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BAJS Annual General Meeting – 8 July 2013

University of Kent

Present: Maria Diemling (Treasurer), Francois Guesnet, Hannah Holtschneider (Web Officer), Daniel Langton, Larry Ray (President), James Renton, Helen Spurling (Secretary) and c.20 members.

Apologies: Nathan Abrams, Lutz Doering, Mark Gilfillan (Bulletin Editor), Zuleika Rodgers, Alison Salvesen, Sacha Stern

1. Welcome and Apologies

Helen Spurling opened the meeting and Daniel Langton spoke in remembrance of Geza Vermes, the President of BAJS in its founding year.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes were confirmed as an accurate record of the previous AGM at UCL.

3. New BAJS members

Helen Spurling reported that 50 new applications had been received since the AGM at UCL. Interestingly, half of these applications were from postgraduate students, which is encouraging for the future development of the field. The list of applicants recommended by the committee for membership was circulated, all of whom were duly approved.

4. Committee and Officers

Larry Ray asked for the approval of the AGM for the election of Helen Spurling as BAJS Secretary and Mark Gilfillan as Bulletin Editor, both of whom were elected. Francois Guesnet requested that thanks be noted to the new committee members for their contributions.

5. BAJS Essay Prizes

Helen Spurling reported that there were 14 entries for the essay prize this year, and noted the generally high standard of the submissions, which were from a range of institutions in the UK and Ireland. Two UG winners were announced and no PG award was granted this year. The winners were Rhian Evans (University of Manchester) for an essay on 'The Early Transmission and Interpretation of Malachi' and Leo Mercer (University of Manchester) on 'Is a Nonfoundationalist Jewish Philosophy Possible? The Thought of Tamar Ross and Peter Ochs as Case Study'.

6. President's report

Larry Ray reported that the conference was going well. The costs of the conference had been higher this year but this had not affected attendance, with around 80 participants in the conference. LR noted that 12 PGR bursaries had been awarded, due to funding from Rothschild, and that provision for PGRs had been a particularly successful aspect of the conference. A specially organised PGR workshop with David Biale had been organised as a result. LR thanked the local organising committee, and especially Maria Diemling as a co-organiser of the conference.

7. Treasurer's report

Maria Diemling reported that a huge effort had been made to bring in money for the conference and the bulletin through contacting publishers regarding advertising space for the bulletin, and also the conference book stall and promotional material. As a result, the Association's financial status is stable and a report was circulated. MD then raised the problem that subscriptions are too frequently unpaid by members, and she requested that anyone with outstanding subscription dues should get in touch with her. Suggestions from members on how to improve the system were welcomed.

8. Secretary's report

Helen Spurling thanked the AGM for approval of her election. Members were reminded to pass on updates to their contact details and HS hoped that recent mail and email communications had been received and encouraged more members to communicate by email. HS reported that the committee had been in touch with the relevant sub panel heads earlier in the year in relation to specific nominations for Jewish Studies panel advisors and also to clarify the difficulties Jewish Studies faces in the REF. The committee is also exploring ways in which it can expand membership of the Association and grow its income in order to undertake more projects to advance Jewish Studies in the UK and Ireland.

9. Web officer's report

Hannah Holtschneider reported that she continued to receive a large number of announcements for the website, which is most welcome. HH requested that complete lecture series for the year be forwarded to her rather than individual lectures on a weekly basis. A lot more people have signed up for the website and it is a real opportunity to showcase what is going on in Jewish Studies across the UK. HH requested that members continue to send job advertisements and CFP's for the website. If colleagues had any suggestions for improvements, they would be most welcome.

10. Bulletin editor's report

Helen Spurling reported on behalf of Mark Gilfillan. HS noted that MG had done an excellent job with the Jewish Studies Survey and Bulletin this year. In order to reduce costs, there would be a new format, so the Bulletin would be about 50% smaller primarily because the Jewish Studies Survey would be published online (so easily searchable) with an analysis in the Bulletin instead. MG requested that members work with him to help improve the accuracy of the Survey. For members not at the conference, the Bulletin would be sent out with the next mail circular. Only members who had paid their subscription would receive a copy.

11. Conference 2014

Helen Spurling reported on behalf of Zuleika Rodgers and provided an update on plans for the 2014 conference. The theme is 'Jews and Political Discourse' and the conference will run from 13th to 15th July 2014 at Trinity College Dublin. The keynote speakers are Professor Moshe Halbertal, Professor of Jewish Thought and Philosophy at the Hebrew University and Gruss Professor at NYU Law School and Professor Paul Franks, Professor of Philosophy and Judaic Studies at Yale University. A number of cultural events in Dublin are planned including a special display of Hebrew books from the collections of the Old Library, Trinity College Dublin and Marsh's Library. There will also be private tours of the Irish Jewish Museum and of the Chester Beatty Library.

12. Any other business

The AGM expressed its gratitude to Larry Ray and Maria Diemling for their excellent work in organising this year's conference.

13. Date of next meeting

The next AGM will take place during the 2014 conference in Dublin.