

CTA AGM
Durham University
8th September, 2015

1. Welcome
2. Apologies

Rod Strange, Brendan Walsh, Paul Gadie, Beata Toth, Tony Curren, Joe Inguanez, Frank Turner, David McLoughlin, Julie Clague, Ruth Reardon, Mary Grey, Margaret Hebblethwaite

3. Minutes of Last Meeting (September 2014)

Circulated in October 2014, provided overhead to the meeting today. These were accepted without alteration.

4. President's Report

Gemma Simmonds spoke to the events of the year that have significance for our Association members.

Closure of Heythrop -

This is to be seen in the context of wider diminishment of Catholic theology and of the humanities more widely. The Heythrop closure specifically needs attention from the CTA to consider how we might best support future planning. GS also wanted to emphasise some positive elements in this area however, such as changes at Buckfast and Ely. Let us pay attention to projects around the country to continue access to theological study.

Membership -

10 members have joined in the course of the year and we will finalise the constitutional change to widen membership possibilities during this meeting. For members attention though, recruitment should be a key responsibility for each of us over this year.

European connections -

President to speak at ESCT conference (in Philippines)

Presence -

Taking up the suggestion of the previous President Paul Murray, GS had written to Cardinal Nichols to underline our support for the hierarchy of England and Wales as a resource for theological thought and collaboration. The question of resourcing a theological discussion through other institutions may be picked up in a later AGM conversation about migration.

Committee -

Sincere thanks offered to David McLoughlin, Paul Murray, Brendan Walsh as they resign and finish terms of office. Thanks too to Jan Lash, Amy Daughton and Geoff Turner for their work through the year

Members' news -

More personally, congratulations to Johannes Hoff on his marriage and to Karen North and Ant Towey on the birth of their daughter Bethany.

5. Secretary's Report

AD reported briefly on progress with the website. This is almost complete and should be finalised before Christmas. The main goal and improvement for members will be a new online mailer that should communicate without reducing emails

In the meantime, those who are not receiving regular emails from the Association should check spam folders, and ensure that mail@ctagb.org.uk is on any whitelist made available through their institution webmail provision.

6. Treasurer's Report

Audit and annual report was completed by JL for end of August for charity commission and shown to the meeting overhead. The report was proposed by GS, seconded by Oonagh O'Brien.

JL also spoke to the current financial state of affairs which is good. The 2015 conference will make a slight loss.

Next year's conference has already been confirmed by deposit and therefore booking early would be very welcome!

7. Constitutional change on membership

This item covered the necessary update to the Constitution to reflect the 2014 decision to expand membership categories (Associate, Student)

The meeting discussed how to best name the potential members of these categories, in the light of advance notes from non-attendees requesting a change from 'non-Catholic'. The phrase 'other scholars' was agreed.

A change to the AGM requirements was also made, making associate and student members non-voting, rather than non-attending.

The now complete version follows these minutes as appendix 1. The constitution online will be updated by AD.

8. Closure of Heythrop College

The Association committee presented a prepared statement to come from the AGM (not the whole association) commenting on the closure of Heythrop as an international leader in the field.

The meeting discussed the need to decide to whom such a statement would go, and the need for further group work on the statement to refine it in the light of that audience. Specific remarks from that discussion here follow:

Eamon Duffy - to whom this addressed is a crucial decision as this impacts on what we can achieve.

Ashley Beck - those who teach theology at St Marys regret that the future of Heythrop no longer lies with St Marys. We would wish to support a statement of this nature.

Chris Dzczyk - references in the statement to the viability of the wider institution seem strange if we are seeking to find a way for Heythrop to continue.

Duncan MacPherson - Indeed, new forms might be of value even if they are only partial.

Philip Endean - some elements of the draft statement are more directed at HEFCE than the groups involved in decisions at Heythrop.

Gemma - so is this more of a comment of government organisation of higher education?

Michael Gilmore - but you have to take that framework as read, there must be a sustainable financial model anyway. There's always a fixed cost issue regardless of government policy.

GS - recent public letters have indeed have an effect on thinking. So as a wider public statement may be of value there. Could be addressed to hierarchy, provincial council of Society, governors of Heythrop - offering expertise.

Karen Kilby - Yes, this makes sense for direction. This is modest we need more emotive to really convey the strength of feeling.

ED - the thing that needs saying loudly is that theological infrastructure of RC church in the UK is chronically weak. Very few first rate theological institutions and Heythrop was right at top of those.

Janet Martin Soskice - and not purely in UK terms but international terms.

Jim Sweeney - yes, it's valuable to recognise that others have got to be a part of the replenishment of the infrastructure as a shared national concern.

Paul Murray - the draft statement as it exists is just saying something to say something. We require something strategically focused with a specific proposal

Conclusion -

It was agreed that ED would convene a small working group to develop the statement, which should go the Bishops of England and Wales, the Provincial Council of Society of Jesus, the Heythrop Governors and to the wider press where this was possible. The AGM would meet again at in an extended session on 2pm on Wednesday - minutes of this follow below.

9. Elections

- Secretary

Only one candidate and AD was duly elected. AD noted that she would only be available for the year 2015/16 so next year the Association would need to be find another Secretary during this year,

- Committee members

The committee had not had the opportunity to discuss possible membership with candidates so postponed this item for the Wednesday 2pm extended meeting.

10. Conference 2016

The theme finalised by the committee following 2014 AGM is Sensus Fidelium. The committee is keen for this to be reflective of the interests of the Association, so asked for discussion on the elements and perhaps speakers to include.

ED - must have a historical dimension contextualising the question from Newman to today.

JMS - an african theologian to have a deep experience of that reality

Duncan - development of doctrine, the whole question of who the faithful are? Magesterium can always trump it without this definition

Gemma - Who is the Magesterium?

Andy Downie - synod on family. what input has the SF actually had in there. Case Study

PM - Johan Bonnie? (Bishop of Antwerp - public letter, we could ask him over for a conversation on the process)

JS - how theology is articulated at grassroots level. how is the SF actually articulated? theology of the people by the people Jeff Astley (Paul - though he's not Catholic; Nick Healy - how the professional theologian can engage with the ordinary thinker)

Etienne Veto - we are poor at engaging with popular religiosity

AB - reflect on the landscape after Heythrop

JMS - fewer papers!

PM - therefore modes and structures of consultation and bringing in canonical perspective. Miriam Wirejvens....

Linking to fundamental theology, spirit and church...

GS thanked everyone for these contributions which will be considered for a concrete plan by the committee at their next full meeting.

11. Conference 2017

GS opened discussion on the theme of the conference two years from now.

AD reported Mary Grey's in absentia suggestion of focusing on Christianity in the Middle East.

Eamonn O'Brien - raised the possibility of China as a theme before and the theme of world christianities would allow both of these to proceed. EB also noted his future plans for a group of theologians visiting China.

John Sullivan - Reformation revisited -

ED - strong support for this in the light of the anniversary, 500 years on. This would not necessarily be a purely a historical topic, but consider processes of secularisation, issues of ecumenism and faith (GS - and on art and music also)

JS - Theology of the people

Johannes Hoff - Could argue that reformation also part of the media history of western societies and now we are in digital revolution again a reform.

Janet - more on what has happened to Biblical studies. Great growth of evangelicals in reception history for example bringing us closer together.

Gemma - religious life change at that time, new monasticism begs a question.

Committee to consider these ideas and report back.

12. AOB

ED raised the current intense crisis of refugees entering Europe. Anna Rowlands has agreed to offer a summary of the current situation and the various responses being made by Catholic agencies. This would follow the discussion of the Heythrop statement during the extraordinary meeting at 2pm Wednesday and consider the ways in which the Association or individual members can respond.

Extraordinary Meeting 2pm

1. Revisiting statement on Heythrop closure

A new statement had been written by ED, KK, PM, JS.

Discussion ensued, the results are shown in the final version which is added here as appendix 2.

GS to follow up this work by sending it to the appropriate audience: Bishops, Governors, SoJ, Catholic press

Catholic principals to follow up with this with a covering letter for their individual diocese.

2. Refugee crisis discussion for action

ED introduced the topic in terms of considering what can we do in a constrained, practical way and as a crucial question in the context of a conference of spiritual life.

AR introduced the current context of the refugee crisis and the current Catholic response in the UK. That summary follows here:

Main Catholic agencies (e.g. CAFOD, CSAN, JRS) are leading Catholic response in this country. CAFOD are holding their focus on refugee camps and their conditions, JRS are working with those already here who are destitute, CSAN with those who have arrived in this country and with those in Calais.

The Bishops Conference of EW and Catholic organisations do not yet have a coordinated formal advocacy process. Secours Catholique have a three point advocacy plan

- first, to encourage all countries to agree to quota sharing within Europe (for migrants within Europe, seeking to be placed). As UK are not party to the Schengen agreement, we are not so bound - Cameron's statements take this as a virtue. SC sees it as a vice - Calais is a direct outcome of that.
- second, under the Dublin convention refugees must seek asylum in the first Schengen country that they enter and must expect to be fingerprinted there. Strong surge in rejection of this by migrants. So second point is to abandon the Dublin convention. To choose instead with reference to family connection, language skills and industrial skills.

- third, create hot spots where crisis is most intense e.g. Greek and Italian coasts, and make a concrete ask that migrants once dispersed through quotas be allowed to work while their applications can be considered. This strengthens immediate integration.

Catholic Worker Movement and housing justice are both working on refugee welcome programme (allow people to offer spare rooms); too many rooms at the moment for numbers govt will allow!

In addition, CitizensUK (not Catholic agency, but strong Catholic membership) already active a year ago in advocating for the government to relocate 20,000 Syrian refugees over a two year period. Current agreement over five years. CitizensUK have been organising private landlords to offer their accommodation to Local Authorities for use by migrants for a stable two to three year period. (Interesting to see how Church will relate to this medium-term plan).

A new initiative is issuing a call to universities asking them that each university offer 10 free places to refugees coming in. See CitizensUK website for information.

Bishops conference (most recent) -

1. Archbishop Vincent statement before Cameron's, also sounds a note of caution, highlighting that govt is expecting civil society to fill funding and provision gap. Church wants to stress need for govt to fund.
2. Pat Lynch letter of advice to parishes is due. Agencies overwhelmed by these requests - who should we fund, help us think about this). A pastoral letter of advice how to donate is coming, and there may be a longer pastoral letter in two to three weeks time when Conference has had an opportunity to think it through

AR concluded that the gap is really advocacy and support needed for Bishops conference and agencies.

Discussion -

Karen - clarification. What does advocacy in this country mean?

AR - clarity in what we ask for; we need a consistent strategy

Further, rally in calais, Anglo-French cooperative endeavor

Theresa May and her counterpart agreement was all about border control. SC and agencies will sign a solidarity agreement.

Eamon - special responsibilities to Syrian Christian refugees

AR - this has not been discussed. It is a question to ask

Augusto - CAFOD cannot discriminate r.e. religious affiliation. It would be difficult to do this therefore.

Ashley - c.f. Robin Gibbons, the line from the Syrian patriarch is to try to stop people going.

Andrew - what's the profile of those incoming? single people, families? Is there any way gauging it in terms of numbers and time frame?

AR - profile is those in UK is focused on torture survivors and vulnerable children. Implication is of continuing. Advocacy could widen that. Profile of those reaching the West is largely single men.

JRS keen to remember the refugees of other places and there is growing feeling about how different countries are being preferred. In Syria half the population is displaced, within and outside the borders. This is the beginning of something. This will be the issue of a generation.

Three potential ideas -

- If a group of theologians were going to do anything was that the home secretary is a christian (and prides herself on that). We could write directly, from a Christian perspective.
- There is not a massive volume of theological resources, church is running to keep up in terms of its overall reflection. Association may wish to write to Cardinal Nichols to offer its own resources - not just general offer, but resources for an ongoing process.
- Agencies all look and seek to work with theologians to reflect on the issues in practice. Easy to form a database of expertise, so this would help them identify people ready to work with them. We can offer and write more directly. A number of agencies are already doing their programmes and one of their things is to engage with the tradition. They will be looking for theologians to engage with.

MG - can we each commit ourselves to following up on university bursaries. One way of making clear our emphasis on practical and pastoral.

CD - comparative numbers seem striking. So many parishes have written in, how long term a commitment would they really have? It's a ten year slog. who will facilitate

AR - parishes are looking for direction, resources, this is something that individual theologians can support.

Augusto Zampini - one thing we can do as theologians is act as immediate resource to the agencies. Long term - those we are heads of institutions, promoting study and phd students on this area, so as to encourage a deepening of understanding.

Martin Poulson - short term and medium term help is something that the Association as a whole could be offering.

AR - Also a reminder that we want good theology!

ED - do we have the expertise to make this offer?

AR - in fact the perspective of every discipline is needed, and for individuals to be identified for agencies that AR can funnel in more directly.

ED - need names ready therefore.

Anthony Maggs - Bishop John Arnold travelling globally on this question. We can focus on John as someone who knows the issue and has ear o the cardinal

AR - and on Pat Lynch's office that coordinates.

JS - rhetoric around this issue is poor, so the call for people to speak in parishes is of very real importance

AR - yes, that's a gap

JS - crucial for us to work on that level also therefore, something individuals can already take up.

Pauline Dimech - to note that the Faculty of Theology in Malta (in year of mercy) - is undertaking a project on "the migrant" cross-faculty and for the whole academic year. Conference by the end of it in which those who have contributed their ideas.

ED - on the three ideas, we should write to the relevant bishops as the Association to offer resources, similarly so to the agencies. More difficult is the home secretary as we cannot determine content during this meeting. Would the meeting be content for there to be a drafting process?

AR - one way to make it less risky. We are in principle committed and then wait for the agencies in this country decide on their advocacy asks in the UK. Then ask that Gemma be empowered to write in support of those asks.

Action points

AR to receive all volunteers to support agencies in developing their thinking and to make connections where appropriate. All enquiries to be address to anna.rowlands@durham.ac.uk

GS to write to Cardinal Nichols and express the support of CTA for a serious response and note that this is likely to be ongoing issue and offering the resources of CTA for any work to be done.

Once advocacy approach has been settled by agencies GS to coordinate a group in writing on behalf of the Association to the Home Secretary, arguing along the same lines of advocacy from a theological perspective.

These were agreed by acclamation.

3. Members

Patricia Rumsey nominated by GS, seconded by Theo Hawksley- voted without objection

Remaining post is to cover the remaining two years of committee membership left open by early resignation and committee agree to co-opt someone to this role.

Appendix 1

The Catholic Theological Association of Great Britain

AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION

To give effect to the decisions made at the 2014 AGM as recorded in the minutes:

‘Following this detailed discussion, two issues were voted and passed:
Opening an Associate Membership to non-Catholics: 31 votes in favour, 3 against and 3 abstaining
Opening a Student Membership: unanimously passed’

The following amendments are proposed to the text of the Constitution (new/changed text in red):

3 MEMBERSHIP

- (i) Membership of the Association shall be open to Catholics who, in the judgment of the Committee of the Association, are eligible by virtue of their academic qualifications and their work and ministry in teaching, research or writing in theology or allied disciplines.
- (ii) Other scholars who are engaged with Catholic theology in a professional capacity may be admitted as Associate Members; they shall not vote in the AGM.
- (iii) Theology students who have yet to complete a masters degree may be admitted to Student Membership; they shall not vote in the AGM.
- (iv) Members shall pay an annual subscription to be determined from time to time by the Association.
- (v) The subscription of new members shall be payable on admission, and thereafter subscriptions shall be payable in advance by all members on the 5th day of March each tax year.
- (vi) Non-payment of the annual subscription for two consecutive years shall be construed as resignation from the Association.
- (vii) Membership of the Association shall entitle members to attend and vote at Annual General Meetings and general business meetings of the Association, to receive regular information on the activities of the Association, and upon payment of such additional fees as shall be decided from time to time to attend conferences and participate in other activities of the Association.

Appendix 2

Statement from the AGM of the Catholic Theological Association of Great Britain, September 9th, 2015

The CTA at its AGM on 8 September 2015 expresses its distress and urgent concern over the announced closure of Heythrop College. For many years Heythrop has been the single most important centre in this country for university study of theology and philosophy in a Catholic environment. Such provision in this country remains very fragile, despite some recent welcome developments in other institutions. Heythrop has been unique in its importance both internally for the Catholic community, and in its wider academic standing, both locally and internationally. It possesses what is probably the finest theological and philosophical library in the country, and prepares Catholics for pastoral ministry and to engage in higher study. Its closure because of major financial pressures would be a catastrophe for the Catholic Church in this country, impairing the Church's ability to meet the intellectual and moral challenges confronting our society, and to contribute to the common good, now and into the future.

We welcome assurances that the governors of Heythrop and the Society of Jesus are urgently seeking ways of continuing the mission of Heythrop by other means. We consider that the continuation of Heythrop's work in teaching and research at a comparable level is a matter of vital concern for the Catholic Church in Britain. We urge the bishops and the wider Catholic community to explore vigorously all possible options for sustaining this vital community resource.

Members of this Association would be willing to offer their expertise to the Governors, the Society of Jesus and other interested parties in finding a creative outcome.