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## EDITORIAL

This issue has a touch of the ‘modern’ about it. Of course there are herein copious references to the bible, Christian tradition (e.g. Augustine, Calvin) and the history of the Faith, but the emphasis falls on the 19th to 21st centuries. Essays on those ‘Victorian’ phenomena of David Livingstone and Classical Dispensationalism start us off. Then, reaching back into the early 20th but arguably as far as the Disruption of 1843, there is something on the balancing act of the Free Church of Scotland (and supposedly other cognate denominations in some other countries) in attempting to be a national church that is ‘in it’ but not completely of it, in being ‘for it’. Then we turn to two ‘issues’ that are not entirely new but seem extremely pressing in our century for the whole of our shared human existence as well as a Christian response with integrity and wisdom: the ecological ‘crisis’ and the nature of forgiveness.

And this is where Augustine would encourage Christians but also (and perhaps principally in their providential use of law as well as virtue) Christian rulers (not least when elected) to add their ethical efforts to make the society less evil than it otherwise would be. Robert Markus’ view of the saeculum as neutral space perhaps does quite not do justice to where Augustine saw the cosmic battle of the ‘sixth day’ continuing: not in heaven but on earth. Moreover, one might want to ask which sins are to be opposed rather than ‘sin’ in the abstract.

The idea of the church being distant just enough to be able to see the nation (echoes of Hugh McDiarmaid), the better to witness to it yet, without being so distant as to be unfamiliar—this is a large concern for all churches a century on from the issue of the Church and Establishment in Scotland. As I write, Scotland has just elected a new ‘Holyrood’ Parliament, leading to more of a multi-party system, while the Church of Scotland decides to pare its number of theological colleges down to one.

This journal is not intended to give some sort of bi-annual commentary on the state of the world or country we inhabit, but we do hope that some wisdom can be learned from the articles (and reviews) that follow, even as we expand our horizons.

One last thing: as will be obvious to most readers by now, both the Scottish Evangelical Society annual conference and the biennial Rutherford House-led Edinburgh Dogmatics Conference have ceased trading. It is our aim (at HTC) to run a conference in August of next year to draw some of the threads from both of these, so that an attendee might find something ‘biblical’, theological and ‘church-facing’, where practitioners

and scholars can come together and even, for a couple of days, be unable to tell each other apart.

*Mark W. Elliott,  
May 2026*