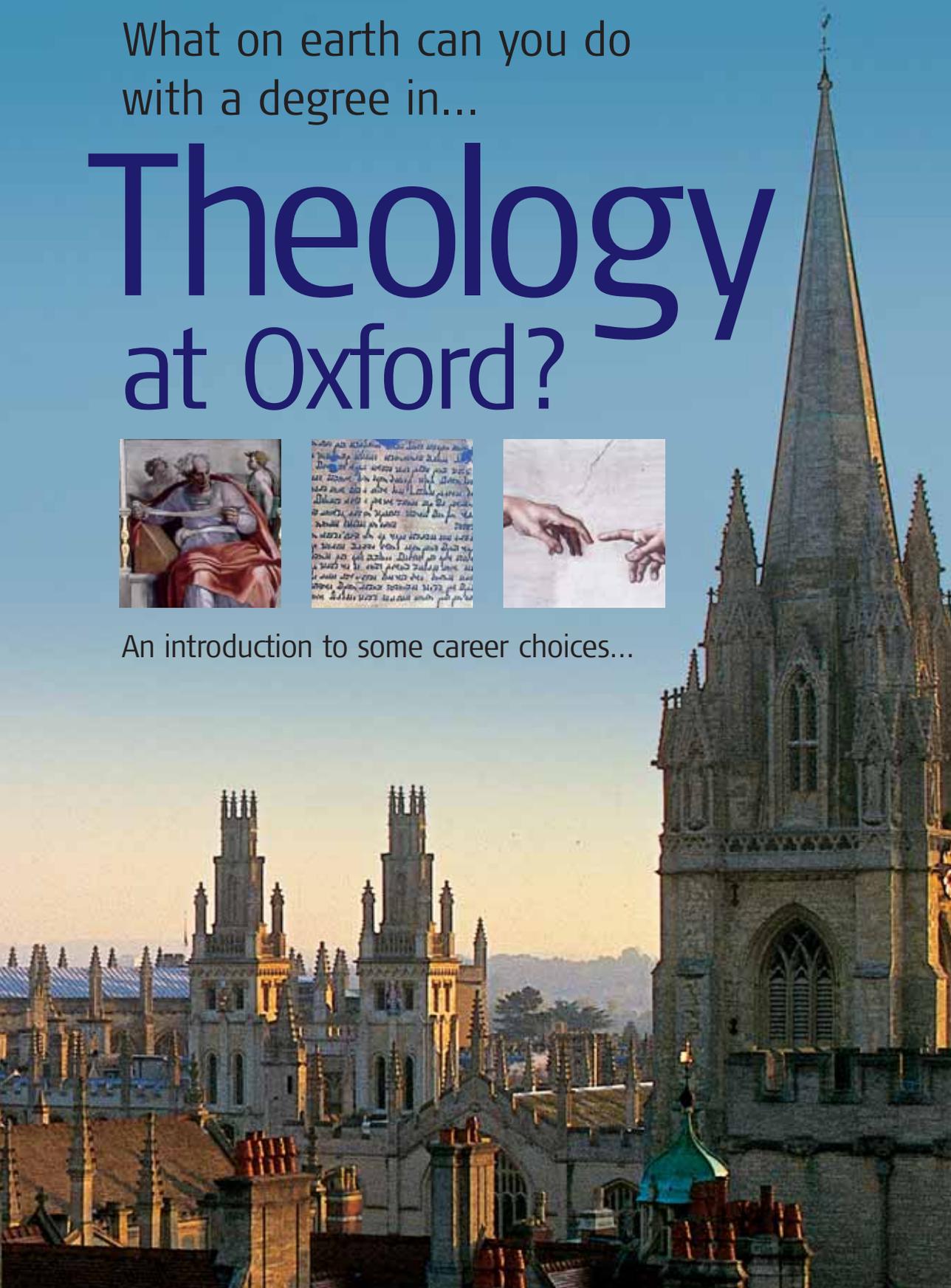


What on earth can you do  
with a degree in...

# Theology at Oxford?

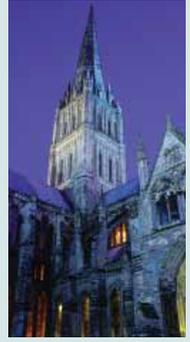


An introduction to some career choices...





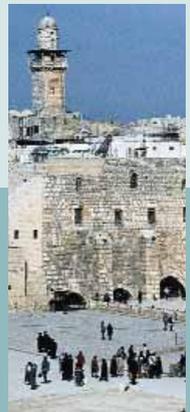
research & development **copywriting** police  
graduate training education music ART museums  
saleroom assistant interior design  
antiques **social work** management  
**consultancy** galleries political researcher  
of parliament **campaigning**  
COMMUNITIES **media** communications  
publishing  
literature television production  
chartered surveyor **solicitor**  
BARRISTER personnel management  
**journalism** teaching RELIGION fundraising  
advertising civil service musical director producer  
artist publishing venture capitalist CHARTERED  
SURVEYOR **personnel management** retail  
**journalism** teaching communications



# Théōlógy̅

The study of God's relationship with humankind  
and the universe...

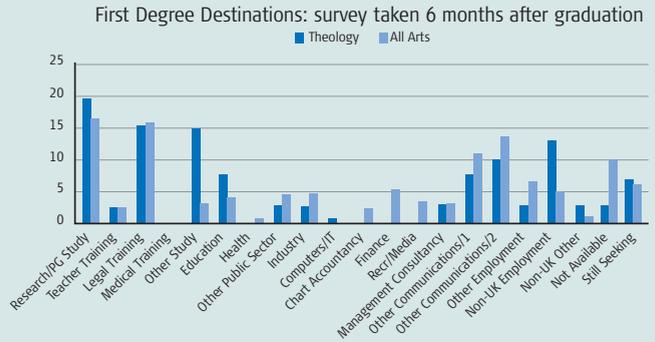
Some of those who study Theology at Oxford go on to a career in teaching or in the church. But the majority do not. There are many ways in which a degree in Theology can be used...



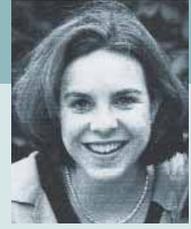
# Careers in Theology...

**This chart gives some idea of what arts graduates do when they leave Oxford.**

**Of the eighty or so undergraduates who leave each year with first degrees in Theology or Philosophy and Theology, about six eventually enter the church (women as well as men) and a similar number train as teachers or work in higher education...**



# ...are a matter of choice.



**...this leaves nearly seventy other Theology or Philosophy and Theology first degree graduates taking up different careers. Here are a few examples...**



**Tom** left in 1999. He joined the BBC and works now as a Research & Development Engineer: he and

his team are 'frequency planners' – the last link in the chain of getting TV and Radio programmes out to the public. Tom works mainly in digital TV and his job is to provide advice to the BBC and Government on where transmitters are to go and how they should work. 'Explaining technical ideas in everyday language' is how he puts it.

## **How did Theology help?**

*'It taught me to write articulately and quickly; being able to attack a problem using different techniques; seeing the wider picture. Theology was anything but an impediment in getting me to work in an entirely different field.'*

Right: A group of the Theology students enjoying a class discussion. Left is **Francesca**, now doing graduate study in Theology, and considering applying for a career in museum studies; far right is **Louise**, now training to be a teacher and hoping to spend a few years teaching in Canada; next to her, **David**, training to be a lawyer. In the middle are **Sara**, now a civil servant, and **Daisy**, at present in PR, whose careers are described in more detail later.



Part of the Bodleian Library, one of the world's greatest libraries.

**Sophie** left in 1994.

She travelled a while, then took a first job as copywriter in a large publishing company. She was soon made a marketing manager and moved to Penguin Books where she became a brand manager. She is now account director with an advertising agency called MML which works with clients such as Penguin books and Whitbread PLC.

## **So how did Theology fit into this career progression?**

*'It helped me to make sense of a sizeable pile of information, to arrive at key insights which take you forward. Advertising is all about looking at the market place from different perspectives, of cutting a way through the humdrum. I loved Philosophy of Religion, for example: this armed me with an ability to be incisive which has proved valuable ever since.'*



# Case studies / 1



**Chris** left in 1989. He's now a police sergeant in the Control Room HQ near Oxford. He joined the Thames Valley Police via the Graduate Entry Scheme.

## **So was a degree in Theology any help?**

*'Coping with long reading lists and producing structured essays helped me to handle information efficiently. The Police are custodians of vast amounts of information, both current and historical. Theology too is a vast subject (I can remember writing an essay simply entitled 'God'), and I think learning to cope with the many disciplines involved then has contributed to my being able to cope with the demands now. And the study of theology enriched my life in other ways, providing a balance with my professional life.'*

Sara and Daisy revise for finals.

*'Learning to cope with the many disciplines involved then has contributed to my being able to cope with the demands now.'*



**Sara** left in 2000. She is on the Civil Service Fast Stream graduate training programme, and works for the Department for Work and Pensions. She's had to work closely with the Treasury, to secure funding for her department; at the moment she is in Streatham Jobcentre Plus office, part of a Government initiative combining Social Security and Employment services.

## **Why Theology?**

*'Working for the Civil Service uses a lot of the analytical, written and verbal communication skills I acquired as an Oxford Theology undergraduate; without them, I would never have made the Fast Stream in the first place.'*



# Case studies / 2

**Ethan** graduated in 1990. First he trained as a secondary teacher. Then his interest in music took over, and by 1994 he was teaching the cello full time. He has worked in 60 schools in Scotland and England, working with orchestras and ensembles, conducting and coaching a variety of groups at a variety of levels.

## **How does this link back to a degree in Theology?**

*'I'm constantly drawing on skills I learned in Oxford. Having a critical, objective view on a subject, however sacrosanct, is at the heart of Theology; helped by excellent teaching and lectures, one had the feeling of taking part in a discussion that had been going on for hundreds of years. Studying Theology is a valuable skill for any field of work.'*



Ethan conducting a school ensemble.

Venetia at Bonhams.



## **Venetia**

left in 2000, with no clear idea

of what she wanted to do next. She was interested in doing something art-based, so after applying to various galleries, museums and auction houses, she became a saleroom assistant at Bonhams, and is now working with an antique furniture dealer and interior designer.

## **Why study Theology to do this?**

*'It has helped me with general research skills when I am asked to do reports on pieces of furniture and art for my employer. But Theology is most important because it provides me with a feel of history and the importance of art within societies and the symbolic power of art within different cultures.'*



# Case studies / 3

**Anna** left Oxford in 1992. Theology plays an important part in her present career, and it has taken her round the world making television and radio programmes for the BBC's Religion and Ethics Department. She is at present producing 10 BBC2 documentaries about characters in the Bible – from Joseph and his technicolour dreamcoat to the 12 disciples.

## ***So what does she have to say about a degree in Theology?***

'I can honestly say that a day hasn't gone by in the last 10 years when I haven't used the theology I learnt at Oxford. My degree has taken me from the deserts in Egypt to Buddhist monasteries in the New York Bronx. I've climbed Mount Sinai on a camel by moonlight; interviewed Anthony Hopkins; witnessed lambs slaughtered in an extraordinary religious festival in Israel; and burst in on the film director Richard Attenborough in his underwear. From mad monks in monasteries deep in the wilderness to sleeping with bedouins under the stars, it's been a fascinating ten years. And along with determination, stamina and an ability to do without sleep, theology at Oxford has proved to be one of the key things I needed to achieve all that!'



*Anna, the crew and Jeremy Bowen in Jerusalem filming for the BBC1 Discovery series 'Son of God'.*

**Nick** graduated in 1991. He took a second BA in the practice and theory of visual art in 1998, and an MA in fine art in 2000. He is now a professional artist, and has exhibited in various galleries in London and Poland, in 1999 being invited as artist-in-residence at the 'Bathhouse' Centre of Contemporary Art in Gdansk, Poland: you can see some of his work on [www.the-e-gallery.co.uk](http://www.the-e-gallery.co.uk) For Nick, his first degree was more about an education than a training – it was about providing a historical and theological framework for what he knew he wanted to specialise in later – his art. Some of his sketches of a visit to Israel made by theology tutors and students in the late 1980s are still in circulation: they evoke more memories than any photograph.

*Anna and the crew filming in Egypt for a Discovery Channel documentary about Moses*



# Case studies / 4

These are some of the more unusual careers Theology graduates have chosen. There are more obvious careers, too, although many sixth formers don't realise that you can take them up after a degree in Theology...

**Some decide they want to serve the community in fields such as social work, in the UK or abroad, or politics.**

**Rachel**, who left in 1991, has worked in many third world countries, including a length of time in Angola; she also trained as a management consultant, and is now an consultant adviser for third world charities such as Oxfam and CAFOD.

**Ben**, who left in 1999, worked for some time as a political researcher for a Liberal Democrat MP, and now works in a political lobbying department campaigning on behalf of museums and galleries.

**Kathleen** graduated in 1990, and went immediately to work in the voluntary sector. She is currently 'Head of Major Giving' for Mind, the Mental Health Charity, securing income from government bodies, charitable trusts and foundations, and wealthy individuals. *What use is a degree in Theology in a career like this?* 'It gave me the ability to work through important issues and re-assess my own values in a

creative way. Learning to think my way through an argument, to see the pros and cons, and to reach some kind of solution is something I apply on a daily basis.'

**Ed** left Oxford in the early 90s, and stood as a Conservative MP for Ipswich in the last election. He uses his Theology degree by teaching part-time at a school in south London, where he is also Development Director. He is now hoping for a 'safe seat' in the next election!

**Hugh**, who left in 1989, has since then lived and worked in L'Arche community in the East End of London.

**Michelle**, who left in 1997, took an MA in Peace Studies and is now working in the NGOP sector looking at development and conflict issues.

All of these theology graduates speak of the need to understand the religious backdrop to social issues, and agree that studying Theology gave them the analytical skills and inspiration to put their ideas into practice.



*Celebrations after finishing finals.*

*Michelle working with local organisers on an HIV/AIDS project in Somaliland, Africa.*



# Case studies / 5

## Others have followed careers in publishing and the media...

**Gillian** left in 2000 and has since been working with Oxford University Press, in their educational division, mainly working on children's books. 'Theology taught me how to attain high standards; I gained confidence in my ability to understand and process information quickly for the weekly essay', she says.



**Liz** finished her degree in 1993. She enjoyed most her studies of biblical archaeology, so went to find an outlet for this in Greece. She ended up living there for six years, and worked for a publisher in English Language Teaching, ending up as Regional Manager in Athens. She's now returned to the UK to do a similar job, which takes her travelling throughout much of Central Europe.

*Liz (on the left) with English language teachers in Greece.*



**Tim** left in 1994 and is now a Senior Producer in a marketing communications company that specialises in live events. 'Although seemingly a million miles away from marketing communication, the skills I learnt in Theology are now with me for life. I've still to apply that probing, critical and insightful attitude to any proposition, text, or – let's bring it back home – statement of Brand Values. And you'll always have something to talk about in job interviews: 'Why on earth did you study theology?!'



**Daisy** left in 2000 and is working for a public relations consultancy, but is considering doing a further degree in Drama. 'Theology introduced me to a plethora of ideas and literature from ancient and modern societies. It's astounded me how broad my degree is, compared with my contemporaries', with elements of literature, language, history, geography, classics and ethics:



this breadth of knowledge and skills base will enhance whatever I do in my career.'

*Public relations can produce some unusual assignments...*



# Case studies / 6



Julie celebrates a successful fundraising project in Australia.



**Julie** graduated in 1989 with no firm view of a career path. She focussed for 4 years on advertising, finding that Arts graduates had no problem in obtaining interviews for this line of work, and ended up with an agency based in Leamington Spa. It was a small career move to professional fundraising. She joined an international team of consultants and spent several years in Australia, providing fundraising advice to charities, schools, cathedrals and other non-profit organisations. 'Now I've gone back to roots: fifteen years after graduating, now with a young family, I'm using the Theology again, teaching R.E. in a large state school in the Midlands. Theology has been a fantastic foundation for me personally, as it's opened so many doors: who knows when and where the next one will be?'

**Becca** left Oxford in 1994, with a vague interest in publishing and the media. She joined a boutique investment bank which specialised in mergers and acquisitions in the media. Having decided she had no head for figures, she went to work in international sales for a UK academic publisher, Cassell. This work took her to India, Pakistan, SE Asia and South Africa, but she realised she wasn't the world's greatest sales person, so she moved into PR,

eventually joining Pearson, a media company, working in corporate communication.

*How has a Theology degree helped her? ' 1. It's always a good conversation starter or stopper. 2. Writing – much of what I do is about communication and the ability to digest large amounts of information. 3. Multi-tasking – what appealed to me about theology was the broad range of subjects it covered (languages, literature, philosophy, psychology, history), something which stood me in good stead as I cover a huge range of things each day. 4. Like-minded people – two of my closest friends did Theology with me in Oxford days.'*

**Nerys** left in 2001; she now works for a Media, Telecoms and Internet Consultancy in Montpellier, France: 'I'm confronted daily with new challenges, new fields to research and analyse, with strict deadlines when I've to present in-depth information clearly and concisely to a high profile audience. All these skills were developed during my time in Oxford. It allowed me to time travel from 2000 BCE to the present day, allowing me to process information so that I could formulate my own conclusions.'

# Case studies / 7

**Some use theology directly by taking up careers in teaching. At Oxford we like to keep up links with teachers who were once undergraduates in Theology. They teach in all types of schools, and the two things they have in common are their love of Theology and their concern that as many sixth-formers as possible should have the same opportunity to study Theology at Oxford as they had.**

**Andrew**, for example, left in 1992, with 3 great passions in life: Theology, rowing and travelling. He spent a year travelling, and then a year training to be a teacher. He's taught since then: but he's been able to indulge his three passions at the same time. He's head of R.S. at a school in London; he coaches the school's senior squad oarsmen, and seen some represent Great Britain at junior level, and he organises school trips each year to places of religious and cultural interest – Turkey, Israel, Egypt, Greece, the Sinai desert, Andalucia, and Syria. 'It may not pay as well as the city, but there are holidays to make up for it!' he says.

*Andrew escapes from his school trip in the Sinai desert.*



*Emily's work at Lambeth Palace opened up memorable contacts...*

**Emily** left in 1995, and worked for a year at Lambeth Palace, doing research for the then Archbishop on the Anglican church, pursuing one area of study she had loved - church history. The two projects she remembers best were briefings for Archbishop Carey's visit to South Africa when he went for the official retirement celebrations for Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and a series of lectures and radio-style interviews for the Archbishop to give at Notre Dame University in Indiana, USA. She was hesitant about training for teaching at first, but she's been at a school in Reading for some years, and now loves it. 'I have a lot of freedom and holiday time compared with other friends working professionally, and it's good to carry on using Theology and updating my knowledge. And it means I can carry on doing the other two things I love - music and drama.'



# Case studies / 8

**As for all Arts subjects in Oxford, quite a lot of undergraduates go on to do graduate study, and teach at University level. Here are some examples...**



Above: Chessie  
Below: Paula and Susanna.



**Chessie** graduated in 1997, but wanted to stay in Oxford to do further studies. She's not a Christian; she'd call herself an open-minded agnostic. Despite initial difficulties with funding, she persevered and got her doctorate quite recently. She now teaches Old Testament to undergraduates, whose concerns she remembers all too well! She is also preparing to publish her first book. *So what did she get out of her degree in Theology?* My first degree gave me the opportunity to study everything which interested me: ancient people and their religious beliefs, histories, literature and languages. After the degree, I wanted to keep learning about these things, so it seemed natural to continue studying'.

**Paula** also teaches theology at University level, but from a Christian point of view. She graduated in 1992, and got her doctorate on a New Testament topic some five years later. She has since taught at two colleges which train future priests – one near Oxford, one in Birmingham - and, now married to a clergyman, with a small daughter, she writes and lectures on a freelance basis. 'I use the skills I learnt as an undergraduate every day, working on biblical texts and teaching Greek and Hebrew. I love it!' she says.

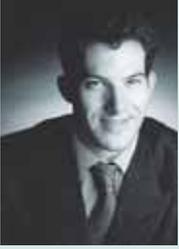
**Simon** graduated in 1993. He also decided to do a doctorate in Oxford: his interests were political theology. He then worked on a research project in Sheffield, and after a long period of reflection, decided to become a priest. He is at present working in an inner-city parish in Bristol, teaching in a theological college nearby.

Simon's career spans teaching in higher education and serving as a priest. About 8% of graduates with first degrees in Theology or Philosophy and Theology become priests or ministers.

**Lydia** left in 1994. She knew during her time in Oxford that she wanted to be a priest, and as the door for women priests was by then open, she trained immediately and served her first parish placement in Brackley.

**Greg** left in 1997, and then spent some time working in a cathedral in London. Because his father was a priest, it took him some time to decide to do the same thing, but he is now in training. 'I decided to study Theology at Oxford before discerning this vocation. It was the unique combination of languages, texts, history and philosophy which attracted me to it, and it seemed to be one of the most varied and interesting art courses offered at Oxford.'

# Case studies / 9



*'...an environment where you combine the best academics with bright students cannot help but be a positive learning experience.'*



## **Other graduates have careers in the City...**

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**James** left in 1995. He joined Hambros Bank as a trainee fund manager, managing pension funds and unit trusts. He's now in the venture capital sector. 'Theological study is the interpretation of issues and opinions that are centuries old and there is rarely a 'right' or 'wrong' answer to a theological question. I needed the same research and debating skills to deal with ancient texts as I do now in working with a team in developing portfolio companies.'

**Will** left in 2000, and now works as a strategy consultant for projects for multi-national corporations in Europe and beyond. 'Three things about the course stick in my mind: the variety – so many interdependent disciplines coming together, the system – one-to-one tutorials with people who are genuinely interested in your development rather than being stuck at the back of a crowded lecture hall; and the people – an environment where you combine the best academics with bright students cannot help but be a positive learning experience.'

**Harry** left in 1998 and did a Masters in Land Management. He's now with a Chartered Surveying firm in London. 'I read property leases, and have to think of their meaning and origin – not too different

from the way I had to look at the meaning of 'Son of Man' in the Gospels. The only writing I do now is reports, but they are meant to be concise and to the point. I think writing essays for tutors prepared me for that. Theology offers a talking point with enthusiasm – a skill for life.'

## **...whilst a career in law appeals to many**

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**Richard** left Oxford in 2001. He remembers his degree for all its diversity: his papers were as far apart as the war in Kosovo, Theravada Buddhism in Sri Lanka and varieties of Islam. For him, theology is 'the distilled history of humankind, about unpacking why we are what we are. I worked first for Lloyd's of London insurance brokering house, then did management consultancy for a firm in Germany, and now I'm on a law conversion course in London before hopefully going on to the commercial Bar.'



# Attracted by what you can do with a theology degree?



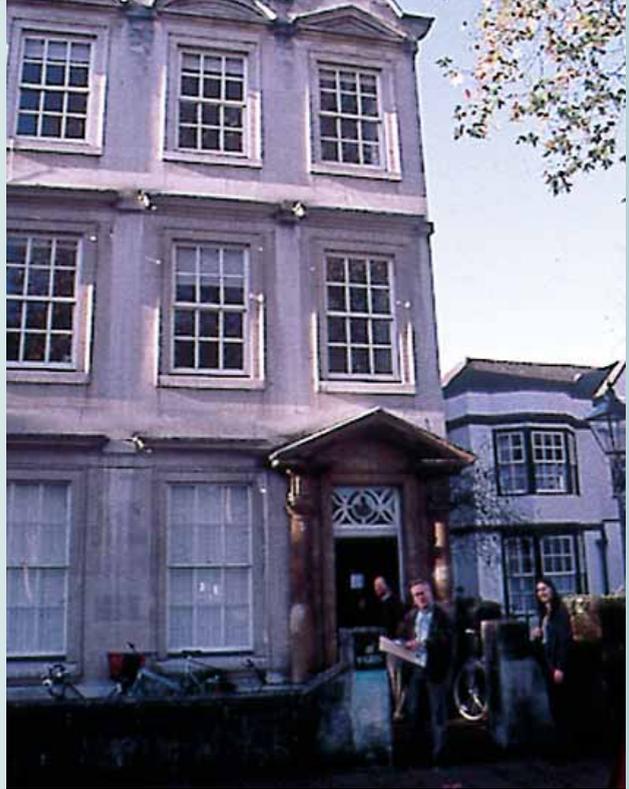
*Louise and Harry at graduation, with their tutor*

**Louise** who left in 1998 did the same thing: she started in an estate agents, spent two years on a law conversion course, and is now a trainee solicitor in London.

**Roz** left in 1991, and spent a further two years in Cambridge doing another BA, this time in Law. She has had several career moves as a legal adviser, and is at present with a phonographic company in London which has a particular responsibility for the BRIT awards. Roz specializes in intellectual property law.

**Joe** left in 2001. He took a year out travelling, and is now training to be a lawyer, having got a training contract at a City law firm to fund him through.

All would agree with Louise: 'It's the intellectual argument, the need to write clearly and give attention to detail in such a broad and fascinating range of subjects which now stand me in such good stead.'



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