



## Editorial



### Theological Reflection

How can we understand the relationship between theology and practice? This has long been the key methodological question in Practical Theology and, arguably, ought to be on the agenda of all the theological disciplines. The so-called Action-Reflection model and its elaborations has been central to the process of Theological Reflection, a concept which has united its exponents in advocating its importance more than in finding agreement about what it actually is. Perhaps this lack of unanimity is no more than an expression of the different ways in which academics and practitioners (and of course there are many who would claim to be both) go about their vocation, each in response to their own context.

There is a sense in which the five articles in this issue reflect the varieties of theological reflection. Hans Barstad in his Inaugural Lecture as Professor of Hebrew and Old Testament at Edinburgh University explores the implications of his discipline for contemporary issues of war and violence. Granted that the Hebrew Bible is an integral part of the Christian scriptures, this is a valuable contribution to understanding how academic insights can inform current thinking.

Alison Elliot works in an academic context too, albeit one whose *raison d'être* is precisely the relationship between theology and issues in the public domain. She brings the added perspective of her year as Moderator of the General Assembly to reflect upon the role of the Church of Scotland as a national church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This is an issue which may come to assume increasing importance as the different churches in Scotland learn that they must work together in an increasingly secular country.

Our other three contributors are not primarily academics, but each of them are articulate reflective practitioners exercising significant ministries and bringing to them distinctive theological insights. As Leader of the Iona Community, Kathy Galloway is a key figure in a

movement characterised both by ecumenical and political commitment. Starting from her involvement in the most recent Assembly of the World Council of Churches at Porto Alegre, she moves via an engagement with Rowan Williams' Christology to a discussion of these for the ecumenical movement in Scotland and beyond.

Tom Gordon and Jenny Williams write from their perspective as chaplains to institutions concerned in different ways with spiritual healing. Working mainly with patients who are terminally ill, Tom's theology is generated by his perception of that healing of spirit which comes when healing of body is no longer possible. The theology which emerges from the reality of this engagement with the Christian tradition is fragmentary rather than systematic, but with its own truth and profundity. Jenny, bringing a background in both biology and theology to her work in the Christian Fellowship of Healing, writes of the theology which emerges from her experience of working creatively with the tensions which are integral to this (and indeed any) ministry.

All these papers are expressions of the rich diversity of theology in Scotland today, coming from the reflections of both academics and practitioners of ministry. Each of them provides a model which we can use in our own theological reflection upon whatever ministry we find ourselves engaged in.

*David Lyall*

### **COMING SOON ...**

Papers from the John McIntyre Conference:

Bill Shaw on 'John McIntyre's Life and Work'

George Newlands on 'McIntyre on Theology and History'

Alison Jack on 'Theology, Imagination and Scottish Literature'

David Fergusson on 'The MacIntyre Papers'

John McPake on 'A Reformed Critique on the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification'

Cecelia Clegg on 'Faithful Citizens: Untapped Resources of Scotland's Faith Communities'