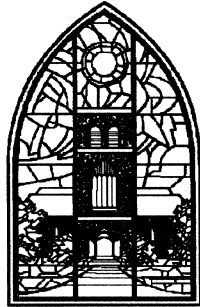


ABF FALL ASSEMBLY

September 29 and 30, 2000



First Baptist Church Halifax
(1300 Oxford Street)

Featuring

Ken Sehested, Executive Director and
Rev. Nancy Hastings Sehested
of the

Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America

Friday, September 29th

7:00 p.m. Rev. Nancy Hastings Sehested
Holy Communion / Fellowship

Saturday, September 30th

8:30 a.m. Devotions / ABF Business Meeting
10:10 a.m. Ken Sehested
Noon - Lunch

“Live fully into the adventure of God’s reconciling activity”

For Background Information
check out the BPFNA website <www.bpfna.org>

A Quarterly Publication of the

Atlantic Baptist Fellowship

THE Bulletin



John Boyd and Harriet McCready
Elected President and Vice-President (respectively)
of ABF at Spring Assembly in Parrsboro,
May 27, 2000

Summer 2000

President's Message

Paul Burden, President ABF

This will be my last article for the Bulletin as president of ABF. I have held this office since the fall of 1997.

Like others before me I began with great plans for ABF. I planned to contact churches throughout the Atlantic Provinces in order to provide information and alternatives to as many as I could. I managed to contact quite a few but I did not get to nearly as many as I wished.

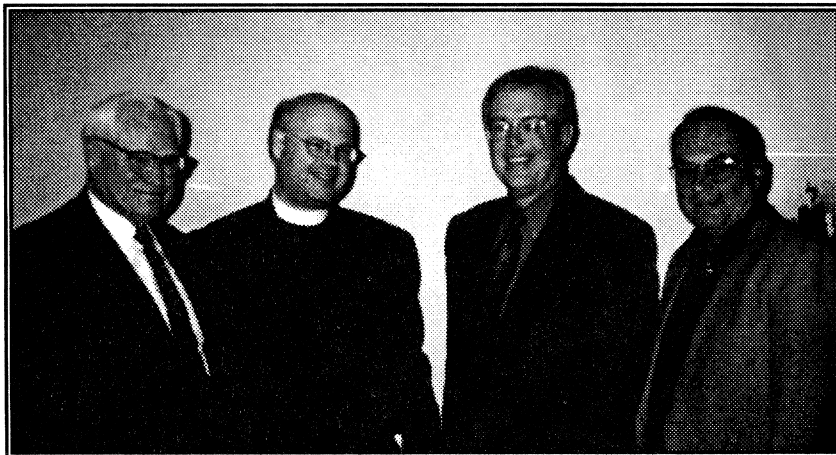
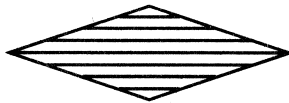
I wanted to see an increase in funding for our group so that we could increase our programs. To this end I failed miserably. I wanted to see us be able to provide resources to women, Sunday schools and to our brothers and sisters in Cuba. There has been a beginning toward this end.

Like others before me, I found that leading such a group is a full time job and like them I was not able to provide the time and effort required.

However, all said and done it has been a wonderful experience. I have had the privilege of working with some caring, hard working people who have been a great help and who have become friends. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Terry, Andy, John Churchill, Elaine Anne, Isabel, Roger, Roger, Rodger, Lovesey, John Dickinson, Frank, Sheila, Nita, Jeff and many more too numerous to mention.

I thank you all for the privilege of representing you at Alliance functions and Gathering meetings. These times were life changing and affirming.

Finally, I thank ABF for the privilege of serving you as president. I believe in the aims and theology of this group and I hope that it continues and thrives in the future.



M. R. Cherry, Roger Prentice, Ray Hobbs and Paul Burden

Have You Ever Been Hungry?

Dianne Swinemar



Dianne Swinemar

Over the 9 years I have been met with various forms of greetings as I go about in Halifax Regional Municipality to tell the story of the Metro Food Bank Society. I think the most profound greeting however, is one I received as George Jordan of CBC Mainstreet was introducing me on one of his programs. He said "Here is a woman who makes me angry every time I see her. She makes me angry because she reminds me that this community that I live in has a hunger problem."

Have you ever been hungry? So hungry that you feel weak and barely able to function. How often do we so glibly declare that we are starving? For thousands in Canada, hunger is an every day reality. Chronic hunger plagues so many families every day, 365 days of the year.

To visit a front line food bank would be to come in contact with people from every nationality, every level of education from elementary to doctorate, and any age from infancy to seniors. Hunger is one thing that has shown absolutely no discrimination. This disease known as hunger can and all too often does affect anyone. The most recent survey conducted by the Canadian Association of Food Banks identified that over 790,000 different people used a food bank at least once during the month of March 1999. This was a 10% increase from March 1998's survey results. Children make up a large portion of the food bank "population", actually 40% nationally. To put that in another perspective, 1 in 4 children in Canada live in families who must depend on the local food bank for some of the meals served during the month.

As Christians we must ask ourselves, What would Jesus do today about food banks? Would He stand back and declare "Let Caesar (government) handle this." I somehow don't think so. It is our responsibility to feed the hungry. For many this means volunteering at the local food bank or soup kitchen, for others it means upholding the work of hunger relief programs in prayer, and for others it may mean financially supporting their local food bank to ensure that the ministry can and will continue. The responsibility does not end there, however. It also means assuming responsibility for decisions and the decision-makers. Every time there is emphasis and attention given to bringing down the deficit, whether it is at a provincial or federal level, there is a direct link to services cut. As taxpayers, can we sit back and assume more taxes, less services, and "user pay" for health care and education? Can we knowingly allow this to happen, when we are aware that those most affected by such decisions are those among us who exist on fixed incomes? I would implore you to allow Jesus to accompany you to the polls, and to take part in your decision on whom or which party can lead us to a humane and hunger free Canada. We live in a land of plenty, let's just make sure it has been fairly shared.

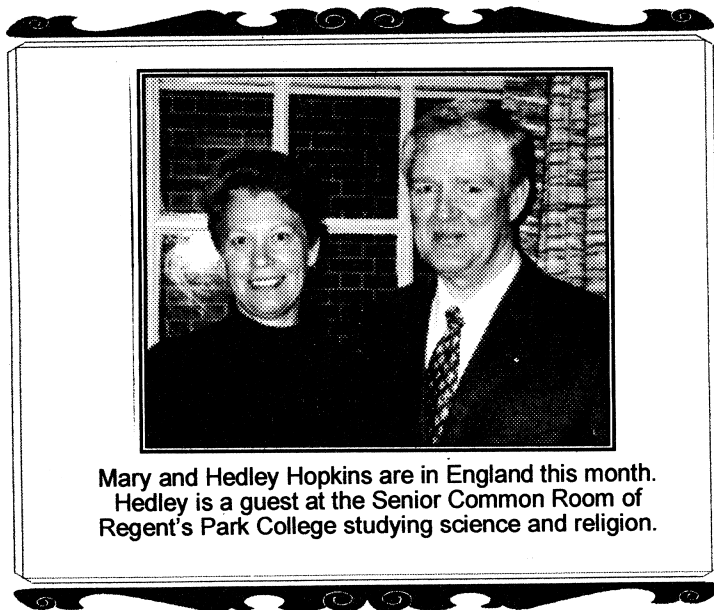
To go back to the beginning of this article, I do hope that I have made you angry, so angry that you will seek direction on how to advocate for a change in attitude about the poor and what you and I as Christians can do to affect change.

(2 Corinthians 8. 1-15)

(continued on Page 4)

Editor's Note:

Dianne Swinemar is the executive director of the Metro Food Bank Society, a non-profit warehouse facility that collects and distributes food to over 60 food banks, shelters and soup kitchens in Halifax Regional Municipality. She has just been re-elected as president of the Nova Scotia Association of Food Banks, and for the past four years has served as chairperson of the Canadian Association of Food Banks. Dianne and her family worship at St. Francis by the Lakes Anglican Church, Lower Sackville, N.S.)



Mary and Hedley Hopkins are in England this month. Hedley is a guest at the Senior Common Room of Regent's Park College studying science and religion.

Atlantic Baptist Fellowship



within
Convention

ABF BULLETIN

The **ABF Bulletin** is published quarterly by the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship. Submissions: Articles must be less than 500 words in length. Opinions and views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of the ABF or the Editors.

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EDITORIAL COMMENT

Golden Rule for Religious Liberty

In 1614, a book appeared, "Religion's Peace - a plea for Liberty of conscience," written by Leonard Busher. It is famous for advocating full liberty of conscience. Busher bluntly asserts that no temporal or spiritual power may coerce faith. "And as kings and bishops cannot command the wind, so they cannot command faith;.." he wrote, adding, "you may force men to church against their consciences, but they will believe as they did afore, when they come there; for God giveth a blessing only to his own ordinance..."

(This, and quotations which follow, are from: Tracts on Liberty of Conscience and Persecution (1614-1661), printed for The Hanserd Knollys Society by J. Hadden, c. 1846.)

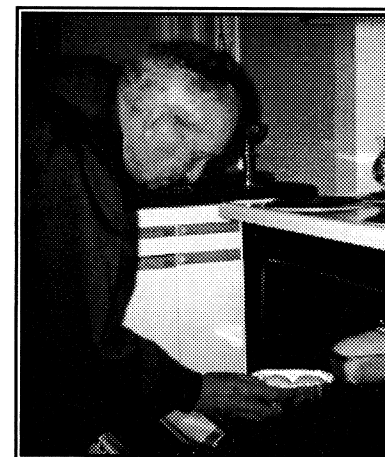
Busher expounded continually his concept that religious persecution is essentially anti-Christian, charging it to be "unmerciful, . . . unnatural and abominable; . . . monstrous for one person to vex and destroy another for difference in questions of religion."

Busher's defense in this "plea for liberty of conscience" is really summed up in his Golden Rule for religious liberty:

"Therefore as the king, would not have his subjects to take away his life, because he is contrary to them in religion; so let not the king take away his subject's lives, because they are contrary to the king in religion. And as you would not that men should force you to religion against your consciences, so do not you force men to a religion against their consciences."

Although not as well known as John Smyth or Thomas Helwys, Leonard Busher took a stand which helped blaze the trail for the emergence of the doctrine of religious liberty. The time has come for ABF'ers to let it be known - loud and clear - that they stand for "Liberty of Conscience" - period!

People We Meet



Deacon Ian Campbell, Bayside, bakes bread for Communion

If you attend the Bayside United Baptist Church on the first Sunday of the month, you will be overcome by the aroma of piping hot, fresh baked bread just out of the oven. Deacon Ian Campbell has prepared the bread for the communion service ... and a loaf or two for the time of fellowship following.

Ian has been a supporter of ABF from its formation in 1971. He approaches Christianity with a spirit of open-mindedness and a sincere desire to make worship simple and dignified. He seeks church unity on all levels.

Resident of Bayside (on the Prospect Road 12 miles from Halifax City) Ian, and his wife, Audrey, have been married for 56 years. They have raised seven children, have 13 grandchildren, and 4 great-grandchildren.

Ian's counsel for ABF: "ABF is on the right track. Steady as she goes."

Hobbs Addresses Friends

"Community and Structure within the Baptist Context" was the theme of Dr. Raymond Hobb's address at the Vincent Rushton Memorial Luncheon for ABF Friends April 8th. The focus of his talk was:

What are Baptists going to do ... going to be in the foreseeable future? How do we live in the present as a people with a past?

He asked: "If we as the part of God's people called Baptists, understand ourselves to be in a crisis of some kind, how do we reconstruct ourselves? What root paradigms of behaviour do we adopt? What do we see ourselves becoming. How can we be?"

Dr. Hobb 's observed that the new role business plays in our lives and the loss of the value of the human being "is experienced in the deep sense of alienation in so many people from the institutions that once nourished them."

"Groups like the Gathering are providing a haven for many who have been ground up by a system which does not seem to care."

In our present conditions, a "seductive choice" has been placed before us – an entire package of organizational change ... organizational option. The pastor is the Project Manager and key words now enter our theological vocabulary, like efficiency, progress, goal orientation, purpose-driven, etc.

Dr. Hobbs stated that the organizational mentality "has little to do with the Bible", and proposed as an alternative, the creation of a community by Baptists. He said that a lack of concentration on the nature of the Christian Community has allowed us to be "seduced" by the organizational mentality.

ON COMMUNITY MENTALITY, Dr. Hobbs asserted the following: ©

"It seems that in the final analysis, in response to our 'existing conditions', we do have a choice. Our 'root paradigm of behaviour' can be the organizational manager, desperate to put things in order, to strengthen the borders of the organization, control its entrances and exits, and manage those on the inside.

Or, we could seek to emulate our ancestors in the faith and strive to create communities which embody the Gospel in its fullest sense. To create those kinds of communities which embody that ideal of a *company of visible saints ... being joined to the Lord and to each other, by mutual agreement in the practical enjoyment of the ordinances commanded by Christ their head and King* (Revised London Confession of 1646) It seems to be we have a choice between systems and civility, - between contract or covenant. These choices are put before us not that we may become more efficient, but that we may become what Christ would have us be. In the age of alienation, and dehumanizing structures what greater need is there than to form communities of caring, for places where the Cross is honoured, where obedience to Christ is fostered. We need to follow that messier path which is littered with the debris of human existence, and to respond to human needs, and to accept the human as we move along it. How would these communities look?

A. They would function at the micro-level - in Baptist terms, at the level of the local congregation, the Gathered community, and would not be distracted by demands of growth. This, I know, is heresy in the modern age. Rousseau was bold enough to state that democracy is impossible in large nation-states, and I would suggest that 'community' and 'fellowship' - while desirable - are simply not possible with thousands of people.

B. They would operate at the personal, and not the organizational level - in Baptist terms, this is a corollary of the Priesthood of Believers. The spiritual

(Continued on page 7)

(Continued from page 6)

welfare of the person, and not the organizational agenda, is pre-eminent.

- C. They would generate their own levels of Mission and Outreach - and they do. As communities of caring they develop what one writer has creatively called 'porous borders' - completely antithetical to the organizational mentality which wants to know who is in and who is out...
- D. They would operate at the level of disengagement - in Baptist terms, at the level of the autonomy of the local congregation; but more than that. It is the right to maintain a critical distance from any and all structures which would stifle the ministry of the local congregation, from those powers which would damage the fellowship by interference and manipulation. "

In CONCLUSION, Dr. Hobbs told ABF "Friends": ©

"Many of us in Baptist life here and elsewhere were once part of communities in which we found encouragement, support, spiritual nourishment, a shared vision and real sense of fellowship. Something happened along the way which shocked us. In the interest of political expediency, narrow visions of progress and growth, hands, arms, legs and sometimes heads were chopped off. The politics of amputation became a reality, and moral and theological visions were lost. In the interests of a 'greater good' or 'better future' people were pushed aside, lives and careers were shattered, and the human dimension fell into the ditch...

... The Christian community of mutual enjoyment is characterized by a boundless compassion. The Gospel writer Matthew, who is above all else the instructor of the community, makes a wonderful connection of the compassionate ministry of Jesus to an Old Testament prediction, in a remarkable context. At a time of hunger, physical deformity, blindness and despair on the one hand, and in the face of the hostile looks and comments of the First-century 'organizational men', the scribes and Pharisees, on the other, he characterizes the Jesus' actions as that of the servant (his root paradigm of behaviour) who *'will proclaim justice to the nations, He will not promote epis (arguments that lead to war), nor will he raise a disturbing voice, for the sake of it, people in the streets will not notice him. Instead he will not break a bruised reed, nor will he douse the flickering candle.* (Matt. 12:18). The passage from which this is taken goes on to depict the gentleness of the servant who takes the blind by the hand, raises up the ground where it is broken and leads them into the light. (Isa. 42:16).

It would be this character, this flavour of community that I hope for."

Honoured Guests at

Vin Rushton's Memorial Luncheon April 8th

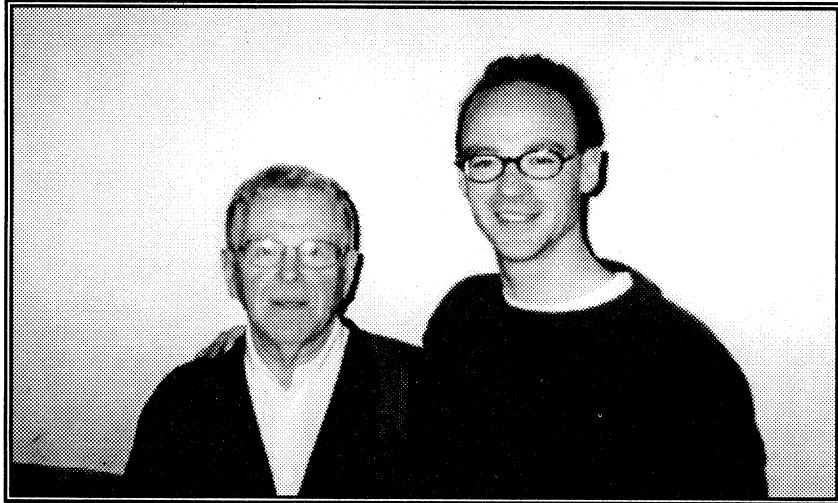


Ula Noiles (sister) and Jean Rushton



Son, Robert and Granddaughter, Heather

PHOTO HIGHLIGHTS

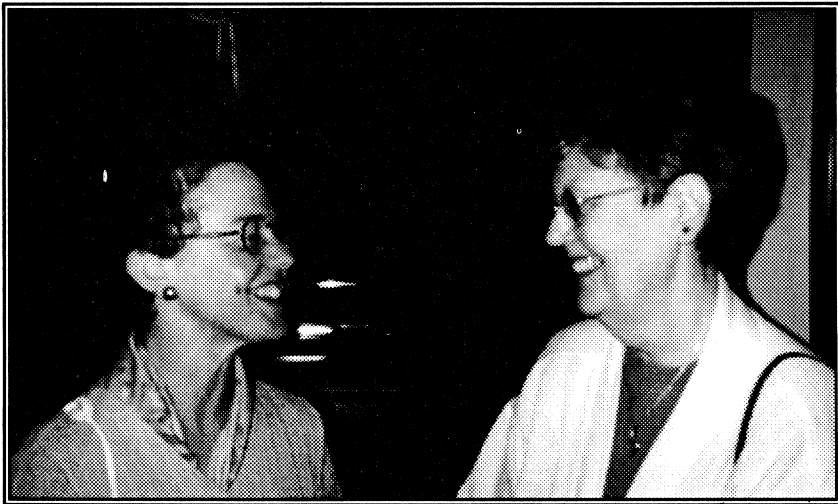


Willis Henderson, retiring as minister of Sydney UBC after 30 years and , Andy Crowell, who has accepted "call" to the Sydney Church

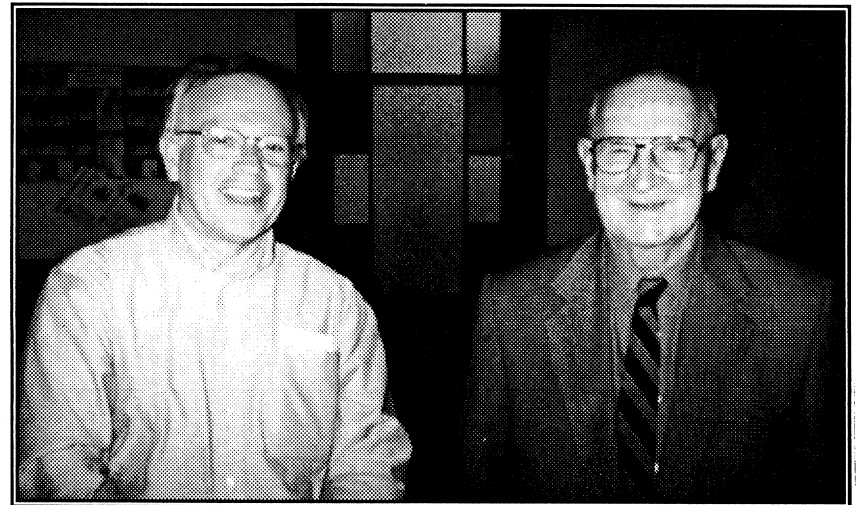
ABF SPRING ASSEMBLY



Panelists at Parrsboro meetings:
Jeff White, Wilma Janzen and Mark McKim



Mary Miles and Ruth Henderson



John Churchill and Sheldon Fountain

Can This Not Be A Better World?

Roger H Prentice

The Gospel is always meant for the contemporary day and we live in a world crying in despair. 'Gospel' comes from the old English word *god-spell*, which simply means 'God-story.' It is the good news that a Promise from God is fulfilled. That fulfillment is Jesus Christ.

So many areas of the world are suffering war, insurrection, famine, plague. Close to home we are even more aware of abuse, homelessness, aimlessness, and spiritual ignorance. We might cry ourselves, 'Can this not be a better world? Even the Church seems impoverished, marginalized in our society as irrelevant. This is no wonder when we encounter poor worship, trite language, ill-informed sermons, and isolationist attitudes.

The Idea of Evangelism

We need to recover the authentic meaning of 'evangelism' for today. If it is intrusive, arrogant, imperialistic, can we change it to be encouraging, informative, creative, supportive, and liberating? It is essential that the Church thinks about and develops 'evangelism' for today's secularized society.

A new social gospel for an incorporated world

There are two unequal divisions in our world. Western society, excessively rich and 'secularized,' and Africa and Asia, where Christianity is growing very quickly.

World-wide communication has become instant encouraging instant reactions, such as mass protests against the Multi-lateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) in Vancouver, Seattle, London, Washington. People generally fear that multi-national corporations and excessive capitalism will crush human (and Christian) compassion, creativity, individualism, and social concern. The Church needs to respond to secular concerns of today with spiritual insights.

Jesus cares about human concerns. We need to listen, and speak, rediscovering the meaning of 'redemption' and 'salvation.' Pious platitudes are useless, offensive, and dangerous. *Authentic* words of redemption have meaning for people in Kosovo, Africa, Fiji. Faith must be credible and stimulating, or it will be lost amongst the other cults and spiritual clap-trap about us.

The authenticity of our gift

We must dedicate our lives to delivering the Gospel with authenticity to people in need whilst sharing it amongst ourselves. We can be tested with the words of St. *Matthew 25*.

Some forms of evangelism have done great damage to Christ by being aggressively intrusive, manipulative, and simplistic, and ultimately turn the interested away. Bad evangelism is a 'wolf in sheep's clothing'. We must become authentic *bearers* of the Gospel of Christ, protecting the believers' principles of justice, soul liberty, regenerate church membership, congregational government - the very principles upheld by Baptists - and deliver them as part of the message of deliverance to our world.

Evangelism is the process by which we open people's minds and hearts to the Promise which God has for them: that we have meaning and worth in His sight. Through contemporary evangelism we can bring people to this wonderful fellowship, communion, which is the very Body of Christ.

Making a difference

It is unlikely that many worldly people will be attracted to old-fashioned 'crusades.' These can still gather crowds, but they will be mostly church members or re-cycled Christians. This is not a bad thing, but it is not evangelism. We need to speak to the secularized world. The large amounts of money spent on these 'crusades' (which are more like pep rallies) might be better spent on

(Can This Not Be A Better World? Continued from page 10)

getting credible speakers to the secular world like Jean Vanier, Bishop Tutu, Jimmy Carter, Nelson Mandela, A.N. Wilson and so forth. The non-religious would certainly attend events with people like these speaking.

If evangelism opens a person's mind and heart to the Gospel of Christ, it must be done with integrity, allowing the person to consider the Christian faith in the light of today. Learning by rote will not do. Escapism into a religious cocoon is foreign to Jesus. We need to be Christian.

Since 'echoes' of the Gospel are still observed by society (Christmas, Easter, Lent and Advent), why not let them speak the story again? Passion Plays are attractive and non aggressive, yet speak plainly the Gospel story. Drama always has been a successful way of proclaiming the Gospel. Let the story speak for itself.

Let the churches use the computer and Inter-Net effectively; this is the communication devise of choice for most young people and families now. If we use it, let it be 'user-friendly' and interactive.

The idea of Lay Schools of Theology is attractive once more. There has been a revival of interest in 'spirituality'. Offering courses in neutral locations will attract a diverse collection of people. Even involvement with community projects is important. Society will note that if we are interested in their projects, they could be interested in ours where there is common ground.

There are deep social concerns in our communities, too. Perhaps the Church has turned over too much to government. We need to care for people, and make the sacrifice financially and personally which they require. Christian care speaks more loudly and authentically than governmental bureaucratic necessity.

Self-righteous, intrusive, abrasive, judgmental evangelism has never been appropriate. Our proclamation of Jesus needs now to be presented in terms which are understood and attractive to our non-church world. Undoubtedly we have to re-think our approach to our society, as people and congregations of faith.

Note: Address to ABF Spring Assembly - abridged

The Date of Easter

Gerry Harrop

When I realized that Easter would be on April 23 this year my first reaction was to cheer. Such a late Easter would surely be sunny, springlike, warm. As we all know it turned out to be dimly dark, wintry and cold. The church leaders who settled the question of the date of Easter certainly did not live in Atlantic Canada! It was the Council of Nicea (325 CE) which finally decreed that Easter would fall on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the vernal equinox: the date could be any Sunday between March 22 and April 25. Some churchmen argued that the Christian Easter should coincide with the Jewish Passover Nisan (a Jewish month) and thus could, like Christmas, fall on any day of the week.

Easter (oestre) is the name of a pagan spring goddess. As we experience it, the feast of Easter, like Christmas, has come to mean a combination of Christian and pagan traditions and activities. The pagan Easter features include spring fertility symbols: eggs, bunnies, spring flowers &c. But for the Christian believer the proclamation is still told and heard: "The Lord is risen indeed!" Christian worship one day moved from the ancient sabbath day to the weekly Easter. There are some "seventh day" Christians who cling to the ancient Sabbath, maintaining that the New Testament nowhere authorizes departure from sabbatarian observance, and they are right. But the majority of us hail the Resurrection on the weekly Easter, even as we remember with sorrow and repentance the events of Holy Week remembering that there is daybreak at the end of the Via dolorosa.

Willis Henderson Retiring . . .

Highlights of Henderson's Address to the May Assembly

- ~ ABF has been my life line in the ministry of our denomination. Soon to retire, I was assistant minister, First Baptist, Truro (1962-64); Minister of C.E., Brunswick St. Baptist, Fredericton; (1964-67), Associate Minister, First Baptist, Halifax (1967-70); Minister, United Baptist Church, Sydney - 1970 - 2000.
- ~ When I went to Sydney in August, 1970, I never suspected that before two years had passed, we would be embroiled in the controversy that led to the formation of ABF, i.e., imposing qualifications for local delegates attending Convention Assemblies; and, of cutting ties with the Canadian Council of Churches and any involvement in the ecumenical movement.
- ~ We have an open membership policy in our Sydney Church with no restrictions of any kind regarding rights and privileges for any member. We decided that we would boycott any meetings of either the Convention, or the Association, if we had to discriminate among our members as to who could, or could not represent us. We were of the opinion that we could not extend full rights and privileges to all members, while at the same time tell some that they could not be delegates. That would be inconsistent!
- ~ Our Church endeavours to be part of some of the "good" things that are happening in our area. One event for which we have become rather widely known, is the annual "Hanging of the Greens" which we have presented every Christmas since I have been the minister.
- ~ That part of my life spent in Sydney has been the best; and I thank God for the privilege of being able to serve there. "Without a doubt, the best years of my life!"
- ~ I was asking my wife Ruth the other day if she could think of a single word to describe our Sydney experience. She said, "FREEDOM." Indeed. We have been free to be ourselves, to be what we want to be, and to do what we want to do. And the congregation has always been wonderfully supportive, and encouraging.



Enjoying Fellowship at ABF Spring gathering:
Doug Horsman, Willis Henderson, Marilyn Taylor

A Full Gospel for Living

Howard Taylor

Thy power standeth not in multitude nor Thy might in strong men: for Thou art a God of the afflicted, an helper of the oppressed, an upholder of the weak. a protector of the forelorn, a saviour of them that are without hope.

Judith 9: 11

There are many persons today who claim that they have no gospel for their life and that they seldom experience any sense of fulfillment in their existence. There are others who possess a gospel of words of which when all is said and done, little of what was said is ever done.

A smaller minority of people who are like salt that savors, seek to place their faith in the God of the afflicted, oppressed and weak. These are the persons who often find satisfaction in forming relationships of caring by sharing themselves and their resources with others. The results of such action provides a security that counters anxiety with serenity, illusions with reality, and loneliness with companionship.

Persons who trust create relationships of caring and sharing which develop a secure and stable base that holds fast: in times of failure by providing consolation and courage, in times of suffering and pain by providing company, in times of despair and loss by allowing space for grieving and adjustment.

The history to this good news rests in the theological understanding of:

1. The *contractual* and *covenantal* experiences of the revelational nature of God in the Old Testament.
2. The *redemptive* and *relational* experiences of the incarnational nature of God in the New Testament.
3. The *inspirational* and *transformational* experiences of the transcendent nature of God within the spiritual dimensions of daily life.

The energy and power of the gospel is the **love of God** which comes through *faith believing (trust)*. The acceptance of God's love enables the keeping of the two great commandments of Christ, namely, to love God with all our heart, soul, strength and mind; and to love others as we love and experience ourselves being loved. Love helps focus our attention and awareness upon the challenges of life which require discernment before decisions or judgements are taken.

The impact of the love of God impels those who experience it to utilize their energy and power for empowering others rather than holding power over them. Matthew, in his gospel, records for us the manner in which Jesus suggests *servanthood* in place of a task master.

You know that in the world rulers lord it over their subjects, and their great men make them feel the weight of their authority; but it shall not be so among you. Among you whoever wants to be great must be your servant and whoever wants to be first must be the willing slave of all like the Son of man; he did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give us his life as a ransom for many.

Matthew 20: 25-28

All persons live in the **NOW**. Jesus said **NOW** is the time of healing. Now is always an *eternal moment* for within every now there is the effect of the past, the event of the present, and the potential for the future. The gospel within the judeo-christian scriptures approach the experience of time in respect to these dimensions. The faithful reading of these scriptures provide insight, guidance and understanding as the mysteries of life are encountered. This holds as true for the endurance of pain and suffering in times of *agony* as it does in times of celebration and joy in moments of *ecstasy*.

Good Sermons

M.R.B.Lovesey

A short while ago a friend told me that when he went to church on Sunday morning he liked to hear what he called "a good sermon." He went no further at that time but I think he would not disagree with me had I said: "that means that you think the sermon should be interesting, educational and challenging." He wanted a "sermon," not a "meditation," or some other circumlocution used so widely today, but a real sermon, which is a form of address used in Christian public worship, normally based on scripture (used in the lectionary of the Christian Year) and bringing to the congregation a heart-felt message from the beyond.

I am happy to say that a Friend of the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship has published, June 1999, a number of sermons preached at his church in Ottawa. I refer to the volume entitled Telling It Slant, a collection of fifteen sermons prepared and preached by the Reverend Ernest J. Cox. The title of the book comes from a poem by Emily Dickinson:

Tell all the Truth but tell it slant -
Success in Circuit lies
Too bright for our infirm Delight
The Truth's superb surprise

As Lightning to the Children eased
With explanation kind
The Truth must dazzle gradually
Or every man be blind —

The wisdom of that understanding of preaching must be apparent to every experienced sermon-taster!

Should we wish to appraise these sermons in the light of the three criteria listed above we would, I venture to think, come to agree with the opinion, expressed by Professor Joseph Griffin, of the department of English, Ottawa University: "These sermons are powerful, practical and beautifully illustrated with reference to arts, popular culture and everyday life. They richly deserve the wider hearing this book will give them."

Applying the first criterion, that sermons must be interesting (the unforgivable sin in preaching is dullness) we may take as an example Sermon Number Ten, entitled "These Things We Must Believe," based on Mark 9:14-24; Luke 10:38-42. A comic strip character asks "What can a fellow believe in anymore?" The sermon suggests we have to believe in three things in order to live properly: 1) "you must believe you are capable," 2) "you must believe that the world is a good place to live in, despite its many pitfalls," 3) "we must believe we are loved." The sermon is full of interesting references to the life and poetry of Emily Dickinson, with significant references to the works of Mark Twain, Nelson Mandela, Goethe, Robert Frost, Victor Hugo, and, of course, to passages from the New Testament.

The Eighth Sermon, based on Mark 9:24; Hebrews 11:1, is entitled Dear Mr. McRae (A sermon for persons perplexed about religion). It illustrates the second criterion, that a sermon should be educational. It is essentially a reply to an Ottawa journalist who, in his column in a local newspaper, challenged Billy Graham to "prove" the existence of God. The sermon points out that the existence of God cannot be proved by rational argument, but is a "mystery" which has to be believed in. The sermon must have helped many to understand more fully the nature and statement of Christian Faith.

I was taught in theological schools in London and Oxford that a sermon is a "call to decision" either about something to be believed or something to put in action in one's life or the life of the church. This criterion of Challenge is shown in the

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(Good Sermons continued from page 13)

Seventh Sermon, entitled "What Shall We Do?," based on Acts 2:37-47. This sermon was prepared for a church anniversary.

It addresses the problem of the serious fall-off of support for the Church today. It suggests the way forward is not by entertainment. We must do what Acts 2 suggests: "Let us give the message that what we do is to offer forgiveness of sins, and a challenge for others to think about the direction of their lives and to consider a higher purpose for their lives which we believe is to be found in Jesus Christ. That's what we do, and that's what we offer . . ." And further, the way forward is not that of escapism (Christians sealing themselves in their cosy ghettos, their "comfortable pews," and not going out to serve the world). Douglas John Hall, professor of Christian Theology, McGill University, Montreal, has some pointed words to say on this subject: "Biblicism is a pious ruse for avoiding the actual content of the Bible, while seeming to honour it above every authority." As Ernie Cox says: "We are called to redeem the world, not run away from it." The way forward is summed up in the word evangelism, but evangelism of the right kind. St. Francis of Assisi is believed to have said: "Preach the Gospel at all times, and if necessary, use words." This is what we should do.

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