

What is the Enterprise? Colleges and Anglican Identity

by Raymond Heslehurst

Introduction

A Word of explanation is needed to introduce this article. It was first conceived as a paper to be read to the “Bogong Society”, a meeting of Heads of Colleges in the Sydney NSW metropolitan area. It examines of the role of ‘colleges’ as opposed to ‘halls of residence’ in the Australian University system. A college in this sense is a residential establishment within or affiliated to a university. It is this institution with which this article concerns its self.

That being said, I will try to make some remarks at the end of the paper to suggest how this approach may affect teaching and research institutions. The appended statement of the philosophy of my own College, I think, has such a broad application.

Foundation Arrangements

The argument concerning which was the first tertiary institution in Australia highlights the issues of the role of university colleges in Australia. If taken judged the foundation documents, then Moore Theological College would be the oldest.¹ If by the commencement of programmes, the University of Sydney would claim that distinction. Either way the radically different nature of the two institutions shows the dichotomy of approaches to education that has prevailed in Australia until recent times. One exists for the education or training of the clergy for ‘godly work’ the other to enable the transmission of ‘secular’ knowledge. This latter did not mean ‘non-religious’ but has had the effect of adopting a predominately non religious (and sometime anti religious) mode. It was not until the failure of materialistic philosophy which came about with the ‘baby boomer experience’ that anything approaching true religious study was entertained by the University of Sydney.² Not until the establishment of the Catholic University has a real attempt to reintegrate knowledge and faith been institutionally undertaken. Although, the fact that it is a denominational institution may simply suggest an expansion of the seminary/university divide.

The foundation of St Paul's College was meant to provide a place of 'godly learning' within the university³. This was never really achieved due both to the university and the diocese. The very existence of a college within a secular university was suspect in the sectarian model adopted by the diocese for the training of its clergy. Even when candidates for orders were graduates there was still thought to be a need to 'train' them so as to enable proper ministry. One result of this approach, in the last 20 years, is a dichotomy between what is called 'gospel work' (which is supposed to have divine approval) and secular occupation which is tolerated to enable the former.⁴ The divergent theological worlds of the university and the theological college have only hardened the divide. The establishment of other denominational 'seminaries' has tended to reinforce this situation.

In such a climate what role is there for university colleges, especially for Anglican colleges?

The answer to this question is determined by a large number of factors chief among which are a view of the church as an institution, a view of knowledge with reference to Christian thought and especially the implications of the doctrine of creation, the experience of Israel in exile, the incarnation and eschatology.

The following issues need also to be explored:

- a rationale for the expenditure of time and energy on 'collegiate' life
- a definition of collegiate life,
- the difference between colleges and halls of residence,
- the integration of the college within the institution,
- the loyalty of the college to the theological position, ethos and polity of the denomination,
- the profile of the staff of a college with reference to the academic enterprise,
- the relative value given to individualism, conversionism, and community,
- and the analysis of present resource use.

1. What is a College

In a review of the accommodation sector of the University of Wollongong in 1996 the distinction between collegiate and non collegiate accommodation was raised. In the Review Committee's report to the Council of the University the committee avoided any clear comment on this issue. The Heads had included in their submission the following

The essence of a college is its sense of community. It is not simply a place in which one lives in proximity but which has a common life. This has traditionally been seen in a common meal arrangement with a component of regular "formal dining", an academic life peculiar to the college, a social programme which is determined and involves the whole college and

where appropriate a religious or philosophical unity.

Pastoral care and academic assistance by the senior members of the community is an integral part of this arrangement. The involvement of other than undergraduates fosters both a sense of continuity and of a 'community of scholars'.

While recognising that many people join a college for a variety of reason part of a collegiate purpose is the forming of its members, both undergraduate and graduate. This implies that each 'college' has a distinctive self-understanding and societal orientation. While the "tradition" and foundation aims carry this each generation of members develop and mould it. By its very nature a college will try to maintain a living contact with its previous members who may, in theory, be only 'absent members'.

Collegiate life, because of its strong community orientation, may not be appropriate for some people but most could benefit from it.

In one sense the college represent the essence of university - an attempt to be a 'community of scholars for the community'.⁵

In some ways this is an idealised view but it represents, I think, the essence. I would wish to add, that only with a clearly owned philosophical position that a college is able to exist or mature.

By its very nature a college is 'owned' by its members. This raises interesting tensions for colleges founded by a particular group when that group no longer has the dominant membership in the institution. It is especially true for religious based institutions.

2. The University

Historically, universities have grown from many sources. It is said that the institutional form of one French university resulted from a riot over the price of beer. Others have grown out of collections of colleges or teachers. In Australia the same voices which called for Responsible Government also called for local universities. In Sydney although attempts were made to found a university after the English model⁶ a compromise structure was achieved (on paper) between an examining body and a teaching institution. Colleges were founded but they never achieved the role envisaged for them in the mid 19th century.

One is tempted to idealise the university, although this is somewhat difficult in post-Dawkins⁷ Australia. In a world where 'useful' has come to mean 'saleable', universities find themselves challenged at most fundamental levels. Yet, with all the difficulties, there is still a belief that in some way universities should not only provide knowledge (by teaching and

research) but also inculcate wisdom, whose and how is little analysed.

While Christians have been fully involved with university education in Australia, there has tended to be a marginalisation by both sides. This has sometimes taken an anti-intellectual mode and sometimes a compartmentalisation mode. Either way the comment made in a sermon before the University of Wollongong in 1991 stands true

The marginalisation of Christians in the academic world sometime by Christians sometimes by the academic community is to repeat the mistake of Emperor Julian, of attempting to separate the Christians from the exploration of the created world and such a separation, such a marginalisation, whether it is carried out by Christians or non-Christians, is intellectually and theologically indefensible.⁸

The development of rationale for universities will profoundly affect what colleges can do in the next century.

3 Anglicanism

Only a fool or a martyr would attempt the task of defining Anglicanism in the Diocese of Sydney in the 1990's.⁹ I hope I am not the former and I do not desire to be the latter; yet I will take a chance. In a brief paper for the Richard Johnson College Journal I wrote:

Of all the planks in the Archbishop's vision statement "Dynamite Anglicanism" has received the most attention and the least light. Some have suggested that it has an internal contradiction others have defined it to reflect the variegated practice of the diocese. Most discussion has failed to deal with the obvious need to define the substantive before we empower it.¹⁰

Yet if we are to have a role for "Anglican Colleges" in the 21st Century we will need to know and own a definition. Bishop D W B Robinson, in one of his first Synod addresses as Archbishop of Sydney described Anglicans as 'reformed catholics'.¹¹ Historically this is an excellent description. Three things characterise us, "this church choose to be served by the threefold order of ministry, to maintain a written rite for its services and sacraments and to adopt a limited creedal base while allowing significant theological freedom".¹² This was reinforced in the 1961 Constitution of the Anglican Church of Australia but the model does not go unchallenged especially in the present episcopate. Given this model's commitment to Scripture, Tradition and reason as expressed in Anglican formularies, the Anglican church is at home in the political world and also finds the university a natural environment.

4. A Model for Australia

Any institution which seeks to do more than just accommodate and assist members of the university will face the limits of history and circumstance. We cannot start as if there were no existing structures.

The chief component or benefit that Anglican University Colleges can bring to the University, and through them to the church and state, is a critique of the age. I do not mean by this a constant caviling about the 'morals and ethics' of society or the rejection of the academic enterprise. The task will be to speak from and into the enterprise we call the university. To do so it will need to be the following:

a) Clearly Christian.

I do not mean by this a community composed of Christians only. Such a community may be valuable for prayer but is of little use in seeking to express the implications of the Gospel of Christ in a multi-faceted world.

The community will need to be committed to the unique message concerning Jesus of Nazareth; to be so unashamedly but not arrogantly. It will be this orientation which governs its decision making and its analysis of ideas.

b) Clearly Anglican

If we are to bring the distinctive influence of what I would (cautiously) call "western orthodoxy" to bear on university, church and state this will be done when we take the stance required by our formularies. We will need to be committed both to revelation and reason.

The freedom and form of Anglican polity are both necessary. You cannot have the balance without the structure. An Anglican College will be an open event just because it is confident of its form. As Anglicans we will have to acknowledge that other Christian colleges may provide useful critique.

Because our membership 'boundaries' are grey rather than a sharp black line, there will always be the temptation to 'play the market'. This would require us to surrender just that tool which is most valuable in the whole Christian enterprise.

c) Integration

Whatever form the universities take in the next 20 year we will need to be integrated with them. While we will criticise their priorities and processes we must do so from inside. We are to be involved in the educative and research process. We are to model an inquisitive, honest and inquiring mind. This ought also be the shape we desire for all members of our community.

We ought to seek to provide an expanding educative programme ourselves, not to challenge the university but to complement it. The development of teaching institutes and programmes within our colleges ought to be seen as a part of our formation of resident and non resident members as well as a contribution to the Academy.

There ought also to be integration at the social and pastoral levels. Our own internal care for the college (that is its members) ought to be a model for the university. Yet as a Christian community following him who came to serve we should also be available to the whole community of the University.

d) Community not Aggregation

Many people will seek to provide accommodation and care for students. It is, in itself, a worthwhile thing to do but it is not the role of colleges.

While we will fail to achieve influence if we are homogeneous units we will also fail if we do not challenge the spirit of individualism, which is rampant in our society. There must be a core concept of belonging and of owning the College's purpose. This will never be static but must have a solid core which transcends the present resident members of the community.

e) Worship

At the heart of the Christian enterprise is worship. Not for its own sake but because no other response is sufficient toward the God with whom we relate. This worship will be eschatological in its orientation. Simple meetings for edification and evangelism must never replace it. These are useful but fail to understand the basic orientation of the faith. We are a community of the future living in the present. We are also a community with a history. Simple existential experiences will fail due to justice to the communion of saints and the hope of heaven.

There has always been a tension in this area with reference to 'high culture'. The nature of our God demands that the corporate worship in which we engage should reflect the persons with whom we are engaging. For colleges this must mean a quality of style and intellect and an engagement with the world in which the community sits.

The whole process must be intentional. It must be open but clearly part of our foundation structure. It is to be the community at worship if it is to serve the college. Non college members may and should be encouraged to be present but it will be chapel not parish.

The nature of Anglican self identification will enable all who are baptised to play a full role in the worshipping community. It can do this only as it maintains its distinctive polity and form.

5. Collegiate Conclusions

Much of what I have written is simply reflection on others work. Nothing radically new is really contained here and in some ways it is vague. But I hope it sets out an enterprise worth doing. Many will see it as not valuable because it does not ‘fill the pews’ or overturn the institution. Much of it requires more detailed material to both justify it and implement it. At points it seems triumphalist or arrogant with reference to the Anglican Church.

Yet Daniel mastered the wisdom of the Chaldeans and kept his eyes fixed upon Jerusalem. That is our task. That is what we should be doing if we are to make a distinctive contribution to universities in the 21st century and thus ‘there will not be lacking suitable people for the service of church and state.’¹³

6. Paths of Further Exploration.

Unlike the Australian Colleges many of the institution with which CUAC is involved are themselves teaching or research institutions in their own right. They have complex and complicating involvement with the governments of their various states. In what ways may the ideas in this paper be extended to them?

The core enterprise of the college can best be described as being a ‘Christian community of Scholars for the community’. This is, in essence, the role of any Christian foundation in the educational enterprise. Any university will be in the business of forming its students. It will also exist within a particular national or ethnic framework. As such, especially if it is financed by the state, it will have limitations and obligations within these frameworks.

Yet if it ceases to have a distinctive face in that enterprise it loses its right to be called a ‘Christian’ institution. It may still be a worthwhile enterprise in which Christians may work, doing, as the Apostle Paul wrote, “good to all people”.¹⁴ It is important that Christians work in the world, Daniel and Joseph provided excellent models for this, even if Joseph did reduce Egypt to serfdom.

The task of being an Anglican University will show the characteristics, in different ways most likely, which I have said are necessary for an Australian Anglican University College. The task of implementing them in a hostile or multi-cultural situation will provide a challenge for any Head of such an institution. But as the Canon 55 says, when it enjoins prayer before a sermon or lecture, we pray for our universities to so teach and form “... that there be not lacking fit men [*and women*] for both church and State...”.

The Philosophy of Richard Johnson College

The first Chancellor of the University of Wollongong, The Hon Dr Robert Marsden Hope, would say in his opening address to each graduation “you have experienced a general education as well as a special education”. This is a good place to start with a description of the goals and philosophy of RJC.

The College needs to be described properly so that its philosophy can be clearly understood. Richard Johnson College is a community of scholars associated with the University of Wollongong. It consists of both residential and non-residential members. The academic activity of its members ranges from that of professors of disciplines to people preparing for entrance to university. It must not be seen simply as a hall of residence for current students. Membership of the College will continue as long as there is a desire to be associated with the College and recognition and support of its goals and values. All activities of the community are a result of this definition.

The core values of this community are those of the orthodox Christian Faith. It is assumed that both the revelation of God-in-Christ and the exploration of creation accesses the truth of God. A result of this is the belief that the university is the natural home of the Christian. As a consequence of this Faith it is also believed that community is the best environment for people in which to engage.

It is the belief of the College that a total education, which involves both learning and formation, takes place best within a community. It is held that this community is optimum when it is a mixture of disciplines and stages of learning, formation and experience. Since it is both a scholarly and Christian community it will seek also to be international in its composition.

We see ourselves not as a community of Christians but a Christian community. It is not expected that all members of the College will be Christian but that all will accept the collegiate values undergirding the College.

Several things result from these base statements.

Firstly, there will be a centring on the scholarly enterprise. The College will seek to promote quality research, teaching and learning. This exercise is grounded in the nature of the universe as ‘creation’ not simply ‘nature’. This will involve a scholarly life within the community at appropriate levels and the demonstration of that life.

Secondly, the worship of God will be a significant activity of the College. This will not only involve what is called the ‘common prayers and sacraments’ but these will be central and visible components of the College’s life. It will also mean that the pursuit of the knowledge

of God is regarded as an important activity of the College. As a consequence there will also be a scholarly apologetic expressed internally in the College and toward both the University and the wider civic community.

Thirdly, there will be a sense of community fostered. The idea of 'belonging to' not simple 'using the services of' the College will be central. Activities which express and foster this will be a major component of the College's programme. Customs and practices which express and reinforce this idea will be maintained and fostered. Thus the College will engage not only in scholarly activities but also in those things which foster the formation of a truly mature person.

The College sees itself as being a continuation of the ancient universities of Christendom. In the area of religious practice it is different in not requiring assent and practice to the College's indisputable religious position. Some of the members of the College may hold and practice different religious values. This is not a surrender to syncretism but a recognition of the robustness of the Christian Faith. Clearly those who have responsibility in the College to maintain and develop its life must hold that Faith.

If the 'chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever', the College will do this by being a liberal scholarly Christian community.

Footnotes

- 1 Thomas Moore's will was proved 2nd February 1841 Loane, Marcus L, The History of Moore College, Sydney, 1955, 8
- 2 At first this was 'hidden' in the School of Semitic Studies'
- 3 Loane, 203
- 4 Cheng, Gordon Salt, a publication of AFES
- 5 Heads joint submission to the Review Committee, 1996, Unpublished.
- 6 In founding the Kings School Bishop Broughton hoped it would become the first 'College' of a University for the Colony of NSW
- 7 Minister for Education in the Federal Government responsible for the changes which led to a corproatisation of the university
- 8 Sermon preach at St John's Keiraville in the presence of the Chancellor and Vice Chancellor and other members of the University by the author.
- 9 The election of Archbishop Jensen in 2001 has made this task easier but the question is wether you are dealing with Anglicanism.
- 10 The Archbishop was The Most Rev R H Goodhew, the article is in RJC Journal Vol 4
- 11 The year Book of the Diocese of Sydney 1988, Robinson, D W B, p242,
- 12 *ibid*
- 13 Canons 55 of 1603/04 of the Church of England
- 14 Galatians 6.10