



THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH
School of Divinity

NEW COLLEGE

M A G A Z I N E 2 0 2 4



NEW COLLEGE NEWS

Stories from around the School

| P4

KENYAN THEOLOGIAN

Esther Mombo

| P10

ALUMNI UPDATES

Your news

| P15

EDITOR'S NOTE



THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH
School of Divinity

School of Divinity,
University of Edinburgh,
Mound Place,
Edinburgh EH1 2LX.

Tel: +44 131 650 8959
Email: divinity@ed.ac.uk
Website www.ed.ac.uk/divinity
Facebook.com/uoedivinity
Twitter.com/uoedivinity
Instagram.com/uoedivinity
Linkedin.com/groups/8766402

© The University of Edinburgh March 2024.
No part of this publication may be reproduced
in any form without prior written consent. The
views expressed are those of the contributors
and do not necessarily represent those of the
School of Divinity, New College or the University
of Edinburgh.

Change of address?

If you have changed address, please let us
know. Contact the University's Development
and Alumni office on +44 (0)131 650 2240 or
email alumni@ed.ac.uk

The University of Edinburgh is a charitable body
registered in Scotland, with registration number
SC005336.

PRIVACY STATEMENT

All personal information is held securely by the
University and in accordance with Data Protection
Law. The data we hold will be used by the University,
or other parties acting under the instructions of the
University, for a range of activities. These include
sending publications. If you'd like to find out more,
you can view our full privacy notice on the University's
website www.ed.ac.uk/development-alumni/privacy.



Welcome to this year's New College magazine—your annual
window into the life of our vibrant, diverse community
of scholarship.

This year's cover image recognises the achievements of
the Kenyan theologian Prof. Esther Mombo, an Edinburgh
alumna who recently returned to receive an honorary
degree. Alongside her story, we are pleased to feature those
of former students Amy Plender, a civil servant now working
in the Grenfell community, and Sebastian Moll, culture editor
for the German newspaper Die Tagespost. It's also our
pleasure to introduce our new Head of School, Prof. Jeremy
Carrette, to the wider New College community.

As ever, we are glad to celebrate all the successes of our
alumni community, and are always pleased to hear from
former students about developments in their own lives.

Dr James Eglinton
Editor

James.Eglinton@ed.ac.uk



CONTENTS

New College news _____	4	Reporting Culture: Sebastian Moll _____	12
60 Second Interview: Sneha Roy _____	6	New Courses on Old Languages _____	14
New Head of School: Jeremy Carrette _____	7	Alumni Updates _____	15
Honorary Doctorate: Esther Mombo _____	8	Books and Belief _____	18
Serving Grenfell: Amy Plender _____	10	Reading Matters _____	19



NEW COLLEGE
NEWS

New Head of School

Prof. Jeremy Carrette has joined as Head of School and as Professor of Philosophy, Religion and Culture. He joins from the University of Kent, where he held the same professorial title and was Dean for Europe. For more on Prof. Carrette, see p.7.



Significant departures

Two longstanding members of the New College faculty have moved on to new roles elsewhere. Prof. Matthew Novenson has been appointed Helen H.P. Manson Professor of New Testament at Princeton Theological Seminary, and Prof. Jolyon Mitchell is now Principal of St John's College, Durham. We thank them both for many years of outstanding service to the school.

Audience with Pope Francis

As part of a group of scholars and artists including the celebrated filmmaker Martin Scorsese, Dr Linden Bicket was received in a private audience with Pope Francis in May 2023.



Essay prizes

Postdoctoral research fellow Dr Ximian (Simeon) Xu was one of six winners in Stanford University's AI100 Early Career Essay Competition. PhD student Edward DeLaquil's essay 'By what measure? A signpost theory of doctrine' won the Theology Meets Philosophy essay prize organised by SET Foundations—a programme in science engaged theology hosted by Loyola University Maryland.



New College videos

What's it like to study at New College as an undergraduate or postgraduate student? Follow the QR codes below for new videos highlighting students from across our degree programmes.

People of CAHSS Awards

This year, a record number of Divinity staff were nominated for the People of CAHSS Awards—an award from the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences that recognises colleagues for their contributions in leadership, inclusion, teamwork, and inspiring others. Congratulations to our most nominated colleagues Julie Robertson, Rory Dunlop, and Roisin O'Fee.



Buddhist Studies

Prof. Naomi Appleton has been elected to the board of the International Association of Buddhist Studies.

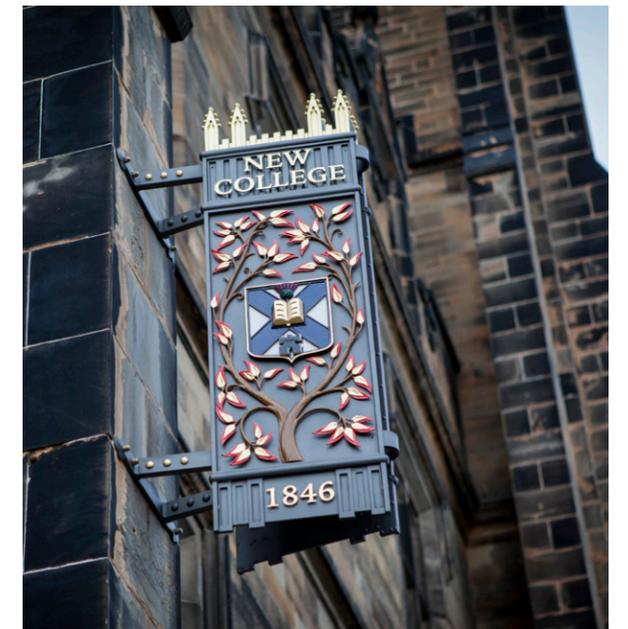
Major research grant

Dr James Eglinton has been awarded a grant of £195,000 by the John Templeton Foundation. From 2024-26, he and Dr Thomas Bak (Reader in Cognitive Neuroscience, Edinburgh) will work on the relationship of bilingualism to theological ethics. Their project is part of a larger project, God, Language and Diversity, which was awarded £1.5 million.



New appointments

Dr Quan (Luke) Li has joined the school as a British Academy postdoctoral fellow to work on Karl Barth and Chinese public theology. Dr Upali Sraman has been appointed Lecturer in Buddhist Languages.



60 SECOND

INTERVIEW



Dr Sneha Roy is a British Academy Postdoctoral Fellow. A socio-cultural anthropologist, she is a graduate of Delhi University, Durham, and Wales Trinity St. David. She is working on Hindu nationalism, gender, and ecology in the borderlands between India and Bangladesh.

Where did you grow up?

In a small town in Jamshedpur in India. It was cosmopolitan and really fun.

What kind of undergraduate were you?

At school I was focused on sports and dance. University was a different ball game. I could choose the subject I wanted to study: anthropology. That was a turning point in my life.

What's the biggest misconception about your field?

That it's easy because you're dealing with people. Understanding people is sometimes more complex than Rocket Science.

Why did you move to the University of Edinburgh?

It's one of the most inclusive schools where I could work around topics of religious nationalism, ecology, gender with an area focus on south Asia.

What do you read outside of your academic work?

Jane Austen (always) and Charles Dickens (current spree).

How would you like to be remembered?

As someone who can be trusted with intimate emotions and experiences particularly of those who have had experienced violence of sorts.

“Understanding people is sometimes more complex than Rocket Science.”



JEREMY CARRETTE

Last year, Prof. Jeremy Carrette joined as Head of School. A scholar of Michel Foucault and William James, he brings considerable leadership experience from the Universities of Stirling and Kent, and succeeds Prof. Helen Bond who led the school with distinction for the past five years.

“It's a joy to work here. There's something very special about the people, the building, and the history.

“I describe myself as a philosopher of relation. That's a technical way of describing reality as relational: we are what we are because of our relations. My thinking is fundamentally about relationality across disciplines, categories, time, and people.

“My thinking for research enables me to be multidisciplinary, to respect difference and diversity. As Head of School, that means I can have intellectual conversations across all of the different areas at New College.

“Our field is going through a lot of changes, as is higher education in general. My initial job is future

proofing the field and ensuring the sustainability of our school in those changes. Our subject will change to have bigger centres in a smaller number of places. I want to ensure that Edinburgh is the leading global centre for theology and religious studies.”

“It's a joy to work here. There's something very special about the people, the building, and the history.”



ESTHER MOMBO

H O N O R A R Y D O C T O R A T E



In 1994, the Kenyan theologian Esther Mombo arrived in Edinburgh to begin a PhD at the Centre for the Study of Christianity in the Non-Western World (now the Centre for the Study of World Christianity). Three decades later, she returned to her alma mater to give the 2023 Cunningham Lecture and to receive an honorary doctorate in recognition of her many

contributions to theology — and in particular, to the place of women in African theology.

“I was brought up as a Quaker, south of Lake Victoria. My grandmother was my first theological educator. She taught me about equality, stewardship and peace. When I applied to study in Edinburgh, I was teaching at a Bible school in a patriarchal space. I wanted to enlarge my



vision, to support women who do ministry and to write about African theology. Through the support of friends, I got a Commonwealth grant that was given through the Church Mission Society, and came to Edinburgh.

“I started with a theological focus but shifted to history, working on African women in the Quaker tradition. I sat in seminars at New College and also in the Centre for African Studies: development, theology, and history. Edinburgh was a free space. I got to know students from Korea, Germany, Scotland, Ireland, lay and ordained, men and women, young and old. It was a joy to be able to study within that kind of community.

“The Centre was small and cozy. You knew everybody who was associated with it. I got to know people personally, and their projects, and even their families and church traditions. I felt I could grow academically and socially. I’ve kept in touch with friends from those years. I’ve taught in South Korea, and have good friends in Nigeria and France. Scottish friends took me to ceilidh dances.

“In my time, everyone worked in the computer lab. We journeyed and laughed with each other there. It was a space to vent, which is good for a PhD student!

“Edinburgh shaped my international outlook. There was room to think, to envision, to question, to critique, to analyse. Religion has the power to convene and convince. I don’t avoid discussing how religion can be positive and negative—we can see that in the ways women have been treated in the Christian tradition. That’s why I’ve worked very hard in opening more space for women to enter into theological space and to grow there.”

Esther Mombo is Professor of Church History and Theologies from Women’s Perspectives at St Paul’s University in Limuru, Kenya.

“Edinburgh shaped my international outlook. There was room to think, to envision, to question, to critique, to analyse.”



A lumna Amy Plender (MA Hons 2015, MTh 2017) is a civil servant who works on the UK Government’s response to the Grenfell Tower fire.

“I chose Edinburgh before I chose a subject. I wanted to be in a big, exciting city that had a life beyond the university. My first plan was to study English Literature. I did a gap year in Haiti after the earthquake in 2010, which made me think about my faith in a new way. I hadn’t done Religious Studies since GCSE, but I applied for theology at Edinburgh and got in. I arrived wondering if I might still transfer into English, but people at New College were so lovely and I loved its sense of community. By the end of first year I saw that everything I loved about English Lit was also there in Divinity: telling stories,

exploring nuances of language and understanding, connecting with people through old and modern texts. I took an outside course in Scottish Literature in first year, but from then on, all my courses were in Divinity.

“I stayed on for the MTh because I felt I had more to learn. Religious literacy is important to me—especially in helping people who don’t have a faith understand what it’s like for people who do. My postgraduate research was on suffering, trauma, and lament. After that, I applied for an internship in London with the think tank Theos. It was a communications and research post, so my theological background meant I got opportunities to write on social issues, and to speak on Radio 4’s Sunday programme. That six-month internship then became a job.

“The Grenfell Tower fire had happened while I was a student.

Through my background in lament and inter-faith dialogue, I’d been interested in how faith groups had responded, and was asked by Theos to write about it. My religious literacy and trauma-informed background helped me approach those issues.

“I moved on from Theos to work for Eido Research, providing management consultancy for churches and faith groups, but eventually I applied for a civil service position working with Grenfell.

“My background in theology informs my civil service work profoundly. In a typical week I engage with government ministers and bereaved parents. My work always has many facets and means thinking through difficult problems. Theology trains you for that kind of real life complexity. It pushes you towards nuance, humanness and meaning.”

“Religious literacy is important to me – especially in helping people who don’t have a faith understand what it’s like for people who do.”

AMY PLENDER

S E R V I N G G R E N F E L L



SEBASTIAN MOLL

READER OF CULTURE



Sebastian Moll's path has never been conventional. Following studies in Bonn and Lausanne, he first came to Edinburgh for an MTh (2005) on the second century heretic Marcion. "I actually handed in my Master's thesis in the form of a play, Meet Marcion. I was drawn to him because he was a controversial and prominent figure in his day, and there was no up-to-date scholarship on him." Funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, he then wrote a PhD (2009) on the same figure. An academic career soon opened up, first at the University of Mainz, and then in the Evangelische Akademie

in Bingen am Rhein. Today, though, Moll works as culture editor for Die Tagespost – a weekly Catholic newspaper. How did his path wind from ancient Christianity to cultural journalism?

"In my years as an academic, I'd also been writing freelance on cultural affairs for the paper. It just so happened that the culture editor retired, and I was asked if I was interested in the job. I had no formal training in journalism, although I'd been writing for many years in both the academy and at a popular level. Even when I was in the academy, I liked



writing in a way that people could understand, and that could reach a wide readership.

"I love my job. I write an article each week, and work with other writers. We review cultural events and discuss cultural questions. I get to meet and interview interesting people, and write about things that fascinate me. At the moment, I'm writing a series of articles on sermons in novels, starting with Moby Dick, and covering a lot of other literature. To do that kind of journalism, you need to know your theology. The same is true across modern

culture in general. Religion influences culture deeply. For a newspaper like mine, it helps to have journalists who have a high level of religious literacy.

"Edinburgh is my happy place. Whether I was in Rainy Hall, playing in the New College basketball team, or doing detective work in the library, I always felt like part of a community. I loved going down into the library stacks and hunting for clues, evidence, and texts. I miss that. I could talk to faculty about scholarship, but also normal life. They were the best years of my life."

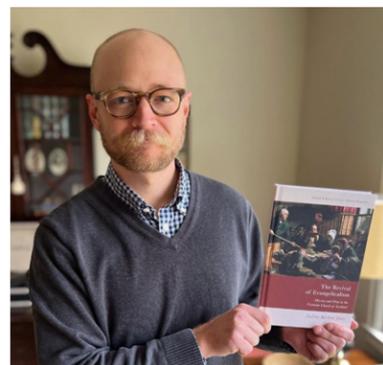
“Edinburgh is my happy place. Whether I was in Rainy Hall, playing in the New College basketball team, or doing detective work in the library, I always felt like part of a community.”

Rev Dr Cory Brock
(MTh 2014, PhD 2018)

has been ordained as senior pastor at St Columba's Free Church in Edinburgh.

Dr Marilyn Burton
(PhD 2014)

is Lecturer in Biblical Studies at the Faith Mission Bible College in Edinburgh.



Dr Yusuf Çelik
(PhD 2020)

is now Assistant Professor of Digital Humanities and Islam at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.

Dr Calida Chu
(PhD 2020)

is Teaching Associate in Sociology of Religion at the University of Nottingham

Dr Austin Freeman
(MTh 2012)

published Tolkien Dogmatics: Theology through Mythology with the Maker of Middle-earth (Lexham Press, 2022). He is now Assistant Professor at Houston Christian University.

Dr Jaan Islam
(PhD 2023)

is a postdoctoral researcher in Islamic Studies at the University of Oxford.



Canon Anderson Jeremiah
(PhD 2012)

has been appointed Area Bishop of Edmonton, in the diocese of London.

Dr Andrew Michael Jones
(PhD 2018)

won the Faculty Research and Scholarship Award, and was promoted to Assistant Professor of History at Reinhardt University. He recently published The Revival of Evangelicalism (Edinburgh University Press, 2023).



Prof. Matthew D. Kim
(MTh 2003, PhD 2005)

is Professor of Pastoral Leadership and the Hubert H. and Gladys S. Raborn Chair of Pastoral Leadership at Truett Seminary.

Dr Andrew Kloes
(PhD 2016) and
Dr Laura Mair
(MA Hons 2010, PhD 2016)

have co-edited Social Christianity in Scotland and Beyond, 1800-2000 (Edinburgh University Press, 2024), a Festschrift in honour of Emeritus Professor Stewart J. Brown.



Dr Joanna Leidenhag
(PhD 2019)

is Associate Professor in Theology and Philosophy at the University of Leeds. She is currently leading a £1.5 million grant from the John Templeton Foundation for the God, Language, and Diversity project.

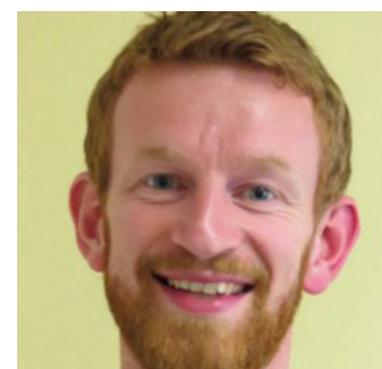


Wing Li
(MA Hons 2021)

is a PhD student at Princeton Theological Seminary, where she received the Presidential and Trustees Merit scholarships.

Dr Elizabeth Martejijn
(PhD 2022)

has been awarded a prestigious VENI grant to research diasporic Palestinian Christianity at the Rijksuniversiteit Groningen.



Angus Moyes
(MA Hons 2004, MTh 2005)

is Lecturer in Theology and Ministry at the Faith Mission Bible College in Edinburgh.



Dr Matt Reis
(PhD 2022)

is Assistant Professor in the College of Arts and Sciences at Lynn University.

Dr Chun Tse
(PhD 2022)

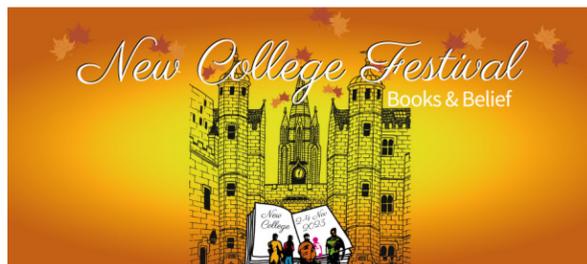
teaches New Testament and Church History at Carey Theological College in Canada. He recently published The Marrow of Certainty: Thomas Boston's Theology of Assurance (Vanderhoeck & Ruprecht, 2023).



Dr Eric Lewis Williams
(PhD 2016)

is now Director of the Office of Black Church Studies and Assistant Professor of Theology and Black Church Studies at Duke Divinity School.

BOOKS AND BELIEF



The third New College Festival of Books and Belief—an annual event bringing together academics, students, authors, and members of the public to reflect on the relationship of faith and literature—took place in November 2023.

Prof. Alison Jack, Principal of New College and Festival Director, reflects: “It was a resounding success. The Martin Hall was packed for a busy programme which included Alister McGrath, Ayesha S. Chaudhry, Merryn Glover, Victoria MacKenzie and Kathy Galloway. A Festival Pass was introduced which gave access to all of the events. Planning for the 2024 Festival (Nov. 7-9) is already underway and the new programme will be announced on our website later in the year.”

For more information, see www.ed.ac.uk/divinity/new-college-festival.

“It was a resounding success. The Martin Hall was packed for a busy programme which included Alister McGrath, Ayesha S. Chaudhry, Merryn Glover, Victoria MacKenzie and Kathy Galloway.”

Prof. Alison Jack



READING MATTERS



A SELECTION OF RECENT BOOKS BY ACADEMIC STAFF



Simon Burton, *Ramism and the Reformation of Method: The Franciscan Legacy in Early Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2024).

James Eglinton, Cory Brock, and Nathaniel Gray Sutanto (eds and trs), *Herman Bavinck, Christianity and Science* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2023).

Michael Fuller, Mark Harris, Joanna Leidenhag, and Anne Runehov (eds), *Issues in Science and Theology: Global Sustainability* (Berlin: Springer, 2024).

Arkotong Longkumer and Meren Imchen, *A Path Home: A Graphic Novel on Naga Repatriation* (Dimpaur: Recover, Restore and Decolonise, 2023).

Shadaab Rahemtulla (ed), *The Future of Liberation Theology* (Basel: MDPI AG, 2023).

Rachel Muers, Ashley Cocksworth, and David F. Ford (eds), *Ford's The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology since 1913*, 4th edition (London: Wiley Blackwell, 2024).

Joshua Ralston and Klaus von Stauch (eds), *Beyond Binaries: Religious Diversity in Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2023).

Bethany Sollereder, Gijsbert van den Brink, and Rik Peels (eds), *Progress in Theology: Does the Queen of the Sciences Advance?* (London: Routledge, 2024).

Linden Bicket, Emma Dymock, and Alison Jack (eds), *Scottish Religious Poetry: From the Sixth Century to the Present* (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 2024).

ATTRACTING THE BRIGHTEST AND BEST

On average around 50% of Divinity postgraduate students are awarded some level of scholarship funding, all based on academic merit.



Màiri MacPherson

Originally from Northern Ireland, Màiri received a School of Divinity scholarship for her PhD in Systematic Theology.



Awweroswo Akpojaro

MTh by Research student Awweroswo, from Nigeria, received the Kirby Lang International Scholarship.



Téa Nicolae

A graduate of Warwick and Lancaster, Téa was awarded the Edinburgh Doctoral College scholarship for a PhD in Religious Studies.

Thank you for your support

We are grateful to alumni and friends who support our scholarships and postdoctoral fellowships, and to all whose donations support the scholarship funds set up in memory of Larry Hurtado, Lloyd John Ogilvie, and John McIntyre. Donations can be made at www.ed.ac.uk/divinity/support-us or by contacting the Head of School.

School of Divinity,
University of Edinburgh,
Mound Place,
Edinburgh EH1 2LX.

Tel: +44 131 650 8959
Email: divinity@ed.ac.uk
Website www.ed.ac.uk/divinity
[Facebook.com/uoedivinity](https://www.facebook.com/uoedivinity)
[Twitter.com/uoedivinity](https://twitter.com/uoedivinity)
[Instagram.com/uoedivinity](https://www.instagram.com/uoedivinity)
[Linkedin.com/groups/8766402](https://www.linkedin.com/groups/8766402)

©The University of Edinburgh March 2024.
No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form without the prior written consent. The views expressed are those of the contributors and do not necessarily represent those of the School of Divinity, New College or the University of Edinburgh.

