

## EDITORIAL

In this editorial I wish to draw *SBET* readers' attention to two recent publications which have considerable significance for the life and witness of the church in our global context.

Firstly, Dr Christopher J. H. Wright, the International Director of Langham Partnership International, has published an important book entitled, *The Mission of God* (Leicester: IVP, 2006). In this substantial book, Wright challenges the notion that 'mission' or 'missions' is given a 'biblical basis' by a select number of isolated texts such as Matthew 28:16-20. Rather, he claims, 'Mission is what the Bible is all about; we could as meaningfully talk of the missional basis of the Bible as of the biblical basis of mission' (p. 29). Drawing on a qualified use of the established missiological phrase, *missio Dei*, Wright argues that the Bible is about God with a mission. That is, God has a distinct purpose and he has chosen to reveal himself and that purpose in the Bible. To limit our understanding of mission to the texts which speak of cross-cultural mission is to focus, he says, on what 'we do'. Once we see the Bible's 'grand narrative' as God with a mission, however, we can also see humanity with a mission, Israel with a mission, Jesus with a mission and the church with a mission (pp. 62-8). Thus a missional reading of the Bible does not do away with the need for cross-cultural mission; rather, these efforts are given greater significance as they are seen within the context of an overarching narrative of God's mission. We are called to participate in God's mission.

Devoting careful attention to this book may have the effect of broadening our concept of mission and thus highlighting the fact that all of the Lord's people are called to be involved in God's mission. Purchasing this book will have another positive benefit. All the royalties from the sale of this book have been assigned to Langham Literature, a ministry designed to provide books for students, pastors and teachers in the majority world. Thus, when you purchase this book, you are contributing to the task of providing more adequate resources for those who seek to preach God's word with only minimal library resources. This is a serious book and it is not an afternoon's read (581 pages), but it is written with clarity and should be accessible to most serious readers. It is well worth the effort.

The second publication is the *Africa Bible Commentary* (Nairobi/Grand Rapids: Word Alive/Zondervan, 2005). This major publication represents the fruit of the work of the Langham Partnership International and others who have sought to foster biblical scholarship in the majority world. This one-volume commentary is distinctive in that it is written entirely by African scholars and reads the text ‘contextually’, that is with open recognition that the social context of the African scholars has a notable impact on the questions they ask the text and their interpretation of the text. The commentary is based on serious scholarship, but it is not an academic commentary and the comments fall somewhere along the continuum from exegesis to exposition, depending on the particular author. This book provides preachers and pastors in Africa with much-needed help in preaching and applying the Bible appropriately for their context.

Perhaps some *SBET* readers will ask, ‘Why should I be interested in this volume? I am not an African and I do not live or minister in Africa.’ Let me suggest two reasons why churches and individuals in the UK or the USA or other ‘Western’ nations should consider purchasing and reading this commentary. First of all, reading this commentary will help to remind us that we are part of a single worldwide church and that we have much to learn from each other. Seldom will a British preacher think that he has nothing to learn from an author simply because he or she is American. Why, then, would we adopt such an attitude with respect to African authors? We can expect to gain new insights into the meaning and significance of the text of Scripture by listening to African interpreters whom God has raised up to teach his church (not just the African bit!). Secondly, reading this book, and particularly some of the short thematic studies, will highlight some of the pressing issues which Christians in Africa face. Of course, some of these issues are similar to issues faced by Christians around the globe (though sometimes with distinctive nuances) but others are specific to the particular African countries out of which the authors write. The more we understand the challenges our brothers and sisters face, the more effectively we can pray for them.

Literature has the potential to open our minds and our hearts to issues and people and places we have never considered before. Let me encourage you to read these volumes and to dare to see what God will bring about in your life through them.

*In this number*

I am pleased to offer five articles for *SBET* readers to engage with in this issue.

The first article comes from Dr Geoff Grogan who has been a central figure in the Scottish Evangelical Theology Society for many years and who has been having a particularly productive ministry in writing in his 'retirement'. One of his projects has been a theological commentary on the Psalms and, while we await with anticipation its publication, we can benefit from Geoff's reflections on the task of writing a commentary. This will be useful, not only as an insight into the issues that motivated Geoff in his writing, but also as a means of reflecting on the task of commentary writing in general. It is a real pleasure to open this issue with a contribution by a fine scholar, a longtime friend of *SBET*, and a faithful servant of Jesus Christ and his church.

The second article builds nicely on the first by reflecting on the use of the Psalms in the opening chapters of Acts as a test case for the whole task of biblical theology. The author, Dr Jamie Grant of the Highland Theological College in Dingwall, draws on his research on the canonical shaping of the Psalms and also his strong interest in the fruitful resurgence of the discipline of biblical theology to provide a stimulating study which will aid reflection on the manner in which the early Christian community read the Psalms in particular and the Old Testament in general.

In the third article, David Gibson, a doctoral student at the University of Aberdeen, provides a careful exegetical study of the footwashing incident recorded in John 13 with a view to reconsidering the extent to which John seeks to present a theology of the death of Jesus.

The fourth article is also by a doctoral student, this time from the University of Edinburgh. William Schweitzer draws on his research on Jonathan Edwards in this lively paper which was originally presented to the Theological Society of the Free Church of Scotland College, Edinburgh. Schweitzer not only reflects on Edwards' challenge to the historical issue of Deism, but also suggests that there are aspects of the debate which demand attention in the twenty-first century church.

Finally, we have a biographical study of Claudius Buchanan by Dr John Ross, Minister of Greyfriars Free Church in Inverness, Scotland, and formerly General Secretary of Christian Witness to Israel. Ross highlights the significant role played by Buchanan in the development of modern Jewish missionary activity and agencies.

I hope that you will enjoy these essays and benefit richly from the work of our authors, to whom we are very grateful.

*Alistair I. Wilson*