

FOREWORD

The idea of a journal of New Testament Studies, promoted and sponsored by an international organization of New Testament scholars, goes back to the early days of the founding of *Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas*. The story of the inception and development of the project belongs to the history of the *Societas*, and is told elsewhere in this number.¹ The moving spirit throughout and the sole originator of the idea has been Professor J. de Zwaan of Leiden, to whose vision and enterprise the *Societas* itself owes its origin. An international periodical of New Testament studies was first advocated by Dr de Zwaan at the informal gathering in Edinburgh during the Faith and Order Conference in 1937, at which the first moves were made to establish such a Society. The idea has been kept prominently before members ever since, and Dr de Zwaan has never tired of reminding the Society (as he did again at Cambridge in 1953) that its obligations, as an international body of scholars and teachers of the New Testament, are not finally discharged by meeting together once a year to share with one another the most recent results of Biblical exegesis and research: such results belong, not only to all who desire to keep abreast of the best New Testament scholarship, but to everyone interested in the elucidation and interpretation of the primary documents of the Christian faith.

It was in the belief that there was room for such a periodical that the Society decided at its Cambridge meeting in September 1953 to go forward with this venture.

In one respect it is a new kind of venture in the field of Biblical scholarship; for it is an international journal of New Testament studies, and its international aspect is rightly felt by the Society to be one of its most important, as it is its most distinctive feature. In one of the earliest papers read before the Society on 'The Idea of a Society for New Testament Studies', Professor T. W. Manson, one of its founder-members and earliest Presidents, stressed the need for such an organization of scholars as 'an international clearing-house' of New Testament studies, where knowledge can be pooled, co-operation between scholars promoted and fostered at an international level, and overlapping of research projects prevented. It is hoped that *New Testament Studies* will serve similar ends, by bringing together the results of the labours of scholars of different nations and traditions; by making known valuable and important work which is all too often carried out in unadvertised ways or to be found only in inaccessible publications; by reporting on different

¹ *Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas*, by G. H. Boobyer, p. 66.

undertakings and research projects in various countries; by encouraging constructive criticism across political and confessional frontiers, and, in general, by offering articles, studies and reviews by the main authorities in their subjects, whatever their country of origin. In its international aspect *New Testament Studies* is an experiment in ecumenical scholarship.

The aim of the new journal may be further defined in the same terms as that of the *Societas* itself, as set out in its Constitution:¹ '... its aim shall be the furtherance of New Testament studies'. The wide range of subjects included under 'New Testament studies' makes such an aim a comprehensive one, for it is bound to take account of a variety of specialist interests (language, text, background, patristics, etc.), as well as matters directly concerned with Biblical theology and interpretation. The periodical will naturally reflect the many specialized interests of its contributors, but it is not intended simply to be an organ for specialist studies. It is above all concerned to promote a better understanding of the New Testament documents in the light of the fullest knowledge available and with the assistance of the best interpretative skill in our day.

There is a cloud, perhaps no bigger than a man's hand, on the modern theological horizon. It is a tendency to despise or neglect the ideals which inspired the Biblical scholarship of the great liberals of the nineteenth century. It is not difficult to misrepresent this period as an age when theology was wandering in the wilderness of Biblical antiquities, of textual criticism and drab philology. But these years were not all years of idolatry and apostasy; and they were certainly years of probation and discipline. The danger in the present is that theology, with its head too high in the clouds, may end by falling into the pit of an unhistorical and uncritical dogmatism. Into any new theological undertaking must be brought all that was best in the old ideal of sound learning, a scrupulous attention to philology, text and history.

A liaison between specialized studies and Biblical exegesis is not always possible, since New Testament science has, as its field, not only the interpretation of the primary documents, but all that has a bearing, direct or indirect, on language, text, history, transmission and translation of these writings. In these peripheral areas the scholar is, for the most part, the scientist, not the exegete or theologian. But as his interests move nearer to the centre, the interpretation of Holy Scripture, sound learning takes precedence of all other considerations; and no interpretation or Biblical theology which does not stand squarely to history, language and text can command the respect of the modern student.

Such a point of view, however, does not preclude other and deeper sources of motivation in the Biblical scholar's work. In his Presidential Address delivered at Christ Church, Oxford, in 1948, Professor J. de Zwaan wrote:²

¹ A copy of the Constitution of S.N.T.S. will be found at p. 70.

² Published in *The Journal of Theological Studies*, vol. XLVIII, nos. 191-2, under the title 'The Unity of Purpose in New Testament Studies'.

For us, it is our desperate privilege to stand in a world which no longer believes in the 'isms' of approved authorities or philosophies. Our world has passed through so much that it has reached the courage of despair. It is ready for a dive into the uttermost scepticism, a scepticism not of reasoning, not born from undigested thought, but a more fundamental scepticism, a scepticism of experience. Total experience, experience drawing its vitality from sub-conscious reactions, is the reaction of the whole of man to his experience as a whole. That is a great and indeed awe-inspiring experience. There is only one thing comparable to it. That one thing is faith, faith as we meet it in the New Testament. Faith, not verbal, traditional or intellectual faith, but faith as it is set forth in the New Testament is the only weapon by which the perils of this situation can be overcome. I presume that it is the will of God that we, students of the New Testament, should by our professional studies and labours promote that better faith, directly and indirectly, in whatever way we can. That should be our one purpose. We should inspire . . . by our vision of the tremendous importance of New Testament revelation, by the perfect loyalty, cleanness and openness of our methods and our whole mind, by the humility of our theorising and the stern rejection of any kind of insincerity. It is a joy to live on the threshold of a renaissance of real theological thinking.

Though the full project of an international journal has had to wait more than fifteen years for its realization, the Society has meantime issued a number of publications. Reports of meetings and papers read by members have been published in the *Bulletin* of which three numbers have appeared.¹ The first Continental meeting of the Society at Bern in 1952 devoted its sessions to the theme 'Man in God's Design', and the papers read then (by C. H. Dodd, P. I. Bratsiotis, R. Bultmann and H. Clavier) have been published in a separate brochure; these papers are printed in English, French and German.²

The Society's *Bulletin* was edited by the late Professor R. H. Lightfoot. As in all his editorial work, Dr Lightfoot took the greatest pains to ensure the highest standard of accuracy in the presentation of the Society's reports and papers. Illness prevented him from occupying the Presidential Chair to which he had been called in 1952, and his recent death has meant a grievous loss not only to New Testament scholarship, but to the Society which he so loyally supported.

The new journal will continue to publish reports of the Society's work together with papers and short studies read before the Society: but its pages are open to contributors outside the Society.

The first number appears during the Presidency of Professor Rudolf Bultmann of Marburg whose Presidential Address on 'History and Eschatology in the New Testament' is here published. Dr Bultmann has been closely

¹ *Bulletins* 1, II and III, for 1950, 1951 and 1952, published for the Society by the Oxonian Press Ltd., Queen Street, Oxford, England, from whom a few copies are still available.

² *Man in God's Design*, printed by Imprimeries Réunies, 9 rue Pasteur, Valence (Drôme), France, in 1952, and obtainable from Messrs B. H. Blackwell Ltd., Broad Street, Oxford, or Verbands-Sortiment Evang. Buchhändler, Ludwigstrasse 73a (Postfach 721), Stuttgart S., Germany, or the printers.

associated with the preparations for the launching of the new journal; these made heavy demands upon him, and the Society owes him a special debt of gratitude. Professor T. W. Manson, former Chairman of the Publications Committee and a member of the Editorial Board, has been especially helpful in giving his advice and guidance; and the members of the Editorial Board and General Committee have co-operated closely with the Secretary and myself in making and completing the necessary arrangements for the publication of the journal.

The present Editorial Board holds office for the years 1953-4, and is still not complete or fully representative; arrangements will be made at the Marburg meeting of the Society in September 1954 for a wider representation.

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