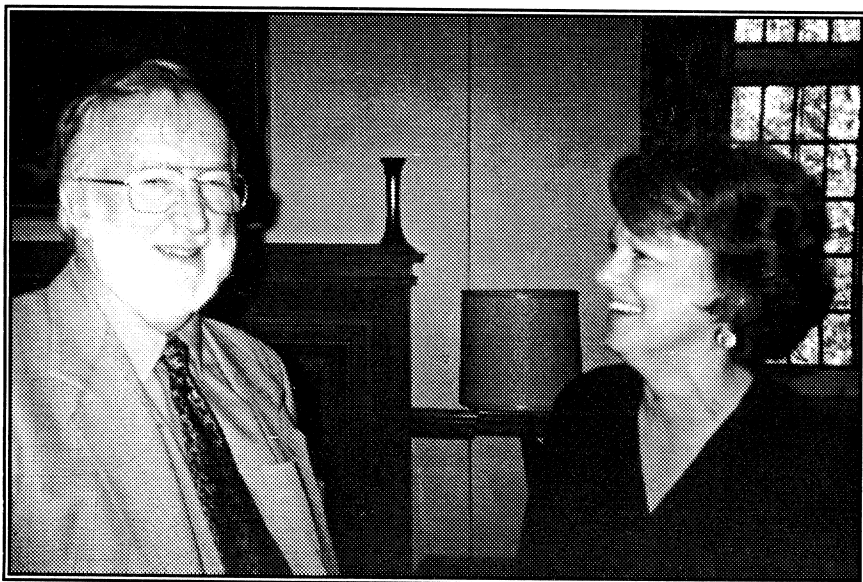


# Friends of the ABF

- By the end of September, sixty-four of the friends of ABF paid their \$10.00 membership fee for the current year. Others may send their cheques to Dr. Roger Cann, PO Box 354, Wolfville, NS, BOP IXO.
- Dr. James Perkins, Past-President of Acadia University, will be the speaker at next springs' Vin Rushton Memorial Luncheon. He will make a presentation in the area of Baptists and worship. The Luncheon is tentatively scheduled for Saturday, April 21st, 2001, at the Manning Memorial Chapel at Acadia University, in Wolfville.



Roger Cann, ABF Friends Secretary and Nancy Hastings Sehested, BPFNA

To:  
Rev. Dr. Roger Cann  
P.O. Box 354  
Wolfville, N. S.  
BOP 1X0

Please enroll me as a Friend

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ 'Phone # \_\_\_\_\_ Subscription \_\_\_\_\_

A Quarterly Publication of the

# Atlantic Baptist Fellowship

## the Bulletin

### Survivors

"We are all survivors of life's struggles and uncertainties.

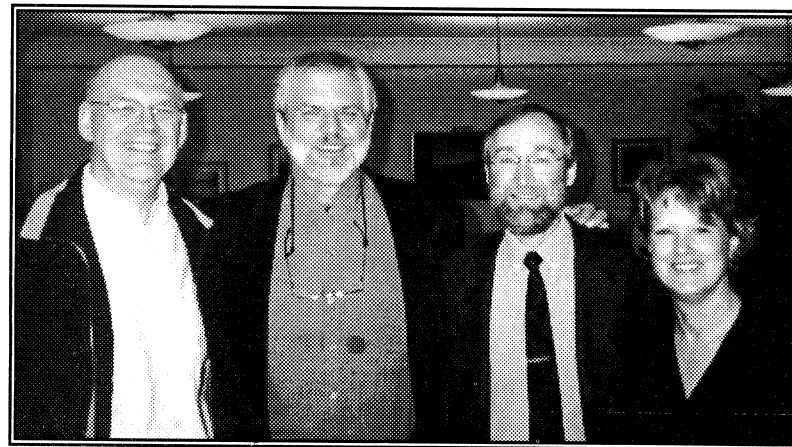
The Bible is always asking the question of 'how' we are surviving.

God's word to survivors of the wilderness in Deuteronomy is 'choose life'. God gives an alternative vision from the death grip of 'the market economy'. God gives us visions of life in love, community, justice and peace.

This is our song and story of survival. Christ embodies this story and song of hope."

Nancy Hastings Sehested

Opening Address, ABF Fall Assembly



Participants ABF Fall Assembly

ABF'er, Ed Colquhoun; Ken Sehested, BPFNA; Barry Morrison, ADC;  
Nancy Hastings Sehested, BPFNA

Fall 2000

# President's Message

John E. Boyd, President

THE ABF IS ON THE MOVE! After an exciting Fall Assembly in FBC Halifax, I am happy to report that the ABF is on the move!

Dr. Ken Sehested and Rev. Nancy Hastings Sehested of the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America gave us both inspiration and information for the challenges of peacemaking and reconciliation. We were delighted to hear that the BPFNA is considering Nova Scotia as the site for their annual Summer Conference in 2002. No doubt the ABF will be involved.

Three new initiatives were announced during the business session:

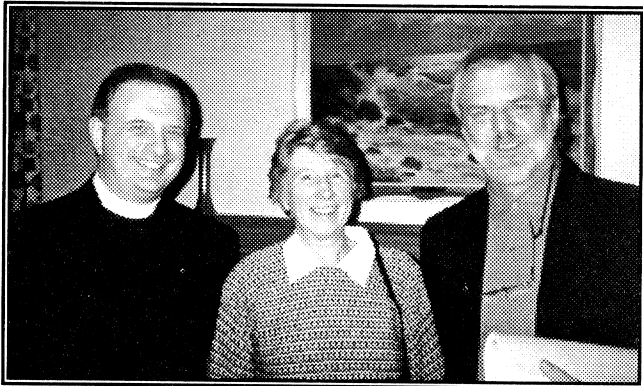
1. ABF agreed to support the development of a Women's Spirituality Network. This is the brain child of Rev. Sheila Smith and Elaine Anne MacGregor, a former President of the ABF, and has also received the financial support of the *Alliance of Baptists*.
2. ABF has set aside funds to organize a Youth Event that will bring together older teens and young adults. We want to offer our youth a safe and exciting environment in which to address their issues, as well as to enjoy the fun and fellowship of Christian friendship.
3. ABF will seek to establish an Annual ABF Lecture at Acadia that will offer students and faculty the opportunity to reflect on important issues in Baptist life and identity.

We continue to place a high priority on developing networks with fellow Baptists. Our first and most important relationship is with our fellow Baptists in our own Convention. To assist in keeping open the lines of communication, we will be meeting from time to time with Convention leaders to discuss mutually important issues.

Two other relationships have become increasingly important to us; namely, our networking with the *Alliance of Baptists*, primarily located in the US, and with *The Gathering*, which is centred in the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec. It is anticipated that your President will attend meetings of both organizations in 2001.

All of these initiatives require time, energy and a great deal of volunteer effort. I invite you to become involved, and I challenge the Churches to support us financially so we can not only accomplish our current goals, but look for new opportunities to grow in our faithful witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

(continued on page 3)



(left to right)

John Boyd  
President, ABF

Janet Atwood  
"Friend" ABF

Ken Sehested  
Executive Director  
BPFNA

(continued from page 2)

2001 will mark the 30th Anniversary of the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship! We are planning to celebrate this milestone at our Spring Assembly, tentatively set for June 3-4 at Acadia and Port Williams UBC. We are "on the move," and we need you to join with us!

## Fall Council Meeting

The ABF Council will meet in First Baptist Church Halifax on Friday, November 3, 1:30-3:30 p.m. The Council is made up of the ABF Executive plus a layperson and the pastors of ABF supporting Churches. All meetings of Council are open to interested "ABFers" who want to work with us on our projects and programs.

## ABF Fall Assembly . . . Reflections on Living Fully Into the Adventure of God's Reconciling Activity

Dr. Ken Sehested, executive director BPFNA, addressed the ABF Fall Assembly Sept. 30. He explored an analysis of the ways we have attempted to domesticate Scripture, effectively rendering it innocuous, by driving a wedge between spiritual realities and material or physical realities; by indicating why it is that the word following is a much better term for discipleship than is the word believing; by pressing the point that, in the end, Christian obedience ("ethics") is deeply rooted in trust ("worship").

He offered his own "systematic theology":

First, the principle duty of the Christian community is to adore God. Second, according to the New Testament, to adore, honor and worship God means we should attend to Jesus, God's Only Begotten. Third, according to Jesus' own repeated command, those who adore him will follow him - "if you love me, do as I have commanded." Fourth, if we follow Jesus - animated by the power of the Holy Spirit - we are likely to end up with a fate somewhat like his own. Which is to say, we're likely to get into trouble. Fifth, and finally, it is in trouble - when human resources and calculations prove insufficient - that we learn what it means to adore God, to "lean on the everlasting arms."

He concluded:

It is in worship, in adoration, in contemplating the fact that Almighty God takes great delight in loving us that we are freed to live - to live with abandon, especially in the directions of, for the sake of, those for whom the world has no use. We are free to honor the dishonored, for the world's honor is recognized for what it is, vainglory. We are free to associate with the lowly, for the opinions of the high and mighty no longer impress us. We are free - even, if need be, to risk our very lives - for we now know that our security rests elsewhere, that there's nothing the world can do to us which ultimately matters. Because of our confidence in the resurrection, not even death can harm us.

In worship, according to Dom Helder Camara, we discover the power to "be free to the point of being able to deliver ourselves from ourselves and be able to give ourselves to others."

When our lives are rooted in prayer, in adoration, in solitude, we stay in touch with God's grace. Not the sugar-filled emotions of feel-good religion. It is only a focus on adoration as the basis for action, prayer as the ground of politics, the ecstasy of worship as the seedbed for ethics, which will heal the severance of redemptive action from redemptive vision.

## NOT HYMN 248!

Douglas G. Horsman

It was a dull and dreary day when Rev. Clarkin announced to the little congregation that they would sing hymn 248. Reactions varied.

"Not #248," thought Barbara. "That is such a sad hymn."

"Why #248" pondered Kristen. "That doesn't do much for me!"

"Really, #248!" snorted Donald. "That's a sleeper if ever there was one!" You might think that as a worship leader, Rev. Clarkin's choice of hymns left something to be desired, but, at the other end of the same row, in that plain little church, response was somewhat different.

"Lovely! Lovely hymn, that good old 248." beamed Malcolm and his wife Joan smiled with quiet appreciation as she turned the pages to one of her favourite hymns - 248.

"I enjoy #248 so much," enthused Susan. "I'll sing alto as usual and I just know that Lawson will love the tenor lines in this selection." Confusing? Certainly so!

No one sings just hymn numbers - but, too often, our worship leaders invite our congregations to do just that - sing hymn 248! Surely the invitation to join together in worshipful song can be crafted in a more invitational mode. We know that effective leadership style is one of the on-going concerns of many worship teams and leaders. Perhaps if a hymn title was announced first, or a familiar line of the verse or chorus was spoken first - possibly this presentation would help to guide and to enrich the thinking of an individual as they approached "hymn 248". Would not the sound of a hymn title or some portion of the hymn lines serve as a helpful cue to the worshipful mind-set of those who have gathered together to pray, to sing, to worship meaningfully?

Let us encourage those good people who endeavour to provide congregational leadership to reflect on this topic and, hopefully, come to realize how very cold and less-than-inviting it can be to announce the singing of "hymn 248". Surely, with a small bit of preparation, an invitation to song can be made more rich and inviting - which will be a beneficial service to any group gathered together for the purpose of meaningful worship.

## Editorial Comment . . .

America's oldest black church elected the first female bishop in the denomination's history on July 11, 2000.

Delegates to the general conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Cincinnati elected the Rev. Vashti McKenzie of Baltimore to one of four bishop positions on the second ballot.

McKenzie was one of two women among 42 candidates for bishop.

It marked the first time in the denomination's 213-year history that the general conference has ever voted electronically for bishops and other church officers. In the past, voting was on paper ballots that were counted by hand, often causing elections to run into the early hours.

The AME Church has never had any women among the 20 bishops that govern it during the four-year intervals between general conferences. It is the oldest US black denomination and has 2.3 million members in the United States, Canada, England, Africa, and the Caribbean.

Women have run for 20 years for AME bishop without winning.

An Associated Press article reported that male and female activists attending this year's general conference argued that the church should have a female bishop because women have served it capably for years as pastors and supervising elders, and because they are the majority of its membership. Women make up about 70 percent of the denomination.

*And at home . . .*

Is it really true that only one woman has been president of our Convention of churches since 1846? Five candidates were vice-presidential candidates at August's assembly - one a woman. She was not elected! No surprise.

By the way, does anybody know the percent of women who are members of our Convention of United Baptist Churches? Where would our churches be without them?

## People We Meet

Aubrey Pulsifer was a pillar of the Head of St. Margaret's Bay UBC Church in the 50's and 60's. He died almost 30 years ago. A veteran of the first world war, Aubrey enlisted in the army at the age of 16. He was decorated with the Military Medal at the end of the war. A miraculous event during the war saved his life and influenced his devout faith.

Ministers of the church looked forward to Sunday dinners with Aubrey and his wife, Hannah. After all, this church was one of eight on the St. Margaret's Bay pastorate in those days.

Aubrey spent hours "experimenting" in the kitchen - trying to discover Colonel Sanders secret recipe of herbs and spices. The army corporal never did find the Colonel's combination - but the samples of his research were tasty.

Aubrey was, in every way, "a good Samaritan". Getting to know him was a most enriching and unforgettable experience.

**Atlantic Baptist Fellowship**

**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 Editors.

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**Dr. John Churchill, P.O. Box 56, Port Williams, N.S., B0P 1T0.**

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**Deadline for Article Submission for Winter issue December 1, 2000**

## Questions and Perspectives II: From Women

Martin Rumscheidt

"How weak and unhealthy barren women are and how much healthier, neater and merrier are those who are fertile. It matters not whether they wear themselves out to the point of tiredness or even to death; let it be, for that is what they are there for. It is better to live a short but healthy life, than a long unhealthy one." - "Indeed, if you were not a woman, you should desire to be one for the sake of this work alone and, therefore, suffer and die with delight in God's work and will." So Martin Luther in the 1522 writing on "Married Life" and in a subsequent letter.

Once the shock about this blatant heartlessness has been dealt with and one seeks to understand this stuff, three things need to be watched:

- 1) Luther was by no means alone in this perception; it was the accepted notion that the most important task of a married woman was to assure the continuation of the human race. In good biblical fashion one would recall the creation-account in which humans are given the command: "be fruitful and multiply."
- 2) ... it was taken for granted that a woman would become married ... and bring children into the world ...
- 3) Luther's seemingly very rough statements about women and their tasks are rooted in his rejection of monastic life. The existence of the nun was not to be the highest form of female existence, rather, a woman was to live according to her nature. Such ideas are to be found, however infrequently, even before Luther.

The preservation of humankind was not the only task of women in Luther's view. Like theologians centuries before him, he believed that it was also a duty of the woman to assist the man in their common life, both practically and spiritually.

For the sake of the good done to him by his wife, every man should regard his partner as a personal gift to him from God. Luther had no idea about the life of women beyond that of wife and mother. The question of women, which had been significant already in the Middle Ages, had become even more precarious in the Reformation, hardly impinged on him. He once said: "it happens also among us now that many must remain without a man and children" only to add right away that that presented no difficulty, "since the estate of virginity and widowhood, living without fruit of the womb, is not despised or taken to be unworthy by the gospel, but rather as honest and praiseworthy." This is the theoretical theologian speaking. He just did not see the economic and social difficulties of so many women of the day. That may have been on account of the little university-town Wittenberg and its numerous male citizens not suffering from a surplus of women so common at the time, estimated now at 10%. Or was it that such questions were simply too far removed from him? He did want women to be teachers but not because he wanted them to have jobs but because he wanted, for one, to have an alternative for women for the monastery and the monastery-schools and, for another, so that they would receive the necessary education so as to be able to understand the gospel.

What was his general assessment of women? He fought prejudices, which is astounding to note. Yes, he did hold that a man is not best suited to look after small children, but he did not turn that into a male privilege to be spared the duty

(continued on page 7)

(continued from page 6)

of such caring. He said that God looked with equal pleasure on a man who went to the river washing diapers or doing other despised jobs for kids, even if they are done for sheer obedience to God. This does not sound like rigid patriarchal structure in the home. He shows no preference for the man in the institution of marriage. The female sex is not excluded in his view from anything that honours *human* nature. He has a notion of equality when he declares that "one human being is worthy of another when they have desire and love for one another." So, a woman may punish an unfaithful man and leave him just as he can leave an unfaithful, adulterous wife. Luther picks up here developments in jurisprudence in Germany and draws his conclusions from it. Contrary to the peculiar, somewhat antiquated traditions of his day, he said that man and woman alike are God's most supreme creature. The creation of the first woman was a miracle just like that of the first man. Eve had perfect knowledge of God, like Adam, and the glory of the life to come was destined for her as much as for him; both parents of humankind were masters over the earth, the sea and the air. The works of the woman please God like those of the man. Luther knew of the faith and steadfastness of women in witness and in martyrdom. He was enraged by the practice of his day publicly to denounce women, to diminish their standing; God, he said, looked upon the woman as a splendid creature. He accused one author of bunching together with erotic lust everything the devil has ever said evil of women.

But he paid his dues to his time: while saying that a woman is not excluded from any honour due to human nature, he also said that woman is not equal to man in respect and repute. The man is comparable to the sun and woman, you have guessed it, to the moon. That he described the female sex as weaker by nature and ascribed to it the Latin "imbecillis anima" - which in this context means: little self-confidence- may pass, but it does sound rough when he adds that women do quickly have good ideas when push comes to shove, but that in comparison to men they have "ingenium longe infirmus" - which means: a far weaker talent. He also held that no dress is as ill fitting a woman or virgin than "when she seeks to be clever." Women are not known for their ability to speak with eloquence, he held; rather, it is fitting that they speak haltingly. That he shared his age's belief in witches should not be taken as a sign of particular disdain of women; he held the equally wide-spread idea of male sorcerers. What is particularly odd are his comments on the Fall. Here the woman is clearly the weaker and the more temptable. The basis for this view was laid for him in I Timothy 2:13: "Adam was created first and Eve thereafter. Adam was not seduced, Eve was and fell victim to transgression." In addition, Luther argued, that he could cite all other interpreters of Scripture. It was almost lucky, as one might add, that Luther could also cite Romans 5: 12ff, where Adam is said to bear the guilt for the Fall as well. But he deduced from the Fall that the woman is now subject to the man. This was proved to him by Ephesians 5:22ff. That is why in marriage the woman takes the man's name and follows him when he changes domicile and that is why men alone rule in state and church and the woman is restricted to the home. He quotes on old German saying: "Women's rule rarely ends well." And yet, his actions did not always correspond to his words. For example, on June 24, 1531 he turned to Catherine Zell of Strasbourg asking her to help in settling a dispute between the theologians of Wittenberg and Strasbourg. He asked her to take on a significant and eminently theological and church-political task. He conceded to the abbess of Herford that she had complete jurisdiction. Even though he dealt with women of the upper classes here, it is clear that he did not ride a principle that allowed him no changes in the traditions.

Note: Dr. Martin Rumscheidt, PhD., is a faculty member of the Atlantic School of Theology, Halifax, Nova Scotia. He spoke to ABF re "the Radical Right" in 1993. The above subject matter (abridged) was presented on television and is printed in the ABF Bulletin with his permission.



# Women's Spirituality Network

Sheila Smith and Elaine Anne MacGregor

Rev. Sheila Smith and Elaine Anne MacGregor propose to form a **Women's Spirituality Network** ("Network") in Nova Scotia and asked the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship for a grant of seed money to help defray initial start up costs.

Speaking to the ABF fall meeting they stated:

"The Network will connect Baptist women with material and people resources that foster spiritual growth. An appropriate image is that of the spider's web. Initially we will work to form the web - canvass Baptist women to see what their spiritual needs are and contact people who can be resources of information and talent. Eventually we will be the center of the web - directing incoming inquiries to the appropriate resource person or information source. We will connect women with people and resources that assist them. We want to offer to Baptist women choice of avenues for developing their spirituality and an affirming community in which to do it.

The first year will be formative for the Network - connecting with Baptist women and learning of their needs and areas of expertise. We will establish a web page on the Internet that will connect us with women and be a source of information. The grant of seed money will help defray the costs involved in contacting and meeting with Baptist women and setting up a website.

Initially we intend to take direction from the needs that Baptist women express to us. Eventually the Network may develop in many areas: offering retreats, workshops, curriculum packages, and a facility from which services can be offered.

We are making this proposal to the ABF for seed money for the Network because we know that the ABF is concerned with issues of spiritual growth, Christian education and individual freedom to read and knowledgeably interpret the Bible. We are impatient with the fact that Baptist women have to find resources for spiritual growth on their own. We want to change that search from a solitary quest to one made in a supportive community. We want to create in Nova Scotia, for Baptist women, a sense of affirmation, acceptance and challenge. Our experience of the ABF tells us that the people of the ABF understand our impatience with the status quo and our drive to create community here."

Rev. Sheila Smith is an ordained Baptist Minister with 3 pastoral charges in rural Nova Scotia. Her ministry is broad, but has as its focus social gospel. Sheila is a member of the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship and serves on the Program Committee. She is member of the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America.

Ms. Elaine Anne MacGregor, a past President of the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship, is an active member of First Baptist Church Halifax. She is enrolled, on a part time basis, in the Master of Theological Studies program at the Atlantic School of Theology and works full time as a provincial government employee.

If you are interested in the Network, either as a resource of talent or someone seeking its assistance, please contact either Sheila. (902)354-3752, ([ssmith@ns.sympatico.ca](mailto:ssmith@ns.sympatico.ca)) or Elaine Anne (902)454-7206, ([macgreeg@gov.ns.ca](mailto:macgreeg@gov.ns.ca)) (work).

ABF Council will consider the "Network" request for seed money in November. The Alliance of Baptists has already provided \$3000.00 to assist the "Network".

# Perspectives

Stan Hasteley

Once more, this time with emphasis, the Southern Baptist Convention has announced to the world that Holy Scripture forbids women to be pastors of churches. Last month's action, contained in the rewritten *Baptist Faith and Message* statement, made big news in the national press. Actually, the news was hardly new.

Without apology and with a certain edge of cockiness, the new SBC has been writing women off for the better part of the past two decades. Beginning with its first explicit declaration on the subject, the infamous 1984 resolution against the ordination of women to any church office, the convention set the course for a sustained and uninterrupted anti-womanist agenda. That agenda now is complete with the declaration in Article VI of the Baptist Faith and Message that "the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture,"

Not incidentally, the new confession of faith also places the authority of Scripture above that of Jesus with the omission from Article I ("The Scriptures") of the 1963 declaration, "The criterion by which the Bible is to be interpreted is Jesus Christ." The new standard for biblical interpretation clearly is being set by a hierarchy of self-appointed arbiters who routinely describe themselves as "godly men." They are, contrary to their fierce protestations, the undisputed ayatollahs of the established church of the South.

Enough about them. They have their reward. From my perspective, assessing the current status of women in ministry becomes even harder when I look at our own camp, the camp of self-described moderates, progressives and liberals. (Of the three designations, (Of the three designations, by the way, the only one I choose to shun is the first.) To put the matter bluntly, when it comes to the rightful role of women as pastors, the larger onus is more on us than it is on them.

Why? Simply because, unlike the Southern Baptist overlords, we claim to be for women. Let me get right to the point with the example I know best. For nine months, between August 1999 and May 2000, I served as chair of the pastor search team for my own congregation, First Baptist Church of Washington. Of the 13 or 14 candidates we considered seriously, only one was a woman. And she decided her present ministry meant more to her than the prospect of becoming our pastor.

Women more than men know that example is legion. With rare exceptions, even the most progressive of our congregations in the Alliance - let's be straight here - are not calling women as pastors. Yes, we've become quite comfortable by now with women as associate pastors, but somehow are not quite ready, to elevate them to the last rung on the ministerial ladder. So women continue to hear the tinny sound of the still all-too-common refrain, "Our church is not ready yet."

So when will we be ready? When Larry King asked me on his program June 14 to predict whether we will see the calling of women as pastors in the near future, I replied as honestly as I knew how, "I think it will continue to go very slowly."

That clearly is nothing more than an opinion. What I added in my response is a conviction. God will continue to call out women. Courageous women will continue to respond to that call. And some congregations, as brave as the women they call, will give them a chance to validate their vocation as pastors.

Until the day comes when these rare exceptions become the norm, we liberal Baptists do well to remember how far we have yet to travel on the road to justice. When we do, it will be small consolation to gloat on the backwardness of the Southern Baptists.

Note: "Perspectives" by Stan Hasteley, Executive Director of the Alliance of Baptists, Washington, D.C., appeared in the July 2000 issue of *CONNECTIONS*, the newsletter of the Alliance.

## ABF Booth at Assembly 2000

Pauline Allsop

We all know that this August marked the first time that Baptists, from across Canada met in assembly in Halifax: from August 9th to 13th Halifax Metro Centre was the setting for Assembly 2000. But what many of us do not know is that Atlantic Baptist Fellowship was present at this gathering. In addition to all the worship times, programs, workshops, business and other sessions, a large number of exhibits from various groups, colleges and ministries were set up around the perimeter of the meeting space. One of these exhibits was organized and staffed by ABF members, who were pleased to have this opportunity to describe who we are and what we stand for to Baptists in general, many of whom knew nothing about us.

On Wednesday, 9 August, Frank McGill and Pauline Allsop set up our booth, which contained a large poster prepared by Frank, leaflets explaining our history prepared by Phil Griffin-Allwood, copies of a few of our older bulletins, and a ring binder containing bulletins from the past several years prepared by Terry Tingley. During the 25 hours that the exhibits were open for viewing, the booth was staffed by a total of nine ABFers, each working a three and one half hour shift: Paul Burden, Roger Cann, John Churchill, Frank McGill, Bruce Morton, Donna Myers, Roger Prentice, Elbert Stevenson and Jeff White. We had originally hoped to have two people on duty at all times, but not enough folks were available to make this possible, so John Boyd and Pauline Allsop acted as back-up for those on duty on Thursday and Friday. On Saturday, Jeff and Pauline took down our display, sharing some time with other exhibitors who were doing the same thing.

It was agreed by all who participated that this was a very worthwhile exercise. We had an opportunity to talk to Baptists from many parts of Canada while they visited our display. We also found that there was considerable interest in ABF on the part of Baptists, who had previously known nothing about us, or who had harboured all kinds of misconceptions about us. Phil Griffin-Allwood stated that sense of who we are and what we stand for in the title of his leaflet describing our historical roots and our present purpose: "Atlantic Baptist Fellowship within Convention. From 1971, A Pilgrimage for Identity: To be Free and Ecumenical."

## Rev. Marion Pardy

### New United Church Moderator

The Rev. Dr. Marion Pardy was installed as 37th moderator of the United Church of Canada. It took six ballots for 400 Church commissioners meeting in Toronto to choose among nine nominees.

"With God's help, I will seek to live up to the calling to which I have been called," Pardy said, following the election.

Pardy thanked the commissioners "for the confidence and the trust that you have placed in me and in the experience and leadership I hope to bring."

Pardy also thanked her congregation at Gower Street United in St. John's, Nfld.

"Your life has just changed and it will never be the same, but it is a marvelous change," outgoing moderator Bill Phipps told Pardy. In a written statement to the General Council, Pardy identified six major issues facing the Church, including its involvement in residential schools for native children.

Pardy has served the United Church in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, northwestern Ontario, Hamilton, and Toronto.

Born in Newfoundland, she moved to Belleville, Ont., in 1961 to work at Albert College.

## Study Leave . . . Focus on Science and Religion

Hedley Hopkins

Oxford is a great place to study! For the third time now our congregation, the Port Williams United Baptist Church, has freed me up for a study leave at Regent's Park College, our Baptist seminary there.

This time my focus was on Science and Religion. It was a great pleasure to do tutorials on this theme, to attend a series of lectures on Human Consciousness and another on Christianity and Culture, and to be present at the Whitefield Institute Evening Conference 2000 to hear Alister McGrath on Postmodern Apologetics, Rediscovering Paul's Areopagus Speech.

My wife, Mary, and I lived at the North Oxford Overseas Centre, a Christian residence for international students: for example, our neighbours on one side of us were from Jamaica, on the other, from India. One evening I went to a "bull-session" in Mandarin, with translation. Another time Bible study included persons from Greece, Korea, China, Ukraine, England, Italy, Bulgaria and Canada. In ping-pong my partner was from Belarus; our opposition from the Ukraine and Kenya.

On Sundays we went to Headington Baptist Church, a church family that has warmly welcomed us on all three study leaves. Worship, fellowship and meals with the elders and deacons gave us a real friendly insight into how another body is and does "church".

As you can see, Mary and I belonged to three communities in Oxford: Regent's Park College, the North Oxford Overseas Centre and Headington Baptist Church. Add to this the stimulus of being in Oxford, travelling in England and Wales, and chance conversations in the Senior Common Room and elsewhere and you have a sense of the wonderful privilege that has been ours.

Reflecting back on those days, May 9 to June 26, 2000, a number of things stand out: first, both science and religion are ways the one God reveals himself and works in his universe. Science, with its belief in an objective world out there that is universal, backs religion up in its proclamation of absolute truth. Religion, with its belief in a demythologized and ordered universe, gives science freedom and a framework within which to work.

Second, science is subject - object truth. It is humans working on creation with the scientific method to discover truth. Religion is Subject - subject truth. It is Being (God) revealing truth to other beings - humans. All this truth is God's truth. It fits together. It does not contradict itself.

Third, evolution is now moving forward through human consciousness. Therefore, continuing education advances this process if we live in the light of the truth we receive. Evolution, which includes human history, is moving toward the Kingdom of God. This will finally come to be when Emmanuel appears again.

In closing, I encourage my colleagues, and their churches, to benefit from such study leaves. In the case of Regent's Park College, initial enquiries may be made to the principal: Dr. Paul Fiddes, Principal Regent's Park College, Pusey Street, Oxford, UK. OX 1 2LB.

## Gift from the BPFNA

Sheila Smith

ABF has received a complimentary copy of a new resource "Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth: A resource for congregations in dialogue on sexual orientation" from the Baptist Peace Fellowship. The Peace Fellowship sent this gift to ABF in thanks for their support in making it possible for me to attend a retreat last August held in North Carolina.

# Pivotal Moments in Humanity's Pilgrimage

M.R.B.Lovesey

The story of humanity is one full of change - change is the name of the game!

In her best-seller, A History of God, Karen Armstrong reminds us that historians call the period 800-200 BCE the "axial age," for change was in the air then throughout the civilized world. Each region developed its particular ideology to deal with its problems and concerns: Taoism and Confucianism in China, Hinduism and Buddhism in India, philosophical rationalism in Europe.

James Burke, the Oxford-trained, British journalist and TV programmer, has pointed out that there have been many such periods of change in the human story since then. In his TV programme and its accompanying book, The Day the Universe Changed, he argues that our knowledge is man-made and that when mankind's views of reality are changed by knowledge reality itself changes. His work examines the critical periods in history from the Middle Ages to today that have transformed our understanding. He lists eight such "hinges" or "pivotal" movements: 1) the Eleventh Century rediscovery of the Greek thinkers; 2) the discovery of perspective geometry in Renaissance Florence; 3) the invention of printing; 4) the study of cannon trajectories; 5) the Industrial Revolution of the early 18th century onwards; 6) the pairing of medicine with statistics in Revolutionary France; 7) the origins of Evolution; 8) the publication of Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle that challenged the rational views of Newton.

The changes that have occurred in the two millenia of Christianity have been spelt out magisterially by Hans Küng in his book Christianity: Essence, History and Future, first published in German in 1994. Using the idea of "paradigm change in human thought," an idea gratefully borrowed from Thomas S. Kuhn, the American historian of science. A paradigm is defined as "an entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques, which are shared by the members of a particular community." Küng traces six paradigms: 1) the Early Christian Apocalyptic; 2) the Early Church Hellenistic; 3) the Medieval Roman Catholic; 4) the Reformation Protestant; 5) the Enlightenment Modern; 6) the Contemporary, Ecumenical or Post-Modern.

Peter Vardy, who teaches Philosophy of Religion at the University of London, in his book The Puzzle of Sex (Fount, 1997, p.viii ff.) lists eleven changes in the history of thinking about human beings in relation to God and the whole moral order: 1) the Book of Job deals with the inadequacy of the prevailing ideas about suffering; 2) the Book of Jonah asserts Israel's God is God of the whole world and concerned with all people totally contrary to the prevailing views of his fellow Israelites; 3) Saint Augustine changed the way in which his contemporaries regarded war; 4) Aquinas supported the feudal system in society including slavery - but Wilberforce and others overturned the conventional wisdom to reach a higher understanding of the brotherhood of all human beings; 5) Luther condemned many of the accepted practices of his day- many came to see the merits of the changes he demanded; 6) the empire-building of European nations brought disease, slavery and degradation to millions in South America and Africa, but many Christians of those times maintained the fundamental equality of all human beings, often in opposition to established churches; 7) the Reformation changed a long-standing tradition that forbade clergy to marry; 8) the teaching of the Catholic Church, following Augustine, regarding the date of the implanting of the human soul in the foetus has been changed recently to say that the soul is introduced into the body at conception, or more recently that it is impossible to be sure when personhood occurs; 9) the inquisition burnt heretics, but most people now believe freedom of conscience must be respected; 10) the Old Testament forbids the lending of money on interest, but most Christians now see this as an outmoded morality, appropriate to its ancient context, but not to ours

(continued from page 12)

today; 11) the accounts of creation in Genesis until recently were required by Christians to be taken literally, but since Darwin's work on Evolution and Lyell's work in Geology, there has been a change - the early chapters of Genesis are seen as containing myths by most main-line churches.

I totally agree with Stanley J. Grenz, when in his book A Primer on Post-Modernism (Eerdmans, 1996, p.10) writes: "Our society is in the throes of a monumental transition, moving from modernity to post-modernity." The considerations sketched above should teach us beyond all reasonable doubt that change is the name of the game in humanity's pilgrimage through time. It must not be feared, for it is to be expected and like death has to be dealt with ahead of time. We must take care to preserve all ideas that have proved their worth in times past - for example, we must be firm in preserving the grammatico-historical-critical approach to the Bible. We should also resist ideas that are inimicable to the progress of "pure religion and undefiled," both in theory and practice - for example, the demands made by some to make public worship emotional and entertaining.

## Funeral Home Co-op

Credit Unions and Co-ops have been a part of the Annapolis Valley Region for more than 50 years. These members of the co-op family and the Co-operators Insurance Company serve thousands of co-op families in our area. Concerned members of the co-op community looked at the possibility of establishing a co-operative funeral home in the Annapolis Valley. They have now been incorporated as THE VALLEY FUNERAL HOME CO-OPERATIVE LTD. and are signing up members.

### Dignity & Quality

The Valley Funeral Home Co-op will provide a funeral that is affordable to all, guarantee the ownership and earnings will always be in the hands of the members. Valley Funeral Home Co-Operative will be under the direction of a fully qualified funeral director and embalmer licensed by the Province of Nova Scotia.

The Valley Funeral Co-Operative will provide a wide selection of caskets. The caskets will be of the same quality and standards as those stocked at other funeral homes, however at co-op price.

- The quality of service will be first class.
- The Co-Operative's funeral director and staff will ensure that funerals are carried out with dignity, respect, and in strict confidence.
- To become a MEMBER or to arrange for a meeting in your community or with a group or if you require more information,

### Contact

The Valley Funeral Home Co-Operative Ltd.  
c/o Frank Porter  
RR#1  
Port Williams, NS  
BOP ITO  
678-4150

or Boyd Taylor 678-6752  
or Chester Sanford 678-5926

## Ad Hoc Meeting: ABF Future

At the Wolfville autumn Assembly of the ABF part of the programme commissioned people to report on their views about the future of the ABF. An ad hoc committee was formed and met Tuesday, 12 October 1999. The group consisted of Dr. John Churchill, the Rev'd. John Boyd, Dr. Rodger Forsman, and the Rev'd. Roger Prentice.

**ABF issues:** ABF supports the Divinity College and Acadia University, believing they should remain together. Withdrawal from the University Board of Governors would terminate the official Convention presence and end our historical ties with the University.

There is a perceived malaise within Convention, many following 'the party line' of a particular 'Evangelical' and theological slant, without critical thought. It is believed there is a significant minority within Convention who know 'another way to be a Baptist'.

Convention has troubled clergy, especially young liberal clergy, for churches are becoming ignorant of diverse Christian views. These clergy are afraid of being identified with ABF by the Convention officers and many churches, and 'labelled' as un-Christian. Their ministry may be damaged by this uncalled-for reputation.

**Clergy situation:** It is thought that many clergy are incompetent, needing better education, philosophical understanding, and practical training. Many do not know how to conduct weddings and funerals properly. Some lack understanding of historic Baptist principles and polity, and historical practices of Convention. It is doubted that discussion of these issues could be held in Convention since it is difficult to hold rational and mutually respectful discussions at Convention Assemblies.

There is a certain amount of 'burn out' amongst ABF clergy because of the stress which they carry due to the hostility and pressures of Convention.

There is some doubt Acadia Divinity College can train ministers for the few Convention churches concerned about biblical scholarship, women's issues, and ecumenism in spite of the best attempts of some of the faculty. These churches have to look, more and more, outside Convention for pastoral leadership.

**The ABF and Convention:** It is important the ABF remain in close contact with Convention officials so that there will be another voice heard in reply to the more outlandish views of others. Since we are proud members of Convention, every attempt must be made for representation on Convention Boards and Committees. Many delegates from churches in Convention are well intentioned but uninformed about issues and principles at stake. Much voting is done on emotional but ignorant grounds. Delegates from ABF churches to Convention will attend, but are often 'turned off' by the procedures and uninformed decisions often made.

**ABF suggestions and the future:** It was concluded that ABF Assemblies are important to the organization. Substantive speakers and issues should be the bases of programmes. The best schedule is a Friday evening and Saturday morning session (concluding after lunch) with the business meeting early Saturday morning. Announcement of time, place and programme should be well in advance so people may plan their attendance.

Although interested in the Southern Baptist Alliance situation, more time and resources should be spent on local concerns and interests.

Appointment of ADC professors is an interest, since they deal with theological

(continued from page 14)

education of our clergy. It is hoped there will be a broad spectrum of theological ideas represented within the faculty. The ABF might also play a heavier educational role regarding Baptist principles, polity, ecumenism and history.

These issues should help restore a 'sense of purpose' to the organization.

### 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.

### FALL GATHERING

Saturday, October 28, 2000 at the  
Home of Geoff & Dorothy Hearn,  
Holstein, Ontario

The format will be 'Open Space'  
and the general topic for discussion is  
*"GATHERERS participating in God's  
preferential option for the future:  
a HOW TO? inquiry"*

The Open Space facilitator will be Bob Bond.  
Cost for the day is \$15.

Suggested reading prior to the **Gathering:** Marcus Borg's *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time*, Verna Dozier's *Dream of God*, Sally McFague's *Models of God*, John Spong's *Why Christianity Must Change or Die*.

Please inform Merle Caldwell (1 -905-647-3504 or [caldwell@icom.net](mailto:caldwell@icom.net)) if you are planning to attend.