

# THE CONTEMPORARY OPPORTUNITY FOR THE EVANGELICAL:

## AN EDITORIAL

In the contemporary ferment of varying theological trends, some moving toward ever greater unity and others toward greater antithesis, evangelical theological thought has increased opportunity to make itself known and influential. This means that those who represent this tradition of theology must seize upon their stewardship of scholarship with great care.

Evangelicals, in their conviction of the absolute authority of the Written Word of God, must understand that to occupy a position of theological acceptance they must first of all be devoted to biblical scholarship of the highest order of excellence, employing the exegetical tools both of cultural-historical awareness and linguistic exercise. Anything less than their highest attainment and use can only bring reproach on the name of Christ, the Lord of His Word.

Secondly, evangelicals, in order to have a meaningful contact with the total theological world of definition and evaluation, must look carefully to their modes of communication with that world. This requires more than an understanding of the contemporary theological literature and positions. It means that we need to speak the language of our theological culture. The modes of expression we employ must reflect the forms of the thought-patterns of our day.

Moreover, it is insufficient for evangelicals to accept simply the declarations by non-evangelicals in defining the nature and characteristics of theological issues. Rather, evangelicals should be leaders in declaring what the relevant issues are. The task of our scholarship becomes not simply a definitive clarification of the issues, but a declarative assertion of the issues themselves. Ours is a task of conservative progressive thought. This includes an earnest searching for the relevant data, but also indicates an acute awareness of the spirit of modern man and his world. It means a genuine appreciation of the existential in theology if the essential of theology is to be meaningfully stated.

The evangelical also must generate a full appreciation of the historical lines of theological development. He must bring into his exposition and evaluation of issues a sense of the continuity of the mind of orthodoxy, while recognizing the richness of thought and understanding that theologically varying emphases can bring to one's fuller theological ability. The contemporary trend evidenced in an unfortunate lack of historical foundations, both in liberal and conservative circles, can but yield confusion in theology. The evangelical must therefore direct the movement of his thought in accordance with his particular heritage, and thus become clear in his theological assertions in their ancestry. We cannot be forever building foundations; our task is that of superstructure.

It is this understanding of contemporary opportunity that shall direct us in our journalistic efforts. The Evangelical Theological Society invites the contributions of Christian scholarship to its journal. The enlargement of each issue of the Bulletin will permit us expansion to include evaluation of contemporary literature. There will be brief exegetical notes, and editorial comment. However, the large space of each issue will be reserved for outstanding articles contributed by the members of the Society.

The first number of this volume, as in years past, is largely given over to the directory of the Society, and the report on the annual meeting.

J. E. LUCHIES  
WHEATON COLLEGE