

'Churchman' in 1982...?

A comment from the Chairman of the Editorial Board

Last year it became apparent that the cost of publishing this journal was increasingly uneconomic and that a major reappraisal was needed. 1982 has therefore become a 'make-or-break' year, with new publishing terms to see whether or not *Churchman* can survive. With three issues a year instead of four, and at the increased subscription, we can probably break even as long as our present number of subscribers continues. Viability will, of course, only be more certain if there is a substantial increase in our circulation. The continuance of the journal into the nineteen-eighties and beyond lies in the hands of its present readership, together with their commendation of it and the enlistment of a growing number of subscribers. This is our basic method of marketing—all others can only be secondary.

Is it important for *Churchman* to continue as a forum for informed and thoughtful discussion of the many matters concerning the church and the world, the world church and the Anglican communion, from the theological and ecclesiastical position of evangelical members of the Church of England? We believe this is a concern not only for evangelical churchmen, but for other Christians who have given evidence of their interest, sometimes very publicly, from time to time.

One of the perpetual problems for *Churchman* is that it stands in the cross-fire of debate amongst evangelicals themselves—a debate which has developed substantially in recent years. But throughout the more than one hundred years of its life, it has maintained that the integrity of any convinced position can only be genuine if there is a mature readiness to acquaint oneself with the actual realities and facts and be ready to discuss differences openly. Such differences have existed as far back as one is prepared to examine—as indeed the first editor noted. But then and now, and throughout the hundred years of its life, the guiding principle of the journal has been, and still is, 'profound reverence for the absolute authority of the Word of God, and devout belief in Christ's promise of the gift of the Spirit of Truth'.

Over the course of time, it is not surprising to find evangelical churchmen (speaking generally) exhibiting somewhat changing attitudes, some of which have been reflected upon in our past issues. Today it is well known that a renewal of theological scholarship—as well as the involvement of inter-disciplinary studies—has resulted in a deeper appreciation of the biblical doctrine of the church, and therefore

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a greater commitment to ecclesiastical responsibility involving synodical and ecumenical work. Besides that, there has also arisen an enhanced awareness of social, ethical and political tasks confronting Christians who recognize their service of God as not opting out of the world they live in, but responding to its complexity as part of their service and evangelistic ministry. Hard thinking has to be done in the context of challenging experience both here and overseas, and no benefit is gained by pretending that the world is different from what it is; by ignoring difficult intellectual problems; by superficial treatment of matters requiring careful and discriminating study; and least of all by resort to prepackaged pronouncements filled with clichés and slogans.

The task of probing, expounding, assessing and debating will of course always begin from some accepted basis: for *Churchman* that basis has been, and continues to be, the Reformed Anglican tradition and its historic development into evangelical churchmanship. Central to that stands the supreme authority of Holy Scripture: God's Word written, the revelation of God, centred in his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, making known his truth and grace in the gospel. Biblically, theologically and ecclesiastically, our Reformed Anglican tradition was both indebted to, and also independent of, the Continental Reformers and their successors in the Puritans on both sides of the Atlantic—and this still holds. The stance of Cranmer, Baxter, John Wesley, Simeon and J. C. Ryle, in their different ways, points to a continuing thread in this tradition, which seeks for harmony between brethren by promoting an understanding not only of what is true or false, but also what is important and what is not. For those addicted to polarization, this is often a weakness: 'tending to liberalism' in the view of one side; 'conservative and reactionary' in the eyes of others. But for those who know our tradition in its richness, the tradition offers the resources for a continuing evangelical theology and churchmanship free from sectarian lop-sidedness, ghetto neurosis, or specious and superficial 'with-itness' that is ready to jump on to the next passing bandwagon.

The Editorial Board believes that this calls for the continuance of a journal such as *Churchman*. It takes a route between the technical journal and the popular magazine, but it cannot expect to please the casual reader or the skimmer. We hope for a growing readership of those who will find, in its articles and reviews, material that above all will assist them to come to well-informed and thought-through opinions of their own—in ever-deepening commitment to, and appreciation of, our Reformed and evangelical Anglican heritage, and its abiding value in the interpretation of the gospel, its truth and life—in wrestling with tasks and problems in the church and in the world.

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