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# Through Fire and Water ...to a Place of Liberty

G. J. C. MARCHANT

*Reflections on evangelical churchmanship  
through the past hundred years*

The Renaissance stands out in European history like a great watershed which, in radically altering the whole drift of development thereafter, has eventually, in more recent times, affected the whole world. From the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the spirit of the Renaissance, as summarized by Paul Hazard, of 'eagerness for invention, a passion for discovery, an urge to play the critic' grew in strength and confidence, through the periods of intellectual and social ferment around 1700, and then in the later time of the Enlightenment, and so into the nineteenth century. One can therefore see the last century as a gathering of all kinds of powerful forces that had been set going beforehand: political, social, industrial and commercial, scientific and philosophical, religious and theological. These were at work in controversial interaction to alter the western world and eventually all emerging nations elsewhere. Also part of this scene is the growing speed at which more and more ingredients were contributing to the ferment as technology, instantly harnessed to commercial enterprise, provided cheaper and easier forms of communication of ideas. The slogan 'Ideas have Legs' (coined by the old Oxford Group) was never more evident in rapid dissemination than in the total picture of the nineteenth century. To that inheritance the twentieth century contributes no mere addition or extension, but fresh and revolutionary material that emerges from invention, discovery and critical activity in all areas of life and thought; and activity at a speed and with implications that now raise basic questions as to proper goals and responsibilities.

## **A century of social revolution**

A survey of any aspect of that era, particularly—as in this article—of the period that begins two decades before the twentieth century and goes right up to the present, must note its larger context. In noting, it must ponder (more than is frequently done) what is happening throughout; what is the significance of the forces at work, and the reactions produced. This must lead to a discernment of deep underlying forces of anxiety, obsessive fears and compensatory violence

as men struggled to identify their ideals, clarify their real import and discern how they might suitably be articulated in fresh community terms. From the time *The Churchman* replaced the old *Christian Observer* (begun in 1802 as a shilling monthly), throughout its entire life up to the present, it has had the task of assisting members of the Church of England—and in particular evangelical churchmen—in such attempts, even though from a position of deep involvement in the problems of the successive decades of the century. Here was an era deeply fractured by the impact of three wars of successively worsening effect: the Boer War, the Great War, and the Nazi War. Amongst these, the Great War spelt the final demise of Victorian Europe. The break-up of empires—finally the British one—and the shifts in international power, have made a vastly different outlook and awareness between British people of 1879 and those of 1979. Within that context come the swings in political outlook and the far-reaching changes in social conditioning in terms of work, education, trade-union development, better food, housing, medicine, educational facilities, entertainment, the radio and TV media, much of it through the provisions of a growing welfare state. Consequently, the whole of society has rapidly become able to respond to many stimuli in literature, in art, in music and—in discussions at various levels of expertise and popularity—in all the varied intellectual debate which was once, in more restricted form, a possibility only for the few.

A steadily increasing population threw off the last restraints of Queen Victoria's reign, when the influence of the throne's dedicated rectitude, refinement and manners was being undermined by the anticipation of the Edwardian era in the 'naughty nineties'. Yet this itself turned out to be but a bland aperitif to the heady and volatile draughts of the nineteen-twenties and thirties, and to the later fifties and 'swinging' sixties. Somehow those earlier capers look adolescent to the sophisticated and cynical amorality of many of later outlook. Their tensions of escapism from a national consciousness that was losing its credibility were simpler than the present tension that sees no escape from a vast system which goes on under its own momentum and in which meaning is derived for very many solely in terms of keeping going. Earth has been explored, and is being over-exploited; the moon has been trodden; complex machinery can be reduced by micro-electronics to pin-head size; work shares with increasing leisure the pattern of living; mobility by car, caravan and travel agencies assists life to rush along. But the 'where?' and 'why?'—if asked—find hollow echoes. Despair and frustration find expression in violent anarchy, drawing in international criminals out for any gain, and assert a contorted question to the self-conscious humanism which lacks any transcendent quality and which provides ethical content of a kind to the growth of the corporate state.

## **The Church of England in the last hundred years**

In this hundred years, the Church of England has lost not only much of its numerical support, but also, as time has gone on, a good deal of its earlier confidence. Perhaps some of that earlier confidence was best lost. The kind of overweening complacency and magisterial naivety with which so many greeted, misunderstood and passed by the changes and challenges in the intellectual world at the end of the last century, was itself replaced by new intellectual and religious positions that led to much strife and, in some quarters, dismay. In 1889, the publication of *Lux Mundi* heralded the beginnings of 'liberal catholicism' that was to replace the older Tractarianism and to be a dominant theology in England for fifty years. It was one example of a struggle in which others were engaged from somewhat different presuppositions. Modern historical study applied to the Bible, to the Fathers and to church history generally, brought critical light to bear on doctrine and churchmanship that was also coming from other directions at the same time. Scientific humanism was taking shape, widely canvassed by T. H. Huxley and his followers (and later by Dr Julian Huxley), while the dominant figure of Harnack in the theological world contributed a watered-down Christianity in his widely read book *What is Christianity?* 'Modernism' was born, and followed by less extreme kinds of approach such as 'liberal theology', including 'liberal evangelicalism'.

In terms of ecclesiastical life and structures, the times were steadily bearing the church away from the Victorian Sunday, away from the staid pattern of Morning Prayer and Evensong—with an exotic fringe of 'ritualistic' churches—to a tempered 'high church' expression which the Archbishops Benson and Davidson, and later Lang, were ready to establish. The increased frequency of Holy Communion was taken up in the last half of the hundred years by the Parish & People Movement, and the Parish Communion went on to oust Matins by steady attrition, while failing in its primary principle of providing an alternative teaching occasion at the 'parish meeting'. Yet, with all the pressures, Prayer Book revision did not surface until 1927 nor gain proper authorization until the Prayer Book (Alternative and Other Services) Measure 1965, when a period of experimentation was allowed by Parliament that enabled the more adventurous forms of Series 2 and 3 to emerge.

Only by hard experience was it found that any such adaptations of the Church of England to changing circumstances must go hand in hand with others, not least the involvement of the laity (the majority of the church) in all levels of discussion and decision. The whole hundred years was needed to bring the pressures to bear: by the Life and Liberty Movement, which led to the Enabling Act and its provisions; and by the experience of the Church Assembly and the gathering force of the House of Laity. Then came the final step of

synodical government, with its degree of detachment of the church's legislation from parliamentary procedure which enabled it to move ahead in accord with the church's general mind and will. It is hardly useful to call this 'democratization' of the church unless one realizes that 'democracy' itself is a many-faceted term, not all aspects of which are necessarily 'worldly'. Sometimes the release of the Christian understanding of man into the thinking of society at large brings it back with something of a boomerang force to teach the church elements of its own truth at an oblique angle. What was happening in all this was that the Church of England was emerging from its prolonged conditioning to the Tudoresque implications of the Book of Common Prayer, and the Hanoverian establishment, to learn the meaning of the doctrine of the church in New Testament terms. With that avenue of insight, another was contributed by the growing ecumenical concern, originating in missionary thinking and finding a first important statement in the Lambeth Quadri-lateral in 1888, near the beginning of this hundred years. It became a period during which the doctrine of the church, together with ministry and sacraments, was to be thrashed out with one eye looking to Christendom—reformed and unreformed—and the other eye on internal relations between the dominant high churchmanship with its supposedly unassailable doctrines, and other churchmen who challenged them and in a number of cases showed them to be unfounded. In this all were increasingly to profit from the intellectual and academic disciplines with their accumulating results over the hundred years; and to be influenced by profoundly changing outlooks signaled by the forces of continental theology, the Barthian and Biblical Theology Movements, existential theology, and the wide social change of outlook that affected all Europe and beyond after 1950.

### **Church tradition in question**

In this formidable hundred years, the course of evangelical churchmen, their standing, contribution and influence looks very much like the descent from a wave crest into a trough and then a climb to a crest again. The nadir of the trough was the time between the two world wars. Perhaps it is important to examine a little and in a preliminary way, what is meant by 'evangelical churchmanship'. Recently in an article in *The Times* (9 August 1978) Mr Philip Howard—in his repeated interest to preserve proper English usage—sought to distinguish 'evangelistic' from 'evangelical', with a view to preserving the latter from loose popular misuse. He reminded his readers that in this it was possible to step 'into deep and turbid ecclesiastical waters'. Nevertheless, greatly daring, and recognizably depending too much on *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (ed. F. L. Cross), he described evangelicals as those

who emphasize the preaching and personal acceptance of the gospel. They do not attach much importance to liturgical worship or church authority. They reject the doctrines of baptismal regeneration and the eucharistic sacrifice. In general they exhibit a strong suspicion of the Roman Catholic Church and hostility to characteristic Tractarian and high church doctrines. From this, it might well appear that evangelicals could hardly call themselves 'churchmen' at all, and indeed there have been those in the past (whose opinion the Dictionary may provide with some perpetuation) who would regard evangelicals as having little or no 'churchmanship'. As always, it depends upon what you mean by 'a churchman'.

In the earlier part of this period of one hundred years, a lot was talked about 'church principles', particularly in the *Church Times*, which identified them with what otherwise were known as 'catholic principles' so as to conclude that only 'the High Churchman . . . is consistent and loyal to the Church' (its concluding words in a criticism of the CMS centenary celebration, 24 March 1899). Charles Gore, on his appointment to a Westminster canonry, was applauded in the same paper for his 'enthusiasm for church principles'. But when it came to liturgy, it was the evangelicals at the time who were unswerving in their use and regard for the 1662 BCP, while those who prided themselves on zeal for 'church principles' were hard at work introducing other rites from Roman Catholic sources. And on the issue of 'authority', it has been a well-known feature of the Anglo-Catholic revival that its adherents gladly obeyed episcopal authority in the Church of England when that authority supported its policies, but otherwise cited some wider authority of 'western catholicism' to justify their disregard of what was required by the Church of England.

In fact all this very rough and ready pigeon-holing of Anglicans, into which Mr Howard so innocently fell, is the continuing hang-over from a century and a half when Christians all over Europe have been forced to ask themselves what loyalty to a tradition was going to mean. The Roman Catholics were deeply involved, as is seen by the rigid authoritarianism of Pio Nono, the struggles of Newman (especially after he had seceded to Rome), the problems with the 'modernists', and indeed the struggles surrounding Vatican II and its aftermath. With appropriate variations, the Reformed churches had their own struggles and within the Church of England the issue was complex, inasmuch as it involved a controversy about the Anglican tradition on the one hand, and at the same time, and with increasing pressure, an entirely different debate as to what kind of response had to be made to 'modern thought'. For neither of these two controversies were churchmen of any sort very well fitted, either by general education at school or university, or by the kind of basic confidence that could assist them in sifting the important issues from the

secondary.

The Roman Catholic Church tried to meet the social, political and intellectual developments and changes by first building up a citadel position, defending the church's position authoritatively against all assailants from inside and out. Then it began to come to terms with the challenges and turn them somehow into allies, without surrendering the essentials. The Tractarians and their successors in Anglo-Catholicism also tried to build up a total view of, and claim for, the Church of England as authentically a part of western catholicism, by demonstrating a tradition of credal doctrine and of unbroken church continuity of ministry and sacraments—separated from Protestantism with its errors and weaknesses—which they held to be 'catholic' or 'church principles'. They worked with the poor tools then to hand, and their historical researches have been increasingly undermined by more sophisticated and fuller learning with the passage of time. After aping post-Tridentine Romanism, they saw the light burning brighter in the medieval period—and Percy Dearmer made all this available in the *Parson's Handbook* (1899)—before finding the undivided church a better pattern still. Evangelical churchmen, after a preliminary welcome to what they thought Tractarians were after, reacted in their own way to spell out the Church of England tradition in terms of the Edwardian Reformation and the Elizabethan Settlement, produced that monumental archive, the Parker Society Library, and more or less settled down to live in that inheritance and to build up barriers and 'no-go' areas against Anglo-Catholicism. Much money and time was devoted to societies and their publications and meetings in order to provide thunderous refutations, devastating proofs and magisterial pronouncements; and to expound an unchanging tradition, which they did not see needed new-minting in creative theological and philosophical terms, to speak to the situation rapidly ushering in the transformations of the twentieth century. In that, they were very much children of their time.

### **Evangelical churchmanship since 1880: into decline**

At the beginning of this centennial period, evangelical churchmanship was strong in the parishes. The sober Victorian Sunday, Bible reading, family prayers, the regularity of Matins and Evensong and parish organizations were all part of the widespread pattern that evangelicalism had steadily helped to build up. Evangelicals had a considerable body of able and highly-placed leaders in the 1870s in terms of bishops, deans and influential parish clergy (cf. Balleine's *History of the Evangelical Party*, pp 266-7; J. S. Reynolds *The Evangelicals at Oxford 1735-1871*, pp 150-7). The growing head-on conflict with Tractarians was, however, leading them into an increasingly withdrawing attitude, based on fear. They opposed the

restoration of Convocation in 1850 and they tended to avoid the Church Congresses, begun in 1861, until *The Times* in 1879 could express a doubt as to whether evangelicalism was of any further significance in the church. It was about this time that there gradually began that retreat into the ghetto: the tendency to find their principal occupation solely in matters missionary, evangelistic and devotional, and in their own gatherings like the Islington Clerical Meeting, rather than to participate in ecclesiastical issues which occupied a good deal of the interest at, for instance, Church Congresses. Only those who followed J. C. Ryle and one or two others made known the views of evangelical churchmen while the congresses lasted. But in other ways, with a longer view to the future, they had about this time founded three great theological colleges—London College of Divinity (1863), Wycliffe Hall, Oxford (1877) and Ridley Hall, Cambridge (1881), following the earlier foundation of St Aidan's, Birkenhead in 1847. These were able to be nurseries for future leaders as well as providing a steady flow of clergy. Following the bishops at the end of the century (Ryle, Thorold, Edward Bickersteth and Straton) Francis James Chavasse, Principal of Wycliffe Hall, and Handley C. G. Moule, Principal of Ridley Hall, began a line of evangelical bishops from theological college staff backgrounds.

Nevertheless, the increasing tendency to form an *ecclesiola in ecclesia* developed steadily. Evangelicals entered into their own kind of ecumenism with Free Churchmen who shared their own doctrinal priorities in doctrines of the atonement, justification by faith, sanctification in the power of the Spirit, and the priesthood of all believers, which now found its growing focus in the Keswick Convention. In company with their polemics on the 'high church' front, now fast becoming seen as a set of negatives (what they did *not* believe or do) and their apparent lack of care for strictness (did they not practise non-fasting evening communion and share in the Open Communion at Keswick?) it is not surprising that many misconceptions were bred. As new young men came forward into evangelical ministry they were more concerned with evangelism, missions at home and abroad, holiness, Bible study in a devotional way, and prayer. The busy, many-sided life of the parishes soon absorbed all their energies in this way, and the vitality of most of them made total demands. They were hardly encouraged, nor given much time, to take seriously to heart the need for theological study and so to know the real issues that had made deep divisions in the church. For them a little general reference to the Reformation, the Thirty-nine Articles or the Prayer Book, sufficed.

Still less were they helped to think through the enormous issues for the modern outlook occasioned by literary, critical, historical and scientific work. Here many could take refuge in ridicule or superficial answers which had already had a fairly long run, often from



those whose position should have produced a greater sense of responsibility. In the period between the two wars, particularly in the 1930s, evangelicals were valued in the Church of England for their evangelistic and missionary zeal and effectiveness. They 'brought the people into the church; others could then turn them into "good churchmen".' Many therefore in the church looked on the evangelical experience and outlook as a good street to go through but not to live in. Their condition at that time gave rise to the view that evangelicals had little to offer in churchmanship. There were many of them ready to accept that position: they saw the Church of England simply as 'a good boat to fish from'. As long as they were left alone to follow the traditional bent of an evangelical parish at the time, they were happy to let the Church of England be run by others. Their influence in the Church Assembly dwindled and indeed it was a prominent layman, Mr Albert Mitchell (who called himself an 'old-fashioned high churchman'), who guided matters in their favour through his deeply respected knowledge and wisdom, when votes were hard to come by. It was a dark time of bitter party animosities, when the defeat of the Deposited Prayer Book of 1927 and 1928 by the leadership of Sir William Joynson-Hicks and Sir Thomas Inskip in Parliament alienated friends and made evangelicals in the Church of England almost everywhere under official disapproval, if not contempt. Evangelical bishops were few in those years, but after 1928 nobody who was known to have opposed the Deposited book was preferred to the episcopate until Christopher Chavasse was taken from being Master of St Peter's Hall, Oxford to become Bishop of Rochester, in the early 1940s. Bishop Alwyn Williams of Durham—no unsympathetic critic—writing an epilogue to Professor E. W. Watson's *The Church of England* (HUL 1944) remarked of the evangelicals that 'their theology often seems to be too unconcerned with the dominant interests of our times.'

### **Evangelical churchmanship since 1880: recovery**

Not that there had been no reaction to this decline in these first four decades of the twentieth century. Early in the new century some had seen the problem of bringing current evangelical thinking into relation with contemporary studies and ideas, and it led to the development of what became known as 'liberal evangelicalism'. This was a parallel movement to the 'liberal catholicism' which stemmed from the publication of *Lux Mundi* and the able thinkers and writers who gathered around the leadership of Charles Gore. The evangelical movement found expression in the Anglican Evangelical Group Movement (AEGM) and flourished in the period between the two wars. Unfortunately, it had insufficient theological ballast of its own, and found itself too easily influenced by members of the Modern Churchmen's Conference on the one hand, and the

less advanced liberal catholics on the other. Their one distinctive production, *Liberal Evangelicalism: An Interpretation* (1923), was a symposium to which Bishop Barnes of Birmingham contributed a final chapter. J. K. Mozley (*Some Tendencies in British Theology*, 1951) anticipated an eventual drawing together of liberal evangelicals and liberal catholics in an effort to arrive at a more 'central' position (p 89). In fact other influences brought about other results. During all this time, such agencies as the Islington Clerical Conference and the Oxford Conference of Evangelical Churchmen, together with the regular publication of *The Churchman*, had maintained areas of communication between evangelicals—from the somewhat 'liberal' through all other kinds to the very 'conservative'. They were also able to meet through the membership and activities of the National Church League, which took a different line from, though in fraternal contact with, the Church Association (which for many had become discredited). Not only was this serviceable for purposes of making some evangelical representation in central church affairs, but it even had a literary output in terms of common outlook through the NCL publishing side. There were also works like *The Evangelical Doctrine of Holy Communion* (1933) edited by A. J. Macdonald, to which T. C. Hammond contributed on the one hand with V. F. Storr and J. W. Hunkin on the other; and *The Atonement in History and Life* (1936) involving D. Dawson-Walker and A. J. Tait, with others like L. B. Cross and R. S. Cripps. The alliance was tenuous, however, and the traumatic separation of BCMS from CMS over 'liberal' views in 1925 pointed to a rift that in the late 1930s was taking evangelicals into the sands of indefiniteness on the one hand, or pietistic insignificance on the other. Something was needed to bring about a resurgence of genuine evangelical thought and churchmanship, at a time when there was much abroad to give fresh insight and new thrust from the growing strength of Karl Barth's influence, biblical theology and developments in Reformed theology on the continent.

The answer came along two main channels. The first derived from the new concern for evangelical theology fostered by the Inter-Varsity Fellowship and then fed into its newly founded Fellowship for Evangelical Theological Students. T. C. Hammond (later to become Principal of Moore Theological College, Sydney) wrote a trilogy: *In Understanding Be Men* (1937), a handbook of Christian doctrine; *Perfect Freedom* (1938), a much-needed text book on Christian ethics; and *Reasoning Faith* (1943), which was an eye-opening introduction to Christian apologetics. There were other books coming quickly into publication by F. F. Bruce and others dealing with biblical and controversial issues. The second channel was the founding in 1942 of the Evangelical Fellowship for Theological Literature by Max Warren, then General Secretary of CMS, and the staffs of Wycliffe and Ridley Halls. This brought together a number of

evangelicals who, though they did not advertise their stance in the fellowship, were in fact 'liberals' and 'conservatives' but who were ready, indeed glad, to talk openly over themes of importance raised by successive annual conferences and, in many cases, by their own line of study and writing. This was inherently a background activity, feeding the very soil of production and encouraging its growth (cf. *Churchman* vol.92:2, pp 125-133). It produced from its membership authors who built up the St Paul's Library of popular books that were to help a new generation after the Second World War to think in creative terms about evangelical truth and churchmanship, preaching, sacraments, liturgy and devotion. No longer was it going to be necessary to build only on the standard work of Griffith Thomas's *Principles of Theology* (1930), or the even older work of E. A. Litton's *Introduction to Dogmatic Theology* that dated from the mid-nineteenth century and was re-edited by H. G. Grey in 1912. At last evangelical churchmen were being given fresh tools for the job, and an incentive to use them.

### Into a changing order

This turning of the corner was timely. With the end of the war, and all the aftermath in Europe and America, and indeed in the countries to the east, forces were at work—political, social and philosophical, as well as religious—that, with the vast proliferation of radio and television and other forms of communication media, were to gather into a tide of revolutionary power that would turn the outlook of the second half of the twentieth century into something very different from what had gone before. One of the important new elements in evangelical thinking was a fresh and deeper grasp of the doctrine of the church. No longer was it going to be possible to detach oneself from the church visible and live in a dream-world of some 'invisible' church—the vague vision of which could excuse ecclesial irresponsibility. To enter into a truer and deeper understanding in this area was by no means to capitulate to the limited ideas of high churchmen, who were themselves finding that many of their treasured beliefs were based on sand and the tides of thought were dredging away their supports. In 1950, Archbishop Fisher received at his request a report, *The Fulness of Christ*, from a group of theologians drawn mainly from membership of the EFTL, which was to contribute to an important ecumenical development both with Free Churchmen and within the Church of England itself. After an over-smooth beginning, it went on to state with balance and thoroughness a firm, fresh presentation of evangelical churchmanship that still offers important guidelines. At about the same time, in *The Churchman* of December 1948, F. J. Taylor commented:

Evangelicals in the Church of England are only just beginning to emerge from that deplorable phase of their history when worship was relegated to a secondary

position in the scale of priorities. The lack of a rich and virile tradition of worship during the last two generations, which should nevertheless have been unmistakably evangelical in origin and inspiration, has given currency to the false doctrine that evangelicals have no distinctive word to speak on the subject. Recent discussions have emphasized the fact that liturgical worship is the only possible expression of the evangelical genius since it has no meaning apart from the priesthood of the whole worshipping body. [pp 232, 233]

Similarly, in *The Fulness of Christ*, there was a firm reminder that

Evangelicals indeed brought about within the Church of England a renewed emphasis on the importance and dignity of the sacraments and of the corporate worship of the Church. . . . The somewhat negative attitude of some later Evangelicals towards the sacraments was alien to the true nature of the Evangelical Movement, and was caused by a reaction against what was regarded as the false and dangerous sacramental teaching of the Oxford Movement: [p 53]

an insight that G. R. Balleine had emphasized in his *History of the Evangelical Party in the Church of England*. At the same time, week by week, the *Record* newspaper (and its successor *The Church of England Newspaper*) in that period made an open forum for important articles and for well-informed debate.

There was increasing material for the purpose. At the beginning of the new reign of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953, Archbishop Fisher had alluded to the coming of 'A New Reformation', no less glorious and no less far-reaching than that under the first Queen Elizabeth. It seemed hardly to be justified in the dreary reform of canon law to which he had committed the church in 1947, leaving the report *Towards the Conversion of England* (1945) to die of debates in deanery chapters. But other trends, which the archbishop no doubt had in mind, were going ahead. Ecumenical discussions between Anglicans and Presbyterians were recommenced in 1953 and between Anglicans and Methodists in 1955, with evangelicals being represented on both panels. Then later, as canon law revision drew to a conclusion, other fresh departures, equally far-reaching, were embarked upon. In 1960 the Church Assembly agreed to set in motion the enquiry that issued in the report *Development and Payment of the Clergy* (1964) by Leslie Paul, the introduction to which sounded warnings as to the intellectual, ecclesiastical, pastoral and financial trends in the church. Some anticipation of all this had been included in a publication of 1942 called *Putting Our House in Order*—itself a follow-up to *Men, Money and the Ministry* (1937). All churchmen were now having to face the structural problems of insufficient income for the needs of the church and a decline in the number of ordinands to minister to a much increased population steadily moving into new areas away from the country into swelling conurbations. The later '60s thereafter brought in quick succession measures to facilitate reform on all fronts: the Prayer Book (Alternative and Other Services) Measure 1965 to facilitate liturgical 'experiment' for fourteen years; the Pastoral Measure 1968 that would have far-reaching powers to do almost anything in parochial reorganization (following

the previous Pastoral Reorganization Measure 1949); the Synodical Government Measure 1969 following the Hodson Report 1966 (of the Commission set up in 1964); and the report *Partners in Ministry* (1967) which had a very weak evangelical representation.

Thus the fifteen years from 1955 to 1970 was a period in which a great movement was taking place in ecumenical conversations (particularly with the Methodists, with whom the church's leaders thought it wisest to embark on a unilateral union); in liturgical work to replace almost all the Prayer Book services with alternatives; and in far-reaching action radically to alter the pastoral basis of the church in its parish structure, the appointment of its ministry, and its centralized financing. Church people came alive to this through the new terms of synodical government and as they began to experiment with new Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Communion (Series 2) services. The torrent of reform brought the new synodical government under fire. In this, as well as in much of the reforming work, evangelicals were now taking part in larger numbers both centrally and locally, sometimes in a leading way. They were heavily involved in critical work connected with the Anglican-Methodist Scheme of Union, producing in the light of it an important theological document *Growing into Union* (1970) in which 'conservative' evangelical scholars met Anglo-Catholics in a genuinely ecumenical production. Some were similarly involved in the work of the new Liturgical Commission; and, strange though it might appear, many in the parishes were prepared to experiment with Series 2 (and later Series 3) Holy Communion services. At the same time a steady development was taking place in bringing forward the holy table, celebrating with the westward position, and making the service much more prominent in Sunday worship.

Presumably a convenient terminus to this survey might well be made by a glance at the National Evangelical Anglican Congress at Keele in 1967, with the one at Nottingham ten years later as a footnote. Both were given careful preparation in order to promote full involvement in the parishes, from which delegates were to be expected and indeed came. These vast gatherings manifested a new strength, a greater sense of responsibility by evangelicals within the Church of England towards having an important part to play and a committed interest in doing so. Without doubt a new mental climate had been developing in the post-war period, involving a background of educational and social change that had been stimulating growth points in ideas. Clearly there was more promise than performance in 1967, and as much continuing argument as agreement in 1977. In both cases it was new to find evangelicals acting out an internal debate in public without either loss of fellowship and mutual regard or, above all, drifting from their true identity—despite some clucking and tut-tutting from those ever afraid of passes being sold in any

situation of change at all. In 1967 and again in 1977 the heightened social awareness, probing to the roots of evangelical assumptions, was evident—even if there still remains the problem of having important things to contribute to issues discerned.

In the wide spectrum of church reform and renewal, of ecumenical relations (including Roman Catholics), and of social, moral and international problems, clear notice was being served that evangelical churchmen were involved with all other kinds of Christians, or non-Christians, and that they were going to work at them in terms of the full gospel as evangelical churchmen have received it in their Reformed heritage—re-deployed, in hope, creatively, in the new circumstances of a changed world. For this they were determined to bring the best they could in academic knowledge, wide experience and their own contemporary spirituality. In this they might have been learning from some wise words of T. S. Eliot about tradition:

We are always in danger, in clinging to an old tradition, or attempting to re-establish one, of confusing the vital and the unessential, the real and the sentimental. Our second danger is to associate tradition with the immovable: to think of it as something hostile to all change; to aim to return to some previous condition, which we imagine as having been capable of preserving in perpetuity, instead of aiming to stimulate the life which produced that condition in its time. [*After Strange Gods*, 1934]

It was a wise warning not recognized when *The Churchman* was born; it remains a watchword in a very different new century of its life.

### **The gospel—today and tomorrow**

For in this 'new century', the deepest concern of evangelical churchmen—that the church shall minister the gospel to mankind—faces its own strongest challenges. After a period in the 1960s when great hopes were placed on what had become the standard mass-evangelization method from the time of D. L. Moody, then taken up with modern sophistication by Dr Billy Graham—not to mention a legion of imitators—there has settled a big question mark over the way forward in modern evangelism. Modern versions of the Bible, contemporary forms of worship, lay ministry and participation in pastoral ministry, hymns 'for today', sharing, consultation, dropping of paternalist and authoritarian approaches—all characterize many parishes, and not just evangelical ones. The influence of the charismatic movement—with its enjoyment, free involvement, innovation and spontaneity in liturgy and fellowship—goes across the varieties of churchmanship, although leaving a number untouched in them all. Much has happened to make the flock feel that they can be themselves in their church activities, and not have to adopt some special ecclesiastical phraseology and attitudes. But the worrying questions remain, as violence and crime escalate everywhere and financial materialism is accepted and encouraged on a wide scale: What is the gospel saying to our time? How does salvation through Christ,

including the great doctrines of grace and the significance of the church, speak to man today as it spoke to late-medieval man in the Reformation? Confronted by the secular philosophies which declare that the four hundred years since the Renaissance is the period of the gradual working out of all religious views of existence from enlightened and emancipated mankind, by the gains made upon the allegiance of multitudes by political and social programmes involving some kind of state-idealization with its implied moral conditions, and by the way some of the church's scholars seem convinced that the faith is going to be necessarily expressed more in terms of vague generalities, the task of re-interpreting the gospel for today is pressing and difficult. Bonhoeffer's demand that the church should speak to modern man in his strength rightly points to the inadequacy of just a form of ambulance work on the side. Yet modern man's strength at many times looks suspiciously like Samson's: blinded through self-indulgence and pride, and too capable of being vented against enemies, involving everyone in total disaster. The harsh divisions between races and colours, communists and non-communists, the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' (with international terrorism and crime penetrating it all) and the problems raised by developing technology for all levels of human life, family, work, leisure, and community, are producing strains and tensions more and more widely felt in shorter time as modern communications link the world in tighter relations. The lesson of the past century of life of *The Churchman* is surely that in all life, including the Christian life, there is an indivisibility. The decline in the sense of churchmanship amongst evangelicals was not just an issue relating to secondary matters, no more than its recovery is of peripheral importance. Gospel and church go together: this is one of the important results of the thought and experience of Christians in this time. The understanding and vision, the experience and expression of gospel and church are one. This was the great insight of the Reformers, and needs renewal and re-interpretation in our time. Intellectual and devotional resources, structural and pastoral patterns, liturgical and fellowship life, social, industrial and political ministry—all are aspects of the task and its requirements. Human life in all its greatness and wretchedness, individually and corporately, offers manifold opportunities for the gospel sensitively and perceptively ministered with understanding and sympathy. There is no blue-print for this, but there is a fellowship reaching out all over the world; and there is communication in which *Churchman*, we believe, may have a part to play.

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