

Editorial

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This issue of the *Journal of European Baptist Studies* is published at the end of the year 2024, which has marked the celebration of the 75th anniversary of the International Baptist Theological Seminary, now the International Baptist Theological Study Centre (IBTS Amsterdam). The journal is the biannual publication of the Centre and has appeared for twenty-four years, since 2000. This issue contains nine articles from a wide range of topics and research areas, from biblical hermeneutics to Christian education and Baptist history. This, no doubt, reflects the variety of authors who contribute to the journal, forming a network of scholars who — in their turn — are part of the research community that IBTS strives to develop and strengthen.

A research community is important. IBTS has defined its mission as not only offering a PhD programme, but as building contacts and academic relationships between Baptist scholars or scholars whose work helps to enhance European Baptist studies in the wide sense of the word. One might use the expression ‘baptistic studies’, if preferred. The journal is one avenue where these relationships are deepened and ideas are discussed. This is why *JEB S*, besides printed copies for subscribers, is open access as soon as the issue is published (jebts.eu).

This issue begins with a question: ‘What is normative for British Baptists?’ The author, Anthony Clarke, argues that the answer should be sought from the multi-dimensional confession ‘Jesus is Lord!’ What this means — in the life of the churches and individuals, and in the document the *Declaration of Principle* — and what conclusions may be drawn when different hermeneutical keys are used, is the focus of this article. No doubt, readers from different countries can make some comparisons with their own context. The second article, by Einike Pilli

and Meego Remmel, turns to Baptist education and mission, analysing the Estonian Free Church Theological Seminary project to help students become more missional and increase their ability to be involved in a meaningful dialogue with secular society. Recently, the Seminary developed a master's programme 'Theology and Society'. The story of this process, with its theoretical background and practical implications, shows how missional efforts, curriculum development, and problem-based learning can work together in preparing future leaders, offering them tools for Christian witness in a secular environment. The third article in this volume is also a reminder of the Baptist central conviction of mission. However, this piece of research uses an historical approach. Brian Talbot discusses Scottish Baptist overseas mission efforts in the late twentieth century and describes changes in overseas missionary ministries by the end of the century. While evangelism, church planting, educational and medical work remained important, 'there was now a greater emphasis on alleviating suffering and injustice and in development work'.

Baptists, whatever their theological challenge, have always tried to bring the Bible as a guidance into their discussions. This is why it is only to be expected and welcome that one article in this issue is devoted specifically to the interpretation of a biblical text. Ksenija Magda demonstrates how re-reading Matthew 18 and 19 with an historical critical methodology may broaden the readers' ethical view on reconciliation and forgiveness, avoiding, however, increasing the abuse of victims. She gives the reader a warning: quick solutions for complicated issues, forced on the victims by the power of the church or their formal leaders, may cause more harm than healing.

The next two articles offer glimpses into the life of Slavic Baptists, both using an historical method. Constantine Prokhorov gives a survey of the life and ministry of Gavriil Mazaev (1858–1937), a Baptist leader who came from a Molokan family and later considerably shaped Siberian Baptist life as a leader, organiser, and evangelist. The author also unfolds an historical narrative about Mazaev's several imprisonments, and finally his death under the Soviet repressive authorities. The other historical piece of research takes the Ukrainian

Baptist story in the Orthodox context as its main subject. Roman Shvets focuses on Ukrainian Baptist and Orthodox relations from 1917 to the present day. The author is convinced that even if there have been different phases in their mutual understanding and misunderstanding, there has been a move towards more positive dynamics, particularly during Soviet times when all churches were ‘in the same boat’. Under the Communist and atheistic regime, all churches were persecuted in one way or another. Nevertheless, as the author argues, negative experiences have not fully disappeared from Baptist and Orthodox relations, and there is still a long way to go towards respect and appreciation from both sides.

Leslie Francis, Bruce Fawcett, and others have published a study in the field of the empirical psychology of religion that explores personal, psychological, and religious factors shaping attitudes towards sexuality and substances among young Canadian Baptists and their leaders. The data showed that young Baptists and their leaders had similar attitudes towards sexuality, but that young Baptists held stricter positions than their leaders on the use of substances. The study confirmed the centrality of intrinsic religiosity in shaping attitudes within both moral domains of sexuality and substances.

The last two articles in this issue of *JEB S* continue a discussion that began some years ago between Kegan Chandler and Stephen Holmes. To what extent were the early General Baptists theologically orthodox in their views on the Trinity and Christology? The published articles can be seen as a good example of an academic debate, illustrating challenges and questions a researcher in history meets when analysing written evidence from the past and the theological context where this evidence is found. The journal thanks both authors for the thorough academic conversation!

The book review section in this *JEB S* issue includes ten reviews, summarising the contents of the publications and giving a fair account of their merits. They demonstrate in a concise form the ways in which the books evaluated could be helpful in research, teaching, and learning. The book review section is an integral part of *JEB S*, and contributions come from three main sources: IBTS students, IBTS teaching staff and

research fellows, and the wider community of pastors and theologians. The journal strives to review volumes that are related to IBTS's three research areas: identity, practice, and mission. In libraries there are sometimes displays of recent acquisitions. *JES* book review section is something similar, offering quick and annotated access to the main ideas of the recent literature in the field of baptistic studies.