



## Editorial

At the time of writing this Editorial, the storm has just broken around the head of Archbishop Rowan Williams for his comments regarding the place of Sharia law (and the practices of other faith communities) within British society. No doubt by the time the journal is published the debate will have moved on (or not as the case may be). Nevertheless the contributions of the first two papers in this issue are particularly timely. Cecelia Clegg draws upon her research (with Michael Rosie) into the relationship between faith communities and government in Glasgow and explores issues relating to religious intolerance, sectarianism, social cohesion and the Christian churches as agents of reconciliation. While there are signs of hope, it is clear that there is still much to be done to prevent past (and sometimes still present) tensions between Protestant and Catholic spreading over into a wider multi-faith society.

Writing out of his experience in Ireland, Alan Falconer describes part of the process of dialogue between Reformed and Roman Catholic churches. The importance of different traditions being able to hear the stories of those with whom there has been long-standing disagreement is made clear. There can be no reconciliation of communities without a reconciliation of memories. Yet, recent history does not leave us without hope. The past thirty years has seen greater integration in Europe, reconciliation in South Africa, and shared government in Northern Ireland, each in itself a cause for celebration. Only future historians will be able to assess fully the role of the churches in these situations but perhaps it has been enough to encourage the churches to pursue their ministry of reconciliation, however imperfectly, in these conflicted times.

Peter Potter is an Episcopal priest with a postgraduate degree in German which makes him uniquely qualified to reassess Bonhoeffer's concept of 'a world that has come of age'. His translation/reading of Bonhoeffer presents a very different understanding both of that phrase and consequently of its relevance for contemporary theology.

Finally, there is theological reflection on three very different topics. Gordon Grant, drawing upon a lifetime of pastoral ministry and recent academic study, discusses the final destiny of those who have never heard the Gospel, indicating that this may be a pastoral issue which is more prevalent than talked about. Hilary Smith, exploring the issue of human sexuality in the Song of Songs, writes from the perspective of preaching from a lectionary passage when it might have been easier to preach on one of the other readings. And Jane Blackley, at the beginning of her ministry, tackles the issue of dementia, a matter which theologically and practically, is a perennial source of uncertainty for most of us who have been involved in the realities of pastoral practice.

If there is one feature which holds all the above papers together it is the fact that they all, in one way or another, seek to engage with difficult issues, each with their distinctive theological implications. To that extent, they illustrate the thesis that all theology is practical theology.

### **Change of Editor**

Having recently moved to Kent and after six years as Editor, I now feel it is time to relinquish the post. When I took over and asked about the interests of readership, it was suggested that I aim for somewhere between the *Scottish Journal of Theology* and *Life and Work* – a big enough target! Whether or not I have succeeded is not for me to say but it has been a privilege to undertake the task. My successor is the Rev Dr Ian D. Maxwell, Minister at Edinburgh: Kirk o' Field. I wish him success and satisfaction as he takes *Theology in Scotland* on to its next phase.

*David Lyall*