

Editorial

As Iain Torrance noted in the previous issue of this journal, editorials have quite deliberately not been a feature of the *Scottish Journal of Theology*. But in light of his and Bryan Spinks's retirement from their longstanding place at the top of the masthead, I think it appropriate not only to acknowledge – with more gratitude than I can express – Iain's generous and gracious welcoming of me into the role of editor, but also to say something about how I envision the journal going forward.

The quickest way answer to the latter question would be, 'More of the same!' For my willingness to serve as editor of the *Scottish Journal of Theology* was mostly due to its status as a leading voice in Anglophone Christian thought, known equally for its exacting standards of scholarly excellence and the extraordinary breadth of topics and perspectives reflected in its pages. If at the end of my term as editor, I am judged to have maintained that legacy, I will consider myself to have done very well indeed.

And yet I think something more than this can and should be said. If nothing else, one might ask by what right a journal now being led by an American Lutheran working at an English university can meaningfully be called the **Scottish** *Journal of Theology*. In answer to that question, I would note that at no point in the journal's history has its title been a sign of ethnic or geographic parochialism. On the contrary – and as stated by the founding editors, J. K. S. Reid and T. F. Torrance, in the opening sentence of the very first issue in 1948 – the journal was born of the conviction that 'theology is a task urgent upon the whole Church'. I would argue that the ongoing 'Scottishness' of the journal consists in this profoundly Reformed ecumenical sensibility: that because a Reformed theology worthy of the name must be *semper reformanda*, theological conversation must cross national and confessional boundaries, so that the church (as Reid and Torrance put it) 'may be perpetually brought under review and judgment, and at the same time receive correction and renewal'.

In order to achieve this end, I will strive to promote what Hans Frei called a 'generous orthodoxy'. It is important to interpret this phrase rightly. If orthodoxy is understood as 'right belief', then it is not well served by generosity, since (as theologians from Irenaeus in the 2nd century to James Cone in the 21st have argued) the church does itself no favours when it is generous to falsehood. But if (as the etymology allows) orthodoxy is understood as 'right praise', then it does not stand in tension with generosity. For the modes of praising God are many, and the task of the theologian is at bottom that of testing whether what the church says and does praises God

rightly, by examining how others seek in their words and deeds to glorify God – celebrating them when they succeed, and challenging them when their witness falls short. It is in that spirit that I hope the theological conversation carried on in this journal for well nigh seven decades will continue.

As I understand the editor's role in this process to be maieutic rather than magisterial, in closing I can do no better than to cite once more that inaugural editorial from 1948: 'It need hardly be said that no theological position is represented exclusively by the sponsors of this project, and that their one desire is that where difference of opinion exists truth may prevail'.

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