

**ATLANTIC BAPTIST FELLOWSHIP  
 SPRING ASSEMBLY  
 29 - 30 MAY 1992  
 LAWRENCETOWN  
 UNITED BAPTIST CHURCH, NOVA SCOTIA**

Theme: "Baptist Theological Education: Is There a Crisis in Canada?"

Special Speaker: Professor T. Raymond Hobbs,

ThM (Rüschlikon), BD, PhD (London),

Professor of Hebrew and Old Testament Interpretation,

McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario

**P R O G R A M M E**

FRIDAY	SATURDAY
6:30 pm Registration	9:00 am Devotions: Rev'd John Boyd
7:05 pm Devotions: the President	9:20 am Intimations
7:15 pm Welcome: President & Host Minister	9:25 am Lecture II: "Modern Theological Education: The Agenda"
7:25 pm Lecture I: "Modern Theological Education: The Context"	10:25 am Coffee Break
8:30 pm Break	10:40 am Panel Response: Rev'd Dr. G.G. Harrop (chair); Rev'd Dr. Andrew MacRae (Acadia Divinity College) General Discussion
8:45 pm The Service of Holy Communion, conducted by the Minister and Deacons of the host church	Noon Lunch at Church (donations invited)
9:10 pm Reception	1:15 pm Business Meeting
	3:00 pm Dismiss

**N O T E S**

- \* The Lawrencetown United Baptist Church is located at 430 Main Street in Lawrencetown, Annapolis County, Nova Scotia (Highway 101, Exit 19)
- \* Parking is on the Main Street of Lawrencetown -- there is no parking space on the church property
- \* Coffee will be available at registration time on Friday evening
- \* Hospitality -- Mid-Valley Motel, Middleton (off Highway 101, Exit 18), tel: 902-825-3433
  - Marian's Bed & Breakfast, 469 Main Street, Lawrencetown (down street from Church). Tel: 902-584-3649. Rates: single, \$25.00; double, \$40.00; child under 16, \$10.00.
  - Alberta's Place (Bed & Breakfast), in town with pool. tel: 902-584-7222
- \* A limited number of free billets are available: write -- ABF Billets, P.O. Box 68, Lawrencetown, Annapolis County, N.S., B0S 1M0; or telephone -- 902-584-3634 or 902-584-3355.

**BULLETIN  
 Atlantic Baptist Fellowship**

**May 1992**



*Lawrencetown First United Baptist Church*

**SPRING ASSEMBLY 1992**

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First United Baptist Church  
 Lawrencetown, Nova Scotia

Theme: "Baptist Theological Education: Is There a Crisis in Canada?"

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 McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario

*For full particulars see page 16*



### THE OFFICERS OF THE ABF ARE:

President: Rev'd Byron D. Corkum, P.O. Box 637, Amherst, N.S. B4H 4B8.  
 Vice-President: Rev'd David H. Shaw, P.O. Box 237, Hantsport, N.S. B0P 1P0.  
 Secretary: Mr. Edward A. Colquhoun, 1 Durley Street, Amherst, N.S. B4H 2B2.  
 Treasurer: Dr. John E. Churchill, P.O. Box 56, Port Williams, N.S. B0P 1T0.  
 Public Relations: Rev'd Vincent V. Rushton, 1026 Evergreen Crescent, New Minas, N.S., B4N 4L6. Tel: 902-681-1121.  
 Secretary for the Friends of the ABF: Dr. Dorothy M. Lovesey, P.O. Box 68, Wolfville, N.S., B0P 1X0.

### THE OBJECTIVES OF THE ATLANTIC BAPTIST FELLOWSHIP

(approved by the Spring Session, Wolfville, June 14-15, 1985)

The Atlantic Baptist Fellowship is a community of Baptist churches, laypersons and ordained ministers. It is supported by voluntary contributions made by persons and churches sympathetic to its aims, which are:

- (1) to witness to the freedom implicit in the voluntary principle in religion which is the essence of the traditional Baptist position;
- (2) to affirm and celebrate Baptist participation in, and witness to the whole, visible, catholic and evangelical church of Jesus Christ;
- (3) to strengthen the United Baptist Convention of the Atlantic Provinces and to encourage it to strive for the above;
- (4) to provide a forum for the discussion of doctrinal and ethical questions and social problems and policies in that spirit of tolerance and mutual respect which issues from Christian love;
- (5) to publish, at regular intervals, a Bulletin which seeks to further these aims and which describes the activities of the Fellowship and announces the agenda for its general meetings which will be held in the spring and in the autumn of each year.

**THE BULLETIN OF THE ABF** is published by the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship, Editor — the Rev. Dr. M.R.B. Lovesey, P.O. Box 68, Wolfville, N.S., B0P 1X0. Telephone 902-542-5264.

The Bulletin is mailed to interested churches and individuals. Those wishing to receive the Bulletin, and all details of changes of address, are to be sent to the distribution organizer: Mrs. Isobel Horton, P.O. Box 586, Wolfville, N.S. B0P 1X0.

While the Bulletin is mailed free of charge; donations to help pay the ever-increasing costs of publication and mailing are gratefully received and should be mailed to the treasurer (address above). Receipts for income tax purposes will be mailed.

*My quarrel is not with Bible and creeds but with the freezing of these instruments in time or with the assumption that somehow the Bible or the creeds escaped the subjectivity of the era that created them.*

-Bp. John Shelby Spong, 1931-

## EDITORIAL COMMENT

We are looking forward with immense pleasure and interest to the Spring Assembly of the Fellowship. It will take place 29-30 May in the beautiful Annapolis Valley town of Lawrencetown, by kind invitation of the pastor and friends of the Lawrencetown United Baptist Church. We shall be asking the important question, "Is there a Crisis in Baptist Theological Education in Canada?" and shall be helped in coming to some conclusions by Dr. Ray Hobbs of McMaster Divinity College. Dr. Andrew MacRae, principal of the Acadia Divinity College, has kindly consented to take part also. We can trust mature Christians to handle this somewhat delicate question with Christian truth, honesty, love, mutual respect and complete absence of rancour. While respecting legitimate diversity we shall aim at as much unity and unanimity as possible.

As preparation for the Assembly we could do no better than look up two past editions of the paper *Christian Week*. This periodical claims to give "a window on Christian faith and life in Canada" and is published by the Fellowship for Print Witness, a group that one suspects is strongly Mennonite. The paper is committed to "historic Christianity" (by which it means, one might suppose, post-Reformation protestant Christian scholasticism) and has a Board of Directors among whom appears the name of the Principal of the Acadia Divinity College. The stance of the paper is strongly conservative/evangelical/fundamentalist.

The 15 May 1990 edition of the paper gave considerable space to several articles attempting to evaluate the state of conservative Christianity in the Atlantic region. It thought the United Baptist Convention of the Atlantic Provinces dominates the evangelical church scene in the area even though the numbers of churches and church members are declining. The Acadia Divinity College is praised as a main player in the evangelical thrust now in progress. "Twenty years ago the School's future was not promising. It was then a part of Acadia University with a student body of less than 50. Some of its professors were regularly criticized because of professed liberalism. Relations with the Convention were cool." In the late 1960's Baptist control of Acadia University ended and the Acadia Divinity College started. Student enrollment has tripled. "Solidly evangelical, its faculty is highly rated across Canada."

The 17 December 1991 edition of *Christian Week* celebrated a similar swing to the theological right of the McMaster Divinity College. The article, "The Unlikely Transformation of McMaster Divinity College: Long Reviled as a Bastion of Modernism, McMaster Divinity College is now gaining a Reputation as an Evangelical School," by Doug Koop, associate editor, celebrates a major change in the School's direction. He points out that the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec began to elect board members to the College who wanted a shift to conservative theology. This was strongly signalled in 1977 when Dr. Clark Pinnock, a prominent conservative/evangelical theologian was appointed to teach theology. Dr. Pinnock has recently said, "What I have always represented is much more what McMaster will become."

There are many questions and problems that beset us all. May the good Lord lead us, and may he teach us to "love one another (1 John 3.11, RSV)," and "in humility" to "count others better than yourselves (Philippians 2.3, RSV)." Above all may we be delivered from the *odium theologicum*!

# Friends of the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship

FRIENDS are sympathetic to the aims of the ABF, which are:

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- (5) To publish, at regular intervals, a Bulletin which seeks to further these aims and which describes the activities of the Fellowship and announces the agenda for its general meetings which will be held in the spring and in the autumn of each year.

FRIENDS undertake:

- (1) To pray for the life and work of the Convention and the Fellowship;
- (2) To seek other committed Christians to join the Fellowship;
- (3) To become better informed about current ethical and theological issues;
- (4) To pay an annual subscription, minimum \$10.00;
- (5) To respond, as circumstances permit, to requests for financial support.

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Please cut off along this line  
and mail to:

Dr. Dorothy M. Lovesey  
P.O. Box 68, Wolfville, N.S. B0P 1X0  
Tel.: 902-542-5264

Please enrol me as a FRIEND:

Name and title .....

.....

Address .....

.....

Date ..... Tel.: .....

Subscription .....

## FRIENDS OF THE ABF — UPDATE

by Dorothy M. Lovesey

We are happy to report that since the beginning of this year fourteen more names have been added to the list of "Friends of the A.B.F." This brings our total to 220. As you remember, the target set for 1992 was 240, so we are well on our way. Please do your best to help us surpass our target by encouraging others, spouses, relatives, friends, to join us. We need each other in these troublesome times!

Over the years we have been privileged to have a number of good and worthy people



supporting the cause of the A.B.F. Outstanding amongst them are our two featured "Friends," Winston and Gene Miles. Formerly of Cape Breton and staunch supporter of the Sydney Baptist Church, Mr. Miles was a prominent business man. The Miles now reside at "The Elms," Windsor, N.S., which, by the way, has its own small enclave of Friends and supporters of the Fellowship.

We are often heartened by the letters we receive. We refer to two of them. One came from a retired minister who has just celebrated his 91st birthday. He writes: "I am still interested in the Fellowship and appreciate the good work being done." Another wrote simply: "Thanks for lighting a candle."

**PLEASE JOIN US  
WE NEED YOU — YOU NEED US**

## NEWS OF THE CHURCH FROM FAR AND NEAR

### CHINA'S CRACKDOWN ON RELIGION

Early last year the Chinese Communist Party issued Document No. 6, the first major statement of official religious policy since 1982. It called for the registration of all religious institutions, sharp limits on preaching and missionary work by self-styled preachers, bans on unauthorized seminaries, convents and Bible colleges, and controls on publications and donations from overseas. This action was prompted by the pro-democracy demonstrations of 1989 that led to the killing of an estimated 5,000 protesters by army troops in Beijing. Officially recognized groups -- Christianity, Buddhism, Taoism, Islam -- are now monitored by "patriotic associations." Some observers say the Chinese government is alarmed by the role of the churches in the downfall of communism in Eastern Europe and want to prevent such a development in China.

### MUSLIM RENEWAL IN U.K.

Zaki Badawi, principal of the Muslim College in London, has proclaimed an Islamic Decade of Renewal in response to the Decade of Evangelism launched earlier this year by most of the nation's churches and Christian groups. Badawi claims the Christian Decade of Evangelism "gives a feeling of threat" to Muslims. The Archbishop of Canterbury has assured non-Christians that the Decade "is not an assault of the churches on the faith communities." However many Muslims see inter-faith meetings and calls for religious dialogue as merely disguises for conversion efforts by Christians.

### DISAPPEARING CHURCH

The Church of Scotland is declining in membership at the rate of 20,000 a year; current membership is 800,000. If the present trend continues, the Church will have no members left by A.D. 2047.

### WOMEN ANGLICAN PRIESTS

The Anglican Diocese of Perth in Australia recently ordained ten women as priests despite strong opposition from church traditionalists.

### GAY UNION APPROVED

A Southern Baptist congregation in Raleigh, North Carolina, has voted (by secret mail poll -- two-thirds in favour) to allow their pastor to bless the relationship of two men, both professed homosexuals.

### TRENDS IN SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

The moderate/fundamentalist conflict ravaging the Southern Baptist Convention has moved from the national to the state level. Several schools operated by State Baptist Associations fear that conservative leaders will impose doctrinal restrictions on faculty hiring and teaching. Last fall, conventions in Texas, South Carolina, Florida, North Carolina, Missouri, Tennessee and Georgia all signalled the depth of the discord.

It is interesting to note that the sociologist Robert Wuthnow terms the division between evangelicals and liberals that runs through American Protestantism, the "Great Fracture."

## S.B.A. DROPS "SOUTHERN" NAME

Celebrating its fifth anniversary in Providence Baptist Church, Charlotte, North Carolina, 5 - 7 March, 1992, it was agreed by the 800 in attendance, that the name of the Southern Baptist Alliance should be changed to the "The Alliance of Baptists, Inc."

The highlight of the Assembly was director Stan Hastey's "State of the Alliance" address in which he dealt with the Alliance as an institution. He asked "Will the Alliance dissolve into the larger movement that has come to be known as the "Cooperative Baptist Fellowship?" Acknowledging the close involvement of Alliance churches with the Fellowship, he said many Alliance members have already shifted their primary energies to tasks of the CBF. He said the Alliance should neither dissolve passively into the CBF nor wither slowly and die because of an inability to disband organizations. He felt the Alliance must "claim responsibility for its decision and pursue it intentionally." The Alliance has to be willing to allow institutional death and the Fellowship has to be willing to plant the Alliance's ideological seeds (an important one of which is the pursuit of real unity among black and white American Baptist individuals and institutions).

The editorial of *Baptists Today*, 19 March 1992, dubs Stan Hastey "one of the finest thinkers and writers in the Baptist world" today.

## FEWER BIBLICAL LITERALISTS

A recent poll says the proportion of biblical literalists in the U.S. is currently only half of what it was in 1963 -- a decline from 65% to 32%. Protestants are more likely than Roman Catholics to interpret the Bible literally -- 39% to 24%. Southern Baptists believe in biblical literalness in greater proportion than do members of other Baptist denominations -- 60% for Southern Baptists compared with 49% for all other Baptists combined.

## ATLANTIC SEMINAR IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

The 24th seminar, sponsored by the Acadia Divinity College and the Atlantic School of Theology, will be held June 7-12 at the Nova Scotia Agricultural College, Truro, N.S.; theme, "Cultivating the Inner Life of the Christian." Speakers include the Reverend Carolyn Irish, Dr. Arthur Van Seters and the Reverend Marjorie Thompson. For further information contact the Registrar, Joanne MacIntosh, Box 123, Truro, N.S., B2N 5B6; telephone, 902-893-3392.

## CONGRATULATIONS

The Reverend Theodore Thomas Gibson (well remembered in the Atlantic region) and Bishop K. H. Ting (president of the China Christian Council) will be honoured, 12 May 1992, with the honorary Doctor of Divinity degree of McMaster University.

## SURSUM CORDA

Remember the promise: "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it [the church] (Matthew 16.18 KJV)."



Stan Hastey

## MIDDLE EAST DIS-ORIENTATIONS

by Douglas du Charme

Most westerners find the situation in the Middle East, particularly after the Gulf War, incomprehensible. With this in mind one of my goals over the past years in interpreting the Middle East has been to dis-orient.



Douglas du Charme

The word "orient" means *both* to gauge one's direction, to revise and correct the map before setting out again, and "the East." Today, for westerners, the Orient tends to refer to the Far East, especially China and Japan; but, traditionally, it meant the Middle East, where, for Europeans, the sun rose. So the word came to have its double meaning. I attempt today, initially to dis-orient and then, I hope, to re-orient you in your understanding of the Middle East, the Holy Land.

### I

One could tell many thousands of true horror stories of individuals, men and women, boys and girls, of all kinds and creeds who have suffered terribly, many to death, in the area in recent years. To give but one example, Jamal Radwan, a young Palestine man, living in the Gaza strip, was physically abused by Israeli soldiers. Recovering in hospital from his wounds he said, "I know the wound in my heart will never heal." What are we western Christians to say in the face of these horrors -- horrors that affect Jew, Muslim and Arab alike?

### II

The region has a very diverse population. We tend to see it in terms of Muslim Arabs living in tents in the desert! But only 20% of the Muslims are Arab. The largest Muslim population is in Indonesia. A million Palestinians live within Israel. As many Jews live in New York as in Israel. Not all Middle Easterners speak Hebrew, most speak Arabic. But many other languages are spoken -- Armenian, Syriac, Assyrian, Kurdish, et al.

Today, perhaps 14 million Christians, descendants from the first Pentecost of the Church, live in the Middle East, but their number is rapidly declining. Surely it would be the greatest tragedy if Christianity lost its historic connection with Jerusalem and the Middle East area!

### III

We may think of the Middle East as "middle" in the following ways:

- 1) geographically. Asia, Africa and Europe meet there. Little wonder it has always been an area of diversity and conflict.
- 2) religiously. The region is the birthplace of the world's three monotheistic faiths, Judaism, Christianity, Islam. Fundamentalisms flourish there, but there is also the opportunity of fruitful dialogue.
- 3) historically. The great river valleys in the area nurtured much of human civilization -- cities, culture, literature, agriculture, etc.
- 4) economically. The region is the centre of the world's trade-routes.
- 5) militarily. Nine major wars were fought there in the last 40 years.

Peace is sorely needed in the region, but war is a distinct possibility. The Gulf War caused immense damage to the environment -- this must not recur. The Canadian Council of Churches seeks to stimulate the concern and action of Canadians for peace and justice in the Middle East.

# THE MIDDLE EAST COUNCIL OF CHURCHES



مجلس الكنائس المتحدة في الشرق الأوسط

The Middle East Council of Churches

The MECC, founded in 1975, is an independent regional fellowship of churches confessing the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour, according to the Scriptures, and expressed in the Nicene and Apostles' Creeds. In bringing together the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox and Protestant/Anglican church families, the MECC is the culmination of a series of ecumenical endeavours in the region dating from the early 1900's. The family of Catholic churches in the Middle East joined the Council in March 1989. As a result, the MECC now has 24 member churches, making it representative of nearly all the Middle East's 14 million Christians.

The MECC is organized into three programme units (Education and Renewal, Faith and Unity, Life and Service) and two departments (Communication, Finance and Administration) together with the General Secretariat. Every four years the MECC holds a General Assembly, which is the ultimate authority of the Council. An Executive Committee meets annually. The affairs of the Council, its four Presidents and General Secretary, are elected by the General Assembly.

The headquarters of the MECC are in Beirut, Lebanon, with area liaison offices in Limassol, Damascus, Cairo, Amman, Jerusalem and Bahrain. An international liaison office is located in Geneva, Switzerland.

The MECC is therefore the meeting place for all the Christian traditions in the Middle East, and represents an attempt to surmount a past characterized by divisions towards a future characterized by unity. This unity would enable Christians, through love and sharing, to be more effective in the promotion of a society that respects religious beliefs and guarantees justice, freedom and peace.

**Editor's Note.** The above material is reprinted from *MECC Perspectives*, a publication that appears three times a year and which offers an in-depth analysis of important trends in the Middle East in their impact upon the future of the churches and people of the region. For further information, rates, etc., write: MECC Publications and Information Service, P.O. Box 4259, Limassol, Cyprus.

The Reverend Douglas du Charme is a Presbyterian minister who serves as liaison officer of the Canadian Council of Churches with the Middle East Council of Churches. His address, printed elsewhere in this Bulletin, entitled, "Middle East Dis-Orientations," was given in the Manning Memorial Chapel, Acadia University, 12 February 1992.

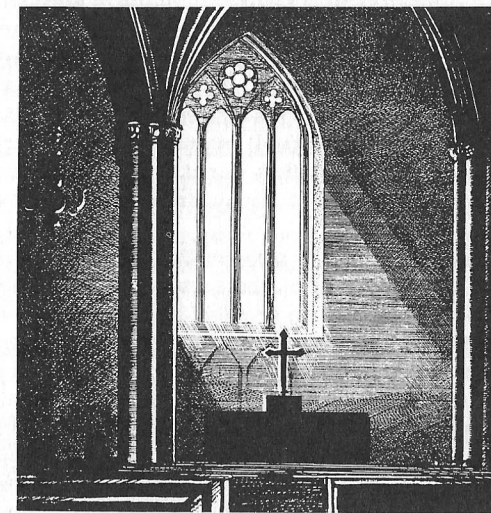
### *A Prayer for the Unity of Christians*

*Lord Jesus Christ, you said to your apostles, "Peace I give to you; my own peace I leave with you." Regard not our sins, but the faith of your Church, and give to us the peace and unity of that heavenly city, where with the Father and the Holy Spirit you live and reign, now and for ever. Amen.*

# LIVING RELIGIONS II — CHRISTIANITY

by the Editor

Christianity is the name of the religion founded by Jesus (a Greek form of the Aramaic Yeshua), a Jewish peasant of Nazareth in northern Palestine who lived c.4-7 B.C. to c.A.D. 27-33. He preached about the imminent arrival of the Kingdom of God upon earth and urged all to repent of their sins and prepare for its coming. His loving concern for all, especially those suffering in body, mind and spirit became legendary. His sharp criticism of the religious status quo caused the antipathy of the religious authorities who persuaded the Roman authorities to execute him as a revolutionary. So he was "crucified under Pontius Pilate, dead and buried." He suffered for us men and for our salvation, Christian believers assert, and so the Cross became the symbol of Christianity.



## I

But the cross was not the end of Jesus, whom his followers gave the title of Messiah, or King, in the belief that God had appointed him to set up the Kingdom of God upon earth. On the third day, the early Christians affirmed, Jesus was raised from the dead by God and exalted to heaven and seated at God's right hand in heavenly session, whence he would soon return to earth again in glory to complete the work of redemption. Whether the resurrection is interpreted today physically and literally, with traditionalists, or spiritually and mythologically, with modernists, there is little doubt in the mind of most believing Christians that the validity of the Christian religion rests solidly upon the "truth" of the resurrection.

Primitive Christianity is best thought of as a reform movement within Judaism. Jesus was a Jew, as were all his first followers. But the early Jewish Christianity, begun at Pentecost, rapidly gave place to Gentile Christianity, founded by Paul of Tarsus, whom C.H. Dodd has taught us to recognize as the "second founder of Christianity." Saul of Tarsus, who became Paul on his conversion to the faith he tried to exterminate, was born shortly after the beginning of the Christian era and executed for his faith on the Appian Way, Rome, c.A.D.65. It soon became clear that Christianity was not merely a kind of reformed Judaism, but was a new religion, broader and wider in its scope than the Judaism in which it was cradled. Persecution, first by the Jews against the Christians, and then by the Romans against both the Jews and the Christians, brought about the extinction of Jewish Christianity and the spread of the Gentile Christianity throughout the known world.

## II

The early centuries of the Church's life were marked by a fairly rapid expansion throughout the civilized world. The *Pax Romana* brought many

blessings to the struggling Church; in particular a reasonable peace in the world, safe roads for travel, a rough justice for all, protection from criminals, a common language, first Greek then Latin. Then, *mirabile dictu*, Constantine adopted the chi-ro symbol before the Battle of Milvian Bridge in A.D.312, stopped the persecution of Christians as a *religio illicita*, made the Roman Empire officially Christian, and created the conditions in which the Church could flourish and work out its theology. Thus the classical expressions of the Christian religion in terms of Greek philosophy were enunciated at Nicaea, A.D.325, and Chalcedon, A.D.451. The famous creeds dealt mainly with the doctrine of God and Christology. It should be noted that they do not give ecumenical support for any particular theory of the atonement, the doctrine of the *work* of Christ.

The early centuries also saw the sifting and evaluating of the voluminous Christian literature that had come into being. It was not until A.D.367 that Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria (c.296-373), produced the canon, or list of books suitable for the construction of dogma and for reading in public worship in church, that became fairly normal thereafter. As more and more educated people became Christians, the amount of all types of literature increased -- letters, treatises, apologies, histories, sermons and the like. The great Origen Adeimantius (185-254), to take one author, was the first biblical critic and exegete, the first systematic theologian, who, to his eternal credit, was not canonized by the authorities of his day because of his supposed heresies.

### III

As the centuries passed the Christian world split into two parts. The Greek-speaking Eastern Church with its centre at Constantinople, froze its thinking in the system of John of Damascus (c.675 - c.749). The Latin-speaking Western Church with its centre in Rome, survived the sack of Rome and the destruction of the Roman Empire at the hands of the Germanic tribes in the fifth century. The doctor of the Western Church was Augustine of Hippo (354-430), whose thought has been influential ever since. In 1054 the schism between east and west that had existed for centuries was formally recognized. Only in modern times, with the rise of the ecumenical movement, has much attention been given to heal the wounds in the body of Christ.

Western Christianity, with the theology of Thomas Aquinas (c.1225-74), abandoned Platonism for Aristotelianism in its understanding of religion. It developed the Papacy, the Holy Roman Empire, monasticism and kept learning alive in the Dark Ages. The seventh century saw the rise of Islam and its expansion through areas long thought to be solidly Christian. The march of Islam was only stopped in Hungary in the 15th century.

### IV

Then came Martin Luther (1483-1546) and the Protestant Reformation of the Church which was essentially a protest about certain religious matters (for instance, indulgences). The European Continental Reformation beginning in 1517 when Luther nailed his 95 theses to the door of the church in Wittenberg, was followed later by the English Reformation of Henry VIII and Elizabeth I.

The Renaissance and Reformation periods witnessed the voyages of discovery of the great navigators and the consequent spread of European Christian culture, in both its Catholic and Protestant form, throughout the world. In 1492, so it is said, Christopher Columbus discovered the New World

and the great American adventure began. The various European Nations began the great land-grab and before long this produced the colonial wars of the 17th and 18th centuries.

### V

In Europe the scientific principles developed in the 16th and 17th centuries were applied to the Christian writings and dogma, and, along with the philosophies of the Enlightenment, resulted in the rise of the grammatico-historical-critical approach to the Bible and Christian literature, and to the various attempts to re-state Christian beliefs in terms more appropriate to the culture of the times than to the Greek philosophies of traditional creeds. The movement, beginning in Germany, spread to England and other European countries and eventually to the Americans, issuing ultimately in the Fundamentalist/Modernist wars which still unhappily rage among us today.

The turbulent 20th century has witnessed disastrous world wars and social upheavals on an unprecedented scale. But, as Elton Trublood wrote long ago, there are "signs of hope in a century of despair." Perhaps the most important of these from the perspective of the Christian Church is the rise of the modern Ecumenical Movement, which was prompted, on its Protestant side, by missionaries working in non-Christian countries who felt hampered and frustrated by the lack of unity and co-operation among the various Christian denominations. The World Council of Churches, the Protestant expression of the search for unity, began its operations with its first Assembly at Amsterdam in 1948. This was followed, on its Catholic side, by the Second Vatican Council, 1962-65, brought about by Pope John XXIII. Unhappily one must confess that the closing decades of this century have seen a falling off in the enthusiasm for the ecumenical vision and an unwelcome rise of denominational competitiveness.

In the Americas the eternal conflict between conservative and progressive or liberal is seen in the conflict between fundamentalist and modernist. The modernists appeared to have emerged on the winning side from the wars of the World War I period. The Scopes monkey trial of 1925 seemed to prove the superiority of the historical-critical approach to the Bible over the literal approach. However the fundamentalist forces regrouped and worked out a strategy that proved very effective. They planned: 1) to send their brightest young men, who had been thoroughly indoctrinated in fundamentalism, to prestigious universities and theological seminaries to win higher degrees and thus be able to infiltrate important churches and theological colleges; 2) to produce a mass of scholarly theological literature promoting fundamentalism; 3) to flood the media, particularly newspapers, with material commending only fundamentalism. This strategy has been completely successful with the result that the past two decades have seen a steady swing in the denominations and the theological seminaries from modernism in the fundamentalist direction.

How does the future look for Christianity in the Americas? The rise of quasi-religions, such as secularism, and the expansion of non-Christian religions, such as the oriental religions and Islam, make the prospect for the future somewhat unpromising. But one thing is abundantly clear. Clearly, Christianity in North America must stop committing hari-kari; Christians must stop competing with and fighting with each other. While recognizing and tolerant of *diversity*, they must learn about and discover their true *unity* in Christ.

## COMMENT

If you have ever possessed a tender corn you will know how exceedingly painful it can be when somebody treads on it. Your immediate reaction to the excruciating pain is to take a swing at your tormentor with a left hook worthy of Joe Louis. Without doubt, trampled corns bring an instantaneous, unpremeditated and sometimes violent response.

Some groups, especially religious ones, also have tender corns and you tread on them at your peril. In the first century of our common era, for instance, the Jewish people possessed *two* very tender corns and any offence against them brought the penalty of death. Stephen, the first Christian martyr, was destroyed by mob violence because he dared to speak against both the Temple in Jerusalem and the sacred Torah, the Law of Moses, the Law of Yahweh. Jewry allowed folk at the time much latitude in their thought about many important matters -- an orthodox Jew might hold any of a number of views about the person of the Messiah, for example -- but he was not permitted, on pain of death, to speak adversely about either the Temple or the Torah. Acts 6.13 tells us that the false witnesses that testified against Stephen said: "This man never ceases to speak words against this holy place and the law; for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place, and will change the customs which Moses delivered to us."

A modern example of this can be seen in the case of the Reverend Doctor Dale Moody who died 22 January 1992 in Louisville, Kentucky at the age of 77. A native of Texas, he received degrees from Baylor University, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and Oxford University. He served as assistant to Paul Tillich at Union Theological Seminary, New York, and taught at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. He taught theology at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky, from 1944 until his 'retirement' in 1984. He served on the World Council of Churches' Faith and Order Commission and on the Baptist World Alliance's Commission on Doctrine. His magnum opus, *The Word of Truth: A Summary of Christian Doctrine Based on Biblical Revelation*, was published in 1981. He agreed with Karl Barth that the primary task of theology is to critique preaching.

Those who have suffered through church history courses will know the value of mnemonics. How is it possible for anybody to remember the five points of Calvinism without the aid of the TULIP?

T = total depravity of humankind  
U = unconditional election  
L = limited atonement  
I = irresistible grace  
P = final perseverance of the saints

The last item is a particularly tender corn that all Calvinists possess. Deny the dictum "once saved -- always saved" and you will be attacked by all good Calvinists. Dale Moody set out his case against the doctrine in his book *A Study in the Epistle to the Hebrews and in Baptist History*, published in 1991. For holding such views, as it was thought, his appointment to teach as a professor of theology in Louisville was not renewed in 1984 -- his retirement was forced. He was as effectually -- or perhaps we should say 'ineffectually' -- gagged, that is, removed from the teaching of ordinands, as was Hans Küng by the Vatican! The Calvinist-oriented electing authorities could not bear one of their tenderest corns being stamped upon!

## BOOK REVIEW

by M. R. Cherry

Nancy Tatom Ammerman, *Baptist Battles: Social Change and Religious Conflict in the Southern Baptist Convention*. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1990.

Nancy Tatom Ammerman, the daughter of a prominent Southern Baptist minister and the wife of an ordained Southern Baptist, who has herself been a "messenger" to more than a half dozen Southern Baptist Conventions, is the author of *Baptist Battles*, a book that anyone wishing to understand the current state of the Southern Baptist Convention should read. Associate professor of the sociology of religion at the Candler School of Theology, Emory University, she writes as a sociologist who is seeking to understand the nature of religious conflict. She writes: "This book is not an analysis of who was right and who was wrong but an analysis of why each side came to view the other as wrong and what they did once that had been decided (p.xii)." Though by her own admission the book is not objective, it is, she hopes, even-handed, a hope, which in the opinion of the present reviewer, is admirably achieved.

After a dramatic account of the 1985 Southern Baptist Convention Assembly in Dallas in which the fundamentalists gained effective control of the Convention, Ammerman traces the history of Southern Baptists from their roots in English Dissent to Southern Establishment in which religion, ethics and culture had come together in one ethos. By the 1960's this synthesis was breaking up, and the more conservative Baptists began to be concerned about the orthodoxy of the leadership and bureaucracy of the Convention. The battle-cry was the inerrancy of Scripture, but other concerns were pastoral authority, the ordination of women, right-wing political issues, abortion, homosexuality and a Christian lifestyle. Under the leadership of Paige Patterson and Paul Pressler in a secret meeting at Atlanta in 1978, the fundamentalists decided upon a strategy to elect presidents and control appointments. By electing a fundamentalist president who in turn would name the Committee on Committees which in turn would name the nominees for the Committee on Boards (now Nominations), the fundamentalists were able to gain control of every Board and Board of Trustees in the Convention. So far as control is concerned, the Southern Baptist Convention is now in the control of a well organized minority of fundamentalists.



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By means of questionnaires, Ammerman identifies five groups of Southern Baptists: 1) self-identified fundamentalists, 11%; 2) fundamentalist conservatives, 22%; 3) conservatives, 50%; 4) moderate conservatives, 8%; 5) self-identified moderates, 9%. A well organized minority of 11% was able to mobilize a conservative majority around the banner of inerrancy and take control of the Convention. The moderates by means of two organizations, Southern Baptists Committed to the SBC and the Southern Baptist Alliance, continue to have a voice but are unable to influence Convention decisions. Ammerman sums up the present situation by means of an interesting figure of speech: "No official divorce was necessary; separate bedrooms and bank accounts would do (p.51)." The Southern Baptist experience should be a warning to all moderates to be on guard!

# THE WILDERNESS EXPERIENCE

A Sermon by John E. Churchill

“And Jesus full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan, and was led by the Spirit for forty days in the wilderness, tempted by the devil (Luke 4.1, RSV).”

The story of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness, recorded in the Synoptic Gospels (Mt. 4.1-11; Mk. 1.12-13 and Lk. 4.1-13), is a powerful and revealing story describing a highly important incident in the life of our Lord. The only way we could know about it is through Jesus telling his followers about it -- no one else was present.

The wilderness referred to covered an area some 500 square miles between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea. It was sometimes called the “Devastation” -- a terrain of yellow sand and crumbling limestone, bare and jagged rocks, devoid of water and sustenance. The word ‘wilderness’ would readily bring to mind feelings of trial, pain and endurance.

We may understand the story as Jesus' victory over those things which tempted him away from his vocation, to corrupt his identity and compromise his methods -- a story about establishing once and for all who he was, why he came to be born, and the methods he would use to accomplish his mission. But it is as much a story about an inner struggle -- an existential experience. It is a story of a person in a highly uncomfortable position, wrestling with himself. It is perhaps an account of a “dark night of the soul.”

Seeing this story as one of Jesus struggling with his identity brings us close to our own wilderness struggle -- to our struggles with who we are and to what end we will use our lives. I suspect we all know something of this, something of a wilderness experience, of being alone in uncomfortable territory, without sustenance, support and direction. In our wildernesses the values we so firmly believed in are shifting and under attack. We are compelled to look again at who we are, at what is important to us, and what life is all about.

Human beings, we know, can be called on to endure such “wilderness experiences” at various points in their lives. Leaving home for the first time, with its supports and familiarities, and coming to university, where there are so many different styles of belief and behaviour, can be a “wilderness experience.” Let us look at the story of Jesus' struggle in his wilderness and seek what light it might shed on ours.

## I

We notice, in the first place, that Jesus was led into the wilderness by the Spirit of God! This, at first sight, seems odd -- for the Spirit of God to lead Jesus into ‘temptation’! However, Luke is saying that this was a necessity for Jesus, it was important that he go through it.

Paul Tournier speaks of life as analogous to a trapeze artist who is always leaving one secure position to launch out into unsupported space hoping there will be something of stability there to hang on to. Life does seem to be a series of ‘getting it altogether’ -- figuring out who we are, what we want out of life,



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what we really believe. And as soon as we reach some position of relative assurance, we are torn away from it and the ‘wilderness experience’ returns. Fortunately this happens only occasionally.

It is interesting to note that Luke places his account of Jesus' temptation immediately after his account of Jesus' baptism. Jesus went, it would appear, from the height of certainty and commitment to the depths of struggle and uncertainty. This can happen to us all!

## II

Secondly, Jesus' experience warns us that there are temptations in the wilderness.

The meaning of the word ‘temptation,’ as it is used in the New Testament, is not concerned essentially with incitement to evil, but rather means a testing of one's strength, ability, loyalty, values -- to see what we are really made of. Such temptations, or testings, are strongest when we are in unfamiliar territory and perhaps unsure, bewildered. Coming to university from home for the first time can be a moment of intense testing. Linda Frum has revealed recently that it is so easy for students at Acadia to spend their time in the many opportunities for partying that exist there.

## III

Thirdly, we need to know that there is grace in the wilderness.

One of the worst feelings that can come to us ‘in the wilderness’ is the fear of being abandoned, without support or hope. It is comforting and encouraging to note that Matthew's story of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness ends with the words: “Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and ministered unto him.” This should remind us that we are never abandoned by God, that in one form or another God's grace, his favour towards us, undeserved though it is, is always available for our comfort. I have proved as a fact of experience that God's grace does come to us when we need it.

Just as God led the Israelites through the wilderness of Sinai to the Promised Land, a land flowing with milk and honey, so he will lead us through our wilderness experiences. Let us trust him!

Just as Jesus worked out the values by which he should live so we must work out our value-systems and learn how to face the wilderness experience in the right way. Eleanor McGovern, wife of a candidate for the US presidency, once said that if she could give young people anything it would be “the ability to draw a straight line,” by which she meant we must know where in our life-style we must draw the line. We must know that there are limits, lines beyond which we will not go. Clearly Jesus drew a line between giving and getting, between serving and being served, between serving God and the devil. It is fitting on this first Sunday in Lent that we examine ourselves in this regard.

**Editor's Note.** The above sermon, by Professor John Emerson Churchill, BA (Acadia), MA (San Francisco Theological Seminary), BD (Andover Newton), MBA (Dalhousie), PhD (Strathclyde), was preached in the Manning Memorial Chapel, Acadia University, 8 March 1992. John has served Acadia's School of Business Administration since 1982. Since June 1990 he has served the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship as its Treasurer.