

A Challenge For Dialogue

1. Our Philosophical Underpinnings

The conception for this JOURNAL from the Radical Reformation grew out of the realization that there needed to be an expression of a significant theology that was biblical, but heterodox, in contrast to the overwhelming orthodoxy expressed in most theological journals.

It was conceived as a continuing expression of those from the Radical Reformation who could find no home among the other branches of the Reformation. All of the other four branches of G.H. William's five-part paradigm were unwilling to accept, or even consider, the theological positions expressed by the "radicals." Yet the majority of the "radicals" seemed consistent in their intent to seek only biblical support for their theological positions.

There are at least four areas in which orthodoxy is at odds with those "radicals," and with those who continue in that tradition. Out of an unyielding biblicism, a Biblical Unitarian position emerged, and thus Christology and Theology Proper became two of the areas of emphasis for this JOURNAL. Conditional Immortality, as opposed to the natural immortality of the soul, and Eschatology, especially regarding the Kingdom of God, are the third and fourth areas to be stressed and addressed by this JOURNAL.

Those four areas show a continued need to have "radical" views expressed, as they do not seem to be openly addressed in most instances. The Theology Proper that expresses that only One is God is a position much closer to that of Jewish monotheism than to orthodox Christianity's doctrine of one God in a threesome. This monotheism is a position that this JOURNAL seeks to articulate. Unfortunately there are few, if any, forums for discussing this issue without strident cries of "heresy," and attacks on authors that dare ask questions of the majority position.

That "Biblical Unitarian" position necessitates a radical Christology that insists on the "sonship" of Jesus, not a position of "God, though not God, yet God," demanded by orthodoxy. That Jesus is the Son of God hews to the biblical language and New Testament position. The Atonement makes sense only when he is understood as the sacrifice, as expressed in the book of

Hebrews. Again the language of orthodoxy only obscures when words no longer mean what words have always meant.

The matter of Conditional Immortality has found others, besides this JOURNAL, that see it as a biblical position, and also view natural immortality as of pagan Greek origin. That man seeks immortality is expressed time and again by the New Testament, as well as that resurrection, similar to Jesus' own resurrection by the Father, is the ultimate fulfillment of mankind's groping back to the Father's side. If immortality is inherent, there is no purpose to seeking after it, as both Old and New Testaments express.

That this culminates in Christ's literal return to this planet is a position much closer to the Radical Eschatology found in some from the days of the Reformation. That Jesus will himself reign as King for a Millennium, before finally turning the Kingdom back to his Father, is the position that fits the biblical evidence most accurately.

These four areas of theology, along with historical articles, form the basis for this JOURNAL as it expresses a non-orthodox yet strongly biblical position that needs to be heard and that ought to be considered. In fact, the editors of this JOURNAL invite those who would disagree with positions taken in this JOURNAL to write dissenting articles, or at least letters of dissent, expressing cogently their own views.

2. This Fall issue

In this issue of A JOURNAL FROM THE RADICAL REFORMATION we have only two featured articles. Senior Editor Anthony Buzzard explores in detail John 1:1, a text that largely has been misunderstood, and as a result has brought much misunderstanding regarding the nature of Jesus' existence.

Janet Stilson writes from her historical perspective. Living in a small town in Ogle County, Illinois, it was fascinating to find Dr. John Thomas giving the Christadelphians their name in Ogle County during the Civil War. This is the same small city in which the Church of God General Conference was centered, which has as a founder Joseph Marsh, ex-Millerite. The connections with them, and early Church of God/Age-to-Come believers, especially in Illinois, need further exploration. Perhaps further exploration of the Wilson/Thomas connections needs to be done.

3. Features in Winter Issue

Pastor Jeff Fletcher does extensive work with the history of Heaven. Since our journal's themes include conditionalism and eschatology it would seem appropriate to discuss and to investigate how "heaven" became the goal

of Christians, with the corresponding loss of the biblical theme of the Kingdom of God. His work also includes a discussion of the biblical themes of the Kingdom and what has been done exegetically with those applicable texts.

Dr. Marian Hillar, of Texas Southern, writes of the Italians Laelius Socinus and Faustus Socinus. His profound insights into the historical record of these monumental figures are of great value to those fascinated with the Radical Reformation, especially in Poland.

Kent Ross

For the sake of accuracy we have redated the JOURNAL, beginning with this issue. Volume 10 is beginning in Fall, 2001 rather than Fall, 2000. This change affects only the date, not the volume numbers, and will not affect subscriptions. We apologize for any confusion our recent publication schedule has caused, and we hope to proceed on a more regular schedule.