

Faculty of Divinity
AGM 14th November 2013
Chair's Annual Report

Faculty personnel

This has been an encouraging year as we have welcomed new members of staff enabling the Faculty to retain core strengths while also developing new areas. In January Dr Joel Cabrita joined us from SOAS as Lecturer in World Christianities. This is an important emerging area and Dr Cabrita has been active in developing the subject in teaching, at both Tripos and MPhil levels, and in research through a new research seminar; she has worked in association with Professor Maxwell, the Dixie Professor in the Faculty of History, who also is an Africanist, with Dr Naures Atto, our Mellon postdoctoral fellow, with Dr Emma Wild Wood from the Henry Martyn Centre, and with others with related interests. Also in January we welcomed Dr Nathan MacDonald as Lecturer in Old Testament/ Hebrew Bible from the University of St Andrews; Dr MacDonald has most recently headed a research project at the University of Göttingen, and with this experience behind him has been appointed to chair the Faculty Research Committee and to co-ordinate our research activity. As anticipated in last year's report, Prof. Garth Fowden joined us in July as Sultan Qaboos Professor of Abrahamic Faiths and Shared Values, and Academic Director of the Cambridge Inter-Faith Programme.

There were also farewells: Professor Julius Lipner retired as Professor of Indian religions although he retains a research role in the Faculty until December. Dr Fraser Watts retired from the Starbridge Lectureship in Theology and Science. Both were warmly thanked at a dinner in their honour. Another departure from the Faculty at the end of the academic year was Dr Anna Williams, whose contributions to teaching especially in Theology and Literature will be much missed. Professor Nicholas de Lange completed his work as Director of the 'Mapping Jewish Communities' project (see below) but remains a welcome figure around the Faculty. Dr Ankur Barua was appointed to a lectureship in Hindu Studies from 2013-14, and the Starbridge lectureship is in the process of being filled. Dr Mike Higon completed his secondment to CIP from the University of Exeter and has moved to a Chair in Durham to work with the University's partnership with the Church of England in the Common Awards scheme.

There have also been changes in the office: Ms Rajashree Dhanaraj left to work in Fitzwilliam College, and we were pleased to appoint Mrs Karen Webb from the Faculty of Education as Chief Secretary. Karen has quickly learned our ways. Dr Janet Moore also left and we have appointed Ms Jenny Holden from 2013-14. We also have welcomed to a new post in the office, Mrs Laura Jeffrey as Outreach Officer, who is seeking to spread the attractions of studying TRS among sixth-formers, and to help maintain, and improve, our application numbers.

Among research associates, Dr Chloe Reddaway joined us as research associate to Prof. Fowden, and Dr. Philip McCosker as research associate to Prof. Sarah Coakley. Other members of the postdoctoral and research community moved to other positions, including Dr Alison Wood to a post in CRASSH, Dr Hilary Marlow to one in the Faraday Institute, and Dr Liz Gulliford to a post in the School of Education in the University of Birmingham.

Research and Other Projects in the Faculty

Members of the Faculty continue to be very active in their differing lines of research, publishing articles in leading international journals, and in significant edited volumes, as well as major monographs. A selection of recently published books are displayed in a case in the entrance foyer, while down the corridor the Buzz Board celebrates the work, and shares the news, of past and present postgraduates from the Faculty.

Professor de Lange completed his EU-funded research project on 'Mapping Jewish Communities of the Byzantine Empire' and the resultant interactive website is now up and running. CIP completed their RCUK-funded project on 'Research in the Wild: Online Inter-faith Dialogue Platform', and also the first phase of the Templeton Foundation (TWCF)-funded project on 'Religion And The Idea Of A Research University: Phase 1'.

CIP continues to be extremely active, running a number of activities, particularly centred around Scriptural Reasoning, including their highly successful Summer School.

Following a review in the summer of 2012, CIP are now moving in to a new phase of their activity, with the aspiration of becoming ever more fully integrated in the research and teaching of the Faculty.

Major signs of esteem

The Faculty was delighted to be ranked first in the list of Departments of Theology and Religious Studies published by the Complete University Guide for a further year, as well as by the Guardian University guide for 2014.

Among very many honours awarded to, and special lectures given by Faculty members, Professor Ford was awarded the Coventry International Prize for Peace and Reconciliation in November 2012, and in June 2013 was awarded an Honorary OBE for his services to theological scholarship and inter-faith relations; in January 2013 he was presented with a Festschrift, edited by former students, [The Vocation of Theology Today](#). Professor Eamon Duffy was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Medieval Studies from the Pontifical Historical Institute in Toronto. Other Faculty members continue to give major public lectures in the UK and overseas, as well as numerous seminar papers at other Universities.

Students

49 new students were welcomed into the first year of the Theological and Religious Studies Tripos, making a total of 151 undergraduates on the Tripos altogether. 29 students were admitted to the BTh programme. As of 1 October 2012 there were 114 PhD students (full- and part-time) on the doctoral register, with a further 13 registered for the MPhil. Of the 19 PhD students who submitted their dissertations, 16 proceeded to their degree, and the remaining 3 are either awaiting approval or are revising their dissertations.

Although undergraduate application numbers held up in 2012 the overall pattern (as elsewhere in the Humanities) is a cause for concern. We do not compare well with a number of other Humanities subjects in the ratio of applications to places offered. Recent government policy about the status of different subjects at GCSE and A Level militates against us: there is still an assumption that because Religious Studies is 'compulsory' it has no significance as an examined subject, and despite lobbying by the Faculty there is no sign of any realisation that giving it significance would contribute to establishing religious literacy. As described above, we are trying to reach out to a wider range of potential applicants, including those who have not taken RS at A Level, through the work

of our new outreach officer, although it will take time for any effects to become visible. We may also have to return to examining the pattern of Tripos.

During the year the Faculty underwent a Learning and Teaching Review. This involves the preparation of a substantial body of documentation demonstrating our aims and procedures in all aspects of our teaching activity. It culminated in a day's visit from the review team, consisting of members internal to the University as well as an external. The Report that was produced after the Review was a positive and encouraging one with only a few recommendations, most of which have now been implemented.

Our graduate students continue to play an important role in the Faculty. Alongside the goal of recruiting the most able students to study at MPhil and PhD levels, it is also our aspiration to enable them to undertake those studies. The best students achieve the competitive funding offered within the University and from outside sources, but this continues to be an area of concern.

The Faculty continues to enjoy a fruitful relationship with the Theological Federation, which itself is facing significant changes, particularly following the Church of England's decision to introduce a Common Award. Ridley and Westcott have been granted permission to continue entering students for the BTh and Tripos. As part of the process of demonstrating the status of the BTh as an award of the University, arrangements have been made for some BTh and Tripos courses to share lectures from 2013.

Library

The Library remains a well-used resource, with figures for those working in it on sample days once more considerably higher. The expansion of material on CamTools, the new Library web pages and a self-issue machine are some of the improvements for readers achieved in the past year.

Dr Bevin, the Senior Library Assistant, will shortly be moving on to another post, and it is expected a successor will be in place by January 2014. Dr Bevin has made a considerable contribution during his four years in post for which the Faculty is very grateful. Negotiations for the affiliation of Arts & Humanities to the University Library have begun and it is anticipated the Divinity Library will affiliate on 1 August 2015. Our Librarian, Dr Dunstan, is very involved in these negotiations on behalf of the School. It is hoped that the significance of the Library and its services to the Faculty will be reflected in the final agreement

Other Faculty events

Among various significant events, the Stanton Lectures were given by Professor Paul Griffith in Lent 2013 under the title 'The End – An Eschatological Assay'. They are available at <http://sms.cam.ac.uk/collection/1393224>.

Remarks

Amidst the many pressures on their time Faculty staff manage to produce a rich variety of research of the highest calibre. The Faculty seeks to support staff in this through small grants to provide research assistance or other research expenses, as well as encouragement and support in preparing and submitting grant applications. The Faculty submission for the REF will be sent off in November 2013, and this has involved many hours of work by the REF Committee chaired by Dr Catherine Pickstock. We are very aware of how much

we depend on Government funding for research, which will be allocated on the basis of this exercise, but this does little to alleviate the anxieties that the demands of the exercise may skew patterns of research: as ever, the University's, and our own, aspiration is always that research undertaken in the Faculty should be of the highest calibre.

Challenging times are likely to continue to face us, even if the challenges change. The Faculty is well-prepared to meet them. As always thanks are due to the assistant staff and to all members of the Faculty in their various roles.

Judith Lieu
14.11.2013