

FROM THE EDITOR

This new journal is an initiative of alumni of the School of Divinity's distance learning post-graduate programme here at the University of St Andrews in Scotland. As course director, I am delighted to introduce this online periodical as a show case of contributions to the study of the Bible in the contemporary world.

Since it started in 2003, this course has opened post-graduate studies in Divinity to people whose undergraduate degree is in *any* subject. It has given graduates in, for example, engineering, law, medicine, and the humanities an opportunity to join those with degrees in biblical studies or theology in exploring what it might mean to read the Bible in the light of 21st century social and political issues. Students from Hong Kong, Switzerland, the USA, Egypt, and the United Kingdom (to mention only a few countries) have met together at intensive study weeks in St Andrews at the start of each semester. Being part-time students, most continued in their vocations as teachers, charity workers, business executives, or clergy.

It has been my privilege since 2005 to have supported these diverse cohorts of adult learners. I find it immensely rewarding to observe their critical engagement with biblical and theological research as this relates to medical ethics, social policies, the arts and my own specialist field of surveillance studies. Some students focus directly on what is happening the contemporary world, others turn their attention to interpreting biblical texts.

'Bible and the Contemporary World' is a course that includes both taught classes and a substantial research project. When, in late 2016, Daniel Rentfro (from the USA) and Martina Bobulova (from Slovakia) proposed finding a way to disseminate some of these dissertations I was keen to help. This journal is the outcome. It has my enthusiastic support because, most importantly, it will encourage a wider readership to think deeply about many pressing public concerns from biblical perspectives. Furthermore, some readers may well be inspired to join a future cohort of distance learners.

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Applications are open for entry each September and January, for details: <http://bcw.wp.st-andrews.ac.uk/>

BIBLE AND THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

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