

MARGINAL NOTES

by Grammateus

The Evangelism Commission of the UBCAP has recently produced a pamphlet based on a tract written by the Reverend Doctor James A Wells, the Coordinator of Evangelism of the BUWC. This article was recently reprinted in *The Atlantic Baptist*.

Most of us, I think, would agree with this writer that believers' baptism by immersion most faithfully reflects New Testament practice and most eloquently symbolizes the believer's identification with her/his Lord and Saviour in death and resurrection — death to sin and darkness and resurrection to newness of life (Romans 6: 3 -4).

But this tract admits, citing Luke 23:43, that baptism is not essential to "participation in the Kingdom of God, or eternal life with Jesus Christ."

Does it not seem to be strange to assert that a person may enjoy "so great (a) salvation" but may not be a delegate to the annual assembly of the UBCAP? But since 1971 this has been the case with the UBCAP. Article III (1) of the convention constitution reads:

The following persons will be recognized as accredited delegates to Convention, being in every case a member of one of the Churches of Convention **and a believer who has been baptized by immersion.**

This limitation has turned our Convention into a Church. The three Baptist churches this writer has been a member of since 1950 have all practiced some form of inclusive membership. Inclusive membership has indeed been practiced in many churches in Associations and Conventions or Unions in fellowship with the Baptist World Alliance. There are different forms of inclusive membership from totally "open" membership to some form or other of Associate membership. The debate about membership, and its resolution, is solely and exclusively the business of the local Church. At our coming Assembly, there will be an opportunity to reverse this un-Baptist limitation on the right of the local church to elect its delegates to the annual Assembly. Let us return to Baptist practice.

from the ABF Photo Album



Sheldon and Marjorie Fountain and Fern Levy

Susan Colquhoun
and
Hubert Bartlett



Atlantic Baptist Fellowship

Bulletin



Elaine Anne MacGregor, John Boyd and Andy Crowell
in attendance at the '96 - 150th Annual Assembly of the AUBC

EXCUSE ME

Vicki Brown



My church is a democracy. All members have a personal faith in Jesus Christ and seek to perpetuate His ministry as led by the Holy Spirit. Why then, pray tell me, does our Convention Constitution in Article III (1) state:

"The following persons will be recognized as accredited delegates to Convention..." Excuse me!

All on the church roll are accredited members of our church. Since we believe in the priesthood of all believers we feel any member in our church is worthy of representing us at the Convention Assembly. What right has any association of churches have to dictate to us? If the delegates have been selected by a Baptist church then surely they are accredited!



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Elaine Anne MacGregor

Being a Baptist is not easy! As you will see from this edition of **the Bulletin** there are challenging issues to be discussed. At the 1997 meeting of the United Baptist Convention of the Atlantic Provinces, to be held in Wolfville in August, I will present, on behalf of the ABF, a motion to amend Article III of the Constitution of the United Baptist Convention of the Atlantic Provinces. The amendment makes membership in one of the churches of Convention the only prerequisite to being recognized as an accredited delegate to Convention. How you become a member of one of the churches of Convention is a matter for that church to decide. Presently, the constitution of Convention requires an accredited delegate to also be a believer who has been baptized by immersion. The issue raised in removing the requirement for a delegate to be a believer who has been baptized by immersion is that of a Baptist church's right to decide who is recognized as its member. It is an issue of Church autonomy, a freedom professed by Baptists.

The challenges that lie ahead, be they for each one of us as individuals in our daily lives or for us as supporters of the ABF, are to be celebrated. As Baptists we believe in soul freedom, church freedom, bible freedom and religious freedom. Although the preservation and exercise of those freedoms can be hard work, they are also challenges that force us to life and growth. Let us find joy in the freedoms and responsibilities of being Baptist!

ABF SPRING ASSEMBLY

MAY 30 AND 31, 1997

FIRST UNITED BAPTIST CHURCH NEW GLASGOW

Theme "Work and Worship"

Presenter - Rev. Gregory MacLeod, U.C.C.B.

Registration: 6:30 p.m. Friday, May 30th

(Complete details in the next issue of the Bulletin)

ABF EXECUTIVE MEMBERS



(front row l to r)

Jeffery White
Secretary

Ed Colquhoun
Immediate Past President

(back row l to r)

John Churchill
Treasurer

Doris Hilchey
Friends Secretary

Elaine Anne MacGregor
President

WHERE ARE WE GOING?

John E. Boyd

Between now and the end of this decade, corresponding as it does with the end of a century and a millennium, much will be written and said about the future of the Church - most of it far more profound than what you will find in this article! Nonetheless, I will venture to offer a few thoughts for your reflection and response.

Even a brief glance at the contemporary scene reveals that much has changed for the Church since the beginning of the 20th century. Whereas in 1900 most people in Canada would have defined their faith as either "Catholic" or "Protestant", today many would choose other designations such as Sikh, Buddhist, Hindu, Wiccan, New Age, and "none of the above"!

Add to these demographic changes the developments in biblical studies, theology, styles of worship, and ecumenical relationships (to name just a few) and one begins to grasp the magnitude of the impact of the 20th century on the Church!

So, where are we going now? Obviously, I do not have the answer to that question, but I do have a conviction that we Baptists are well suited to meet the challenges of the 21st century if we face them from the perspective of our cherished historic distinctives.

The Baptist emphasis on the local church can give us flexibility to meet new opportunities as they appear. Because each congregation is self-governing under the Lordship of Christ, we can create very specific ministries and respond to concrete needs without waiting for a regional or national "program" to be developed. As society becomes even more complex, the need for relatively small, but active communities of faith will grow - places where "nobodies" can be loved and empowered as "somebodies" in Christ.

Soul liberty will take on increasing importance as we engage a diverse population with the gospel of Christ. As missionaries have learned over the last few decades, we must be able to distinguish between the gospel and its "cultural clothing" in a Western, industrialized democracy. At times we will be amazed, and perhaps even alarmed, by the vastly different ways in which people will interpret the meaning of Jesus' invitation to "Follow me." The Baptist willingness to accept dissimilarity in belief and experience will help us create congregations of inclusiveness and diversity that are open to new ways of being faithful to Christ in worship, faith and service.

Believer's baptism by immersion is already striking a chord of authenticity with many non-churched Canadians. We are in a mission situation within our own country where most young people have no religious training or experience. At the same time, studies have shown that there is a tremendous interest in spirituality. As people respond to the love of Christ they are looking for ways to meaningfully express their faith. The symbolism of believer's baptism by immersion has a dramatic impact as personal spiritual experience and communal liturgical action unite.

Though the 20th century gave us more than a few battles over the Bible, the Baptist desire to be guided by "what saith the Scriptures" will be crucial as we distinguish between what is central to faith and what is dispensable as outmoded tradition. This is not to say that Baptists should abandon "willy nilly" the accumulated wisdom of previous generations, but that we must remain open to the fresh winds of renewal that come as we constantly bring all things into

dynamic, critical interaction with the full biblical witness to God's Way in Christ. This will require a level of humility and willingness to listen to one another that often eludes us to our peril!

The effective mobilization of individual Christians for mission, evangelism and service will be a critical aspect of the Church of the future. Our belief in the priesthood of all believers opens the way for a ministry that is not restricted to the professional clergy, but draws on the skills and gifts of a laity that is already deployed in the homes, schools, workplaces and marketplaces of our land. As pastors devote more of their time to training and equipping the laity for ministry, the Church will break loose from a model of ministry that has over-emphasized the "chaplain to the faithful" approach.

With all of this talk about "Baptist" distinctives, what about ecumenism? To say that we have important emphases to contribute to the future of Christ's Church is not to say that other Christians denominations do not have equally important things to offer. Surely as we enter the third millennium since the birth of Christ, Christians will diligently seek specific, concrete and visible ways to celebrate their oneness in him.

We Baptists must learn to expand our concept of the "local" church to include our sisters and brothers in other congregations who likewise are seeking faithful ways to worship and serve our Lord. Drawing on our belief in soul liberty we will learn to accept the validity of other forms of baptism, worship, and church government so that individual Christians can move freely between and among congregations as they are led to do so. Though baptism by immersion will remain a cherished and vital part of our witness to Christ, it must not continue as a barrier to someone's full participation as a believer serving Christ among us.

Where are we going? We Baptists can use our distinctives as an excuse for facing inward, circling the wagons around us, and becoming an insular, rapidly diminishing ghetto - quaint but ineffective.

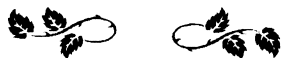
Or, we can draw strength from the primary roots of our identity and, in partnership with our fellow Christians, enter into the next millennium with a willingness to open doors, tear down walls, and jump over barriers that stand in the way of God's love in Christ reaching out to all people.

Editor's Note: Rev. John E. Boyd is the Senior Minister of First Baptist Church Halifax.

HAPEMAN TO FREDERICTON CHURCH



Debbie and Doug Hapeman



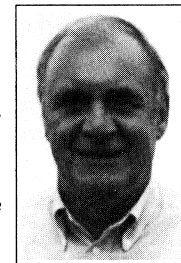
Rev. Doug Hapeman began duties as senior pastor of the Grace Memorial Baptist Church in Fredericton, New Brunswick on February 10, 1997.

Since 1990 Doug has been the Director of Communications for the United Baptist Convention. In that capacity he worked with the Stewardship-Promotion and Social Action Commission, predominately in the areas of stewardship education, promotion of the United in Mission Fund, issues of moral and social concern, and internal and external communication.

EDITORIAL COMMENT ...

HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED WHY ...

- those leading worship services interrupt continuity by reading notices already in the printed bulletin?
- the Board of Publication (Atlantic Baptist) did not inform delegates attending the 1996 Annual Assembly of the AUBC about the financial predicament that would result in the removal of Michael Lipe as editor on December 31?
- a Convention that is made up of autonomous churches has a Constitution challenging that autonomy in Article III (1)?
- Convention's business at the annual sessions is not conducted in one day and all other items on another?
- it takes some ministers 20-30 minutes to say something that a TV news clip can sum up in 60 seconds?
- the word **BAPTISTERY** is not found in the New Testament?



Terry Tingley
Editor

CHURCH CAMPS

Do parents really send their elementary and junior high school aged children to Summer Church/Association Camps to "be saved"? What is the purpose of our youth camps anyway? Check it out! The potential for surface emotionalism is great. Risky to say the least.

And, those responsible for staffing camps must screen potential camp counsellors for more than church affiliation - particularly when children are involved. Counsellors just a few years older than campers lack insight into how children grow and develop as well as a functional knowledge of human behavior. More adult counsellors are needed - those who know Jesus and youth.

COVER: "EXCUSE ME" - Vicki Brown, a deacon and Sunday School Superintendent of the Bayside United Baptist Church, has been selected to represent her church at the annual assembly of the AUBC in Wolfville in August. Vicki is a member of the Social Action Committee of the Halifax Region Association.

She is Chair of the Halifax Regional School Board.

Atlantic Baptist Fellowship



within
Convention

ABF BULLETIN

The **ABF Bulletin** is published quarterly by the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship. Submissions: Articles must be less than 500 words in length. Opinions and views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of the ABF or the Editor. The **BULLETIN** is mailed to interested churches and individuals. Those wishing to receive the **BULLETIN**, and all details of changes of address, etc., are to be sent to the distribution organizer:

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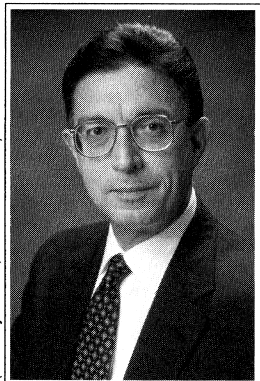
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Stan Hastey

Baptists and Religious Freedom

Stan Hastey

From our beginnings nearly four centuries ago, Baptists always have contended for religious freedom for all. Rooted firmly in their interpretation of Holy Scripture, early Baptist leaders on both sides of the Atlantic fought a fierce battle with civil and religious authorities unequally yoked to secure what one contemporary historian has called our "first liberty."

Why were our denominational ancestors so determined to fight for religious freedom that they were willing to endure beatings and imprisonment and even death itself?

It was, first and foremost, because of their utter conviction that God creates every person in God's own likeness (Genesis 1:27; Genesis 2:7). This was the theological linchpin of the Baptist movement.

It was this conviction that caused John Smyth to write in 1612, "That the magistrate is not by virtue of his office to meddle with religion, or matters of conscience, to force or compel ... to this or that form of religion, or doctrine but to leave Christian religion free...."

And it is what compelled Thomas Helwys to write to King James I, at the cost of his own freedom and eventually his life, "The King is a mortal man and not God, therefore hath no power over the immortal souls of his subjects"

On the North American continent, Roger Williams of Rhode Island called this first theological principle "soul liberty" and, like Smyth and Helwys in Holland and England, insisted it could be guaranteed only by putting a proper distance between the institutions of church and state.

No text in the New Testament argues more forcefully for the essential need for that distance between these two basic institutions than does Matthew 22:15-22, the account of the challenge to Jesus by Pharisees and Herodians over the lawfulness of paying taxes to Caesar.

Jesus' timeless response, "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's," has never been -- and can never be -- improved upon. "That utterance," the great Dr. George W. Truett once declared, "once for all, marked the divorcement of church and state."

And so it did. Yet just as our earliest ancestors had to wage an arduous battle to secure religious freedom, so too must every generation secure it anew. In our day as in theirs, voices are raised in fundamental opposition to the principle. Those who would force their faith on others are ever with us.

That is why voices like those in the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship and the Alliance of Baptists are so needed today, voices that will sound anew the first principles, not only of our beloved denomination, but of the Christian gospel itself.

Just as Paul reminded the new believers of Galatia who were being tempted to slip back into their old spiritual bondage, so too must we be reminded, "For freedom Christ has set us free; stand fast therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery." (Galatians 5:1)

Editor's Note: Stan Hastey is the Executive Director, Alliance of Baptists, Washington,

THE FREEDOM OF THE LOCAL CHURCH IS AT THE HEART OF BAPTIST ECCLESIOLOGY

Gerry Harrop

Article II of the Constitution of the United Baptist Convention of the Atlantic Provinces (UBCAP) reads as follows:

- (1) The responsibility of Convention is to the Lord Jesus Christ; the command of the great commission to declare His saving grace; to the total man *[sic]*; and to the whole world.
- (2) The policy of the Convention is to make available as directed by the Convention Assembly, such inspiration, counsel, programs and personnel as required to fulfill this responsibility, ***without overruling or interfering with the autonomy of the local church.***

Until recently such a statement would be thought to represent standard Baptist ecclesiology, certainly among Canadian Baptists. But recently the concept of local congregational autonomy has come into question with some of our leaders. Most recently (*The Canadian Baptist*, December 1996) in an interview with the recently retired "Executive Minister" of the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec (BCOQ) quoted him, the Reverend John Wilton, as saying:

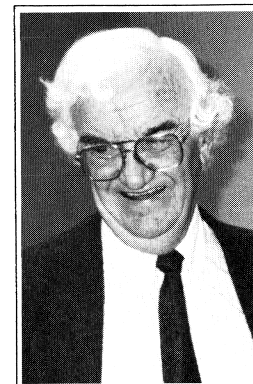
"This idea that a church is autonomous is nonsense; it's heresy. **Autonomy** is not a Biblical word. It means to be a law to oneself, which is not a Biblical concept. Early Baptists did not talk about the autonomy of the local church; it only appeared at the beginning of this century in North American Baptist writing. Local church inter-dependence is the way I would go, meaning the church has been given the freedom to determine the way it will fulfill its destiny, but does not have the right to refuse to be concerned about its brothers and sisters within the community of churches."

Those of us who still believe in the autonomy of the local church have never claimed "the right to refuse to be concerned about its brothers and sisters within the community of churches" any more than our insistence on "soul liberty" (a Biblical expression ?) means that an individual Christian is free to ignore the needs of her brothers and sisters in the church and beyond.

A recent (1991) Oxford English Dictionary gives four meanings for "autonomy": (1) the right of self government, (2) personal freedom, (3) freedom of the will, (4) a self governing community. Baptists have used the word in the fourth sense. The same Dictionary tells us that to act autonomously is for a community to act independently, or (have) the freedom to do so. For a community or an individual to act autonomously does not mean to act autistically -- that is to be isolated from the world of nature or society about us.

Mr. Wilton's complaint that the word **autonomy** is not Biblical comes strangely from one who accepted the title **Executive Minister** an expression that is as oxymoronic as it is unbiblical! This title, which replaced the more modest (if equally unbiblical) "General Secretary" breathes the very air of the corporate business community.

Dr. Walter B. Shurden expressed precisely what we mean by local church



Gerry Harrop

autonomy, without using the word:

For Baptists, Church Freedom means that a Baptist Church has the right and responsibility to run its own affairs under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. No bishop or pastor, no civil leader or magistrate, no religious body or convention of churches can dictate to the local church. To permit such dictation is to abdicate freedom and obligation...

Baptists follow, therefore, what is called congregational church government...

(*The Baptist Identity: Four Fragile Freedoms*, pp 31-37)

The operative words in this quotation are "Under the Lordship of Jesus Christ." The autonomy (or "freedom" if one prefers) is not merely head or hand counting democracy. The church proceeds prayerfully as well as democratically. The covenanted community seeks the wisdom to discern the mind of Christ and the power to follow where He leads.

A statement issued in 1948 by the Council of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland describes Holy Catholic Church as follows:

... the holy society of believers in our Lord Jesus Christ, which He founded, of which He is the only Head, and in which He dwells by His Spirit, so that though manifested in many communions, organized in various modes, and scattered throughout the world, it is yet one in Him

In Baptist ecclesiological thinking this universal church, whose boundaries and whose membership is known only to God, achieves its visibility in a gathered community of believers who have covenanted together to discern and to walk in God's ways "known and to be made known."

The Council of the British Baptist Union put it this way:

It is in membership of a local church in one place that the fellowship of the one holy Catholic Church becomes significant. Indeed, such gathered companies of believers are the local manifestation of the one Church of God on earth and in heaven.

(Both quotations cited in Shurden, *op. cit.*, pp 88-89)

In 1964, a Committee representing six North American conventions, echoed this British twofold vision of the Church:

Many early Baptists in their confessional statements express a belief in the church universal as composed of all who truly profess faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour by whatever denominational name they are known. They also indicated their understanding of the church as being visibly expressed in local congregations where the gospel was truly preached, the ordinances rightly administered, and the discipline of holiness maintained. This dual understanding of the church has been maintained by Baptists to the present day and is a viewpoint which allows them to recognize other communions as fellow Christians.

(cited in *ibid.*, pp 69-70.)

There have been three types of church government through history: episcopal, Presbyterian and congregational. All three can be discerned in the pages of the New Testament. We have, however, historically stood in the congregational traditions. To say that we find this the "more excellent way" to know and serve Christ together, is not to excommunicate other Christians who think and act differently.

In our increasingly impersonal society, our doctrine of the visible church is now more relevant than ever. For in the company of them, known to us by face and name, sharing with them our ultimate concern, we express and experience

salvation. We come to God as persons. We continue in God as Christians-in-community, and so we grow together.

So much of our life is now lived impersonally. Many of us do our banking by machine. We need never see and talk with a teller, whose trade will soon be "redundant." We correspond by electronic mail, we may take our higher education by the "distance" mode. Most of us carry several cards and we are identified with long numbers.

Can the local expression of the believers' church be the last refuge of the truly human? After all, our faith is incarnational. It is personal fellowship, with God and with one another. As the poet Browning, who is both romantic and Christian, put it:

'Tis the weakness in strength that I cry for
my flesh that I seek
In the Godhead! I seek and I find it.
O Saul it shall be
A Face like my face that receives thee;
a Man like to me,
Thou shalt love and be loved by forever;
a Hand like this hand
Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee!
See the Christ stand.

PLACES WE WORSHIP: First Baptist Church New Glasgow Al Jorgenson



"Under guidance of God, nineteen men and women formed the New Glasgow Baptist Church on October 13, 1875. The small group met in a "vestry" built at a cost of \$981.00.

In 1896 the church was destroyed by fire and a new building was constructed "out of sacrifice and self denial." The new building was completed and dedicated on February 7, 1897. To commemorate the 100th anniversary of the dedication of the present building, a special anniversary service will be held on February 9th.

A number of people will take part in the commemorative service representing the various ministries of the church over the years. These people will be dressed in antique, period clothing and will represent a bride and groom, the missionary society, the Ladies Aid, Sunday School and youth, maintenance, service men, outreach, etc.

The past year has been a significant and busy year for the church. They have a new pastor and with him have come a number of changes. During the anniversary service the church will dedicate new Sunday School classrooms in the Church Hall. A new ramp and wheel-chair accessible washroom have been added. As well a new electric piano has been added to the choir room and a new sound system has been added to the sanctuary. These are in addition to new offices which were dedicated earlier in the year. A new ministry to Junior and Senior youth is well under way.

The Lord continues to bless the work and ministry of First United Baptist Church, New Glasgow. We thank God for His faithfulness.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR . . .

May I briefly disagree with part of the article "Public Worship That Helps Me" in the last Bulletin? While I heartily endorse most of Dr. Lovesey's comments, especially the emphases on orderly worship, superb music, and intelligent preaching, his comment that the communion table, not the pulpit, should be central in the sanctuary, is open to serious theological question.

Surely, among Protestants, the word, read and preached, represented by the pulpit, has primacy over the sacraments, symbolized in this instance by the communion table. Logically, the order must be the word, which explains the meaning of the sacraments, first, and then the sacraments which have been explained by the word. Without the word which instructs, the sacraments become meaningless rituals. One of the complaints of the 16th century reformers was that the medieval church had so emphasized the sacraments that whether an individual understood anything about the sacraments of which he or she was partaking, was almost irrelevant.

Placing the pulpit in a central position surely does not indicate we worship the pastor! Rather it symbolizes a logical progression - first the word, then those things which the word explains, the word read and preached, then the word celebrated.

Dr. Mark G. McKim
Germain Street United Baptist Church
Saint John, N.B.

CELEBRATE: LIBERATE: WORK FOR ABOLITION 2000

Jud Corey

In little more than three years the new millenium will begin. Some people are still searching for ways to celebrate it. Others — thousands of people of intelligence, faith and commitment — have their plans made. They have faith that the world can celebrate the beginning of the new millenium with "the completion of an international convention setting out a binding timetable for the elimination of all nuclear weapons."

These plans, now well under way, are the response of peace groups — e.g. Peace Bureau, supported by many others — to a historic decision of the World Court. "On July 8, 1996, the highest court in the world, the International Court of Justice at the Hague," ruled that "the threat or use of nuclear weapons would generally be contrary to the rules of international law applicable in armed conflict, and in particular the rules and principles of humanitarian law."

The decision by the World Court was the result of the relentless work of thousands of people in hundreds of countries. They lobbied the U.N. to ask the World Court to make a ruling on the legality of nuclear weapons. Then they lobbied their governments to submit legal briefs to the Court, supporting the need for a legal ruling, and to persuade the Court to act on the U.N.'s request for a ruling. That activity was called the World Court Project.

Those same people are now working for "Abolition 2000," a global network "which is calling for the completion by the year 2000 of an international convention setting out a binding timetable for the elimination of all nuclear weapons." Globally, 600 organizations are working for "Abolition 2000". In Canada, the Canadian Network to Abolish Nuclear Weapons is supported by 14 organizations and many individuals. Let's join this world wide movement. We can raise awareness in our communities. By letters, contacts and petitions to M.P.'s we can encourage the Canadian Government to move forward on this issue. I'll supply petition forms on request. See "The Ploughshares Monitor", vol. XVII, no. 2, pp. 3-5.

A.D.C. UPDATE

Andrew MacRae

The Place of Prayer in Worship: First, I believe in the importance of making prayer a corporate experience. There is a place for private, personal prayer, but it is, I believe, in a private context, and not in public worship. When I am called to lead people in worship, I speak, in prayer, not for myself, but for the people. So I never pray in public in the first person. That is to say, I never say in worship, "Lord, I pray that you will ...". The prayer is not mine. It is **ours**. So I always pray in public in the plural. The only exception I ever make to this rule is if I pray, as I rise to preach, in the words of Scripture: "May the words of my mouth, and the meditation of our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, our Strength and our Redeemer". I also find it usually helps others as well as it does me, when I pray for God's illumination of His Word through the Holy Spirit, either before I read it, or before I preach, and even both times.

Second, I believe prayer should be prepared. Extemporaneous prayers are nearly always repetitive, predictable, generalised and full of common evangelical or church phrases, which give little or no evidence of forethought, but rather of conformity to the kind of things Christians say. Now, whether you read your prayers word for word or not is not the point, any more than it is when you preach. But you should at least know where you are going in your prayer, where you are leading your people, develop the collective thoughts of the people, how you will relate the prayers to the lives of you people, and hold their attention in prayer, as well as how you will communicate **their** needs and prayers to God.

Third, I believe prayer should be comprehensive. In each service, I feel I ought to seek God's presence for His people in prayer. I also think that the confession of our sin before God is an important element in coming into His presence in humility and true worship of the heart. I further believe that we should always pray for others, that is, intercession should be part of our corporate prayer, and I try to include the local church and its needs, the community, the country, and the world. I try to include prayers for the sick and sorrowing, for the oppressed and needy, for those who suffer from the ravages of war, terrorism or other destruction, and for those who are called to leadership in our own and other nations. I believe, likewise, that thanksgiving is an important part of worship and that our faith is strengthened and built up as we give thanks to God for His bounteous gifts of love and faithfulness. And, by the way, I don't think I ever close a service without either a Biblical blessing, like the famous Aaronic blessing, "The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you. The Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon you and give you peace", or most frequently, a Trinitarian blessing, such as "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all now and for evermore, Amen". That kind of blessing reminds us, as we go, of how awesome it is to be in the presence of God and how awesome to go out into the world bearing His name.

And, as I think you all know, I encourage worshippers to engage in private prayer rather than social chatter **before** worship begins and also **after** it is concluded, as we seek God's strength and enabling for the way ahead, normally while appropriate devotional music is being played.

I wonder how much thought you give to the prayers **you offer** when you conduct worship. I cannot decide that for you, and I will not try to make that judgment for you, but I do ask you to remember that you represent both God and the people, and I believe you should take that into account when you pray in public. The reality of other people's worship may depend on it!

Editor's Note: This article was one of a series, **A.D.C. UPDATE** in which Dr. MacRae, Principal and Dean, ADC, raised "from a rather personal point of view", aspects of worship with his students. It is reprinted here with permission of Dr. MacRae.

BOOKLET IS READY

Roger Prentice

The latest in the Chapel Booklet Series has been published. The fifth in the series, *The Jesus Seminar*, by Dr. Bruce Matthews, is now available either from the University bookstore (\$4.95) or the Chaplaincy office (\$5.00).

This booklet is a transcription of a lecture given by Dr. Matthews in September 1996 and offers a comprehensive view of the "Jesus Seminar," which has been attracting a great deal of attention in the past few years.

The "Jesus Seminar" is a conference of biblical scholars which is attempting, through various scholastic tests and criteria, to find the "historical Jesus."

Controversy has swirled around this group. Most unusual of their procedures has been a common voting poll to decide some fairly complex questions.

Nonetheless, this group has brought to the fore the on-going questions of biblical scholarship and theology.

In concise language and style, Dr. Matthews has surveyed the activities of this group and has presented a fair view of what they are doing. Dr. Matthews says,

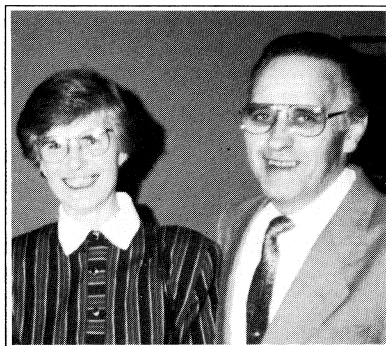
I agree that the unique, imponderable qualities of Jesus are perceptible only to the intimate level of personal experience. But I would also aver that these qualities won't be injured either by comparing Jesus' states of consciousness with our own — such a study may underscore what separates him from the rest of humanity — or by seeking to have a more precise understanding of who he was in his time and where he came from. ... Even in the first century there was a plurality of differing approaches to Christ. The Seminar is merely the latest wave of the tidal waters.

This is a limited edition, at the moment, although if the demand exceeds supply, another printing will be made.

Editor's Note: Roger Prentice is Chaplain - Acadia University, Wolfville, Nova Scotia, B0P 1X0



Bradford and Barbara Putnam
following their Ordination at the
Mahone Bay United Baptist Church
November 16, 1996



Jean and Andrew MacRae

BOOK REVIEW

Spong, John Shelby. *Liberating the Gospels: Reading the Bible with Jewish Eyes: Freeing Jesus from 2000 years of Misunderstanding*. New York: Harper Collins, 1996, 361 pp.

M. R. B. Lovesey

This extremely well written book by the controversial Anglican Bishop of Newark, New Jersey, argues the case for a new look particularly of the Synoptic Gospels, recently put forth by Michael D. Goulder, the Oxford-trained New Testament scholar.

Bishop Spong ("Thank God for Spong" was blazoned on the religion page in the Halifax *Chronicle-Herald* of 4 January 1997) was raised in an evangelical, fundamentalist ethos but emerged from that as his education in Christian theology and biblical studies proceeded. The author of some fifteen or more books he has become the *vulgarisateur par excellence* of North America, the mediator between the leading theologians of today and the comfortable pew. The book before us tells the story in part of his theological pilgrimage and, in particular, his illumination in Synoptic Gospel studies brought about in the last few years by Michael D. Goulder. Goulder, an Oxford-trained former priest of the Church of England, a faculty member of Birmingham University, a pupil of Austin Farrer, has written several books difficult to read (as professional books they are replete with abundant footnotes and ancient languages). Spong, a skilled popularizer, has served the Church well in making Goulder's thought plain to ordinary folk like most of us.

Spong does not slavishly follow Goulder in all things. For instance, the Bishop still claims to be a believing follower of God and Jesus Christ, holding a *reasonable* faith, whereas Goulder has abandoned his early orthodox Christian faith, resigned his Anglican orders and become a self-confessed atheist. Nevertheless, Spong thinks Goulder's main thrust in Synoptic studies is on the right lines and is making a valuable contribution to us today as we pass through the difficult times of a major paradigm change in Christian theology.

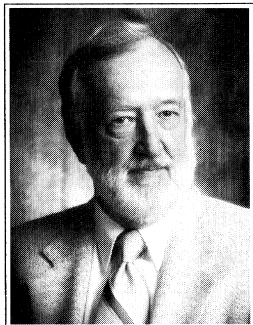
Spong argues that the best way to understand the Synoptic Gospels (he has very little to say about the Fourth Gospel or the Acts of the Apostles) is to see them as liturgical and lectionary documents prepared by Christian leaders for the very early Christian Church, following the example set by the Jewish rabbis. The gospels of Mark, Matthew and Luke give appropriate reading for the Christian liturgical year, which of course was based on the Jewish year from Passover to Purim.

This new approach, it is claimed, goes beyond the liberal understanding of the Synoptic Gospels with its Q, M and L suppositions, all of which are rejected. Further, it is not based primarily on history - these teachers have little interest in seeking the Jesus of History that lies behind the Christ of Faith! The tradition of Jesus which the Gospel writers inherited was based more on an interpretation of the Old Testament proof-texts than on historical memory. The Synoptic Gospels are Jewish books, heavy with haggadic and halakic interpretations, not Greco-Roman books heavy with rationalism and history. It is claimed that for 2,000 years the Church has made this major mistake.

Such an approach is clearly upsetting to conservative Christians. Spong is aware of this — he has suffered years of abuse from conservative heresy-hunters — and he does his best to point out that he is a genuine believer in God and a loyal follower of Jesus Christ. He promises to give us another book soon, entitled *A Believer in Exile* in which he will deal with "how one can continue to say the creeds of the Church, with integrity while taking seriously the intellectual revolution that stretches from Copernicus through Einstein, and into the fields of astrophysics and subatomic physics, which has created what some call 'the postmodernworld.'" Look for this book in 1998!

GUIDELINE FOR CONFLICT SITUATIONS

Roger Cann



Roger Cann

In most churches there is an undercurrent of conflict and real hostility, which is carefully masked. We are very good at being civil to each other, when actually we can barely stand being in the same room. There is always a potential for conflict whenever people must share time and material things with others. There is nothing wrong in finding yourself in conflict. The test for the Christian is what you do about it.

Peter Schmiechen writes in *Christ the Reconciler* that although some of our churches may look lively, powerful, and active, in reality they are divided and not very effective in their mission. Justice and reconciliation are blocked when the groups and individuals who benefit

from the current state of affairs refuse to allow meaningful change to take place.

The advice of those versed in conflict management is don't ignore conflict, or attempt to solve conflicts that arise by denying their existence. You do have to go beyond merely understanding the concerns of others. That is just the start, otherwise you paper over the cracks, the conflict has gone underground, and produced acquiescence, not peace. The hostility remains.

Some suggested guidelines:

- **Conflicts are to be faced.** Jesus recommends going to the other person and in private, in confidence, working it out (Matthew 18:15). If that doesn't work ask one or two others to act as mediators. All in confidence.
- **Understand the needs and fears of others.** This is no easy task. Daniel Coleman writes in *Emotional Intelligence* that we must understand our own emotional needs and fears before we can understand those of others.
- **Seek solutions where everybody wins.** I like the example given by Cornelius and Faire, in *Everyone Can Win: How to resolve Conflict*. The last orange on the tree, and the husband and the wife go to war over it. Until they realize their needs are complimentary; juice for one, and peel for marmalade for the other.
- **Make friends of strangers and enemies.** That is the goal. Any other attempt to manage the conflict will result in having it return one day, and it may be more explosive.

Alienation, conflict, enmity, violence are the marks of our time. In contrast, reconciliation and new life are the message of the *gospel*. Mending broken relations, and making friends of those who had been enemies is the work of reconciliation. Through the Cross of Christ, God has made enemies into friends. We who had been at odds with God and our fellow human beings, by our attitudes and actions, have now been reconciled to God and each other through the work of Christ.

The Church of Jesus Christ is called to carry on the mission of Christ through this ministry of reconciliation.

FRIENDS OF THE ABF - UPDATE

Doris Hilchey

Dear Friends:

Greetings for the new year, 1997. May it be one rich in blessings for you all.

Though you will not read this until March, I am writing it in January — that month named for the ancient Latin deity Janus with his two faces, one looking back, one looking forward. While the myth may mean little or nothing to us, the idea of reviewing past efforts and of planning for the future is a sound one as we begin another calendar year.

So, in review: there are 289 names on the ABF Friends Record Book. Of those, 18 are now deceased, only one, to my knowledge in 1996 — Ms. Marion Gordon, a beloved member, worker and deacon of First Baptist Halifax, after a long struggle with cancer faced so cheerfully. Three have resigned, two in 1996 — Rev. & Mrs. R. D. Wilton, because of a move to Ontario. One name was entered twice; five have been lost track of over the years. By simple arithmetic it would appear that 262 members remain. 131 paid their dues (some very generously) in 1996.

The total collected in 1996 was \$2,478.06 as compared with \$2,414.45 in 1995. We ask you to remember Item 4 of your commitment to ABF "Friends" and appeal to all who can to forward your 1997 dues (a minimum of \$10.00) as early as possible.



Now a brief look ahead to our Spring Rally scheduled for Saturday, April 19, 1997, a noon luncheon, at First Baptist Halifax, catered by the Ladies Auxiliaries of the church. As guest speakers we have been fortunate to book our hospital chaplains Rev. Douglas Kellough and Rev. Gerald Burke. Their topic — a very timely one — will be "Health Care Reform and Pastoral Care: How Hospital Chaplains and the Church Pastors Can Work Together". Details will follow in a March Friends Newsletter. Plan to attend.

Please Join Us. We Need You. You Need Us.

ALLIANCE CONVOCATION '97

The Alliance of Baptists Convocation will be held in Raleigh, N.C., March 14-16. Representing ABF will be our president, Elaine Anne MacGregor, and divinity students: Judith Saunders and Shelia Smith of the Eastern Valley Association.

Reports will be included in the next issue of the **ABF Bulletin (May '97)**