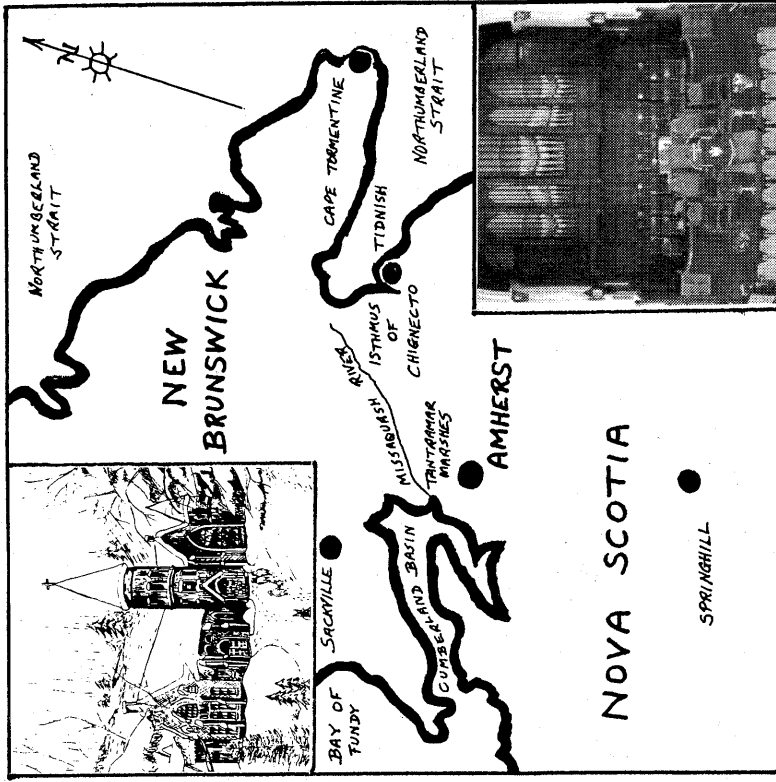


BULLETIN

of the
Atlantic Baptist Fellowship

May 1987

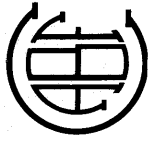


SPRING ASSEMBLY FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, AMHERST, NOVA SCOTIA 12-13 JUNE 1987

Theme: The Concept of the Historical Jesus
and its Theological Significance

Special Speaker: Rev. Dr. Dan O. Via, Jr.
Professor of New Testament, Duke University,
Durham, North Carolina, U.S.A.

For full particulars see Page 16



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: The Rev. Byron Corkum, P.O. Box 68, Lawrencetown, N.S., B0S 1M0.

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, Mrs. Evelyn Smith (address above). Receipts for income tax purposes will be mailed.

*Frankness is always commendable;
but outspokenness upon delicate and unsettled problems,
in the ground of which cherished convictions are rooted,
ought to be tempered with consideration.*

— Asa Gray, Harvard biologist, 1810-88

EDITORIAL COMMENT

Publications such as our *Bulletin* are entirely dependent on the gracious cooperation of the contributors who allow us the privilege of printing their material. Five such have supported this edition and we must thank them for their services which are given absolutely gratuitously.

The Reverend Frank H. Sinnott, BA (Th), BD, DD (Acadia), has written the delightful little article on page 5 in which he scores a telling point. One of the most respected Baptist ministers in the Atlantic region, and after a lifetime of service to the churches of the Atlantic Baptist Convention, especially in Prince Edward Island, Frank now lives in well-earned retirement in Port Williams, Nova Scotia.

On the 14th day of February 1987, Dr. J.R.C. Perkin, MA, DPhil (Oxon.), DD (McMaster), the President and Professor of Religious Studies at Acadia University, read a paper to the annual meeting of the Nova Scotia District of the Canadian Bible Society in Truro, Nova Scotia. Entitled, "The Bible Then — The Bible Now," the paper will be found below and read with profit.

The Reverend John E. Boyd, BA, MDiv (Acadia), Senior Minister of the First Baptist Church, Amherst, Nova Scotia and President of the Atlantic Ecumenical Council, travelled to Wolfville, Nova Scotia, on Monday 16th February 1987 and addressed a well-attended meeting of the Wolfville Inter-Church Council on "The Ecumenical Church and Young People." See the paper printed below.

A fourth paper in the series on the great Theologians of the Church, this time on Thomas Aquinas, has been given us by the Reverend Professor Thomas A. Mabeey, BA (St. Mary's), MTh (Ottawa), LTh (St. Paul's, Ottawa), a priest of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Halifax and Professor of Systematic Theology and Ethics at the Atlantic School of Theology, where he has taught since 1973. We are greatly indebted to him for a most helpful paper.

This edition's sermon is the work of the Reverend Malcolm F. Harlow, BA (Dalhousie), BD (Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Philadelphia), DMin (Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky). It is a most appropriate meditation for Lent and was preached during the Lenten season, on 9th March 1986, in Dr. Harlow's First Baptist Church, Truro, N.S.

The *Comment* feature deals with two issues that will probably be considered at Convention this August, namely, the proposal that the Convention should affiliate with the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, and the possible alteration of the rules of procedure for Ordination. The views expressed in this feature are entirely those of the contributor and are not necessarily those of the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship. A third issue, that of the ordination of women, has been sufficiently ventilated in the April 1987 issue of the *Atlantic Baptist* and more need not be said here. It is refreshing to see in that issue that the theologians have been consulted on the topic. It is to be hoped that this departure will persist in the future.

We are delighted to have a leading American New Testament scholar, in the person of the Reverend Dan O. Via, Jr., BS, DLitt (Davidson College), BD (Southern Baptist Theological Seminary), PhD (Duke), Professor of New Testament at the Duke Divinity School, lecture at the Spring Assembly of the ABF (see full particulars on page 16) on the topic, "The Concept of the Historical Jesus and its Theological Significance." We hope to see you in Amherst in June — don't miss it!

In conclusion, three brief quotations from Jane Austen (1775-1817):

I am by no means convinced that we ought not to be Evangelicals

I do not like the Evangelicals
I dislike noisy religion

**ATLANTIC BAPTIST FELLOWSHIP
FINANCIAL STATEMENT: 1 MAY 1986 to 31
DECEMBER 1987**

1 May 1986 Balance in hand	\$2058.89
RECEIPTS	
Churches:	
Amherst.....	\$500.00
Annapolis Royal	100.00
Avonport	25.00
Berwick	25.00
Bridgewater	75.00
Canning	90.00
Cornwallis First	100.00
Halifax First	450.00
Indian Harbour	10.00
Lawrencetown	100.00
Lockhartville	10.00
New Ross	35.00
Pereaux	125.00
Seabright	60.00
Sydney	900.00
Wolfville	292.50
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Personal Donations (85 donors)	2897.50
Interest on bond	2487.35
Offerings	80.00
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	137.40
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	\$7661.14

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	\$3314.27
	400.00
	282.65
	487.95
	281.40
	691.42
	25.00
	1.35
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	\$5484.04
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	\$2177.10

31 DECEMBER 1986 Balance on hand

THE BAKKER DEBACLE

In a recently published, open letter to the public on the demise of Jim and Tammy Bakker from the PTL Television Show, the correspondent wrote: "As a Christian raised in the evangelical traditions I would like to appeal to thoughtful Christians everywhere and say enough is enough. For too long we have been hesitant to speak out against the apparent abuses of high profile TV evangelists. In my view, the Bakkers have demonstrated their inability to lead any responsible Christian ministry. The opulent lifestyle, the constant begging and badgering for money, the imbalanced emphasis on health and wealth theology, the over-simplification of complex human and spiritual problems and the Madison Avenue approach to Christianity has exhausted my patience...."

WHAT IS THE MARK OF THE CHRISTIAN?

by Frank H. Sinnott

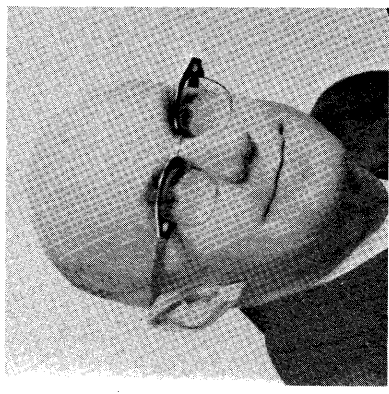
Augustine of Hippo (354-430) is quoted as having said: "The sign of a true disciple is not baptism but love." Probably he was protesting about the commonly held misconception of Christianity that it is a matter of rites and ceremonies rather than a matter of the quality of life. As I understand it, throughout the history of the Church the tendency has been to over-stress the outward and visible. That's why in the early Church the custom arose of baptising infants lest they die unbaptized and become objects of God's wrath. Similarly, and for the same reason, it became the practice for a person to be baptized (have a few drops of water splashed on him) on his deathbed. The mark of the Christian has far too commonly been taken to be a matter of ceremonies rather than the living of the life of love.

We are convinced that the evidence of the true disciple is not found in the performance of an external rite but in the internal matter of a loving spirit that issues in loving acts. Surely it has little to do with a ceremony, but everything to do with Christian walk, or life. Jesus (as recorded in Mark 12:28-34, with parallels in Matthew 22:34-40 and Luke 10:25-28) quotes Deuteronomy 6:4-5 and Leviticus 19:18 in teaching that love to God and neighbour is what God requires above all else from us mortal beings, his creatures. The person who loves has fulfilled all the demands of God's law.

Dr. E. Y. Mullins, the distinguished Southern Baptist leader, wrote in his book *The Kingdom of God*: "Christianity is not a set of legal enactments (laws or statutes) put down in a book, like those of Mohammed in the Koran, to be obeyed as external statutes. . . . Primarily Christianity is a relation between persons, God and man." Our holy faith then is obedience to the inner law of love, not obedience to external rules. Paul's "more excellent way" is the way of love (see 1 Corinthians 12:13b-13.13). Dr. Mullins points out our discipleship begins with faith and continues on with hope and love — which are all spiritual qualities.

It would seem that all too often our dear church folk think of the Bible as a collection of rules to be obeyed. Perhaps that attitude can be seen reflected in the recent story of Judge Bartlett of Nova Scotia, a family court judge, who was recently dismissed from his post for lecturing the women who came before him about what he took to be Christian teaching on human sexuality that is based on Bible texts!

In conclusion I would like to quote from a letter Quinton Hogg wrote: "I do not care what denomination you belong to; I do not care very much what special creed you profess, but I do care beyond all expression that the result of that creed in your daily life should be to make you a power for good amongst your fellowmen. We hear much talk about creeds, professions of faith and the like, but I want you to remember that when God started to write a creed for us, he did it, not in words that might change their meaning, but he set before us a life, as though to teach us that whereas theology was a science which could be argued about, religion was a *life* and could only be *lived*."



Frank H. Sinnott

COMMENT

THE EVANGELICAL FELLOWSHIP OF CANADA

Should Convention join this group as our Western Convention has done? Speaking for myself and only for myself I think it would be wise for us not to. But before I state some reasons for this opinion, which many may well find ungenerous, I had better define some terms remembering the philosophy of Humpty Dumpty in *Alice Through the Looking Glass* who declared: "When I use a word it means just what I desire it to mean, neither more nor less."

The word "evangelical" is a slippery one meaning many things. As we use it in North America it covers several Protestant Christian groups that come under the general umbrella of "Conservative". Broadly speaking all such conservative groups stem from the teachings of the Post-Reformation Protestant Scholastics such as Francis Turretin, 1632-1687 (for evidence of this see Rogers, J.B. and D.K. McKim, *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible*, Harper and Row, 1979), and, placing supreme and absolute reliance upon the doctrine of the infallibility (another slippery word that needs care in handling) of the Bible, stress such dogmas as the Holy Trinity, the Virgin Birth, the physical resurrection and personal Return of Christ, and the penal substitutionary theory of the Atonement, all of which are thought to flow necessarily from the basic dogma of biblicism.

The conservative group shows a spectrum of theological opinion from Hard-shell Fundamentalism on the extreme right through to Neo-Evangelicalism on the extreme left. The word "evangelical" covers such groups as: Classical Evangelicalism (Billy Graham, *Christianity Today*, Wheaton College, the National Association of Evangelicals, the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada); Charismatic Evangelicals (Old-line Pentecostals); Anabaptist Evangelicals; New (or Neo-) Evangelicals. We should remember there have been many attempts to classify the groupings of conservatives, the one above is by Carl Armerding (Regent College, Vancouver) in the March 1987 issue of *Ecumenism* (a most valuable issue dealing with Evangelicals and mostly written by them). Clark Pinnock, of McMaster, in the same magazine, has a somewhat different classification. The *TIME* magazine issue of 2 September 1985 has another classification, which has received the imprimatur of Billy Graham as being accurate. This lists under the general heading of American Conservative Protestantism the following seven groups: Pentecostals, Neo-Pentecostals, Mainline Evangelicals, Southern Baptists, Non-Mainline Evangelicals, New Fundamentalists, Old Fundamentalists.

According to the 1984 *Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches*, the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC), formed in 1964, has shown spectacular growth in membership, nearly doubling its numbers between 1981 (300,000) and 1984 (525,000). It claims the support of 9 denominations and 30 organizations in addition to the individual membership. Its declared purpose is to unite theologically conservative Christians in Canada of all shades of opinion to bear their testimony "to the Church and to the world" of Christian truth, morals and social action as it understands such things. Pinnock writes: "The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada is a loose coalition of small conservative denominations like Associated Gospel, Christian and Missionary Alliance, the Pentecostal Assemblies, Mennonite Brethren, Free Methodists, as well as single congregations and even individuals who want to belong."

The EFC's Statement of Faith in several articles begins, significantly, not with God (as do all the great creeds of the Church) but with scripture: "The Holy Scriptures as originally given by God, divinely inspired, infallible,

entirely trustworthy; the only supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct." The remaining articles deal with God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the blood atonement, the resurrection of the lost unto damnation.

It seems clear to me from the above that the EFC is located in the conservative section of the spectrum of Christianity and, as such, despite protestations to the contrary, is necessarily divisive. I would hope the Convention will not elect to join it and thus tie many of us who are Baptists to that particular wing of the Church. Surely we need the inclusive approach to the unity of the Church, the approach of the ecumenical movement.

I have only space left in which to deal with what I think is my fundamental objection, namely, that such a move is regressive, a putting of the clock back, a step in the wrong direction. We do not want to go back to anything, least of all to the cosy "comfortable pew" of the old out-dated Protestant orthodoxy which is so ignorant of Biblical scholarship and the development of Christian doctrine. We are constantly being exhorted to go back. The Papacy want us to go back behind Vatican II to medievalism; the Anglicans want us to go back to the theology of Saint Cyprian of Carthage; the Liberals want us to go back to the rationalism of the Enlightenment; the Conservatives want us to go back to Post-Reformation Protestant Scholasticism. I want us, with the greatest respect for the Bible and Church History and the History of Christian Dogma, to go forward. What the future holds for us nobody knows. What the shape of the new paradigm, which is in the travail of birth now, will be (to use the thought and language of Hans Kung) I do not know, but I do know that the genius of our faith is that we must ever go forward, relying on the Spirit, praying and thinking, conferring with the best minds of the entire modern Church and listening to the wisdom of our age. Like Abraham of old we have to go forward in faith not knowing whither we go.

SHOULD THERE BE CHANGES IN THE CONVENTION'S RULES FOR ORDINATION?

In response to representations made to the Convention Council by some who wished to see a greater degree of local (associational) participation in the examination of candidates for ordination and that more time should be given to the in-depth questioning of such candidates, a Convention committee was set up which reported recently (see the article, "Report of Study on Regulations and Procedures for Ordination," published in the *Atlantic Baptist*, December 1986, pages 49-51). This committee, we understand, viewed with concern the possibility of increased emphasis upon regional interests at the expense of Convention-wide interests. It felt that Convention should maintain its historic right to determine who shall be accredited in the eyes of the whole denomination.

The following resolution was passed unanimously at the annual business meeting of the Wolfville United Baptist Church on 28 January 1987;

"Inasmuch as the present system of examination of candidates for ordination in the Atlantic United Baptist Convention gives an equal opportunity to all candidates from all our Associations to be examined by the same body of people representative of our whole Convention, and, questioned by the same qualified examiner, thus giving an ordination accepted by all areas of the Convention and Federation,

And, whereas adjustments have already been made in the actual examination of candidates giving sufficient time for questions to be asked by the members of the examining council,

We request that the present method of examination of candidates be retained."

YET ANOTHER ENGLISH VERSION OF THE BIBLE

So many translations of the scriptures exist today that one wonders if there can be justification for yet another. In 1970 the *New American Bible* (NAB) was published, the first done by American Roman Catholic scholars based on the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts rather than on the traditional Latin text. Some scholars like it for its clarity but, although 15 million copies have been distributed, many, scholars and laity, thought it lacking in style and dignity and called for a revision. The Revised NAB New Testament is now available which has tried to remove mistakes and colloquialisms and pay some attention to the modern demand towards more inclusive language. The new version sounds very close to that of the *Revised Standard Version*, so one wonders why the Roman Catholic churches could not simply adopt that Protestant-produced version, in the spirit of ecumenism, particularly since it is available in an approved Roman Catholic edition. Does the opinion of the chairman of the board of editors that the revised edition is "slightly better" than the RSV justify the labour and expense of producing it?

CHURCH COOPERATION IN MONCTON, NEW BRUNSWICK

In response to an approach by the Downtown Ministerial Association, following the closure of the CN Locomotive Repair Shop, the City of Moncton declared Wednesday, 7th January 1987, to be a "Day of Prayer for Moral Renewal and Economic Recovery." Thirty-two city churches were opened for prayer that day for an hour between noon and 1:00 p.m. The churches in the greater Moncton area also participated in the time of prayer. The Reverend Edgar Roberts, the Minister of Visitation at the First Baptist Church, Moncton, said there was a good gathering at his church, where the occasion was covered by the local TV crew and subsequently seen widely in the Atlantic region.

CLERGY STRESS

Research carried out in England, resulting in a well-received TV programme, about clergy stress among Anglican priests reveals that many clergy were suffering from a degree of stress with which they were unable to cope, often resulting in break-down either nervous or marital. The rising clergy divorce rate is causing great concern — now two per diocese per year. The report found that the trouble lay not primarily with the clergy or their families but with their flocks who expected far too much from them in terms of super-sanctity, work, living accommodations and stipend. Although it was realised that the Bishops could and should do more to minister to their clergy families, it was stressed that ultimately the onus for the health of the ministerial family really rests on the individual churches.

CONGRATULATIONS TO: —

- Dr. Athol Roberts, Charlottetown, P.E.I., who will assume the presidency of the Canadian Medical Society this August.
- Reverend Robert C. Berry, General Secretary, Canadian Baptist Overseas Mission Board, on being awarded Acadia's honorary D.D. this spring convocation.
- Most Reverend Colin Campbell, Roman Catholic Bishop of Antigonish, awarded Saint Mary's honorary D.Litt degree in recognition of his distinguished services to the community, his part in the foundation of the Atlantic School of Theology and for his role in communicating the new ideas generated by the Vatican II Council of his Church.

by James R. C. Perkin

I. THE BIBLE IN THE EARLY CHURCH

The earliest Christians were Jews whose sacred writings, in decreasing order of sanctity, consisted of the Law, the Prophets and a less certainly defined collection led by the Psalms called the Writings. These Jewish Christians searched the scriptures for passages which might be linked to the story of Jesus.

As the generation which had known Jesus died away, and as Christianity won converts in distant lands and among Gentile communities, there grew a need for written records. Jews were trained to remember teaching but Gentiles needed something written. So the oral tradition of the words of Jesus, spoken in Aramaic, were changed into the Greek language and written down, eventually giving rise to the four gospels.

As Paul and other missionaries made their journeys and established Christian communities, they were forced to keep in touch by letter. The Corinthian letters illustrate the point clearly.

It is important to see that the New Testament came into being as a result of the needs of the churches. Different churches used different documents; there was no general agreement. It took over 300 years of growth to produce the collection, more or less recognised by all, that we have and use today.

So we see that for the first 400 years of the Church, the key question concerning the Bible was, What books should make it up?



James R. C. Perkin

II. THE BIBLE AND THE REFORMATION

In the Western Church, up to the time of the Reformation (say c.1500 to c.1650) there was no question about the content of the Bible. It consisted of 82 documents in Latin. Nonetheless the Reformers felt free to criticize some books while praising others. Luther did not think much of Esther, 2 Maccabees, James or Revelation. But whatever they thought about the canon, the great Reformers — Luther, Calvin, Zwingli — made it central in preaching, teaching and worship. Their scholarly predecessors had recognized, in addition to the literal meaning, three other kinds of interpretation: the *moral* (believers should follow the rules of morality found in scripture); the *mystical* (believers should use the Bible as a vehicle for the awareness of the nature and mind of God); and the *allegorical* (people and events in scripture really mean people and events in another time-frame and place, usually that of the interpreter). The Reformers insisted on the primacy of the literal meaning, asking, What does the Book say? and as a corollary to that, they took steps to enable the people to read the Bible for themselves, in their own language, and decide for themselves what the Bible said.

III. THE BIBLE IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

We have no great problem about the canon today, realizing that the issue is never fixed and can always be reopened. Neither do we have difficulty about the literal meaning of scripture; in general we identify with the Reformers' position that the Bible should speak for itself and be explained,

not explained away. Our problem is, What do we do with passages that seem outdated or contradictory or obscure? And being well aware of the difference between our world and the world of Bible times, we wonder whether some things can be applied directly. Not being able to accept a fundamentalist view of the infallibility of the Bible I would summarize my approach in two ways:

First, I worship God not the Bible. The Bible tells us about God, points to God, but it is not God. I think of the Bible as the Record of God's Word to be discerned by successive generations for themselves.

Second, I try to distinguish between what I call the *topical* authority of the Bible and its *general* authority. Most of Paul's observations about women, for instance, belong to the category of the topical and should not be taken as rules for today. But others of his statements, such as in Christ there is neither male nor female, come under the category of general authority and we should obey them. Some may object to this view feeling that this means that as the generations pass there can be no certainty about what passages have general authority. I recognize that and regard it as an advantage. Any view which circumscribes the activity of God, or the scope of the human mind, or the relevance of the Bible, or the task of the Church is not in keeping with the dynamic tradition in which we stand.

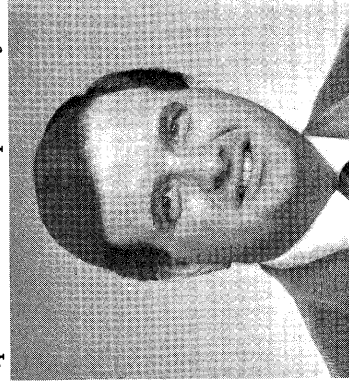
As I see it the challenge is not to try to get back into the past, pretending that we can ignore 200 years of biblical scholarship. The challenge is to keep working, studying, praying and thinking. For the Bible is not only a collection of documents which was important *then*; it is important *now*, and will so remain in the future.

THE ECUMENICAL CHURCH AND THE YOUNG PEOPLE

by John E. Boyd

The relationship between young people and the Church has always interested me; initially as a youth growing up in a Christian home, then as a University student where many of my classmates had little interest in religion, and now as a pastor who often wonders whether today's youth will be able to find their way into the dynamic life of faith which the Church represents. Over the past few years I have become increasingly active with the involvement of youth in the ecumenical movement. Our ecumenical church gatherings are so often made up of senior members of the churches; the young people are absent, apparently not caught by the vision of Christian unity. One fears that in some cases they have been taught to be hostile to it.

It has become apparent to me that, firstly, the Church as a whole has a mission to young people that no one denomination can fulfill. As a youth I was involved in the activities of my own Baptist Church but I know that ecumenical development as a Christian would have been incomplete without the gaining of an understanding of other traditions in Christianity. And, secondly, the training of young people, committed Christians, in mission is incomplete without the ecumenical dimension.



John E. Boyd

I. TOWARDS AN ECUMENICAL STRATEGY IN MISSION TO YOUNG PEOPLE

We all know that the majority of young people in our communities are not connected with any of our churches. Only about 200 of the 1400 youth in the Amherst High School are involved in the various congregations of the town. I contend that the best approach to them with the Christian message is the ecumenical approach.

Most young people are gregarious, they want to belong to some group or other. In our Amherst High School several groups exist to which they could be attached, but not all join them. Some do not "belong" at all. It is clearly important for the local churches working together to provide the youth with a model of inclusiveness, of unity in diversity. Such an ecumenical approach would help young people see that people with differences can still work together and "belong" together.

Many young people today are confused about matters of faith. No wonder, since their parents' connection with the Church is minimal or nil. The world that youth experiences is mainly secular and increasingly pluralistic. They discover too often that a divided Church speaks a confusing, even an incoherent word. An ecumenical strategy of mission would give them a greater confidence in the messengers and the message of faith.

Most Christian communities I know consist of small churches with limited resources in terms of buildings, facilities and personnel. No one church has all the facilities, but if all would share what they have and work together they would make an impact upon young people for the faith. If each church goes it alone it can only but fragment the overall thrust to youth as a whole.

One possible step forward might be the establishment of a Youth Commission in each of our local Councils of Churches which would involve young people as well as clergy and older laity. At least one major event a year could be organized involving all youth groups in the churches working together. We have had a couple of such weekends in Amherst with over 100 young people involved.

And further we should insist that all projects carried out by local Councils of Churches should be staffed by at least one young person.

II. TRAINING YOUTH FOR MISSION IN THE ECUMENICAL CHURCH

We are grateful for the youth who participate in our Sunday Schools, read lessons in worship and sing in our choirs. But how faithful have we been in teaching them the ecumenical understanding of the Church and its mission? I feel no confirmation or baptismal class should ignore the BEM (Baptism-Eucharist-Ministry) document of the World Council of Churches. No group should go through a whole year's activity without a visit to other churches in the town or having other groups come in for a program.

And have we been faithful in training our youth in leadership roles? Each one of them has a talent of some kind. Those with computer skills could be asked to keep in touch with the youth of the community through addresses, telephone numbers and the like. Those with photography skills could be invited to keep a pictorial record of church activities. Those trained at school in music and drama could be used in many ways.

One fears that too many of our clergy are insufficiently trained in ecumenical matters. To improve here the Atlantic Ecumenical Council has begun a feasibility study concerning the establishment of a Chair of Ecumenics at the Atlantic School of Theology, Halifax. The person appointed would not only lecture ordinands but would also make himself available for ecumenical education services to the entire Christian body in the Atlantic region.

THOMAS AQUINAS, 1225-1274

by Thomas A. Mabey
I. BIOGRAPHY

Aquinas lived, by our standards a short life but his contribution to Christian theology has been influential for seven centuries. The seventh son of a Lombard family with imperial connections, his father for purposes of political alliance, placed him with the monks of the Benedictine Abbey of Monte Cassino for his education. At age fourteen, again for political reasons he was withdrawn and sent to Naples where he made the acquaintance of the newly founded "Order of Preachers" (Dominicans), and in 1244 he joined that order. To remove him from family and political pressures, his religious superiors dispatched him to Paris and later to Cologne, where he came under the influence of Albert the Great and became a friend of Bonaventure. Successively in the roles of scriptural commentator, sententiary commentator, and Master of Theology, he taught at the University of Paris and engaged in lecturing, disputation and consultations throughout France and Italy. He was summoned to provide theological advice to the Council of Lyon in 1274, but died on the road.



Thomas A. Mabey

II. THEOLOGICAL WORK

It is significant that Aquinas chose to live his life as a member of the "Order of Preachers." The creative and redemptive Word of God which was the content of preaching had to be received, understood and formulated by the preacher; and it had to be brought to life in the minds of its hearers. Aquinas' theology is predicated on the premise that the "Logos" of creation and the "Logos" of incarnation is one Word, revealing one God. All reality is unified in that Word. This conviction found expression in the governing principles that provided coherence to his theology: the principle of analogy of being which informed his doctrinal theology, and the principle of natural law which informed his moral theology. In this stress on the unity of the created and redeemed orders Aquinas was expressing the pervasive medieval worldview of the continuity of all things.

Aquinas' best known work is the monumental **Summa Theologica**, judged by many to be a masterpiece of theological architecture, and, as an embodiment of faith, the intellectual counterpart of the great medieval cathedrals. Great as it is as a systematic synthesis of thirteenth century theology and as a model of scholastic theological style, it was written as a compendium of basics for students beginning advanced theological studies. Like all compendia, it is not the best representation of the genius of Aquinas' working theological mind. Other works display his theology more dynamically and creatively as he inquires into the positive sources and the intellectual questions that provide the infra-structure of the Summa's serene exposition of Christian truth. To see his mind at work we must look to his commentaries on the "sacred page" of Scripture; his commentaries and interpretations of Aristotle; his monographs on disputed questions in philosophy and theology; his debates with contemporaries like Siger of Brabant; and, not least, his sermons and prayers. In these we get a more vivid sense of Aquinas' theology as a process, as the product of a mind

being actualized in its encounter with the divine Word.

The catalogue of his multi-volumed and multi-faceted corpus of writings gives us an insight into a man in many ways of interest to our contemporary theological scene. The thirteenth century was, like ours, an enormously confident age of growth and expansion of intellectual horizons, although, unlike ours, that confidence tended to be built on the conviction of a timeless, providential divine plan being acted out in nature and history. It was an age in which ideas new to medieval culture were being introduced; including substantial recoveries of the more "empirical" thought of Aristotle which was beginning to compete with the more static Platonic and Neo-Platonic ideas that had provided the framework for Christian theology since Augustine. On the basis of Aristotelian categories a new concept of science was beginning to emerge, one which took the concrete world of experience more seriously as a starting point for reflection. Christian reflection in this era undertook active dialogue with Islamic philosophy and theology. In the environment of the new universities Aquinas was engaged in reformulating the thought categories and processes that had been used to embody the faith experience of Christians. In our time, when "Thomism" has become for many synonymous with "static Medievalism", it is easy to forget how radical and inquiring was Aquinas' mind and theology. While his contributions were widely appreciated and his consultation called for by leaders in the church in his own time, the spirit of adventure his thought represented struck many as dangerous. In 1277 elements of his theology were condemned by the Archbishop of Paris, and before the end of the century by two Archbishops of Canterbury.

III. THOMAS' INFLUENCE

To speak of the influence of Aquinas is to speak more of a tradition of interpretation than of his own corpus of writings. Thomistic scholasticism has come to be more influential than the actual work of the man himself. Schools of Thomistic theology waxed and waned under different commentators from the thirteenth to the nineteenth century, most prominently in the Roman Catholic and Anglican communities, but not without influence in the scholasticism of the Reformation communities in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In the mid-nineteenth century a concerted effort was made to revive Thomism in the Roman schools as a definitive answer to and bulwark against the liberal theologies sweeping through both protestant and catholic intellectual circles. The culmination of that movement came with Pope Leo XIII's endorsement of Aquinas as patron of Roman Catholic schools of theology — an event from which some have drawn the erroneous conclusion that Thomism is the official and normative theology of the Roman Catholic Church.

Leo's act did however have important ramifications in that it encouraged a retrieval of the historical sources of Aquinas' theology and a process of reinterpretation of his work in the light of more contemporary schools of philosophy and theology. During the last century at least three varieties of Thomism have been influential. The first carries forward the tradition of commentary within the established scholastic movement. The second, represented by figures such as Etienne Gilson and Jacques Maritain, attempted a recovery of the historical setting of Thomas' actual medieval thought and text and sought to translate it as a perennial philosophy for the guidance of contemporary culture. The third, the "transcendental" school, represented most prominently by Karl Rahner, undertook a thorough reinterpretation on the basis of post-Kantian critical theory and of existential and phenomenological movements. These different schools of interpretation have kept the work of Thomas Aquinas alive as a formative influence in the evolution of contemporary theology.

GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANTS

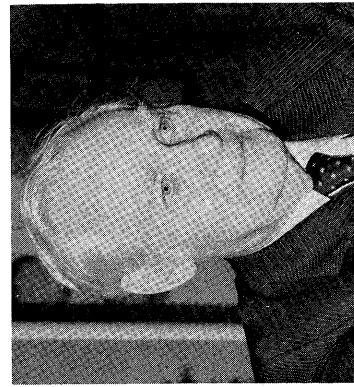
The Atlantic Baptist Fellowship salutes the homecall of two of its most loyal and respected supporters who fought the good fight and kept the faith.

ROBERT ALDER COLPITTS, 1910-1987

Alder was born in Pleasant, N.B., grew up on a farm and was educated for the Baptist ministry at Acadia's School of Theology (B.A. (Th.), B.D.) and Yale Divinity School (STM). Finally deciding to enter the ministry rather than the medical missionary service to which he was attracted, he was ordained in 1934 and served in pastorates of the United Baptist Convention in New Brunswick (Deer Island, Oromocto) and in Nova Scotia (Lockeport, Bridgetown and Seabright). During his years in the active ministry he held positions on various boards and committees of the Convention.

Like the Apostle Paul, Alder was called on to bear a "thorn in the flesh," for in 1937 while at a scout training camp he was suddenly afflicted with poliomyelitis which left him as he often used to say "only half a man." Despite the paralysis in his left arm and with only a limited use in his right arm, but with the loving support of Athena his wife, he refused to be daunted and never made his disability any excuse for lesser effort. A blunt, outspoken critic of all cant and "phoneyiness" in religion, his pungent comments and questions could always be relied on to stab a dull meeting alive and awake. We shall miss him.

HERMAN CHRISTOPHER OLSEN, 1898-1987



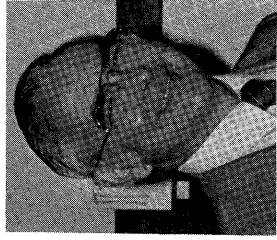
Herman Olsen

Scotia where he held distinguished pastorates at Amherst (1938-1947) and Wolfville (1947-1960). Ill-health compelled him to take a slightly early retirement from the active ministry in 1960.

Herman's lifelong concern for the needs of people found expression in the Depression years of the 30's. He gave hours of service to the Red Cross Society, the Children's Aid Society, the Wolfville Hospital and to Rotary (of which he was a Paul Harris Fellow). On the 60th anniversary of his ordination he was named pastor-emeritus of the Wolfville Church.

HIS CUP AND OURS

A Sermon by Malcolm F. Harlow



Malcolm F. Harlow

Do you remember Hoffman's painting, "Christ in Gethsemane"? In agony of soul Jesus is shown praying in the Garden.

Gethsemane is painted with different strokes in John's Gospel, but still carries the same impact. Chapter 18 continues the Passion narrative, as Jesus and the disciples enter a garden. In a few dramatic sentences, John tells how Judas came with an armed band to arrest Jesus.

Simon Peter, in anger and defiance, pulled out his sword to fight. Jesus strongly rebuked him: "Put your sword into its sheath; shall I not drink the cup which the Father has given me?"

Peter had already made his reply to that question. He wanted to spare Jesus the cup of suffering and the approaching threat of calamity and death. Peter wanted no part of those things. Most of us would agree. Still the frivolous and frail barriers with which we surround ourselves are no protection against the reality of the human condition. Day by day we hear and see more bad news than we can handle. In the face of our own weakness and amidst a world gone mad, we are sometimes overwhelmed by a great emptiness and fear.

But once said, such words make us vaguely embarrassed. Christians are supposed to speak the words of triumph and walk unbowed. Ah, my friends, we have forgotten the cup, the cup of his suffering, the cup of human suffering. Jesus drank that cup. There is only one reason. Jesus came into our suffering, to taste its bitterness and to help us through it.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer raised a question we have to ask and keep on asking. "Who is Jesus Christ for us today?" We have heard much of the triumphant Christ, the Christ who will solve our problems and prosper our undertakings, and improve our relationships. We have forgotten Gethsemane and the Father's cup. In our zeal to proclaim victory, we have forgotten the battle still rages. Too often our Christ strides in triumph, far above the human misery, and we would stride with him.

Douglas Hall, writing in the religious journal, *Interpretation*, describes an alternative to this triumphant Christ. He refers to the novel *Silence* by Shusaku Endo, in which a priest seeks for some word from the silent, majestic Christ he worships. Placed on trial for his faith, he is forced to trample on a wooden representation of Christ's face. In that act, the Christ spoke to him: "Trample! Trample! It is to be trampled on by you that I am here." In this powerful story, the truth is driven home, as Hall wrote: "The beautiful, kingly, controlled face of the triumphant Christ of Christendom had always been silent. Only the distorted, sorrowful, suffering face of a Christ no longer beautiful, no longer manifesting any worldly glory, could speak." A forsaken Christ for a forsaken man, a stricken Christ for a stricken man, a Christ who drank his cup of suffering for a man who is drinking his cup of suffering. Only such a Christ could help such a man.

Whatever your suffering may be this day, remember this one thing: Jesus drinks the cup with you. No wonder Gethsemane is so tremendously important! It is the reminder that in all the human story, God is in it with us, and that is enough.

ABF SPRING ASSEMBLY PROGRAMME
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, AMHERST, NOVA SCOTIA
12-13 JUNE 1987

Theme: The concept of the Historical Jesus and its Theological Significance

Friday

- 6:30 p.m. Registration
- 7:10 p.m. President's opening remarks
- 7:15 p.m. Devotions — Rev. Morley A. Shaw
(First Baptist Church, New Glasgow, N.S.)
- 7:30 p.m. Lecture I — Dr. Dan O. Via, Jr.
- 8:30 p.m. The Service of Holy Communion, conducted by the Minister and the Deacons of the host church
- 9:00 p.m. Fellowship — refreshments will be served

Saturday

- 9:00 a.m. Devotions — Pastor Ogueri James Ohanaka
(Second Baptist Church, New Glasgow, N.S.)
- 9:15 a.m. Lecture II — Dr. Dan O. Via, Jr.
- 10:15 a.m. Coffee break
- 10:45 a.m. Response to lectures — Drs. M.R.B. & D.M. Lovesey
- Noon General Discussion of theme — chaired by Dr. G.G. Harrop
- 1:00 p.m. Dinner at church — moderate cost
- 3:00 p.m. ABF business and discussion of Convention concerns
- Dismiss

Hospitality

A limited number of bed-and-breakfast billets are available, courtesy of the ladies of the church. These will be reserved strictly on a first-come first-served basis. Contact, not later than June 5, the minister of the church: the Reverend John E. Boyd, P.O. Box 637, Amherst, N.S. B4H 4B8; telephone, 902.667.2001.

Nearby motel accommodation

	Telephone	Single	Double
*Fisher Motel	902.667.3853	\$38.00	\$42.00
Tantramar Motel	902.667.3838	\$21.00	\$24.00
*Victorian Motel	902.667.7211	\$36.00	\$42.00
*Browns Guest Home	902.667.0760	\$20.00 - \$22.00	\$22.00 - \$25.00
Wandlyn Motor Inn	902.667.3331	\$47.00	\$53.00

Motels marked with a * are within walking distance of the church. The others are within five minutes' driving time.

* * * * *

*Life is a pilgrimage of learning,
a voyage of discovery in which
our mistaken views are corrected,
our shallow opinions deepened
and some of our vast ignorances diminished.*

John R. W. Stott, 1921 -