

The Centenary Eucharist and Presentation of the Lambeth Diploma and MA Degrees

By Noel Cox

Ten years ago, on Tuesday, 3 May 2005, I was privileged to attend the Centenary Eucharist and Presentation of the Lambeth Diploma and MA Degrees in the Lambeth Palace Chapel. Looking back, it was an occasion of great moment, not just for me personally. We were fortunate that the date of our graduation coincided with the centenary of the creation of the Lambeth diploma, a qualification now superseded by the MPhil and PhD—and indeed the MA itself was also later to be phased out.

Dr Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury, conferred MA degrees upon the Revd Vivienne Armstrong-MacDonell and me, and an STh (Diploma of Student in Theology) on Mark Ratcliffe. Mrs Armstrong-MacDonell, who was retired, had been the adult training adviser to the Diocese of Exeter. Her thesis was on ‘Language, Power and Ministry’. At that time I was a senior lecturer in law and a barrister; I was ordained seven years later. My thesis was ‘An exploration of the basis of legal authority of the Anglican Church in New Zealand’. Mark Ratcliffe, a reader in the Church of England in the Diocese of London and serving as a Sergeant in the Royal Air Force at RAF Uxbridge, wrote a thesis entitled ‘Reader Ministry in the Church of England—where has it come from and where is it heading?’

The Archbishop presided at the Eucharist, assisted by the Revd Christine Hall, a deacon and a member of the Lambeth Degrees Committee. A couple of nuns were in attendance, and these assisted the Archbishop and Mrs Hall (who acted as deacon) during the Eucharist. Also in attendance were the Honorary Director of the Lambeth Diploma programme, the Very Revd Dr Martin Kitchen, the Lambeth Awards Officer (and Staffing Officer), Ms Karen Little, the Registrar of the Court of Faculties, Peter Beesley, the Chief Clerk and Sealer of the Court of Faculties, Stephen Borton, and the Secretary of the Lambeth Diploma Association, the Revd Alan Davies.¹

All those involved in the graduation ceremony itself were dressed in academical dress as appropriate, with the Archbishop wearing over his black cassock an Oxford DD gown and black scarf. The Registrar wore court suit (single-breasted black suit jacket with waistcoat and grey striped formal trousers) with a solicitor’s gown and a short wig. Dr Kitchen wore cassock, surplice and black scarf. Most of the clergy present were in choir dress (cassock, surplice and black scarf). I wore black gown and hood; without cap, as did Mr Ratcliffe and Mrs Armstrong-MacDonell. Ms Little, as a graduate in theology from King’s College London, wore a black stuff gown with pointed sleeves gathered at the forearm and held in place with a cord and button, and a black stuff hood fully lined with white silk. The

1 A section of the University of London Church Choir, under its musical director, Bryan Almond, led the singing. The organist was Paul Dean. There were a number of interested individuals in the congregation, including friends and family of the graduands, and members of the Lambeth Diploma Association and Lambeth Degree Association.

cowl was faced inside for three inches and edged outside with $\frac{3}{8}$ inch of faculty silk, in this case Sarum red. The neckband was similarly edged.

The two MAs wore Oxford MA gowns, and the STh a London BA gown. Academical dress for the STh was a Cambridge full shape hood of black stuff, the lining divided horizontally when worn, white over light blue. The gown was London BA with blue cord and button. Both MA candidates wore Oxford MA hoods; an Oxford Burgon shape, black silk, lined and bound $\frac{1}{4}$ inch crimson shot silk.²

The ceremony in the Lambeth Palace Chapel commenced, appropriately enough, with the hymn 'Come, ye faithful, raise the strain of triumphant gladness' (the words from St John of Damascus). Dr Kitchen read the first lesson (Proverbs 8. 22–31); the choir sang Psalm 19; and Deacon Hall read the Gospel (Matthew 13. 44–46, 52). The Archbishop's address was concerned with the Lambeth diploma programme, and the encouragement of education in the Church, especially for clergy.

After the conclusion of the Eucharist, and the hymn 'Teach me, my God and King', the stage, as it were, was changed (literally, as the Faculty Office officers placed a desk beside the altar). The Archbishop took his seat in front of the altar.

The Archbishop read a citation for the STh candidate, describing the nature of his work, and then called upon the Director of the Lambeth Degree programme (now wearing his Manchester PhD hood with his black scarf, over the surplice) to introduce him. A certificate was presented to the candidate, while he knelt before the Archbishop. Mr Ratcliffe then took his seat.

The second part of the ceremony was more formal, because, unlike the STh, the MA was a degree. The Archbishop continued his address, commenting on the scarcity of funding for advanced theological research, and giving a eulogy for the first MA candidate, who was me. He then called upon the Director to introduce me.

Martin Kitchen: 'Archbishop, I present to you Dr Noel Cox to be awarded the Lambeth MA in Theology'.

Archbishop: 'It now gives me very great pleasure to be able to use the right given to me by virtue of my historic office to grant dispensations, previously granted by the Pope, which means that I can dispense you, Noel Cox, from residence to qualify for the degree of Master of Arts for which you have shown evidence that you are worthy.'

Mr Beesley, the faculty office registrar, administered the oath of allegiance at a small table set to one side of the altar.

Now an MA, I knelt before the Archbishop, who read from the Instrument creating me 'an actual Master of Arts' and admitted 'into the Number of the Master of Arts of this Realm' for my 'Proficiency in the Study of Theology, Uprightness of Life, Sound Doctrine, and Purity of Morals'.

While the Archbishop read the Instrument, supported by the Registrar, I held the pendant wafer seal.³ At the end the Archbishop capped me with a square cap (gently tap-

2 The academical dress of Oxford and Cambridge is of course very different. For more on the nature of Lambeth degree academical dress see Noel Cox, 'Lambeth Degree Academical Dress', *TBS*, 5 (2005), pp. 64–75.

3 This seal has been used since the time of Archbishop Cranmer in the reign of Henry VIII. On one side of the Seal is a representation of Moses lifting up the brazen serpent, with the motto 'Mundus transit' and the Arms of the See of Canterbury. The reverse side shows a representation of Christ's Crucifixion with St John. In Latin is a quotation from St John's Gospel (17. 3), which trans-



The Very Revd Dr Martin Kitchen, the author (MA), the Archbishop, the Revd Vivienne Armstrong-MacDonell (MA), and one step below, Mark Ratcliffe (STh).

ping the crown of the head), and then the Awards Office placed the hood over my shoulders. A newly created MA, I then stood and shook hands with the Archbishop, and the second MA was introduced.

Mrs Armstrong-MacDonell followed the same process as I had done.

The ceremony concluded with an anthem sung by the choir ('O praise ye the Lord, ye angels of his'), the Blessing, and a recessional hymn ('Now thank we all our God'). While the latter was being sung the Archbishop, the Director, the Registrar and Chief Clerk, and MAs and STh, and the awards officer, left the chapel in procession. This passed through the chapel, and through the Palace to the entrance hall, whilst the singing could still be heard from the chapel. A photo call was held outside the doors of the Palace.

Afterwards the MAs and STh signed the register and the MAs also signed copies of the faculties. The faculties were then put aside to be endorsed by the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery, a process which would take several months.

lates as: 'And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent'. One side is thus symbolic of the other: 'And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up' (St John 3. 14).

Neither the MA nor the STh will be awarded in future. The MA has been replaced by the MPhil and a new higher qualification (the PhD) in the newly expanded Archbishop's Examination in Theology. The STh is being allowed to die out.

The graduation ceremony, accompanied by a nice lunch and a meeting of the Lambeth Degree Association, was particularly moving because it was a vivid reminder of the unique status enjoyed by the Archbishop of Canterbury,⁴ as inheritor of the ancient legatine privilege to award degrees.⁵ Archbishop Lang called himself a 'one-man University'.⁶ Though a slight exaggeration of the nature of his powers, nonetheless it is memorable turn of phrase, and not wholly inaccurate, particularly with the recent expansion of the degree programme.

The day was also memorable for me because I had arrived in London at dawn that morning, and was to fly out again that night. Due to the difficulties of long-distance travel—I lived in New Zealand—I had left home on the Monday and got back home on Thursday.

4 Under the authority of the Ecclesiastical Licences Act 1533 (25 Hen VIII c 21), recognised, in accordance with s 216(1) of the Education Reform Act 1988, by the Education (Recognised Bodies) (England) Order 2003 (SI 2003/1865).

5 See Noel Cox, 'Dispensations, Privileges, and the Conferment of Graduate Status: With Special Reference to Lambeth Degrees', *Journal of Law and Religion*, 18(1) (2002-2003), pp. 249–274.

6 87 Parliamentary Debates, House of Lords (5th series) (1933) 838, 839 (per Dr Cosmo Lang, Archbishop of Canterbury).