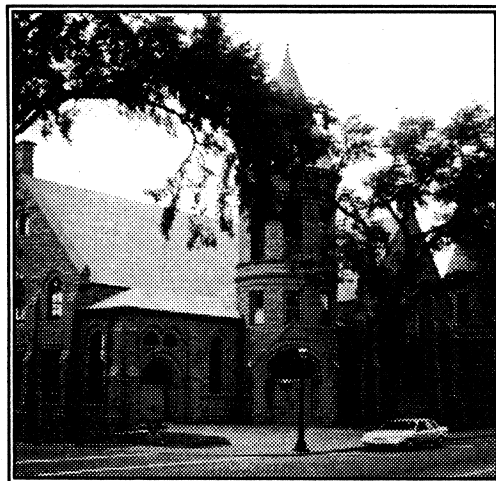


**ABF FALL ASSEMBLY**  
 JOINING HANDS ~ CONNECTING HEARTS ~  
 OVERCOMING THE RACIAL DIVIDE



**October 12th and 13th**



**First Baptist Church, Amherst, Nova Scotia**

**Friday Evening - October 12th (7:00 p.m.)**

Drama

**Saturday - October 13th (begins at 8:45 a.m.)**

Devotions

Business Meeting

Theme Speaker: **Rev. Elias Mutale**, Dartmouth, N.S.

Luncheon 12:30 p.m.

A Quarterly Publication of the

**Atlantic Baptist Fellowship**

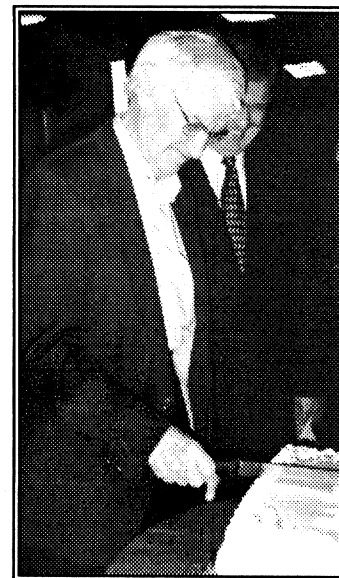
**the Bulletin**



*ABF Celebrates  
 30th Anniversary*



Above, Dorothy Lovesey and Ruth MacPherson, strong ABF supporters, enjoying the 30th Anniversary celebration in Wolfville May 4th.



Left, Gerry Harrop, longtime ABF "Friend" cuts into 30th anniversary cake during banquet at Wheelock Hall, Acadia University.



## The President's Message

John E. Boyd

(Report to ABF Spring Assembly - Abridged)

Certainly a highlight of this past year was attending as your representative the 15th Convocation of the Alliance of Baptists held in Decatur, Georgia (near Atlanta) on 20-22 April 2001. The theme for the weekend was ... *a still more excellent way* .. *Celebrating the call of Christ for men and women to live in equal partnership*. Keynote speakers included Joan Aldredge-Clanton, Author and Chaplain Coordinator for Oncology, Baylor University Medical Center, Dallas, Texas; Andrew Lester, Professor of Pastoral Theology and Pastoral Counselling, Brite Divinity School, Fort Worth, Texas; Stan Haste, Executive Director of the Alliance of Baptists; and Paula Clayton Dempsey, Chaplain, Mars Hills College and President of the Alliance of Baptists. Our meetings were held in the Oakhurst Baptist Church, which provided wonderful facilities for worship as well as for workshops on a variety of topics. This Church has been under attack for its stance in welcoming gays and lesbians into its membership and elected leadership. It has been expelled by both the Southern Baptist Convention and the Georgia Baptist Convention and the Atlanta Baptist Association is under pressure to expel Oakhurst as well.

I was delighted to be able to bring the greetings of the ABF to the Alliance during the Saturday evening service. Other visitors bringing greetings were: Chamunorwa H. Chiromo, Pastor, Emmanuel Baptist Church, Harare and President of the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe; Timothy C. Downs, Conference Minister, Southeast Conference of the United Church of Christ; and Adalberto Cuéllar, Executive Secretary, Fraternidad de Iglesias Bautistas de Cuba. Elaine Anne MacGregor, a Past President of the ABF, read scripture at the Saturday evening service.

We continue to be blessed by our relationship with the Alliance of Baptists. Stan Haste is planning to attend our Fall Assembly in Amherst and many Alliance members plan to attend the Peace Camp of the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America to be held at Acadia University 22 to 27 July 2002.

I was disappointed in not being able to attend one of the meetings of our sister organization in the BCOQ, the Gathering, this past year. However, I am hopeful that I will be able to attend their next meeting in the fall and help strengthen the connections between us.

My first year as your President has been busy and very meaningful. I believe the ABF has an important role to play in the life of our Churches and within our Convention. Over the next year I hope to continue working with the Council and the Program Committee as we plan our gatherings, strengthen our relationship with fellow Baptists in the Alliance and the Gathering, make a constructive contribution to our Convention, increase our support base and broaden our ministry to young people. Your prayers, suggestions, finances and encouragement will make the difference between an exciting future and gradual decline.

### Partners in Christ



The Alliance of Baptists



The Gathering

BCOQ

## Women's Spirituality Network

Rev. Sheila Smith and Elaine Anne MacGregor are forming a Women's Spirituality Network ("WSN") which we envision will extend to all interested Baptist women. The initial vision of the WSN is to connect Baptist women with material and people resources that foster spiritual growth. Using the image of the spider's web, we will work to form the web by first canvassing Baptist women to learn of their spiritual needs and by contacting 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, and connecting women with people and resources that assist them. It is our hope to offer Baptist women choice of avenues for developing their spirituality and an affirming community in which to do it. We want to change the search for spiritual growth from a solitary quest to one made in a supportive community and create for Baptist women, a sense of affirmation, acceptance and challenge.

Since the Fall 2000 meeting of the ABF, when the formation of the WSN was announced, we have been clarifying our vision for the WSN and making contact with interested people. In the late Fall, we contacted over 50 ordained women and women in ministry in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick to inform them about the WSN and to arrange a meeting time. We were not successful in arranging a convenient meeting time, however, we have received responses from women interested in the WSN.

In April we attended the Alliance of Baptists annual Convocation held in Decatur, Georgia. The theme for the Convocation was "A Still More Excellent Way: Celebrating the call of Christ for men and women to live in equal partnership". Our time there was full and well spent as we met new people, reconnected with friends, and expanded our view of what the WSN could become. We attended the workshops and all the scheduled events. We set up an information table on the WSN. At lunchtime, we held a meeting for people interested in the WSN during which we learned from the experiences of others.

Our time at the Alliance Convocation refreshed and renewed our spiritual batteries. We grow from the examples of courage, conviction, and ways of being witnessed among Alliance people. We learn ways of doing that expand our vision.

It is our intention to have the WSN website working by the Fall 2001. It will be a work in progress as we continue to develop it and add links and resources. We are interested in undertaking the development of a resource binder. The focus of the project will be the call of Christ for women. The resource materials will likely include articles on bible study, theological reflection, personal testimonies/reflections on the call of Christ for women, statements from Baptist and other Christian institutions, sermons and meditations and a bibliography. We will discuss with Convention and other Baptist groups across Canada whether they would be supportive of such a resource.

Rev. Sheila Smith is an ordained Baptist Minister where she pastors the congregations of Milton, Charleston and Port Medway United Baptist Churches. Sheila is a member of the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship. She is a member of the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America.

Ms. Elaine Anne MacGregor is a past President of the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship. She is an active member of First Baptist Church, Halifax and works full time as a provincial government employee.

If you are interested in the WSN or perhaps seek assistance in your spiritual journey, we want to hear from you. Please contact either Sheila (902-354-3752, [ssmith@ns.sympatico.ca](mailto:ssmith@ns.sympatico.ca)) or Elaine Anne at (902-454-7206, [macgreea@gov.ns.ca](mailto:macgreea@gov.ns.ca)) (work).

## Editorial Comment . . .

Thomas Helwys (1550-1616)

The tolerant sentiments which John Smyth had expressed were significantly developed by Thomas Helwys. Helwys expanded to a very considerable degree Smyth's plea for liberty of conscience. For Helwys' "demanded not only legal toleration but religious liberty."

His last work, "A Short Declaration of the History of Iniquity" was the first demand made in English for universal religious liberty for freedom of conscience for all.

Helwys argued that the king has no power whatsoever in the spiritual sphere and if he exercises any he invades Christ's dominion.

Since men are solely responsible to God for their own souls, it follows that the right to seek truth in one's own way is the best necessary and sacred of all rights. Even if the king should happen to subscribe to the true worship of God and by force or love should bring men into the church, it would avail them naught, for we are not able to delegate our responsibility to another man.

He was one of the first men in England to conclude that persecution even of the most serious spiritual error was "iniquitous." Every religious body must be allowed complete freedom in its own religious affairs.

Helwys' outstanding contribution lay in the fact that "he dissociated completely the magistrate from the religious life of the nation... "sweeping away the theoretical justifications supporting the persecution of heresy." <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Jordan, W. K. The Development of Religious Toleration in England. Vol. I. Cambridge, Harvard University Press, c. 1932. p274.

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## Church and Schools

During the 15th Annual Convocation of the Alliance of Baptists in Decatur, Georgia, April 20 - 22, the newspaper, The Atlanta Journal, was considering a rabbi who was "disinvited" from presenting the baccalaureate address to Walton High School graduates at the 6,000 member Mount Bethel United Methodist Church. Rabbi Steven Lebow was informed he could not speak at the church/ceremony because of his Jewish beliefs. That decision sparked a public debate about the separation of church and schools, about accommodating diversity, and about freedom of speech and religion. Walton's parent-teacher-student organization shifted the baccalaureate service from the church to the Cobb Civic Center and invited the rabbi to speak. In Canada, as well as south of the border, church-based services are conflicting with the sensibilities of an increasingly diverse population in public schools. Hopefully, community and church officials will seek to work together for the well-being of all. The words of Dr. Gordon C. Warren, former dean of divinity studies at Acadia University, seem to apply to such a situation:

"Tolerance toward those who differ with him in matters religious is a vital part of a Baptist's belief and practice."

## Marginal Notes by Grammateus Redivivus

Many leaders and followers of " the religious right " in America today are Baptists, many of them " Southern". They seem to have no idea what the slogan: "a free Church in a free State" may possibly mean. The passion for freedom produced a new kind of Church and a new kind of member, a "peculiar people" which dared to imagine a faith community wherein one could worship God and follow the Lord Jesus Christ without the authority and sponsorship of the nation.

Such a believer would not seek the power of the church to combat enemies, with the backing of the state.

Such a believer would not expect public schools to seek tax support beyond the general education funds, to promote partisan doctrines and outlook.

A true Baptist would not seek to establish his/her faith in order to seek general public support for his/her own spiritual and theological visions.

The traditional response of a Baptist to the society about him/her is one of loyalty if possible; but always tinged with skepticism. Caesar simply reeks of power, a power that seeks to act like a god, but really is no god. The worship of the world is idolatry - to most of it the answer is the prophetic "No". Our search for our own roots must be undertaken with prayerful intensity.

Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn  
And to the hole of the pit  
Whence ye are digged.  
Look unto Abraham your father,  
And unto Sarah that bare you." Isaiah 51:1-2. (KJV)

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:

Mrs. Isobel Horton, P.O. Box 586, Wolfville, N.S., B0P 1X0.

The **BULLETIN** is mailed free of charge. Donations towards cost of publication are gratefully received and should be mailed to the treasurer:

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

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Deadline for Article Submission for Fall Issue July 15, 2001

# Photo Highlights: Alliance of Baptists Decatur, Georgia - April 20 to 22



(left)  
Stan and Bette Hastey with  
daughter Lise Hastey-Shirley



(right)  
Jeanette Holt, Alliance staff member  
and Rev. Brenda Wallace, a minister  
at Oakhurst Baptist, Decatur, Georgia



ABF president John Boyd with ABF supporters  
Marilyn and Wally Wahl, Edmonton, Alberta



## Port Williams Baptist Church To Propose Amendment

During the ABF business meeting at the Spring Assembly on May 5th Hedley Hopkins, minister of the Port Williams UBC (host church for the gathering) informed those present that his church will be proposing an amendment to Article 3 #1 and Article 3 #2 of the constitution of the United Baptist Convention of the Atlantic Provinces during the Annual Assembly in August. The amendment will be to delete the phrase "...and a believer who has been baptized by immersion." As a Baptist Church with open membership the church feels this phrase violates Article 2 #3 of the constitution which reads "...while honouring the autonomy of the local church." The phrase the Port Williams UBC would like to have deleted clearly "violates our autonomy" Rev. Hopkins stated, since Port Williams UBC accepts into membership any regenerate person regardless of his or her mode of baptism. "It is our belief that we should be able to send to Convention any of our members in good standing."

After hearing Port Williams UBC intention, Nita Irvine moved, and Morris Lovesey seconded, that ABF encourage and support the Church in its proposed amendment. The motion was carried unanimously.

## The "Giving" Golf Tournament

In support of

# Canadian Baptist Ministries

Chester Golf Club

June 18, 2001 ~ 9:00 a.m.

Shotgun Start ~ Texas Scramble

\$75.00 (tax receipt for \$35.00)

### Registration

Rev. Dan Green, P.O. Box 435, Chester, Nova Scotia, B0J 1J0

or e-mail <dangreen@ns.sympatico.ca>

Cheques payable to the Chester United Baptist Church



## Bill Leonard Speaks to ADC Faculty, Pastors, and Laity

Dr. Bill J. Leonard, dean of Wake Forest Divinity School, North Carolina, was the guest speaker for the ABF Spring Assembly on Saturday, May 5, at the Port Williams UBC. On Friday, May 4th Dr. Leonard met with the faculty of ADC and ABF executive members (and the president and chaplain of Acadia University) to enlighten them about the new divinity school where the academic community of teachers and students "are ever learning, shaping, reshaping, and reviewing their work..."

Also, on Friday, Dr. Leonard spoke to interested pastors and laity re the Shape of the Ministry in the New Millennium. Using as a text Isaiah 35:1-2, his thesis was that perhaps a Divinity School can be understood as something like a desert - a wilderness - a place "where you take the flocks after the rains come". It is not a place where one can stay forever, nor is it always a "sacred" place. It is a place to come aside and cultivate Christian vocation. "Divinity school is a scary place ... It should push, stretch, enrage, exhaust, and force students into the dangerous places of Christian and human life and thought. But they will have to confront those dangers in the church, and they might as well do it before they get out there with the folks."

Perhaps.. the greatest danger in a divinity school or any "Wilderness" is confronting the presence, the question and the call of God. Transition and preparation should shape our understanding of theological education. "At the best, I hope theological education will be a safe place - a place where persons are accepted, heard, and affirmed. Good teaching not only answers our questions, it helps us formulate better ones. "You can make this, mitbar blossom, for lo, the winter is past, the rains are over and gone, flowers appear on the earth, the time for singing has come."



Bill Leonard, Dean of Wake Forest Divinity School, North Carolina and John Boyd, President ABF

## Dr. Bill Leonard Addresses ABF Assembly

Dr. Bill J. Leonard, dean of Wake Forest Divinity School, North Carolina, was the guest speaker at the ABF Spring Assembly, Saturday, May 5", at the Port Williams United Baptist Church. Theme of his address was: The Shape of the Church in the New Millennium.

Elaine Walcott, third year student in the B.Th/M.Div program at AST, and newly inducted pastor of the Bayside Baptist Church and Jeffrey White, minister of the Parrsboro pastorate, share their reflections on the Leonard Lecture.

Dr. Bill Leonard gave a historical perspective to the diversity of our Baptist tradition reminding us that we have a great precedent for celebration. He encouraged us to be proactive in our reflection of how pluralism influences us. Dr. Leonard used humor to encourage us to get over ourselves and move closer to the authentic Christian leadership that allows us to find joy in being who we are and whose we are.

Pluralism is influencing the trends and issues in religious life in every denomination. In many ways Dr. Leonard's, delivered a wake-up call to those gathered to celebrate ABF's 30th Anniversary. Baptists need to get with the, program that there are other ways of being Baptist. Let go. Let God!

We need to realize that there are more and more non-denominational people seeking spiritual shelter in places of welcome to those craving spiritual direction for their lives. Catholic spirituality centres offer retreats that are gatherings for those seeking to shed the external baggage which keeps seekers from being strengthened where and as they are in every community of faith. Dr. Leonard shared his ecumenical lens on Pentecostalism, Promise keepers, Charismatics, Anglicans, Presbyterians, and other traditions that challenged us to view the blessing of inter-faith dialogue as gift to the realization of hospitable traditionalism. To experience the Joy in opening that gift means we must be intentional about reconnecting to the truth that as Baptists we are a Post-Reformation people who began at both ends of the spectrum with an awareness of ourselves as spirit - filled creatures in a constant state of recreation.

Dr. Leonard stated that denominationalism is more than ever just one of many options for Christians. Because of this, Baptists must be intentional about their (our) identity if we want to pass it on.

Elaine Walcott

From my present rural church experience, the issue of denominations or not is very significant. New young "seeking" people are not denominational, and some of the "old faithful" recognize that our little 100+ year-old churches will not be able to stay open forever.

But it seems to me that few of the establishment are really willing to give up their affiliation and buildings and cemeteries.

Jeffrey White

# The Spiritual Pilgrimage of Jane Goodall

M.R.B.Lovesey

I have just finished reading a book which I warmly commend to all readers of the Bulletin of the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship. I am quite sure it will give them much pleasure and profit. It is entitled Reason for Hope: A Spiritual Journey (p.b., Warner Books, 2000), by Jane Goodall.

The basic facts of the author's life are very widely known, since she is a world-famous celebrity, the author of perhaps the best book ever written on animal behaviour (Through a Window: My Thirty Years with the Chimpanzees of Gombe, 1990). Born 1934 in London England to a middle-class family, she trained as a secretary. Invited by a friend to visit Kenya she sailed to East Africa in 1957, where she worked as a secretarial assistant to Louis Leakey, the famous scientist and expert on the early history of mankind. Practical work, involving the recovery of fossils in the Olduvai Gorge, made it clear to Leakey that Jane was the ideal person to study the habits of chimpanzees in the wild, a project he thought might take at least a decade. So, along with her mother, who stayed with her for the first few months, she went to Gombe, Tanzania, on the eastern shore of Lake Tanganyika, a dozen miles north of Kigoma, in 1960 and began her life work. She made important discoveries about the chimpanzees, the nearest of the primates to homo sapiens, and the lessons they provided for understanding human evolution. Her work was rewarded with the Ph.D. of Cambridge University and the C.B.E. conferred on her by Queen Elizabeth. Her first marriage to Hugo van Lawick, photographer and film-maker (1964-74), ended in divorce. A much loved son Hugo, nicknamed "Grub," was born in 1967. Her second marriage to Derek Bryceson, agriculturalist and Tanzanian politician, of short duration, ended in 1980 with Derek's death from cancer of the colon. Some fifteen years after that stressful experience she wrote Reason for Hope: she was then 65 years of age.

Due to the fact that, as Jane wrote "I never studied religion formally," her religious experience was written out with the assistance of Phillip Berman, who helped her with philosophical expression. The degree and nature of such help is recognized in a note at the end of the book. She learned much about the Christian faith from her grandmother (known in the family as Danny, since the infant Jane could not pronounce Granny) the wife of a Congregational minister; and from a much-loved pastor, the Reverend Dr. Trevor Davies, of the Richmond Hill Congregational Church. Jane recalls that at fifteen she "fell madly in love with him!" As a young person "religion was never thrust down her throat," but her faith in God was real and genuine. It sustained her while studying for the Ph.D. of Cambridge University where most members of the zoology department were atheist; and later when she had to grapple with doubts caused by the mystery of death. Her grandmother's oft-repeated favourite text was "As thy days, so shall thy strength be (Deuteronomy 33.25 KJV)." That text helped Jane through the hardest times of her life. It is evident that her theology is based mainly on her religious experience - she never experienced the pleasures and pains of a B.D. course!

Dr. Goodall explains that her belief in God has been helped and supported by mystical experiences. One such occurred in the spring of 1974 while visiting Notre Dame cathedral in Paris. Surrounded by the glorious architecture and the brilliant colour from the stained-glass windows she suddenly heard the organ beginning Bach's Toccata and Fugue in D Minor. The sound filled the vast spaces of the huge building. She felt exalted in spirit, "the closest," she says, "I have ever come to experiencing ecstasy, the ecstasy of the mystic . . . So I must believe in a guiding power in the universe - in other words I must believe in God."

Another vividly recalled mystic experience came after her return to Gombe, tired out after a strenuous visit abroad in search of funds for the Jane Goodall Institute. Alone, among her trees and chimpanzees, she felt exalted in spirit. "Lost in awe at the beauty around me, I must have slipped into a state of heightened awareness . . . self was utterly absent." Although not visited by angels, that characterize the visions of the great saints and mystics, she felt her experience was a true mystic happening. She writes: "The forest and the spiritual power that was so real in it, had given me the 'peace that passeth understanding.'"

One interesting anecdote related in the book illustrates very well the sensitive quality of our author. It tells of a conversation she had with a youthful bell-hop in a New York hotel. He had asked her advice about the right way to understand the relationship of evolution and religion. Brought up in the American fundamentalist tradition the young man believed Evolutionists taught that mankind is descended from monkeys. Jane disabused his mind of that, pointing out that she, as an evolutionist, believed in God and that evolutionists teach that both mankind and monkeys were descended from a common ancestor in the far distant past. This distinguished scientist tried to help a young man to understand better the relationship of science and religion. "When we finally parted his eyes were clear and untroubled, and he was smiling . . ."

Fully conscious of man's inhumanity to man and the rest of the creation, and of the problems currently facing planet earth, such as nuclear war, the destruction of the environment and over-population, Dr. Goodall is nevertheless cautiously optimistic about the future of the individual, human society and the natural creation. Her reasons for hope are four-fold: 1) the human brain, 2) the resilience of nature, 3) the energy and enthusiasm that is found, or can be kindled, among young people worldwide, 4) the indomitable human spirit. As a reviewer wrote: "Goodall is one of the few to tell us there is, indeed, reason for hope."

*ABF Celebrates  
30th Anniversary*



Attending the ABF Spring Assembly at Port Williams United Baptist Church, Katherine MacPherson and Ed Colquhoun



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# Friends of the ABF

*I dare not tell you that I cannot lay hold of that salvation which you preach, lest I should be guilty of lying against the Spirit of God; but indeed, brother, I sometimes fear I shall never lay hold of it.*

It was in the first two decades of the nineteenth century that Montgomery established his reputation as a poet. In the early 1800s Napoleon abolished local governments in the Swiss cantons. In January 1809 Montgomery's six-part poem "The Wanderer of Switzerland" was published. The five hundred copies were sold in a matter of weeks. Later in the same year his poem "The West Indies" appeared, celebrating the legislation abolishing the slave trade. There followed the ten canto poem "The World Before the Flood," and literally dozens of smaller compositions.

Montgomery's social concerns began to find full expression. The *Iris* had initially sold lottery tickets, as the *Register* had done, but Montgomery discontinued the sale and in 1816 ceased to carry any advertisements of the lottery. In 1807 Montgomery gave his support to a movement to improve the lot of chimney sweeps' boys. For more than thirty years he contributed to and attended an annual Easter Monday dinner for the boys.

He was a supporter of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts; the Bible and Tract Society; the London Missionary Society; the Sunday School movement; and the British and Foreign Bible Society.

In 1814 Montgomery wrote to Fulneck to seek re-admission to the fellowship. He was warmly welcomed and celebrated the event with a poem that included the following lines with their haunting echo of the biblical poem in Ruth 1:16-17

*Lonely I no longer roam,  
Like the cloud, the wind, the wave;  
Where you dwell shall be my home,  
Where you die shall be my grave.  
Mine the God whom you adore;  
Your Redeemer shall be mine;  
Earth can fill my heart no more  
Every idol I resign.*

Montgomery was a meticulous and voluminous correspondent; many of his letters are extant. He was regularly in touch with Carlyle, Coleridge, Southey, Tennyson, Wordsworth and other major poets, as well as with a host of other friends. However, from this vast literature, marking my respect for the names of Rushton and Cann in connection with missionary work in India, I will report only one item of correspondence. A botanist living near Sheffield (presumably a Baptist!) sent a parcel containing various English seeds to William Carey, the pioneer Baptist missionary to India. The parcel included a separate packet of English daisy seeds. Carey, himself a keen botanist, wrote to acknowledge receipt of the seeds and his letter was shown to Montgomery. It is thanks to Montgomery that we know that Carey wrote:

*I know not that I ever enjoyed, since leaving Europe, a simple pleasure so exquisite as the sight of this English daisy afforded me; not having seen one for upwards of thirty years, and never expecting to see one again.*

Montgomery memorialized Carey's pleasure in a little six-verse poem entitled "The Daisy in India" in which each verse begins "Thrice welcome, little English flower."

#### Editor's Note:

**This is part one of James R. C. Perkin's Lecture delivered at the Rushton Memorial Lecture on March 31, 2001. Part two will be published in the Fall edition of the ABF Bulletin.**

### 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.



Attending Vin Rushton's Memorial Luncheon at the Acadia University chapel on March 31st.

Robert, son and Heather, granddaughter (back)

Jean Rushton (center)

Arlene Hood, niece and Ula Noiles, sister (front)

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 \_\_\_\_\_

# JAMES MONTGOMERY: *The Christian Poet*

The Rushton Memorial Lecture - 31 March 2001

James R. C. Perkin

Part one

I would like to offer you some account of the life and work of James Montgomery, whose profession was publishing, whose avocation was poetry, whose guiding passion was social justice, and whose hymns have enriched Christian worship for almost two hundred years.

John and Mary Montgomery (James' parents) were Irish and members of the Moravian Fellowship at Grace Hill, not far from Ballymena in the County of Antrim in the north-eastern corner of what is now Northern Ireland. In passing, we might note that the Moravians had their formal beginning in the 1720s in Germany, where they lived under the patronage of Nikolaus von Zinzendorf. The group emphasized individual piety and fellowship rather than creeds and theology, and was strongly evangelical in outlook. From 1732 the Moravians worked in the West Indies, Greenland, South Africa and Labrador. In 1738 John Wesley visited the Moravian community near Dresden and was deeply influenced by his experience there.

John and Mary Montgomery were sent from Grace Hill as missionaries to Irvine, a seaport in Ayrshire, in the south-western quadrant of Scotland. In Irvine four children were born: the firstborn, Mary, who lived for only eighteen months; James, the focus of our study; and two younger brothers, Robert and Ignatius. James was born on 4 November 1771.

Before James was four his parents were recalled to Ireland, although only two years later John took the six year-old James to a Moravian school at Fulneck, near Leeds in Yorkshire. This was a big adjustment for a small boy, but the horror-stories about eighteenth-century schools did not apply to Fulneck. Studies were rigorous, but there was a home-like atmosphere in which the children were secure.

There was a Christian environment, work in the gardens and fields, and considerable freedom for the students. But James Montgomery was not really comfortable there; many years later one of his biographers was to observe

*Too little account was taken of the peculiar tastes and capacities of individual minds. The imagination of the pupils was in some danger of being treated rather as part of their depravity, than as a gift of God ...*

from the Introduction to *Poetical Works of James Montgomery*, by the Reverend Dr A. Thomson of Edinburgh, 1868.

Two important things happened to Montgomery during his years at Fulneck. The first was that one of the masters used to read poetry to his classes and James was fascinated; he began to read poetry and to write verse himself. The second was that the staff noticed that he would never conform to the school's requirements. Instead of trying to coerce him into conformity, the school simply acknowledged that he was not destined to become a Moravian pastor and found him a job with a shop keeper in a nearby village, where he carried out his responsibilities and continued to write poetry.

In 1789, at the age of eighteen, Montgomery left for London, with three shillings and sixpence and a collection of his poems. In London he met a publisher who liked the poems, but not enough to publish them, so he made his way back to Yorkshire, arriving there in time to see an advertisement for an assistant placed by the editor of the *Sheffield Register*, a weekly newspaper. Montgomery applied and was successful and so began his lifelong work. The editor was Joseph Gales, a radical thinker and speaker who enjoyed considerable support among

the citizens of Sheffield, especially the industrial workers. These were turbulent times and radical thinking was controversial, if not downright dangerous. The French Revolution, with its bloodshed and social upheaval, was feared by English authorities, although many aspects of it were admired by a majority of the working classes, who believed that a parallel upheaval in England was the only way in which to improve their lot.

In 1794 Gales learned that he was suspected of encouraging sedition and his friends urged him to flee. He took their advice, but not before preparing a final editorial for the *Register* that included the scathing comment "To be accused is now to be guilty." He fled to the Continent and thence to America. With the help of a wealthy supporter Montgomery took over the newspaper, renamed it the *Iris*, and began his duties as editor and publisher. He was not yet twenty-three. Gales' three sisters invited him to live with them and his future might have seemed assured, but the political situation provided an unwelcome surprise. Within weeks of taking over the printing business Montgomery agreed to print a ballad for an itinerant singer. The song had been written several years before and Montgomery saw no harm in printing it. But the song had been written when France was fighting Austria and English sentiment was with the French; now France and England were at war and any reference to a French victory was highly sensitive. Montgomery was charged with printing seditious libel and attention focused on the final verse of the ballad:

*Europe's fate on the contest's decision depends; Most important its issue will be, For should France be subdued, Europe's liberty ends If she triumphs, the world will be free.*

So in January 1795 the young editor appeared at the Doncaster sessions and heard the serious charge:

*James Montgomery, printer, being a wicked, malicious, seditious, and evil disposed person, and well knowing the premises ... and unlawfully and wickedly to seduce and encourage his said Majesty's subjects to resist and oppose his said Majesty's government, and the said war ...*

Montgomery was fined £20 and sentenced to three months imprisonment in York Castle. Later in the same year (1795) there was a disturbance in Sheffield and the *Iris* reported it, objecting to the severity of the military response. Clearly the authorities were intent on teaching this young editor a lesson. He was accused of publishing a "gross misrepresentation of all that happened," was fined £30, sentenced to six months in York Castle, required to post a £200 personal bond and to obtain two additional sureties of £50. Once again a group of friends came to the rescue and kept the presses running during the editor's absence.

Initially, Montgomery was able to joke about the sentence, saying that he was obviously safer in the Castle than he would be at home, but on release he needed time to recuperate before returning to the editor's chair in August 1796. While in prison, Montgomery, as one would expect, described his experiences in verse. The several poems he wrote are collected under the title "Prison Amusements"; one is called "The Pleasures of Imprisonment."

The publicity attending Montgomery's editorial policies did not deter him from involvement in many social causes. In 1798 the Sheffield General Infirmary was opened. Throughout the controversy surrounding its establishment the *Iris* had carried opinions for and against the hospital, although Montgomery himself was a strong supporter. During this time he felt a sense of religious isolation and lost some of his earlier beliefs, although never to the point of ceasing to believe in God. There being no Moravian church in Sheffield, he worshipped either with the Unitarians or the Methodists. He stated his uncertainties to his brother, Ignatius, who by this time was ordained and a teacher at Fulneck.