

Biblical Unitarians Ancient and Modern

The Spring edition of *A JOURNAL FROM THE RADICAL REFORMATION* introduces our readers to a little-known work of William Penn, the celebrated Quaker, whose opposition to the doctrine of the Trinity earned him a year's incarceration in the Tower of London. We reprint a section of his *Sandy Foundation Shaken*. Investigating the biblical unitarian tendencies of Quakerism, Patrick Nugent demonstrates the common theme among early Quaker leaders that Jesus is to be recognized as Messiah and not abstractly as part of a Trinity.

Jim Tabor discusses Luke's view of the future of Israel. His examination of Luke 1 and 2 reveals Luke's intense interest in the Hebrew Scriptures as well as his preoccupation with the ongoing history of Israel. Luke has not abandoned the prophets' realistic hope for redemption in Jerusalem.

We take the opportunity of reporting briefly on the recent third annual Theological Conference held at Atlanta Bible College (April 29 - May 1). A welcome participant was G.W. Buchanan, retired Professor of New Testament at Wesley Theological Seminary, Washington, D.C. A lifetime of research in the Bible and Jewish literature has convinced him of the need to study Jesus in terms of the categories he shared with his Jewish environment. Buchanan's portrait of Christ is similar in many ways to the impression of Jesus gained by the reader of Scripture who consciously lays aside some aspects of the image of Christ cherished by the Church. Buchanan pointed out that the early Christians expected the Kingdom of God to be a territory supervised by His legal agent, the Messiah. The kingdom would come to power when the land of Israel was freed from pagan domination. Brilliant new light is shed on Scripture if it is read in the context of its own Jewish preconceptions. Professor Buchanan's work may be examined in two important books: *Jesus, The King and His Kingdom* (Mercer University Press, 1984) and *The Consequences of the Covenant* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1970). More recently he has written on the themes of legal agency and New Testament eschatology (see our reviews in this Journal, Winter, 1992 and Spring 1993).

We were delighted also to have with us Marian Hillar of Texas Southern University. Professor Hillar is currently researching seven-

teenth-century Polish Socinian unitarians. He had been surprised to find that a form of biblical unitarianism still survives among American Adventists, namely the Church of God (Abrahamic Faith).

Other presentations dealt with matters of perennial concern among us, notably the issue of divorce and remarriage. We publish William Wachtel's discussion of divorce presented at the Conference. The issue of Israel in New Testament eschatology is a favorite topic among Adventists. A paper was read on Acts 1:6, in the light of Calvin's negative reaction to the disciples' questions about the restoration of Israel. The subject has attracted the interest of Howard Marshall, editor of the *Evangelical Quarterly*, who plans to publish the essay next year.

Cassette or video recordings of the Conference are available from Atlanta Bible College.