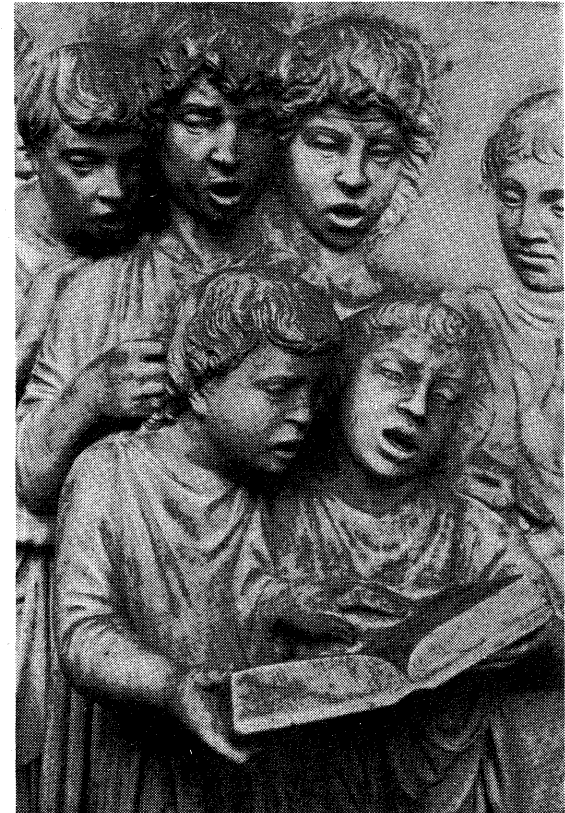


BULLETIN

of the
Atlantic Baptist Fellowship
December 1990



*As Joseph was a-walking he heard an angel sing,
"This night shall be born our heavenly King."*

SPRING ASSEMBLY 1991

31 May-1 June, 1991

First United Baptist Church, Sydney, N.S.

Theme: "Music and Hymnody"

Special Speakers: David MacDonald, David & Nancy Carle

Full Details in next Edition of the Bulletin



THE OFFICERS OF THE ABF ARE:

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THE OBJECTIVES OF THE ATLANTIC BAPTIST FELLOWSHIP (approved by the Spring Session, Wolfville, June 14-15, 1985)

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

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

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

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

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

"I find the great thing in this world is not so much where we stand, as in what direction we are moving We must sail sometimes with the wind and sometimes against it, — but we must sail, and not drift, nor lie at anchor."

— Oliver Wendell Holmes, 1809-94

EDITORIAL COMMENT

This December number of our *Bulletin* brings Christmas and New Year greetings to all our readers. May all the joys of the festive season be yours! And, while making New Year resolutions, don't forget to determine that in 1991 to be an even more loyal supporter of the objectives of the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship than you have ever been in the past.

Christmas is a time for joy, rejoicing and singing at the birth of Jesus, our Lord and Saviour. Thus we print on our cover page a picture of a mural now found in a museum in Florence, Italy, in which marble-throated choristers pour out their praise to the Eternal. The choir gallery carving was crafted by Luca Della Robbia, c. A.D. 1435. We can imagine them singing the words of the charming, anonymous Christmas carol the first two lines of which are printed below the picture. A few more of the following lines might be added here:

He neither shall be born in housen nor in hall,
 Nor in the place of Paradise, but in an ox's stall.
 He neither shall be clothed in purple nor in pall,
 But all in fair linen, as were babies all:
 He neither shall be rocked in silver, nor in gold,
 But in a wooden cradle that rocks on the mould, etc.

Since Dr. Bruce Matthews and your editor are both alumni of Mansfield College, Oxford, it gives your editor peculiar pleasure to print an article by the C.B. Lumsden Professor and Head of the Department of Religious Studies, Acadia University, in which he explains the three approaches contemporary Christian thinkers detect in the modern Christian approach to non-Christian religions: the exclusivist, the inclusivist and the pluralist approaches. Should any reader wish to pursue this matter further he could do no better than read, study and reflect upon a book referred to by Dr. Matthews in his article, namely, *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: Toward a Pluralistic Theology of Religions* (John Hick and Paul F. Knitter, editors: Maryknoll, New York; Orbis Books, 1987). This reports an important conference, on "the urgency and complexity of exploring genuinely new Christian understandings of other religions and of Christianity in the light of other faiths," that met at the Claremont Graduate School, Claremont, California, 7-8 March 1986. It was attended by many American theologians, such as David Tracy, Leonard Swidler, Schubert Ogden, Paul Knitter, John Hick, Langdon Gilkey, Wilfred Cantwell Smith, Tom Driver and Rosemary Radford Ruether.

This number reports on the 1990 ABF Fall Assembly which dealt with the theme of foreign missions. Abstracts of the two lectures, by Dr. Miriam Ross and the Reverend Hedley Hopkins, will be found below on pages 6-9.

Our ABF *Bulletin* is dedicated to ". . . all those who have not been put off from making a thorough enquiry into the truth of religious tradition by the protests of the pious or by a ban on entertaining certain thoughts," as Gerd Theissen, professor of New Testament at the University of Heidelberg, says in his thought-provoking book, *On Having a Critical Faith* (SCM Press, 1979, p.11). Paul F. Knitter writes, in *No Other Name?* (Maryknoll, New York; Orbis Books, 1985, p.34): "Contemporary nationalism and fundamentalism can perhaps be understood as a cultural 'last stand,' as a final resistance to the death of the old world of divided nations, as a reluctance to give way to the difficult birth of a new world order, a global village. Every new stage in world history has been preceded by a last-ditch resurgence of the old."

ABF FALL ASSEMBLY 1990

Some fifty to sixty persons took part in the Fall Assembly of the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship, which was hosted by the First United Baptist Church, Truro, Nova Scotia, and held 28-29 September 1990. The theme was "The Question of Missions," which was opened up by lectures given by Dr. Miriam Ross, Associate Professor of Christian Missions and Social Issues, Acadia Divinity College, and the Reverend Hedley H. Hopkins, pastor of the Port Williams United Baptist Church.

FRIDAY EVENING

After opening devotions had been conducted by the Reverend Dewis Rector, pastor of the Westbrook and Southampton United Baptist churches, Nova Scotia, the participants in the Assembly were welcomed by the ABF president and the Reverend Dr. Malcolm Harlow, the pastor of the host church. Then Dr. Miriam Ross gave her lecture entitled, "A Summary of the World Mission of the Church Today." This was followed by the service of Holy Communion, conducted by the minister and deacons of the church. The evening's exercises were rounded off by a happy time of fellowship and refreshments.

SATURDAY MORNING

Opening devotions were conducted by the Reverend Brent Robertson, pastor of the Immanuel United Baptist Church, Truro, Nova Scotia; after which the Reverend Hedley Hopkins gave his lecture, "The Demand of Truth." Following mid-morning coffee break, a stimulating discussion on the theme of the Assembly was held with many taking part. This was sparked by two very good responses to the lectures given by Dr. Forrest C. Bent, of the Department of Biology, Acadia University, and the Reverend Vincent Rushton, CBOMB retired. Dr. Bent strongly emphasized the need of the Assembly to pay serious and critical attention to the matters of the environment and the population explosion in any thought about the church and the globalization of the world today. Vince Rushton, who served many years as a CBOMB missionary in India, said he would commend the missionary policies current in his day, policies that strongly included the ecumenical dimension.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON

Strengthened by midday lunch, prepared and served by the ladies of the church, the conferees settled down to a serious consideration of the business of the Fellowship. This began at 1.15 p.m. and concluded about 3.00 p.m.

Minutes and financial reports were dealt with and reports were given by the "Friends" secretary, the Fellowship's public relations man, the editor of the *Bulletin*, the Fellowship's representative to the Atlantic Ecumenical Council, *et al.*

The chair of the planning committee reported that the Spring 1991 Assembly will be held 31 May to 1 June in the Sydney United Baptist Church. Under the theme "Music and Hymnody," David MacDonald will lecture on "Music and Worship," and David and Nancy Carle will lecture on "Towards a New Hymnbook." The Fall 1991 Assembly will be held in the First United Baptist Church, Halifax, Nova Scotia, when the twentieth anniversary of the formation of the Fellowship will be celebrated. It is hoped that the special speaker will be the Reverend Dr. Stan Hastey, Executive Director of the Southern Baptist Alliance. Among topics under consideration for the 1992 Assemblies are "Youth and the Church" and "Theological Education among Canadian Baptists."

The editor of the *Bulletin* said that the deadline for material for the May 1991 issue is Friday, 15 March 1991.

SCENES FROM THE FALL ASSEMBLY 1990

Photographs by Vincent Rushton



A Happy Group!

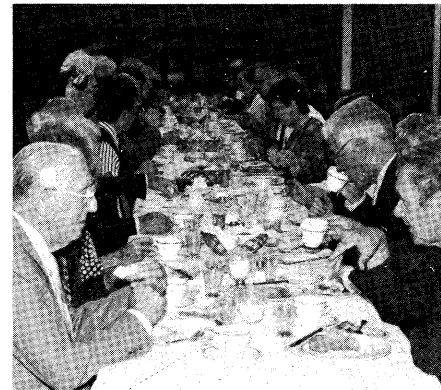


Table Fellowship



*The Minister and Deacons of the Host Church conduct Holy Communion
l to r: Earl Murray, Shirley Hiltz, Dr. Malcolm Harlow, Bruce Martin,
Dale Cunningham, Stuart Allaby*

A SUMMARY OF THE WORLD MISSION OF THE CHURCH TODAY

by H. Miriam Ross

Globalization is a word that we hear with increasing frequency. It means a concern for the needs and well-being of other nations and peoples on this globe and for the effects of actions of one nation or one people upon all those who live in this world. Businessmen, theologians, missiologists frequently use the idea of globalization. I want to use the term as I attempt to give a wide picture of world trends in church and mission and of their implications for our future.



Miriam Ross

Globalization may be a new word in our vocabulary but the idea is evident throughout Scripture. For instance: in the Old Testament we read of God's concern for people outside Israel and we can recall the promise to Abraham that "in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed," and in the New Testament we see Jesus dealing with people outside the Jewish tradition and after his resurrection promising power to the Church to witness to him throughout the world.

I. WORLD TRENDS

Study of the *economic conditions* prevailing in the world shows a dangerous inequality in the distribution of the world's wealth. Of the five billion persons now living, one billion live in absolute poverty. Hunger and starvation abounds. Such appalling conditions in Third World countries is often attributed to the systematic exploitation of their peoples and their resources by the Western industrialized societies. Compounding the complex economic problems facing the modern world are the recent shifts in economic power (e.g. from the North Atlantic to the Pacific, from the United States to Japan).

The *political state* of the world also poses immense problems for humanity to solve. After World War II the world witnessed the "Cold War" between the two major power blocks U.S. and Russia but these are now disintegrating and smaller nations and groups are agitating for their place in the sun. Ethnic nationalist movements are multiplying, led often by student power. The spread of television is encouraging groups to take militant action for what they consider to be their "rights." The migration of peoples is turning many countries towards ethnic and religious pluralism. Resistance to change often promotes militaristic dictatorship with its violence, suppression of human rights and its recourse to torture in its prisons.

Great *social changes* are under weigh in the world. Too rapid urbanization brings its immense problems. How are people to live in the megalopolis, with scientific technology and automation bringing more and more unemployment? The population explosion in the Third World is straining the world's food production to its breaking point. Damaged people are seeking relief in drugs and this leads to family breakdown and the abuse of women and children.

Such, in rough outline, is the world in which the Church has to live and to which it must bear its witness. The tragedy is that too often the Church

is unaware of the economic, political and social trends, is insensitive to them and tries to hide from the harsh realities in the world outside her walls.

II. CHURCH/MISSION TRENDS

We live in a time of *increasing secularization*, in a materialistic culture, in which God is often treated as non-existent or irrelevant. We behave as though money and technology can solve all the world's problems. How has this context affected the Church and its Mission?

We note that between 1980 and 1985, the *centre of gravity of Christianity has shifted* from the North to the South. In 1800, 99% of evangelical Christians were found in the West; but by 1985, only 34% lived there, 66% lived in Third World countries. Canada is no longer considered Christian.

This century has witnessed the *resurgence of Non-Christian Religions* that many at the beginning of the century thought were on the way out. Islam particularly has increased in numbers, fuelled no doubt by Middle East Oil. Some think that by A.D.2100 the adherents of Islam will outnumber Christians.

The last quarter century has seen *great changes in Church/Mission relationships*. Many missions have moved from paternalism to partnership and finally to servanthood. With the breakup of colonialism after World War II there came a demand for the transfer of administrative authority in the Church to national leaders. The call for a moratorium on foreign missionaries arose.

There has been a *change in mission personnel*. There are fewer long-term missionaries now; many are on short career terms, often in response to stages in their own family life. But there are increasing numbers now of volunteers, tent-makers and bivocational missionaries.

Recent times have seen a *growth in Third World Christian missionary forces*; perhaps there will be as many as 100,000 by the year A.D.2000. Some argue that instead of Canada and the United States sending out their own nationals they should be sending out Third World missionaries who are more effective.

The *growth of Pentecostals and Charismatics* in Third World countries has been phenomenal, e.g. the Full Gospel Central Church in Seoul, Korea, has over 500,000 members. However along with the drive to obtain "decisions for Christ" there is little concern or planning for follow-up, discipleship, or helping new believers towards mature Christian faith.

Recently there has arisen a call from the Third World for a non-Western Christian Theology that addresses such Third World issues as relation to ancestors, witchcraft, magic, polygamy, caste, and the like.

The World Council of Churches has been especially concerned with issues of *peace, justice and the environment*. Feminists have made the Church aware of patriarchal structures and language that discriminate against women.

III. IMPLICATIONS

First, we might examine our institutions to see if they are appropriate to present conditions. This might lead to significant changes being made.

Second, we must train Christian workers more adequately to serve in urban areas, since so many of them come from rural backgrounds.

Third, To evangelism we must add nurture. Believers must be trained to be witnesses in their personal world and in their work world.

Fourth, we must learn to present the Christian faith to the adherents of non-Christian religions in a way that will merit their consideration.

Fifth, we must develop Third World theologies.

Sixth, Christians must be nurtured so that they can make a contribution to the problems the Church faces in the modern "global village."

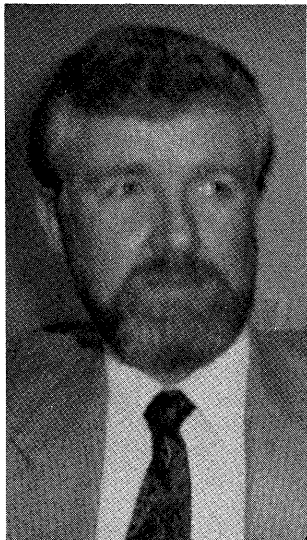
THE DEMAND OF TRUTH

by Hedley H. Hopkins

I believe that at the heart of the question of missions is the question of truth. Is there any Truth that speaks to the whole of creation? that is applicable right across the board? The answer is "Yes." It is the truth of the Creator of the whole of creation. It is God's truth.

I. ON MATTERS PHILOSOPHICAL

We believe this in reference to scientific truth. Here, the scientist, as a subject, observes nature, which he has objectified for the purposes of study. He develops hypotheses and seeks to "prove" them about the object. When



Hedley Hopkins

his conclusion is "proven" it is regarded as universally applicable. This subject-on-object way of finding universal truth can be either inductive, i.e. going from particular facts or individual cases to a general conclusion; or deductive, i.e. the opposite, going from a known principle to an unknown, from the general to the specific, from a premise to a logical conclusion. But there is another way of knowing, called by the term "revelation." In this method both observer and observed are subjects. There is no attempt to make an object out of the observed subject. Instead the observer listens and hears the self-revelation of the other. These "other" subjects can be people, animals, or even plants, which have the same DNA and evolutionary journey behind them that we have, and, as well, the very creation itself.

When we hear reality in this way we are on holy ground, because we are observing the nature of things in their life centers. We

discover that we ourselves are inextricably bound up with them. We see they are our kin. And as we gaze subject at subject, in this mindful way we are drawn to the source of their being and ours, God the creator. The question of missions is rooted and grounded in the truth of this doctrine of God's creation of all peoples and things (see Psalm 24.1-2).

The Subject of all subjects then is God. When the divine voice is heard, we are hearing the authentic voice of universal truth revealed to us. This One speaks on all issues with authority everywhere. He is Truth talking in a pluralistic society. Indeed, along with its offspring, relativism and individualism, pluralism must not be allowed to quench the conviction that we have heard the Creator God revealing his will to us and that we must obey him now. The Creator God is everywhere. He must not be thought of as living in a remote, fixed land called Heaven, from which he has sent a revealed theology with its web of overbelief. As Emil Brunner states: "Protestant theology has taken over the prejudiced view that revelation is revealed theology, and that theology itself is therefore a 'revealed,' that is a 'sacred,' science (*Revelation and Reason*, p.391)." This has frozen God in his tracks with nothing more to say!

We need to perceive, with Ezekiel, a dynamic, mobile, alive God, who is not static and locatable in the rear of life. He is powerfully out there, ahead of us in all the events that fill the news media and make history today. If we have to locate him somewhere he is not primarily in religious institutions and buildings; he is not enshrined in creeds and "final"

theologies. He is the market place of life. He is the Beyond in our midst. He is the one, the Church confesses, whose voice has been heard with perfect authenticity in the life of Jesus of Nazareth. As Brunner says: "This is not an impersonal, objective 'it' truth, but a 'Thou' truth. In the Event of revelation, in the Person of Christ, the divine Thou addresses me, in love (op.cit.,p.370)."

This "Thou" reveals himself to me, made in his image. He reveals to me the meaning of my life and his will for it. And when I listen, when I am obedient, I find myself nudged out in mission. He does not reveal a generalized theology but rather very specific guidance and encouragement for each day. Mission results from the demand of truth revealed by God.

II. THREE COROLLARIES

It follows from the above that: first, the Creator God who has revealed himself to me wants also to reveal himself to all my fellow human beings, male and female. Second, the Creator God reveals himself to me through his entire creation, i.e. other persons, cultures, animals, and the whole sacramental universe. He may speak to me through my enemy or my competitor, even through other religions. Third, to spurn the message of this God, whose love for me is supremely shown in Jesus Christ, is to flee to lies and untruth.

III. THE BIBLICAL WITNESS

My openness to God makes me a missionary because he is a missionary God. The biblical evidence for this can be seen in such passages as Isaiah 42.5-7; 49.5f.; Matthew 10.19 f.; 28.18-20; John 20.21f.; Acts 2.4; 10.45f.; 19.6; 1 Corinthians 14.1,3. These passages sketch the divine pattern: people are filled with the Presence of the Living God and by the energy of the Spirit are sent out to others in proclamation and service. The constraints of truth compels them; they act in love and do not try to browbeat people with a so-called revealed theology. The motivation to mission is Spirit given. How different from outreach based on corporation models of growth goals! We seek to establish the Kingdom of God on earth, not a religious empire.

IV. PERSONAL EXPERIENCE: AN EXAMPLE OF THE ABOVE DYNAMIC

I depend greatly on the prayers of others to sustain me in my focus on the Creator God who has revealed himself perfectly in Jesus Christ and who continually reveals himself to me through the Holy Spirit.

My parents and extended family taught me a deep reverence for life. They told me God had created all that was around me, and that his love for me is shown in Jesus, who died on the cross. I was taught to be good, to be guided by my conscience, which for me was the voice of God. While at university the death of a friend and the study of historical geology made me understand something of the immensity of time and the frailty of my life. This drove me to a serious search for the meaning of my life and ultimately to a full surrender to Jesus Christ as Lord. I also discovered that it was through my heart, not my head, that God usually spoke to me. However, I soon learnt that the promptings of my heart had to be evaluated by the Bible as interpreted by the best wisdom of the Church. I had to come to terms with the Bible. I discovered that God has not left us to go by sight by ferreting out "truth" from an infallible book. Instead we are called to go by the secure road of faith in the personally present and risen Christ — we are to walk by the Spirit (Galatians 5.16,25). The tragedy is we have preferred a sacred theology and a perfect book to the arduous but rewarding road of faith-walking.

My early understandings were tested and honed by hard experience in the East Wolfville pastorate, the Bolivian Mission and pastorates in N.S.

**Friends
of the
Atlantic Baptist
Fellowship**

FRIENDS are sympathetic to the aims of the ABF, 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.

FRIENDS undertake:

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

Please cut off along this line
and mail to:

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

Please enrol me as a FRIEND:

Name and title

Address

Date Tel.

Subscription

**FRIENDS OF THE
ABF — UPDATE**

by Dorothy M. Lovesey

At the time of writing this to you the membership in our "Friends" organization stands at 155. Since we began in June 1988, 160 individual persons have joined us but regretfully of these we have lost five by death.

Most of our "Friends" have paid their annual subscriptions of \$10.00 minimum; indeed 91% have done so, an excellent and very gratifying result since it encourages us to believe that what we are doing is appreciated by our membership. We do hope the remaining 9% will mail in their cheques before the end of the year.

We are much encouraged too by occasional comments "Friends" make to us in letters. Here is one that brightened the day it was received: "Other than the Church the ABF is the most important organization I've ever belonged to!"

Perhaps you are not aware that we do not have "family" memberships. For us, living in these days that emphasize the equality of the sexes, husband and wife make two persons, not one; so we hope both spouses in a family will join us, each paying the \$10.00 minimum annual dues. We ought perhaps to add that it is the individual's total commitment to all the aims of the Fellowship that we covet, rather than just his financial support.

Although many agree whole-heartedly with the objectives of the ABF, some of these do not see the importance of becoming a "Friend," that is, of becoming a "card-carrying" supporter. We trust you are not of this number. If you are, we pray you will see the urgency of our task and thus make a serious commitment to the ABF by signing on as a "Friend." The membership goal for 1990 is 200 by December 31st. Please help us to reach this goal.

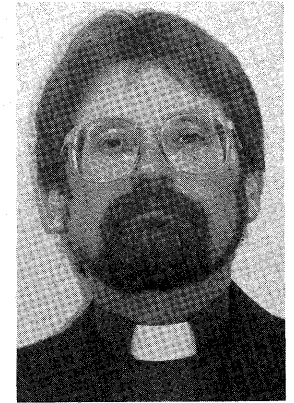
PLEASE JOIN US —
WE NEED YOU

**ATLANTIC UNITED BAPTIST CONVENTION
1990**

A PERSONAL REPORT

by Byron D. Corkum

Each year, many of our churches are finding it increasingly more difficult to find people who are interested in serving as delegates to the Convention Assembly. The Council and Convention staff are to be commended for trying to make the 1990 Convention more appealing. A wide range of activities and programmes were offered to attract the interest of delegates. It will be interesting to see the comments that are evoked by the changes, in particular the addition of the workshops and the transposing of the worship service on Sunday morning to Saturday.



Byron Corkum

As a whole the Convention meetings ran smoothly. The singing was especially good this year, although the theology of some of the hymns could do with a little revision. The great value of the Convention, it seems to me, lies not so much in the meetings as the opportunities it gives to meet one's friends, colleagues and fellow Baptists. The business meetings, in most cases, involve house-keeping items, confirming what Council has undertaken. Realistically, decision-making and future planning will lie largely in the hands of the Council, which, if it is true to its calling, will in its goals and proposals reflect the thinking and needs of the local churches. The Assembly does, however, have the opportunity for some input into the final decision-making process.

I was disturbed by this year's meetings, in that I did not feel we touched on issues that would truly affect the people in the pews and in the world. It seems that we as Baptists make and pass motions at the Convention level that are designed to give us a "good press" rather than have a profound effect on the society in which we live. This year, in the midst of historic and traumatic events taking place all over the world we were content to deal only with issues and topics that concern our particular ghetto. It seemed to me that we had locked out the "real world."

I sometimes think Convention needs to get its teeth into a really major issue that would allow for interaction among the varying interpretations of belief within our Convention. Whether we could deal with such and with one another in an atmosphere of love, intelligence and in the fine Baptist tradition, is a question. We need room for more belief sharing and frank discussion of some of our differences, but one knows from experience that this is not something that comes easily to many of our people and often it is difficult to share our differing views in love.

Finally, I would like to emphasize the fact that our ABF is not a divisive organization, as some malign it; it seeks to make Convention truly Christ-like, serving the local churches and the world.

Editor's Note. The Reverend Byron D. Corkum, BA (Dalhousie), MDiv (Acadia), is the senior minister of the Amherst, Nova Scotia, United Baptist Church and the current president of the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship.

BOOKS THAT STIR THE MIND — III

by Harold L. Mitton

Though I might write about books like Barth's *Dogmatics* and Temple's *Nature, Man and God*, which have mightily stirred my mind in days gone by, I cannot refrain from writing here about one which has recently greatly affected me. The book is *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly*, written by a Lutheran theologian, Marva J. Dawn, and published by Eerdmans in 1989.

To one brought up to groan at the austerities of the puritan sabbath, it was a joy to discover that in her book this author promotes the discipline of Sabbath not as a legalistic duty but as the way to freedom, delight and joy. Relying heavily upon Abraham Joshua Heschel's monumental book *The Sabbath*, she indicated that Yahweh established the rhythm of six days of work and one day of cessation from work. While many ritual laws concerning the Jewish Sabbath do not apply to contemporary Christians, the author is convinced that we cannot violate the spirit of the Fourth Commandment without undermining our own well-being.

The rush and pressure of modern life is taking its toll of our physical, mental and spiritual health. Doctors tell us that people are cracking up because they do not have access to spiritual resources. Sabbath-keeping provides us with the opportunity for relaxation, re-creation and worship.

Marva Dawn tells us that an effective tool that brings her into God's presence is beauty — in many different forms and stimulating all the senses. Lovely music; the majesty of nature in mountains and flowers and fall leaves and winter snows; the fragrance of candles and spices; the taste of communion wine and bread; the embrace of children and close friends; the mystery of works of art — all these lead her to experience the presence of the Creator. Sabbath keeping, she contends, provides us with opportunities for spiritual enrichment, saving us from idolatrous self-absorption and the encroachment of the secular culture. She quotes Heschel with approval: "What we are depends on what the Sabbath is to us."

Sunday corporate worship provides us with the opportunity to join with others in the praise and worship of God, seeking to bring every area into loving subjection to his revealed will. Only by nourishing our souls in this way, through Word and Sacrament, can Kingdom people resist the subtle process of being drawn into the vortex of contemporary secularism and atheism.

Without wanting to return to the blue laws of my childhood, I am convinced that the steady and relentless erosion of Sunday as a "special day" has had lamentable consequences. It seems to me that society has degenerated in the last half century. Greed, selfishness and the like have taken over and robbed us of our peace, our *shalom*. The Hebrew word *shalom* which we translate "peace," means, more importantly, "peace with God." If we are not at peace with God, Marva Dawn points out, no other kind of true peace is possible.

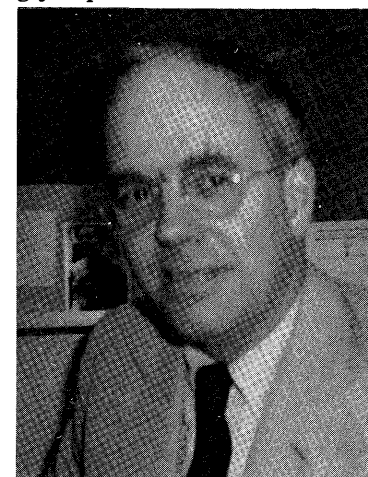
The benefits of Sabbath-keeping are enormous. For one thing, it reduces the tumultuous noise and hectic pace of modern life, enabling us in silence and solitude to discover who we are and what we are to become. It puts us in touch with God who is the very ground of our being. It enables us to live more fully and usefully in the world, serving out of wholeness, order, revived spirits, empowered emotions, healthy bodies, renewed minds, authentic relationships, and nurtured selves. In a word, it allows our souls to catch up with us!

CHRISTIAN ATTITUDES TO NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS

by Bruce Matthews

The whole question of how Christians understand the relation of the gospel to the world of many faiths has been seriously debated for several decades, especially since the end of World War II. At that time, many newly independent Asian nations invoked religio-cultural tradition to define their sense of community and identity. The sometimes vigorous reassertion of a religious world-view (e.g. Islam) that had been held in check by colonialism and Western domination gave new vitality to religions long thought to be passive or even moribund. Coincidentally, the increasing multi-faith dimension of Western societies brought the faiths of other men right into our everyday midst. Although the study of world religions had been conducted in certain select schools and universities in the first half of the twentieth century, in general the numerous surging expressions of belief, behaviour and values caught the West unprepared. This was particularly so in Christian seminaries, and the lack of adequate instruction in Comparative Religion remains a serious deficiency in most of our theological colleges. The fact is, however, that the spirit of the times will increasingly require us to be better informed about other religions. To use the words of the current calendar of the University of Chicago's Divinity School, "we must better understand the plural world community with which Christianity interacts on a new historical stage." Obviously, some Christians will disagree with this ideal, or share in the same judgement concerning the claims of other religions. Indeed a wide range of opinion, even within a single denomination, makes it difficult or impossible to reach consensus on the issue of whether non-Christian religion reflects the divine and offers ways to salvation.

How are we to make sense of the questions that are at stake here? One way is to set down three approaches that are sometimes used to define the range of the debate. These are the *exclusivist*, *inclusivist* and *pluralist* positions. A brief definition of each is in order. *Exclusivists* argue that all religions other than Christianity are the product of 'blindness' or 'sinful unbelief.' Such religions perhaps give a hint of divine activity but they do not express God's saving grace. They are essentially inadequate for salvation. On the other hand, *inclusivists* and *pluralists* are much more receptive to acknowledging the seriousness of other religions. *Inclusivists* maintain that although God has been 'supremely manifested' in Jesus, they also affirm the 'universal presence' of God's spirit in other religions. The spirit or *logos* of God is felt to be operative in more than the Christian religion (e.g., it is in this way that the Indian Christian theologian Raymond Panikkar refers to the "unknown Christ" of Hinduism). Further, non-Christian religions might be seen as a 'preparation' for the still greater light of the gospel. They are not invalid, but await that completion which only Christianity can bring in the long run. *Pluralists* take this position a step further. They



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aver that different religions present different images and experiences of the divine, spread across history and cultures. *Pluralists* are still committed to the universality and authenticity of the Christian gospel, but are willing to acknowledge that the divine has spoken to different peoples in different ways.

All three positions have subtle differences among themselves, so that the overall range of Christian response to other religions is extremely complex. Many of us may shift from one emphasis to another. We are often unsure of being too generous in acknowledging the truth-claims of other faiths, yet recognize the obvious: that religions other than our own are a permanent fact, and are endowed with great spiritual beauty, wisdom and meaning. What you or I individually may think of the validity or authenticity of another religion is, therefore, at least to a degree, a private or subjective matter to the individual. Some of us are academically better informed about how other religions 'work,' and not unexpectedly this may condition our judgement about that religion, negatively or positively. Others will have seen the joy and liberation (or vice-versa) another faith has brought to someone else. It should be said that it is extremely difficult for Christian denominations to make official pronouncements on the issue of whether other religions are 'true' or not. Most of the main-line denominations have recently struggled with these questions. In this regard I have yet to read an entirely *exclusivist* Christian position, although I know there are a lot of exclusivists in every denomination. The Roman Catholic church took the initiative of acknowledging that through the activity of divine Providence, salvation is open to those "who strive to live a good life (*Lumen Gentium*, 1966)." Over twenty years ago Cardinal Konig could write, "in our own seminaries we ought to have a training in universality precisely through a knowledge of the religious thought of men of our own day. I become richer when I know what others think." In the same time, the Anglican theologian R.H.L. Slater's profound book *Can Christians Learn from Other Religions* (1963) seemed to speak for many in his denomination. Its conclusion is that the faith of other believers reflects a religious experience from which Christians may learn. This conclusion is still alluded to in the documents of recent Lambeth conferences. Perhaps this Anglican position is best summed up in the statements of the Board for Mission and Unity (1984): "It may well be that the questions and the witness of other faiths may renew our own understandings, judge that which is unauthentic in our own witness and refine and balance the witness we seek. We cannot deny that which we believe to be true, which we receive in scripture and tradition within the community of the church. But neither can authentic witness be given without proper respect for the other person and the right to be free." This is essentially an *inclusivist* approach with an affirmed loyalty to Jesus; but it is important to emphasize that there is no official Anglican position *per se*. The same could be said for other main-line Protestant denominations today. There still remains a clear responsibility for all denominations to be receptive to inter-religious dialogue. This is critically important in our epoch, when tolerance and understanding of other peoples are urgently required. What is unwelcome is the creeping return to *exclusivism* we find in Christianity (and in some other world religions as well, I might add).

The eminent United Church scholar Wilfred Cantwell Smith is to be taken seriously when he observes that a sizeable and growing number of ordinary church members "are re-affirming, at times with some vehemence, the old-time exclusivist stance. Over against this development one must reckon the uncounted number of those who have abandoned the church for reasons that include their discerning Christian intolerance as intolerable. Further, one must recognize that if the exclusivists become dominant in the church,

countless more persons will leave it (*The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: Towards a Pluralistic Theology of Religions*; John Hick and Paul F. Knitter, editors; 1987; p.67)."

In conclusion, one might well consider that denominations are constituted by people, and that 'people' are constituted by participating individuals. It is their participation which shakes, makes or undoes the denominational values and outlook. In general, we all have a responsibility to be better informed about other faiths and to appreciate and understand the many ways in which the divine Word moves in the history and destiny of the human race.

A collect for the 14th Sunday after Trinity in the Anglican Cycle of Prayer, 1990:

"O God, who created all humankind in your own likeness, we thank you for the wonderful diversity of races and cultures in this world. Enrich our lives by ever widening circles of fellow feeling and understanding; show us your presence in those most different from us, so that both by what we have in common, and in those things in which we differ, we may come to know you more fully in your creation."

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Editor's Note. The Reverend Bruce Matthews, BA (Acadia), MA (Oxon.), STB (Trinity), PhD (McMaster), is the C.B. Lumsden Professor and Head of the Department of Religious Studies at Acadia University. A member of a well-known and sizeable Toronto Baptist family, Bruce was ordained an Anglican priest in 1966. He is married to Pamela Wright from Saint John, N.B., and has two sons, Mark and Joshua.

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IN MEMORIAM



Austin MacPherson

AUSTIN DONALD MacPHERSON died 15 August 1990, aged 80. Born in Sydney, N.S., Austin was the son of the late Rev. Dr. D.J. and Florence MacPherson. He is survived by his wife, the former Ruth Layton Porter; two sons, Ian of Yarmouth, Rev. D. Neal of Honolulu; a daughter, Katherine of Chester Basin; and five grandchildren. He was predeceased by a brother, Rev. Ian MacPherson. Holder of the Honours BA (U.N.B.) and the MDiv (Andover Newton), his pastorates included Canning, Fredericton, Middleton, Wolfville and recently a period as interim at Amherst. In Fredericton he served on several labour relations boards, on the N.B. Public Health Committee and was president of the Children's Aid Society, Fredericton. He was active in the ecumenical movement, ploughshares and the Wolfville Inter-Church Council. As a democratic socialist he was a member of the CCF and the NDP. Austin was a loyal "Friend" and supporter of the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship — we shall miss him so much! At the service in celebration of his life, held in the Wolfville United Baptist Church August 18th, 1990, his son Neal said that his favourite passage in the Bible came from the Book of Micah: "God has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God."

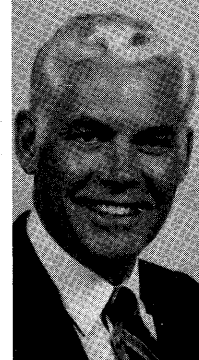
SERMON

by Ralph D. Wilton

Many of us were taught as children not to use the name of God as a swear word. This was an application of the third commandment, "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain." Today scholars give us a range of understandings and interpretations of this prohibition from which we can benefit.

I. FALSE OATHS

In Old Testament times, in the early stages of the development of God's people, the divine name was often used to undergird oaths. The people of God were warned that a failure to carry out the action prescribed in the oath would bring disgrace upon the holy name. Leviticus 19.12 reads: "You shall not swear by my name falsely, and so profane the name of your God: I am the LORD." Later, Jesus taught a standard of honesty in speech that rose above oath-taking altogether. "Let what you say," he said, "be simply 'Yes' or 'No.'" See the passage Matthew 5.33-37. For Christians there is no question of honesty being optional. Indeed, without honesty in all our relations with one another our society cannot be stable.



Ralph Wilton

II. USING GOD

The story of "wrestling Jacob" (Genesis 32) reflects the ancient belief that knowledge of the divine name could be used to gain power. Unfortunately we are still prone to use God's name for our own purposes. In national emergencies people who seldom think of God crowd into churches for prayer. We tend to make our plans and then ask God to bless them. There is a vast difference between worshipping God and using him.

III. EMPTY WORSHIP

The word translated "in vain" has a root meaning which suggests emptiness, unreality. It is not good enough to call on God in an empty and shallow way. Jan Lochman, in *Signposts to Freedom*, speaks of "the temptation to name the name of God, the name of Jesus, without taking seriously what the name stands for; to appeal to the Exodus or the history of Christ, but not to be committed to them, . . . not to accept their implications." We need to examine the reality of our own worship. We need to be dismayed at the way baptismal vows in our churches, and marriage vows made in the presence of God, are all too lightly discarded.

As our understanding of the nature of God deepens we come to appreciate why we should not take God's name in vain. We do well to heed the command: "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain."

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Editor's Note. The Reverend Ralph Douglas Wilton, BA, BD (McMaster), MTh (Acadia), was born in India of missionary parents. Ordained to the Christian ministry in 1954 he has served pastorates in Ontario, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. He began his current service as pastor of the Wolfville United Baptist Church, Nova Scotia, in 1985. He represents the Atlantic United Baptist Convention on the Canadian Overseas Mission Board.