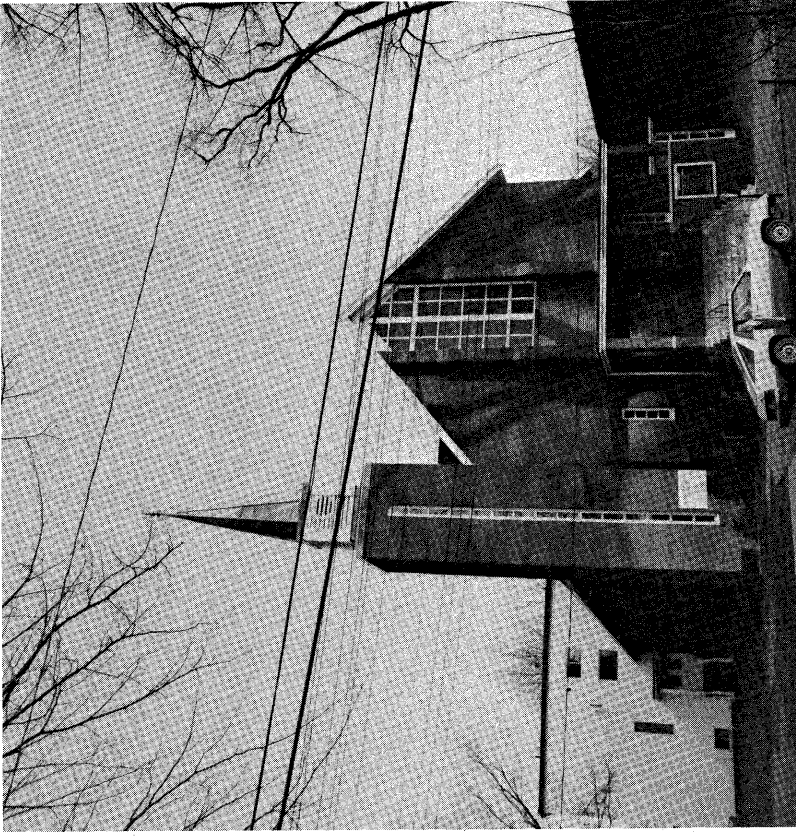


BULLETIN

of

The Atlantic Baptist Fellowship
October-November, 1984



First Baptist Church
Truro, N.S.

WHERE THE
ATLANTIC BAPTIST FELLOWSHIP
MET

September 21-22, 1984
(See pages 8-15)

Editorial Comment

The first thing to note about this issue of the ABF Bulletin is that it is different — a difference that, it is hoped, will be of interest and value to our readers.

The main difference is that it is made up, almost entirely, of the reports of two conferences — the Spring Conference, held in Sydney in June, and the Fall Conference in Truro in September. Since our printing schedule does not allow for a Bulletin between these dates, it became necessary to report both conferences in one issue — a difficult task!

The first reaction by some of our readers may be that it is heavy — perhaps to some it may seem to be too heavy. Both of these conferences dealt with subjects that are pertinent to the Baptist position on matters central to the Christian Faith and practice, and we feel that what was said and done should be reported to our readers. This is in line with the purpose of this Bulletin to be an educational instrument. It is hoped that these summaries will be read thoughtfully, and that, as a result, local churches may be stimulated to conduct study groups on these subjects. It is for this purpose that this material is being presented.

The next issue of the Bulletin will be the February-March number. At that time, some interesting material will be presented that could not, for the lack of space, be included in this number.

I. Judson Levy
Editor

An Advent Prayer

Amid the world's darkness, O God, we seek a star which will give us hope and guide us on our way. Our days are troubled with portents of despair, and the counsels of men have increased our anguish. Turn us from ourselves, lift our vision beyond our earthly empires, and let the day spring from on high visit us. If the pilgrimage be long, sustain us by thy strength until we are made strong in the innocence of Bethlehem's Child. Amen

Samual H. Miller: Prayers For Daily Use

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.

The Bulletin is mailed to interested churches and individuals. The names of any who wish to receive The Bulletin, and all matters of address changes, are to be sent to: 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 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.

ATLANTIC BAPTIST FELLOWSHIP

Annual Meetings

Sydney, N.S., June 15-16, 1984

Friday Evening

There was a fine turn-out of Atlantic Baptist delegates for the first session of the Annual Meeting of the ABF Friday, 15 June, at the Sydney Baptist Church. Introductions were made by the President, the Rev'd. Gordon Gower, and Dr. Gerald Harrop presented a paper on 'What it means to be a Baptist, Here and Now.'

Dr. Harrop, drawing somewhat upon the material of Dr. George Gilmore, former professor of Church History at MacMaster University, sketched his views of the early beginning and development of the Baptists in England during the 17th century. He particularly pointed out the principles of congregational government, the concept of the 'visible saints', the baptism of believers, and the indigenous ministry of the local church. It was the Baptist pioneer intent to recover, as much as possible, the concepts of the New Testament Church.

Stressing the Baptist maintenance of a high doctrine of the Church, Dr. Harrop indicated the developing interest of their belief in 'separation of the church and state.' Certainly, the persecutions and religious intolerance promoted this feeling amongst the English Baptists, which led them to write a number of pamphlets regarding this principle.

Ironically, since the 17th century, Baptists have ignored much of this principle, and have accepted tax exemptions, the Lord's Day Act, civil duties of marriage, and countless other integrations of church and state. In fact, these are beginning to disappear, in face of 'The Secular City' facet of society. Dr. Harrop suggested that this was the logical triumph of early Baptist views, which we should welcome. It is vain to pine for the former 'Christendom' and a return of the Church's influence in government and society. The American 'Baptist' leaders who ask for prayer to be returned to the classroom fly in the face of the view held by our early Baptist congregation.

For today's congregation, it is a matter of confronting 'face-less communication,' which has developed in present-day society. It will be the concept of a 'Christian family' which will serve the Church well. The congregation, looking out to those in our communities, should be ready to welcome them into the church as a part of a family: singles, widows, widowers, single parents, as well as secular families. The earliest Church of Acts 2 held all things in common: perhaps today this can be expanded so that there are no 'single' people in the Church. Small groups might assist in making the congregational fellowship more intimate for the larger churches. Certainly, there is no salvation outside the fellowship of the Church.

There is a tremendous need for ecumenical activity amongst the denominations. We all agree that the Gospel is not Baptist, but Christian. However, there is a Baptist doctrine of the Church, and we have this message to offer to the whole Church, from within the Church, Dr. Harrop concluded.

Saturday morning

After the Annual Business Meeting of the ABF, Dr. Harrop addressed the subject 'Baptist Ordination and nature of the Ministry'. Defending the previous



evening's thesis, he clarified that he did not believe that the early Baptist ancestors would have welcomed a 'secular society'. However, Dr. Harrop maintained that their concept of religious freedom of religion would logically lead, eventually to freedom from religion.

Again, Dr. Harrop related the views of Dr. George Gilmore concerning the doctrine of the visible church. With the passage of time, the clergy/laity distinctive has grown so that each views the other as being quite different, and the 'distinctive church' has become less distinct from the world. In the beginning, with the development of the clergy becoming more 'worldly', the Baptists wished to abolish clericalism and remove the direct involvement of clergy in the affairs of state. The Baptists held a high view of the Church, but not of 'clergy', that is, that the clergyman is 'church incarnate'.

The Baptists always aspired to order, but not for 'Orders'. The sacraments were validated by the action of the congregation, and those other than ordained ministers were permitted, with permission of the congregation, to celebrate them. The Ministry of Word and Sacrament was the sanction of the church, and not the preserve of the clergy. The early Confessions of Faith, such as the 1656 Somerset Confession, specifically mentioned the ability of congregations to select ministers from amongst themselves, those whom they felt worthy, and who would be directly responsible to the congregation.

In view of this, Dr. Harrop questioned our frequent use of 'Reverend' indiscriminately, which promoted a 'saintly distinction' between clergy and laity. He believed that ordination should be viewed as ordaining by a local congregation of a person to a specific task: this would mean that ordination would be repeated each time a person was called to a new congregation as a minister, and given up when this task was completed. There would be no question concerning the admission of women to the ministry, since they would be free to be selected by congregations so led, to serve as their ministers. All this, Dr. Harrop felt, would be consistent with the Baptist doctrine of the Church.

In observing today's procedures, Dr. Harrop mentioned the almost casual way in which many church licences to preach are given, including some to people who obviously have no gifts for preaching. He also felt that they could be interpreted so to prevent some from celebrating the sacraments. Since holy communion is a congregational fellowship activity, this would prevent such celebrations in 'temporary communities' such as camp and retreats (and observing that it is always the local congregation which performs this for the ABF). The ministry of the Word and Sacrament should never be broken, so that there should not be a sacrament without the preached word. Dr. Harrop felt that 'home communions' were inconsistent with Baptist principle.

In reference to ordination itself, Dr. Harrop pointed out that the Convention Ordination Council is a consultative committee for the local church for it is the local congregation which sets apart the person for their ministry. Recently, the Convention Council makes a too-rushed consultation, with as many as 30 candidates appearing before it in a very short period of time, which prevents a thoughtful review of candidates' views. The Year Deferralment of ordination, as now practiced by churches in our Convention is also inconsistent (and subversive) to a Baptist concept of ordination.

Dr. Harrop concluded that the key to understanding a Baptist view of ministry and ordination was the local congregation's acknowledgement of the gift of the Holy Spirit to the call of a person to the Ministry, which the congregation recognizes as its own.

PLEASE NOTE in case you miss it in reading the report of the business meeting — Cassette tape recordings of the two addresses by Dr. Harrop may be attained by, at a minimum cost, from The Rev. Willis Henderson, 16 Lorway Avenue, Sydney, N.S. BIP 4Zz.

Annual Meeting: Business Meeting, Saturday Morning

The annual Meeting of the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship, held Saturday, 16 June, at 9:00 a.m. at the Sydney Baptist Church, was opened with prayer by the President, the Rev'd. Gordon Gower. The Minutes of the last meeting, held last autumn in the Port Williams United Baptist Church, were read by the Secretary, the Rev'd. Donald Jackson. The next ABF meeting will be held at First Baptist Church, Truro, 21-22 September. Cassette tape recordings of the two addresses by Dr. Harrop may be obtained, at a minimum cost, from the host minister, the Rev'd. Willis Henderson.

It was pointed out by the Rev'd. Byron Corkum that there is a supervision by himself of the distribution of the **Bulletin**, and congratulations were extended to Dr. I. Judson Levy for the quality of this periodical.

There was some discussion concerning the financial year, but it was decided to maintain the current practice of the ABF to close the financial books at the end of each April. There was some concern that some church treasurers may not understand this practice and subsequent financial reports issued.

The Treasurer, Mrs. Evelyn Smith, gave the Financial Annual Report, closing 30 April. The offering for Friday evening, 15 June was \$325.00, and a gift from the Sydney church of \$250.00 was added, for a total of \$575.00. The Balance on hand for June 1984 was \$1530.00. (The full report is given on page 6)

The Rev'd. Vincent Rushton gave the Nominating Committee report. Elected were:

President: the Rev'd. Robert Matthews, P.O. Box 261, Annapolis Royal, N.S. B0S 1A0

Vice-President: the Rev'd. Dr. Gerald Harrop

Secretary: Mrs. Gwen Atherton, Camp 4, Site 19, Sandy Point Rd., R.R. #1, Saint John, N.B. E2L 3W2

Assistant Secretary: the Rev'd. Harold Beaumont

Treasurer: Mrs. Evelyn Smith

ABF Bulletin Editor: the Rev'd. Dr. I. Judson Levy

Atlantic Ecumenical Council Representative: the Rev'd. John Boyd

Executive Council: the Rev'd. Donald Jackson, the Rev'd. Dr. Frank Simnot, the Rev'd. Phyllis Mensies, Mr. James Stanley, Mr. Donald Myers, Mr. Kendall Kenney, Mrs. Kendall Kenney, the Rev'd. Willis Henderson, the Rev'd. John Churchill, Mr. J. P. Matthews, the Rev'd. Ida Whitehouse, the Rev'd. Gregory Whitehouse, the Rev'd. Dr. William Carey Harvey, Mrs. Evelyn Denton, Dr. Marion Grant, Mr. Winston Miles, the Rev'd. John Boyd, the Rev'd. John Tonks, the Rev'd. Vincent Rushton, the Rev'd. Roger Prentice, Mr. Hillyard Nason, Mrs. Hillyard Nason, the Rev'd. Alder Colpitts, Mrs. Alder Colpitts, Mrs. Beverly Miles, the Rev'd. Gordon Gower, the representative of the Canard Baptist Church. The Rev'd. Philip Alwood is a corresponding member.

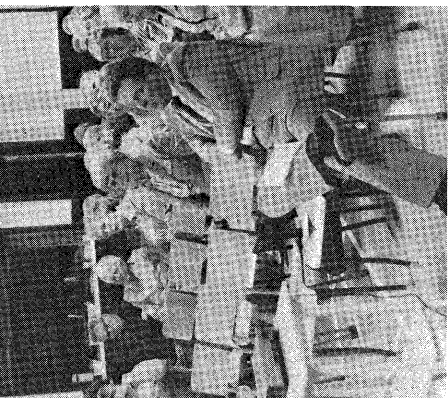
A vote of sincere appreciation was expressed to the Sydney Baptist Church for being welcoming and accommodating hosts.

The Rev'd. John Boyd reported that as ABF representative to the Atlantic Ecumenical Council, he has attended several meetings, and is presently the Vice-President of this organization. Mr. Boyd mentioned a number of important activities of the Council, including various programmes each year which promote better communication and ecumenical dialogue in the Atlantic provinces. He was a representative at the World Council of Churches meetings in Vancouver. Although there is sponsored an annual conference of 'Heads of Denominations', most ecumenical activity springs from local congregational activity.

There was reported that a special committee concerning ordination has been appointed by the Convention Executive, and that this had been reported to the Halifax Association. Little is known of the deliberations of this committee, and interest was expressed concerning this subject. This subject was referred to the ABF Executive for consideration. Appreciation was expressed to Mr. Boyd for his active interest in representing the ABF on this Council.



Spring Conference — Sydney



Fall Conference — Truro

**ATLANTIC BAPTIST FELLOWSHIP
FINANCIAL REPORT
May 1, 1983 to April 30, 1984**

	1983-4	1982-3	Budget
May 1, 1983: Balance on hand			
RECEIPTS:			
CHURCHES:			
Amherst	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00	
Annapolis Royal	50.00	25.00	
Bayside	25.00	10.00	
Billtown		25.00	
Bridgewater	50.00	75.00	
Canning	440.00	50.00	
Chester	100.00	350.00	
Cornwallis First	100.00	100.00	
Halifax First	600.00	100.00	
Indian Harbour	10.00	10.00	
Lawrencetown	100.00	100.00	
Liverpool		50.00	
Milton		50.00	
New Ross		35.00	
Northwest*		100.00	
Pereaux*	25.00	125.00	
Seabright	600.00	25.00	
Sydney	320.00	600.00	
Wolfville	2970.00	340.00	
	2970.00	3270.00	
Personal Donations		3,270	3,700
Bond Interest		1,483.00	1,800
Bank Interest		80.00	80
Offerings		91.05	6
		40	200
		6,249.41	6,184
			7,405
EXPENDITURES:			
Bulletin — 3 issues			\$3,608.69

Speakers — 2 meetings	600.00
Secretary's Honorarium	150.00
Bonny Lea Farm	75.00
National C.G.I.T.	200.00
W.C.C. Observer	200.00
Receipt Books	46.16
Bank Charges	3.00
Ecumenical Council Administration	93.54
April 30, 1984 Balance on hand	4,976.39
	4,559.51
	5,350
	1,273.02
	6,249.41
TRUST FUND	
April 30, 1983 Balance on hand	\$227.66
Donation	100.00
Interest	18.93
	346.59

K: Introducing the new ABF President

(At the annual meeting of the ABF, June 16, 1984, the Rev. Robert Matthews was elected president. Mr. Matthews has officially retired from the active pastorate and is living in Annapolis Royal, N.S. We are happy to present this statement from our new president, Editor)

I am grateful to the editor for allowing me to write this short statement for the Bulletin and I take the opportunity to thank the members of the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship for the honour they have done me in making me president. I do regard it as a great honor because of the nature of the A.B.F.

A young man asked me the other day, "What is the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship?" and, "Does it have a future?" We inside the Fellowship must remember that there are people coming along who do not know what the pressures were that brought us into being, nor what is our "raison d'être."

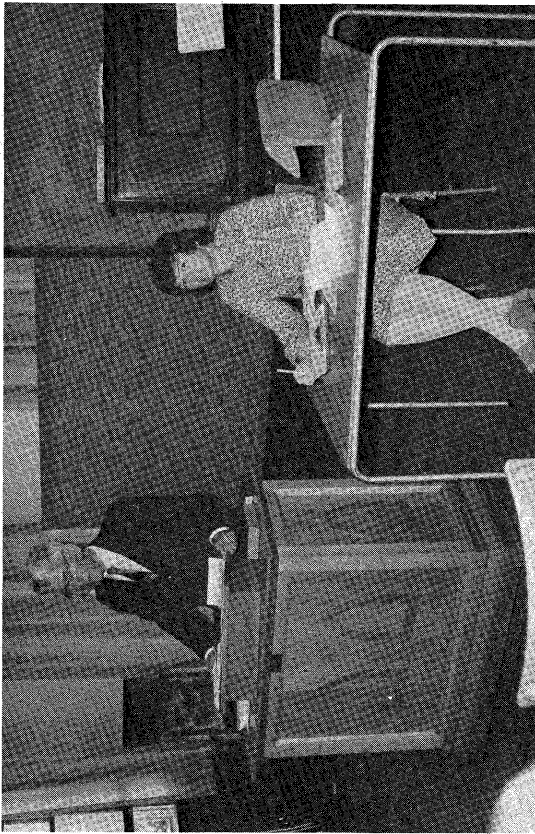
Let me say, then, that the A.B.F. is a BAPTIST fellowship and stands for all the great historic Baptist principles. For instance, it believes in the supreme authority of the Holy Scriptures and feels that we must take our direction from them and not from the catch phrases of the nineteenth or twentieth centuries. It believes too that Bible study calls for complete intellectual honesty and the following of truth wherever it may lead. It believes in the priesthood of all believers, that each can and must know God for himself, and that no conscience should be forced to adopt any creed or statement of faith. The A.B.F. believes that historically Baptists have led the way in appreciating and trying to understand other Christians who differ from them, and feels that Baptists should still be pioneers in the process of reconciliation that is going on in the church of Jesus Christ.

The A.B.F. is also a Baptist FELLOWSHIP, where every person is accepted as an individual with innate dignity. It is a fellowship in which one can feel secure in the warmth of Christian love.

To go back to the second question asked by my young friend, I do not know how far into the future the A.B.F. will be needed but I know that there is a place for it now.

Robert Matthews

ABF FALL CONFERENCE



The Fall Conference of the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship was held in the First Baptist Church, Truro, N.S., September 21-22, 1984. The president of the Fellowship, the Rev. Robert Matthews, presided over the sessions with Mrs. Gwen Atherton as secretary.

The theme of the conference was based on a study paper produced by the World Council of Churches entitled "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry." This document is known as "The Lima Report", in recognition of the fact that the meeting from which came was held in Lima, Peru. Officially it is a product of the Faith and Order Commission of the WCC, although in producing this document other churches, at present not members of the WCC, were invited to be participants in the conference and to be acknowledged as such.

Among other churches, the Roman Catholic Church accepted the invitation, and so is a party to the conclusions that are given in the document. It is to be noted that this is essentially a study paper only and having no authority beyond that. The process continues and all churches are asked to study the report and present their reactions. It is in order to have a part in the on-going study that the ABF chose this as the theme of the Fall conference. In this conference two of the subjects, Baptism and Eucharist, were studied. The two persons who were selected to lead in this study by presenting reaction papers were The Rev. Roger Prentice, minister of the Annapolis Royal Baptist Church, gave the paper on Baptism, while the Rev. Dr. Morris Lovesey, retired professor of the Acadia Divinity College, gave the paper on Eucharist. Only a very brief summary of these papers can be given here, but it is hoped that what is given will be enough to stimulate further study of these important matters in local churches.

CONFERENCE WORSHIP

The Friday evening session closed with a service of Holy Communion conducted by Dr. Malcolm Harlow, minister of the entertaining church, assisted by Dr. J. Wilson and deacons from the church. The organist of the church, Jeff Joudrey, played the hymns and supplied a background of meditative music.

This was a beautiful and deeply moving service, carefully prepared and reverently conducted, certainly a high spot in the conference program.

Rev. John Boyd, a former president of the ABF, led in the worship with which the Saturday morning session was opened. Mr. Boyd, comparing the church to a family, stressed the fact that unity and variety are both a vital aspect of the Church. This was a very thoughtful interpretation of the Church. (The request was made that this message be printed in the Bulletin. The editor regrets that, due to the lack of space, this is not possible in this issue, but it is expected that it will appear in the next issue of the Bulletin. Our readers are advised to look for it.)

The Saturday afternoon session began with a devotional period conducted by Rev. John Churchill, a service around the theme of ministry.

A BUSINESS MEETING occupied the remainder of the Conference. A committee, appointed earlier by the council of the ABF, gave an interim report on plans being made to make the ABF an effective instrument for advancing the emphasis for which it stands in the life of the convention. Most plans that were discussed are in the formative stage, and will be reported on more fully as the plans develop. The committee recommended that the theme for the Spring Conference be "Women in the Church" and related topics. At the invitation of the representatives of the Wolfville church, it agreed that THE SPRING CONFERENCE OF THE ABF WILL BE HELD IN THE WOLFVILLE BAPTIST CHURCH, FRIDAY AND SATURDAY, JUNE 14-15, 1985. Full details of the program, and other necessary information, will be in the next Bulletin. In the meantime, all interested persons are asked to mark this in their date books, and make it a part of their plans.

At the close of the conference, a vote of thanks was passed, and extended to the minister and people of the First Baptist Church, Truro, for the courtesies and help extended to us, to the minister and organist, the ladies for their coffee breaks, noon luncheon, and to all others who, in any way, helped to make this an interesting and very worthwhile conference.

BAPTISM AND THE BAPTISM, EUCHARIST AND MINISTRY DOCUMENT

by
Roger Prentice

Baptism has been regarded by most of the Church¹ as the rite by which a person enters its fellowship. An understanding of its theological meaning and administration has taken several directions over the years, the cause of much misunderstanding and division. It is remarkable that such a document as Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry was published at all, and the 'Preface' clearly states that a comprehensive consensus has yet to be reached.

It is important to note that full members of the WCC Commission included Roman Catholics . . . and other churches which do not belong to the World Council of Churches itself.² It is important for Baptists to examine the statements carefully. Baptists have claimed . . . that the Bible is the all-sufficient ground of faith and practice.³ On the other hand, much is to be learned from Baptist history of understanding Scripture, and their debates with paedobaptists. A key to understanding the subject is possessing a clear view of conventional theology, and how Baptists believe it is expressed.

This document attempts to analyze the subject of Baptism under five headings, with an added 'Commentary' to clarify the text itself.

There is no disagreement concerning the roots of baptism within Jesus' ministry, later practiced by the disciples and early church. All agree this is a reminder of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, identifying the believer as a follower.⁴ The document states,

... it is entry into the New Covenant between God and God's people.⁵ The churches today continue this practice as a rite of commitment to the Lord who bestows his grace upon his people.⁶

This statement would be lauded by Baptists as it stands. The phrase 'entry into the New Covenant' hides a minefield of misunderstandings. It is important to comprehend the full meaning of 'Covenant' and its attendant baggage of theological and ecclesiastical implications. Even today amongst Baptists themselves there is considerable debate regarding our understanding of 'Covenant'. Most Baptists do understand that their denominational roots are grounded in the English Separatist tradition.⁷

John Calvin always preferred Luther's sacramental theology to Zwingli's. He believed that Baptism was a seal of God's Promise, a gift from God, which strengthened faith and sanctification. Almost without exception theologians who emphasized the Covenant relationship between God and Man, with baptism as its sign and seal, took the Old Testament practice of circumcision as its model.⁸ It is important for Baptists to remember that while Calvin's idea of baptism 'engrafting' children into the Church, did not necessarily place them within the Covenant,¹⁰ but only in a position to inherit the Covenant,¹¹ which was meant only for the 'elect'. Thus, Calvin admitted that baptism would be rejected by those not 'elected', so it was not a guarantee of future faith for infants. The doctrine of the Covenant dominated the debate between Baptists and paedobaptists ever since.

When Baptists examine **Baptist, Eucharist and Ministry**, which says that baptism '... is the entry into the New Covenant' and 'a gift of God', they should look closely. The principle of believers' baptism has been the Baptist stronghold. There are signs of wrestling with this belief within paedobaptist churches, and it is significant that the document itself says nothing much more. One of the earliest Baptists wrote 'baptism is the publically demonstrated act of obedience to Christ's command.'¹² Baptists today need a clear idea about 'Covenant' and its importance to discipleship, and how it may be 'confirmed' between God and Believer.

Baptists would be suspicious, at the least, with any doctrine which insisted children could inherit faith from parents or god-parents, or that it could be planted within a person by baptism. The Covenant is sealed by faith, Baptists believe, which is demonstrated by accepting baptism.

The document's call for use of the Trinitarian formula is certainly acceptable only,¹³ but there are reasons for adopting the traditional Trinitarian form. It confirms Baptist belief in the Trinity, and gives priority to the Gospel over Acts and the Epistles. This small conformity would go a long way to fostering Christian understanding.¹⁴

The Meaning of Baptism

It was agreed, 'Baptism is the sign of new life through Jesus Christ'¹⁵ which, is a sign, Baptists have been saying throughout their history, of a new life already obtained. Difficulty appears when paedobaptists interpret this to say that faith may be inherited after baptism. When there is prior faith, baptism **acknowledges** the believer's unity with Christ, and entry into the Church. A baby, a Baptist would contend, is already united with Jesus until the child grows into his own age of responsibility.¹⁶

The document also provides a list of 'Scripture Images' which define baptism, all perfectly acceptable to Baptists by themselves, but which demand further examination. The idea of 'Covenant' rises again. The I Peter 3:20-21 image of Noah and the flood is often used by paedobaptists to justify the view that one may inherit the faith through others. The Exodus from bondage (I Corinthians 10:1-2) has been likened by paedobaptists to the Church physically inheriting the Covenant. Many paedobaptists thus contend that these scriptures are

'telescopes' provided in the Old Testament, typology of sorts, to pre-figure practices in the New Testament. They attempt to make faith a collegiate experience, no longer embodied by the nation of Israel, but by the Church. When Baptists read, 'By Baptism, Christians are immersed in the liberating death ... they need to be certain that not baptism, but individual faith is that liberated. Even Baptists know that some in their churches are baptized for reasons other than faith: peer pressure, family tradition, theological fears, or attempting to stack the celestial 'deck'.

Encouragingly, there is 'Our common baptism, which unites us to Christ in faith, is thus a basic bond of unity'¹⁷ which mentions the operative word 'faith'. This is the true unity which Christians can experience, and which Baptists have proclaimed for 375 years. On the other hand, Baptists could well ask themselves whether enough attention is placed by them upon the growth of children. Do Baptists spend enough on Christian Education?

Baptism and Faith

Baptists have no problem relating faith to witness and service. The question they might ask, however, is that if the document's statement is true,¹⁸ does the baptism of infants relegate them to irresponsible membership, as though they were not able to give witness nor perform service? Paedobaptists may wish to hurry by this truly horrible question, but it should be answered. When the document says,

As they grow in the Christian life and faith, baptized believers demonstrate that humanity can be regenerated and liberated.¹⁹ Baptists should rejoice with this statement.

Baptismal Practice

This document admits that 'the most clearly attested pattern in New Testament documents' is believers' baptism, but adds that 'in the course of history' infant baptism established itself. It asks if the Baptist Service of Presentation and Dedication can find a common meeting place with Infant Baptism. The Commentary hopefully adds that perhaps here 'the difference between infant and believers' baptism becomes less sharp.'²⁰ Alec Gilmore explores this in **Baptism and Christian Unity**.²¹ However, this fails to distinguish between the Baptist conviction that baptism is a sign of faith, whilst paedobaptists regard baptism as much as a sign of promise. Baptists should note that throughout their history there have been 'open membership' churches.²² This may be a more fruitful place to begin ecumenical dialogue, rather than the Service of Presentation and Dedication.

The Celebration of Baptism

This section affirms immersion as 'vividly' expressing the death and resurrection of Christ. The rite of laying on of hands with baptism and/or anointing with oil are not alarming to Baptists, for some have practised these in the past. Their 'recovery' might enrich Baptist liturgy, but Baptists have always been cautious. Unless all churches adopted this practice, the danger of a 'two class' membership might develop (i.e. those with laying on of hands, and those without).

Some Conclusions

It is disheartening to know that 20 years ago more Baptists desired Christian unity than today. Canadian Baptists are now often influenced by Southern Baptist opinions, and views of American Independent Religious television. These tend towards isolationist positions, easily afforded by them by their vast numbers. Television, training ministers across the border, and whole-hearted acceptance of American curriculum and journal has given some Canadians the illusion that our Christian tradition and situation is the same as theirs. This is not true. The small number, comparatively, of Canadian Baptists should stimulate the need for Christian dialogue in every community.

Baptists themselves must look deeply into their own sacramental and covenantal theology, and define it more clearly. Alec Gilmore wrote.

Only those who know why they must be Baptists will ever truly understand why they must not and cannot rest content with being Baptists. Education at this point remains a primary need.²³

This document could be the launching pad for serious discussion amongst the Baptists themselves. This document presents a case which remains faithful to many things treasured by Baptists. We need to reach into the rich meaning of Baptism. The crucial question still stands as a barrier to understanding: **when** do persons acquire their new identity as sons and daughters of God? The document persists in saying 'baptized persons', rather than 'believers.' The Baptists' high regard for the personal relationship with God, consciously recognized, needs to be openly discussed with other Christians who believe that God will care for the individual throughout life, allowing infants to enjoy the privilege of feeling this security.

The Commentary observes,

In many large European and North American majority churches infant baptism is often practiced in an apparently indiscriminate way. This contributes to the reluctance of churches which practice believers' baptism to acknowledge the validity of infant baptism; this fact should lead to more critical reflection on the meaning of baptism within those majority churches themselves.²⁴

Perhaps this is the open door through which Baptists can seriously enter the discussion. If there is any will in Baptists for unity, it cannot be an opportunity lost. This will mean ecumenical dialogue, on an informed basis, and a commitment which goes far beyond maintaining forms and historical argument.

1. The Society of Friends nor the Salvation Army administer baptism.
2. William H. Lazareth, Nikos Nissiosis, 'Preface', Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (Geneva, 1982) p. vii.
3. Constitution of the United Baptist Convention of the Atlantic Provinces (Revised to 1978), **Year Book 1984** (Saint John, 1984) pp. 23.
4. St. Matthew 3:13-17; St. Mark 1:9-13; St. Luke 3:21-22; St. John 4; Romans 6:1-11
5. I, 1, p. 2.
6. I, 2, p. 2.
7. B.R. White, **The English Separatist Tradition** (Oxford, 1971)
8. E. Brooks Holfield, **The Covenant Sealed** (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1974) p. 14. Calvin had written to friend Guillaume Farel, 1540, stating this.
9. Genesis 17:12. Hence, they accepted Infant Baptism.
10. Holfield, *op. cit.*, p. 17.
11. **Institutes**, 4.16.7, 6.24.
12. Edward Barber, **A Small Treatise of Baptisme, or Dipping** (London, 1641) p. 8. This book is interesting for it is one of the earliest evidence that General Baptists were baptizing believers by immersion about the same time the Particular Baptists began.
13. Some Baptists have noticed Acts 2:38; 8:17; 10:48, etc., and believe this use of the name Jesus is proper. Early Baptist confessions of faith conceded this.
14. This also is mentioned by scholars in Russell F. Aldwinckle, et. al., 'Believer Baptism as an Ecumenical Issue', **Canadian Baptist History and Polity — The McMaster Conference**, Murray J. S. Ford, ed. (McMaster: Hamilton, 1982) p. 126, 130.
15. II, 2, p. 2.
16. 'Age of responsibility' has been difficult to define. Usually left to individual conscience, the Minister and congregation should provide consultation. See Aldwinckle, *op. cit.*, p. 112-113, and in the same volume William R. Wood, 'A Study of Church Membership in Relation to Baptism', p. 142 ff. Wood states that in 1976 35,562 children under the age of 8 were baptized by the Southern Baptist Convention. One may understand why paedobaptists might begin to point fingers.
17. II, D.6., p. 3.
18. 'The necessity of faith for the reception of the salvation embodied and set forth in baptism is acknowledged by all churches.' III, 8., p. 3.
19. III, 10., p. 4.
20. Commentary (12), Paragraph 1, p. 5.
21. Alec Gilmore **Baptism and Christian Unity** (Lutterworth, London, 1966)
22. e.g. 1642 the Henry Jessey Separatist church, London; the Broadmead Baptist, Bristol, Bedford congregation of John Bunyan.
23. Alec Gilmore, ed., **The Pattern of the Church — A Baptist View** (Lutterworth, London, 1963), p. 163.
24. Commentary (21), (b), p. 7. This very recommendation is presented in William H. Lazareth, **Growing Together in Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry — A Study Guide** (Faith and Order Paper No. 114, WCC, Geneva, 1982) p. 18.

CANADIAN BAPTISTS AND THE EUCHARIST: SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE LIMA REPORT

by
M. R. B. LOVESEY

The recent papal pastoral visit to Canada has reminded Canadian Baptists of the centrality of the Eucharist in the Catholic tradition. We rejoice that this event together with the Lima Report on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, shows a remarkable degree of convergence of the Catholic and Reformed traditions on these contentious matters.

1. THE SACRAMENTAL PRINCIPLE.

Modern linguistic philosophy teaches us to use words and language with care, especially words of a highly emotive character. Baptists generally call the Eucharist "the Ordinance of the Lord's Supper," although they are comfortable with the word "Communion"; but other words used by other communions, such as "the Sacrifice of the Mass," "Eucharist" and "the Sacrament," they are less comfortable with, since they are associated with, they think, objectionable ideas such as magic, and rites and ceremonies conveying grace automatically, **ex opere operato**. However, many Baptists feel their communion could be persuaded to be comfortable with the use of some if not all of these words, in particular "Eucharist" and "Sacrament."

The Latin word **sacramentum** came to be used in the Latin Western Church as a translation for the Greek word **mysterion**, mystery. Thus the sacraments were considered to be the mysterious events by means of which God particularly blesses his faithful people. The catholic tradition accepts seven such sacraments (baptism, confirmation, eucharist, penance, matrimony, orders and extreme unction) but the reformed tradition only two of these (baptism and eucharist), since these alone are clearly taught in the New Testament as being **Dominal Ordinances**.

Some Christians believe that all life is sacramental, that is, that the physical is the vehicle of the spiritual, and that therefore there is no need of any special events for God's grace to flow to his people. And some of these support their argument by denying that repetition of the rites of baptism and the eucharist were ever a part of the Intention of Jesus, these being a result of the thinking of the early church. A useful distinction is made by some Anglican theologians between "natural" and "appointed" sacraments; the former of which safeguards the idea of a general sacramental principle, the latter safeguarding what many believe to be a fact of Christian experience that God does specially bless those who share in the dominical ordinances. Such as analysis, which preserves both the general and particular aspects of the sacramental principle, could surely be made acceptable to many Baptists.

2. THE USE OF THE BIBLE IN THE LIMA REPORT.

One is surprised to note that the Report appears to reflect little use of modern biblical scholarship. For example, in the section on the biblical traditions of the institution of the Eucharist the four major passages are quoted (one in Paul, 1 Corinthians 11, and one in each of the synoptic gospels), the first only in full, but nothing is said about the problems of the text and the difficulty of establishing the history of the traditions or of the acute problems of exegesis. The impression is given that there are no problems, that the Pauline tradition of the institution of the Supper is to be accepted, that nothing needs to be said about the variant Marcan and Lucan traditions. Such biblicism must be deplored for the sake of honest religion. There is, of course, a strong consensus today that the Pauline tradition is to be accepted and that the Eucharist is indeed a dominical ordinance to be repeated by the Church, but we must always be wary of establishing truth by counting heads. We have to rest content, with

Bishop Butler long ago, that probability not dead certainty is the guide to life, and it is misleading to suggest otherwise.

3. CANADIAN BAPTISTS AND THE EUCHARIST.

William H. Jones' book, **What Canadian Baptist Believe**, published 1980, will provide a fair statement of what Baptists believe about the Eucharist in Canada today.

Jones insists that Baptists are anti-sacramental (in the sense that they oppose all ideas that in the Supper the bread and wine, through the action of the priest, are literally transformed into the very body and blood of Christ) hence they jib at using the word "sacrament" and allied words. Their view of the Supper is essentially Zwinglian, although there are some who lean towards a more Calvinistic view, feeling there is some truth in the idea of Christ's "real presence" in a special way at the celebration of the sacraments.

Jones says: "most Baptists believe that the use of the ordinance should be accompanied by a 'preaching of the word.'" Well, we should rejoice that the Pope always gave a homily during his recent visit (and, we may add, it was good to see the use of women in reading scripture, offering prayer and distributing the elements). There is convergence here of the Catholic and Reformed traditions. Jones writes: "The fact that Baptists usually refer to the Lord's Supper as an ordinance rather than a sacrament should not be interpreted as meaning that Baptists give this institution little honour or respect." Well, my experience leads me to a contrary opinion. Too often the communion service is a hurried addendum to a preaching service. Surely it is true to say that most Baptists see the sermon as the heart of public worship while everything else that goes on is mere preliminary to the sermon. The Eucharist is not held very regularly (generally perhaps once a month) and can be cancelled or re-scheduled without a twinge of conscience if circumstances appear to require it.

4. THE LIMA REPORT'S SECTION ON THE EUCHARIST

Section I, "The Institution of the Eucharist," seems to be substantially correct but simplistic in its biblicism. Section II, "The Meaning of the Eucharist," is interesting and comprehensive and should be generally acceptable to Baptists. Particularly pleasing here is the convergence that recognizes Reformed difficulties about "the real presence" and "the sacrifice of the mass." Properly understood Baptists could be able to speak about the "real presence" of the Lord at the Communion Table (they would find the word "altar" difficult), but they could never entertain any idea of a repetition of Christ's once-for-all sacrifice of himself on Calvary's Cross. Section III, "The Celebration of the Eucharist," would be generally acceptable to Baptists. Of course general culture and aesthetics enter into the matter here. Many of us Baptists are not all that enamored with the use of stale, diced bread and horrible tasting grapejuice in thimble-sized cups!

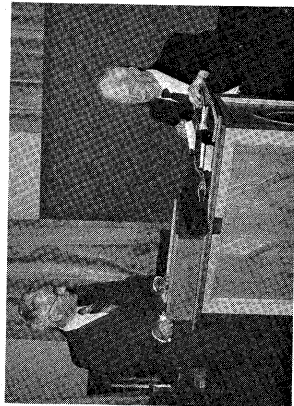
Our tentative conclusion must be to rejoice in the measure of convergence achieved in the Lima Report on the three contentious areas of Christian theology, but one feels that the statement leans too far in the Catholic tradition. It is but a good step along the way and must be re-written to lean more towards the Reformed tradition for Baptists to be happy with it. However Baptists could be taught, one feels, to accept some of the language and concepts used; but they must be assured that all outmoded philosophical underpinnings of the religious ideas used (such as transubstantiation and consubstantiation) to reduce the mystery, and all concepts of magic (in relation to the priesthood and **opere operato** views of certain rites) are rigorously and explicitly excluded.

The Reverend Dr. M. R. B. Lovesey is a former Professor of Biblical Studies at Acadia University. He is now retired and living in Wolfville, Nova Scotia.

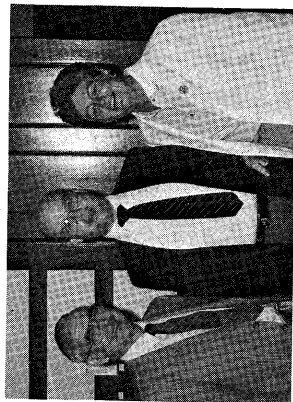
The committee that planned the conference decided to invite a person from

another denomination to follow the thoughts presented in the Baptist papers, and respond to the thoughts thus presented. This proved to be a very interesting and profitable part of the discussion. The person selected was the Rev. Dr. Allen Beveridge, a retired minister of the United Church of Canada, with whom it was a joy to have fellowship and an exchange of opinions. He was very much a part of the conference, and was not regarded as an "outsider".

Dr. Beveridge's comments at the close of our discussion added much to our deliberations. He made the point that perhaps the most significant thing about the Lima Report was that it had been produced at all, representing as it does a wide variety of theological opinions that, for far too long, have been regarded as being incapable of coming together in any way - all of this was symbolized by his presence in sharing in a Baptist theological discussion. While all of this seemed natural to our way of thinking now, it could not have taken place in a day that many of us remember. Our guest emphasized the mystery that surrounds both Baptism and the service of Holy Communion. When we have advanced all our ideas, and said all that we can say about the sacraments, and explained them as best we can, the fact remains that ultimately we face a mystery that is beyond our understanding. We can receive spiritual benefits from them only through faith. There was no question in the minds of the people who shared in this interdenominational exchange of opinions that it was of great value. We look forward to further such exchanges, and thank Dr. Beveridge for his presence with us and the contribution that he made to our deliberations.



The President and Dr. Beveridge



Dr. Malcolm Harlow, Rev. Roger Prentice and Yan Storr

SOME WORLD CHURCH NEWS

COMING EVENTS

January 20-27, 1985 - Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

March 1, 1985 - World Day of Prayer

May 11-15, 1985 - Triennial Assembly, Canadian Council of Churches, Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax, N.S.

1985 is the 70th anniversary of the beginning of the well-known Church program for girls, Canadian Girls in Training (CGIT). To mark this very special event, the National CGIT Committee is planning 12 leadership events all across Canada. **The Maritime Event will take place at A.C.T.C., Tatamagouche, N.S., May 17 to 20, 1985.** CGIT leaders and other interested persons should write the national office for more information.

June 14-15, 1985 - THE SPRING CONFERENCE OF THE ATLANTIC BAPTIST FELLOWSHIP AT WOLFVILLE, N.S.

A RELIGION FROM LEFT-OVERS

(NOTE: Before reading this meditation, read Isaiah 44:14-20).

This is the story of a religious man, at least a man who, by outward appearances, was religious. As a religious man, he needed to have a god. How can one be religious without a god? Like many of "religious" people, this man knew what kind of a god he wanted; so he made one according to his own specifications. Note how he did it.

He cuts down a tree and makes a god. No - not yet! He takes a portion of the tree and makes a fire. Over that fire he roasts his meat and eats - thus providing for his material needs. By that same fire he warms himself - thus providing for his comfort. But what of the god? I almost forgot, as did the man himself - almost! Now comes the stinging line: "And the rest of it, he makes into a god." Get the picture - after all his personal wants have been satisfied, there are some splinters of the tree left. There always are. Out of this left-over portion, he makes his god. In other words, his religious practice gets no attention until all else is satisfied. Then, and only then, does he turn to his religious concerns.

What a quaint story! It has nothing to do with us - but do not be too sure! Such a strange practice! Surely we have outgrown that - but again, do not be too certain of this! Let us take this as a parable, and dare to find the truth that does apply to us. We believe that it is a good thing to be religious, and for this we need a god. But what kind of a god?

We like to choose our own gods. Such gods are so easy to control. They do not demand anything of us that we are not willing to give. True we do not make our gods as this man did - at least not literally. We do like to choose them. But the Christian religion, and the Jewish faith which forms its background, both present a God who chooses us - the Creator God who makes us, not one whom we make. This is the basic difference in various types of religious life and practice. This God speaks: "Thou shalt not have any other gods before me" ---- "Thou shalt not make any graven image, and bow down to worship it"

The people who make and worship their own gods do not find much satisfaction in their religious practices. It is easy - but so deadening! On the other hand, they who see religion as their response to a God who chooses them find it to be demanding, but also life-giving. This indicates why so much of so-called religion is dull and deadening - it is not a response to a life-giving Other. Or, to say it in another way: it gives so little because it costs so little. The Bible, both in the Old and New Testaments, makes crystal clear that God has first claim on our human life and resources. We must give him more than the leftovers - "the finest of the wheat" and "the firstling of the flock". The challenge of Jesus echoes even to this day: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself"

So this old story. It is old-fashioned. It is quaint. It seems so far from us. But in the truth that it presents, it comes very near to us - uncomfortably so! Beware of idolatry as the worship of something different from, and less than, the true God. You cannot choose your own God. You can only respond to the God who chooses you. Nor can you adequately worship and serve this God with the left-overs of your life. It is a word to ponder seriously: "And the rest of it he makes into a god, his idol."