

Editor's Introduction to Winter 2005 edition, Journal of Liberal Religion

As the editor for this edition I want to begin by thanking Ken Olliff for the truly outstanding job he did as editor of the first seven editions of this Journal. I can vouch for the fact that this is a demanding job, and since Ken has taken a full time position at the University of Chicago he was forced to step aside from the Journal. We regret that it has taken so long to replace him, and that together with technical complications regarding the web site explains why there has been no new edition for some time.

This edition deals with "Issues in Liberal Religion" and is divided into two sections. The first treats issues in Unitarian Universalism, and the second deals with empirical and naturalistic theology. The first essay, by Davidson Loehr, articulates his view that Unitarian Universalism is dying because it does not have a viable theology and is in fact simply a liberal political group. As always Dr. Loehr is provocative and iconoclastic if also strident and controversial. The second article, by Lex Crane, was written entirely independently of the first, but it offers a response to some of Dr. Loehr's concerns. The two articles should be read in the order in which they appear here. Like Lex Crane's article, David Bumbaugh's essay was given at a minister's study group in which the assigned topic was "the core of our faith." While Crane's approach is theological, Bumbaugh's is socio-religious and as always Professor Bumbaugh is provocative and original.

The next article, still on the UU theme, asks the question, as one of my former parishioners put it, "if we're so good, why are we so small." I think you will find this treatment by Manish Mishra to be very thoughtful.

The last two articles are more strictly theological in nature. "Value in Experience" by David Tarbell deals with empirical theology. Tarbell focuses on two contemporary empirical theologians, one of whom is Jerome Stone, the author of the other article.. Stone's essay makes a useful distinction between three types of religious naturalism and identifies thinkers with each. Stone's title, "Is God Emeritus" comes from Shailer Matthews.

As always, the editor welcomes responses to these essays, and the Journal will publish those that are suitable. We also welcome manuscripts for the next edition which we hope to publish in fall of 2005. Part of the next issue will deal with the thought of James Luther Adams, a year late for the tenth anniversary of his death, but one reason for looking again at JLA is the appearance by his foremost interpreter, George Kimmich Beach, of a major work, "Transforming Liberalism: The Theology of James Luther Adams," published by Skinner House. I especially welcome submissions dealing with Adams. Please send all submissions to bmurry21@msn.com.

All published essays, both responses and original manuscripts, have been reviewed by scholars in the field of each essay. These scholars, not the editor, make the decision about publication.

Bill Murry
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