
EDITORIAL

Please allow me a moment of expressed exasperation. Over the years this Journal has tried to present a biblical, although heterodox, point of view, especially in regard to issues concerning the oneness of God, the Sonship of Jesus, conditional immortality, and eschatology, particularly as it relates to the Kingdom of God and its establishment on the earth.

Yet in all these years, we have still not been able to engage in an open dialogue with orthodox theologians on most of these issues. In truth, we have had some interaction, but we have never been allowed to do this in the open, since most theologians are very cautious about openly expressing views that those less skilled in theology could accept. They fear the charge of “Heresy,” and the censure that would surely follow.

Permit me to quote from a source typical of what well-known writers have expressed elsewhere, and ask, “Why have not these logical, though decidedly non-orthodox views, been addressed and then, if possible, disproved?” Instead they are read and silently given assent, though perhaps grudgingly, but not in *open* continued dialogue.

A highly respected writer such as Jaroslav Pelikan, in his first volume on *The Christian Tradition*, titled *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition*, writes of the difficulties and seeming contradictions of the centuries after Nicea, when the Church was trying to explain what it had already determined to be true.

He quotes Loofs: “In reference to the historical human appearance of Christ,” such formulas were “intelligible and interpreted religiously, even intelligent; but isolated from the historical appearance of Jesus Christ, they sound like the babbling of an idiot.”¹

Again he cites Loofs: “Therefore the transfer of the concept ‘Son’ to the preexistent Christ is the most significant factor in the pluralistic distortion of the Christian doctrine of God.”²

He cites Hilary as saying, at the very end of his treatise on the councils, that “he had not heard of the Council of Nicea until he was about to go into exile in 356, but that he regarded *homoousios* and *homoiousios* as synonymous.” Pelikan goes on to write:

Speaking doctrinally rather than politically, the *homoousios* was saved by the further clarification of the unresolved problems of the One and the Three and by the recognition of a common religious concern between the partisans of *homoousios* and those of *homoiousios*. The spokesman for that recognition after various kinds of hesitation was Athanasius himself, who ultimately asserted his unwillingness to the *Homoiousians* as “Ariomaniacs, or as opponents of the fathers; but we discuss the issue with them as brethren with brethren, who mean what we mean and are disputing only about terminology.” By saying that Christ

¹ Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, Vol. 1: *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600)*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971, 177.

² *Ibid.*, 187.

was “of the ousia” of the Father and “like [the Father] in ousia,” they were, he continued, “setting themselves in opposition to those who say that the Logos is a creature.” And this was finally the doctrinal interest for which homoousios had been a symbol — coined by Gnostic heretics, dictated by an unbaptized emperor, jeopardized by naïve defenders, but eventually vindicated by its orthodox opponents.”³

Pelikan is only one of the many authorities who write bold words that ought to challenge the Christian community to question orthodoxy, and seek to discover the Bible’s clear, simple presentation of the “Sonship” of Jesus, without appealing to philosophical double-speak.

Only theologians can understand and dialogue with the complexities and fine distinctions others try to make to explain and clarify the doctrine of the Trinity. In seminary, over supper one evening, I challenged my professor about the doctrine, to which he replied with words that have imprinted themselves on my mind: “Kent,” he said, “New Testament scholarship is on your side (meaning Biblical Unitarianism), but the Church Councils clarified what the Bible was trying to say.”

That seems to give us the reason for the problem. Not content to take the Bible at face value, not having a strong conviction about the inspiration of Scripture, even Protestants have had to resort to the early councils for their doctrinal understanding, and abandon clear biblical teachings. Catholic theologians admit these inconsistencies, but continue their support for the tradition for which they can find no biblical support.

John Hus asked to be shown from the Bible where he was wrong. Even Luther would not yield unless he could be shown from Scripture — at least in the beginning, though not in later dialogue with the “radicals.” That’s precisely the point those Radical Reformers tried to make with Calvin and Luther, and the point this Journal continues to try and make with the larger theological world. Is there any boldness for dialogue, or only a retreat into the jargon of past council double-speak? It borders on disingenuousness! Perhaps there never will be those bold enough to ask the honest questions and see the clear answers the Bible gives.

Kent Ross

³ *Ibid.*, 210.