

## EDITORIAL

To serve as an editor of a theological journal reminds one very forcefully of the communal character of Christian service. If others do not think, read, write and submit their work to me, then there is very little I can do by myself to provide our readers with a completed journal. Thankfully, I have not had that fearful experience recently! I trust that I will not have it in the future, either. I am very grateful to all those who share the gifts that God has given to them by writing for publication, specifically in *SBET*, but also elsewhere. When I think of how much I have learned from those authors who have taken the brave step of submitting their ideas to public scrutiny in print (a very daunting thing to do, as I now know all too well), I realise that I would be much the poorer if they had held back. They could have kept their learning to themselves and simply given the benefit to a small number of people who could listen to them speak face to face, but instead they made their ideas and research available to others throughout the world. Some, no doubt, have various motives for publishing – which of us, in fact, can claim that we do not have mixed motives? And there may well be various legitimate motives for publishing: identifying a particular idea as one's own; defending one's ideas against opposing views; fulfilling the requirements of an academic contract; etc. But to those whose motivation is fundamentally to seek to serve their Lord by using their gifts in writing I say: keep going! I hope to hear from many of you soon!

Some *SBET* readers may feel, however, that they have nothing to offer in terms of submission of articles to *SBET*. Where is your part in this ministry? Whether or not you ever submit an article (and don't rule out the possibility too quickly), let me encourage you to consider ways in which you can, indeed, contribute to this communal ministry.

Firstly, let me encourage you to pray for the authors who write for *SBET* and for the ministries in the midst of which they do their writing. Perhaps writing an academic article does not seem to be a matter for prayer but we must not give in to the dualistic tendency to believe that we must pray for the Lord's enabling and blessing for preaching and evangelism but that an author simply requires a good brain and resources for careful research. Perhaps some readers (although I can hardly believe it of *SBET* readers) hold the view that the academy is just a hindrance to the church and that there is no point in praying for it. If we hold such an attitude, we may

will get what we asked for! Pray that authors will be enabled to think clearly, write simply, state the truth boldly and disagree with others graciously. If we wish to see articles which will do the church good, let's pray for them.

Secondly, please pray for potential authors. That is, please pray that the Lord would raise up future writers. Ask that he would stir in the hearts of some, who may never have dreamt of writing an academic article, a desire to serve the church through research and writing and a commitment to submit to the whole process of training and study that will involve. The church throughout the world needs able teachers, but they don't spring up overnight. Pray now for the authors of the future.

Thirdly, will you support the ministry of *SBET*? I do not simply mean that you will pay your annual subscription fees (although please do) but that you will encourage others to read the journal and draw attention to its value (if that is how you regard it) whenever possible. If you have found material in the journal helpful, will you let us know and explain why it was helpful so that we can encourage more of the same? If you found material unhelpful, will you explain why graciously and constructively and accept that others may not share your opinion? If you think there are issues which *SBET* should address, will you let us know (and perhaps suggest someone who might tackle the subject well)?

Perhaps, to some, these requests do not seem appropriate in the pages of an academic journal, but this journal is self-consciously an *evangelical* journal; committed wholeheartedly to the gospel and to the church. We strive for the highest standards and for the good of Christ's church. Will you stand with me in seeking the best for *SBET* so that it may offer the best to the church?

### *In this number*

The opening article is the Finlayson Memorial Lecture, given by Professor John Webster of the University of Aberdeen at the Conference of the Scottish Evangelical Theology Society in April 2005. As indicated in the last *SBET*, this paper was the second of two lectures on the topic of 'Discipleship'. 'Discipleship and Calling' was published in *SBET* 23.2 (2005) and I am very pleased to see the companion paper, 'Discipleship and Obedience', in print now. I pray that, together, these articles will not simply provide readers with intellectual stimulation but will spur us on to follow the way of faithful discipleship.

It is a particular pleasure to welcome the contribution of Dr Claire Kaczmarek for several reasons. Firstly, Dr Kaczmarek has written an able historical study of Thomas Chalmers, a figure who still has great

significance for the church in Scotland. This study was presented in an earlier form at an international symposium on religion and politics at the Calvin Institute, Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA. Secondly, it is a delight to have an article by a female scholar in *SBET*, the first in many years, and I hope that the publication of this article will be an encouragement to other women to submit their work for publication. Thirdly, as a French woman, Dr Kaczmarek follows in the footsteps of Professor Henri Blocher in providing a valuable contribution to *SBET* from continental Europe.

The third article is part one of a two-part study of the nature of Christ's obedience by Dr Daniel Kirk, of Biblical Seminary, Hatfield, PA, in the USA. Dr Kirk takes an exegetical approach to the question of whether New Testament references to Jesus' obedience relate to his whole earthly life or solely to his death on the cross.

Our fourth article is written by the Revd Dr Andy Saville, who is Assistant Minister, All Saints, Fordham and Eight Ash Green, Essex. Dr Saville wrote his doctoral thesis for Coventry University on Annihilationism, and in this article he presents a clear discussion of the doctrinal arguments for this view, together with counter-arguments.

I wish to thank these authors for their work and for offering the results of their research to *SBET*. May these articles be read widely and carefully for the glory of God and the good of his church.

*Alistair I. Wilson*