

Editorial

The cathedral city of Durham in the northwest of England is a city of bridges. The buildings, ancient and present-day, are located on the sides of a topographical saucer. The bottom of the saucer rises into an outcrop on the flat top of which is a UNESCO World Heritage site. Here is the cathedral with its mix of Norman and Gothic architectural markers, separated from the castle by the rectangular grassy expanse of the palace green. Round the base of the outcrop, the river Wear does a loopy meander. Therefore, the bridges.

Bridges span the Wear, connecting the central hill to the city around it. The medieval Framwellgate Bridge, wide and solid, was once the city's main point of entry. Elvet Bridge, more like a street with its restaurants and shops, was built with the inducement of indulgences (for the forgiveness of sins) handed out to volunteer workers. Kingsgate Bridge is a footbridge, but was built high enough for a ship to pass under. Prebends Bridge was located with a view in mind, and affords a picture postcard panorama of the cathedral and castle.

It seems to me that good theologians are much like bridges—each unique in form and function. They are the link between God and God's world. Dedicating their lives to the study of ancient texts and dead languages, they bring to us their understanding of God. For the longest time in the two millennia since Christ, these bridges were primarily male. This issue showcases women theologians.

Therefore, this issue is dedicated to Ann Loades (1938–2022), Professor Emerita of Divinity at Durham University. (The cover picture is of Dr. Loades being felicitated by the late Queen Elizabeth II.) Mimi Haddad, who was privileged to have Dr. Loades as her doctoral supervisor at Durham University, writes a tribute, admiring her for the enormously skillful bridge-building theologian she was.

We reproduce here Dr. Loades's St Andrews University School of Divinity 2022 Smith Lecture. In it, she tracks pioneering women

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theologians from the fourteenth-century Julian of Norwich onwards, showing how they made their contributions both while outside of and, later, from within academia.

Chongpongmeren Jamir presents Pandita Ramabai of India as the unorthodox theologian. Here was a scholar of two religious traditions, Hinduism and Christianity, who approached Christian theology, and more specifically Christology, as a quest for truth.

Jennifer Cox has brought her theological education to bridge into realities such as disability. In this article, she lays out side by side the identity markers of the community of faith in the Old Testament and New Testament to show how replacing the gendered marker (circumcision) with the gender-neutral marker (baptism) opens the doors to a concrete practice of egalitarian theology by way of women in leadership.

Juliann Bullock's sermon applies a theologically weighty metaphor of rebirth in John—a particularly feminine one. She insightfully points out how being born entails negotiating the narrow birth canal. Similarly, we cannot be born into the God's family unless we submit to being constrained within the narrowness of complete dependence on God, just as a baby depends on its mother for its birth.

Anna Morgan makes an intriguing case for how egalitarian theology rides on the back of successive feminist movements in the West. She uses the trends within Pentecostalism as a case study, showcasing women who bridged the Scriptural text and their cultural context through their vigorous leadership in matters both religious and social.

We pray that this issue of *Priscilla Papers* inspires us in our Kingdom service.

Together, side by side, in God's world.

Havilah Dharamraj
Editor

Editor: Havilah Dharamraj

Assistant to the Editor: Jeff Miller

Graphic Designer: Margaret Lawrence

President / Publisher: Mimi Haddad

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