

Editorials

BIG CHANGES AT OUR MODEST BUT MIGHTY LITTLE JOURNAL

Touchstone has been predicated on one simple assumption: that the mission of the Church includes continuous and rigorous theological engagement, and that such engagement requires a sustained encounter with our traditions, both ecumenical and denominational. In the pages of *Touchstone* history and biblical witness are not so much problems to be explained as they are foundational experiences through which God calls and addresses us.

This issue of *Touchstone: Heritage and Theology in a New Age* represents the completion of 27 years of publication. All of that work has been under the editorship of Mac Watts, and facilitated by a wonderful cast of volunteers based in Winnipeg. Tribute will be paid to those volunteers at a later time.

It has been an amazing ride. We have debated admission to the Lord's Table, inclusive language, the Trinity in contemporary theology and spirituality, sexuality, ethics, our understanding of ministry and the role of theological education. We have met dozens of figures from our heritage, some of whom we could not have encountered anywhere else. Through all of this Mac has worked carefully and diligently to allow us to see and understand ourselves and our church as part of a lively and dynamic tradition of faith that still has a great contribution to make to Canada and to Christ's mission here and in the world.

Last November, Mac and John Daly — the latter being our intrepid treasurer cum administrator — indicated they were going to step down from their respective roles. We had been aware of this possibility for some time, but we had now come face to face with it. We had to examine whether the journal had run its course and should thus retire along with its editor, or would it continue? Conversations across the country weighed the continued mission

of the journal. In those conversations the need within our denomination for a theological publication that engages life and faith with history, tradition and the biblical witness was repeatedly affirmed.

Critical to our future, of course, would be a new editor, and with him or her a new cast of characters to make the journal roll off the presses and into the mail. The annual meeting of our Editorial Board in May had to probe our mission and our prospects. Over the course of that meeting we were joined by various colleagues who share a passion for theology and the church. They helped sharpen and renew our sense of mission, and, as it happened, helped shape the material for some upcoming issues of the journal.

Attending our meeting throughout was Peter Wyatt, the recently retired Principal of Emmanuel College, Toronto, and former Secretary of Theology and Faith with the General Council. As the meeting proceeded, to our great delight, Peter agreed to take on the role of editor — though with the understanding that Mac would edit the September and January issues so that he, Peter, could take over fully with the May 2010 number. Peter's commitment to theology and the church make him an exceptional fit with the goals of *Touchstone*. With our new editor being based in Toronto, we will be moving the operations to the Greater Toronto Area. *Touchstone* will nevertheless continue to draw its Editorial Board from the Atlantic to the Pacific. We want to make sure the history and breadth of our Canadian and Christian experience is maintained.

The establishment of a new editorial and administrative team will involve widening our subscription base and raising our profile. We will need your prayers, your continued subscriptions, your encouragement of new subscribers, and your financial support. In the coming months we plan to make more use of the web, and thus to make the material from *Touchstone* available to a wider circle of readers. At the heart of all of this will be the continued effort to address, in the pages of our modest but mighty little journal, the issues of faith and life from the perspective of our heritage and tradition.

Thirty years ago, when David Hoffman and I first broached the possibility of a theological journal for the United Church, few thought such an entity could be launched, and if it actually were they considered it would last at most a couple of years. Even those of us intimately involved were cautious about its impact or longevity. After 27 years of publication there are few issues in the life of our church that have not benefitted from the careful historical and theological exploration that *Touchstone* has provided. For this there are many who need our “thank you” but none more so than Mac and the Winnipeg connection. Well done, good and faithful ones!

Looking forward, *Touchstone* has a renewed sense of hope and urgency for the life of the church. An effective social and pastoral witness to the resurrection of Christ needs an engaged and committed theological and historical imagination. We are honoured to share this unfolding future with you, exploring the depths of our faith and the call of God to live faithfully.

— John Hogman, Chair, *Touchstone* Editorial Board

ALL AUTHORITY IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH...

One of the most beloved stories in the Gospels has very weak support in the ancient manuscripts. I’m referring to the account in John about the woman caught in adultery. In our current English Bibles this story appears in the first part of chapter 8. The footnote to these verses in the NRSV tells us that the most ancient manuscripts don’t carry the passage. It goes on to say that “other authorities [they mean here, I believe, not just later Gospel manuscripts, but also quotations attributed to Jesus in early Christian writings] add the passage here or after 7:36 or after 21:25 or after Luke 21:38, with variations of text; some mark the passage as doubtful.” The footnote on this passage in the Jerusalem Bible claims the narrator’s style is more like Luke’s than John’s.