

## DOUGLAS WILLIAM DAVID SHAW

*This tribute to our long-time member Professor D W D Shaw OBE DD was prepared by the Very Revd Dr G Russell Barr and was part of the funeral service that he conducted on 3<sup>rd</sup> August, 2020. Bill Shaw is fondly remembered in the Society particularly for the ready words of support, encouragement and appreciation he never neglected to offer for its projects and its publications.*

Douglas William David, DWD 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 encyclopedias, 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 – '62, 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

speaking volumes about the character of the man and in celebration of Bill's 90<sup>th</sup> 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 Apostles' Creed's great declaration of faith in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting.<sup>1</sup>

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. He said:

*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:*

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1 Scottish Journal of Theology Volume 47, pp149-168, 1992

*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.*

**Russell Barr**