

Third Lord Dearing Memorial Lecture

Cathedrals Group

## **Christianity and Universities Today:**

### **A Double Manifesto<sup>1</sup>**

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#### **Opening remarks**

It is an honour and a pleasure to be with you this evening to deliver this Third Lord Dearing Memorial Lecture hosted by the Cathedrals Group of universities. It is also a cause for some apprehension that I am here, as an outsider to the Group, in the presence of so many people who bear weighty responsibilities in the Group, and am taking the risk of proposing a manifesto – indeed two manifestos – about the future of the Group. I hope you will forgive all those statements that are mistaken or, perhaps more likely (since I have had the fascinating experience of immersion in the huge pile of literature sent to me by Group members as well as by Church authorities), those claims that may be more or less correct but still do not quite ring true to insiders. My hope is that this approach to your future will be received in the spirit in which it is intended, as both friendly and challenging, and, at the least, helpful to think with as you carry out your diverse responsibilities.

#### **Introduction**

The religions are clearly important to our world in many ways, and the same is true of universities. This lecture is about a particular convergence of these two: the religion is Christianity (mainly Anglican, Roman Catholic and Methodist) and the universities are the fifteen members of the Cathedrals Group in England. I will ask what is distinctive about the Cathedrals Group among universities, why that distinctiveness is important, and how it might be enhanced in today's circumstances.

The result will be a double manifesto, one addressed to the Group's diverse stakeholders and the other to its leaders. I speak as a Christian

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<sup>1</sup> I have many debts of gratitude for assistance in preparing this lecture: to Professor Tom Greggs for a long seminal conversation; to my Research Associate Frances Clemson for both practical and academic aid; to Stephen Heap for providing Church documents; to Susan Boorman, Louise Botten and Sarah Griffiths for organizing the lecture and arranging for quantities of material about the Cathedrals Group to be sent to me; to all who sent the material; to the Universities Reading Group for our studies and discussions of Kant, Humboldt and Schleiermacher (Professor Robert Gibbs, Professor Sarah Coakley, Dr Timothy Jenkins, Dr Catherine Pickstock and Dr Mike Higton), and above all to the team working on the research project 'Religion and the Idea of a Research University' which is being funded by the Templeton World Charity Foundation: Dr Mike Higton, Dr James Golden, Dr José Liht and Dr Alison Wood.

theologian, as Director of the Cambridge Inter-faith Programme (one of whose current research projects is 'Religion and the Idea of a Research University'), as a member of the Churches Higher Education Liaison Group chaired by Stephen Heap, and as someone who, ever since I was invited by Emmanuel College in Cambridge to deliver their Gomes Lecture in 2003 on the future of the University of Cambridge, has been gripped by the theme of universities in the twenty-first century.<sup>2</sup> The background material directly relevant to what I have to say includes the recent Government White Paper *Higher Education. Students at the Heart of the System*,<sup>3</sup> the recent report of the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education on the distinctiveness and identity of the Cathedrals Group institutions,<sup>4</sup> the Group's own constitution, reports and self-descriptions,<sup>5</sup> the Church of England Board of Education document *Mutual Expectations. The Church of England and Church Colleges/Universities*,<sup>6</sup> material by Adam Dinham and Stephen Jones from the Religious Literacy Leadership in Higher Education project (based at Goldsmiths in the University of London),<sup>7</sup> and, of course, the seminal report by Lord Dearing himself in 2001.<sup>8</sup>

### The Distinctive Marks

The distinctive marks that I will discuss are four:

1. Each member of the Group has *Christian roots*, being Church foundations.
2. Each was founded with a *vocational vision* in order to educate for forms of service to society. Initially this was for the training of teachers, which is still very important, but now alongside that are nursing, social work and a wide variety of other services from child care, youth work and counselling to community policing and probation work; and in addition a huge variety of vocationally-related studies in business, computing, media, sport, landscaping, the arts, hospitality, conservation and events management.
3. Each aims to be a strong *community of learning* informed by Christian values.
4. Each maintains close *links with particular Churches and associated institutions*, especially Church schools.

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<sup>2</sup> The lecture, 'Knowledge, Meaning and the World's Great Challenges: Reinventing Cambridge University in the Twenty-first Century' is published in David F. Ford, *Shaping Theology. Engagements in a Religious and Secular World* (Blackwell, Oxford 2007) pp. 93-113.

<sup>3</sup> Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, *Higher Education. Students at the Heart of the System* (June 2011). Retrieved from <http://discuss.bis.gov.uk/hereform>

<sup>4</sup> Ewart Wooldridge and Eddie Newcomb, Leadership Foundation for Higher Education, *Distinctiveness and identity in a challenging HE environment: a unique opportunity for Cathedrals Groups Institutions* (February 2011). Retrieved from <http://cathedralsgroup.org.uk/Projects.aspx>

<sup>5</sup> Council of Church Colleges and Universities, *A guide to governance in church higher education institutions* (2007). Retrieved from <http://www.lfhe.ac.uk/governance/govpublications>; see also <http://cathedralsgroup.org.uk>

<sup>6</sup> Church of England Board of Education, *Mutual Expectations. The Church of England and Church Colleges/Universities*, General Synod Paper 1601 (February 2006).

<sup>7</sup> Adam Dinham and Stephen H. Jones, *An Analysis of Challenges of Religious Faith, and Resources for Meeting them, for University Leaders* (2010); idem, *Programme Evaluation Phase I: September 2010-February 2011* (2010). Retrieved from <http://religiousliteracyhe.org/leadership-resources/publications>

<sup>8</sup> *The Way Ahead: Church of England schools in the new millennium* (Church House, London, 2001).

There are of course many other important matters that could be discussed about these universities, ranging from the role of research in relation to teaching, through interdisciplinarity and governance, to widening participation and the hot topic of fees. But those are common to all universities in this country today, and, while they may be mentioned in passing, my main focus will be on the distinctive marks of the Cathedrals Group and how they might be justified and strengthened.

## Christian Roots

I begin with the distinctive mark of Christian roots. The first thing to be said about this is that universities themselves have Christian roots. For this Group, to be true to its founding principles is also to be true to the 'DNA' of the tradition of universities. In the magisterial multi-volume study of the university in Europe edited by Walter Rüegg<sup>9</sup>, there is a striking list of core elements in the ethos of the first universities and an exploration of how they are related to Christian understanding. He and the other contributors to the volumes make a convincing cumulative case for there being, despite huge changes, some continuity linking the Medieval origins of the university with the character of many of its successors today.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> *A History of the University in Europe*, vols I-IV, general editor Walter Rüegg (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992-2010).

<sup>10</sup> The seven "evaluative propositions" are:

(1) The belief in a world order, created by God, rational, accessible to human reason, to be explained by human reason and to be mastered by it; this belief underlies scientific and scholarly research as the attempt to understand this rational order of God's creation.

(2) The ancient understanding of man as an imperfect being, and the Judaeo-Christian idea of a creature fallen into sin, and the proposition deriving from these ideas about the limitation of the human intellect, operated in the Middle Ages as driving forces impelling intellectual criticism and collegial cooperation; they served as the foundation for the translation of general ethical values like modesty, reverence, and self-criticism into the image of the ideal scientist and scholar.

(3) Respect for the individual as a reflection of the macrocosm or as having been formed in the image of God, laid the foundation for the gradually realized freedom of scientific and scholarly research and teaching.

(4) The absoluteness of the imperative of scientific truth already led scholasticism to the basic norms of scientific and scholarly research and teaching, such as the prohibition of the rejection of demonstrated knowledge, the subjection of one's own assertions to the generally valid rules of evidence, openness to all possible objections to one's own argument, and the public character of argument and discussion.

(5) The recognition of scientific and scholarly knowledge as a public good which is ultimately a gift of God had not, it is true, even before universities existed, prevented study and teaching for the sake of money. Nevertheless, there has been less interest within the universities in the economic use of scientific knowledge than there has been in the learned professions outside the university. This relatively smaller interest in the economic utilization of scientific knowledge has been an axiomatic value of the university.

(6) *Reformatio*, which regarded one's own scientific efforts as the renewal of previously established knowledge and its further development 'in the cause of improvement', laid a disproportionate weight in the medieval university on already established patterns of thought and older authors. Nevertheless, these were not accepted without criticism; they were critically scrutinized to test their veracity as the basis of one's own knowledge. They were a stimulus to new ways of seeing things and to new theories...Scientific and scholarly knowledge grows in a cumulative process, by building on earlier knowledge. In this sense, the progress of knowledge is a continuous process of *reformatio*.

The Christian tradition in which these core elements are historically rooted can be affirmed by twenty-first century Cathedrals Group Christians or Russell Group Christians just as it affirmed by medieval Christians. The teachings - God as creator of a world order accessible to human reason; human imperfection; humanity in the image of God; the appropriateness of public argument and discussion to the absoluteness of scientific truth; scientific and scholarly knowledge as a public good transcending any economic advantage it might bring; the cumulative and self-correcting process of the growth of knowledge; and the equality and solidarity of those committed to the pursuit of knowledge - would be likely to gain the assent of a broad range of Christians in universities: conservative, liberal, radical, postliberal – though not, perhaps, some postmodern.

Moreover, members of many other faith communities, especially those of the Abrahamic traditions, but also others, would affirm analogous doctrines. And in addition the practical implications of the propositions could be affirmed, even if justified in very different ways, by many agnostic or secular people in the academy. I mean such implications as: rational investigation of the world; ethical values of honesty, justice and self-criticism; respect for the dignity and freedom of the individual; rigorous public argument appealing to demonstrated knowledge and rules of evidence; the recognition of the pursuit of knowledge as a public good irreducible to economic interest; the need for continual self-criticism in the course of improving our knowledge; and the value of equality.

There is one further striking thing. The three key purposes identified in the first universities - *love of knowledge, understanding and truth for their own sake; formation of students in a way of life, its habits and virtues; and usefulness to society – practical use and employment in various spheres of life* – are as relevant today as then and achieving a balance between them is just as difficult.<sup>11</sup>

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(7) The equality and solidarity of scholars in confronting the tasks of science enable the universities to become the institutional centres of the scientific community. The acknowledgement of the scientific achievements of those who think and believe differently from ourselves and of those who are members of social strata different from our own and the readiness to correct one's own errors in the light of persuasive new knowledge, regardless of its source, permitted the rise of science...Indeed, the more highly equality was evaluated, and the more it was joined to the common responsibility for the increase of knowledge, the better the university fulfilled its obligations." Walter Rüegg 'Themes' in *ibid.* vol. I, *Universities in the Middle Ages*, ed. H. De Ridder-Symoens (1992) pp. 32ff.

<sup>11</sup> On these see *ibid.* Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 13. On the tensions between the different dimensions of a university see the recent statement by Robert Anderson: "If we seek guidance from the past, it is better to see the 'idea of the university' not as a fixed set of characteristics, but as a set of tensions, permanently present, but resolved differently according to time and place. Tensions between teaching and research, and between autonomy and accountability, most obviously. But also between universities' membership of an international scholarly community, and their role in shaping national cultures and forming national identity; between the transmission of established knowledge, and the search for original truth; between the inevitable connection of universities with the state and the centres of economic and social power, and the need to maintain critical distance; between reproducing the existing occupational structure, and renewing it from below by promoting social mobility; between serving the economy, and providing a space free from immediate utilitarian pressures; between teaching as the encouragement of open and critical attitudes, and society's expectation that universities will impart qualifications and skills. To come down too heavily on one side of these balances will usually mean that the aims of the university

Among all the attempts since to describe what universities are about, it is hard to better some variation on those three. We still should be about *amor scientiae*, wholehearted inquiry into reality through many disciplines, with knowledge, understanding and truth as worthwhile for their own sake. We still should be about the shaping of students through the habits and disciplines needed to enable them to delight in understanding, to learn well and to apply their learning and habits responsibly. We still should be about usefully serving the good of society. To deserve the name, a university should have an 'ecology' in which those three come together. For this to happen well more than knowledge is required: wisdom is also necessary; and it is worth noting that the wisdom which fed into the medieval foundations was not just Christian – it was also hospitable to pagan (classical Greek and Roman), Jewish and Islamic sources.

The Rüegg volumes trace the European university down the centuries and show this wisdom being continually rethought in different circumstances, most notably in the foundation of the Humboldt University in Berlin in 1809. That might be seen as a modern improvisation on the medieval university, and one that, through one of its chief architects, the Christian theologian Schleiermacher, also embodied a Christian wisdom hospitable to many other traditions, both religious and secular. That is also the challenge for those shaping the Cathedrals Group today: *can you discern what a hospitable yet critical Christian wisdom might be in our circumstances for these institutions?*

One condition is clear, evident in classic ways in both the medieval universities and the German universities inspired by Berlin: *the need for academically-mediated Christianity*. What I mean by this is that, just as Thomas Aquinas in the Middle Ages and Schleiermacher in the nineteenth century were theologians who engaged deeply both with Christianity and with the best contemporary thinking across the disciplines, wherever it came from, so the leaders of Christian foundations today need to be resourced by a similar quality of Christian thought. More widely, our society and world desperately needs people of faith who are as wise, intelligent and responsible as possible, and there are few enough places where such people can be formed.

There are two aspects of academically-mediated Christianity.

First is the need for focused concentration on Christian understanding in departments of theology and religious studies. It is a huge advantage of the Cathedrals Group that you are free to pursue both theology and religious studies together. Viewed globally, very few of the world's universities can do this. Many largely ignore the religions; some have confessional theology in one or more traditions (in the University of Tübingen, for example, where I once studied, there are Roman Catholic and Protestant faculties of theology); some have religious studies, which studies the religions through a range of disciplines but does not allow for critical and constructive pursuit of questions of truth and

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are being simplified and distorted." - "The 'Idea of a University' Today', *History & Policy* (March 2010) Retrieved from <http://www-histpol.hist.cam.ac.uk/papers/policy-paper-98.html>  
Most of those tensions can be read in terms of the three medieval elements.

practice within and between the religions. (If one may compare God and Mammon, religious studies seems to me to be like having a study of economic history, economic systems, econometrics and so on, while forbidding any relating to government policy, current debates about the economy, management practices, employment legislation, business ethics, and suchlike. Indeed, an economic parallel to some approaches to religious studies might be the forbidding of economists to use money at all or have any other involvement with the economy in case they lose their objectivity.)

In Britain, some universities have developed (often through decades of negotiations combining principles and pragmatism) what I think is the best way of engaging with religions in a university department. Theology and religious studies is ideally suited to the sort of complexly multi-religious and secular world we inhabit today. It can bring to bear on the religions a range of academic disciplines – linguistic, literary, cultural, historical, social scientific, natural scientific, philosophical, and more. It can also take seriously questions of theological truth and wisdom, and the full range of ethical, political, scientific, ecological and aesthetic issues of most concern to religious communities and others today. A space can be created in which not only questions about the religions but also questions raised by them and between them can be the subject of disciplined study, conversation and debate. And the participants can include faithful members of particular religious traditions as well as those with no such allegiance.

It is not only our multi-religious and secular society that needs such spaces – the general level of discussion on religious matters is disturbingly low – but each of the religious traditions needs to be academically mediated in ways that engage them in interaction with other faiths and worldviews and with diverse disciplines. In the Cathedrals Group it is appropriate that Christian theology be a leading concern, but in a university context such theology is likely to flourish best when the departmental ecology includes both the disciplines of religious studies and the best current thinking of other religious traditions. Such a combination is significant far beyond our own society: I think the rest of the world too needs to learn from what has been slowly developed in this country in recent decades.

The second aspect of academically-mediated religion is its relevance to all other departments in the university. Universities in the twentieth century on the whole engaged very inadequately with the religions, especially as regards their contemporary relevance. It was a very secular century in which most of the dominant ideologies – communism, fascism, capitalism, naturalistic scientism – had written religions out of their scenarios of the future, and much of that excoriating writing was happening in universities. In retrospect it is extraordinary that the four or five billion of the world's population who are directly related to the major religions should be largely ignored. I am sure that many Cathedrals Group members are still in recovery mode from the massive secularizing and anti-religious pressures of that time, which, of course, are still continuing.

The difference today is that 'default secularism' is more widely challenged, and it is more commonly recognized that there is more than one way to be modern, intelligent, educated, scientifically literate, and so on. There are multiple modernities, many of them religiously inflected. Part of the recovery is to make sure that every department in a university takes this seriously. The research project we have at present in the Cambridge Inter-faith Programme, 'Religion and the Idea of a Research University', is trying to do this in part by concentrating on three departments, English, History and Psychiatry, in which postdoctoral fellows are now embedded. And as I look at other universities exciting initiatives are taking place to ensure that the significance of the religions for academic disciplines is acknowledged. I assume that the Cathedrals Group should be leaders in such initiatives, and that your strengths in departmentally-focused theology and religious studies should be accompanied by strengths in attending to theology- and religion-related aspects of all departments.

### **Resourcing and Educating Leaders in Service**

I come now to the distinctive vocational element of the Cathedrals Group. I recognize that you educate for many areas of the private as well as public sector, but in the time available I will concentrate on the latter.

The vocational emphasis of the Group serves a vital public need: not only the staffing of our public services in education, health, social services, probation, youth work, child care and so on, but the education of those who will *lead* such services, and also the scholarship, research and thinking that can *resource* them.

There is, of course, a battle being fought concerning the usefulness of universities. How broad is the definition of usefulness? Is it to be reduced to narrow economic measurements? Or is there a broader definition that includes many public goods? Even by narrowly economic criteria what the Group contributes comes out well – our schools and hospitals are essential to our economic well-being (and there are also all those courses that directly serve business and other parts of the private sector); by broader criteria the Group excels. *To resource and educate those who lead in service* is a mission that resonates deeply with Christian faith and values and is also in line with the Big Society, or whatever other vision of collaboration in pursuit of the common good one may support.

I suspect that one of the temptations under present financial pressures is for the Group to settle for more of the same, even cutting back on resourcing students and services through outstanding research. Yet this time of difficulty may also be a moment to be seized. There are many outstanding researchers who recognize the importance of service to the public good, and the current shortage of posts means that they are available for recruitment. (My best doctoral student in recent years went to the University of Chester.) Universities are above all about the quality of the people employed in them, and there is an opportunity at present to use some of your scarce resources to recruit outstanding people who will be of immense benefit. The 'impact' criterion in the Research Excellence Framework (REF) is, in its present form, problematic in many ways, but it is a gift to institutions that are so closely linked to areas where research should make an impact. It is an incentive both to build up the Group's

own research (to which the key is hiring the best people) and to collaborate in research with universities in other groups.

This is not just about the REF's concern for quality of research; it is also about the synergy between research and teaching, in which I passionately believe. "Granted that there can be perfectly good reasons for research and teaching to be carried on separately and that there are many fine institutions where this happens ... the question is whether there is a strong case for a world class university to be committed to keeping the two together."<sup>12</sup>

"I would summarise the case in terms of the deep affinity and mutual reinforcement between the habits, values and orientations of good teaching and good research. Both require intellectual values of truth-seeking, rationality in argument, balanced judgement, integrity, linguistic precision and critical questioning. Both involve disciplined, patient attention to the natural or social world, to texts that have abundant meaning, to alternative hypotheses or interpretations, to complexities that resist our simplifying, and to particularities that defy our generalising. And each at its best releases new energy and offers moments of sheer joy. Most academics who are passionate about their fields have caught the passion from their teachers. Dedication to teaching is certainly a matter of relishing the interaction with good students and passing on in gratitude something of what one has been given; but it is also a recognition that, besides the contribution to many spheres of life made by one's students, those who continue in one's own field as academics are likely to contribute to it far more than oneself. So any concern for future research in one's field beyond one's own individual contribution supports the wisdom of cultivating lineages of researchers who are also teachers. Without such lineages it is hard to imagine a healthy long-term intellectual and social environment.

"But beyond the need for continuing to support new thought and research in specific fields, today's situation makes the case for the cross-fertilising of teaching and research even stronger. With so many jobs being knowledge-intensive, and with continual change in knowledge, information and skills requiring not only habitual new learning but also the perceptive integration of the new with the old, there is a sense in which 'we are all researchers now'. Research skills can best be learnt through apprenticeship to those who are at the forefront of their field – if they are willing, and enabled, to teach them."<sup>13</sup> It is through experiencing the teaching of those who are energetic in research and who are in conversation with the best academics in their field that leaders in service will be formed most thoroughly and satisfactorily.

### **Community, Collegiality and Christian Values**

The next distinctive mark has to do with the communities of learning The Cathedrals Group undertakes to build, based on Christian values. That, of course, involves all that the literature of the Group, and its individual members, says

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<sup>12</sup> David F. Ford, 'An interdisciplinary wisdom: knowledge, formation and collegiality in the negotiable university' in *Christian Wisdom: Desiring God and Learning in Love* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2007) p. 317.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 317-18.

about the values pervading governing bodies and institutional practices, the provision of chaplaincy and of places of worship not only for Christians but also for others, support for social justice, and much else. But the first focus should, I think, be on the way in which community is academically mediated.

This I would call 'collegiality'. Cambridge colleges are one form (which I greatly appreciate), but most of the world's universities do it differently – and indeed for many in Cambridge their main forms of academic collegiality are not college-based. I see collegiality as the pivotal factor in the quality of academic life and formation – the first two of the three medieval elements. It is key to the interplay of disciplines, of students among themselves, of academics among themselves, of students and staff with each other, and the often neglected relationship of the administration with everyone. I have treated this elsewhere,<sup>14</sup> but this evening the question is about the distinctiveness of the Cathedrals Group. One advantage of the Group should be that this academic collegiality is interwoven with other forms of community that it is committed to cultivating.

What about these? A Cathedrals institution is a Christian-inspired community which is not just for Christians, and I am impressed by the consistency with which it is seen to be a Christian value to cultivate such a hospitable space. This is not just about tolerating others who differ but about creating a setting where they can be fully themselves in their integrity as Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and various other types of religious or non-religious people. One way of trying to provide such a setting is to form a 'neutral' space where nobody is religious in public and religious identities and differences are ignored or marginalized – call Christmas 'Winterval'. This can amount to the imposition of a programmatically secular ideology, and is by no means neutral as experienced by people of faith.

The alternative, represented by the Cathedrals Group, is a great gift to this country and beyond. This is to be unashamedly Christian in a setting that allows others too to be unashamedly who they are. I want to draw on two personal involvements to suggest how this aspect of the Group might be enhanced still further.

The first has grown out of my years of inter-faith engagement, mostly among Jews, Christians and Muslims. In particular fifteen years of regularly practicing Scriptural Reasoning, in which Jews, Christians and Muslims study and discuss their scriptures together has convinced me that the core dynamic of the best inter-faith engagement is one that allows you to go deeper into your own faith, deeper into the faiths of others and deeper into the common good. This encourages partnerships of difference, deep relationships across deep differences that do not depend on consensus. You can have friendship and understanding without agreement on many important matters; what often helps most is to improve the quality of your disagreements. The Cathedrals Group is ideally situated to create settings of respect, trust and collegiality where there can be mutual hospitality across differences, and faiths can be unashamed together. I have been intrigued by how often in your literature you indicate the

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<sup>14</sup> E.g. *ibid.* pp.323ff.

importance of this sort of setting, though I also detect an understandable hesitancy – it is early days yet in inter-faith engagement, and practices such as Scriptural Reasoning are young too.

The second personal involvement is with the HEFCE-funded Religious Literacy Leadership in Higher Education Programme (RLLP), led by Dr Adam Dinham and based in the Faiths and Civil Society Unit in Goldsmiths. It now embraces over 60 English universities, from all university groupings, with participants including Vice-Chancellors, senior management, chaplains, student services and a range of departments. It is good that, when the project began, five of the Cathedrals Group Vice-Chancellors were approached to become ‘religious literacy champions’ in their institutions and all five accepted. Yet at other levels the smallest take-up has been from this Group, while the largest has been from the Russell Group. I suggest you rectify this, because RLLP has proved remarkably successful at something that touches your distinctiveness. In a pluralist society religious literacy is important for peaceful diversity. Universities are more pluralist than most parts of this society, but they vary greatly in how they relate to the religions and their members. RLLP has a revealing typology of five differing ways universities handle the religions, from the secular or neutral university at one end to the ‘formative-collegial university’ at the other. It suggests an array of ways to enhance the religious literacy of your institution and offers training to staff. It seems to me that this Group should be leading the whole higher education sector in moving towards the formative-collegial.<sup>15</sup>

Overall, the Cathedrals Group universities are the nearest any universities (except perhaps other originally religious foundations such as Oxford, Cambridge and Kings College London) come to being microcosms of our wider society: complexly religious and secular, with Christian roots. But in these the balance differs from the wider society. There, the secular often seems to dominate in a way that is not hospitable to people and communities of faith. In the Cathedrals Group members, on the contrary, Christianity tries to be genuinely hospitable to those who are secular and those who are religious, and to create a space where a better version of a complexly religious and secular society can be realized.

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<sup>15</sup> On leadership of the formative-collegial university Adam Dinham and Stephen H. Jones write: “This university takes into account the widest experience of its students and staff, seeing their learning and work in terms of their overall human growth and development. This might include recognizing religious dimensions of human life. Faith is not seen simply in terms of requirements or needs which some students have and others do not. Rather, all people’s worldviews, both religious and secular, are taken as essential aspects of identity and culture and as potentially enriching dimensions of learning and growth. Its strategy for widening participation emphasizes the personal and intellectual benefits of obtaining a university education alongside people from different traditions and none, in addition to the economic and material benefits. The student experience is not seen as a process of knowledge transfer in pursuit of a ‘bankable’ academic qualification, but is taken to be a significant component of a broader life-project. Good campus relations are ensured by trying actively to create an environment in which faith is ‘at home’ on campus, with religious events and forms of expression enjoyed alongside others, and religiously-orientated questions and legacies being on the academic agenda in curricula, teaching and learning. There is outreach to surrounding communities, including faith communities, which are seen as enriching the university experience within and beyond the campus walls.’ – *Religious Literacy Leadership in Higher Education, An Analysis of Challenges of Religious Faith, and Resources for Meeting them, for University Leaders* (2010) pp.19-20.

## **Connecting with Churches and Other Stakeholders**

The fourth distinctive contribution of the Cathedrals Group is to be in strong mutual relationships with churches. Intermediate institutions are essential to the health of our civil society. Here two sets of intermediate institutions work together for mutual benefit and for the common good. This in turn leads them into other relationships with both the state and other intermediate institutions, especially schools and hospitals. The obvious thing to be said about this is that the relationships need strengthening all round. I want to add just three points.

The first is that the churches need academically-mediated faith, and universities that take faith seriously, both in departments of theology and religious studies and across the board, are vital sources for this. Validation of training for clergy and other accredited ministries is important, but only one of many ways this can happen.

The second concerns faith schools. I cannot discuss now what I consider the strong case in favour of having faith schools, but I would argue that if our society is to be healthily multi-religious and secular then faith schools have a role to play, and that they in turn need teachers trained in settings where faith matters.

The third is about a global perspective on the Christianity in which you are rooted. I recently had the pleasure of seeing a former doctoral student become the Vice-Chancellor of a Christian university in Kenya. In Africa and other places Christianity is growing rapidly; Christians are founding and expanding numerous universities and other educational institutions; and there is a great desire for connections, exchanges and collaborations. I know many of you already have close links abroad, and large numbers of overseas students, but I suspect that the potential for global synergies in higher education has hardly begun to be realized.

### ***A Double Manifesto: Deeper roots, hospitable difference and wiser education in our religious and secular society***

In this lecture, I have given some initial thoughts on four distinctive marks of the Group. I now want to focus those thoughts so as to generate two sets of slogans that I hope you might find helpful not only to think with but also to bear in mind while formulating policy and strategy, and while engaging in advocacy in both the Churches and wider society. If I were to choose an overarching slogan for both sets I think it would be: *Deeper roots, hospitable difference and wiser education in our religious and secular society.*

## **I Manifesto for Cathedrals Group Stakeholders**

- **To Government**

If you are serious about the Big Society, or any other vision of many stakeholders collaborating with each other and with the state for the common good, it is going to require religious and secular partnerships.

You need diverse players in every sector, including Higher Education, who can be both confidently themselves and hospitable towards others. An open and distinctively Christian Cathedrals Group, deeply engaged with their religious and secular contexts, is a huge asset for a vibrant educational and societal ecology, and well worth supporting properly.

***So: Recognise in policy and funding the immense value of distinctively Christian universities that are dedicated to the common good of our society.***

- **To Voters**

Your local MPs and local government councilors need to support local educational institutions in all their particularity and their religious and secular diversity. Ask them to resist the tendency seen in all parties to centralize, secularise and homogenise the Higher Education sector. Ask them specifically to support the Cathedrals Group, which is engaged in multiple ways with local communities and regions, and which educate and resource the leaders of services that are essential to the common good.

***So: Put your vote behind what the Cathedrals Group stands for and expect your democratic representatives to resist the centralizing, secularizing and homogenizing of higher education.***

- **To Academics**

The Cathedrals Group members are dedicated to love of knowledge, formation of students and usefulness to society, they combine teaching with research, they are committed to collegiality, and they fulfil responsibilities towards a range of academic disciplines, towards the Churches and other religious communities, and towards many spheres of society. It is difficult to be an academic at the intersection of research, teaching, collegiality and these multiple responsibilities, but it is one of the most fruitful places to think and work.

***So: See the Cathedrals Group as a place where the founding Christian vision of universities can be renewed and improvised upon for the good of all, and where you can follow a classic, demanding and fulfilling academic vocation in the twenty-first century.***

- **To Students**

You are whole persons, with hearts, souls and imaginations as well as bodies, minds and bank balances, you are members of families and traditions, and connected to the whole of nature. In your formative years, do not be taken in by fear-driven, utilitarian constrictions of education. Go for places like the Cathedrals Group, with a distinctive ethos, a high level

of student satisfaction, a spirit of service, and a concern for citizenship in a complexly religious and secular society.

***So: Seek out an education that appreciates the whole rich ecology of self, society and creation in an institution that does not see you only as a consumer or customer.***

- **To Parents**

You above all are concerned for the all-round, long term well-being of your children. Consider the benefits of the formative environment that Cathedrals Group members offer, and their orientation towards jobs that serve the common good of society and will always be needed. And, in a society where university education can be pretty soulless, you should value their 'cure of souls'.

***So: Whatever your own religious allegiance, recognize the worth to your children of a university that is formative and collegial, prepares them for responsible employment and has good chaplaincy.***

- **To Employers**

Students from Cathedrals Group universities have usually had work experience through placements or volunteering; whatever their course, they have had an education that is formative as well as vocational, that takes responsibility toward society seriously, and that prepares them for a multi-faith and secular society.

***So: Not only employ these graduates, but also please tell the government and others that you prefer such employees, and in addition are interested in partnerships with their institutions and even in sponsorships.***

- **To Benefactors**

Universities can look to government less and less for funding, so fees and research grants become more important. But the most underdeveloped element in this country is fundraising. Religion is the single most important motive for giving money worldwide (it is estimated at 85% of American charitable giving). Universities are attractive to donors for many reasons, and especially to those who want to make a long term difference across generations. A group of universities that is confident in its religious identity and also strongly committed to the common good should have the best of all worlds.

***So: If you want your money to support intelligent, wise and responsible faith, to help train leaders in service and to go on having effects decade after decade, give to this Group – and above all give endowment.***

- **To Other Faiths**

The seriousness of the Cathedrals Group about their Christian heritage is good news for you, because it means that they will support you in being equally serious about your heritage. There is no good future for our world without good relations between faiths, and this Group creates spaces where that can happen.

***So: Come confidently to Cathedrals Group universities, take advantage of the opportunities to go deeper into your own faith as well as those of other faiths, and form alliances with Christians and others to serve the common good of our society and world.***

- **To Secular People**

A vibrant public culture needs multiple voices, secular and religious, and a flourishing multi-faith and secular society needs spaces where those speaking from different positions can listen to each other, and where alliances can be formed between those who are not either religious or secular extremists.

***So: Come confidently to Cathedrals Group universities, take advantage of the opportunities to go deeper into secular positions and traditions as well as into diverse faiths, and form alliances with Christians and others to serve the common good of our society and world.***

- **To Churches**

The Cathedrals Group are your natural partners. They need you to help them keep in touch with their distinctive roots, and you need them not only to resource your work in education, youth work and other areas but also to nourish you with intelligent, scholarly and thoughtful faith.

***So: Look for more forms of collaboration and mutual support, encourage your members to become students in the Group, and encourage the Group in its distinctive Christian identity.***

- **To Other Groups of Universities**

Do not be misled by the rhetoric of competition. The higher education sector is a diverse ecology, and there is great scope for collaboration between groups. Some of the 'pathways to impact' for Russell Group universities may lead through intensive collaboration with Cathedrals Group members, and all universities need to become more religiously literate.

***So: Be open to partnerships with the Cathedrals Group, learn from their appreciation of the academic importance of the religions, and***

***join with them in rebalancing the Government's White Paper vision of university education towards a broader conception of usefulness to society, a conception of education as formation rather than as a commodity to be consumed by customers, and an appreciation of wonder, free academic inquiry and the joy of discovery as worthwhile in themselves.***

## **II Manifesto for the Cathedrals Group leadership**

- Christianity is deeply involved in higher education worldwide.

***So: Seek classic and contemporary Christian wisdom as you shape your universities, and bring it into dialogue with other religious and secular wisdom.***

- UK universities lead the world in their ways of doing theology and studying religions.

***So: Engage academically with Christianity and other faiths through building up your departments of theology and religious studies.***

- The religions are relevant to all fields.

***So: Engage academically with Christianity and other faiths across all disciplines.***

- Students are in fact at the heart of your institutions.

***So: Let all stakeholders know the quality of your student experience and cultivate it further.***

- Many of your alumni become leaders in areas of service to society.

***So: Educate students to lead in service through uniting love of learning, formation as people, and responsibility towards society.***

- Good research and the habits of mind that generate it are vital to all areas of public service.

***So: Resource your students, our public services and our churches through uniting research with teaching in every field and in as many teacher/researchers as possible.***

- All universities rightly need to consider the impact of their research in the wider world.

***So: Collaborate with other universities in this country and abroad on research projects relevant to your areas of service and vocational training.***

- Academic collegiality among students, among staff, between students and staff, and between them all and the administration is at the heart of the university as a learning community.

***So: Cultivate settings and practices of intensive, disciplined conversation and collaboration within and between fields and groups and also with stakeholders outside the university.***

- Our complexly multi-religious and secular society needs places where high quality engagement across differences can happen.

***So: Create shared, hospitable spaces, enabling students and staff to go deeper into their own tradition and position, deeper into the traditions and positions of others, and deeper into the common good.***

- Religious literacy is desirable and especially important in a pluralist society.

***So: Develop the religious literacy of your institution towards becoming 'formative-collegial' and encourage other universities to move in the same direction.***

- Your alliances with Churches and allied institutions are a long-term advantage for both sides.

***So: Be true to your roots and strengthen these relationships.***

- Higher education is rapidly expanding among the world's two billion or more Christians.

***So: Go global, and collaborate, increase exchanges, and seek together a Christian wisdom for twenty-first century universities.***

## **Conclusion**

Well, writing manifestos is easy compared with acting on them. I hope my two have seemed at least somewhat to the point from where you sit. I suppose that theologically this whole lecture has been intended simply as a blessing on your institutions and the immensely important work you and they do.

I close with a passage I return to again and again, the cry of Wisdom in Proverbs. To be gripped by this cry is, I think, to be inspired to attend to the cries of our world, including those cries that our universities try to respond to – cries for meaning, understanding, knowledge, truth, education, skills, know-how, employment, health, and much else. Wisdom might be defined as the discernment of such cries.

**Does not wisdom call, and does not understanding raise her voice?**

**On the heights, beside the way, at the crossroads she takes her stand;**

**Beside the gates, in front of the town, at the entrance of the portals she cries out:**

**'To you, O people, I call, and my cry is to all that live ...**

**Take my instruction instead of silver, and knowledge rather than choice gold;**

**For wisdom is better than jewels, and all that you may desire cannot compare with her . (Proverbs 8:1-4, 10-11)**

It may be hard to sustain that attitude to silver, gold and jewels in the face of cuts and other financial difficulties, but that is exactly where talk of values and distinctiveness is tested. Last week I told my Vice-Chancellor, Sir Leszek Borysiewicz, about this event and asked him what he would say to you. He simply said: 'Keep to your core values'. May you and the Cathedrals Group flourish as you seek the wisdom, the will and the means to do so!

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