

GUEST EDITORIAL

Across the centuries Christian theology has faced two perennial challenges: the maintenance of a pure testimony, and the application of revealed truth to the total life of man. Though these two tasks interlock (since application of the truth is impossible if the truth is lost, and truth without application stands self-condemned), theology has generally devoted itself now to the one, now to the other, and the cause of Christ has suffered from the imbalance. "These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone" stands as a perpetual judgment over the Church's history.

Contemporary evangelical Christianity has demonstrated great vitality both in its stress on an unchanging gospel and in its forthright proclamation of saving truth. Yet in spite of this (or perhaps because of this, since nothing maddens the Evil Foe like fidelity to God's will), the present evangelical situation is fraught with extreme perils. On the one hand, a current of opposition to unqualified biblical authority has begun to erode evangelical testimony from within the ranks; on the other hand, the importation of Barthian dichotomies between Church and world has reinforced the natural isolation of a pietistic fundamentalism that finds it easier to declare what it is "agin" than what it is "fur".

The cry of "paper pope" has been shouted at evangelical Protestants ever since the Reformation. Today, however, one observes with amazement and with sorrow that in the very orthodox circles where the twentieth-century battle for biblical authority has been most courageously fought, voices are being raised against the inerrancy of Holy Writ. Biblical Seminary in New York, an evangelical center where brilliant pioneering techniques of inductive Bible study were developed, saw the 1963 publication of Dewey M. Beegle's *The Inspiration of Scripture*, in which that faculty member—having embraced Neo-Orthodox, dialectic presuppositions as to the nature of truth—imposes them on Scripture, denies its inerrancy, and makes the incredible claim that evangelicals by a "mental readjustment" can now retain inspiration without inerrancy and thereby rejoin mainline Protestant-ecumenical theology. North Park Seminary in Chicago, long known for its uncompromising free-church orthodoxy and piety, is now characterized by an anti-inerrancy approach to the Bible that finds scriptural truth-value not in any historical soundness or factual consistency possessed by the Word, but in its ability to trigger spiritual experience. Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, a bastion of biblical orthodoxy in the days of Theodore Engelder and W. F. Arndt, has in the last decade weakened its stand considerably; how much can be seen from the September, 1965, issue of the *Concordia Theological Monthly*, where arguments contra inerrancy once directed against the Church from outside (e.g., non-possession of the original autographs of the biblical books) are now advocated by faculty members themselves. And in many quarters of the American evangelical scene, from East coast to West, theologians who should be testifying to Scripture's total truth are preferring to avoid the word "inerrancy," are making no efforts to explain apparent discrepancies in the Bible, and are re-defining "truth" so that the Scripture can—we are confidently

told—retain its absolute revelational veracity without *de facto* historical accuracy.

The anti-inerrancy trend in evangelical Protestantism has the characteristics of Aristotle's classic tragedy: it has occurred in a remarkably short time, and it produces both pity and fear in the sensitive observer—pity that our theologians have learned so little from history (the proposed Presbyterian New Confession is the inevitable consequence of the denial of inerrancy by the Presbyterian Church U. S. A. in the 1920's!), and fear that such naiveté will totally corrupt evangelical witness across the land.

This concern has led the Editorial Committee of the ETS Bulletin to focus attention on the inerrancy issue in recent numbers of this journal ("A Historian Looks at Inerrancy," by Harold Lindsell, Winter, 1965; "Inspiration and Inerrancy: A New Departure," by the undersigned, Spring, 1965). In my capacity as Guest Editor, I am continuing this policy by presenting to readers as lead-article in this number a contribution by Dr. Robert Preus, the distinguished author of *The Inspiration of Scripture: A Study of the Theology of the Seventeenth Century Lutheran Dogmaticians* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1957). Dr. Preus' essay should serve as an adrenal injection for the faint-of-heart who question the place of inerrancy in historic Christian theology or doubt that modern exegetical research is compatible with an errorless Bible.

Contemporary evangelical thought suffers from ingrownness as well as from the above-described bibliological flabbiness. Barth's commendable opposition to theological liberalism has given him uncritical hero-status in the eyes of some influential evangelicals, so that they have incorporated into their thought Barth's divorce between Church and world—and the cultural negativism of sociological fundamentalism has pointed in the same direction. Over against this deleterious trend, a second criterion of selection has operated in the editing of the present issue, resulting in the inclusion of two articles of wide scope that demonstrate the necessity and desirability of apologetic confrontations between the unadulterated biblical message and the modern secular world. Arnold Daniel Weigel, a Canadian honors graduate in theology, analyzes in detail Bertrand Russell's reasons for rejecting Christianity, and deals mortal body blows to this influential case by one of the greatest living Western philosophers. Donald Neiswender, a missionary to Japan, interrelates the fundamental Mandala symbol of Tantric Buddhism with the depth psychology of the late Carl Gustav Jung, and shows that the historic Christian gospel provides the final answers to Eastern man's age-old quest for the meaning of life.

It is, *in fine*, the hope of the Guest Editor that upon Preus' solid Reformation base of an inerrant *Sola Scriptura*, Weigel and Neiswender's Renaissance perspective of the Christian as "uomo universale" will stand forth. Such an orientation could revolutionize evangelical theology in our time, and ground a new age of commitment and discovery comparable to that of the sixteenth century. As in that day, new worlds are opening up, and just as a senile Romanism was unable to meet the challenge then, so the senile dialectic theologies are incapable of pointing the way now. The Christ of the inerrant Scripture, through whom all without exception have been created and redeemed: He alone is Way, Truth, Life—and Mandala!

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