

# KING'S THEOLOGICAL REVIEW

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13. *Letters to Two Friends* p.148 (written by Teilhard in English).
14. This is most vividly expressed in "The Death Barrier" (1955) in *Activation of Energy* p.403, but is found throughout his works.
15. In "Zest for Life" (1950) in *Human Energy* p.237 he describes man as being revolted by life, like a sick man faced with a banquet.
16. See "The Eternal Feminine" in *Prayer of the Universe*.

## A DECADE OF THEOLOGY AT KING'S: A PERSONAL VIEW

Graham Stanton

First impressions are always interesting, even if they turn out later to have been mistaken. When I first came to King's in 1970, I knew that a number of very distinguished scholars taught in the Faculty of Theology and that the College was well-known for excellence in many disciplines, but I knew very little else. I was struck immediately by the concern of the teaching staff for the academic and general welfare of every individual student. The friendliness of my colleagues was sometimes embarrassing: it was often difficult to slip away from conversations over coffee with distinguished senior colleagues in order to give a lecture or take a tutorial!

The ability of the students turned out to be almost as varied as their backgrounds. I have always enjoyed teaching gifted students, but also less able students who are keen to learn and are not afraid of hard work. I quickly found that a number of my students fell into the latter category. Many students who began the first of their three years at King's without outstanding qualifications made very considerable progress. This often surprised me—and it still does! As a team of teachers my colleagues were able to mix assistance, encouragement and stimulus in the right proportions in order to produce growth in understanding and maturity of judgment. And this is what University teaching is all about. The University teacher does not supply all the answers on a plate, nor even all the questions. But he or she should assist students to know how to go about finding and evaluating for themselves possible answers to the right questions.

Eight years later these first impressions do not need to be modified at all: they still stand to the

credit of the Faculty today. But two further first impressions have been modified to a certain extent over the years. At first I liked the B.D. degree very much. Perhaps this was partly because it is so similar to the B.D. degree I had taken myself in New Zealand. In both cases the degree was demanding and required competence in all the main branches of Theology. I still like the general ethos of the present London B.D., but there are good reasons for introducing a new degree, about which I shall say a little more below.

When I first came to King's I was confused by the complexities of the history and the constitutional position of the Faculty of Theology within the College. In 1958 the University established several teaching posts in Theology which were grafted into the Theological Department at King's which had been engaged primarily in training Anglican ordinands. By 1970 almost half of the students were not Anglican ordinands and were studying Theology for a wide variety of reasons. So in some ways the Faculty was engaged in two related but different tasks at the same time.

In earlier years students who were not Anglican ordinands sometimes said that they felt that they were second class citizens within the Faculty, but with the one exception of the Chapel services this was not my own experience. It has always seemed a little odd that ordained non-Anglicans should be able to share in the ministry of the Word in the College chapel but not in the ministry of the Sacraments. I know that I am touching on sensitive and complex issues and that changes cannot easily be made. And I am bound to add that as a staunch Free

Churchman I have come to appreciate more and more the Anglican Chapel services.

While I have been at King's there have certainly been some very curious anomalies within the Faculty but with good will on all sides they have rarely been frustrating and most students have hardly been aware of the rather odd constitutional position of the Faculty. However, the Faculty did wear two faces: at times one felt that one was in an Anglican theological College and at times in a 'secular' University Faculty. In this respect and in others, there have been very considerable changes recently.

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The Faculty has lost by retirement five distinguished scholars who all enjoy international reputations, Professors C.W. Dugmore, C.F. Evans, H.D. Lewis, E.L. Mascall and E.G. Parrinder. These scholars all spent a substantial part of their academic careers at King's College. Our former Dean, Canon Sydney Evans, has become Dean of Salisbury: it is to him more than to any other individual, that the Faculty owes its existence in its present form within the University. The sudden death of Professor James Cargill-Thompson earlier this year was a severe blow; his wisdom and astute leadership as Dean of the Faculty were invaluable during the most crucial of all the phases of change. The learning, experience and many other gifts of these outstanding scholars cannot easily be replaced.

This special role of King's College in the training of Anglican ordinands is now almost at an end. However, the Faculty hopes that Anglican ordinands (as well as students from other denominations) will continue to come to King's to take a degree in Theology before going to theological Colleges to complete their training. I regret the disappearance of Anglican ordination training from King's, as well as the closure of Richmond College (which trained Methodist ministers) and New College (United Reformed Church). Richmond and New College both played an influential role as Schools within the University. London offers not only good facilities for a solid grounding in Christian Theology at King's, but also unrivalled opportunities for pastoral training. Ordination training should not

be cut off either from the rigour of study of Theology in a University setting or from the cultural life and social currents of our time. So I very much hope that the departure of denominational ordination training from central London will not prove to be permanent.

Theology in the University has been strengthened considerably by the move of Heythrop College from Oxfordshire to London. Through the University's Board of Studies in Theology, Heythrop shares with members of the Faculty at King's responsibility for the B.D. syllabus and examinations. Although Heythrop is not much more than ten minutes away from King's by cycle, the journey by public transport often takes half an hour or more, so unfortunately it has not proved possible to share teaching resources to any great extent.

In recent years the number of mature students studying Theology at King's has declined. Ten years ago half a dozen or more mature students entered the Faculty each year, sometimes after retiring from professions as varied as medicine and the Navy. Each year several graduates in other subjects entered the second year of the B.D. course. These students all contributed a good deal to the general life of the Faculty and their presence was always welcomed and appreciated by students who had come straight from school. The steep rise in tuition fees (as a result of Government policy) means that it is now very difficult to take a degree course without a local authority grant. And Local authorities are usually reluctant to give grants for second undergraduate degrees or courses. This is a short-sighted policy. The importance and necessity of re-training is often mentioned nowadays and surely the Universities have a special role to play in this area. I hope that it will become less difficult for mature students to take a degree in Theology; maturity and breadth of experience are both sorely needed within the teaching profession and the ordained ministry.

Changes in Government policy have also led to a decline in the number of full-time post-graduate students. The enormous rise in tuition fees means that a grant or a scholarship is essential for full-time study. While grants are available for well-qualified United Kingdom students, students from overseas often find it difficult to obtain financial support in their own

countries for 'minority' subjects like Theology. Over the years there has been a steady stream of overseas students coming to the Faculty; we shall all be the poorer if financial constraints continue to restrict the number of students from other countries.

Many of our part-time postgraduates produce quite outstanding work under difficult circumstances. Postgraduate work is inevitably lonely but part-time students do miss opportunities for regular contact with other postgraduates and ready access to library facilities. For some years now a seminar for postgraduates in the Faculty has provided stimulus and has helped to overcome the isolation of postgraduate work.

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So much for a personal view of some of the recent changes in the Faculty. But what of the future? For several years the College has offered a B.A. in Religious Studies within the Faculty of Arts. From the beginning of the 1979-80 academic year the B.A. in Religious Studies and the B.D. in Theology will be brought together in the new Faculty which will be renamed as the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies. This is an important and exciting development which is far more than a matter of administrative convenience. The two degrees will each have their own distinctive character, but there will be more opportunities for co-operation in teaching. Students studying for both degrees will benefit from closer contact with one another.

Preliminary planning is under way for a possible degree in Biblical Studies. Such a degree would allow a greater concentration on Biblical Studies than the B.D. and would require a substantial amount of work on Hebrew and Greek texts.

Under its new constitution the Faculty will come into line with other Faculties within the College. There will be three Departments: Biblical Studies; Christian History and Doctrine; The History and Philosophy of Religion. While the new departmental structure will bring many advantages, the Faculty's strong conviction that Theology is not a bundle of separate subjects but a single discipline with several branches will not be allowed to fade away.

Within the next two or three years a new degree in Theology will be introduced to replace

the B.D. degree. The new degree will retain many of the characteristics of the present B.D.: it will be a degree primarily in Christian Theology and it will demand competence in all the main theological disciplines. Although the details have not yet been finalised, it is possible to sketch out the main ways in which the new course-unit degree will differ from the present degree. Instead of nine final examination papers, nearly all of which are taken at the end of the third year, students will take approximately eighteen courses (or half units), six each year. Each course will be self-contained, but in some cases pre-requisites will be laid down.

The new degree will be much more flexible. Although students will be required to take a certain number of courses in Biblical Studies, Church History, Christian Doctrine and Philosophy of Religion, the compulsory part of the degree will be much less rigid than the present B.D. There will be more scope for specialisation, but it will also be possible to include a wider range of optional subjects than in the present B.D. There will be two compulsory third year courses designed to encourage students to integrate their theological studies. These courses, (one of which will be primarily doctrinal and the other Biblical) will concentrate on important questions of theological method and interpretation which are often not tackled in traditional courses in Theology.

The new degree will retain the strengths of the B.D., but it promises to be a bold and imaginative step in new directions. As it will be taken only by internal students of the University, it will be possible to make modifications from time to time in the light of the special research interests of members of staff. In the present degree there are few opportunities to link research and teaching; this is especially so in the work for the six compulsory papers. But effective and stimulating teaching at University level is often a by-product of the teacher's own research or writing projects.

During the last few years the pace of change in the Faculty has quickened steadily. Although many of the changes are matters for regret, the future is full of promise. The new appointments to the Faculty have brought new strength. We now have a strong and well-balanced range of specialists which few if any other Faculties or Departments of Theology or Religious Studies in

the United Kingdom can match. Members of the Faculty are involved in several new published ventures and in important research work.

Many of our graduates will go on to theological Colleges of the various denominations to complete their training; many will enter the teaching profession where there is an acute shortage of well-qualified R.E. teachers. The

new degree should prove to be particularly attractive to ordinands and to prospective teachers, but it will be flexible and broad enough to cater for the interests and needs of many others, including those students who want to study Theology simply because it is an interesting subject which provides a rigorous academic training.

## THE GOSPEL IN A SECULAR CULTURE: CHRISTIANITY AND THE MODERN UNIVERSITY<sup>1</sup>

Colin Gunton

The word *crisis* is at present trivialised and over-used. It is best restricted to areas of thought and action where there is a serious breakdown of confidence or coherence. But it may be that in the two aspects of human activity that this talk seeks to relate the word is employed justifiably. In each area there exists a crisis of confidence; in each the crisis has something to do with modern culture's view of truth and the values of the intellect generally.

If theology has a contribution to make to modern culture, especially as it is represented in higher education, a large part of it will lie in its ability to evoke reflection on the nature of truth and its relation to life. That is not to say that truth is theology's or the university's sole concern, but that it is there that the interests of the two overlap most obviously. And if the much-quoted dictum that the most effective way to destroy civilisation would be to destroy its universities has in it any grain of truth, the topic may be of greater importance than may appear to those with no direct concern for, or interest in, those institutions.

To begin very generally, it must be recalled that the modern university is a secular institution, in the neutral sense that it is a part of what is now - to use the unavoidable cliché - a post-Christian society; one whose fundamental drives, aims and mythology owe little consciously to the institutionalised religion of the past. As part of the educational system of that society, the modern university can be said to

have two aims that live side by side in what has become a rather uncomfortable marriage of convenience: on the one hand, academic excellence for its own sake; and on the other, the training of personnel, within the atmosphere generated by the pursuit of excellence, for running government, the law, the economy, industry, administration and the rest. What has Christianity to contribute to all this? First should be said something that is scarcely problematical, but should be mentioned because it is sometimes suggested that it is the only contribution: the work and attitudes of all the individual Christians who work and/or study in the different parts of a university.

But when we think of Christianity as a collective—as a community possessing a modicum of coherence of thought and action—the question becomes complicated by two factors. The first is what might be called the social, cultural and political dimension. Over the past few centuries, and perhaps over the last one hundred years, Christianity's role in British society has been radically changed. It has, no doubt, played a large role in the development of those institutions which now attempt to do without it, such as our democracy and schools. But now it is only in the most tenuous relationship to institutions like universities. Such is the impression gained by a chaplain from overseas, who has written of his impression of the almost complete indifference of British students to the Christian faith. What does Christianity have to