

## Editorial

### Mark Elliott

There have been encouraging signs, in Britain at least, of Christian scholars who believe that the Bible is crucial for and relevant to today's world obtaining prestigious positions where they can teach it. We need only think of the Professors of Hebrew Bible in Oxford and Cambridge. We are however aware that in a pan-European setting this is somewhat exceptional. Even in Britain, one wonders how much influence biblical theology and the gospel's message exercises on present cultural and ideological debates, how much it gets out of the commentaries on the shelf into the comment page of the news press. Whereas in Germany, for all the problems that 'minorities' (evangelicals, non-conformists, women...) have in securing professorships, there are at least Christian newspapers: while in Italy the power of the Catholic church means that through (e.g.) *Famiglia Cristiana* biblical values and world-views get some amount of showcasing. It would be interesting to learn of more attempts in European countries where a thoughtful and 'inculturated' Christian message is heard through well-produced and well-distributed media. Yet this is not quite the same thing as taking the message into the heartland of the culture. Something ought to be said in response to the poor treatment the gospel often receives from the likes of *Der Spiegel*, *Le Nouvel Observateur* and *The Guardian*.

Among the pages which follow, Vinoth Ramachandra gives an account of the West and European influence on the world from a non-western (at least in part) viewpoint. We hope to follow this

in later numbers with some European analyses of what it is to be European and Christian. One of these has already been commissioned, but I would welcome offers of more papers on this theme. That is not to forget our foundational strength in biblical studies, as represented by the contributions of Eberhard Hahn and Christoph Stenschke to this number (while Ján Henzel delivers some thought-provoking theses concerning election, justification and sanctification).

One senses that the way ahead is to combine heavy, high-grade theological scholarship with a clear communication (or even popularising) of the results. Is there, for example any demand for a Webpage through which European Evangelical Theologians could inform each other, and even discuss? The North American Evangelical Theology Society has what it calls a 'bulletin board', although when I clicked on the link, nothing happened. It would be insulting to say that this is symptomatic, but if there is a weakness in evangelical theology it is in its failure to think, discuss and dialogue. Iron sharpens iron. The number of historical and systematic-theological textbooks are small, partly because staff and students in theological education do not want to have to think too hard. The attempts to do apologetics or theologies of culture are on the increase, but often have more to say about explaining what postmodernism or critical theory is, than applying theology to culture, or even knowing what our theology is. So what are we going to do about it?