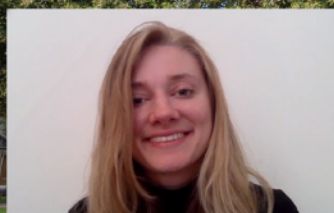


# In Principio

Spring 2021



## THE ALUMNI BULLETIN FROM ST MARY'S COLLEGE, THE SCHOOL OF DIVINITY



### ALUMNI REFLECTIONS

Former students reflect from various vantage points.

### COVID-19 REFLECTIONS

Student accounts of handling the disruption to classroom learning and teaching.

*'I often think fondly about the way...the course really confirmed the importance of forging community and connections with people who think differently.'*

*'I am forever indebted to St Mary's.'*

*'I am grateful for the lived experience of studying theology in a community of very different convictions.'*

(More inside from our alumni.)



### AROUND ST MARY'S

A selection from the School's research activities.

### D.W.D. SHAW – A EULOGY

A tribute to a former Principal of St Mary's.

## Editor's Note

After a brief hiatus *In Principio* is back and as a wholly online publication this year. Hopes for a 2020 issue in the autumn of last year were derailed by the additional demands of adapting our academic provision to the unfolding public health situation.

Alumni events such as our annual dinner and lunch for commissioners to the Church of Scotland's General Assembly have also had to be postponed.

In this issue the focus is largely on undergraduate alumni and some reflections by students on the abrupt transfer to online

studies. You also get a glimpse of some of the many research projects currently underway.

Our friend, benefactor and former Principal of St Mary's College, Revd Prof. Shaw is remembered in the pages and we carry a notice of his memorial service anticipating that a number of alumni may wish to attend. We are grateful to the Very Revd Dr Russell Barr for permission to reproduce the eulogy he delivered at Prof. Shaw's funeral last summer.

Eric Stoddart

### MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR THE LATE REVD PROF. D.W.D. (BILL) SHAW OBE.

To be held at Cramond Kirk, Cramond Glebe Road, Edinburgh EH4 6NS at 2.30pm on 14th July, 2021 being the anniversary of his passing. The service to be conducted by the Very Revd Dr Russell Barr with tributes given by a family member, Prof. Ron Piper, formerly of St Mary's College, St Andrews and Revd Prof. David Fergusson, New College, Edinburgh. To be followed by placing of ashes in the Garden of Remembrance at Cramond Kirk and afterwards a reception with light refreshments at the Royal Burgess Golfing Society, 181 Whitehouse Road, Barnton, Edinburgh EH4 6BU.

All friends and former colleagues welcome, subject to the then prevailing COVID regulations and guidance.

As numbers may have to be limited or late changes made, please email one of Bill Shaw's nephews to reserve a place (by 1 June 2021): Bill Logan at [linbill1@sky.com](mailto:linbill1@sky.com) or Douglas Shaw at [dougsshd@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:dougsshd@blueyonder.co.uk).

The cover photograph this year features, top left, clockwise, Dr David Moffitt (Reader in New Testament), Lowell So (Student President, School of Divinity), Mitchell Mallary (Convenor, Postgraduate Student Committee), Savannah Ney (President, St Mary's College Society).

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## LETTER FROM THE HEAD OF SCHOOL

Dear friends,

**I am conscious that many of you will have suffered since you last received *In Principio*. There will be troubles and sadness not related to the pandemic, others exacerbated by the pandemic, and still others caused by it. It has not been an easy time for any of us.**

This is true both for the University and for the College also.



Colleagues (and students) have been amazing, and we got through to the end of the last academic year. We were able to offer most of our smaller classes in person between October and Christmas, before the second semester was taken out by a renewed lockdown in Scotland.

I am both immensely proud, and somewhat in awe, of what my colleagues in the School have delivered over the past 15 months. Our student

satisfaction scores were actually higher than in previous years. (I put this down to students noticing and rewarding the many extra miles that have been gone, not to students preferring it when we're not in the room with them.)

Among the sadness not related to the pandemic, one looms very large. Revd Prof. D.W.D. (Bill) Shaw died last summer. Bill was a wonderful friend to St Mary's, not only an excellent Principal and Dean, but after retirement visiting us very regularly to catch up until his health failed and, coincidentally, lockdown happened.

Many of you will know first-hand of Prof. Shaw's generosity to students in need, although so often he hid it behind a cloak of anonymity. His kindness continues: a very generous bequest has enabled us to endow a doctoral scholarship in his name. The details of his memorial service are on page 2.

I write this the evening before a significant lifting of restrictions here in Scotland, and I see hope; I write it on a day when I have seen a prospective student in India over Zoom, and I reflect that the hope we have in Scotland is not yet universal. I trust and pray that each one of you will be able to stay safe, and to look forward to better times coming soon.

*Revd Dr Stephen R. Holmes*



## ELLIE GREEN

**From my very first day at St Mary's, I knew the experience would be transformative. I knew that the unparalleled teaching, the invigorating seminars and the unique personal attention that was given to my learning would prove invaluable. At the time, I was certainly not aware that my career would be in politics, or in the think tank world more specifically, but in many ways it has been an extremely natural transition.**

During my second year at St Andrews I became involved with the St Andrews Coexistence Initiative, an interfaith society that focused on bringing people together to discuss and debate challenging issues regarding religion and faith. It was clear that people were usually happy to discuss similarities in religious practice, or the experience of religious discrimination, but often the conversations would falter around politics.

Understandably, many people don't believe interfaith needs to delve into the 'heavy' issues of Middle East conflicts or UK party political policies, but I believe that without the ability to engage on the tougher questions, serious and harmful misunderstandings arise. During my time at St Mary's, I

was grateful that the animated seminar discussions had shown me that respectful and informed discussion was possible and was also immensely rewarding. It was there that I learned how to engage with an idea, look at from different sides, and then argue my position with conviction. I was able to apply this skill not just to my time as President of the Coexistence Initiative but to my career after graduation.

After finishing my studies, I began working at a foreign policy think tank in Westminster. I immediately began to use the skills I had learnt at St Mary's, from the ability to carry out fast and in-depth research to the creation of informed and respectful arguments for policy discussions. When I have been asked to go on various news channels to discuss a policy proposal or commentate on a news item, I consistently go back to what I learned in those seminar rooms on cold, windy days in St Mary's. I am forever indebted to St Mary's and incredibly thankful for the four wonderful years I spent there.

*Ellie Green (M.A. Theological Studies, 2018)*

*Ellie starts a two-year MTS programme at Harvard Divinity School in the autumn of 2021.*





## REBEKAH ACKROYD

**To my surprise, it has been ten years since I started on my theological journey at St Mary's. My professional life today combines studying for a Ph.D. in education and teaching Religious Studies. After leaving St Mary's I completed a PGCE in Religious Studies through 'Teach First', an educational charity who train teachers to work in schools in socio-economically deprived areas, and taught in schools in Birmingham, Germany and now in Blackburn. My doctoral research focuses on exploring how teachers of Religious Studies construct and promote tolerance and mutual respect of people with different religious beliefs.**

Whether I am in the classroom or in the library, I am still very much pursuing questions which St Mary's afforded me the opportunity to begin exploring: How do people relate to God and to each other? How do communities and relationships function? And, with my practical theological hat on, where is God in this? It has been the studies I undertook in practical and pastoral theology which have had the greatest impact on my life. To name just a few examples, my studies of forgiveness, dialogue and restorative justice at St Mary's

led me to engage with and promote the use of restorative meetings in schools as an approach to addressing challenging behaviour and breakdowns in relationships. In the classroom I emphasise the value in exploring the lived experience of believers, rather than focusing purely on religious beliefs and practices in the abstract. The modules I took in medical ethics and philosophy of religion have also undoubtedly contributed to my enthusiasm for using teaching approaches like 'Philosophy for Children', which takes a dialogical enquiry approach to helping young people to question and explore different world-views.

I have also benefited on a personal level from my time at St Mary's. In 2019 I married Michael Forde, who I met at a St Mary's cheese and wine event in Freshers' Week, and during the recent lockdown thoroughly enjoyed whiling away my evenings by conducting theological analyses of musicals. My time at St Mary's College has served me well and I remain extremely grateful for the years I spent in the small town on the east coast.

*Rebekah Ackroyd (M.A. Theological Studies, 2014)*

## TIM STACKHOUSE

**Since graduating in 2016 with an M.A. (Hons) in Theological Studies I have worked in the City (the financial centre), first in the legal and compliance team of an investment company, and now developing and managing financial products at a private bank. In looking back, I would like to explore not so much what I have done with my learning, but rather how it has shaped me.**

My studies at St Mary's gave me a framework with which to interpret and critique the world around me. Texts such as Dante's *Divine Comedy* vividly illustrate themes of self-interest, ambition and redemption and have helped me to perceive (and therefore promote and challenge) both the good and the bad in the companies and industries in which I have worked. Moreover, as much as theology is concerned with knowing God it

inevitably teaches you about humanity. The writings of the Desert Fathers, for example, traverse human spirituality and psychology, and have helped me understand and empathise with the diverse characters I have encountered since leaving St Mary's.

Perhaps most importantly, the discipline of theology has encouraged me to search for answers and solutions, but also to cope with situations and environments (whether personal or work-related) that often present neither. It is perhaps hackneyed to say so, but this was more important than ever in 2020.

Given time, my hope is that I can channel the energy and creativity I encountered at St Mary's into literary or commercial endeavours, perhaps one day writing a book or starting a company.

*Tim Stackhouse (M.A. Theological Studies, 2016)*



In November 2020 the School gained our Athena SWAN bronze award. This is an important recognition of our commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion.



## DAVID BUNCE

**In the six years since I graduated from St Mary's, I have been working as a pastor in the wonderful city of Vienna, Austria. In this time I have worked with refugees before, during and after the 2015 refugee situation. I have been teaching Bible on a year out programme for young people from across the world. I have worked with the very young and with the very old and I have got to meet colleagues from across the world - from Russia to America, Norway to South Africa. What of St Mary's has stayed with me in this time?**

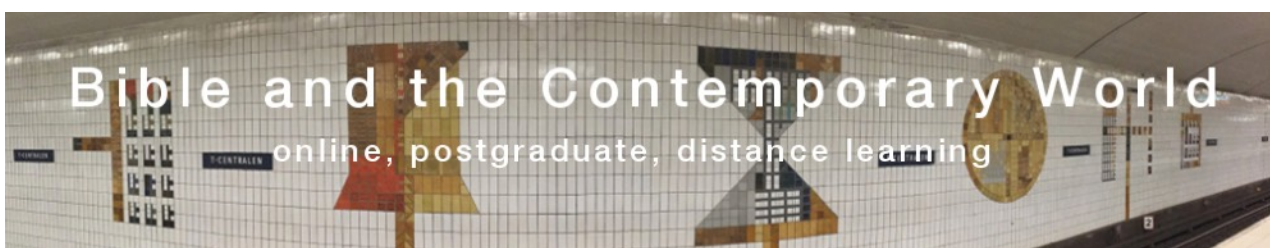
Firstly, I am grateful for the lived experience of studying theology in a community of very different convictions. The example shown by friends and teachers during my studies has stayed with me: the reminder that we can be part of something bigger than ourselves, and we can disagree on aspects of theology and practice and still remain cordial - or even friends. This is an underrated gift in life.

Secondly, the educational experience at St Mary's has helped me numerous times in areas where disagreements have arisen in my working context. Thanks to what I

learned, I am better equipped to examine a particular disagreement and help discern what issues are really at stake. Identifying the actual issues helps to begin to resolve knotty theological and personal problems that at first glance might seem intractable. I am part of a baptistic tradition, which means that the whole church gets a say on lots of different, often controversial, matters (as opposed to a more top-down approach). Part of what St Mary's has enabled me to do is to resource and empower the whole community to begin to make such decisions.

Finally, and related to the above point, I remain eternally grateful for the sheer love of learning that was passed onto me through my time in St Mary's. I relish giving this gift further, whether that be to illiterate Christian converts from Iran, college educated young people from America, or students from the Baptist seminary in Germany who are with us on placement. To be able to learn together – and from each other – and to be part of a tradition that is bigger than any of us is a priceless gift.

*David Bunce (M.A. German & Theological Studies, 2014)*



<https://bcw.wp.st-andrews.ac.uk/>

## STEFANIE REDFERN JONES

**Since graduating I have learnt that the world of work can be challenging in a variety of ways, but illness makes you stop in your tracks and re-evaluate your priorities. Most of all, I have learnt to deeply appreciate time, patience, hope and love.**

My most memorable aspects of study at St Mary's were a module in Medical Ethics and my dissertation about the theology of disability. These modules taught me the necessity of practically utilising our theological jewels in society where they impact and affect real lives. After graduating, I resolved to use my theology degree to do something good and useful in the world.



This led me to be a graduate assistant chaplain at Christ's Hospital School in West Sussex. It was an important first step in sharing the gospel with others, but it was a vital opportunity in listening to young people and being part of their support system. My pastoral work continued as a Resident Tutor at Wycombe Abbey School in Buckinghamshire supporting 93 girls to work towards their A-Level qualifications.

Unexpectedly in 2016, just a year after graduating from St Andrews, my mother was diagnosed with a rare neurological condition called corticobasal

degeneration. This has both influenced and challenged my understanding of practical theology. Although initially devastated, as time passed, I decided to try to glean from the darkness a ray of light, and to use faith to source that radiance.

Caring for my mother is a most poignant, challenging and yet paradoxically beautiful experience. Whilst disability has its very real daily difficulties, if given the chance, it can also present opportunities for spiritual growth. Being a carer has taught me many gospel values – self-sacrifice, unconditional love, devotion, hope and trust in a God who loves us. I believe that my studies at St Mary's were the lynchpin which enabled me to have resilience of mind and spirit.

A degree is a brilliant academic accolade to be celebrated, but what is much more important is how studying theology moulds and sculpts you into the person you need to become to cope with life's challenges.

*'You are the Potter;  
I am the clay'  
Isaiah 64:8*

*Stefanie Redfern Jones (M.A. Theological Studies, 2015)*





## JOSHUA TOWNSON

**By the start of my fourth year at St Andrews I'd sorted my future. having interned with Lloyds Bank in the City of London during the summer I had a graduate job lined up for after I'd graduated. In many ways I took great pride in this, not in the sense of being pleased with myself about working for a bank, but proud that I was doing something unrelated to Divinity.**

I had no intentions towards ordination but the standard response to 'I study theology' was always 'oh, do you want to be a vicar?' and, honestly, I thought I'd proved the value of my degree by getting a job in finance; like I was a sort of apologist for a theology degree.

It was a disaster. I hated every second of working for a bank and was totally depressed. I was rubbish at banking and I pinned to work for a Christian organisation. After three years, including two in central London, I was desperate for a way out but didn't know what to do because my only work experience was in finance (apart from my days as a cleaner at Mitchell's).

Then, late one night, I noticed an advertisement on a job website for a parish finance adviser in the Diocese of London: – 'must have financial experience, some theological knowledge preferred'. So I put in an application, not expecting to hear anything (I'd been rejected from four applications I'd put into the national Church of England and I didn't have experience of church accounting) but I got an interview, and then a second interview, and then I got the job!

It was amazing, I cried when they offered it to me and I have no doubt that I got the position because I'd been at St Mary's. I could learn church accounting but the value of a theology degree from St Mary's is priceless.

Now, after two brilliant years at the Diocese of London, I have been the Generous Giving Adviser for the Diocese of Oxford, producing theological material about giving, and it's all thanks to my time at St Mary's and the theology I learnt there.

*Joshua Townson (M.Theol., 2014)*



<https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/development/support/>

We understand that making a charitable gift requires careful planning and research for everyone.



## ALEXANDER TAYLOR

**When I sometimes hear people talk prosaically about their undergraduate degrees, I feel a silent sense of gratitude at having had the privilege to study a subject I love in a setting as wonderful as St Mary's College. In the five years since I graduated, I doubt that a single day has gone by when an aspect of my theology degree did not influence me in some capacity – whether in an aspect of my work, in a conversation with a friend, or simply in something I have read in a report or a novel. This can be something as simple as considering the reliability of a news source (a skill much enhanced by my final year dissertation), or it might be something of a more profound nature.**

After I graduated from St Andrews, I initially spent a couple of years working in archives and records management. Whilst I enjoyed the intellectual challenge and the careful research of the archival sphere – both skills I developed at St Mary's – I still felt the pull of some of those deeper questions. Partly to consider these in a new context and partly to satisfy my longing for travel, I left my job in the UK and took up a position as an English

language teacher at a school in northern Vietnam. I spent a fascinating year in a beautiful country, where my interest in theology was fuelled by the great variety of religious expression in Vietnamese culture. I also discovered – slightly to my surprise – that teaching was something I really enjoyed.

After several months of travelling in southeast Asia and Nepal, I returned to the UK and spent a year completing my PGCE. I have since started work as a Religious Studies teacher at a high school in Oxfordshire. Despite frequent errors and learning curves on my part, I love the many opportunities and challenges that teaching Religious Studies brings. It is wonderful to see a class engage with some of those profound questions of theology and philosophy that so intrigued me, not only at high school, but at the University of St Andrews too. It is for that passion, inspiration and openness to the great questions that I am most indebted to my time at St Mary's College.

*Alex is currently a Religious Studies teacher at Gillotts School in Henley-on-Thames*

*Alexander Taylor (M.Theol., 2015)*



<https://itia.wp.st-andrews.ac.uk/>

## JAN CARSON

**I thoroughly enjoyed the two years I spent shuttling backwards and forwards to St Andrews during my distance learning M.Litt. I particularly appreciated the diverse group of people who made up our learning community. I've stayed in touch with several of them over the following decade. I'm sorry to say I haven't gone any further with my theology since graduating. The last few years have seen my writing career really take off with seven books published including *The Fire Starters* which won the EU Prize for Literature for Ireland last year and has since been translated into a dozen languages. There's been very little time for any kind of academic thinking. As a confirmed magic realist, I've been mostly living in a fantasy world.**



However, I often think fondly about St Andrews and the way the course really confirmed the importance of forging community and connections with people who think differently. Ever since I've taken every opportunity to connect with, dialogue and learn from people who come from different cultural, political and religious backgrounds. Travelling to literary festivals internationally has given me the opportunity to meet and share with people from all over the world and these interactions have really deepened my understanding of the world and added depth to my writing.

Like most people, the recent lockdown left me stuck at home, unable to travel for an extended period. I'm quite used to solitude and had a number of writing projects to keep

me busy. However, I soon began to miss the sense of connection which I usually find in traveling and meeting new people. I decided to embark upon a writing project to ensure I remained connected during lockdown.

I spent three and a half months writing a daily short story on the back of a postcard. I mailed these postcards to isolated people all over the world. The project soon gained media interest and began to evolve. After a

few weeks I was able to include bespoke illustrations created by children alongside my postcards.

Recipients responded with their own stories, letters, postcards and pieces of artwork. I even received a much-appreciated crate of wine. It was incredibly heartening to see the way my tiny stories had formed a web of connections all over the world. It helped to remind people that even in these strangest of times it

was still possible to enjoy and draw strength from community and creativity.

I've been writing Postcard Stories for five years. The Emma Press have published two collections of these stories. They're the means by which I document life and respond imaginatively to my experiences. However, during lockdown the stories took on a new significance. They became a daily reminder that I wasn't alone. Despite my solitary circumstances, I remained part of a generous, creative community.

*Jan Carson (M.Litt. Bible and Contemporary World, 2011)*

## COVID-19 REFLECTIONS

In March 2020, like so many institutions around the world, we had to make rapid changes to how we delivered our degree programmes.

Here, we have reflections from Win (a first year student at the time), Niamh (who was in her final year), Stefanie (who was poised to do fieldwork for her Ph.D.), and Solomon (who started as a new undergraduate in September 2020).

We were able to hold some classes in person in the autumn of 2020 but from January 2021 we have been wholly online.



### WIN BENKO

**Some of my fondest memories of St Mary's come from last spring's first-year Greek class. We were a small group. We would sit in a circle in our tiny classroom, scratching our heads over syntax, getting into theological arguments, laughing at each other's jokes, and generally relishing learning Greek. We studied together before class, swapped stories about ourselves and our homes, and, occasionally, went to the pub together after tests.**

As February passed into March, the class's mood grew somber. Rather than laughing and joking, we worried about this strange storm on the horizon, the coronavirus. We asked each other as we left for Spring Break, 'Where will we be in two weeks' time?'

Two weeks later, I arrived at Greek class, but rather than pulling up a chair into the circle in a classroom in St Mary's, I joined a video call while at my desk in the United States. My friends and I listened with amazement to each other's stories of travelling home. We enjoyed seeing each other, even while we were saddened by our

distance from each other – and then went back to learning Greek together.

This term, we have not been able to live and learn with each other as we used to. There is no library in which to study together. There is no banter while ambling into the classroom. There is no post-test pub expedition. And, at a higher level, the world is still struggling with the coronavirus. How can we move forward when ahead we can see only more uncertainty?

After Easter 2020, a friend observed to me that, in a sense, Lent never ended. We are in a perpetual Holy Saturday. As I write it is now October 2020, passing into November, and the pandemic continues. We are still waiting. What are we to do? We must remember that, though it feels eternal, Lent always comes to an end. Holy Saturday always passes into Easter Sunday. And one day, the laughter will return. One day, professors and students will sharpen each other face-to-face. One day, our Greek class will go for beers together after a test. Until then, we wait with eager expectation.

*Win Benko (class of 2023)*





## NIAMH SHIEL

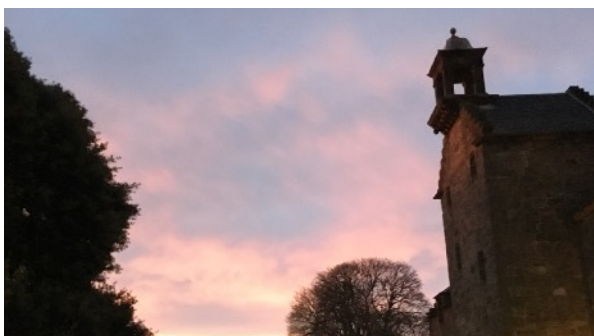
**‘Can you hear me?’, ‘You’re on mute!’, ‘Sorry, my internet connection is unstable.’ These are only a few of the phrases we have become far too familiar with throughout the course of 2020. Many will echo the sentiment that this was not the year we were expecting, and this is certainly true for myself and my fellow 2020 graduates. In March when Covid-19 was rapidly becoming a pandemic and lockdown was imminent, all of my final semester plans came crashing down and I was left feeling uncertain about how I could complete my degree.**

Studying theology at St Andrews was such a wonderful and challenging experience which massively helped me to grow as an individual. I was greatly encouraged by the evident passion of lecturers and tutors in sharing their knowledge with students, caring for us and equipping us to think critically to produce a high standard of work. This had such a positive impact on me, which continued when the university transitioned online. I was amazed by the speed at which this transition took place,

and the great care taken by the School of Divinity to ensure that students still had the means to continue with classes and engage as much as possible. At times it was hard to focus on my studies with the pandemic raging on around me, but the support of my lecturer and dissertation supervisor helped me to stay focused and affirmed the value of my work. Although these changes were not easy, we had a lot of laughs along the way as we wrestled with technology and settled into a new way of life. I’ve seen many a face brighten when a kind flatmate or parent has delivered a cup of tea, or, even better, a piece of lockdown inspired baking.

I am so thankful that I was able to complete my degree, although I can’t say that I ever anticipated doing so in my slippers! We can’t change the situation, but we can change our attitude towards it. In view of this, I look forward to the day when I’ll be reunited with dear fellow graduates of 2020 and the celebrations will be all the more joyous!

*Niamh Shiel (M.Theol., 2020)*



### Studying Again at St Mary’s?

Part-time, distance learning M.Litt. or perhaps just a single module?

Full-time, on campus M.Litt.?

Ph.D. research?

For more information on all the options:

<https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/divinity/prospective/>



## STEFANIE CONRADT

**7:00 am**      **The alarm rings and I hit the snooze button once, twice... just one more time.**

**9:00 am**      In the office: I am responding to emails, sorting my to-do list for the day and experiencing a moment of joy as I see a hard copy of the book I need sitting on my shelf. Perhaps this week, I will manage to decrease my average screen time from 8.25 to 7.5 hours a day?

**11:15 am**      Teams conference call – only one today.

**1:00 pm**      Lunch break. Should I do some stretching or go for a short walk? ‘Yes,’ commands my conscience, ‘it’s healthy!’ So, I stretch and quite pleased with myself I am sitting down at the desk to continue reading.

**4:00 pm**      A refreshing walk home: I am taking deep breaths, while debating if I can postpone responding to the iMessages, WhatsApp or Instagram posts that pop up on my phone. Maybe tomorrow.

**5:00 pm**      With a glass of wine in my hand I am enjoying the company beside me; in 4-D for a change.

Perhaps some of you can identify with this routine in some way or other. It is my experience that more than in *life B.C.* – i.e. *Before COVID* – have self-motivation and self-initiative become the engine for my daily routines. More than in *life B.C.* do I feel the sometimes heavy responsibility to make ‘this’ work, whatever ‘this’ is – be it fieldwork, research, life, family or health. I need to see what keeps me going one day at a time and without the support of previous structures it is up to my attitude and motivation to make the most of my time and my 15” screen.

Then again, an unexpected horizon of training has revealed itself: I have learned to host and chair an online conference, take and cut advertisement videos for research purposes and to utilise the diversity of digital and online products at hand. Unexpected opportunities have opened up through the virtual world that surrounds us and paradoxically, this has brought me closer to some people than *life B.C.* ever could.

*Stefanie Conradt* (Ph.D. candidate, class of 2023)

## SOLOMON TRIMBLE

*Solomon writes during the autumn of 2020 when some classes could still be held on the campus - Ed.*

**The first move to University has never, in all of history, been a particularly easy one. To say that beginning in a new setting, surrounded by new people learning a new subject is daunting is, perhaps something of an understatement. Moving away from home is in many respects a leap of faith, and requires the hopeful student (following after Kierkegaard) to ‘close one’s eyes and hurl themselves trustingly into the absurd.’**

This, of course, was before COVID-19. The words COVID, coronavirus and pandemic have achieved a weariness rarely achieved by any other words as a result of their persistence, inevitability and the nasty things we associate with them. Sadly in this article their presence is somewhat unavoidable.

If leaving home and starting at university was hard once before, in the age of coronavirus we can safely say that it has reached the standards of Kierkegaard’s ‘the absurd’. Existence is reduced to a virtual reality. The body is viewed merely as a potential container of plague and everything it touches must be sanitised of its presence.

The majority of meetings take place in a mediated state of being – the internet – allowing us to safely communicate with one another without committing the sins of mass-gathering and sociality. Concrete

human contact is to be avoided whatever the cost. Perhaps ‘the absurd’, too, is an understatement.

And yet life continues. Despite the pitfalls of the pandemic, studying in St Mary’s over the past few weeks has been a complete joy. The online lectures are thoroughly enjoyable, and have the benefit that they can be paused when one needs to take down notes and watched whenever one wishes.

Online tutorials are something of a mystery, but the moment when one can physically attend a tutorial every other week suddenly becomes very precious, and the joy of learning, conversing and

simply being in the presence of others reaches a new standard.

Personally, I am very thankful for Dr Lyons’ Hebrew classes which have been in-person since day one, which has been a

real blessing and source of sanity in this virtual existence – an island of physical reality amidst the chaotic waters of ‘Teams’, ‘Zoom’ and ‘Panopto.’ The School of Divinity has been an excellent place to learn, and its commitment to quality teaching and to its community of learners is quite simply unparalleled. I look forward to all that follows in my studies here, whether it be online, in-person or everything else in-between.

*Solomon Trimble (M.Theol. class of 2024)*

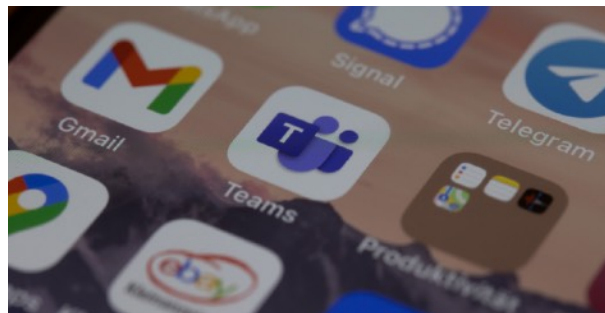


Photo by Dimitri Karastelev on Unsplash

## AROUND ST MARY'S

In this section we feature a few of the diverse research projects currently underway within the School of Divinity.

### Science-Engaged Theology

**Science-engaged theology (SET), a growing field that seeks to use scientific findings in theology, is related to, but not quite the same as, the now well-established field of 'science and religion'.**

Often research in 'science and religion' seeks to answer the apologetic question, 'can science and religion co-exist in harmony?' But in SET we don't want to only find points of agreement (or disagreement) between static truth-claims, we want science to inform and change theology *and* for theology to change and inform science.

These two disciplines are often far more entangled than we might suppose. Sometimes one statement can be *both* scientific and theological. For example, you might have heard a pastor or theologian claim God uses positive thinking to heal people. Some scholars claim that Protestant theories of salvation foster individualistic ethics. How can we tell? We need both theological tools of reasoning and scientific tools of investigation to decide.

Led by Dr John Perry, this project, funded by the John Templeton Foundation, is able to offer a number of summer fellowships, course development grants, and undergraduate scholarships to study theology. Alongside John Perry there is a faculty team comprising Joanna Leidenhag (St Andrews), Sarah Lane Ritchie (Edinburgh), Michael Leidenhag (St Andrews) and Kevin Norby (Lee University, Tennessee).







## **‘USING THE ARTS TO MEET CANCER PATIENTS’ NEED FOR SPIRITUAL CARE.’ EWAN BOWLBY**

**The aim of my research is to design and trial new arts-based interventions in the spiritual care of cancer patients. In modern, secular healthcare institutions, patients’ spiritual needs tend to be overlooked and spiritual care is often limited to a single question on a hospital admission form.**

Healthcare providers are increasingly aware that the scientific model of medical care cannot support a patient’s search for meaning amidst the chaos of cancer. Yet the available evidence suggests that almost all cancer patients want the discussion of spiritual concerns to form part of their care.

When cancer patients’ spiritual needs are met, this improves their mental and physical health, reducing anxiety and enhancing recovery.

In collaboration with the Maggie Jencks Cancer Care Trust (‘Maggie’s’), I have been testing new resources that can help carers to meet cancer patients’ need for spiritual care. Working with cancer support specialists and psychologists, I have found that fictional narratives can help patients to process and express their spiritual concerns, providing language and imagery that enables them to tell their own unique story.

As part of this collaboration, I am trialling a new ‘Fiction Library’ resource in Maggie’s centres across Scotland. The Fiction Library invites people affected by cancer to use fictional narratives to explore spiritual themes relevant to their experiences of cancer. A guidebook ‘prescribes’ a novel, film, or television series that will engage with a specific question or concern, offering insights into living with cancer that might help someone to find consolation or hope. I have also been holding virtual focus groups during the COVID-19 pandemic, bringing people affected by cancer together to talk about a range of fictional cancer stories.

These conversations have been rich and fascinating, helping me to understand how stories can provide a way for people to explore deep and difficult subjects. The encouraging, enlightening results of these trials suggest that this approach could become the basis of a new model of spiritual care, helping to fill a significant gap in cancer care provision.

*Ewan Bowlby (Ph.D. candidate, class of 2022)*

## TEXT & IMAGE

**This project investigates the cognitive psychology of religious art, focussing on the inclusion of text in visual art.**

The researchers' approaches include subjecting art-historical claims, particularly about the art of the Reformation, to empirical testing; conducting other experiments; and sponsoring TheoArtistry partnerships between St Mary's post-graduates and visual artists.

This collaboration between the School of Divinity and the School of Psychology & Neuroscience is jointly led by Brendan Wolfe and Dhanraj Vishwanath and employs Nicole Ruta as Senior Research Fellow.

## ST ANDREWS ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF THEOLOGY

The creation of this free, online research Encyclopaedia of Theology is St Mary's largest project. Modelled on the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, it is commissioning large research articles from hundreds of leading theologians throughout the world, to be openly accessible on its website [www.saet.ac.uk](http://www.saet.ac.uk). Early-access articles will begin to be released this spring, before a launch in the autumn of 2022.

Of permanent staff, Brendan Wolfe is the Principal Editor, and Steve Holmes, Christoph Schwoebel, Tom Wright, and Judith Wolfe Senior Editors. The project also employs another four Academic Editors as well as two administrators and several research assistants.

## SACRED LANDSCAPE

**A team of researchers, led by Brendan Wolfe and Bill Hyland, and including Bess Rhodes, Tom Turpie and Giles Dove, is approaching the coast of Fife as a sacred landscape.**

Using a range of documentary and visual sources, they are examining the nature and history of coastal religious sites and institutions (the cathedral, the priories, the parishes, St Fillan's Cave, etc), and also how these have shaped the landscape itself (through interventions like the Lade Braes, the paths parishioners walked to church, etc).

For the initial stage of the project, they have identified fourteen locations for research spread across the Fife coasts from Newburgh in the north to Culross in the south. These were chosen because they are sites that had been the subject of a diverse array of spiritual expression, eg Anchorites, Mendicants, Canons, Hermits, Monks, Parish Priests, and/or had a history as sacred locations that stretched over a long chronological period.

The research will therefore aim to provide a complex and varied insight into the religious experience of the people of the Fife coast, and the varied ways in which the use of these sites has shaped the landscape. It will be presented in a free website, also serving as a museum display, alongside other Schools' research on Coastal Fife.



## ‘Mapping the Imagination’

Judith Wolfe

**The Templeton Religion Trust has launched a five-year research initiative into the unique ways of knowing, or forms of understanding, that are afforded by making and encountering art. This initiative, entitled ‘Art Seeking Understanding’, is funding fifteen research projects around the world. Two of these are happening in St Andrews: ‘Mapping the Imagination’ (led by Judith Wolfe, Divinity) and ‘Text and Image’ (led by Brendan Wolfe, Divinity, and Dhanraj Vishnawath, Psychology).**

The focus of ‘Mapping the Imagination’ is the imagination in the concrete sense of ‘the capacity of the mind to integrate sensory data into discrete gestalts in the process of perception’. The philosophical literature on imagination in this sense primarily concerns everyday perception but the focus of this project is on the perception of art.

My guiding assumption is that works of art deliberately elicit imaginative gestalt-formation; indeed, that such imaginative investment by the recipient is at the heart of what it means to ‘see’ a painting or read a poem. The horizon claim of the project is that learning about this participative perception of art has things to teach us about the way people of faith see the world.

Because these claims cross disciplinary boundaries, understanding their substance and significance requires interdisciplinary collaboration by theoretical and empirical researchers. The aim of the project, therefore, is to support joint work by theologians, philosophers and psychologists to clarify correlations, disagreements and gaps between philosophical accounts and relevant psychological or cognitive investigations.

## ‘Widening Horizons in Philosophical Theology’

Judith Wolfe

**This is a two-stage project, funded by the Templeton Religion Trust, the aim of which is to strengthen the constructive and discovery-oriented potential of philosophical theology in the broadly continental tradition.**

A two-year planning phase (2019-2021) has built connections with theological centres and individual researchers in the UK and abroad who engage continental philosophy in constructive theological work, with the aim of gaining an understanding of intellectual convergences and jointly

developing strategic directions for the coming years.

The main phase (2021-2024) will invest in the future of philosophical theology by funding up to twelve one- to two-year research projects at various institutions, coordinated by a programme of research and events at St Andrews.

More information is available at the project website, <https://philosophical-theology.wp.st-andrews.ac.uk/>.

INTERVIEW

ERIC STODDART SPEAKS TO  
DR KING-HO LEUNG  
RESEARCH FELLOW IN PHILOSOPHICAL THEOLOGY  
AT ST MARY'S COLLEGE



**Where are you from?** I'm from Hong Kong but I have been in the UK for most of my education, including St Andrews as an undergraduate where I studied philosophy and international relations. I had my theological education in England.

**What was the most important thing you learned when you were writing your Ph.D. in Nottingham?** It would be how philosophy has ceased to understand itself as a way of living and has become a purely intellectual method instead, almost like a kind of scientific endeavour. I think this approach is problematic: for even if we arrive at some account of absolute 'truth' or 'reality', one might say that such truth or reality wouldn't be 'true' or 'real' if it doesn't 'truly' or 'really' affect how we live.

**What's your current area of speciality?**  
It's contemporary philosophy of religion.

**Why that speciality?** Doing philosophy within theology allows us to ask the most fundamental questions in a way that contemporary philosophy does not generally allow. From another angle, if God exists and is the ground of all that exists then we should not shy away from asking of every aspect of reality.

**If you had free rein to design a new module on what or who would it focus?**  
It would be on the notion of the secular: not just how secularisation happened, but also on the very idea of 'the secular' as a theological and philosophical concept and how secularity shapes our way of thinking – perhaps even the way we do theology.

**What's the most intriguing philosophical theology question of this decade so far?**  
It would be how theology relates to questions of identity-politics and social justice in a distinctively theological manner. It's very easy to just borrow concepts or approaches from critical theory or throw in more authors of a certain identity into our curriculum. We might think that's the problem solved. Rather, we need to go deeper than attending to issues such as blackness simply in terms of the identity and experiences of the authors we read and teach, and think theologically about



topics such as slavery and the idea of possessing human beings, and how we might apply those critiques to wider discourse as well as theology.

**If I had time to read just one person on this at the moment, who should it be?**

I think Fred Moten is one of the most interesting critical theorists to read at the moment. In terms of theology, J. Kameron Carter is someone who's most involved with this trend of thought, being heavily influenced by Moten's work.

**Which piece of music would you most miss if you were not allowed ever to listen to it again?** Early Taylor Swift; the

ballads that are very easy to sing along to and not too over-produced. I also have a theory about how Taylor's early work echoes Gilles Deleuze's philosophy of repetition, on which I gave my first ever public lecture.

**You can travel in time to meet one biblical figure. Who would it be and what one question would you simply have to ask them?** The beloved disciple. Who are you?

## INTERVIEW

ERIC STODDART SPEAKS TO  
DR JOANNA LEIDENHAG  
LECTURER IN SCIENCE-ENGAGED THEOLOGY  
AT ST MARY'S COLLEGE



**Where are you from?** I grew up in Canterbury, Kent, but my family originally come from St Andrews, so I like to consider St Andrews as home.

**You studied modern history and theology as an undergraduate at St Andrews. Why those subjects?** I started off doing English Literature but discovered that I was really passionate about how ideas change and how they affect society. Modern intellectual history and theology seemed best suited for thinking about this.

**What's the most important thing that you learned whilst you were doing your MA at Princeton Theological Seminary in New York?**

I wrote an essay on St Augustine of Hippo and eating disorders and have continued to pursue that further research. Those studies convinced me that ancient writers can speak to our contemporary pressing concerns. I also met my husband at Princeton, so if you think that meeting other people is a type of learning then this was important for me too!

**What's your current academic speciality?** Science-engaged theology; thinking through and helping other theologians use the natural sciences whilst they do theology, biblical studies or philosophy of religion.

**Why does this field matter?** I think it's good when diverse knowledge-seeking enterprises can work together because they all have different tools which they bring to the big questions with which everyone is concerned. If we work together then we're much more likely to get to the heart of the matter and the reality of a complicated world.

**Who's the most interesting theologian that you've read?** Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibnitz because he was writing right at the beginning of modernity and with a lot of the questions with which we're struggling today. Is nature like a big machine that we can just use or is it something spiritual? Like today, questions of religious pluralism (for him post-Reformation debates) and the rise of natural science were pressing concerns for Leibniz. He was very, very smart and invented calculus (independently of Newton), as well as writing a lot on politics, theology and philosophy.

**Who's the best scientist that you've studied?** I really admire one of the leaders in psychology and autism studies, Francesca Happé. She was a big deal for a particular theory of autism that we now think is not entirely correct, and now she's working very hard at proving that she was mistaken before and is trying to improve the field. She's perfectly willing to continue to change her mind. Although this is a very important intellectual virtue, it is quite rare.

**You have a fine art qualification in oil painting. Which painting from any period should I add to my bucket list to see?** My favourite artist is Caravaggio. His 'The Incredulity of St Thomas' is where the disciple is putting his fingers in the resurrected Christ's side. I think what Caravaggio does with light in all of his paintings is revolutionary and this painting has real spiritual impact.

**You are isolated on an island on your own for a year and allowed only one movie with you. Which would it be?** *The Mission* because of its emotional moments and emotional range, as well having a beautiful soundtrack that would bring me solace.

**Let's assume the pandemic restrictions are over. If you could impose on-the-spot fines in public places which behaviour would you seek to penalise?** It would be people who don't use headphones but blast music from a big loudspeaker they are carrying.

REV PROF.  
D.W.D. SHAW OBE

Born 25 June 1928 in  
Edinburgh.  
Died 14 July 2020 in  
Edinburgh aged 92.

FUNERAL EULOGY BY  
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**Douglas William David, D.W.D. Shaw – universally known to all of us as Bill – brother, brother-in-law, uncle, solicitor, Church of Scotland minister, theologian, teacher, author, sportsman – the most competitive golfer imaginable – raconteur, mentor and friend: there were so many aspects to the life of this remarkable man.**

The youngest in a family of six children, a pupil at Loretto and Edinburgh Academy, along with his sister Kathleen, Bill was evacuated to Canada in 1940 sailing to New York from Greenock on the SS *Cameronia*.

In a collection of his reminiscences entitled *Much Ado*, Bill described the ship being crowded with refugees but him being too young to appreciate the tragedy of the Jewish refugees and their plaintive singing.

These years in Canada were life-changing for the young Bill – he attended Ottawa's Ashbury College – and they endowed him with qualities of independence, resilience and quiet determination, qualities which would stand him in good stead throughout his adult life.

At the memorial service there will be an opportunity to pay fuller tribute to Bill's many activities and achievements. For the moment, however, having graduated in modern languages in Cambridge and law in Edinburgh, Bill's working life began as a solicitor in both Edinburgh and London and led to him becoming a partner with Davidson and Syme.

Called to the ministry, in 1960 Bill graduated with a Bachelor of Divinity degree from Edinburgh's New College and, having been ordained by the Presbytery of Edinburgh, he served for the following three years as Associate Minister at St

George's West under the charismatic and inspiring ministry of Murdo Ewan McDonald.

In 1963 Bill was invited by Professor John McIntyre to become a lecturer in Divinity at New College and so began the greater part of his life's work – and his ministry – as a theologian, lecturer, teacher and mentor to generations of divinity students and candidates for the ministry culminating in his appointment as Professor of Divinity at St Mary's College in St Andrews where he held the chair from 1979 until his retirement in 1993.

Bill also had the unique distinction of being Principal of New College and Dean of the Faculty of Divinity – the first non-Professorial Dean he would be quick to add – to be followed in 1986 as Dean of the Faculty of Divinity and Principal of St Mary's College, St Andrews.

Like so many of his students I benefitted greatly from his thoughtful and lucid lectures and his series of tutorials on John Hick's *Evil and the God of Love* exploring some of the deepest issues of the Bible, the variety of human experience and our understanding of God were simply outstanding.

As well as many articles in theological journals, *Festschriften*, dictionaries and encyclopaedias, Bill published two books: *Who is God?* in 1968 followed ten years later by *The Dissuaders*. Concerned to bridge the gap between academic theology and the life and ministry of the church, in the year following his retirement Bill became the founding editor of *Theology in Scotland*, a bi-annual publication which continues to this day.

Should Bill have written and published more? Yes, he would acknowledge that he probably should have done but his many academic and university administrative achievements were acknowledged by the

award of honorary degrees by the Universities of Glasgow (1991) and St Andrews (2005).

In 2009 Bill was also honoured by the award of an OBE.

Alongside his busy university life, Bill was actively involved in the life of the Church of Scotland serving on various Presbytery and Assembly Councils and committees and as Moderator of the Presbytery of St Andrews.

Perhaps his greatest contribution to church life was his ecumenical commitment – ten years as chair of Livingston Ecumenical Council (1965–75) and his extensive involvement with the World Alliance of Reformed Churches which included being an observer at the Second Vatican Council (1963). Saying a prayer at St Peter's with the Pope preaching followed by lunch with the Pope were included in the list of Bill's proudest moments.

Scottish Amateur Squash Champion in 1950, '51 and '52, and a Scottish squash international from 1950 to 1962, sport was one of Bill's enduring passions.

A member at the Royal Burgess Golfing Society, Luffness New Golf Club, as well as the Royal and Ancient in St Andrews where he served as club chaplain (1984–2006), Bill was one of the most competitive individuals, a competitive spirit not always well concealed on the golf course at least, and those of us who are golfers have the happiest memories of golfing with Bill.

In the early 1990s Bill was instrumental in establishing an annual Church of Scotland v. Church of England golf outing and when he stopped playing he loved to grace the occasion as the team's grand patriarch.

Gracing any occasion is something Bill did with ease, his natural warmth, good humour and friendliness bringing out the



best in people. He loved to tell a story – stop me if I have told you this before, he would say, but we never did – and has anyone not heard the story of his weekend as Her Majesty the Queen’s guest at Balmoral with Bill preaching at Crathie where a Lance Corporal vomited in the middle of his sermon?

Friendship was at the heart of Bill’s life. In his *Reminiscence* Bill speaks of deciding quite early in his adult life he would not make a good husband – well, if that was true it is also true he made the very best of friends, loyal, hospitable and generous to a fault.

Professor David Fergusson, another of Bill’s students, recalls Bill preached a memorable sermon in King’s College Chapel, Aberdeen, on the words of Christ, ‘I do not call you servants... but friends’.

The accounts of Bill’s many acts of kindness to such a wide variety of people speak volumes about the character of the man and in celebration of Bill’s 90th birthday, David organised a day seminar at New College on the themes of preaching, literature, theology and sport which finished with a wonderful organ recital by John Kitchen.

Surrounded by so many of his colleagues and former students, it was an event which Bill greatly enjoyed and David speaks for all of us when he says we have been blessed to call Bill not only our teacher but also our friend.

Much more might be said, and perhaps should be said about Bill’s life and his many achievements but I want the last word of this simple tribute to be with Bill.

Appointed the Alexander Robertson lecturer at the University of Glasgow (1992) Bill explored what theologians and philosophers have written about the Christian understanding of hope, the hope embraced in the Apostle Creed’s great

declaration of faith in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting.

The final sentences of the lecture capture, to my mind at least, so much of Bill’s theology, his reading of the Bible, his understanding of the Christian faith and his empathy with the human condition. Equally importantly they also speak of the kindness and grace of the man we have all known and loved and for whose life we give God our heartfelt thanks.

‘My conclusion is that Christians should not be ashamed of their hope – and it is hope, not knowledge. We are entitled to believe that although all men and women are mortal and there is nothing immortal about them (soul or whatever) yet just as the physical and material world is not the whole story, so the temporal is not the whole story.

‘More importantly, we are entitled to believe death is not the end, either of ourselves or our loved ones, the basis of this belief being the “inseparability” of the love of God, Jesus Christ being the love of God, in costly, identifying action.

‘Those who share this belief are entitled, rationally and with confidence to believe: because he lives we shall live also – not, surely, in an endless repetition of this kind of individual life, but as participants in a corporate unity with each other because with God, until, as the visionary says, God shall be all in all – in a fulfilment that is not ultimately lifeless or silence – but dynamic, all-inclusive and alive.’

(from D.W.D. Shaw, “The Undiscover’d Country” an Exploration – “The Life Everlasting”, the Alexander Robertson Lecture delivered at the University of Glasgow on 5 February 1992. Subsequently published in *The Scottish Journal of Theology* 47.2 (1994): 149-168.)

# Theology *in* Scotland

*Theology in Scotland* is a journal sponsored by St Mary's College and appears twice yearly, in spring and autumn.

With a mix of academic and practical articles and book reviews, it is an ideal tool to help you keep up to date with current theological thinking.

The Spring 2021 issue is on the theme of theological responses to the Covid-19 pandemic. It has been edited by St Mary's lecturer Joanna Leidenhag and includes a series of papers by David Fergusson, Rebekah Lamb, John Bell, and others. It also includes a tribute to Prof. D.W.D. Shaw, Principal of St Mary's College 1979–1992, who was the founding editor of the journal.

Timed to coincide with the COP26 climate change conference in Glasgow, the autumn issue will focus on theology and the environment.

The journal is available online free-of-charge at

<https://ojs.st-andrews.ac.uk/index.php/TIS>

There is also information there on taking out a subscription to the print version of the journal.



## In Principio

Spring 2021



University of  
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