

BULLETIN

of

The Atlantic Baptist Fellowship

May, 1983



United Baptist Church
Chester, N.S.

**WHERE THE
ATLANTIC BAPTIST FELLOWSHIP
WILL MEET**

June 17-18, 1983 (see pages 8-9)

Editorial Comment

The major article in this issue of The Bulletin is on "The Baptist Concept of the Ministry" — a subject on which there seems to be much confusion. This article is rather long and such as to require careful reading, but of such importance as to make the reading of it worth the time and effort, in the interest of a better understanding of our Baptist position.

Attention is called to the Spring Conference of the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship, to be held at Chester, N.S., June 17-18. Full details as to program and accommodation are in this Bulletin. Be sure to note that this is the annual meeting of the Fellowship. Important business, including the election of officers, treasurer's report and future plans will be discussed. The treasurer's interim report is being submitted for your study before coming to the meeting.

Due to the space available in this issue, more church news than usual is given in this issue. We are happy that this is possible. May it enable all our readers to have a wider view of the Church at home and abroad as it exists in many places and many expressions — all of which are parts of the one Universal Church of our Lord, never understood as seen in one form only.

ABF members are urged to be present, and active, at the annual assembly of our Convention at Sackville, N.B., August 24-28.

Greetings to our readers and best wishes for a pleasant and profitable summer and holiday season.

The next issue of The Bulletin will be in October 1983.

I. Judson Levy
Editor

A Prayer For Pentecost

O God the Father, who didst promise to send forth Thy Spirit, and didst confirm and fulfil the same on the day of Pentecost: we humbly beseech that we, with Thy whole Church, may at this time be made glad by His presence and power. Let our bodies be His holy temple; that we may be pure and unspotted from the world; and grant us a devout heart that we may receive His instruction with meekness. His guidance with obedience, and His comfort with joy; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN

The Presbyterian Book of Common Order

THE BULLETIN OF THE ABF is published by the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship. Editor — Rev. I. Judson Levy, P.O. Box 823, Wolfville, N.S. B0P 1X0.

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While The Bulletin is mailed free of charge, donations to help pay the ever-increasing cost of publication and mailing is gratefully received, and should be mailed to the treasurer: Mrs. Evelyn Smith, 13-A Marilyn Drive, Dartmouth, N.S. B2Y 3X8. Receipts for income tax purposes, will be mailed.

The Baptist Concept of the Ministry

(How do Baptists think of the ministry? Basic to the Baptist position is the belief in "the priesthood of all believers" which, when taken literally and seriously, means that all the members of a Baptist church are ministers. We also speak of the minister. Indeed we ordain men and women to be "ministers" in our churches. How are these two related? What does ordination, in the Baptist view, mean and imply? Among many of our people there is a lack of clarity regarding these matters — even when the above questions are not asked out loud. It is part of the function of the ABF Bulletin, from time to time, to deal with some part of Baptist doctrine and polity. With this in mind, the following article is being presented. It is part of a longer article, "Baptist Church Life Today" by Dr. W. M. S. West, and published in the book, "The Pattern Of The Church" (Edited by A. Gilmore), of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland. Some of the terms used are those used in that Baptist Union, but are readily applied to our Canadian and Atlantic Baptist organizations. The position presented has meaning for us as for them. This matter is commended to our readers for their careful reading and study. The Editor)

The Baptist conception of the ministry is governed by the principle that it is a ministry of a church and not only a ministry of an individual. It is the church which preaches the word and celebrates the sacraments, and it is the church which, through pastoral oversight, feeds the flock and ministers to the world. Within this total conception of ministry each member has his part to play. All have spiritual gifts, differing from person to person, but it is the contribution of these varying gifts which makes up and makes effective the ministry of the church. It is for this reason that so much care is taken in developing the gifts of each individual, through worship, teaching and the total fellowship life of the church. It is for this reason, also, that the church meeting plays so important a part in Baptist church life, for it is in the deliberations of the church meeting that Jesus Christ, the head of the Church, through his Holy Spirit makes clear his mind for the ministry of his church in the world. The church meeting is, in this sense, the "ministers" of the church waiting upon the head of the Church and seeking His will.

Along such lines of thought, we are brought quickly to the well-known phrase "the priesthood of all believers". Many Baptists would claim that this is another way of stating the principle which governs their understanding of the ministry. In a sense this is true. But so far as the whole Baptist historical tradition is concerned, it is true only if careful consideration is given to the definition of the phrase. It is undoubted that such consideration is in process today. There has been a tendency, in the past, to define the phrase loosely and suggest that it means that all believers are equal and have the right to perform all the functions of "priesthood" (i.e. of ministry). The danger of such an interpretation is obvious; it is almost bound to cause a misinterpretation of the term "ministry" in the particular sense of those who are ordained to such work. But although such a definition is what some Baptists think the denomination has traditionally thought, it is a misunderstanding. Within all Baptist definitions of the phrase there has always been a safeguard — that the exercise of "priestly" functions by any person can only be carried out on the authority of the church. No man can take to himself the right of performing the functions normally carried out by an ordained minister. Even the Baptist reply in 1926 to the Lambeth Appeal of 1920 which contains such a sentence as: "we hold firmly the

priesthood of all believers, and therefore have no separated order of priests, goes on to make clear that believers who are not called to devote their whole life to the ministerial tasks may perform them only "at the call of the Church". The clearest recent pronouncement is that contained in the 1948 Baptist Statement:

Any member of the church may be authorized by it, on occasion, to exercise the functions of the ministry, in accordance with the principle of the priesthood of all believers, to preach the word, to administer baptism, to preside at the Lord's table, to visit, and comfort or rebuke members of the fellowship. But this is not what is often termed the "full time ministry." Nor must it be lost sight of, that to assume that this is the heart of what Baptists have to say about the ministry, is to ignore most of Baptist history of yesterday and much of Baptist opinion today. The basic principle of ministry being that of the ministry of the Church has not led traditionally to this loose definition of the priesthood of all believers, that all can perform the ministerial functions. Rather has it led to the understanding of the Church's responsibility to call and ordain men to the ministry and to respect the authority thus conferred. Such a statement may surprise some Baptists today, but this is what history tends to make plain. The 1948 Statement is quite correct when it says: "Baptists . . . have had from the beginning an exalted conception of the office of the Christian minister and have taken care to call men to serve as pastors." This has, indeed, been the Baptist position from the very beginning. Thomas Helwys in a declaration of faith dated 1611 states:

That the officers of every church or congregation are either Elders, who by their office do especially lead the flock concerning their souls . . . or Deacons, men and women who by their office relieve the necessities of the poor and impotent brethren concerning their bodies.

The Particular Baptist Confession of 1644 is in a similar vein:

Every church has power given them from Christ for their better well being, to choose to themselves meet persons into the office of Pastors, Teachers, Elders, Deacons . . .

Implicit within this last quotation are two matters to do with the ministry which are much discussed just now, namely the authority of the ministry and ordination. In a sense, of course, these two things belong together, but in order to make the points clear we will mention the subjects separately.

As we have already hinted, a mistaken interpretation of the priesthood of all believers can (and does) seriously affect the thinking of some Baptists in their attitude towards the ordained minister. Certainly the minister is called by the church, but he is thought of as being little different, in his authority within the church, from any other church member and when he speaks in church meeting, in deacons' meeting or indeed from the pulpit his words carry no more authority than those of anyone else. At worst the minister is even thought of as a kind of "employee" of the church meeting. Such tendencies are serious aberrations of the Baptist doctrine of the ministry. They have resulted, also, in an attempt by ministers to seek after a wrong sort of authority within the church.

These matters cannot be discussed in any detail here. We would simply record what Baptist doctrine has always stated. The classic Baptist Confessions of Faith speak with one voice. The ministry is a gift of God to his Church and its authority is the authority of Christ Himself through His Church. The church is to recognize the minister whom they have called and elected, as a gift from God and as having the call of Christ to the work. They are to respect him as of divine appointment. Daniel Turner in the eighteenth century suggests that a minister

is to rule the flock — and makes clear that to rule does not mean the making of new laws but rightly to interpret and to execute those already made by Christ himself. The authority of the minister which commands respect and obedience is the authority of Christ himself and to accept the minister's "ruling" is not to submit to the dictate of man but to have a reverent regard for the will of Christ.

The understanding of ordination is clearly linked with this, and here again there is much discussion today. There is general agreement that it is the Church which calls a man (or woman) to the ministry and that behind the call of the Church is Jesus Christ, the head of the Church. Similarly it is the Church which ordains. For much of Baptist history it is assumed that such ordination was with laying on of hands, but in the nineteenth century this custom fell into disuse; now, however, it is becoming more and more generally used. At the service of ordination the General Superintendent of the Area in which the service takes place will normally take a leading part. He represents the wider Church at the ceremony, and in his share in the service he is seen to be acting on behalf of a community wider than the local church to which the man is called. To the non-Baptist reader this may seem an unusual and puzzling statement. But no account of Baptists and the ministry, however brief, can omit some reference to the sphere to which Baptists consider a minister is ordained.

It should also be noted that the Union has a carefully prepared list of Accredited Ministers, men whose gifts have been tested and proved and who can be confidently commended to the churches as fit and proper people to perform the tasks of the ministry. For admission to this list a man must be recommended by his local church and Association, and he must also have satisfactorily completed a course of study in one of the denomination's approved colleges or have passed a special examination, usually at the end of a period of three years' intensive study. His name is then included in a list of Probationers and only after a further interview and report can his name be transferred to the list of Accredited Ministers. In all these examinations, interviews and negotiations with the colleges, the Associations and the Union play an important part.

There are two ways of looking at the matter of ordination. Both involve, of course, the Baptist understanding of the Church. We have already defined the Baptist view of the local church and of the one holy catholic Church. When a person is ordained, however, there is often difficulty in deciding exactly what sphere he is ordained. If it is said that he is ordained to the ministry of Christ's Church, this may be true in theory, but in practice it is just not true. The man's ministry will not be accepted throughout the total Church, throughout what Baptists have defined as the one holy catholic Church. Some suggest that he is ordained to the ministry of the word and sacraments, and this is no doubt true, but it is a definition of function rather than a definition of community. The problem of the divided Church becomes acute for many Baptists at this point of ordination. Whilst there are some who are prepared to feel that it is a minor matter of words, there are others who are feeling that the issue involved is quite vital. This latter group maintain that they carry on their ministry in a paradoxical situation. On the one hand their ministry is accepted in practice by other Church traditions than their own, whilst on the other, by some of these same traditions their ministry is said to have, in theory, no validity. The ordination of a Baptist minister thus presents and challenge to ecumenical discussion.

It also presents a challenge to Baptist thinking. This is the other aspect of this question. For there is a body of Baptist opinion which maintains that this sort of discussion is totally irrelevant, as a man can only be a minister of the local

Baptist church which calls him. A Baptist minister, on this view, is the minister of a local Baptist church and that defines exactly his sphere of ministry. There is no doubt that there is some support in Baptist history for this point of view. Thomas Helwys, who may be called perhaps the earliest Baptist layman (though it is doubtful if he would have accepted such terminology!) wrote in 1611z; $\frac{1}{4}$. . . the officers of every congregation are tied by office only to that particular congregation whereof they are chosen." This too would be the position (though for other reasons) of a man like the hyper-Calvinist John Gill, of the eighteenth century. But the trend of Baptist history is against this interpretation. We have shown in our section on the Church that there was an ever broadening definition of the Church — in fact that even to express the matter in that way can give a false impression, for from earliest days many Baptists began their defining of the Church not from the local church primarily, but rather from the holy catholic Church. So it was with the understanding of the ministry. Throughout Baptist history, it can be shown, there has been the recognition that a Baptist minister is the minister of a community far broader in definition than that of the local church. Daniel Turner of Abingdon, in the eighteenth century, could speak of a man being a minister of "the Church in general."

The different understandings on this point remain with Baptists still. The 1948 Statement says:

Many among us hold that since the ministry is the gift of God to the Church and the call to exercise the functions of a minister comes from him, a man who is so called is not only the minister of a local Baptist Church but also a minister of the whole Church of Jesus Christ.

We have already spoken of the difficulty of the latter phrase, of its truth in theory but its manifest untruth in the divided state of the Church. There are some Baptists, therefore, who are feeling that to come to terms with the real situation today it would be a good thing for there to be a clearer recognition of the wider community of Baptists as the Baptist Church. The Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland does, in fact, have a list of recognized ministers and does have a committee responsible for ministerial recognition. As we have said, the General Superintendents of the relevant Baptist Union area do normally play an important part in Ordination Services as representing the wider community. In view of all this, is not the logical thing to ordain men to the ministry of Jesus Christ through the Baptist Church?

This is the question some are asking; we do not, at this point, give an answer. Such a solution would be in keeping with the general movement of Baptists closer together throughout their history, and would provide an answer to those who limit ordination to the Baptist ministry to the ministry of a local church partially on the ground that this is the only ecclesiastically defined Baptist community. At the moment we can but record continuing discussion on this point.

How wise are thy commandments, O Lord, Each one of them applies to somebody I know.

Sam Levenson

Learn from the mistakes of others; you can't live long enough to make them all yourself.

Anonymous

The trouble with being tolerant is that people think you don't understand the problem.

Lawrence J. Peter

Treasurer's Financial Statement

May 1, 1982 to April 6, 1983

May 1, 1982, Balance on hand

\$1182.57

RECEIPTS:

Churches

Amherst	\$500.00
Annapolis Royal	25.00
Bayside	10.00
Berwick	25.00
Billtown	75.00
Bridgewater	50.00
Canning	325.00
First Cornwallis	100.00
Halifax First	550.00
Indian Harbour	10.00
Lawrencetown	100.00
Liverpool	50.00
Milton	25.00
New Ross	35.00
Seabright	25.00
Sydney	600.00
Wolfville	255.00

2760.00
1646.00
40.00
5.80
40.50
\$5674.87

Personal Donations
Bond Interest
Bank Interest
Offering — Annual Meeting

EXPENDITURES:

Bulletin — 3 issues	\$3662.56
Speakers — 2 meetings	375.00
Secretary's Honorarium	150.00
National C.G.I.T.	200.00
Ecumenical Council Dues	
Delegate's Expense	\$ 25.00
Secretary's Expense	37.00
Treasurer's Expense	
Bank Service Charges	62.00
Telephone	82.57
	16.50
	1.75
	8.13

\$4558.51
1116.36
\$5674.87

April 6, 1983, Balance on hand

Evelyn B. Smith,
Treasurer

Historical Sketch

Chester United Baptist Church

Among those who settled Chester in 1761 was the Rev. John Seccombe, a graduate of Harvard College and a Congregational minister. He served as pastor of the local "Dissenters" congregation in Chester, an office which he occupied until the Rev. Joseph Dimock succeeded him in 1793.

Mr. Dimock's ministry continued until his death in 1846. During that time, in 1811, the congregation was re-organized in accord with strictly Baptist principles.

The date of the building of the first place of worship is not known. It was within its walls, however, that the famous Association of 1814 was held. At that time, the Baptists of these seaside provinces embarked on their Home and Foreign Missionary ventures.

The old church was replaced by a new erected at the corner of King and Union streets in 1872. The present structure was completed in 1914.

The parsonage of today was built in 1961 on the site of its predecessor, constructed in 1870, which was torn down to make room for the new.

The congregation has had 30 ministers during its 222-year history. The present incumbent, Dr. M. Allen Gibson, began his work with it in 1947. There are three honorary ministers, Dr. David W. Baker, Dr. G. Gerald Harrop and the Rev. Albert N. Marshall, all of whom are members of the congregation.

The Atlantic Baptist Fellowship looks forward to meeting in this historic church for the Spring Conference, June 17-18.

ABF Spring Conference Program

Place: United Baptist Church, Chester, N.S.

Date: June 17-18, 1983

Theme: Contemporary Medical Ethics

Theme Lecturer: Dr. John Thomas, Professor of Philosophy, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario

Friday, June 17 (At Chester Baptist Church)

7:00 p.m. — Registration and Coffee

7:30 — Lecture and Discussion: "Ethical Issues Surrounding the Beginning of Life"

9:00 — Service of Holy Communion conducted by the Rev. Dr. Allen Gibson and the deacons of the Chester Church.

Saturday — (Both sessions at Bonny Lea Farm, three miles from Chester on Route 14)

9:00 a.m. — Devotional

9:15 — Lecture: "Ethical Issues Surrounding the End of Life"

10:15 — Coffee Break

11:15 — Reactors and Discussion

11:30 — Tour by Dr. Allen Gibson of the Bonny Lea Farm, concluding at the dining hall for lunch.

1:15 p.m. — Devotional

1:30 — Annual Meeting of the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship — election of officers, treasurer's report, old and new business.

3:00 — Closing.

Overnight Accomodation

Those persons who are attending the conference and need overnight accomodation will make their own arrangements. For their guidance, the following list of motels in the Chester area is given.

Phone 275-3567

The Windjammer Motel, Chester 275-3385

Casa Blanca Guest House, Chester 275-4688

Stoney Creek Guest House, Chester (Bed and Breakfast) 275-4542

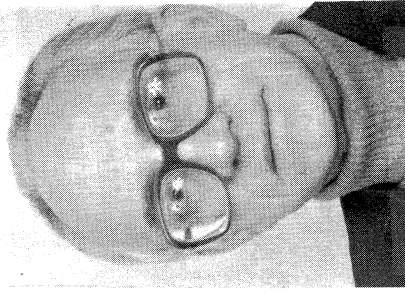
Twin Oaks (Clifton Oxner), Chester Basin, (Bed and Breakfast)

Introducing our Guest Speaker

JOHN EDWARD THOMAS received his early post-secondary education at McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, receiving from that university the B.A. and B.D. degrees. Later he studied at Duke University in U.S.A. receiving the M.A. degree in 1958 and his Ph.D. in 1964. The topic for his doctoral thesis was "On the Meaningfulness of Religious Utterance." During the course of his academic studies, and throughout his professional career, he has been the recipient of many prizes, scholarships and awards, including a Canada Council Pre-doctoral award, a Commonwealth study award at the University of London and, one of particular interest to us, Humanities and Social Science Research Council grant for the study of "The Concept of the Quality of Life in Modern Medicine."

Since 1959, Dr. Thomas has been teaching at McMaster University in the Department of Philosophy, being chairman of the Department from 1966 to 1972. He presently is professor in that department. He is the author of many articles in professional and academic journals — by far, too many to be mentioned here. He has written and published several books, one of which is "Matters of Life and Death: Crisis in Biomedical Ethics", and, in the process of preparation, another book on the related theme, this one entitled "Bitter Sweet: Decision Making in Bioethics."

By means of this all-too brief introduction, it will be seen that Dr. John Thomas, through his deep concern for humanity, and, as a result of study and research, comes to us one well qualified to give us leadership around the theme of this conference, "Contemporary Medical Ethics." The ABF extends a cordial welcome to Dr. Thomas.



To err is human, but when the eraser wears out before the pencil, you are overdoing it.

Anonymous

To clasp the hands in prayer is the beginning of an uprising against the disorder of the world.

Karl Barth

Coming Events

June 17-18, 1983 — THE SPRING CONFERENCE OF THE ATLANTIC BAPTIST FELLOWSHIP AT CHESTER, N.S.

July 24-August 10, 1983 — The Assembly of the World Council of Churches at Vancouver, B.C. Let us pray for this assembly, as representatives from over 300 different churches, and from countries all around the world, gather to explore the theme, "Jesus Christ, the Life of the World". Watch for reports of this most significant gathering.

August 22-24, 1983 — Annual Convention of the United Baptist Women's Missionary Union.

August 24-28, 1983 — Annual Convention of the United Baptist Convention of the Atlantic Provinces.

Both of these gatherings will be at Mount Allison University, Sackville, N.B.

September 6-8, 1983 — 17th Atlantic Ecumenical Conference — Wolfville, N.S. Sponsored by the Acadia Divinity College and the Wolfville Inter-Church Council, the theme will be "Jesus Christ the Life of the World — Vancouver Follow-Up." The principal theme speakers will be Mrs. Heather Johnson, (past president of the Canadian Council of Churches and Vice-President of the World Council of Churches), who will speak on world issues facing the churches, and Father Thomas Ryan (of the Montreal Centre for Ecumenical Studies), who will deal with issues confronting the Canadian churches.

Further information from the secretary of the AEC, Rev. Dr. M. R. B. Love, P. O. Box 68, Wolfville, N.S. B0P 1X0. Tel. 542-5264.

October 28-29, 1983 — THE FALL CONFERENCE OF THE ATLANTIC BAPTIST FELLOWSHIP AT PORT WILLIAMS, N.S. Details in the next Bulletin.

Church News—From Near and Far

Inter-Church Committee

The Inter-Church Committee has appointed interim staff members: Mme. Marie Payette-Falls and the Rev. Dr. Howard M. Mills. Over the next seven months they will prepare plans for the future of the Inter-Church Committee. The ICC/CIE is the successor to earlier co-operative committees of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Canadian Council of Churches. Its task is "to provide better opportunities in the churches for fellowship and renewal, consultation and dialogue, joint action and mission in our quest to understand and express more visibly our unity in Christ."

Mme. Payette-Falls is a native of Montreal. She is currently completing the requirements for an M.A. degree at Concordia University in Montreal.

Dr. Mills served as a senior national staff officer of the United Church of Canada. He had experience in ecumenism in North America and in the World Council of Churches. He will serve as an educational consultant/advisor at the 6th Assembly of the WCC during its meeting in Vancouver in the summer of 1983.

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The members of the Inter-Church Committee are: the Anglican Church of Canada, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Christian Church (Disciples), the Lutheran Church of America (Canada Section), the Presbyterian Church in Canada, and the United Church of Canada. Other churches which maintain close relationships with the Committee are: the Christian Reformed, Greek Orthodox, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada, the Salvation Army, and the Mennonite Central Committee.

It is anticipated that the work of Mme. Payette-Falls and Dr. Mills will result in a specific proposal for a new, broadly representative association of churches to be formed in 1984.

Council Communicator

Nuclear Buildup Opposed

Six Canadian church leaders have signed a letter addressed to the churches of Canada urging their nation's Christians "to write to your Member of Parliament to express your conviction that the moral and ethical costs associated with complicity in the nuclear arms race are too high." The open letter is a follow-up to a meeting the churchmen had last December with Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau at which they protested Canadian industry's participation in the building of the MX and cruise missiles as well as their government's support of efforts by the United States to build up its nuclear arsenal. The six added that the nuclear issue had been given "particular urgency" by the proposal to test the cruise missile on Canadian soil. The decision to test or not to test will, they said, "stand as an important symbol" of Canada's position in the armaments debate.

The six signers are Robert Binhammer, president of the Lutheran Church in America-Canada Section; Archbishop Henri Legare, president of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops; Russell Legge, president of the Canadian Council of Churches; Clarke MacDonald, moderator of the United Church of Canada; E. W. Scott, primate of the Anglican Church of Canada; and Wayne Smith, moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Canada.

The Canadian Churchman

Editor's Note: Here are two stories of Canadian Churches joining together for joint action and planning around some of the great issues facing our country and the world at this time — issues on which the Church must speak. A serious question arises: **WHERE ARE THE BAPTISTS? HAVE WE NOTHING TO SAY ON SUCH MATTERS?**

Churches Offer Cheap Meals

SYDNEY, N.S.

A coalition of church organizations in the Cape Breton city of Sydney went into the restaurant business early in the new year in order to provide low-cost meals to poor people.

A restaurant called Loaves and Fishes opens four hours daily, every day of the week, serving casseroles, tea and coffee. Patrons pay for their meals with vouchers obtained from clergy or the city social service department.

Rev. Melvin Findlay of St. George's Anglican Church said participating

clergy ask for a small donation, according to their assessment of a person's needs.

He said almost all of Sydney's churches and synagogues share in the service, which is paid from donations and staffed by volunteers.

The restaurant occupies the premises of a popular pub that went out of business late in 1982.

The Anglican priest said he hopes the restaurant atmosphere will stop any stigma of handout. "We're killing ourselves to stay away from the idea of a soup kitchen. It's meant not only for those who are completely without income but also for those who can use the service away from that state."

Canadian Churchman

Opposed to Pool

Several Canadian Churches are urging members of Parliament to follow their consciences, not party lines, when voting on the bill that could establish a government-run sports pool.

The United Church, the Salvation Army, the Baptist Federation and the Council of Christian Reformed Churches oppose Bill C-95, calling the bill another example of government-sponsored gambling.

In calling for the non-partisan vote, the Rev. Robert Lindsey, Church in Society officer for the United Church, says the churches hope to appeal mostly to Liberal MPs who oppose the bill but feel they must follow the party line and vote for it.

The United Church Observer

Coming Merger

A joint council of three denominations in India — the Church of South India, the Church of North India and the Mar Thoma Church — has appointed three commissions to further its work in the areas of theology, mission, justice and peace. It has also recommended the "Church of India" as a common name for the three denominations, which are already in communion with each other. The precise date when the actual merger will take place has not been determined. The three denominations account for about 10 per cent of the country's Christian population of approximately 25 million.

The Christian Century

Australian Church Count

The number of people in Australia who claim no religious affiliation rose by 2.5 per cent between 1976 and 1981, according to the country's 1981 census. Figures issued by the Bureau of Census indicate that 1,556,618 Australians (10.8 per cent of the population) said they had no religious affiliation. This compares with 8.6 per cent in 1976 and 6.7 per cent in 1971. A further 11.4 per cent either did not answer the census question, which is voluntary, or gave answers which were rejected as inadequate. However, 11,133,301 Australians (76.4 per cent of the population) described themselves as Christians; 197,273 (1.4 per cent) said they follow non-Christian religions.

Of Australia's major denominations, only the Roman Catholic Church has shown growth. Its membership of 3,786,505 has almost overtaken the Anglican membership of 3,810,469. The third largest denomination is the Uniting Church formed in 1977 as a union of the Methodist Church with major elements of the Presbyterian and Congregational churches. Its membership is 712,709.

The Christian Century

Dr. Kenneth MacMillan, who for the past twenty-six years has served as the General Secretary of The Canadian Bible Society, retired from that position on April 1 of this year. During his period of service, great progress has been made in the work of the Society, and much of the credit for this goes to the wise and devoted leadership of Dr. MacMillan. Even as we express our appreciation to the retiring secretary, we extend a cordial welcome to his successor, coupled with a pledge of support, to the new secretary, the Rev. William Russell, a Presbyterian minister, whose last church was in Montreal.

New Bible Translations

The Canadian Bible Society reports that the complete Bible has now been published in 279 languages and the complete New Testament in 830 languages.

At least one complete book of the Bible has been published in 1,763 languages, which means scriptures have reached 97 per cent of the world's language groups. In 1982, scriptures appeared in 24 additional languages.

Last year's work included translations in two languages that up to then had no complete Bible: users of Zambia's Ichinamwanga language and Brunei's Lun Bawang.

Canadian Churchman

Anglican Conference to Shape Disarmament Policy: A two-day conference November 11-12 provided an opportunity for the Anglican Church of Canada to reflect biblically and theologically on the arms race and Canada's involvement, and to consider models for a new approach to peace making. The sessions were held in Burnaby, British Columbia.

Baptists Confer On Peace Making: Baptists met at a Conference in December at the Ganaraska Woods Farm, near Port Hope, Ontario, to share their concerns on Peace and Disarmament. A "Newsletter for Baptist Peacemakers," is published by David Crone, 812 Hortop St., Oshawa, Ontario L1G 4P1.

The Council Communicator

Eight Hundredth Anniversary of Birth of St. Francis of Assisi: Franciscans in Canada closed the 800th Anniversary observances with a peace rally in Toronto. At the rally Francis' "Letter to the Rulers of the People" was read:

"Embrace the God of us all and His word wherever it surfaces. Enter into His plan of liberating all peoples from everything that oppresses them and obstructs their development as human beings. Do not grow tired of working for peace among all people. Help remove unjust social structures and patterns of exploitation. Uphold the rights and dignity of the human person. Foster the creation of a society where human life is cherished and where all peoples of the planet can enjoy its gifts, which God created for all, in the spirit of love, justice and equality."

(How relative is this 800-year-old message to our present age — and so needed at this time! — Editor)

Equal Status

The Protestant Christian Batak Church, largest church body in Indonesia, has voted to allow women to preach and to give the benediction at church services. The 1.8 million-member church has thereby declared that no longer is there any difference between men and women in the clergy, church council members and evangelists.

The Christian Century

Canadian Christians and Jews Discuss Political Roles

"Canada is the only country where the national leaders of the Jewish community, and the Protestant and Catholic Churches meet together on a regular, ongoing basis to dialogue on religious matters. We are unique in this" said Bishop Eugene LaRocque, President of the National Tripartite Liaison Committee of the Canadian Jewish Congress, the Canadian Council of Churches and the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops.

An example of this unique dialogue was the annual seminar of the Committee held recently in Toronto. Eighty Christian and Jewish representatives from across Canada came together to study the question "What are the rights and responsibilities of religious leaders in the political arena?"

Each presentation was followed by workshop discussions to enable the participant to discuss and compare their varying viewpoints and areas of possible future co-operation between Christians and Jews in Canada.

"This annual seminar is a study session rather than an action-taking body," explained Rabbi Robert Sternberg of the Canadian Jewish Congress. "What each of us learn here, we take back to our respective groups and study further. In turn this influences the future actions and thinking of all three sponsoring bodies" he said.

The Council Communication

World Council of Churches

Mass deportation of illegal immigrants from Nigeria in February, and the accompanying human chaos in West Africa, has resulted in immediate response of aid from the World Council of Churches.

The expulsion order, resulting from a faltering oil resource economy in Nigeria, had an immediate effect on unemployed and unskilled immigrants, who were told to leave Nigeria within two weeks. About 500,000 were estimated to have moved westward across the countries of Benin and Togo to reach their native Ghanas.

The mass expulsion has caused instant crisis of food, lodging and medical care in all three countries, notably in Ghana around the capital city of Accra.

According to the report from Mr. Maro, the Christian Council of Ghana asked WCC general secretary Rev. Philip Potter for food and medicine and asked WCC member churches to press the Nigerian government for more time. The WCC has also offered help to people in Benin and Togo, and to the Nigerian Christian Council.

The WCC in turn asked its membership to collectively produce U.S. \$1 million for food, medicine, blankets and temporary shelter.

Canadian Churchman

By swallowing evil words unsaid, no yet harmed his stomach.

Anonymous

Building more nuclear bombs in the pursuit of peace is akin to making pornographic movies in the pursuit of chastity.

R. Soucy

The three greatest words in the language are giving, forgiving and thanking, and the greatest of these is thanksgiving.

W. J. B. Martin

No grand idea was ever born in a conference, but a lot of foolish ideas have died there.

F. Scott Fitzgerald

A simple, childlike faith in a Divine Friend solves all the problems that come to us by land or sea.

Helen Keller

Man cannot live without faith because the prime requisite in life's adventure is courage, and the sustenance of courage is faith.

Harry Emerson Fosdick

Faith in man, if it is to stand the daily assaults which contemporary history makes upon it, depends on faith in God.

Halford E. Luccock

The atomic bomb is here to stay; the one question is whether we human beings are here to stay, too.

Harry Emerson Fosdick

"We cannot act in the future tense — we can only contemplate. And because the future is unknown, we are forced to contemplate a universe of alternatives. But here is the crucial point: We contemplate not only possible options but also preferred options. This involves deciding, choosing. And once we cross this magic-like barrier something dramatic happens. We are instantly transported back to the world of the present tense where we must consider the impact of our day-to-day actions on that future. Hence, in a tremendously real sense, the future is always now. And to deal responsibly with the present requires contemplating the future and deciding in which directions we would prefer to move. This is freedom in its most fundamental dimension."

Edward B. Lindaman
in *Thinking in the Future Tense*

God's Voice in the Garden

Yes, God is good — in earth and sky
From ocean-depths and spreading wood,
Ten thousand voices ever cry,
'God made us all, and God is good.'

Ten thousand voices! — a different voice for every person? If not literally true, it certainly is true that he does not speak to all people in the same way. One person may hear him in a place and way that may seem quite unlikely to another. Some of us hear him speak in the garden.

The garden — back-breaking toil, aching muscles, weeds never-ending and seemingly indestructible, soiled clothes and dirty hands, flies, bugs and the rest. God in the garden? Where more unlikely?

The garden — the mysterious germination of a seed, a new life, growth and development, the flowers and, in due course, the fruit and vegetables. God in the garden? Where more likely?

These are not two gardens, but one garden seen from two points of view. There is not one garden in which one works and another for enjoyment. The work and the joy belong to the same garden. "God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and care for it." The joys of Eden are for those who share the work of Eden. Every garden must be tilled and kept, and that means work. This is part of our stewardship, to care for the earth that God has given us that it may be productive.

The garden and the farm show, perhaps more clearly than anything else, both the necessity of human toil and, at the same time, the ineffectiveness of human labour without the something that comes from another source upon which success depends. Some call it by one name, some by another. Some of us find that source to be God the Creator as he constantly renews the earth that he has made. Gardens, and many other things, come about not by either God or man alone, but by both working together. God gives us the raw material out of which gardens are made, but he expects us to "fill it and care for it." This I hear God saying as I work in my garden.

God speaks to us, in the garden, of life, and shows himself as the source of life. This is made plain in the germination of the seed, the bursting of the bud and the growth of the plant. It all seems so ordinary. We are so accustomed to it. We even understand it, or think we do. We may describe the process in scientific terms, but God alone is the author of the life hidden in that little seed.

God speaks to us in the garden of beauty — so generous is he for all he gives for our enjoyment. As a poet has said: "Not even the weeds do multiply without blossoms." Surely God might have done it another way, but this is the way he does it! All of this and more is the reward for those who work in the garden. To experience this beauty and joy, is to know that a tired muscle, or a thorn-pierced finger, is a small price to pay.

God, speaking in and through the garden, gives us the assurance of his continual provision for our sustenance. "While earth lasts seedtime and harvest . . . shall never cease." Every garden is evidence of the dependability of this promise. "Yes, God is good" — his voice from the garden makes this plain to those who will look and listen.