

EDITORIAL

If the Lord opens the way, as we trust he will, I expect to write my next Editorial from the Eastern Cape of South Africa. My family and I are excited, if somewhat awed, that the Lord has called us to serve in Dumisani Theological Institute, with a particular emphasis on training and equipping the Xhosa-speaking churches of the Eastern Cape. I am pleased to say that, despite this unexpected relocation, I expect to be able to serve as Editor of the *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* for at least one or two more years and I hope that my new location will help to draw new contributors and fresh insights to the *SBET*.

The prospect of living, teaching and worshipping in an African context has heightened my awareness of the diversity of the Christian church at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Philip Jenkins' provocative book, *The Next Christendom*,¹ has highlighted the distinct shift in the centre of gravity of global Christianity to the south and the east, to the 'majority world' (to use a currently-favoured term). This should not surprise 'minority world' Christians (though I fear it does) since every human being is created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26), stands under the same just condemnation because of sin (Rom. 5) and needs to hear the same Good News of liberation in Christ Jesus. In the light of these universal realities, the Lord Jesus reveals to John that a great multitude 'from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages' will ultimately stand before the throne giving praise to the One who sits on the throne and to the Lamb (Rev. 7:9-10).

As my family and I go to South Africa, we will be described as 'missionaries'; a word which carries a whole host of connotations, both good and bad, depending on the experience of the one who hears it. Yet, in our present global situation, the church in the privileged 'minority world' must take account of the fact that our nations are not simply mission bases but also mission fields. The task of harvesting these fields is not simply that of the home churches either. 'The new global mission', in the words of the title of Samuel Escobar's recent book, is 'the gospel from everywhere to everyone'.²

¹ New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

² Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2003.

When we read of the numerous nations (Acts 2:9-11) represented by those who listened to Peter's sermon on that day when the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the disciples, we recognise that this was not the beginnings of the 'Gentile mission' – for the crowd were indeed all Jews – but we cannot help but wonder how many of the three thousand who were added to the church on that momentous day returned to their own homes with a burning desire to share the news they had come to understand. Likewise, what did the Ethiopian official have to say when he returned to his duties in Africa following his life-changing encounter with Phillip (Acts 8)? It would seem that right from the earliest days of the Christian church, the Lord used the people of the nations to reach the nations.

Yes, the words of the risen Jesus which we now know as 'the Great Commission' were originally spoken (probably in Aramaic) to Jews who were faced with the astonishing task of making disciples of 'all nations', yet with the astonishing promise of the presence of the risen Jesus with them all the way. Now, however, when these words address the people of God in French or Korean or Portuguese or Chinese or Afrikaans or Xhosa or in whatever translation, they call all of the Lord's people of the twenty-first century, of whatever nationality, to make disciples of all the other nations, and they offer exactly the same promise: that the personal presence of the risen Jesus will be with them as they go.

So my family and I look forward expectantly to 'going', but we go (I trust) not from a position of 'strength' to help those in 'weakness' but as participants in the global mission of the missionary God; fellow workers with those 'missionaries' from every nation where the Lord has his people who are called to make disciples of all other nations (including the post-Christian nations of Europe), with a sense of anticipation of standing around that throne and sharing in the multi-national, multi-lingual praise.

In this number

The opening article is by Professor Paul House of Beeson Divinity School, Alabama, whose previous publications have revealed his interest in the theological message of the OT Scriptures in their canonical shape. In this article, he examines the way in which the revelation of the character of Yahweh resonates throughout the OT.

Moving into the NT, Grant Macaskill, a Ph.D. student at the University of St Andrews, calls us to read Jesus' words in Matthew in a new light, against the backdrop of thought expressed in Jewish literature of the day and mindful of the present experience of many of the Lord's people in the modern world.

The writings of Dr N. T. Wright, the present Bishop of Durham, continue to stimulate reflection and debate. In our third article, Dr J. V. Fesko, an Orthodox Presbyterian Church minister and a visiting lecturer in Systematic Theology at Reformed Theological Seminary's Atlanta campus, examines Bishop Wright's view of the function of faith in Christ. We trust that this article will contribute to an ongoing respectful debate with Bishop Wright which will lead us all closer to understanding Paul aright.

Our fourth article is a historical study of George Barclay of Irvine, written by Dr Brian Talbot, Minister of Cumbernauld Baptist Church. In this study, Dr Talbot draws attention to the significance of Barclay as a pastor, as an enthusiast for mission at home and abroad and as a driving force for theological education and a Baptist Union.

Finally, Dr Tim Trumper contributes the first part of a two-part study which seeks to draw out the benefits of renewed attention to and appreciation of the Pauline doctrine of adoption.

I am grateful to these authors who have submitted their work for publication in *SBET* and to others like them whose work will appear in the future. I trust that these articles will not only prove interesting and stimulating but will also contribute to the strengthening of the church of Jesus Christ in Scotland and throughout the world.

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