

## Editorial

### Mark Elliott

One of the tasks of public theology (see the previous volume of *EJT*) is to know how to speak of Christian beliefs and values in the setting of the challenge of other religions. It may seem that to have a journal that seems to promote European theology, even while attempting to be evangelical might unconsciously take the Gospel with all the European cultural layers which have built up during the centuries. One way of approaching the matter is say, that of Hans Küng's search for a *Weltethos*, to affirm a common religious project which might show up just where Western does not mean Christian. Of course there is truth and wisdom in such a method. The different approach of Pope Benedict XVI is to keep a distance of respect for other religions as very much 'other' and to focus on a European Christian inheritance, but to do this self-critically. This Eurocentricity might seem worrying, since as Cardinal he used to insist on the European provenance of ideas which affected the church of the time, notably Marxism on South American Liberation Theology. Everything was European. To counter this, we should perhaps not argue that the Gospel is more middle Eastern than it is European, but we do well to remember that it is neither.

On the day of the terrorist attack on London (7 July, 2005) Bundeskanzler Gerhard Schroeder spoke of how 'our' values were stronger than 'theirs', and that this meant 'we' would overcome. The 'we' was those who affirmed the world system as it stood, the 'they' – those who sought to challenge this by violence. The G8 is an economic forum; the EU is based on economy. A recent work from the Netherlands called *Atlas of European Values* (Leiden: Brill, 2005) has sections on Europe, Family, Work, Religion, Politics, Society and Well-Being with subsections such as 'Unconditional love' 'Work ethos' 'Importance of God' 'Post-materialism' 'Reasons for neediness' (coming after Tolerance and Solidarity) and 'In control of your life'. In a less optimistic tone Joseph Ratzinger (as was) in his *Werte in Zeiten des Umbruchs* (Herder, 2005) has suggested that greed, corrup-

tion and the commodification of persons in labour markets or genetic experimentation follow when the 'bottom line' for agreement and common cause in Europe is a mere economic one. Ratzinger proposed a form of a natural theology that could survive the loss of a common belief in Revelation since the Enlightenment. As the greatest good and guarantor of the human rights (which includes the right not to be treated as a means to an end), a belief in the Creator God should be proclaimed in the public sphere. But the author who would become Pope four months after this book was published believes in an old Christian Europe as dreamed of by Adenauer and Schumann, and remembers the Second World War in a way that the German Bundeskanzler for one, would want Europe to forget and move on. There is also some blindness in the Catholic vision (with all its referencing to Maritain and Spaemann) towards Protestantism in its conservative form: American free church religion is viewed as too fragmented to stand up to the capitalist pragmatism of the New World; English-speaking theology since Newman not worth considering.

One should notice the very considered tone of the Italian Alleanza Evangelica's *Comunicato stampa sull'elezione di Benedetto XVI*. There is a request to the new Pope to reconsider Papal authority and bishops as the mark of the church, since the political stature of his predecessor John Paul II caused evangelicals to worry about the 'neutrality' of the Italian state. How the new Pope will engage with Protestants remains to be seen, but some of the first signs are not discouraging. There is an opportunity for evangelicals and Catholics to meet on historic 'Nicene-Chalcedonian' orthodoxy, without pretending to agree on other matters.

But in all this the question of 'other religions' and 'the wider world' perhaps has been obscured. Islam is not seen in its most positive light due to Al-Qaeda, and this world-wide horror may only encourage reaction, such as the banning of headscarves from French classrooms. The justice of the war in Iraq seems long forgotten, with the Euro-

peans who opposed it motivated more by concern about American hegemony than about innocent Iraqis. And the Indian and Far Eastern religions are too other-worldly for them to appear as problems. The Pope like most of us is not really all that interested in other religions, but wants to keep them at a distance and will not repeat the 'experiments' of John Paul II at Assisi. The Pope's enemy is secularism and alliances have to be forged in the Christian truth. The issue is intra-European. This means starting with Europe not because it matters more or less than the USA (as seems to come across in President Bush's policy-making) but because it is where the heart of even the worldwide Catholic church is. We too who are European Evangelicals, we have to start 'at home' and move outwards. Can a European understand the Middle East or Africa without first understanding Europe?

The urgency seems especially clear in the case of Eastern Europeans moving to find work in Western Europe. What kind of welcome will the Church have for them, not least for those who migrate on a seasonal basis? Will there be outreach, help with language, spiritual comfort of a type that will not look too unfamiliar to them? The Church in mission does not ignore its own problems, but witnesses that however serious these are, the hope in Christ is greater and that the lowliest evangelical theologian can play a part in His kingdom coming. This can only give depth and authority when God's people in Europe speak out about the Middle East and further beyond. A respect for the otherness of say, Islam, must be combined with a love for the people of those lands such as to take a deep interest in them and their fortunes under the merciful Providence of God.

## ERRATUM:

Please note that the first article in Volume 14, Number 1 (Church and State: The Contribution of Church History to Evangelical Models for Public Theology, by Professor A.T.B. McGowan, Highland Theological College, Scotland), incorrectly carried the wrong summaries. The correct summaries are given below:

### SUMMARY

The argument of this paper is that the Christian church has a right to a place in the public square, on the basis of a proper understanding of the relationship between Church and State, as taught in Scripture. The various historical options for a church/state relationship are considered, concluding in favour of the calvinistic model, as seen particularly in the history and theology of the Church of Scotland. Various problems relating to this view are explored and, finally, some implications are drawn for us as Europeans.

### ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Die Argumentation dieses Artikels lautet, die christliche Kirche habe aufgrund eines angemessenen Verständnisses der Beziehung zwischen Kirche und Staat, wie sie die Bibel lehrt, ein Recht auf einen Platz in der Öffentlichkeit. Die verschiedenen historischen Optionen zur Beziehung zwischen Kirche und Staat werden betrachtet und ein calvinistisches Modell, wie es in der Geschichte und Theologie der Church of Scotland sichtbar ist, wird schlussendlich bevorzugt. Verschiedene, dieser Ansicht anhaftende Probleme werden untersucht und abschließend werden einige Implikationen für uns als Europäer aufgezeigt.

### RÉSUMÉ

L'auteur tente de montrer que l'Église chrétienne a le droit d'avoir sa place dans la sphère publique sur la base d'une compréhension adéquate de la relation entre l'Église et l'État telle que cela est enseigné dans l'Écriture. Il considère les modèles divers de relations entre l'Église et l'État que l'on rencontre au cours de l'histoire et conclut en faveur du modèle calviniste tel qu'il se rencontre, en particulier, dans l'histoire et la théologie de l'Église d'Écosse. Il examine de nombreux problèmes liés à ce point de vue et, finalement, propose des implications pour les chrétiens d'Europe.