

EDITORIAL

Scholars who state their position do readers a great service. This is particularly true in the area of Biblical scholarship. Basic presuppositions concerning the Scriptures are crucially important inasmuch as they determine theological method, interpretation, and numerous other aspects of Biblical studies.

In current studies on the Scriptures it is very helpful indeed when reading the volume *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Harper & Bros., 1941, p. 141) by the late Robert H. Pfeiffer of Harvard that in his interpretation he considers the Graf-Wellhausen hypothesis as fundamentally sound. Dr. Geerhardus Vos, formerly professor at Princeton, in his book *Biblical Theology* (Eerdmans, 1948) with clarity asserts that he accepts and studies the Scriptures as they lie before him and rejects the modern critical theories. The historicity of the Biblical events are crucially important to him in his interpretation. G. A. F. Knight, formerly at McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago and now Principal of the Pacific Theological College in Fiji, likewise states his presuppositions in his volume, *A Christian Theology of the Old Testament* (1959, SMC Press, Great Britain). He accepts the documentary hypothesis as a working framework and thus adopts a radical rearrangement of the persons and events as they are presented in the Old Testament. The forthright statement in each case is commendable.

The men assembled in Cincinnati in 1949 to organize the Evangelical Theological Society were concerned that an opportunity would be provided for Biblical scholars to share their efforts in research on a common basis. This was expressed in its doctrinal statement asserting that the Bible is considered to be the inerrant Word of God. Even as individuals state their position so this society forthrightly declares its basis for Biblical scholarship.

Currently a number of orthodox circles reflect uncertainty concerning the trustworthiness of Scripture (cf. Guest Editorial in Vol. 8, No. 4). Others assert that inerrancy is not important or sponsor lectures in which the Biblical accounts in Genesis were advocated as myths. Appropriately this position was challenged by local faculty members. In view of such trends it seemed appropriate for the Evangelical Theological Society to focus special attention on a discussion of its doctrinal statement in its Bulletin as well as at the annual meeting. Part of the latter is shared with our readers in this issue.

In his presidential address Dr. Gordon Clark critically evaluates our basic doctrinal statement. The panel discussion with Dr. John F. Walvoord as moderator focused attention upon the topic "Biblical Inerrancy Today." Three of the panelists' papers are offered in this issue. Dr. Kenneth S. Kantzer's contribution on the "Significance of Inerrancy" will appear in

our forthcoming number. As a society we are confident that through this extensive discussion the significance and necessity of our doctrinal statement will become more apparent to those who have a concern for advancing Biblical scholarship.

Where no common basis is stated for Biblical scholarship it is possible that an enormous expenditure of research and effort may be devoted to changing theories that may represent the concensus of scholars today but be abandoned tomorrow. Such was the case with the Graf-Wellhausen theory. Dr. John Bright observes in "Modern Study of the Old Testament Literature" (*The Bible and the Ancient Near East*, ed. G. E. Wright, Garden City, New York, 1959, pp. 13-14) that modern Biblical criticism is in a state of flux and that "the critical orthodoxy of a generation ago, with its apparent certainties and assured results, has gone. . . ." Volumes devoted to that study are now in need of drastic revision.

Archaeological research, linguistic studies, critical analysis and historical evaluation are the tools used by Biblical scholars. Without any frame of reference in studying the Bible the conclusions may be as varied and numerous as the scholars who study, if each comes with his own assumptions and bias.

Likewise the lack of a common basis for studying the Scriptures offers a dim view of development and progressive thinking in Biblical theology. This is quite evident in what has been published in the last few decades. When the historicity of the Bible, especially the Old Testament, is not accepted as given in the text a wide variety of opinions exist as to the historical order of events, the proper historical arrangements of Biblical facts and the reliability of various Biblical writers. Lacking agreement on these matters current Biblical scholars reflect a variety of opinions and often confusion in their studies. This makes it difficult for one scholar to build on another scholar's foundation. Those who accept the Bible as inerrant and reliable at least have a common basis on which to continue their studies.

If the scholars who authored the volumes in currently published commentaries for laymen had a common basis in the Bible as reliable and trustworthy, the Biblical interpretations offered our Christian constituency would be more unified. The same is true of the current material offered in Sunday School curriculum (cf. *Christianity Today*, Vol. X, No. 10, Feb. 18, 1966, pp. 28ff). Here the teaching in our churches reflects the synthesis of a scholarship of the past generation when Biblical studies were based on a view of Scripture that rested basically on naturalistic, evolutionistic, and philosophical *a priori*.

Our present task as a society continues to be the fostering of scholarship centered in the Word of God as a trustworthy and reliable basis. May our regional and national meetings as well as our publications mark a constructive advance in scholarship which coming generations can develop with confidence because it is based on God's Word.