Greetings from your new editor. It has been a joy to me to see the concern for a Quaker journal of theology, broached at the Conference of Friends in the Americas held here at Wilmington College in 1957 become such a fruitful reality. I ask both your indulgence and support as I try my hand at editorship. The dialogue format of this journal adopted several years ago still seems to me quite useful and will be continued under normal circumstances.

The lead article of this issue was one of several outstanding papers delivered at the third conference of the Quaker Theological Discussion Group held at Friends Boarding School, Barnesville, Ohio, July 1963, on the theme, “Christian Commitment and Quaker Social Concern.” Vail Palmer’s treatment of Christian commitment and the peace testimony has three major points. In the first place, he presents an evaluation and critique of the “liberal pacifist” approach to the resolution of conflict; secondly, of the “radical or prophetic pacifist” approach; and finally he adumbrates a Christ-centered and biblical approach which is his own position.

Our commentators include Stephen G. Cary of the American Friends Service Committee, who participated in the conference and brings very trenchant and valuable criticism of Vail Palmer’s thesis. Stephen Cary feels that commitment to Christ as the sole motive for the peace testimony, while valid and necessary for Christians, is a bit too exclusive for the rest of mankind. Eric S. Tucker of London Yearly Meeting is a bit gentler in his comments but is unhappy with the classification of some pacifists as “liberal” and others as “radical.” He feels that both emphases are necessary and are always found combined to some degree in all persons who actively witness for peace.

Stephen B. Ross, a California Friends pastor, takes issue with Vail Palmer’s interpretation of the term exousia in Romans chapter 13:1 which means “powers” or “authorities.” Whether these powers be those of the Roman imperial government or demonic kingdoms of the spirit or both, is the question. Does a Christian pacifist owe primary allegiance to the peaceable kingdom of our Lord? If so, how does he interpret Paul’s counsel in Romans 13 that we ought to be subject to the “powers [exousia] that be as ordained of God”?

Forthcoming issues of Quaker Religious Thought will deal with the Quaker understanding of the term “theology,” and with the faith of Robert Barclay. Your editor welcomes your suggestions of concerns that should be discussed in future issues.

T. Canby Jones