

ABF

30th Anniversary Assembly

May 4th and 5th 2001

Friday Evening

May 4, 2001

Acadia University, Wolfville, N.S.

30th Anniversary Banquet

Saturday

May 5, 2001

Port Williams United Baptist Church

Guest Speaker

Dr. Bill J. Leonard

Dean and Professor of Church History,

Wake Forest University and Divinity School

Complete details will be given in the
Spring Issue of the *ABF Bulletin*

A Quarterly Publication of the

Atlantic Baptist Fellowship

the Bulletin



Mary Miles
Wolfville

and

Ruth Henderson
Sydney

Winter 2000

President's Message

John E. Boyd

Presentation to The Council - United Baptist Convention of The Atlantic Provinces Meeting in Truro N.S., November 23, 2000.

TEACHING

The objectives of the Convention are to: Evangelize; Teach; and Serve.



INTRODUCTION

I bring you greetings from the Churches and individuals of the *Atlantic Baptist Fellowship* which will be celebrating in 2001 thirty years of witness and service within our Convention. Although the relationships and conversation between among Atlantic Baptists have sometimes been strained and even bitter, it has been the desire of the ABF to be a positive and creative force for the greater good of our small denomination.

This presentation is based on a variety of discussions and conferences over the years, and does not necessarily represent the specific views of any ABF associated Church or individual. It does represent a perspective shaped by the lively discussion around diverse points of view that are the hallmark of our Assemblies.

Over the last three decades, the ABF has held two Assemblies each year during which different aspects of Baptist life, identity, and ministry have been discussed, usually with the help of a guest speaker. Topics have included such things as "Baptist Practice Regarding Baptism", "Open Membership--Open Communion", "Freedom and Authority in Religion", "Education at Acadia Divinity College: Toward a Philosophy of Theological Education", "Baptist Contributions to Christian Unity", "Our Christian Witness and Cultural Identity", "The Canadian Council of Churches", "The Church and the Disabled: A Time to Listen", "Contemporary Medical Ethics", "The Role of Women in the Church", "The Broken Family and the Healing of the Church", "The Use and Abuse of the Bible", "The Theory and Practice of Worship", "The Challenge of Feminism for Faith and Worship", "The Stone has been Rolled Away: A Woman Who is a Minister Looks at Mark 16:1-8", "The Question of Missions", "Music and Hymnody", "Baptist Theological Education: Is There A Crisis in Canada?", "Modern Youth and the Church", "The Face of Violence in our Society", "Family Values", and "The Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America."

As you can see, the ABF has had a strong educational dimension in its work, and has sought to provide a forum where Baptists can look at their faith, discuss its meaning, and relate it to daily life in an atmosphere of openness and freedom.

With this as background, I would bring before you some of our concerns and interests with the hope that these may be considered as you formulate educational policies and goals on behalf of our denomination.

BAPTIST IDENTITY

Most Baptists are aware that the question "What is a Baptist?" is being hotly debated these days. Are Baptists to be defined by how much water is used at baptism? Are Baptists to be defined by reference to

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broader labels like "evangelical" or "believer's church" or "congregational?" Are Baptists to be defined by creedal statements, such as our own *Basis of Union*, or the (Southern) *Baptist Faith and Message*? Are Baptists to be defined by their views on various social issues?

It seems obvious to us that one of the most powerful contemporary forces seeking to redefine the meaning of being Baptist is the Southern Baptist Convention. That Convention is now controlled by those with an ultra-conservative (perhaps even fundamentalist), hyper-Calvinist theology, and they are quite at home in using their *Baptist Faith and Message* as a test for denominational employment, including seminary professors and missionaries. The *Baptist Faith and Message* has been revised over the last couple of years to include statements banning women from being pastors and affirming marriage as an institution where wives are to be submissive to their husbands, surely areas in which most Baptists have agreed to disagree.

Because the Southern Baptist Convention is so large, so wealthy and so powerful, it naturally has an influence on all other Baptists. Southern Baptist educational materials are in wide circulation, and Southern Baptist missionaries are busy planting churches throughout Canada, including here in the Atlantic Provinces.

Our concern is this - Atlantic Baptists will become even more polarized along theological lines if we do not provide our Churches with alternative Baptist educational material that shows Baptists in the rich variety of faithfulness that has marked our history as a denomination.

Atlantic Baptists came into being as a result of a theological convergence between "Free Will" Baptists, who were Arminian in theology, and "Regular Baptists", who were Calvinist in theology. This remarkable union has been sustained for almost 100 years, not without strain and stress, of course, but nonetheless sustained and strengthened as we have participated in mission and service together.

Part of our Atlantic Baptist identity, then, is the affirmation that theological uniformity is not a test of fellowship, and that there will be areas of congregational life and witness that will be different from Church to Church.

The question is this: are we providing our churches with educational resources that will help them affirm and grow in this vision of being Baptist, drawing fully from the rich and varied heritage of our denomination.

It is unfortunate that there is no Canadian Baptist material available, although we understand that the *Whole People of God* curriculum is open to a Baptist supplement if writers came forward.

We would ask that the Council investigate a variety of sources for educational materials on Baptist identity for use in our Churches. Particular attention may be paid to materials produced by Smyth & Helwys Publishing, the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, the American Baptist Convention, and the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland.

EDUCATION FOR MINISTRY

Over the years the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship has had several Assemblies devoted to a discussion of theological education. This coming spring we will have as our guest Dr. William Leonard, Dean of Theology of Wake Forest Divinity School, formerly Professor of Church History at Southern Baptist Seminary. Dr. Leonard will offer two public lectures - one on *The Shape of the Ministry in the*

(continued on page 4)

Post-modern Age, and one on *The Shape of the Church (Baptist Movement) in the Post-modern Age*.

We believe that theological education, in particular the preparation of women and men for ordained ministry, is a bedrock responsibility of our Convention. From the early days of our history until now, Atlantic Baptists have understood that theological education, along with home and overseas missions, are the primary ministries that local churches cannot do on their own. We need to work together to do theological education well.

We have also learned that the health of our local churches is in large part related to the quality of education and training of our pastors. Acadia Divinity College (and its predecessor School of Theology at Acadia University) has been the "flagship" in this effort. The expense has been great, but the results have been outstanding over the years.

In more recent years, Atlantic Baptists have developed another undergraduate institution, Atlantic Baptist University. Although ABU has offered an important service to Baptist youth and their parents, and has provided leadership at various levels of our denominational life, its presence has provided Acadia Divinity College with real competition for scarce educational dollars within our Churches. Although there is a lot of effort to minimize this competition, few would deny that it exists. It appears that most Atlantic Baptists appreciate both institutions, and that is understandable.

On the other hand, is it not important for us to set a clear priority for Acadia Divinity College? Preparing people for ordained ministry is not a job that we can easily depend upon others to do for us.

ADC needs a large and steady source of financial support in order to accomplish its mission. Although the provincial government is currently providing almost \$500,000 per year for this ministry, we would not be wise to assume that this will always be so. Atlantic Baptists need a seminary that is creative, devoted to excellence, and stable, one that is able to prepare our leaders for ministry at a time of unbelievable challenge.

We ask that the Council consider naming Acadia Divinity College as the top priority for our post-secondary education dollars. This would not be to prevent ABU from seeking and receiving support from our Baptist churches and individuals, but would represent a clear choice in priorities within the educational policy of our Convention.

CONCLUSION

There are several other areas of educational interest and concern that we believe are worthy of wider discussion; e.g., working with youth, women's spirituality, education/training for social ministries, university chaplaincies and interfaith dialogue. However, we will save those for another time!

We believe that Atlantic Baptists need many opportunities to sit down face to face for dialogue on these important issues, especially since our yearly Convention Assembly does not easily lend itself to a discussion of substantive matters. (Three minute time limits lead to passionate rhetoric and simplistic sloganeering rather than serious discussion.)

We commend Council for providing this opportunity this evening, and for planning to do so on a regular basis. We are keeping you and our fellow Baptists in prayer.

Editorial Comment

A Game Plan for 2001

"Time out". A familiar call in basketball or hockey to plan strategy for play.

Perhaps the church service should be "time out"...the opportunity for Christians to worship, fellowship and originate a game plan to tackle the social or economic issues of our time.

We gather on Sunday to prepare for mission. Christ calls us to be the leaven that leavens our community.

"But you are ... a royal priesthood ... God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you..." I Peter 2:9 (NRSV)

This is the key text for the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers.

Is not too much of our Christian walk spent in "time out"? Are not many of our plans concerned too often with our own needs and affairs?

The real test of discipleship is what happens on the front lines. Christians need to strengthen the vital link between worship and ministry to communities.

"Time out" - Necessary, yes! But for Paul, as for James, there was no such thing as faith without works. As we begin a New Year let us resolve to live out what we profess to believe. Let us spend more time sharing Christ's message...

People We Meet

When Bev and John Chappelle visited Haiti four years ago they thought they were on another planet. Never during their 35 years of marriage had they seen so much poverty. Active members of the Gateway Community Church in Lower Sackville, NS and education program assistants with the HRM School Board; they prayed for divine guidance that resulted in helping educate youth in Haiti.

John and Bev began "Education Haiti" by collecting recyclable bottles that raise \$3000 per year. Word spread and 65 children now have sponsors which enable them to attend school, i.e., \$150 and \$350. per year for elementary and high school respectively.

If you wish more information about "Education Haiti" you can contact the Chappelle's at:

71 B Smokey Drive
Lower Sackville, NS
B4C 3B5

Bev and John prove again that real Christians are contagiously human.

Anglican-Baptist International Forum (ABIF)

Bruce Matthews

Once every decade, leaders of the Anglican communion meet at Lambeth with the Archbishop of Canterbury to map out strategy for the coming ten years. Closer relationships with the Baptist denomination have been part of this agenda for the last two Lambeth conferences, but it was not until 1998 that the machinery for serious and hopefully consequential conversations was put in place. As a result of the decision of the Lambeth Conference of 1998 and the General Council of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA), the first official international forum involving the two communions was held from 21-24 September in Norwich, England. It focused in particular on Anglican-Baptist dialogue in Europe. This was the first round of a forum which in the future will bring together representatives from Baptist and Anglican Churches in Asia (2001), Africa (2002), the Caribbean and the USA (both in 2003). A continuation committee made up of four Anglicans and four Baptists will attend all the regional consultations and will be responsible for drafting the report to be submitted to the BWA and the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) in 2005.

The BWA and the ACC had the following objectives in mind for the Norwich meeting, and will use them for future conversations as well:

To enable Anglicans and Baptists to learn from each other and to deepen mutual understanding of the relationships between the two Communions in the light of their histories.

To share with each other our understandings of the faith and to work towards a common confession of the Apostolic Faith.

To identify issues of doctrine and of the nature of the Church to be explored further in possible future conversations.

To look for ways to co-operate in mission and community activities and increase our fellowship and common witness to the Gospel.

At the Norwich meeting in September, 2000, representatives from England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Italy and Germany shared information on the particular histories of Anglicans and Baptists in these countries, and on past interdenominational relationships. Papers were presented on aspects of Anglican and Baptist ecclesiological self-understanding in the European region. In my opinion, the most strategic of these was a brilliant presentation offered by Rev. Paul Fiddes, Principal of Regent's Park College, Oxford University ("A particular faith? Distinctive features of Christian faith and practice held by Baptist Christians in Europe"). Several issues emerged which will likely be explored in further conversations in the different regions. These include questions related to apostolicity, the place of statements of faith or confessions, Christian initiation, Holy Communion, recognition/reconciliation, the meaning of 'local church', and approaches to mission, evangelism and pastoral care.

We acknowledged that the conversations would have been further enriched by more attention to the wider European reality of the Baptist denomination (e.g., its presence in Russia). Notwithstanding this, our efforts will hopefully be of help to local and regional bilateral conversations where they exist in Europe.

The following persons took part in the meeting:

Anglicans: Rev. Dr. Bruce Matthews (Canada, co-chairman, continuation committee), Rev. Dr. Paul Avis (England, continuation committee), Rev. Dr. Timothy Bradshaw (England), Dr. Martin Davie (England), Mr. Charles Gore (Scotland), Rev. Susan Huyton (Wales), Mr. Dermot O'Callaghan (Ireland),

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Bishop Samuel San Si Htay (Myanmar, continuation committee), Rev. Andrew Sully (Wales), Rev. Canon David Hamid (Anglican Communion Office co-secretary, continuation committee)

Baptists: Rev. Dr. Paul Fiddes (England, co-chairman, continuation committee), Rev. Gethin Abraham-Williams (Wales), Rev. Myra Blyth (England), Rev. Christopher Ellis (England), Dr. Timothy George (USA, continuation committee), Rev. Anna Maffei (Italy), Dr. Kenneth Roxburgh (Scotland), Dr. Karl Heinz Walter (Germany), Dr. L.A. (Tony) Cupit (BWA, co-secretary, continuation committee). Ms Rosemary Palmer, Anglican Communion Office, served as the administrative assistant. While at Norwich the members of the Forum worshipped together at Norwich Cathedral, and were grateful for the cordial welcome extended by the Dean and Chapter, which contributed in no small way to the success and warmth of the meeting. The Anglican Baptist International Forum, Asia/Pacific consultation will take place from 18-21 January 2001 in Burma (Myanmar), where there is a large Baptist allegiance and a small but historic Anglican representation. Here we will work especially on ways the two denominations can help each other in mission outreach and in surviving under sometimes difficult cultural and political conditions.

Rev. Bruce Matthews, PhD., is the C. B. Lumsden Professor of Comparative Religion, Acadia University, Nova Scotia.

Women's Spirituality Network

Rev. Sheila Smith and Elaine Anne MacGregor of the Women's Spirituality Network wish to thank the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship for its recent grant of \$500.00 seed money. The funds will be used to help defray the costs incurred in contacting Baptist women in the Maritime provinces as the Network is formed.

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. The **BULLETIN** is mailed to interested churches and individuals. Those wishing to receive the **BULLETIN**, and all details of changes of address, etc., are to be sent to the distribution organizer:

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ABF PHOTO ALBUM

Questions and Perspectives II: From Women

Martin Rumscheidt

Part II

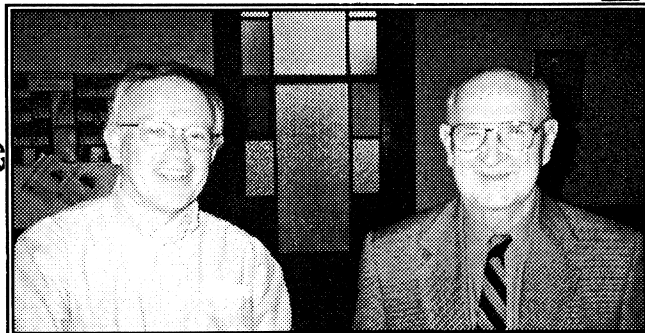
(This is a continuation of Martin Rumscheidt's article that appeared in the *ABF Bulletin* Fall 2000 issue)



Barry Morrison, Lois Forsman, Roger Prentice



Vicki Brown and Carl Dexter



John Churchill and Sheldon Fountain



As in relation to state and church, Luther placed limits on the activity of women in the congregation. The priesthood of all believers ran into a wall here. Women were not to preach. That would have been excess; things do need to proceed "in good order." A public appearance of a woman in a service of worship would not only have been disorderly for him as it was for Paul, the Apostle, it would have been impudent. But it is a different thing when there is no man available: "then a woman may get up and preach to the others as well as she can." God's Word must proceed irrespective of who speaks it in an emergency or who arranges for it to be spoken. An example is found again in his practice. On April 3, 1538 at table the name Elisabeth von Rochlitz was mentioned; the bishop of Meissen wanted to prevent her from introducing the Reformation into her domains. The bishop cited Paul's command that women are to be silent (I Corinthians 14:34); Luther said: "If they don't want to listen to men, they must listen to women and let children speak." Melancthon, who was present, got panicky at this and called out: "That means that we are at the edge of the world's end!" Luther replied coolly: "Today we must fight against Satan." Again, it does not match Luther's views when, in relation to the work of Catherine Zell, who "laboured much with body and mouth" for the gospel, he not only did not disapprove but, instead, praised it highly. So also in relation to Argula of Grumbach who fought for the Protestant Faith in S. Germany with both word and writing. He received her at the Coburg in 1530. In emergency situations Luther was quite open to women baptising. This had been an old, but quite hotly disputed, habit of mid-wives.

If we try to assess Luther's views it becomes apparent how much he was under the influence of his time and of the theological literature of the Middle Ages. The reason for that is, partly, that he had no time for questions that did not claim him with urgency; it is also that a sign that he did not abandon tradition on the basis of principle. The Reformer was called on when tradition stood in opposition to the gospel. And even when he was steeped in traditional ideas, he could drop them in actual practice.

We live today in a different situation than he. For that reason we have to draw different conclusions in certain matters than he did, not to speak of taking from him what he took from scholastic one-sidedness whenever something did not engage his reformatory zeal. We no longer come from an opposition to monastic life as it existed then. There are movements now in Protestantism who experience that celibacy can free someone in a special way for the work for God and the neighbour. We will have to find other models now for the relation of women and men than those of the 16th century. For all models are mortal.

The Swedish film-maker Ingemar Bergman portrays a classic view of the Lutheran manse that depicts Lutheran patriarchy excellently. That model and the other one, concerning the exercise of power, frequently bury the gospel into last place, namely there where women work. I wish to say two things here: in Patriarchy, where women are there is the last place; it is in the last place also where one is most likely to find the real gospel of Christ.

Luther is no image to be followed; his practice, rather, may serve as a model of how to subvert principle.

Note:- Dr. Martin Rumscheidt PhD., is a faculty member of the Atlantic School of Theology, Halifax, N. S. He spoke to ABF re "the Radical Right" in 1993. The above subject matter (abridged) is printed in the *ABF Bulletin* with his permission.

Sung and Lived

Te Deum Laudamus

Rodger Forsman

Preface

This is a sermon preached by Dr. Rodger Forsman at the Acadia University's Manning Memorial Chapel on Sunday, 19 November 2000, during the Evening Service. It formed one of eight meditations within a sermon series entitled 'My Favourite Hymn.' Each one was given by a different person.

Dr. Forsman, retired from the Department of Philosophy of the University a year and a half ago, is a native of Saskatchewan. He graduated from McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, with a BA (Philosophy) and a BD. He went on to the University of Toronto and received a Ph D. He taught at Brock University and in 1970 came to Acadia University, where he remained ever since. He is married to Lois, and they have two sons.



Rodger Forsman

(Ed Note: the hymn "Holy God, We Praise Thy Name" is found in *The Hymnal*, published by The Baptist Federation of Canada No. 264.)

The hymn we have just sung is not old in its present form, but it has deep roots in Christian history and tradition. This fact is interesting in itself and we shall spend several minutes thinking about it. But first we shall become acquainted with a few other facts about the hymn.

'Holy God we praise Thy name' was composed in 1853 by Clarence Alphonsus Walworth, who was born in 1820 and died in 1900. Walworth began his career as a lawyer but later became a churchman. He graduated from Union College in 1838 and was admitted to the bar in 1841. Subsequently, he studied for the ministry in the Protestant Episcopal Church, but then became Roman Catholic and was ordained a priest. In 1864 he became rector of St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church in Albany, New York.

'Holy God we praise Thy name' is a paraphrased translation of an ancient Latin hymn known by its first three words: *Te deum laudamus* (We praise thee, God.)

The *Te Deum*, as it is usually now called, probably originated in south-eastern Europe around the year 400. In the ninth century it was attributed to St. Augustine and St. Ambrose, but there is no historical evidence to support this theory of authorship. There is evidence, however, that the hymn originated in the late 4th or early 5th century, and several scholars ascribe it to Niceta, who from AD 392-414 was Bishop of Remesia, in the ancient Roman province of Dacia, which is approximately modern Romania.

The hymn spread rapidly throughout Christendom. It is known to have been in use in the western (Latin-speaking) church from the beginning of the 6th century, being mentioned in an instruction that it be used in morning services of worship. It is cited in the Rule of St. Benedict (mid-6th century Italy). It was used especially on saints' days and also on great occasions in both church and state, such as a coronation, the consecration of a bishop or pope, or the making of a peace treaty. By the 9th century there was an old German version, and there is an

Anglo-Saxon version dating from the 10th/11th century, an old French version from the 14th century, as well as a very old version in Greek. During the 17th and 18th centuries it found its way into Russian, Icelandic, Swedish, and since then into many modern languages. The common English version is perhaps by Thomas Cranmer (mid-16th century), based on earlier translations.

The *Te Deum* in its fully developed form is constructed in three parts. The first two parts are highly theological in that they express the central convictions of the Christian faith. Hence, the hymn begins with an acknowledgement of God as Lord of all. It proceeds to cite all the classes of creatures who worship God and ends with reference to the other persons of the Holy Trinity. The second part states the central facts pertaining to Christ. This theological focus is understandable in light of the fact that Christian worship in the early centuries of the Church was centred on the Eucharist. Consequently, its chief concern is the saving work of God through Christ in all the world. The hymn ends with petition for God's salvation and aid in day-to-day life. The *Te Deum* is an outstanding example of ancient Christian hymnody.

I said at the outset that 'Holy God we praise Thy name' has deep roots in Christian history and tradition and that we would spend several minutes thinking about that fact. But why should we bother about an old liturgical piece at all? Indeed, why should we not believe those who allege that what is traditional is more likely to inhibit modern Christians in the expression of their spirituality than aid them in that activity?

The answer to such questions lies in considering how liturgical hymns actually function in the life of the worshipping community.

What are hymns for, in the liturgy? Let's begin with an analogy. As everyone knows, the stained-glass windows and other ornamentation both in great mediaeval cathedrals as well as in more modern church buildings served, in effect, as a visual Bible, catechism, and theology book for illiterate people. In the windows, in the paintings, in the carvings, folk unable to read could nevertheless be reminded of the main stories in the Bible and of the central elements of the Christian faith. We can think of hymns as having a similar function. They are, in effect, the vehicles of lay theology. Properly constructed liturgical hymns, taken together, bear witness to the constitutive elements of the Christian faith. By repetition they instill in those who sing them a practical knowledge of the main features of the tradition which makes us Christian. By repetition, too, they pass on that tradition from one generation to the next. The implication of this fact is that hymns function not only to express the worshipper's feelings of the moment (a very modern notion) but, more importantly, they serve educational and evangelistic aims as well.

Hymns often challenge or support the worshipping congregation in various ways. This is frequently accomplished through allusion and imagery. For example, someone encountering difficulty in the daily living of the faith might well take comfort in the marvellous lines:

The glorious company of the Apostles praise Thee.

The goodly fellowship of the Prophets praise Thee.

The noble army of Martyrs praise Thee.

Do we suffer for the faith? So did the martyrs - even more than we. Do we feel intimidated by vociferous opponents of the Gospel of Christ? So felt the prophets when called by circumstances to speak on behalf of justice for the poor. Do we feel obscure and not important enough to do the work of God in the world? Well, the apostles were very ordinary people, too. They were not apostles first, and then called of God on that account; they became apostles by willingness to give

human voice to what they felt was their responsibility to say about Christ. In this way good hymns present models to show us how to practice the faith we profess in word and song.

More important, a proper hymn presents us with a vocabulary, a language in terms of which to interpret ourselves in the context of the Christian faith, that vast accumulation of insight into three millennia of human experience understood as the response of finite beings to what is grasped as infinite grace. To be Christian is, in part, to learn to speak and think in a Christian way, and that means to use the language of the Church in thinking and speaking about our lives.

Good hymns supply the means for such interpretation, and also furnish models of how it is to be done. The *Te Deum*, for example, introduces the language of worship and praise, and then shows us how to use this language: it is God alone who is to be worshipped, and all creatures are to acknowledge their creaturely status. Again, in modeling for us a way of speaking about Christ, it brings us to think correctly of God's saving activity in the world and of what our response to it should be.

Language is important. A vocabulary is a set of words by which we talk about the things we want to talk about. Anyone who has been involved in teaching knows how severely a student's understanding can be crippled by inadequate vocabulary, by simply not having enough of the right words to appreciate nuances and express distinctions needed for understanding of a given subject matter. It is for this reason that introductory courses very often focus on getting students to learn new words. Simply having new words is often all that is needed to achieve new insights into what is being learned. For example, someone who does not know the nomenclature of a musical score finds it difficult to ask a significant question about something he or she does not understand. Learning the terminology yields insight.

Hymns have this role. At their best they set before us the means by which to think of ourselves in a way which invites us to become participants in the long history of human response to God. Good hymns facilitate insight.

In singing 'Holy God, we praise Thy name' we are doing the following things:

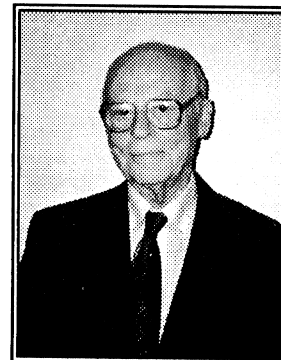
First, we are affiliating ourselves with the Gospel handed down (that is what 'tradition' means) from Apostolic - New Testament - times. Good hymns are essentially identity songs. They remind those who sing them of who they are on the world's stage. Hymns identify for us the features of the past which have made us the people we have become.

Second, we are maintaining a faith and transmitting it to a succeeding generation. The hymn includes a review of the past, but its purpose is not simply to celebrate ancient heroes and their deeds. Its purpose, rather, is to identify the hand of God at work in our history.

Finally, we are rehearsing the basis of our deepest values and shaping our aspirations to bring them into conformity with what our faith understands as God's self-revelation and saving grace.

Hymns like the *Te Deum* tell the Christian story. Their aim is not merely to inform us of the past, nor to confound us with obscure theological jargon, but to tell us who we are, here and now, tonight, taking part in this act of worship. A hymn which had its origin sixteen hundred years ago, perhaps some place north of the Danube River, was first sung in a language which most of us do not understand, has been sung from one generation to another, has echoed the Christian story in many languages, has endured through the rise and fall of great empires, ultimately comes to us and shapes our thinking, speaking, and living. It is a means of divine grace to us. Thanks be to God.

In Memoriam



*Rev. Dr. Reginald S. Dunn
1915 ~ 2000*

"One who practiced what he preached"

CHURCH'S NAME CHANGE RESULTS FROM BAPTIST STEREOTYPE

First Baptist Church in Oberlin, OH, has changed its name to Peace Community Church. The consensus vote was taken on June 11 after several months of study. The name change comes about as the church continues to challenge negative Baptist stereotypes. "The average person on the street who has had no personal experience with Baptists does not distinguish the fine points of difference between various Baptist denominations, pronouncements, and perspectives," wrote pastor Stephen Hammond in explaining the name change.

"We are a different kind of Baptist church," he said. "Baptists have a long and wonderful history of openness to new ideas, commitment to inclusive ministry, and belief that the gospel of Jesus Christ is, at least, as concerned about this world as the next. However, that is not the perception that seems to come to mind to most people these days when you say the word Baptist, or put that word in the name of your church."

The congregation narrowed a list of 28 suggested names to four finalists, then discussed each possibility in depth. "The process was good. We had six months of great discussions about this," Stephen said. "If we hadn't been able to arrive at consensus on changing the name, I think we all could have understood that as a word from God"

The church is now working on ways to reintroduce itself to the community. "We've done lots of talking and planning and dreaming and praying about how our new name can help us focus our ministry and mission," Stephen said.

Peace Community Church is affiliated with the Alliance of Baptists, American Baptists Churches USA, and the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America.

Note: This article appeared in the September 2000 issue of CONNECTIONS, newsletter of the Alliance of Baptists.

Credible Christianity

M.R.B.Lovesey

Words of sound advice came to me recently from an unlikely source. Nova Scotia Power sent me a circular in which it stated its aim was;

Keeping Up with Change, Without Changing Things that Matter.

Wise words indeed, for some like changes for change's sake! Such a policy is foolish in the extreme. I've always thought that the PC political party is well named, progressive and conservative, implying that changes in society's arrangements are often needed, but such changes must ensure that all that was good in the old regime must be kept.

Similar wise words come from the Reverend Dr. John Polkinghorne FRS of Oxford: "Science give us knowledge and this enables us to do new things and to change our environment. If that technical power is to be used rightly, we must add wisdom to knowledge so that we are able to make beneficial decisions. Not everything that can be done should be done. Religious traditions' including those of ancient Israel, are reservoirs of wise understanding and so they can still help us to make right decisions about how to act." See his Terry lectures at Yale, published under the title Belief in God in an Age of Science.

We are indebted to David Edwards, noted British Anglican theologian, for suggesting to Hugh Montefiori, another leading British Anglican theologian and a former Bishop of Birmingham, that he give us a book sketching his understanding of theology that will stand up in today's market place. The book came out in 1993, entitled Credible Christianity: The Gospel in Contemporary Society, about which Edwards wrote: "Many books about what Christians believe are either elementary or technical. This one is special.

Here a distinguished bishop of the Church of England, who is also a Bible-based theologian with a detailed knowledge of contemporary issues, sums up the writing and teaching of a lifetime. Everything in this book has passed through a mind open, honest and articulate. It is a book by a man never afraid to state something unusual if he thinks it is true." Montefiori's whole approach is summed up in a sentence he wrote on page 13: "We who live in the post-Enlightenment world cannot genuinely believe what is inherently irrational."

The Bishop accepts completely the theory of paradigm-change as popularized by Hans Küng. He also accepts the idea that the principle of authority in religion cannot be likened to a cable with only one strand. To take that position is the mistake of the Fundamentalist (Bible only), the Roman Catholic (Church only), the Modernist (Reason only), the Charismatic (Experience only). Rather we must see Authority as a cable made up of at least four strands, which we may loosely speak of as Bible, Church, Reason and Experience. Each strand in the rope must be given its voice. Only when all four strands agree can we be reasonably sure that we have got it right!

Knowing the Bishop's general theology, a modern reader may be somewhat surprised at the Bishop's commendation of the evangelistic methods of Billy Graham. Graham, he says, uses "permissible persuasion techniques" in communicating the Good News. Here perhaps he is influenced by his own experience. He was brought up a Jew and converted to Christianity. His move from one faith stream to another was not the result of evangelistic activity. He recognizes that conversions may take place in dramatic and sudden fashion, with apparently auditory and visual accompaniments, as indeed happened

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with him. Such a conversion, he admits, is no better and no worse than the gradual dawning of belief through the influence of friends, through the words of Scripture (as in the case of Luther), through worship and the sacraments (the only form of evangelism open to the Russian Orthodox Church in the USSR), or through the promptings of moral consciousness. Some people seem to need the stimulus of a Billy Graham crusade to make their initial commitment to Christian discipleship. But this is only the beginning of the Christian life - justification has to be followed by sanctification, we do well to remember!

The book finishes with an Epilogue in which the provisional nature of all theology is clearly stated. The Bishop gives his belief that the Christian Faith is ageless because it is true. "Its intellectual expression must change because thought forms alter and the presuppositions and assumptions of one age differ from those of another." Very great care must be taken to ensure that in our present age we do not lose Christianity's core beliefs and the essential faith that these contain. Nonetheless we must remember that every formulation of this faith, either made by an individual or by the whole Church, remains imperfect, incomplete, unclear, partial and fragmentary. We can never verbalize the whole truth about eternal verities. There is constant need of restatement, particularly, today at the beginning of the third millennium. Impudent, arrogant dogmatism should find no place in the thought of mature Christian believers!

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.

To:

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