

EDITORIAL

Melbourne School of Theology hosted its inaugural *PARADOSIS* conference on 15 August 2016. The conference theme was “Jesus Christ – For us today” and the speakers discussed the person and work of Jesus Christ from various angles, ranging from New Testament studies and systematic theology to historical theology and even musicology.

I am delighted to present some of the contributions in this third issue of MST’s *PARADOSIS* journal.

Thomas Kimber, Senior Lecturer in Missional and Pastoral Theology at MST, kicked off the conference with some pastoral reflections on our union with Christ. In his essay, Kimber focuses on recent research on religion in America and Australia which suggests a growing belief in a God who is distant and uncaring. He counters any contemporary deistic notions by turning our attention to the person of Jesus Christ, God in flesh who came near and lived among us. With his distinct pastoral emphasis, Thomas Kimber encourages ministers of Jesus Christ to nurture their own life of intimacy with Jesus so that they can help others to experience the reality of Jesus as the healer of their soul, the healer of their relationships, the core of their identity and the purpose for their existence.

“Who Did Jesus Think He Was?” asks Greg Forbes, Department Head of Biblical Studies at MST. He puts forward the argument that Jesus operated with a demonstrable self-understanding in the Synoptic Gospels. Although rejecting popular conceptions of Messiah, Jesus saw himself as fulfilling this vocation in terms of the Suffering Servant, Forbes claims. Through a number of sayings and actions he also linked himself with divine Wisdom, and in some sense perceived himself as the embodiment of Wisdom. Whilst Jesus does not elaborate on his person in terms of a Nicene and post-Nicene Christology, Greg Forbes argues, he clearly understood himself to be the unique Son of God in a way that enabled him to share divine rule and prerogatives. In times where scholars (such as Bart Ehrman in his recent work, *How Jesus became God*, for instance) continue to raise doubts about Jesus’ self-understanding, Forbes’ essay is a much welcomed contribution to this debate.

Andrew Mitchell, MTh student at MST, presents a closer examination of some petitions of the Lord's Prayer (focussing in particular on Matthew 6:10, "Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.") He makes the case that – contrary to common understanding – the second petition of the Lord's prayer is actually a prayer for the eschatological ushering in of the kingdom of God. Mitchell argues that it cannot have the sense of a gradual coming of the kingdom. The third petition, he claims, is a prayer that God's sovereign purposes come about. It is not, as is often suggested, a prayer for the increase in obedience to God's will. Mitchell's valuable contribution offers a fresh perspective with a view to our understanding of this important New Testament passage.

Christoph Ochs, lecturer at Worldview Centre for Intercultural Studies (Tasmania), offers a fascinating investigation of the theological challenges Christians had to face from the very beginning. Ochs argues that listening carefully to the voices that question and object had significant impact on the articulation of theology. In like manner, Ochs contends, fresh theological insights come from making listening to today's voices a priority. His essay, "Facing Polemics Head On: Learning Christology 'From the Side'" offers much food for thought for our own apologetic endeavours today.

Our guest speaker from Canada, Bradley M. Penner, who serves as an Instructor in Theology for Prairie College and as an adjunct faculty member for Briarcrest Seminary, delves deeper into christological conundrums by investigating "The Kenotic Christology of P. T. Forsyth." P.T. Forsyth's Christology is unique amongst the plethora of opinions regarding the person and work of Jesus Christ, especially his understanding of the *kenosis* in which he believes the Son of God eternally determined himself to empty himself in the act of incarnation in Jesus Christ. Penner offers a fascinating exploration of Forsyth's focus on the moral, rather than metaphysical emptying of Jesus Christ which culminates in the crucifixion of Christ wherein God redeems humanity in this superlative moral act.

The Very Rev Andreas Loewe, Dean of Melbourne, has a special interest in combining theology and music, and especially the music of Johann Sebastian Bach. In his essay, "'Zeig uns durch deine Passion': The Christology of Bach's St John Passion," Andreas Loewe brings to life the theology of Martin Luther in the music of

J.S. Bach. I recommend reading Loewe's piece while listening to a recording of Bach's St. John Passion.

In my own contribution, which was originally presented at the Abraham Kuyper Conference in Princeton, NJ, earlier in 2016, I suggest a theological response to the contemporary refugee crisis. I focus mainly on the way this crisis has challenged Europe, and especially my homeland Germany. Dutch politician and theologian Abraham Kuyper (1837–1920) has put forward some significant arguments for Christian political engagement, which lend themselves to a powerful application in light of our refugee crisis today. I wish to challenge myself – and the reader – with this contribution and I hope that we will together grow in compassion and also concrete action with a view to alleviating the awful predicament of refugees.

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