



Editorial

There is a common theme that runs through this, the Spring 2011 issue of *Theology in Scotland*. The common theme is that of the life of the Church of Jesus Christ and its varied calling in relation to – proclamation, the Scriptures, and the wider context of society.

In his paper, Glenn Chestnutt reflects theologically on aspects of the current context of the Church of Scotland. Drawing on Karl Barth, Daniel Migliore and Mona Siddiqui, he prefigures a potentially enriching opportunity for reflection for the Kirk as it considers the truth claims of Islam. This, he argues, would not simply be a species of dialogue, but a genuine encounter, an authentic interaction.

Stuart Blythe uses the methodology of *performance* to analyse George MacLeod's open-air preaching. He points out that MacLeod's preaching was derived from a theology of the incarnation, and an understanding of the paradoxes and dichotomies of common human life. This preaching, Blythe suggests, was also a counter-performance in the context of outlooks and ideologies inimical to the gospel. The paper raises interesting issues related to preaching as performance, and the further question as to whether or not the life and work of the Church as a whole might now be better understood as a *counter-performance*.

In his stimulating paper Christian George approaches Charles Spurgeon's sermons in terms of *preached Christology*. That is, a Christology not confined to dogmatics but operative in preaching. If we want to know what a model of Christology might look like preached, here in Spurgeon's sermons we find it. This is because, as George says, for Spurgeon, true Christianity involved 'personally living with a personal Saviour, personally trusting a personal Redeemer, personally crying out to a personal Intercessor.' For those who preach, Spurgeon's sermons offer both a challenge – to proclaim, for example, the High Priesthood of Christ, the nature of His mediation, the range and depth of His intercession – and, at the same time, a model of how this might be done.

In regard to exegesis of the Bible, Niall Martin argues persuasively that we pause to think objectively about whether or not the Bible

contains only explicit teaching and instruction with regard to life. Accepting that there are, of course explicit teachings in the New Testament, he argues that the Scriptures can also be used to illuminate our thinking rather than to provide for regulated conduct. For example, with regard to the Law, Martin juxtaposes the fascinating story of Ruth with the approach of the Book of Ezra. What emerges is a much greater emphasis on contrast or dialectic in our Scriptural exegesis.

In his paper, developed from original work for the Presbytery of Edinburgh, David Denniston broaches the difficult but essential task of beginning to think theologically about the Church in our own immediate context. Though, in the past, there have been theologians who have reflected on the relative power and status of the Church in society – the work of Donald MacKinnon¹ springs to mind – more recently this has been a rather minor consideration amongst more dominant discourses. In this paper, however, Denniston explores the future of the Church as *a following of the Way of the Cross*.

Your thoughts

In this issue of *Theology in Scotland* we break new ground by setting up a trial blog for readers to comment. You are invited to respond to any of the above papers at the following blog:

www.kirkofield.com/TheologyinScotland

The blog will go online to coincide with the publication of this issue.

Ian Maxwell
Editor

¹ D. M. MacKinnon, *The Stripping of the Altars* (Fontana, 1969).