

Dear fellow postgraduates,

This is the first issue of our quarterly SSCE Postgraduate Update. In this first installment, we are privileged to feature an interview with our SSCE President **Professor David Clough** and to introduce two of our very own postgraduates, **David Torrance** and **Andrew Errington**. We hope that this short newsletter serves as a platform to stay in touch with fellow postgraduates and members of the SSCE community. We urge you also to mark your calendars for the 2016 SSCE Postgraduate Conference that will be held on the 21st - 22nd April at Durham University. We'll be in touch soon on further details on the conference theme and the call for papers. We definitely look forward to getting to know each of you and to hear more about the exciting research that you are engaged in.

Your postgraduate conveners,
Nicolas Baumgartner and Esther Chew

**Feature Interview with David Clough,
Professor of Theological Ethics, University of Chester &
President of SSCE**



1. Tell us a little bit about yourself. Any hobbies that you enjoy in your free time?

I've been in my current role in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at the University of Chester since 2007, teaching and researching in Christian theology and ethics. I very much enjoy my work: it's a large, diverse, lively, and friendly department, and I very much enjoy spending time with colleagues and the teaching I do there. I don't know another department that goes to the pub to sing karaoke together!

Beyond work, I'm a Methodist Local Preacher, which means I lead worship in one of the churches every 3 weeks or so. I also sit on the committee that advises the Methodist Finance Board on the ethics of its investments, and have worked on national ecumenical working parties on peacemaking, climate change, and mining. I'm married with three children aged 11-17, a cat, and soon some gerbils if my younger daughter gets her way, which seems likely based on past experience. Directly opposite our house is Chester Zoo, so we hear lions roaring and orang utans whooping, alongside more common British fauna: a good place to think about animal theology and ethics, which has been my focus for the past few years.

I love walking in the hills and mountains with family — Snowdonia, the Peak District, and the Lake District are all not too far away. Cycling is also a regular family activity. We have a Canadian canoe we take on the River Dee, and away on holiday: this past summer on the Norfolk Broads. I read lots of novels, and have been interested recently in a growing list that treat the human/animal boundary in different ways. I also love to sing, play guitar, and have a big djembe drum I play when the family are out of earshot. I've always enjoyed games: I like Risk, but currently the board game Ticket to Ride is a family favourite, and I confess to enjoying Clash of Clans on my iPad.

2. You've published a first volume on a Systematic Theology on Animals and are presently working on following that up with a second volume on Animal Theological Ethics. What first piqued your interest in this area?

I've been vegetarian and then vegan since I was 18. At the time it just seemed an obvious moral choice, but looking back I think it was my Christian formation that made me sensitive to the plight of other animals. I've always been surprised that fellow Christians don't see things the same way. I think it was that puzzlement, together with the sense that not many other theological ethicists seemed interested in the area, that made me think it worth spending time pursuing. (More are interested now, I'm glad to say.) At the time, it was on my laundry list of ethical topics between Christian pacifism (my previous book Faith and Force: A Christian Debate about War, co-written as a debate with Brian Stiltner, who took a just war perspective), and poverty, but it's taken me longer than expected. I'd still like to write on Christianity & poverty, but it won't be soon...

3. In what ways has your present research taken on a practical dimension in your own life? How has it been personally enriching for you as an ethicist?

What I love about my job is that I'm lucky enough to be able to pursue projects I'd want to in any case. I think it's the calling of all Christians to seek to discern the implications of their faith for how they live. Christian ethicists get to spend more time thinking about that than most, and, at their best, help nudge fellow Christians in the right direction. I'm currently planning a campaign that will take my work on Christianity and animals out beyond the academy to churches, challenging Christians to think about what faith means especially in relation to the scandal of the intensive farming of animals. I'd like churches to think about the ethical sourcing of animal products as naturally as they currently do for fair trade tea and coffee. I'm really looking forward to writing a short book for lay audience trying to make that case, and getting out to speak to church groups about it.

4. Looking back at where you first started on this journey in the field of Christian ethics, what were some unexpected surprises or challenges along the way?

I've not had a straightforward journey into Christian ethics. I went from a comprehensive school to Cambridge as an undergraduate to study natural sciences, imagining a career in theoretical physics, and followed that path for my first two years. When my Director of Studies told me that physicists didn't get to ask questions about the philosophical coherence of their theories, though, it lost its shine for me. (Not all physicists would agree with him, but I didn't know that at the time.) So I decided to change to a discipline that would allow me to ask bigger questions: theology! Don Cupitt was my first lecturer in ethics; I had ethics tutorials with Michael Banner: quite the combination. After three years at university I felt I needed to spend some time out in what I believed to be the 'real world'. I worked as a Methodist lay student chaplain based at Hinde Street Methodist Church in central London. At the same time I participated in a group planning the first 'Ploughshares' direct action against nuclear weapons in the UK. Student chaplaincy didn't suit me, so I moved to live with my Dad in Cumbria, and delivered organic bread and cakes around the Lake District for a small bakery, then switched to computer programmer for the same company! After a couple of years out, I decided I wanted to study some more, so had a year studying for the MSt in Christian Political Thought at Oxford with Nigel Biggar and Oliver O'Donovan. After a hugely enjoyable year, I decided I wanted to do a PhD on Karl Barth's ethics, but didn't get funding British Funding for a DPhil at Oxford. That made me think hard about whether I was cut out for further study, but I was reassured by my teachers, and second time around applied to PhD programmes in the US as well. By the time the British Academy decided they would offer me a fellowship second time around, I was almost on the plane to begin doctoral studies at Yale. After finishing my PhD, I was very lucky that Joe Cassidy at St Chad's College, Durham (who sadly died recently and prematurely), decided to create a postdoctoral research fellowship in Christian ethics, for which I successfully applied, before moving a year later to become tutor in ethics and systematic theology at Cranmer Hall, Durham. (I made lots of unsuccessful job applications alongside these ones that worked out: if you're doing that, be persistent...)

5. What personal advice would you offer to our postgraduates?

I remember clearly that it was only after leading my first student seminar with undergraduates during my PhD studies that I thought about university teaching for the first time. The advice I offer doctoral students now is (a) be more savvy about career than I was, but (b) only do a PhD if you love the subject so much that you can't think of anything you'd rather do. What I mean by this is, because it's a long time since most PhD graduates could get university jobs, you need to know why a PhD makes sense for you even if it doesn't turn out to lead directly into a job, as is quite likely. As long as you're clear about this, then a PhD is a good plan for anyone who's interested, qualified, and can find a way to pay the bills. But be very savvy about preparing for whatever career you're interested afterwards. If you're not getting enough guidance on career preparation from your university, find out what you need to do yourself. If you're interested in academia, get published early and often, and learn to network vigorously from whoever you see doing it best (SSCE can be great for that; if you have theological interests, also consider attending the bigger Society for the Study of Theology).

Oh: and my absolute top tips for getting your thesis written:

1. write every (working) day, even if you can't write for long;
2. keep a daily word count log of how many words you write;
3. meet weekly with a small group of peers to set goals for the next week and review progress.

More details here:

- <https://chroniclevitae.com/news/955-don-t-go-it-alone>

- <http://getalifephd.blogspot.co.uk/2010/05/seven-ways-you-can-write-every-day.html>

Our Fellow Postgraduates and their Research



David Torrance
Ridley Hall and Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge
3rd Year PhD

What might someone be surprised to know about you?

By the time I was 8 I had been bitten by a snake and piloted a plane (not on the same day...).

What is your current research work focused on? What are some other research areas that you are interested in?

I'm currently looking at kinship. The very idea of relatedness is implicit in a wide variety of difficult moral questions, whether it be the matter of 'chasing the blood tie' with IVF and other new reproductive technologies, social inclusion through adoption and the care of the elderly, or how we spend our money in a world blighted in so many places by grinding poverty. Additionally, recent 'family values' rhetoric from many Western Christians belies the fact that there is a profoundly critical reception of the idea of kinship and of a range of kinship practices in the history of Christian thought. There has been a tendency to assume that we know exactly what defines a family – perhaps marriage and blood ties – but social anthropological literature shows us not only that Western practices are a great deal more complicated than that, but also that this is by no means how every society either thinks about kinship or practices kinship. The two together – the cultural contingency of kinship forms and the critical reception of kinship in the Christian tradition – suggest that it might be possible to articulate an alternative narrative for family life that is both socioculturally realistic and theologically faithful.

What motivated you to pursue studies in Christian ethics/philosophy/systematic theology? Was there anyone who inspired or influenced your decision?

I've always loved trying to work out the implications of what took place in Jesus Christ for the Christian, and I found Michael Banner (my supervisor) a particular inspiration in thinking this through. My particular topic was motivated by a question that had long bothered me: if I were a parent I would feel under an obligation to provide every opportunity for my child that I could, while someone else struggles to feed their child – how can I, as a Christian, reconcile my kinship obligations and my obligations to my neighbour?



Andrew Errington
University of Aberdeen
1st Year PhD

In early Spring 2015, my family and I moved from Sydney, where we were busy working, loving our church, learning to grow vegetables, and enjoying the beach, to a world of granite, lard-reliant baking, and troublingly single-digit temperatures.

My research is oriented by two interests. The first is in the theory of Christian ethics, and particularly the work of Oliver O'Donovan. The second is in the Old Testament Wisdom literature. I am trying to draw on the wisdom literature to clarify what I think are some vexing questions in Christian ethics to do with created order and moral deliberation.

This study has been a privilege! My previous role as an Anglican minister was terrific, and I was sad to leave it; but I have relished the chance to read and think through issues I have wanted to for some time. My hope and my prayer is that this work will be useful for the kinds of Christian people and communities that have supported us in coming here, and that my study of wisdom would not be fruitless in my own life also.

Announcements & Calendar of Events

SSCE Postgraduate Communication

We would like to hear from you! If you are keen to share an event/activity, provide your feedback or be featured, kindly drop us a mail at pg-convener@ssce.org.uk

Calendar of Events

| Time & Dates | Conferences/Public Events |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| 1st Dec 2015 Time: 7.30-9.15pm | The Paris Climate Summit: A Theological Response' Professor Michael Northcott, University of Edinburgh Venue: Lower Hall, St Paul's Church, Hills Road, Cambridge Cost: Free For further information contact the KLICE Administrator at ethics@tyndale.cam.ac.uk |
| 7th - 9th Jan 2016 | Cultivating Virtues: Interdisciplinary Approaches Fourth Annual Conference of the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, University of Birmingham Venue: Oriel College, Oxford http://jubileecentre.ac.uk/1608/conferences/cultivating-virtues |

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| 3rd – 4th Dec 2015 12pm (Thu) – 2pm (Fri) | Faith in the Future: Organization, Power and Trust MODEM Leadership Conference 2015 Venue: Sarum College Cost: £55 non-residential; £110 residential http://www.sarum.ac.uk/event/modem-leadership-conference-2015-faith-in-the-future-organization-power-and-trust |
| 4th – 6th Apr 2016 | Society for the Study of Theology Conference Further details and call for papers forthcoming |
| 21st – 22nd Apr 2016 | Society of Christian Ethics (SSCE) Postgraduate Conference Venue: Durham University Further details and call for papers forthcoming |
| 26th – 27th May 2016 | “Everyday Ethics: A Future for Moral Theology?” An Interdisciplinary Conference of Theologians, Philosophers, Social Scientists, and Social Anthropologists Venue: University of Oxford http://mcdonaldcentre.org.uk/events/everyday-ethics-a-future-for-moral-theology/ |
| 2nd – 4th Jun 2016 (Call for papers: by 4th Jan 2016) | Character and Virtue in the Professions: An Interdisciplinary Conference Venue: University of Birmingham Cost: £150 http://www.jubileecentre.ac.uk/1619/conferences/character-and-virtue-in-the-professions |
| 29th – 1st Jul 2016 | A Transforming Vision: Knowing and Loving the Triune God The 2016 Theological Conference Venue: Pusey House, St Giles, Oxford Cost: Early registration £85 (before 28 February), regular £115, students £20 and £60 (early and regular) http://www.puseyhouse.org.uk/2016-theological-conference.html |
| 6th – 9th July 2016 (Call for papers by 18th Dec 2015) | Exploring the Glory of God Conference Venue: Durham University https://gloryconference.wordpress.com/call-for-papers/ |