

Publishing Editor's column

HAVING arrived at the time of the year when we ask readers to renew their subscriptions, I would like to use this column both to look back and also to refer to the changes and improvements that have already taken place in the magazine, and to more changes and improvements which are planned for the future, God willing.

Having agreed somewhat reluctantly in 1979 to take over as Publishing Editor, at least for a short while, from the beginning of 1980, I now find myself getting towards the end of my twenty-seventh year as editor, during which time I have been assisted by Sister Mary, who has carried out the work of actually putting the magazine together. I did not of course think at the time that our Lord would remain away for so long, yet here we are well into a new millennium and still planning for the future, though always recognising that the long-expected Divine intervention into the affairs of the world and the ecclesia may put an end to our activities before our plans come to fruition.

Readers who have been with us over this period may recall that there have been quite a number of changes and improvements during this time. These include:

- annual Special Issues, usually double or more the length of an ordinary issue, on a wide variety of topics
- the reprinting of articles as books, six altogether
- a regular programme of inserts on basic Bible principles, with extra copies being made available for distribution to others
- updates to the design and layout of the magazine.

There have also been considerable changes in the way the magazine has been produced over the years. When Sister Mary and I began the work, the magazine was printed and dispatched at the other end of the country by a firm of letterpress printers. This was rapidly becoming uneconomic, and providentially within less than two years we were able to get the magazine printed by a local Christadelphian, Brother Ron Giles, who had just set up his own offset litho printing business, and to arrange for a team of local brethren and sisters to dispatch the magazine. A decade or so later, the availability of PCs, laser printers and desktop publishing packages enabled us to produce camera-ready copy. As a result the price of the

magazine increased by significantly less than the inflation rate over a good many years.

Two years ago consideration began to be given to what improvements could be made to the content and appearance of the magazine. This has resulted in a number of changes already, which we hope have been noticed and appreciated by readers. In particular we have introduced:

- more illustrations
- occasional colour sections
- new features, like Bible Workshop and PS.

In seeking to make improvements, however, we have been hampered by our current inability to make use of advances in printing technology. We are also faced with the problem of an aging team working on the dispatch of the magazine and a lack of available replacements. A decision has been made, therefore, to move to a larger printing firm from January 2007. This will have the following benefits:

- better reproduction of illustrations
- some use of colour without extra cost
- transfer of copy to the printer by electronic means
- use of machinery for packing and dispatch.

The Testimony Committee is most grateful to our present printer, Brother Ron Giles, for his work in printing the magazine for some twenty-five years, and we part company with considerable regret.

The change in the arrangements for printing the magazine does, however, mean a considerable increase in our costs. After those many years during which the subscription price was subject to only occasional increases, it was decided two years ago to apply annual price increases, both to avoid a sudden leap in price if we went to another printer and to build up our reserves to cushion the effect of increased costs. Hence the price rises which appear on the renewal forms. Even with the increased prices, we believe that our subscription rates still compare favourably with other Christadelphian magazines, and hope that readers will agree that the extra costs will be more than outweighed by the improvements we will be able to offer, and that they will therefore continue to support us. And if readers think the changes made have improved the magazine then we hope that they will encourage others to subscribe as well.

Tony Benson