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'Religion out of the box' – Cadbury Lecture series 2013

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The annual Edward Cadbury Lectures began this week with a unique look at the history, theology and culture of religion. Entitled 'Religion out of the box: Dialogues with academy, society and culture', the series comprises seven lectures lead by esteemed academics from across the country.

The Edward Cadbury Lectures come from an endowment from the Cadbury family to the University of Birmingham for an annual series of lectures open to the public on the history, theology and culture of Christianity. The first Cadbury Lecture was delivered in 1948 by the historian Arnold Toynbee, followed by a succession of eminent scholars from around the world.

Addressing the big questions of theology's place in modern society, speakers will analyse religious life in the modern world, the effect of popular culture on religious scholarship, theology and the University and the polarisation of the 'study of Islam'.

Professor Gordon Lynch, Professor of Modern Theology at the University of Kent, opened the series with his lecture, 'Notes on a scandal', exploring the powerful impact of public moral scandal and its ability to taint reputations irretrievably. Over 70 people attended the lecture which analysed why public and social media have become more important carriers of sacred content than traditional institutions, the ways in which sacred ritual succeeds and fails in modern life, and the value and risks inherent in our moral passions.

Dr David Cheetham, Head of the Department of Theology and Religion at University of Birmingham said, 'The Cadbury Lectures is one of the most famous theological lecture series in the world. They are the highlight of our year, bringing the foremost international scholars of religion to a public audience in Birmingham. This year we are delighted to welcome back some of the most distinguished scholars who have studied and worked here in Birmingham at some time in their careers. Their eminence confirms the central role that the theology department in Birmingham has played in the development of religious and theological studies worldwide. These lectures are a must for anyone who wants to see how the study of theology and religion is evolving and changing. We hope lots of people will want to hear our eminent and fascinating speakers as the theological world comes to Birmingham.'

The full lecture series is as follows:

January 22 2013

Professor Gordon Lynch, Notes on a Scandal: the persistence of the sacred and the profane in the modern world. How can we understand the force of shared public reactions to public moral scandal (from phone hacking to Jimmy Savile) in modern societies that are highly individualised and supposedly lack a strong moral core.

January 29

Professor Mark Goodacre, Myths of Mary and the married Jesus: how popular culture is affecting scholarship. From Jesus Christ Superstar to the Gospel of Jesus' Wife, Professor Goodacre looks at the radical alteration in perspectives on key characters in early Christianity seen by this generation.

February 5

Professor John Milbank, Which West should we defend? The crisis of theology and the crisis of the University. Professor Milbank discusses the reasons for the decline in theology over time in the UK as elsewhere and suggests that these are are in part internally generated.

February 12

Professor Judith Lieu, Hearing texts and reading voices: on the redrawing of early Christianity. In recent years new approaches and questions have led to a significant redrawing of the map of the early Christianity, in particular during the second century.

February 26

Dr Ataullah Siddiqui, 'Read! In the name of thy Lord': vision and vocation of the word. Islamic historical order is contiguous with other cultures, faiths and civilisations. It also shares with them the supposedly common moral and spiritual as well as intellectual matrix of humanity.' Dr Siddiqui analyses Quranic calling and it's place in society.

March 5

Professor Gavin D'Costa, Distinctive voices require distinctive universities. The case for theology and a Christian university. Professor D'Costa looks at theology as the queen of the sciences within the university, the renewal of theology's proper disciplinary role and the future of Christianity in Europe.

March 19

Professor David Ford, Questions between religions: deep reasoning, no map. Professor Ford argues that questions raised between the religions can be a lever for the transformation not only of the field of theology and religious studies but also of how other academic disciplines relate to the religions, and of the nature of the University itself. But how are these questions best approached?

For more information please visit: **http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/ptr/events/cadburylectures/index.aspx (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/ptr/events/cadburylectures/index.aspx)**

Notes to editors

The Cadbury Lectures are free and open to all. Registration is requested by email to **cadburylectures@contacts.bham.ac.uk (mailto:cadburylectures@contacts.bham.ac.uk)**

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