

## Editorial

My first reaction to putting together this edition of the journal was that there was no obvious common theme which might link them together. Yet on closer consideration it becomes apparent that one theme which runs through them all to a greater or lesser degree is the importance of narrative, sometimes biblical, sometimes personal and sometimes both.

The first two papers were delivered at the Christology Conference held in Edinburgh last year and sponsored by ACTS. Both papers engage with the exclusive claims of the Christian Gospel. In the first, Helen Bond, a New Testament scholar, sets Acts 4. 12. ('a difficult passage' at the heart of Peter's sermon) in its First Century setting arguing that Luke, while seeking to attract Gentiles to the new faith, those who became Christians could not simply add it to their portfolio of religions. In the second paper, Clark Pinnock, a theologian within the conservative evangelical wing of the Church, offers an interpretation of the same text which does not commend itself to at least some within that tradition. First Pinnock argues that salvation in all its fullness is available to humankind only because God in the person of Jesus Christ has provided it – so far good evangelical teaching. He further argues however that Peter in his sermon is not denying that there have been other (maybe lesser?) revelations of God's saving power in the world. Pinnock is not denying that there are truths about God in the other great religions of the world and in his own theological terms he is expressing an understanding of the Gospel which is congruent with the personal narrative of many people.

Norman Shank's Presidential Address to the New College Union also has a narrative quality. The American author, Frederick Buechner, has written 'My experience is that if anybody is willing to speak with some degree of candour – and with concreteness, that's the other important thing – then everyone is fascinated'<sup>1</sup> In writing with both *candour* and *concreteness*, Norman Shanks skilfully weaves his own personal and professional journey in ministry into an understanding of spirituality rooted in the Christian social and political engagement.

In his paper on chaplaincy within contemporary healthcare, Michael Ward re-visits a seminal article written by the late Tom Scott who was the first chaplain to the newly created Heriot-Watt University<sup>2</sup>. Having recently moved from parish ministry into hospital chaplaincy much of what Tom Scott wrote about ministry in secular institutions being essentially from its periphery made a lot of sense. But now spirituality (whatever that means in the context of the National Health Service) has moved centre-stage in a way which could never have been imagined even fifteen years ago. Michael Ward, from the perspective of his current hospital chaplaincy offers a timely reflection on this new phenomenon.

Donald Smith, Director of the Netherbow, continues the narrative theme by looking at the relationship between storytelling and Scottish culture. It is certainly arguable that Scottish culture and Scottish spirituality (if there is indeed such an entity) are inextricably conjoined. It is only as we look to the richness of our own cultural story and our Scottish experience and find theologians who are storytellers that a new Church will emerge in Scotland. Finally Alasdair Morton, drawing upon his wide experience in parish ministry and in religious education, both overseas and in Scotland, stresses the importance of an ecumenism which is essentially relational. It is in the deep encounter of personal story that historical prejudice is transcended. This personal odyssey reflects the experience of many who, over the years, have been committed to the ecumenical movement. Part of the new church which is emerging in Scotland and elsewhere is one in which, at a personal – and even institutional – level, denominational labels assume far less importance. This must surely be a necessary step towards organic union. Whether or not it can be a substitute for such union is a matter for further debate.

## **Future plans**

Over the past few years increasing numbers of ministers have undertaken Doctor of Ministry degrees mainly in North America. The next issue will be devoted to a number of papers based on doctoral dissertations concerned with theological reflection upon the practice

of ministry. I hope that a continuing function of *Theology in Scotland* will be to provide a forum where much of this worthwhile work can be made more widely known. It will not however be the only function of the journal and I (as always) will welcome contributions from a wide spectrum of perspectives.

*David Lyall*

- <sup>1</sup> Kendrick, S., 'On Spiritual Autobiography: An Interview with Frederick Buechner' *The Christian Century*, 12 October, 1992, pp.900-4
- <sup>2</sup> While Michael Ward cites the recent publication of Tom Scott's paper in the *Scottish Journal of Healthcare Chaplaincy* (2000) it was also published in *Contact* 56, 1977:1