

# We're back!

**Sydney's independent Anglican evangelical voice speaks once more**

**A**fter a ten-year break, we are back. Welcome to our new readers, and to older ones who remember when financial restraints forced us to cease publication in July 1987. We're back because of our concern to see the biblical evangelicalism of the Anglican Diocese of Sydney further preserved and strengthened. A strong biblical witness in the wider Anglican communion and secular Australia is increasingly important.

Historically, evangelicalism has nearly always declined from within. Current events indicate that today is no exception. Three movements threaten evangelicalism from within: 'experientialism', 'traditionalism' and 'redrawing the line backwards'.

## Experience valued above Bible

We are appealing to human experience over biblical teaching.

We have changed the questions we ask and the way we ask them. The New Testament is dominated by questions such as "Who is Jesus Christ?" and "What has he done for us?". The question it asks concerning human experience is "What must I do to be saved?".

Union with Christ is not 'an' experience, but a permanent, historical reality created by Christ himself which we enter into when we cast up our faith into him. How does that experience *feel*? It involves 'suffering' and 'trust' in the promises of God.

Last May, at the Synod Conference on Women's Ministry, both sides of the women's ordination debate were asked questions concerning biblical exegesis. It was a major departure from classical, biblical evangelicalism when speakers

from the pro-side answered not in terms of the text of Scripture, but in terms of their individual stories. This type of experientialism makes it impossible to place our trust in Scripture as the ultimate rule of faith. Since the eighteenth-century, such experientialism has been the seedbed of theological liberalism.

## Traditionalism

It has been said that "Tradition is the living faith of the dead; traditionalism is the dead faith of the living." The apostolic gospel must never be changed (Gal 1:6-9; 2 Tim 1:8-14), for it is the way that Christ continues to do his work in the world; but for the sake of that work, even the way we conduct gospel ministry *must* change. (1 Cor 9:22-3).

The problem we face is losing our trust in God's commands and promises, and replacing it with trust in the traditions of men, even traditions that once were good and beneficial. The pressure to embrace traditionalism remains whenever we make it a priority in our thinking and action to remain recognisably Anglican, at the expense of remaining recognisably evangelical.

## Moving the line backwards

The third threat is that we keep on shifting the line backwards in order to remain within Anglicanism, and so we hope be heard as evangelicals. It is odd that we are rejoicing over Lambeth's move against allowing practising homosexuals to be ordained, when there are many, more central, teachings of Holy Scripture that our denomination has progressively watered down, ignored or denied outright over the last 200 years:

the ultimate authority, sufficiency and reliability of Scripture in all matters of faith and morals, the substitutionary and unrepeatable nature of Christ's atoning sacrifice, the 'body and bones' resurrection of our Lord, that this Jesus Christ is truly man and truly God, that he is the only Mediator between humanity and God, that he is exclusively the way back to God, the reality of the judgment to come and the priesthood of all believers.

Over time we have fought and lost these battles in Australia as elsewhere. We have seen manifest unbelief enshrined in our new prayer books, agendas of conferences, official pronouncements and the ordinances which govern us. Each time we have allowed the line to be drawn further backwards. As evangelical Anglicans we have argued that by doing this we can remain on cordial terms with others in the denomination and thus live to fight other battles. But the New Testament gives us an evangelicalism which must actively seek to draw the line forward.

Historically, liberalism springs directly from evangelicalism. Without the unflinching exposition, teaching and application of the doctrine of the New Testament, uncontrolled by denominational concerns in the opposite direction, evangelicalism loses its roots and is sunk.

It is the hope of the Directors of the Australian Church Record that even if you do not share our opinions, you will find the paper helpful in understanding our evangelical concerns. ●

# The Australian CHURCH RECORD

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**Testimony from Bruce Ballantine-Jones,  
former editor ACR**

"I am delighted that the *Church Record* is resuming publication. Throughout most of this century, the *Church Record* has played a pivotal role in presenting and extending evangelical Anglicanism. There is a greater need than ever for an independent Anglican voice so that people can both read and contribute to the dissemination of Biblical ideas."

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