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Editorial

Renewal

Churchman enters the new year with a new editor and a largely new editorial board, representing the best in evangelical Anglican scholarship and commitment today. There is always a certain air of expectancy and some degree of hesitation when a new team takes over: will the journal improve or decline? The present change is of special interest because it has been widely reported in the press, and there are some who believe that it heralds a major change of policy and content. Time will tell to what extent these fears—or hopes—are justified, but it is important to state at the beginning what the policy of the journal will be in the eyes of those who are primarily responsible for it.

First, it cannot be emphasized too strongly that *Churchman* is an organ of *evangelical* opinion within the Church of England and the Anglican Communion. There are those who are confused about the meaning of this term, but to us it is perfectly clear what is meant. We are a journal determined to uphold the faith of the church as expressed in the Scriptures, the Catholic creeds, the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, and the *Book of Common Prayer*. But we are not antiquarians—this deposit of faith must be matched by a lively concern for the souls of men and women, for the preaching of the gospel, and for the spread of true religion in every aspect of our life. This voice is easily dismissed in the church, and lately its spokesmen have been confused about what it might all mean. But we believe that Bible-based Christianity is as relevant today as it has ever been, that the gospel is as compelling in our time as it was in the first century, or as it was at the time of the Reformation.

Second, *Churchman* is a *scholarly* journal, determined to uphold the highest standards in its articles, book reviews and general outlook. Too often evangelicals have been accused of not doing their homework, of presenting a shoddy case beside liberals or Catholics. We believe there is some truth in this, but that it is a failing in ourselves, not in what we believe. We have a challenge before us to present the faith in a sober and justifiable way, but also in a way which remains faithful to the spirit of biblical prophecy.

Third, *Churchman*, as its name suggests, is an *ecclesiastical* journal. We want to speak to the church and in the church. We do not, and cannot, claim a monopoly on truth, but we are convinced that we have a message which needs to be heard in synods and assemblies today. Our articles will reflect a concern for the living church, and for the issues which confront us daily.

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Fourth, *Churchman* is an *evangelistic* journal. We are concerned not only to present but to persuade—to lead others to an acceptance of the truth of Scripture and the need to apply it today. Modern evangelicals have grown slack and impractical; too often they know the truth but cannot apply it to the needs of the hour. They are wedded to yesterday's causes, which they argue with yesterday's methods. This will simply not do. We do not want to return to the past, but to preach the eternal message for today. This does not mean surrender to contemporary ideas of 'relevance' but a transformation of our minds to think about the things that are above, about the eternal realities which too often elude our earth-bound sensibilities.

Churchman is being renewed for 1984 and beyond, and we sincerely hope that its renewal will presage a wider renewal within the church, and among evangelicals in particular. The trumpet must cease giving an uncertain sound, and summon men to battle in the cause of Christ. Let us pray that the new *Churchman* will be faithful to its high calling.

The editorial board

It is appropriate to use this space in our first issue as a team to introduce the members of the editorial board. Besides myself they are:

The Revd Donald Allister: well-known to readers of the *Church of England Newspaper*, and recently appointed to a living in the Wirral.

Dr Richard Bauckham: lecturer at Manchester University and the author of a recent commentary on 2 Peter and Jude, which is reviewed by Michael Green in this volume.

The Revd Roger Beckwith: warden of Latimer House, Oxford, and a staunch defender of the evangelical cause in the church.

Mr Lance Bidewell: economist and editor, responsible for publishing in Church Society and at Latimer House.

Miss Myra Chave-Jones: author, consultant, former director of Care and Counsel, lecturer in pastoral counselling at Oak Hill College, London.

The Revd Paul Gardner: lecturer in New Testament at Oak Hill College.

Mr Raymond Johnston: a leader in projects for social reform, and an outspoken defender of moral standards in an age of permissiveness.

The Revd Dr David Samuel: director of Church Society and known for his defence of Reformation principles.

Dr Derek Scales: a Reformation scholar and student of Anglicanism from Cambridge.

The Revd Professor Douglas Spanner: a well-known biologist and Christian apologist for many years, now ordained to the non-stipendiary ministry.

Dr Gordon Wenham: a leading Old Testament scholar and author of several outstanding commentaries.

In addition we are pleased to report that most of our overseas consultants are continuing with us, and we hope to involve them more in the future of the journal as we expand our horizons to take in the Anglican Communion around the world.

1984 and all that

This year has been famous to a whole generation who, brought up on George Orwell, have regarded it as a sign of almost eschatological fear; the year in which the truth of our civilization, or lack of it, will be revealed, and the deadly poison of the modern age finally be analysed for all to see and shudder. We are dedicating much of one issue to this theme of the Orwellian apocalypse, to his vision of a technological tyranny in which even language is perverted in the service of Leviathan. But 1984 is also the anniversary of the death of John Wycliffe, and this provides an occasion for a somewhat happier commemoration, as we return to the roots of the English Bible and Reformation.

In between these issues, we shall be dealing with a wide range of themes, some doctrinal, others ethical in their emphasis, but all rooted and grounded in the Scriptures. Later on we shall be tackling some contemporary problems head-on, not least of them the whole question of *ecumenism*. It is not a matter with which we are getting to grips straightaway, but it cannot be ignored in the present climate of opinion, and we are well aware that it is in our attitude to other Christians that we shall be known, and by it that we shall be judged, not least by our fellow evangelicals. The ecumenical movement is undoubtedly the most important single trend in the church today, though we may be permitted a certain scepticism as to its long-term spiritual importance and influence. For the moment, however, it is very much with us, and we must nail our colours firmly to the mast.

It has now become clear in discussion generally that the major question at issue is, and will always be, *reunion with Rome*. The Roman Church is the largest and most universal Christian body; it also has the most to gain—or to lose—from any church union in the future. Will reunion come on Rome's terms, or on some compromise which allows a certain legitimacy to the insights of the Reformation? Either way, there is little doubt that the Roman See will claim the primacy in a reunited Christendom, and the ARCIC statements, so vague in many places, seem to be quite clear about that. Seen from Rome's standpoint, the Anglican Communion is an interesting but a minor partner in dialogue; it cannot really compare with the Eastern Churches, nor even with some other Protestant bodies, like the Lutheran and Reformed Churches, with their larger congregations

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and deeper sense of theology. Anglicanism stands out not for these things, but for the presence in its midst of a large body of committed Romanizers, men who already accept Rome as their spiritual home. This is certainly not true of the Eastern Churches, which despite many similarities with Rome (in our eyes) are sometimes almost 'Paisleyite' in their antipathy to the papacy; nor is it true of other Protestants. In dealing with Rome, we have to remember that we are faced with players of the opposite team on our side in the game, a curious and ultimately unsatisfactory situation which demands our urgent attention. Rome has changed in the past twenty years, though how far is still a matter of debate. At the superficial level there has been a revolution, but in theology there is as yet no reformation. The Protestantism which has influenced Rome is of the liberal variety—scarcely an appetizing mix for an evangelical.

We must enter into and sustain a dialogue with Rome in all its multi-faceted plurality; we must also seek for a frank recognition on all sides of the issues which once split and which still divide us. We must of course speak the truth in love, but we must never allow 'love' to obscure the underlying problems which are bound to intervene in any serious debate. We still believe that we have a message which Rome needs to hear, and which the Church of England needs to reaffirm in the face of opposition in its own ranks. This is the message of justification by faith alone, the mark of a standing church. We cannot compromise on this, or claim that a form of words can whisk away an ancient dispute. Men who fought and died for their faith were not arguing about words alone, but about matters of life and death. What was true of them is true of us also. May God grant us the grace to proclaim his truth to this generation, and may he give us the passionate love for all his children, that when we come together again we may do so in the light of that truth which alone can set us free.

GERALD BRAY