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New Project Unites Biblical and Academic Study of the Bible

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Two University of Birmingham scholars have launched a project aimed at bridging the gap between academic biblical studies and faith communities.

The Syneidon project, based at the Graduate Institute of Theology and Religion, is dedicated to making the sometimes highly technical and complex analysis of the Bible accessible to a wider audience.

Dr Richard Goode, who launched the project says: “Syneidon is dedicated to providing an accessible and non-technical introduction to the academic research of the Old and New Testament for everyone who wishes to widen their understanding and appreciation of these texts, regardless of faith or academic ability.”

Syneidon has an online resource which is designed to provide an interface between scholars and faith communities. The website is intended to be an awareness raising tool, as well as a source for current research and a forum where both academics and non-academics can interact.

One unique aspect of the website is that it aims to provide, not only an explanation of different academic approaches, but also offers the opportunity for the visitor to practically apply them to a text and draw their own conclusions. Dr Goode says, “We have linked different approaches to the CSI investigation style of format for this purpose and to try and make it more accessible and appealing.”

Co-founder, Dr Helen Ingram, explains why Syneidon is such a significant venture: “There has been an endemic mistrust between the Church and academics and up until now both sectors have kept to their corner. The intention with Syneidon is to open the dialogue between the two communities, it is about enriching faith rather than threatening it.”

In addition to its online presence, the project will run workshops with church groups. These are intended to provide an opportunity to engage in a practical way with particular questions or points of interest that have arisen from academic study. Dr Goode explains, “The emphasis is on working together rather than providing answers and creating a non-threatening environment were any areas of tension can be discussed and openly addressed.”

The first workshop has been a considerable success with participants, some of whom had no academic training and who considered themselves not clever enough to go to university, discussing Greek verbs and making meaningful contributions about different depictions of Jesus in the Gospel traditions.

Rev Stephen Winter, Assistant Director of Development (Discipleship) in the Diocese of Worcester, a delegate at that workshop was effusive. “I think that what Richard Goode and Helen Ingram did with us was really rather wonderful. They took a group of enthusiastic people, few of whom had any knowledge at all of New Testament Greek, and some of whom had little experience of formal education at all and not only did they make working with the Greek possible but also exciting and meaningful.

“The feedback I have received from those who participated has been more than positive. Many have told me that they cannot wait to do this again… and we will!”

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Further Media Information

Dr Richard Goode is available for interview. Please contact Anna Mitchell, Press Officer, on 0121 414 6029 / 07920 593946.

Notes to Editors

Dr Richard Goode is a researcher at the Institute for Textual Scholarship and Electronic Editing at the University of Birmingham.

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