

## EDITORIAL

FAITH and HISTORY is the theme of our 22nd meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society for its sessions in Westmont, California, December 28-31. In addition to a variety of papers presented by individuals the Jewish-Christian dialogue should provide a provocative interchange of ideas on this subject. It is hoped that this will stimulate all who attend to advanced research and scholarship.

*New Perspectives on the Old Testament* is ready for distribution. Published by Word Books this volume offers some of the valuable research presented at our 20th meeting in Philadelphia. Another Old Testament study on the interpretation of Genesis is offered in the pages following in this part of our Journal. Note G. Van Groeningen's reference to the volume published by Baker Book House entitled *Interpreting God's Word* (1970).

The interpretation of the Old Testament has precipitated hundreds of volumes in the 20th century. Perhaps no other literature has been subjected to as many theories of interpretation as the Old Testament. Theory after theory has emerged as scholars have delved into research of this unique body of literature and attempted to evaluate its origin and composition. Commendable is the forthright honesty with which many authors approach their interpretation of the Old Testament. Consider what G. A. Larue writes in his recent volume *Old Testament Life and Literature* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc. 1968) in which he states his position as follows: "Because the documentary hypothesis is the most widely accepted of all theories of Pentateuchal analysis, this book will utilize, in principle, the conclusions reached by this method of research." (p. 63).

As one reads R. K. Harrison *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans 1969) the reader is made aware of the fact that many theories need reevaluation in the light of the facts known today concerning Ancient Near Eastern Literature. Theories utilized for interpretation should constantly be subjected to critical analysis on the basis of the current knowledge available from the culture of Old Testament times. Harrison points out that theory after theory is no longer valid in the light of the evidence available to modern scholarship. Archaeological discoveries and the analysis of the findings have provided objective considerations to replace subjective theories.

Correct methodology in the study and interpretation of the Old Testament is likewise important. The Graf-Wellhausen methodology and its presuppositions needs to be critically appraised. We concur with Harrison (p. 532) in the "earnest hope that the scholarly world will not have to

endure yet another supposedly "scientific" hypothesis that purports to explain the origins of Old Testament literature." Harrison confronts current Old Testament scholars with a challenge when he expresses his concern for a sound methodology:

What is required is a thoroughgoing attempt to replace any and all developmental hypotheses by a correct methodology grounded firmly upon an assured foundation of knowledge concerning the manifold facets of ancient Near Eastern life, which, in setting the Biblical writings in proper historical and cultural perspective, will furnish authoritative information as to scribal customs and usages in the realm of ancient literary activity.

With the vast amount of material available from the Near East extending back into the third millennium B.C. the scholars in the coming decade have resources in quantities unequaled in previous generations to pursue intensive and sound investigations. With the Hebrews text and these resources before them it is hoped that new studies will reflect accredited procedures from the known to the unknown instead of theory upon theory.

The interpretation of archaeological material is crucial of the study of Biblical literature. Consequently it seems appropriate that the Near East Archaeological Society should also convene at Westmont. All are welcome to attend the Monday afternoon session of the NEAS. It is hoped that their program will provide a stimulus to all who are concerned with a sound interpretation of Biblical literature.