



Editorial

The Spring 2018 issue of *Theology in Scotland* features three papers. The first paper was awarded the Fraser Prize for 2017. The author is Isaak Deman who is a student at the University of Leuven in Belgium. The essay was entitled: “From Big Bang to Heat Death? Theological Considerations on Modern Cosmological Issues”. The assessment of the Reading Panel acts as a preface to the essay.

In “The Nature and Purpose of Reason in Christian Theology: The 1952 Exchange Between Thomas F. Torrance and Brand Blanshard”, Alexander J. D. Irving returns to T. F. Torrance’s 1952 exchange of letters with Brand Blanshard. Aside from their reproduction in an earlier edition of this journal,¹ the paper argues that the letters are an under-utilized resource in understanding Torrance’s view of the nature and purpose of reason in Christian theology. The essay argues that perspectives from an earlier point in Torrance’s thought (1938–49) converge in these documents. The position Torrance adopted against Blanshard on the nature and the purpose of reason is further developed in his mature thought. Alexander Irving argues that there is a fundamental continuity in Torrance’s position on reason throughout his career. There is, however, significant development in the epistemological and theological sophistication with which he holds these convictions. For Torrance, reason is subordinate to reality and its purpose is to facilitate the conforming of the mind to that reality.

In an extended essay, “*Còmhraidhean*: Doing Local Theology in Argyll”, Kenneth R. Ross offers a valuable overview of conversations which continued over five years from 2012 to 2017. Those engaged in the discussions gathered at Glencruitten House, near Oban, to engage theologically with their own contemporary context. The initiative was prompted by a concern shared among a very loosely connected network of people based in Argyll. The common concern was a commitment to the Christian faith and an awareness that many today have no place for traditional understandings of faith in God or Christian discipleship. The central question became: how could this disconnect be overcome? How could a renewed connection be formed between the contemporary world and the realities to which Christian faith bears

witness? By the Spring of 2017, ten *còmhradh* (conversations) had taken place. A brief review of each is offered, revealing the chief concerns of the *còmhradh* and an indication as to how these have been addressed. The ten *còmhradh* were: Identifying Culture and Context; Faith and Friendship; Faith in Community; Faith and the Environment; Whither Scotland?; Believing in Business; Faith and National Identity; Argyll's Spiritual Landscape; After the Brexit Vote: Inclusion and Exclusion; and, lastly, Argyll, Faith and the Visual Arts. The conversations, as Kenneth Ross points out, offer a model of a 'dynamic interaction between gospel, church and culture' that Robert Schreiter offered as a definition of 'local theology'.²

Many of the discussions have, of course, been tentative and provisional, yet it is clear that a wider conversation needs to take place. The brief account of these conversations is offered in the hope that they may suggest points of engagement that will prove relevant elsewhere.

Ian Maxwell
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- ¹ See Iain and Morag Torrance (eds.), 'A Skirmish in the Early Reception of Karl Barth in Scotland: The Exchange Between Thomas F. Torrance and Brand Blanshard', *Theology in Scotland, Special Issue, In Memoriam: The Very Rev. Professor Thomas F. Torrance*, Vol. 16 (2011): 5–22.
- ² Robert J. Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1985), 22.