



Editorial

The papers in this issue concern two main theological themes:

1. Reformed preaching and 2. Cosmology.

Reformed preaching

In “The Theology of Preaching: A Reformed Perspective” Professor Paul Nimmo offers a concise yet comprehensive introduction to the early Scottish Reformed tradition of the proclamation of the gospel. The sections of the First Book of Discipline outlining the preaching of the Word are central to the vision of the Scottish Reformers, but that preaching is placed in the context of the theological understanding of the wider Reformed tradition. The faithful preaching of God’s Word is, in fact, a distinctive mark of the Church itself. In this tradition preaching is regarded as an *event* which lies beyond human capabilities, in that the Word of God, *is* Jesus Christ, the living Word, and Scripture *is* the testimony to him. God is, therefore, both the object *and* subject of preaching, and the preached Word, therefore, constitutes an instance of the *concursum Dei*. This, in turn, is dependent on a twofold presupposition – the activity of the Spirit in the preacher, and the activity of the Spirit in the congregation. Professor Nimmo reminds us, then, that whatever other circumstances may be, faithful preaching remains central to the life of the Church.

Cosmology

In this section, various cosmological theories are set in historical context and in relation to Christology. The first three papers presented here were given at the Scottish Church Theology Society Conference 2018 “Approaching the Mystery: Physics, Cosmology, Theology”. The following is simply a summary offered as a guide for readers.

The first two papers set cosmological studies in the context of historical development. In “From Newton to Einstein” Dr Robin Green introduces us to the central importance of Newton’s contribution for

our understanding of the physical universe, in establishing the basic principles of mechanics through his three laws of motion, and his formulation of the law of gravity. Earlier, Copernicus had challenged geocentric notions of the universe which had originated with Ptolemy, asserting instead that the Earth was part of a solar system. Following on from Copernicus, the work of Tycho Brahe, Johannes Kepler and Galileo Galilei built on this. Newton's main achievement was to draw these insights together in a theory of universal gravitation extending and developing Kepler's laws. The eighteenth century saw the development of celestial mathematics which resulted in the application of Newton's law of gravitation to the whole solar system. The work of Laplace was a key factor in this development. Other newly-discovered fundamental forces became the focus of scientific study from the late eighteenth century to the mid-nineteenth century. In particular, James Clerk Maxwell's work later in the nineteenth century brought about the unification of the theories of electricity and magnetism and anticipated the existence of electromagnetic waves. As the speed of light became the object of scientific interest, Einstein's scientific contribution in developing a general theory beyond the special theory of relativity is of central importance.

In "Religion and Science: The Search for a Likely Story" Professor David Fergusson draws our attention to the developing interaction between the study of religion and the natural sciences over the last thirty years. There are, of course, positive and negative reasons for this. Positively, the number of distinguished scientist-theologians has grown, and many leading scientists acknowledge the importance of ethical and political issues. On the other hand, negatively, there have been attacks on religion in the name of science. Ian Barbour offers a fourfold categorisation of these relationships: conflict, complementarity, dialogue, and integration. Perhaps the more popular majority view is that of complementarity. Science deals with the *what* questions, and religion the *why*. The best-known model of complementarity in this field is Stephen Jay Gould's notion of non-overlapping magisteria; this is a non-competitive account, which envisages a balancing of approaches. Again, T. F. Torrance provided a theological example which used all four models within a single approach. More recently, there have been theological and scientific

discussions concerning the *first cause*. The multiverse, a theory developed by Martin Rees, uses an anthropic approach to describe the delicate structure of the universe. Perennial questions remain, however. Why something and why order? Professor Fergusson argues for more functional, relational and holistic accounts of creation, other species and their place in divine providence, and points to the inclusiveness of Christ's redemption. It is important for theology to remain committed to dialogue with the scientific community. Many in the churches are aware of these arguments and discussions. It is important, therefore, that resources are made available to guide and foster this thinking.

The following two papers set cosmology in relation to Christology. In "Cosmology and Incarnation" Dr Chris Knight draws on insights from the Eastern Orthodox tradition, in which the theology of creation is linked to an understanding of creation, and philosophical naturalism, a leading feature of the modern science-theology dialogue. The science-theology dialogue was dominated until recently by questions about divine action, in particular the apologetic argument regarding design as a basis for theistic belief.

Regarding the early history of the debate, Dr Knight points out that theological responses to Darwin were not always antagonistic. In 1889, for example, Aubrey Moore had developed an argument for the immanence of God in nature. More recently, Barbour, Peacocke and Polkinghorne have defended the notion that God works, 'in, with, and under the laws of nature' in a type of causal relation. For his part Dr Knight develops a theistic interpretation of naturalism, or as he defines it, a 'strong theistic naturalism', arguing that it is possible to posit both a general divine providence, which includes special action on occasion, *and* an enhanced naturalism, in which new instantiations of the laws of nature take place. Dr Knight then draws on the Eastern Orthodox tradition for an understanding of the link between the act of creation and the incarnation in Christ, arguing for a pneumatological naturalism that effectively reverses the standard divine action theories. The concept of *sacramental potential* is at the heart of this approach, pointing towards 'the intrinsic sanctity or spirituality of all things ... their real nature.'

Mario Russo's paper, an entry for the Fraser Prize 2017, was commended by the Fraser Prize Reading Panel. In "How Soteriology Can Make Sense of Cosmology" Russo argues that in most of the literature on science and faith written from a theological perspective, theology is used to make sense of the natural world. Understanding the nature and character of the Creator gives Christians a framework for understanding creation. While this claim is rarely disputed, there is a lack of specific explanation as to how theology can make sense of the things we observe in nature; specifically, the relationship between theology and cosmology. By examining the wider literature on science and faith, as well as comparing the origins and development of the natural world with theological doctrine, this essay argues more specifically that the doctrine of sanctification has a valuable contribution to make. It is possible for theology to make sense of the natural world by offering a specific analysis of the potential structural similarities that exist between sanctification and cosmological evolution.

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Editor