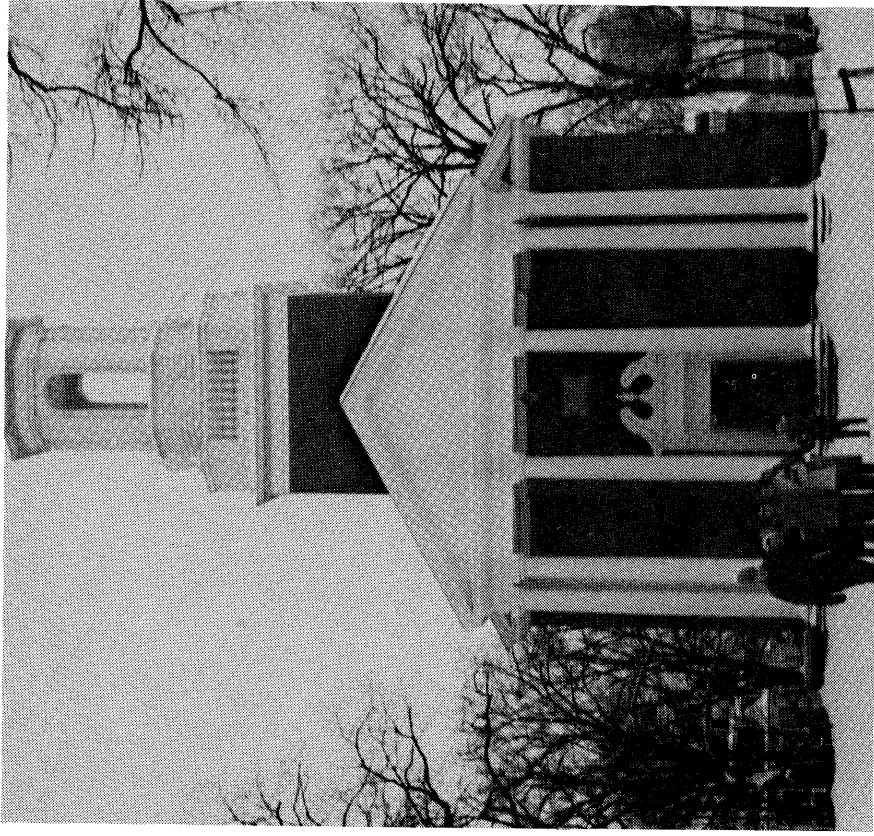


# BULLETIN

of

The Atlantic Baptist Fellowship

February - March, 1984



Manning Memorial Chapel  
Acadia University  
Wolfville, N.S.

*"I was glad when they said unto me, Let us  
go into the house of the Lord." Psalm 122:1*

## Editorial Comment

In this issue of the Bulletin: A report of the ABF Fall conference. We regret the long time distance between the time of the conference and this report — but this will remind those persons who were present of what happened, and, for others, will give an insight into what took place.

The Church in 1983 is a brief summary of some of the leading religious stories relating some activities of the Church worldwide during the past year.

The feature article in this issue is contributed by Dr. J. K. Zeman, at our request. This article deals with a subject of great concern to our ABF readers. A further introduction appears just before the article.

Some thoughts on religious liberty are included from sources acknowledged in the article. Included also are some items of Church news from around the world.

An advanced announcement regarding the Spring Conference is given in this bulletin. Look for the announcement.

It is our hope and prayer that the coming Lenten season may be to all our churches a time of spiritual uplift and rededication.

The next bulletin will be published in May, 1984.

I. Judson Levy  
Editor

## A Lenten Prayer

O GOD, now that the shadow of the cross falls across this season time, bring us deeply and devoutly to consider our lives, that we may present ourselves to the discipline of thy Holy Spirit, repenting of our sinful carelessness, until with newness of will and patience of spirit we act in faith with love, that we may glorify thy name and enter thy kingdom. Build us into a fellowship of love and mercy, that souls may find among us a true sanctuary of hope and strength, in Christ's name. Amen

(Samuel H. Miller,  
Prayers for Daily Use)

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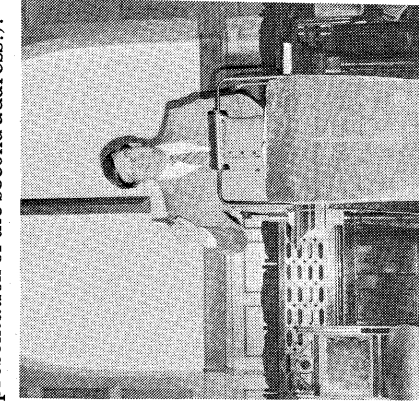
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## ABF Fall Conference

The 1983 Fall Conference of the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship was held in the Port Williams, N.S. Baptist church on Friday evening and Saturday, October 28-29. The president, Rev. Gordon Gower presided over the sessions with the secretary, Rev. Donald Jackson, performing the duties of that office. The theme of the conference was "New Testament Witnessing — The Bible's call to Witness". The theme lecturer was Rev. Dr. Allison Trites, Associate professor of Biblical Studies (New Testament) at the Acadia Divinity College.

Following the registration of the delegates as they arrived, the evening session began with prayer by the president. A welcome to the church was given by the host pastor, Rev. Donald Jackson. The speaker, Dr. Trites, was introduced by the Rev. Ida Whitehouse, Associate minister of the Kentville Baptist Church. In his first address Dr. Trites dealt with "The Witness in Saint Paul's writings." In his opening remarks, Dr. Trites spoke briefly of the way Paul presented the message of Christ to the philosophical leaders of Athens on Mars Hill, and showed that this can provide us with a clue to the problem of presenting the Gospel to our own cynical and philosophical age. By contrast is the practical way Christianity was presented in James' letter (This will be seen more clearly in the presentation of the second address).



The best way to report on these very thoughtful studies given by Dr. Trites seems to be to present the outline of the lecture as given by the lecturer, and the best way for our readers to share in what happened at the conference is for them to follow this outline, noting the biblical references to come to an understanding of what was presented in the lectures. This, either privately or in a group study, can prove to be very instructive and inspirational leading, we trust, to a more effective witnessing. A discussion period followed Dr. Trites' formal presentation.

### WITNESS ACCORDING TO PAUL

Involves:  
(1 Thess.)

1. Personal Activity — Christian words must be matched by Christian deeds.

(1 & 2 Thess., Galatians)  
2. Personal Interest — Christian converts must be cared for, followed up, and disciplined.

(1 Cor.)  
3. Personal Sacrifice — Christian witness must accept the cost of discipleship.

(2 Cor.)  
4. Personal Integrity — Christian witness must be truthful.

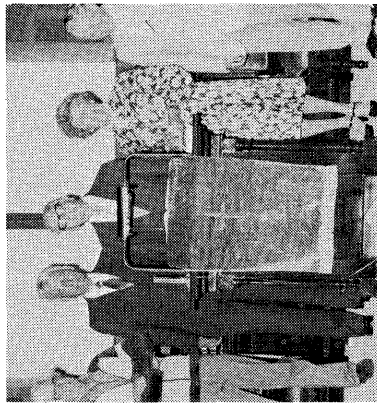
(2 Cor.)  
5. Personal Accountability — Christian witness must be offered in the light of Christ's return.

(2 Cor.)  
6. Personal Stewardship — Christian witness must include the responsible use of our possessions.

(Rom., Phil.)  
7. Personal Courage — Christian witness must involve an open confession of Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

The service of Holy Communion, which has become such an important part of all ABF conferences, followed at this time, conducted by Rev. John Churchill, a member of the Port Williams church, assisted by the deacons of the church and Mrs. Donald Jackson at the organ presenting quiet meditative music which was a very vital part of the service. This service, created an atmosphere of quiet meditation and meaningful communion making it a fitting conclusion to the evening session. The ABF thanks Mr. Churchill, the deacons and Mrs. Jackson.

**THE SATURDAY MORNING SESSION** began with a devotional period led by the Rev. Roger Prentice who recently was inducted as the minister of the Annapolis Royal group of churches, having just returned from four years of study at Regent's Park, Oxford University, England. Mr. Prentice drew attention to the fact that we were meeting on the weekend of the Sunday that, in many churches, is observed as Reformation Sunday, and, in a very thoughtful meditation, drew attention to the significance of the truths that such an observance calls to mind. The devotional period was enriched by the rendering of a solo by the Rev. Lawson Allenback, minister of the Billtown Baptist Church.



Dr. Trites gave his second lecture following the general theme of New Testament witnessing, and this time turning his attention to the epistle of James. He began by noting this epistle, there is a down-to-earth emphasis on the practical application of the Gospel, calling for a complete transformation of life and character as nothing less will do.

For James, Dr. Trites indicated, there is no divorce between evangelism and social service, including that, in this understanding of the Gospel, the prayer meeting and the soup kitchen are both part of Christian witnessing. As in reporting on the previous lecture, we now present the outline that was used at the conference with the same recommendation that it be used in the churches for further study on the subject. Following the formal presentation, a discussion period was held, and this led into the coffee break with its opportunity for fellowship and further discussion — indeed it is in such a period that real discussion takes place.

#### WITNESS ACCORDING TO JAMES

1. Christian witness is borne in the midst of life with its trials and temptations. (James 1:2-18)
2. Christian witness involves deeds as well as words. (James 2:14-26)
3. Christian witness must be offered to all people without regard to their social position and status. (James 2:1-13)
4. Christian witness requires the disciplining of the tongue. (James 3:1-12; 4:11-12)
5. Christian witness is inspired by the great servants of God who have served in past generations. (James 2:20-24; 5:11, 17, 18)

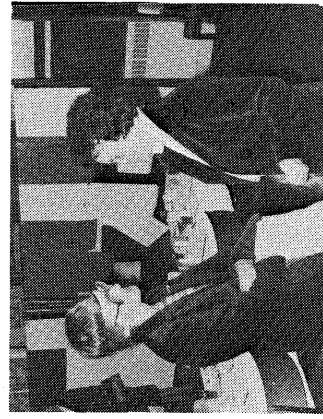
6. Christian witness requires a distinctive lifestyle involving separation from the world and submission to God. (James 4:4-10)

7. Christian witness requires a loving concern for the restoration of backsliders. (James 5:19-20)

The remainder of the morning session was taken up with a discussion the assembly of the World Council of Churches held in Vancouver last Summer, and as seen and heard by the Rev. John Boyd who, partly as an ABF representative, attended assembly as an observer. Mr. Boyd's presentation began with the showing of the official slides of the assembly followed by his personal comments. More than 300 churches were represented by over 900 delegates which with visitors and observers made a gathering of over 4000 people. The moderator of the assembly was Archbishop Ted Scott of the Canadian Anglican church. The General Secretary was Dr. Phillip Potter of Jamaica. The theme of the conference was "Christ — The Life of the World." The Lima Liturgy, a liturgy of universal acceptance, was used at appropriate occasions. An all-night vigil was held for peace in the great tent, which was the worship centre for the entire assembly. In the question and answer period which followed the presentation, Mr. Boyd pointed out that a number of Evangelical leaders became very interested in the WCC at these sessions. Much emphasis, throughout the gathering, was made on peace and justice. Fifteen guests from other faiths were invited to address the assembly, including Sikh, Hindu, Buddhist, Islam and Confucian. Representatives of native Indian groups also were heard. As part of the assembly experience, 60 small groups were also working. The Lutheran chapel on the campus was used especially for women's meetings. This place of meeting was known as The Well. 850 journalists from around the world, but the secular press did not seem to understand the issues. A question and answer period followed Mr. Boyd's remarks, showing a lively interest in the WCC and a desire to know more about it.

A delicious luncheon — indeed an ample turkey dinner — was served by the ladies of the Port Williams church. The program referred to this as "A Fellowship Meal", which in very truth it was. To say that this was enjoyed by all seems a mild understatement. All that we can say is a hearty **THANK YOU!**

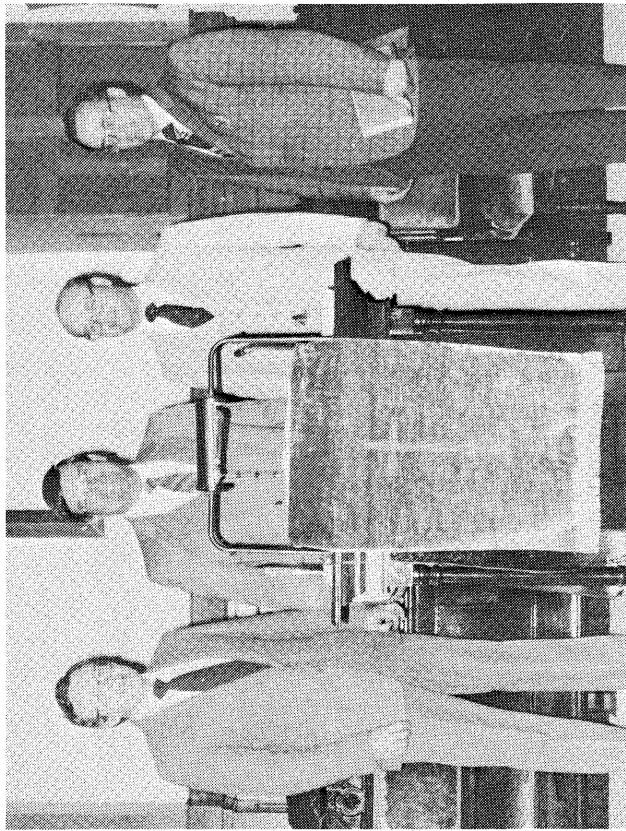
The brief afternoon session began with a devotional period conducted by the Rev. Harry Ward, minister of the First Cornwallis Baptist Church. A few items of routine business followed and with that the conference was brought to an end. The conference expressed sincere thanks to Dr. Trites for his leadership and to all others who shared in preparing and presenting the conference program.



#### AN IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

**THE SPRING CONFERENCE OF THE ATLANTIC BAPTIST FELLOWSHIP WILL BE HELD IN THE BAPTIST CHURCH, SYDNEY, N. S. — FRIDAY AND SATURDAY, JUNE 15-16, 1984.** Because of the distance to travel, it is recommended that delegates to the conference, if at all possible, plan to stay over night on Saturday, and plan to attend the morning service in the Sydney

church before leaving for home. The details of the program are not finalized at this time, but in general, the discussions will centre around such questions as: What are the requirements for membership in a Baptist church? What are the standards for ordination and ministry in a Baptist church? Related questions regarding Baptist policy will be considered. Full details regarding program, accomodation and such matters will be given in the next (May) bulletin. In the meantime, interested persons are asked to mark these dates on their calendars -- plan now to attend. By going to Sydney we are assured of a warm welcome -- typical Cape Breton hospitality!



Revs. J. Churchill, A. Trites, R. Prentice, H. Ward.

## Unity With Diversity

"The ecumenical movement fails when it attempts to unify our diversity; rather it ought to foster and encourage the kind of conversation found within our common Bible. There is still a tendency on the religious left to dismiss the religious right as simplistic or individualistic, while the religious right distrusts the left for being too uninterested in more personal forms of piety. Confessional traditions still tend to appeal dogmatically and exclusively to their versions of the gospel while failing to learn the insights of others. The church has its own self-correcting apparatus, even as the Scriptures do. We must have ears to hear one another so that together we might hear God's Word to the whole church."

Robert W. Hall,  
in *The Christian Century*

## The Church in 1983

THE CHRISTIAN CENTURY, in a year-end review, has published a list of what the editors regard as the leading religious stories of the past year. A brief summary of their observations is given here as something that should be of interest to all of us. It is to be born in mind that this report has come out of the United States, and so, inevitably, is colored by what is happening there, but not exclusively so. Much of what is true of the Church's emphasis and involvement in that country reflects what is happening elsewhere, including our own country. This report is a combination of news items and my own remarks. To make clear the difference, I am putting what has come from the original report in quotation marks -- the rest is my own observations. Editor.

"Underlining this consideration of the alarming increase in atomic weaponry and the problem of war and peace in our time was the appearance of the final version of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops' pastoral letter titled "The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response." The Christian Century's editors had selected the preliminary draft of the letter as 1982's top religious story. Adopted after thoughtful discussion, the 1983 draft -- the third -- contained tougher language on the matter of a nuclear freeze. The bishops also condemned nuclear war as immoral and spoke out against a first-strike strategy. The letter drew international attention, and the resulting debate helped Protestants, Catholics and Jews alike to probe the wider ethical dimensions of nuclear warfare. The Catholic bishops' pastoral letter, then, is the Century's choice as the most notable religion story of 1983." This whole matter of the animosity between nations and the build up of atomic weapons has placed all people in a very dangerous position. So critical is the situation that no one can ignore it. This is particularly true of the Church. This has been concerning most church bodies around the world and many have expressed their concern in one way or another -- and this must continue, calling for much serious prayer and effort. One writer (Paul G. Johnson) states it this way: "On some issues there may be justification for pastoral neutrality, but when the future of this planet is at stake, neutrality seems neither relevant nor justified. On this issue the only relevant approach is prophetic leadership is peacemaking."

The story that places second is that of the Vancouver Assembly of the World Council of Churches which is reported this way:

"The Vancouver Assembly. The World Council of Churches' Sixth Assembly, held in Vancouver, British Columbia, while adopting a variety of resolutions -- sometimes after acrimonious debates -- was notable chiefly for worship that reflected the churches' many diverse traditions. The worship services, using a liturgy developed by the WCC Faith and Order Commission and first used at a WCC Conference in Lima, Peru, indicated that the council has made considerable progress toward its goal of worldwide Christian unity. The liturgy grew out of a text on baptism, Eucharist and ministry (BEM) -- a 16,000-word document devised with Catholic participation and approved by the WCC's Faith and Order Commission. At the same time, the Assembly reaffirmed its sometimes controversial focus on social concerns and insisted that attainment of peace and justice must remain a major commitment."

At least one significant church union took place in 1983. "The split between northern and southern (U.S.A.) Presbyterians dating back to the Civil War was healed when the 2-3-million-member United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. and the 820,000-member Presbyterian Church in the U.S. were reunited to form the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)." An interesting incident is reported in this connection. Shortly after his election as the moderator of the new church, in his

acceptance speech, recalled an ancient Jewish proverb: "When a funeral procession and a wedding procession meet at an intersection, the wedding must have the right of way."

"The Luther anniversary. The 500th anniversary of Martin Luther's birth was celebrated not only in East and West Germany but throughout the world. The extraordinary warmth of Roman Catholic acceptance of the event reached a climax in early December when Pope John Paul II preached in a Lutheran church in Rome to commemorate the Reformer's birth. In East Germany Luther was hailed as a champion of the underdog, and Karl Marx's approval of Luther was duly noted. The Lutheran World Federation adopted a declaration repudiating "the sins of Luther's anti-Jewish remarks"; Jewish religious leaders regarded the statement as one of the most significant achievements of the year long observance. Another consequence of the 500th anniversary was the agreement reached by a panel of American Catholics and Lutheran theologians on the definition and application of the doctrine of justification by faith." THE POPE was much in the news in 1983. This is to be expected because of his representative position heading the large world-wide Roman Catholic Church. While this is always true in a general way, it is particularly true when the pope is John Paul II. "Admonishing U. S. bishops to tighten discipline in the American Church, Pope John Paul II also urged them to oppose all efforts to ordain women to the priesthood, and called for obedience to the church's teaching on sex, divorce and birth control. His firm insistence on adherence to orthodox church teaching met with some resistance among progressive Catholics, not only in the U.S.A. but also in the Netherlands and other countries."

A very sad part of the religious news of 1983 was the increase in religious persecution. "In terms of both numbers and severity, religious persecution accelerated markedly in 1983. Some instances: the near-genocidal persecution of the Baha'is in Iran; the resurgence of anti-Semitic activity (bombings in Paris, Rome and elsewhere); the massacre of large numbers of Muslims in India; the bombing of a Protestant church in Northern Ireland while worshippers were gathered; the harassment, torture and murder of church people both clergy and laity, in El Salvador; the arrest of Catholic and Anglican priests and a Catholic nun in South Africa; the crackdown on activist Catholic priests by the Marcos regime in the Philippines and by the communist government in Poland." This item is of particular interest to Baptists, for perhaps the proudest chapter in our Baptist history has been our concern for religious liberty, not only for those who agree with us — but for all irrespective of their particular religious conviction and practice. This new age has increased, rather than decreasing, the need for a continuous and increased effort to come to the help of those suffering from religious persecution.

These are some of the stories of what has been going on in the Church around the world. Some of the items mentioned in this may seem to be far removed from us. So why should we, a small group of Baptists, take time to write and read about them? The reason is simple and straightforward — we are part of the whole Church in the whole world, which, in a word, is what ecumenism is all about. Try as we like to isolate ourselves, we cannot do it. We are part of the Church world wide, or we are no church at all. While, by necessity, we minister on the local scene, we cannot escape involvement in the whole scene.

According to John Bunyan, Christian was saved by his encounter with Evangelist. And, inasmuch it cannot be supposed that God's nature is less constant than man's, we may and must pray that a reprieve which God has granted our society once will not be refused if we ask for it again in a humble spirit with a contrite heart.

Arnold J. Toynebe

The following article, *Which Way After Vancouver?* has been contributed by Dr. J. K. Zeman at my request. Dr. Zeman is the chairman of the Inter-church Relations Committee of the Canadian Baptist Federation, and so is in a position to give us up-to-date information on the position of the Federation as to ecumenical interests and activities. He has shown his concern about ecumenical matters by his attendance at the assembly of the World Council of Churches in Vancouver last summer. In this article he relates these two as the title of the article suggests. We are grateful to Dr. Zeman for his willingness to share with us on this level of discussion. The ABF is vitally concerned about the relation of the Canadian Baptists to ecumenical interests and activities, by whatever name they are called. This article merits very careful reading and study, and it is our hope that it will stimulate serious discussion in ABF circles and in our churches.

Editor

### Which Road after Vancouver?

#### Personal Reflections

I am grateful for the invitation from the editor to share with the readers a few personal reflections on Canadian Baptist ecumenical relations and attitudes as seen against the background of the WCC Assembly in Vancouver last summer. At least three reports written by Canadian Baptist "visitors" who were present at the Assembly, have appeared thus far (1). Practically all religious and secular papers, as well as other news media, carried extensive reports. The official record of the proceedings will soon be available from the WCC.

In view of such a flood of information I do not intend to add a few drops of personal impressions and recollections. Rather, I would like to raise three basic questions which have emerged in my reflections on the Vancouver experience and which I believe should be faced by fellow Baptists in Canada. The paragraphs which follow are addressed to Baptists although they may be of interest to persons in other denominations as well.

1. Should we, as Canadian Baptists, lay aside the debate over membership in ecumenical agencies and concentrate our attention on issues which the ecumenical movement is raising?

Since the founding of the Canadian Council of Churches in 1944 and of the WCC in 1948, Baptists in Canada have spent many hours at their regional and national assemblies and at other conferences in debates over the pros and cons of "belonging to" the CCC and WCC (2). We are not the only Baptist body which has had problems with membership in ecumenical organizations. Of the 124 Baptist conventions/unions which are affiliated with the Baptist World Alliance, only 12 are presently members of the WCC. In addition, there are many other Baptist conventions which are not related to the BWA. None of them is a member of the WCC nor, in most cases, of the national councils in their respective countries.

I cannot help asking myself and my fellow Baptists: Are not the theological, liturgical, moral, social and political issues with which the various ecumenical agencies struggle, more important than the question of affiliation? The agendas and reports of such organizations are not secret. Their materials can be obtained, usually at nominal cost, for study and discussion in local churches and at conferences, as well as for personal enrichment (3). Some of the materials offer heavy theological diet but others, especially the more than twenty periodicals and newsletters, are written in a more popular style.

In their historical origins and development, Baptists were an offshoot of the Reformed tradition with its emphasis on the Lordship of Christ in all spheres of



life, private and public. In North America, including the Maritimes, we have been also influenced by major movements of awakening (revivals) which had an impact on the whole society (e.g., abolition of slavery, emancipation of women, higher education, temperance, social justice).

Is God calling us to reverse the present trend, so widespread in our circles, toward extreme privatization of religious life? Too many of our people and churches are so pre-occupied with the search for deeper personal piety or better family life, and with congregational activities, that they ignore the pressing moral, social and political issues in their communities, in our country and in the rest of the world. Most of them do it without any sense of remorse and conscience. The coziness of the comfortable pew and the withdrawal into congregational isolation appear to afflict Baptists more than any other major Protestant denomination in Canada today.

No one, not even member of the WCC, is expected to endorse every pronouncement or position of the WCC. Yet its study materials can enrich the discussion of contemporary issues and stimulate independent thinking on such questions.

#### 2. Are we open to opportunities for cooperative Christianity?

Cooperation among Christians and churches is not the exclusive domain of the "official" ecumenical movement and its organizations, such as the councils of churches (local, regional, national and global). Dr. Konrad Raiser, Deputy General Secretary of the WCC (until fall 1983) stated: "To acknowledge that there are many other instruments of the one ecumenical movement is in no sense to denigrate the importance of the WCC" (4).

The Bible Society, the Gideons, several Christian student groups, and other non-denominational or inter-denominational organizations provide opportunities for fellowship and cooperation. By and large, Canadian Baptists readily participate in such movements.

There are also other cooperative organizations which have been perceived as alternatives to the official ecumenical councils. For example, The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada offers membership to individuals, local congregations and denominations. A new trend should be noted on the Canadian scene. At least two denominations, the Salvation Army and the Council of the Christian Reformed Churches, find it possible to relate to both the "ecumenical" and the "evangelical" cooperative structures.

Over against such commitments to structural ecumenism, whether "conciliar" or "evangelical", one should not overlook contributions to the experience of Christian unity made by various non-denominational conferences, the charismatic movement, cooperative evangelistic crusades, para-church organizations and Christian action groups organized to deal with specific issues. "I believe, the unity of the church will not be the product of theological consensus but by growing together in newly discovered fellowship and commitment" (5).

3. Is the Baptist Federation of Canada (Canadian Baptist Federation under its new name) giving any leadership in inter-church relations?

By its constitution, the BFC was assigned primary responsibility for "national, international and interdenominational relations" and to express the common judgement of the constituent churches and organizations on such matters. The delineation was conceived as a constitutional measure to prevent jurisdictional conflicts with the regional (and French) conventions/unions. On that basis, the three conventions/unions surrendered their membership in the CCC in favour of the new national Baptist body, the BFC, in the late 1940's. The BFC membership was understood to be conditional upon agreement among the three conventions, even though no such legal requirement is included in the BFC constitution.

When the Atlantic B. Convention voted in 1970 to terminate its financial support and the nomination of its share of BFC delegates to the CCC, and the French Union withdrew its endorsement of membership in the CCC, the BFC Council, after several delays, voted to end its affiliation with the CCC at the end of 1980. Thereupon, the Council of the B. Convention of Ontario and Quebec decided, in April 1980, "to retain" its membership in the CCC. The fact of the continuing Baptist representation in the CCC is more important than the questionable constitutional basis on which it was arranged and accepted by the CCC since it is a council of national rather than regional ecclesial bodies.

In light of the views on ecumenical affiliation in the opinion poll of Baptist ministers across Canada, conducted in 1979 (6), there is little likelihood that the issue of the BFC affiliation with the CCC (and WCC) would be reopened in the next few years. However, through its Inter-Church Relations Committee (ICRC) the BFC has taken initiative in several directions since its appointment in 1980. Here are a few examples (7).

a) Baptists were represented from 1980 to 1982 at the conferences of Canadian church leaders and at meetings of the new Inter-Church Committee which was planning the transition from the CCC to a new broader ecumenical organization (Association of Christian Churches in Canada).

b) The ICRC sponsored a series of bilateral conversations with representatives of other denominations, including the Christian Church (Disciples), the Christian Reformed Churches, the Mennonites, North American (German) Baptists and the Presbyterian Church. The list reflects a deliberate attempt to avoid "one-sided" relations limited to the mainline denominations, and to reach out to the whole spectrum of Canadian church life.

c) The Committee is considering a proposal made by Rev. John Dickinson (Toronto) for an annual "forum" on selected issues. Representatives from several denominations would discuss theological and social issues "without the pressure of official resolutions, decisions and publicity." The forum would not replace the bilateral talks. They would be expanded.

d) The ICRC would also like to assume a more active role in the educational process. We need more open discussion of issues related to Christian cooperation, including the concept of Christian unity itself.

e) Last fall, the ICRC proposed to the faculties of our four theological institutions (Acadia, Carey Hall, McMaster and the French CETE in Montreal) to undertake a study of the WCC documents on "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry" and "Mission and Evangelism", as well as documents on related issues from the World Evangelical Fellowship. The BFC plans to convene a consultation of representatives from the four faculties with members of its ICRC in November 1984, in order to provide an opportunity to share the findings.

f) One should not overlook the fact that through its other committees and commissions, the BFC is involved in many practical cooperative projects, such as the massive relief and development programs overseas, military chaplaincies, and very recently, in the negotiations on the proposed Canadian Interfaith Communications Network (cable TV religious channel). The long tradition of Baptist Women's involvement in inter-church cooperation cannot be overstressed.

#### Conclusion

The delegates and visitors returning from the Vancouver assembly travelled home in many directions. Their geographic dispersion was also symbolic of the great variety of the ecumenical vision manifested within the WCC. An even greater plurality of views exists in Christian churches which are not related to the WCC.

To my mind, such plurality is to be welcomed as an expression of the vitality of the Christian church in our land and around the world. As long as the Body of

Christ is alive and all members are linked with and controlled by its Head, Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:22-23 and 4:3-13), we can accept and respect the variety of functions and views provided by the diverse members of the body.

There is more than one road to fellowship among Christians. In the words of Dr. K. Raiser: "... in all our efforts to extend the areas of ecumenical consensus, we must retain the ability to acknowledge continuing differences. . . . Sometimes that will mean acknowledging that we affirm different things. But even then we affirm the authenticity of the different voices, and we are united even in this acknowledgement of differences. I believe that this capacity — and course — to acknowledge such differences openly will be more in demand in the years to come" (8).

#### NOTES

- (1) John Boyd's report in the October 1983 issue of the *Bulletin of ABF*; a report by Keith Churchill in the October 1983 issue of *The Canadian Baptist*; and my mimeographed "Report and Reflections on the WCC Assembly in Vancouver". Cf. also the editorial "Structures for mutual work" by William H. Jones in the February 1984 issue of *The Canadian Baptist*.
- (2) See the review by J. K. Zeman, "Baptists in Canada and Cooperative Christianity", *Foundations* 15 (1972): 211-240 and separate edition by BFC; I. Judson Levy, "Canadian Baptist Ecumenical Relationships," *ibid.* 23 (1980); 84-96 and Ronald F. Watts, "The Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec and the Ecumenical Movement (BCOQ, 1982).
- (3) Cf. the catalogue *WCC Publications* 1983. Free copies available from Anglican Book Centre, 600 Jarvis St., Toronto, Ont. M4Y 2J6.
- (4) Konrad Raiser in *One World*, No. 91, December 1983, p. 14.
- (5) *Ibid.*, p. 16
- (6) James A. Beverley, "National Survey of Baptist Ministers," *Baptists in Canada*, ed. J. K. Zeman (Burlington: G. R. Welch, 1980), p. 274.
- (7) Cf. the reports of the Inter-Church Relations Committee in *Turning the Tide* (BFC Report Volume to the Assembly in Moncton, 1982, pp. 75-77, and Report of the Proceedings, pp. 20-22).
- (8) Konrad Raiser, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

J. K. Zeman

## Baptists and Religious Liberty

I had the pleasure recently of reading an address entitled "American Clergy and the Declaration of Independence," given by Dr. T. B. McDormand to a gathering of clergymen in the U.S.A. during the year of the American bicentennial anniversary. This address contains much of interest and value. The whole address cannot be given here, but, with Dr. McDormand's permission, we give here several paragraphs — these refer to the historical Baptist emphasis on religious liberty, and at the same time, indicate what influence churches, both clergy and laity, can have when they take seriously the Lord's call to be "the salt of the earth." Thanks Dr. McDormand!

The editor

### AMERICAN CLERGY AND THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

by Thomas B. McDormand

No sooner was the American Constitution made public, than the Baptists of Virginia noted the absence of a pronouncement guaranteeing religious liberty. They made a direct appeal to George Washington, who replied thus:

"I beg you will be persuaded that no one would be more zealous than myself to establish effective barriers against the horrors of spiritual tyranny and every species of religious persecution . . . Every good citizen is accountable to God alone for his religious opinions, and ought to be protected in worshipping a Deity according to the dictates of his own conscience."

Largely as a result of this, James Madison, greatly influenced by Rev. John Leland, a Baptist, brought in the First Amendment of the Constitution. It stated that "Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof . . ." This was adopted in 1791 — a trophy of the wisdom and determination of the colonial clergy.

The American constitution developed in a climate of religious faith, and was based upon foundations of Christian truth about man and his relationships, laid well and truly by the colonial clergy standing in the Puritan, non-conformist and Calvinistic traditions out of which they and their fathers had come. The preaching of the Word of God and its fearless application to the human situation is always a revolutionary influence in human affairs. It points the way and provides the dynamics for the establishment of political institutions which acknowledge and safeguard the inalienable rights of man. This assertion finds no more convincing support than in the leadership of Roger Williams, Rhode Island. Driven out of Massachusetts by his denunciation of the *de facto* church establishment there, he founded the colony of Rhode Island.

Writing to the six Baptist Associations of Virginia, Thomas Jefferson spoke of Roger Williams' colony in these terms:

"It solved by fair experiment the great and interesting question whether freedom of religion is compatible with order in government and obedience to laws."

When the marble statue of Roger Williams was unveiled in the Hall of Fame, Washington, Senator Anthony spoke these fitting words:

"In the history of all the world there is no more striking example of a man grasping a grand idea, at once, in its full proportions, in all its completeness . . . Those who have followed him have not been able to add anything to the simple words in which he enunciated the principle, nor to surpass him in the exact fidelity with which he reduced it to the practical business of government."

### The Torch Is Passed To Us

It is to be noted that virtually all of the emerging nations and governments of this century have written into their constitutions safeguards of religious liberty for all — though the letter of the law has, in some cases, denied the spirit thereof. It behooves us all to honour the human rights and democratic principles incorporated in the American Constitution. Their validity has not waned, yet demonic forces which challenge their authority today are real and menacing. In the never-ending crusade for true freedom for all men, today's clergy must emulate those whose leadership was so vital in the early days of America. Christian people in general must be alert to resist and expose every form of injustice and tyranny which would nullify the principles of freedom which have so enriched the heritage of America and Canada.

### MORE ON RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

Religious liberty, as a major Baptist concern, is a two-pronged affair. Outwardly it is the insistence on the freedom of all peoples to hold their own convic-

tions and observe their own religious practices. This seems to be clearly understood among us but, not so clearly understood, or practiced, is the freedom within the Baptist fellowship to hold individual convictions regarding scriptural truth and to follow a different program. While we have been strong on the former, we seem to be weak on the latter. The Baptist position, when true to its historic roots, is to embrace both of these emphases. To bring this to our attention, I am presenting here, very briefly, some thoughts selected from an article by W. W. Finlaur, which appeared recently in *The Christian Century*. These thoughts are worthy of our very careful thought.

The Editor

"A quick and honest look at Baptist history could be persuasive. Caught in the cross fire of the wars between Catholic and Protestant states and heartily despised and feared by both, the early Baptists (along with other separatists and dissenters) invoked a pox on both their houses and called for absolute church-and-state separation. They discouraged military service, questioned whether their members should even be civil servants, advocated free conscience and the right of private interpretation of the Scriptures, supported religious tolerance and were ready to defend to the death freedom of speech, assembly, press and worship. We Baptists have a slender sense of history. We have forgotten and forsaken our rich heritage. We have traded our birthright for a mess of something else. We have changed the fundamentals for fundamentalism . . . Emerson said that when the gods arrive, the half-gods go. Because we have enthroned the half-gods, we have little relish for summoning up remembrance of Baptists past. The half-gods represent religious imperialism and therefore frown upon free conscience, autonomy, tolerance, voluntarism, diversity and protection of minorities — in short the faith of our fathers. To such a recovery of our Baptist past we must devote our energies that, as authentic Baptists, advocate religious faith and oppose religious coercion."

## Church News

### Church Statistics

In its annual report on giving and membership, the National Council of Churches' Commission Stewardship, in cooperation with the Office of Research Evaluation and Planning, reports that while the combined memberships in ten mainline Protestant churches declined about one-half per cent from 1981 to 1982, giving in those bodies increased in 1982 and outstripped inflation.

The comparative data on ten selected U. S. church bodies is compiled from information collected on 40 U. S. denominations. In the selected ten church bodies, giving was up 5.34 per cent. Average per capita giving was \$244 in 1982, up from \$230.51 in 1981. Contributions to the ten totaled \$5,991, 151,182; full confirmed membership in them was 24,553,22, a decline of 0.49 per cent from 1981.

The ten U. S. denominations surveyed are American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A. (1980 and 1981 data used), the American Lutheran Church, the Lutheran Church in America, The Presbyterian Church in the United States, the United Church of Christ, the United Methodist Church (1980 and 1981 data) and the United Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), were still separate churches in 1982.

A survey of ten Canadian church bodies resulted in a report similar to that of the U.S. ones. Those ten bodies showed a combined decline in membership of just two-tenths of one per cent. Giving was up 13.7 per cent, compared with a 1982 inflation rate of 10.8 per cent.

### Antiwar Baptists

During the week of Thanksgiving, several members of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky, drafted "A Confession of Faith in a Nuclear Age." Drawing upon the spirit of similar statements by Fuller Theological Seminary and Yale Divinity School, the confession cites moral and political grounds for opposition to the escalating nuclear war capacity. It calls for "transforming initiatives for peace" and challenges present U. S. policies involving the use and threat of war. During the Thanksgiving weekend, the document was signed by some 300 students, faculty and administrators. Copies of the statement are being made available on a wide basis. Copies are also being sent to legislators and to President Reagan.

### No Women Clergy

Southern Baptist associations in Oklahoma and California have refused to seat messengers (representatives) from congregations that have ordained women. The actions were taken by the Capital Baptist Association in Oklahoma City and the Redwood Empire Baptist Association in Vallejo, California. The Oklahoma City controversy arose in January, when First Baptist Church voted to permit the ordination of women deacons. Although the Capital Baptist Association criticized the action, it did not deter the congregation from ordaining three women. Nevertheless, at the annual association meeting, by a vote of 209-101, the messengers voted against seating First Church's representatives, despite the fact that none had registered.

### Pro Women's Ordination

North Carolina Southern Baptists have upheld the right of their congregations to ordain women pastors. At their annual state convention held in Greensboro, the messengers (delegates) voted 921 to 724 to support a resolution which reaffirmed the position taken by the convention on women's ordination in 1975. In addition to reaffirming the policy of local autonomy and recognizing "freedom of conscience," the resolution upheld "the right of the local church to ordain all persons who are called to a church-related ministry." This wording was substituted for the original proposed text, which called for "undiminished support of the commitment, ordination and employment of women" in every part of the Southern Baptist ministry.

### Coming Events

May 18-19: A conference of local churches at Bridgewater, hosted by the Bridgewater Council of Churches.

June 15-16: THE SPRING CONFERENCE OF THE ATLANTIC BAPTIST FELLOWSHIP, SYDNEY, N.S. (for more complete announcement, see Page 5) Fall, 1985 (exact dates to be given later. A "Festival of Faith" to be held in Cape Breton and sponsored by the Industrial Cape Breton Council of Churches. This will perhaps be combined with the 18th biennial Atlantic Ecumenical Council. August 17-19, 1984 — Camp Wegesegum alumni reunion. All former Wegesegum campers are reminded of this reunion, and invited to attend.



# A People Prepared

"To make ready for the Lord a people prepared" Luke 1:17. The four Gospel stories begin in an atmosphere of expectancy. Something big, important and exciting is about to happen — something not to be regarded lightly as an every day experience. For this event there must be careful preparation. The event is the coming of Jesus Christ and the beginning of the Gospel. John the Baptist was the one sent from God to make this preparation. Luke (1:17) sums up the object of John's ministry in this beautiful sentence: "To make ready for the Lord a people prepared". Mark (1.1) presents John and his work as "the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God."

The initial proclamation of the Gospel was made against the background of careful preparation. So it should be in our day. Evidence of this preparation is not apparent in much of our worship and witness. As one observes the average congregation gather for the worship, there is very little to suggest the purpose for which they come. Lacking is the feeling of expectancy, of the sense of something important about to happen for which preparation has been made. They depart at the end of the worship period, or so it seems, with no outward evidence of anything important having taken place. The people who come to worship unprepared are likely to leave unprepared to meet the demands of life to which they return.

This is a reflection on the worship leader as on the congregation — perhaps even more! Here, all too often, the evidence of the lack of preparation is painfully evident. The people receive little because they expect little, or, to turn it around, they expect little because, all too often, they receive little. This is not being written easily, as it will not be read easily. Every honest minister of Christ feels the challenge which every worship service presents, and feels his, or her, inadequacy to meet the challenge. But all must face the demands made upon them. The one who, under God, would make ready a people for the Lord must pay the full price of the preparation that is required.

This text with which we began goes to the very heart of the Church's mission — **to prepare a people for the Lord. It is for this that we are called and for this we must prepare.** How do we prepare? In many ways, of course, but in the hearing of many things, let us not fail to hear the word that was thundered by John — **repent!** No worship is complete that ignores the call for repentance, but, in spite of this, many worship services omit confession. Sin is individual, but it is also social. So it is with repentance. Repentance is an individual act, but it does not end there. We say it again — the call to John was to prepare a people. In both the Old and the New Testaments, there is an emphasis on a people — **the people of God.** God's redemptive act, which begins with the individual, is for all the people. This is the climax of God's call to us in the Gospel.

This thought challenges us at all times, but never more so than, as now, in this another Lenten season. We look forward to meeting the Risen Christ on Easter morning. God save us from thinking of this as an ordinary experience, even though the Easter message is not new to us. It is something, so big, so important and so exciting that we must prepare for it lest we miss his appearing. May we, as individuals and a people, so prepare that on Easter morning we may meet him as a prepared people, praying the prayer from Richard Baxter's hymn:

"Come Lord, when grace hath made me meet  
Thy blessed face to see."