

## Editorial

Jocelyn Bryan  
St John's College, Durham  
j.m.bryan@durham.ac.uk

Practical theology is a diverse discipline and the papers in this issue offer a kaleidoscope of topics which provide insight into the question of what does it mean to live a Godly life? Each paper provides a different approach to a particular aspect of Christian living and draws on the tradition to tease out how we might learn to live more faithfully in the light of what we understand and believe about the nature and mission of God. Hence all of the papers recognise that the divide between theology and practice is a false one.

During recent years the shift in emphasis towards the embodiment of faith and faithful practice has become a prominent voice in practical theology. Living out the faith with integrity is one of the major challenges of Christian living. It is not an easy task. It involves a convergence of the reality and particularity of the experience of human lives and the life of the Church with that of theology. This often proves to be a messy and difficult task.

Zoe Bennett and Richard Briggs meet this task head on in their exchange regarding Zoe Bennett's book *Using the Bible in Practical Theology: Historical and Contemporary Issues*. The nature of the convergence of biblical studies, hermeneutics and practical theology has long been debated, but as Richard Briggs notes, more recently the conversation has taken a constructive turn and Zoe's book makes a considerable contribution to setting an open and constructive tone to facilitate further work in this area. Their exchange illuminates some of the contentious areas in this interaction between various traditions and hermeneutics in what is a very significant book in an important project for practical theology.

Carol Barrett Ford's piece on *Theosis and the Problem of Suffering* examines how the reality of suffering in human lives can be understood through the lens of the doctrine of theosis. Here the convergence of doctrine and human experience brings the possibility of transformation and the potential for good. There is no denial of the pain of human experience and indeed the destructiveness inherent so often in human suffering, but Barrett Ford suggests that if willing to surrender to the will of God then the suffering person's reliance on God can lead to a transformation of suffering and the discovery of beauty within it.

Peter Wright's article highlights the interaction between the doctrine of sin and Christian discipleship. He explores how lay Christians understand the doctrine of sin. In his piece of practical theology 15 Anglican parishioners were interviewed about their understanding of sin. Peter then reflects on how what we believe and understand about the nature of sin is shaped by various factors and explores its significance for the development of Christian discipleship. Again the convergence of Christian living and theology is brought sharply into focus and examined in depth.

Our homes are not only places and spaces that we inhabit in a particular way, but they are places in which so much of our personality and selfhood is expressed. We create them. We decorate them. We store our possessions and display them in them. Dan Pierce asks how is faith expressed in home making. How does materialism converge with theology and what if anything distinguishes a Christian home from any other home?

Practical Theology is primarily orientated towards the lived experience of faith. It is therefore essential that this experience is described and analysed rigorously. Healing Ministry is both contested and controversial. Jamie Harrison and Rich Bregazzi with funding from the William Leech Foundation have investigated how the issues of healing, and the Christian healing ministry, are perceived by a select and selected group of eight church ministers in North East England. They describe Christian healing as bi-focal looking to God and working with people, once again lived experience and theology converge.

Finally, Michael Volland considers how the contested term entrepreneur can be used and understood in relation to Anglican priestly ministry. In his engagement with contemporary culture's interpretation of the term, Michael reflects on how we might conceive of the entrepreneurial parish priest as someone who embodies the core values of creativity and innovation and the desire to create something of value.

I am delighted that three of our contributors have been students at St John's College, Durham studying on the BA or MA programmes in Theology and Ministry. It continues to be the aim of this journal to give scholars and practitioners the opportunity to publish quality work that will enrich and develop the lived experience of faith and the life of the church.