

Editorial

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When *Theology and Ministry* launched in 2012, it was in advance of the field in its commitment to publishing freely available online articles. The field of academic publishing is an ever-evolving scene, and has changed dramatically in recent years. This change was not prompted by the coronavirus pandemic, but has been accelerated by it. Most journals had already moved towards producing online as well as print content, and some have subsequently ceased print altogether. Meanwhile, the availability of eBooks and the quality of their interface has increased dramatically. For both books and journal articles, a major development is the advent of open access publishing as a mainstream option, enabled by funding body requirements and publisher agreements with educational and research institutions. In the sciences, Plan S promises to radically transform the availability of research articles, to the benefit of the global research community. Similar moves are afoot in the humanities and social sciences, where this journal finds its home. New technology always carries revolutionary and democratizing potential (just as it also creates new possibilities for oppression and abuse); in this case, the combination of internet with major open access initiatives promises to transform access to knowledge and research for all, as both contributors and recipients, including in the majority world.

The growth of open access means that new criteria and principles have been developed. The 'gold standard' has a number of stipulations, and we have reviewed and updated *Theology and Ministry's* website and processes to match these. From this issue onwards, authors retain copyright of their articles, which are published under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license (CC BY 4.0). This license allows anyone to share and adapt the work, so long as attribution to the original author and publication details is given. As previously, we have no article processing charges so authors do not pay to publish with us. This also seemed a good moment to refresh the journal's style and appearance, and we have aimed for a look that is consonant with our academic standards and at the same time modern and accessible in keeping with our focus on ministry. Going forward, there are a number of further developments planned, including registration with key indexes to make articles more visible through mainstream research databases; retrospective attention to previous issues to bring their license and copyright status in line with our new policy; an



expanded consultant editorial board; and renovation of the website. We remain committed to publishing at least one issue each year. In all of this, our core goal of bringing high quality, peer-reviewed research to the widest possible audience in both church and academy remains central and unchanged.

Turning to the contents of this issue, we begin with historical theology: in 'Homiletics in the Classroom and the Pulpit', James Halstead explores the interface between Bonhoeffer's homiletical theory and his actual practice in sermons. Halstead draws attention to the fundamentally theological nature of Bonhoeffer's preaching, showing that it is the presentation of who Christ is for us today that keeps preaching real. Daniel Pratt Morris-Chapman in 'Aldersgate Today?' offers a philosophical defence of the validity of religious experience, drawing primarily on the work of William Alston whilst illustrating this with the well-known and archetypal experience of John Wesley at Aldersgate.

The next pair of articles present the results of empirical research, which is increasingly recognized as an essential part of theological research in general, and especially as it touches ministerial practice. Greg Smith presents and analyses data from a number of surveys in recent years, which offer a window into 'The Ordinary Theology of British Evangelicals', highlighting differences between normative evangelical theology as described classically by David Bebbington and the everyday beliefs of evangelical believers. In 'Being Good Neighbours', Michael Hirst offers close statistical analysis of the placement of Methodist manses and explores what he argues is a significant potential domain of mission which is currently largely overlooked.

Our final pair of articles turn to the ever-pertinent question of forgiveness: a central plank in any Christian theology, yet one which needs to be handled with great care. Jennifer Loop in 'Preventing Abusive Theology' explores how the reality of child sexual abuse complexifies theological portrayals of forgiveness, and argues that greater nuance and wider resources are required in theologizing forgiveness if such discourse is to avoid becoming abusive in itself. In 'Forgiveness is Not the Answer', Owen May explores the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through a case study of a specific instance of wrongdoing, and argues that cruciform solidarity can bring about aspects of healing that forgiveness cannot.

In book reviews, we carry an extended review article of William Brown's *Handbook to Old Testament Exegesis* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2017) by Richard Briggs, who both highlights the achievements of that volume and also explores more generally the nature of teaching people to read the Bible – which is as much about forming readers as it is about conveying method. We also have two reviews of recent books on diverse but equally important topics: African American readings of Paul, and church growth in the North of England.

It is as ever a pleasure to offer these important studies for the consideration and benefit of church and academy. We wish to thank our contributors, and also our editorial board and anonymous peer reviewers.