

# From the Chairperson

## Rev Dr Tom Cassidy OP

Dear members and friends of the ATF,

This is my last letter to you as Chair of the ATF Limited. I will be resigning as Chair at the December 2007 Board meeting. Since I complete my term of office as Provincial of the Dominican Friars in December this year, I am uncertain about my location in 2008 and beyond. So it seems prudent that I resign. At the December Board meeting a Chair will be elected to complete my three year term, after which a new election will be held.

During my 5 years of involvement with the ATF much has changed. In 2004 we went through a major review and decided to remain an independent body, and to become a company rather than continue as an incorporated body. The changes involved a new constitution, a new structure and a new name, Australasian Theological Forum. The name change is the result of a growing internationalisation of the Board and its committees. Murray Rae of Dunedin is a recently appointed Board member, and Tim Meadowcroft of Auckland is now a member of the Editorial Board of Interface.

Another area of growth is in the quantity and quality of our publishing. Our aim since ATF began has been to run conferences and publish books. These twin aims continue. We are averaging one conference or theologically based gathering each year and are currently publishing on average 10 books per year. The markedly improved quality of our publishing has been an important step in our being recognised by many as the leading religious publisher in the region.

Over the course of the previous 2 years our offices have moved from the home of Hilary Regan and his wife Sally Nobbs to a series of rooms at the Adelaide College of Divinity (ACD). This has been a very significant step, and many thanks are due to the ACD for their generosity in offering this space at a very cheap rent. This move and the increase in cash flow has enabled us to employ more part-time staff, all of whom do far more work than is covered by their salaries. Thank you Astrid Sengkey, Wendy Baker, Meredith Hodgetts, Alan Cadwallader and Di Thiele for your dedicated service to the ATF.

2007 has seen major changes to the ATF web sites, which are well worth your inspection. We have also begun a revamp of the on-line book review, the ATBR. We are grateful to the staff of the ACD for their assistance in this project: Rosemary Hocking, Marie Turner and Vicky Balabanksi and Paul Babie. Paul, an ATF Board member and lecturer in law at Adelaide University, has recently joined this group. Craig Thompson from Melbourne deserves special thanks for his contribution in contacting those who write the reviews.

The ATF will begin a new period of expansion in 2008. For the last few years we have been marketing and selling our books overseas. In Australia we have had

the services of Rainbow Books as our distributor. We have also sold many books directly to you our members and friends, especially at book launches. In 2008 we will open a bookshop at the Adelaide College of Divinity where we will sell not only our books but course texts for the ACD.

In March 2008 we will have a number of new books launched during the Adelaide International Writers Week. Next year will also see us begin a number of co-publications with other international publishers, and translations of books from English into other languages and some foreign translations into English. Please keep an eye on Nexus for more information about this.

The ATF Book Prize and Essay Prize are continuing this year. Judges have begun their work on books published in 2007. Recently the Board awarded the 2006 Essay Prize to Martin Wright of Melbourne. Essays for the 2007 Prize can be accepted up to the 30 November 2007. The web site has more details.

2007 has been a year of conferences as well as publishing. There is a final conference, the Task of Theology Today VI, in Canberra in November. Information about this will be sent to you, and Nexus is a source of further details.

To all members and friends of the ATF, we offer our apologies for the lateness of the May edition of Interface which will be coming to you in the next few weeks. The October edition will come to you in November!

We have good reason to be more confident of the future development of the ATF with the establishment of a Capital Endowment Fund. To date we have close on \$50,000 in this fund. Our aim is to have \$500,000 or more in the next few years. The interest from this fund will be used to assist us with various projects and to pay a just salary to Hilary Regan, our Executive Officer, who has worked virtually voluntarily for an average of 40 -50 hours per week for the last 14 years. In 2008 we will be able to tell you more about the Fund and the Literary Trust who are its administrators.

In conclusion, I would like to thank you all for the support you give to the ATF. We need members who contribute their membership fees and purchase books direct from us. This enables the ATF to pay the wages of our staff and the bills that keep arriving. But we also need the encouragement you give us through your interest in the work of the ATF. I have found, as I am sure you have, that there is great satisfaction in being involved in an organisation which is achieving so much in making available a forum where Christians can dialogue with each other about the important issues in our lives.

Tom Cassidy OP  
Chair of the ATF Board of Directors.

