



Editorial

On the third of November this year the First Minister, Alex Salmond, opened a conference in Edinburgh to mark the 450th anniversary of the Scottish Reformation. Along with the conference, which was widely reported in the Scottish press, there was an ecumenical service at St Giles' Cathedral and a reception at Edinburgh Castle hosted by the Scottish Government. Guests included leaders and representatives of all of Scotland's main religious communities, academics and political leaders. At the conference, *Scottish Reformation – Marking the Legacy, Imagining the Future*, Mr Salmond took as his theme the educational benefits of the Reformation which, he said, have been vital to Scotland's development. To quote:

This historic anniversary offers everyone in Scotland the chance to celebrate the enduring legacy of the Reformation and the events that helped shape our nation. [...] The educational climate established by the Reformation has been vital to the development of the society we know today. The *First Book of Discipline* of 1560 led to the Act for Settling of Schools of 1696 in the Scottish Parliament and culminated in the establishment of Scotland's free, universal education system. I believe that Scotland's greatest invention, from which all the other inventions sprang, is public education.

This issue of *Theology in Scotland*, coinciding with the 450th anniversary of the Reformation also, in its own way, marks its legacy and imagines the future. The themes of legacy and future are present in all four of the articles in this issue. Marking the legacy of the Reformation, Professor Donald Macleod surveys later Scottish Reformed theology. This is, as he says, a wide field, with complex issues and personalities. His paper, however, offers a valuable survey of the Scottish Reformed theological tradition in Christology, the atonement, the doctrine of the Church, the notion of spiritual independence, and the relation of Christianity and science as understood theologically. We are introduced here to works of passionate and profound theological depth which are

of deep interest in themselves – the Communion Sermons of Samuel Rutherford, for example. There is much to intrigue and interest in this article.

We are delighted to be able to publish in this issue, for a wider readership, Professor Ian Hazlett's superb new version of the Scots Confession. The surprise here is that the Scots Confession, as Professor Hazlett points out, is not 'so absolutist, rigid or doctrinaire', but 'ad hoc, provisional and interim'. The chief aim in providing the new version, says Professor Hazlett, is 'to facilitate the reading of the text by younger generations who inhabit different language and theology worlds.' Alongside the Scots Confession itself, is an extremely valuable introduction which will guide readers in exploring the theological context of the Confession more extensively.

In his paper Professor David Fergusson introduces us to the topic of Calvin in Scotland, reviewing this field through doctrine, church, politics and society. The original vision of the Reformed Church of Scotland, says Professor Fergusson, is still important today and may, indeed, have something fresh to offer the Church in the discussion of current questions. Professor Fergusson is rightly critical of the rather ambivalent responses of the Scottish media to the history of the nation, manifested in jaded stereotypes of Calvin, Calvinism, the Reformation, etc. He looks forward to a re-apprehension or re-claiming of the Reformation in more positive or progressive terms.

After a brief history by way of background, Dr Finlay Macdonald invites us to view current issues in the Church of Scotland in the context of, and in continuity with, issues of its past. In essence, Dr Macdonald offers a theory which argues that structures and institutions manifest a continuity of principle or tradition which is evidenced in the recurrence of certain key issues, the church-state relation for example, but also present in other important areas. Dr Macdonald, by way of conclusion, offers a finely crafted discussion on issues of contemporary significance for the Church of Scotland and the relation of these to the still discernible principles which underlie them.

Ian Maxwell
Editor