

ARCHBISHOP'S EXAMINATION IN THEOLOGY RESEARCH DEGREES PROGRAMME

Introduction by the Archbishop of Canterbury

The Church of England has a long tradition of sound, critical and reflective theological scholarship. Anglican theologians, in England and in the wider Anglican Communion, continue to contribute substantially to the mass of theological research, conducted today in the spirit of ecumenical partnership and inter-faith dialogue. This research focuses on major questions which affect theological understanding, in such areas as the Trinitarian doctrine of God, ecclesiology, history, biblical studies, sacramental theology, liturgy, canon law and ethics. In many of these contexts it is clear that an inter-disciplinary approach is important: collaboration between the theologian and the sociologist, lawyer, philosopher or artist, or with members of the caring professions is more and more the norm, and this is how it should be.

It has been the privilege of the Archbishop of Canterbury to award degrees and diplomas in his own right according to the statutory powers conferred on him by Parliament in 1533. The Archbishop uses these powers traditionally to confer doctorates and masters' degrees *honoris causa* on worthy recipients. Within this legal framework Archbishop Randall Davidson established the Lambeth Diploma examination in 1905 as a means of allowing women access to a theological qualification and thus to ministry. A further extension opened the examination to men, and in 1990 Archbishop Robert Runcie established the MA degree by thesis. The management of this educational provision has been the responsibility of the Committee of the Archbishop's Examination in Theology, its members appointed by the Archbishop.

In my judgement it is time for a further extension of the Lambeth provision into the field of higher research degrees, MPhil and PhD. There are several reasons for this planned extension. First, the Church faces a situation of unparalleled challenges and opportunities. It is important that these challenges are met, not with inaccurate or superficial responses, but with thorough critical research, analysis and interpretation. Careful attention must therefore be given to the continual nurture and building up of a body of theological scholarship, through the disciplined study programmes which MPhil/PhD research provides and on which the Church may continue to draw. Secondly, in many cases potentially good research students are prevented from embarking on such programmes because of the high competition for places at British universities, distance from a suitable institution or appropriate supervisor and the heavy financial commitment involved. The Lambeth MPhil/PhD Awards Scheme has been developed with Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) requirements and general university standards in mind, and in a form which provides easy access for students. Applicants for Lambeth awards are normally mature students engaged in full-time or part-time employment together with family commitment. A careful combination of learning methods needs to be utilised and with it a realistic, disciplined and integrated study programme, appropriate to their needs and organised within the Christian theological framework which such applicants are seeking.

The Lambeth MPhil/PhD Awards Scheme is open to suitably qualified laity and clergy alike. It is my hope that it will contribute to the Church's long-held concept of 'lifelong learning', which has now taken root in all the major professions, and that, in this very broad sense, it will provide a significant theological opportunity for Christian ministers, teachers, members of the caring professions and any who have a lively interest in exploring theology in one of its many dimensions or in confronting pastoral or professional practice in theological perspective.

If the churches are to be renewed in the contemporary age and if, through this renewal, the creation of a more caring society is to come about, then the continual exploration of theology at its deepest level is required. It is my hope that the extension of the current provision of Lambeth awards will become an important component in this long-term task. I commend the new postgraduate award scheme to you.

+ Rowan Cartuar: