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A Global Forum

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Welcome to the New ERT

In 1921, John G. Bowman became chancellor of the University of Pittsburgh, USA. When he arrived in the city, he reportedly asked people for directions to the university and got vague answers. Dismayed, he determined to make his new university a place that people would not overlook.

Before the year ended, Bowman commissioned work on the 42-story, Gothic-style Cathedral of Learning. Completed in 1937, it remains, 83 years later, the tallest educational structure in the Western Hemisphere. And everyone in Pittsburgh knows where the university is.

Could the new *Evangelical Review of Theology* do for the World Evangelical Alliance what the Cathedral of Learning did for a university? Happily, it doesn't have to. The WEA is already widely known for its effectiveness in representing evangelicals' concerns to governments, advocating for religious freedom, giving evangelicals an informed voice in inter-faith and intra-faith settings, equipping national-level affiliates, and much more. Anyone who needs support from a global evangelical body knows where to find it.

But amidst all that work, the WEA's theological voice has been somewhat muted. The *Evangelical Review of Theology* (ERT) was founded 43 years ago to contribute to a revival of evangelical scholarship (as John Langlois explains in a fascinating retrospective article in this issue). Today, we face a different set of needs: to empower, unite, and educate an evangelical movement that is experiencing unprecedented opportunity in the Global South, vexing challenges in religiously closed countries, and increasing cultural coldness in the Global North.

Arguably, no organization is better positioned to do that than the WEA. We hope that ERT can grow into becoming that vehicle.

After 43 years as a subscription-based journal, this is the first free, open-access issue of ERT. It contains several articles by people associated with the WEA, and we expect to continue featuring WEA-connected voices in these pages—especially the organization's two most prominent theologians, Thomas K. Johnson (who writes in this issue on a major WEA-Muslim collaboration) and Thomas Schirrmacher. We also wish to promote the amazingly perceptive writing of director Jay Matenga and his colleagues in the WEA Mission Commission, recent examples of which are available online at weamc.global.

But ERT is not a mouthpiece for the WEA. We want leading evangelicals all over the world to view ERT as a desirable place to publish, now that the journal will be publicly available and (we hope) widely read.

ERT will be guided by these principles:

- *Academic quality plus readability.* We seek to publish articles and book reviews that are carefully prepared, well-argued and documented, but readable by the average Christian.
- *Evangelical faithfulness.* Although we do not publish only evangelical authors—for example, we have invited the Vatican's liaison to evangelicals to contribute to a future issue—everything we publish will be consistent with our goal of advancing the gospel of Christ as historically affirmed by the WEA and other evangelical organizations.

- *Global relevance.* We want readers around the world to find ERT useful. That does not rule out articles focusing on a particular national context; indeed, we have four such articles in this issue, from Indonesia, Nigeria, Canada and the USA. But each article has clear applicability to other settings.
- *Gracious expression.* Evangelicals are united in our affirmation of Jesus Christ as Saviour and the Scriptures as God's inspired word to humankind, but we have internal disagreements on just about everything else. In areas of disagreement, we should present our views openly, honestly and respectfully. In that spirit, the new ERT welcomes rebuttal articles or letters to the editor, as long as they are charitable.
- *Wide-ranging scope.* We treat the word 'theology' in the journal's title as encompassing anything that affects how we think about, understand and live for God.
- *Contemporary connections.* Although we will continue to publish articles on relatively timeless topics such as biblical studies and church history, we seek articles with clear practical application, and we welcome contributions on current issues. Because we have an internal review process rather than the formal peer review procedure typical of academic journals, the turnaround time from submission to publication can be as little as four weeks.

We know that readers' time is limited, so we want to make ERT user-friendly. Each article begins with a two- or three-sentence summary that will enable you to learn very quickly what the article is about and decide whether to read more.

We recognize that in many parts of the world, English is not a native language. Prospective authors do not have to write in perfect English—or pay for professional editing of their articles—to persuade us to read their submissions. If the content is good, we are willing to edit the English.

In addition to recruiting high-quality article submissions, we would like to expand our stable of book reviewers. Contact Peirong Lin at peironglin@worldea.org to become a reviewer or to suggest books for review.

Although much of the world interacts in English today, there is one large exception: Latin Americans tend to talk to each other in Spanish. Accordingly, we are investigating a possible Spanish-language version of ERT, which would include a combination of original articles in Spanish and translations from the English version. *Si este proyecto le interesa, contáctenos.*

We welcome your feedback on the new ERT. We hope it will inspire and challenge you. If it proves so useful that we have to switch from four to six issues per year to publish all the wonderful submissions we receive, that will be a pleasant problem. Happy reading!

Thomas Schirrmacher, General Editor
Bruce Barron, Executive Editor