



Guest Editorial

I am grateful to the editor for allowing me to publish the proceedings of a conference in New College on 14 June 2004, to celebrate the life of Norman Walker Porteous, Professor in St Andrews (1931-35) and Edinburgh (1935-68). The six papers which follow are lightly edited versions of those presented on the day. David Dick, formerly Principal of Stevenson College in Edinburgh, is a local historian of Haddington and East Lothian. Jack Alexander has written on the regimental history of the Royal Scots. Stewart Jay Brown specialises in British and Irish history and church history of the 19th and 20th centuries. James Barr was the only one of Porteous' students who later taught alongside him as full Professor; he went on to hold chairs in Princeton, Manchester, and Oxford; and delivered the 1991 Gifford Lectures in Edinburgh. Ronald Clements started his academic career as assistant to Porteous; from Edinburgh he went to Cambridge and thence to the Samuel Davidson Chair in Kings College, London. John Sawyer studied Classics in Old College and specialised in Old Testament in New College, like his teachers Porteous and Barr before him. He became Professor of Religious Studies in Newcastle, before relocating to Lancaster.

I concluded the proceedings with a preliminary account of the some 780 letters from some 280 correspondents which Norman Porteous had kept and which, with his unpublished papers, his family have presented to New College Library. They start in 1920 and finish in 2003. I detect an implicit autobiography; certainly many of the key choices in his career are documented or illumined. Many are single letters, but there are also some large collections. The big groups from Walther Eichrodt and Artur Weiser I rather expected; but the forty-year-long correspondence with Rudolf Bultmann took me more by surprise. This started with Bultmann's St Andrews DD in 1935, marking not only his personal distinction but also the anniversary of Wishart's return from Marburg in 1535.

The many letters from his broad contemporaries in chairs of Hebrew and Old Testament Studies sketch a veritable *Who Was Who?* and offer fresh perspectives on the theological relationships and developments

sketched below by Professors Barr and Clements. These include a large number of Germans and German-speaking Swiss: Alt, Eichrodt, Eissfeldt, Elliger, Hertzberg, Kaiser, Noth, von Rad, Rudolf, Sellin, Volz, Weiser, H. W. Wolff, Würthwein, Zimmerli; and from elsewhere on the European mainland: Bic (Prague), Jacob (Strasbourg), Lindblom (Lund), Mowinckel (Oslo), Pedersen (Copenhagen), Vriezen (Utrecht). North America is represented by Albright, Bright, Childs, Dentan, Freedman, Irwin, Morgenstern, Muilenburg, R. B. Y. Scott, Terrien, and Wright.

The excerpts which I read at the conference related in the main to his choice between Old Testament and Systematic Theology, nicely illustrated in letters from Adam Welch and H. R. Macintosh. On 10 January 1928, Porteous wrote a letter from Berlin to Welch, who had encouraged him to study there and who had been writing to him regularly, sending him proofs of *Jeremiah: His Time and His Work* to correct. Porteous kept an extract of this letter, in which he explained his decision to switch to Systematic Theology. The letter ended:

I don't think I should be drawing back if I honestly felt that I could do, even in a small degree, creative work such as you are doing in the Old Testament sphere. As it is, I think I'd be happier in another line and perhaps do better work.

On January 14, 1928 Welch replied:

I am greatly interested in your letter and satisfied to think that you have found your bent and made up your mind as to what you want to work at My one regret is that I may have misled you, so that all this Arabic and Syriac, good stuff, has been wasted on you. I don't regret the Hebrew: that will remain useful, but the linguistic time and energy have been wasted. Your next business is to switch definitively off to your new subject. Drop Syriac, drop the work you were planning about the Old Test., and get a new subject for your Cunningham more closely connected with what you want to work at in future. Don't halt on two legs like the men at Carmel.

*The one thing you are not to be allowed to drop is correcting these proofs. It will do you no harm, only good, to have your name mentioned in connection with **any** academic work. It will let some in the church know that they may expect something from you.*

Macintosh wrote to Berlin the very next day with advice on how to approach research on Kierkegaard. The die seemed cast; and yet, in little over three years, Welch was encouraging him to put his name forward for the chair of Hebrew and Oriental Languages in St Andrews; and the Arabic and Syriac studies in Berlin proved not to have been wasted!

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Thank you and welcome

Since giving up sole editorial responsibility for *Theology in Scotland* in 2002 Bill Shaw has continued to undertake many of the technical tasks of the production of the journal (well beyond the computer skills of the present editor!). For understandable reasons Bill now feels it is time to relinquish this role. We thank him for this ‘extra mile’ in addition to all that he did to establish the journal. We also grateful to Colin Bovaird of St Mary’s College Library in St Andrews for agreeing to step into this role and trust that he enjoys his involvement in the journal.

Finally, I am grateful to my colleague Graeme Auld for editing the papers for this issue. Graeme was largely responsible for organizing the memorable conference to celebrate the life and work of Norman Porteous, our distinguished and much-loved professor and it seemed fitting that he should put together the papers for this issue. What is missing is the fascinating paper which Graeme gave himself (only hinted at in the above Editorial but omitted in the interests of overall length) resulting from his access to Professor Porteous’ correspondence. Hopefully we shall see more on this, if not here then elsewhere.

David Lyall