

**ATLANTIC BAPTIST FELLOWSHIP  
FALL ASSEMBLY  
25 - 26 SEPTEMBER 1992  
FIRST UNITED BAPTIST CHURCH  
AMHERST, NOVA SCOTIA**

Theme: *"Modern Youth and the Church"*

Special Speaker: Professor Jack Wendt, BA MA (San Francisco State),  
Associate Professor, Faculty of Management and Education, Acadia  
University; Director, Christian Counselling Centre, Wolfville, N.S.

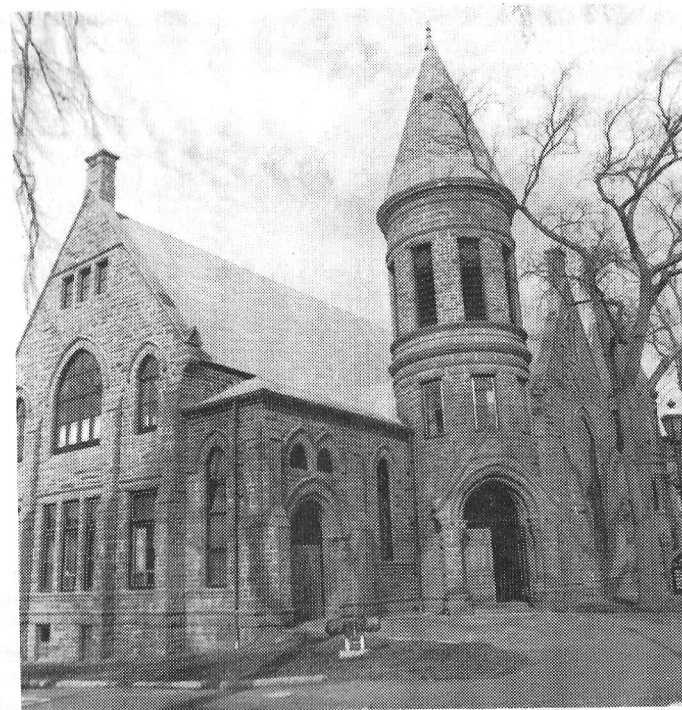
**P R O G R A M M E**

FRIDAY	SATURDAY
6:30 pm Registration	9:00 am Devotions: Rev'd Morley A. Shaw, First UBC, New Glasgow, N.S.
7:05 pm Devotions: the President	9:20 am Intimations
7:15 pm Welcome: President & Host Minister	9:25 am Lecture II: "Pastoral Strategies for Adults Ministering to Youth"
7:25 pm Lecture I: "Adolescent Spirituality and Developmental Theory"	10:25 am Coffee Break
8:30 pm Break	10:40 am Panel Response: Rev'd Dr. G.G. Harrop (chair); Rev'd Derrick Marshall, First UBC, Annapolis Royal, N.S.; Assistant Pastor Donald T. Miller, First UBC, Amherst, N.S. (with some of his youth group). General discussion
8:45 pm The Service of Holy Communion, conducted by the Minister and Deacons of the Host Church	Noon Lunch at Church
9:10 pm Reception	1:15 pm Business Meeting
	3:00 pm Dismiss

**N O T E S**

- The First United Baptist Church, Amherst, Nova Scotia, is located at 90 Victoria Street in downtown Amherst.
- Parking is available at the rear of the church.
- Hospitality - Victoria Motel, 150 Victoria Street East, 667-7211, rates: single, 38.00; double, 40.00.
  - Journey's End, 143 South Albion Street, 667-0404, or toll free 1-800-668-4200. Rates: single, 52.82-55.18; double, 55.18-64.59.
  - Wandlyn Inn, West Amherst, 667-3331, or toll free 1-800-561-0000. Rates: single (fully booked, no accommodation available); double (unknown)
  - Pied Piper, highway 2, 667-3891. Rates: single, 36.00; double, 40.00
  - Browns Guest Home, 158 Victoria Street East, 667-9769. Rates: single, 25.00; double, 30.00
- A limited number of free billets are available from the Church - call the church office, 902-667-2001.

**BULLETIN**  
**Atlantic Baptist Fellowship**  
September 1992



*Amherst First United Baptist Church*

**FALL ASSEMBLY 1992**

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Theme: *"Modern Youth and the Church"*

Special Speaker:

Jack Wendt, Associate Professor, Faculty of Management and Education,  
Acadia University; Director, Christian Counselling Centre, Wolfville.

For full particulars see page 16



### THE OFFICERS OF THE ABF ARE:

President: Mr. Edward Colquhoun, 1A Lamy St., Amherst, N.S. B4H 2B2

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B3L 1Y1

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Past President: Rev'd Byron Corkum, P.O. Box 637, Amherst, N.S. B4H 3B8

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Box 10, Site 23, Armdale, N.S. B3L 4J4 (Tel: 902-852-3265).

### THE OBJECTIVES OF THE ATLANTIC BAPTIST FELLOWSHIP

(approved by the Spring Session, Wolfville, June 14-15, 1985)

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

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

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

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

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

*"The great problem of the present age is to preserve the religious spirit, whilst getting rid of the superstitions and absurdities that deform it, and which are alike opposed to science and common sense."*

-- Translator's preface to *Earnest Rénan's Life of Jesus*, dated 8/12/1863.

## EDITORIAL COMMENT

This edition of the *Bulletin* contains some all too brief references to the important Spring Assembly of the Fellowship which was held last May and which dealt with the exceedingly important and controversial topic of the quality of theological education carried on currently by our Baptist theological institutions in Canada. To discuss such a topic in public is, although highly desirable, liable to lead to contention. We feel, however, that the open, frank and free discussion at the Lawrencetown meeting will do something to liberate the subject from mere gossip and ill-informed comment and will lead to a sober appraisal of the current situation in our Canadian Baptist theological institutions.

Your editor is reminded that some years back now when the late and beloved Dr. John Corston retired from the teaching of New Testament at the Atlantic School of Theology, the local Halifax newspaper in its report of the occasion made a typographical slip - one of those "slips that pass in the type" - caused either by a reporter who had no interest in or knowledge of metaphysics, or by a typesetter, who like so many of his kind, love to improve on the "copy" put before them. Instead of saying Dr. Corston laboured at the Atlantic School of *Theology*, the paper said it was at the Atlantic School of *Technology*. That slip warns us that a theological institution, responsible for training Ministers of the Gospel, may degenerate from producing quality pastors that the Church needs. We are all aware of the difference between a technician who can fix a complex machine like a computer without any real knowledge about how and why a computer works, and a genuine scientist who does understand the electrical and electronic principles of such fantastic machines.

According to Dr. J.K. Zeman (see his *Open Doors: Canadian Baptists 1950-1990*, a book published this year, page 170 ff.), there are several concerns for theological education as currently practised in Canada, the first of which is that the balance between the "theoretical" and "practical" disciplines is swinging too much in the direction of the "practical." In other words Dr. Zeman seems to be saying that we must beware of turning out "technicians" rather than fully trained and equipped men and women of God. When Gert Behanna was converted she asked a friend for a minister whom she might consult. The friend replied, "Do you want a *go-getter* or a *man of God*?" She very wisely said she wanted the latter, some one who knew his stuff theoretically and knew God existentially.

The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) which regulates and supervises all broadcasting in Canada will be holding a full public review of its current policies in religious broadcasting, with a public meeting, to be held in Hull, Quebec, beginning 19 October, 1992. This year's policy hearing has been "triggered" by a number of "fundamentalist" Christian groups who have been operating low power transmitters, illegally, in western Canada. All friends of the ABF should take an interest in this most important event.

We note with deep regret and sympathy to bereaved relatives and friends the death of Roger Prentice's father, Mr. P.H. Prentice, a resident of Halifax and a good "Friend" of the ABF. We also have to record the passing of the Reverend Dr. Russell Aldwinckle, last May 21. We recall with pleasure Dr. Aldwinckle's visit to an ABF gathering in 1976, when he read an excellent paper, "Freedom and Authority in Religion."

## FRIENDS OF THE ABF — UPDATE

by Dorothy M. Lovesey

At the time of writing (20 July 1992) the number of "Friends" supporting the aims and objectives of the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship is 223, which means we must all make every effort to add 17 more names to the roster in order to reach the target for this year.

We have much pleasure in saluting two of our "Friends" who have given splendid support to the Fellowship over the years, the Reverend Doctor I. Judson Levy and his wife, Doctor Fernetta Levy.



Jud. Levy, a native of Lunenburg County, N.S., took his BA at Acadia University and the BD and the STM at Andover Newton Theological School. After serving churches in the Maritimes and Ontario, Jud. was for eleven years Chaplain and Dean of the Chapel of Acadia University. His outstanding service to the ABF was during the years 1976-1985 when he edited 29 issues of the ABF's *Bulletin*. Acadia made him DD *honoris causa*.

Ferne Levy is well-known for her many years of service to the Canadian Bible Society and the United Bible Societies of the World. A former president of the Nova Scotia District of the Canadian Bible Society and of the National Board, she served from 1977 through 1984 as a global vice-president of the United Bible Societies of the World. Her gifts of leadership have been used at all levels of Baptist life and work. In 1979 Acadia University honoured her with its DD degree.



## ABF SPRING ASSEMBLY 1992

Through the courtesy of the pastor and friends of the United Baptist Church, Lawrencetown, Nova Scotia, the Spring Assembly of the Fellowship was held in that historic church and that beautiful Annapolis Valley town 29-30 May 1992. Although there were many counter-attractions being held that weekend (including the Apple Blossom festivities in nearby Kentville) the Assembly drew together upwards of seventy friends. The theme of the conference was the important one concerning the quality of theological education now being carried out in our Baptist theological institutions in Canada. Such a topic is clearly controversial but it was handled, as we confidently expected it would be, with Christian honesty, candour and love, by the speakers and indeed by all present.

The conference was well served by the president who guided the proceedings with his usual quiet tact and efficiency; by the Saturday morning devotional leader (the Reverend John Boyd of Halifax, who spoke to us about the significance of the Ascension story); by the two main speakers, Dr. T. Raymond Hobbs and the Reverend Dr. Andrew MacRae.

The theme of the conference was in the form of a question: "Baptist Theological Education: Is There a Crisis in Canada?" Professor T. Raymond Hobbs, ThM (Ruschlikon), BD, PhD (London), the professor of Hebrew and Old Testament Interpretation, McMaster University, gave two lectures in which he sought to justify his conviction that the answer to the question must be in the affirmative. A response in the emphatic negative was given by the Reverend Principal Andrew D. MacRae, MA, BD (Edinburgh), PhD (St. Andrews), DD (Campbellsville), of the Acadia Divinity College. Brief and somewhat inadequate abstracts of what these two gentlemen said are given below (see pages 7-9). Tapes of their addresses are available from the Reverend Byron Corkum, Box 637, Amherst, N.S.; tel-- 902-667-2001, from whom full particulars (regarding costs, etc.) can be obtained. The presentations evoked a good general discussion, which was ably chaired by Dr. G. G. Harrop.

The business meeting on the Saturday afternoon was, we regret to have to say, poorly attended. However, all the necessary business was done and, most importantly, the slate of officers and officials for the next two years was adopted. Most of the new appointments are listed on page 2 of this *Bulletin*. We might add here that the chair of the very important programme committee is the Reverend Adele Crowell, of Halifax (who would welcome suggestions re topic for future assemblies). Some fifteen individuals were named to serve on the advisory council of the Fellowship.

Some time was spent discussing the finances of the Fellowship with particular reference to the heavy expenses connected with the *Bulletin*. The present editor of the *Bulletin* retires at the end of this year, to date no replacement has as yet been found.

Notice was given that the Fall 1992 Assembly of the Fellowship will be held 25 - 26 September at the First United Baptist Church, Amherst, Nova Scotia, when the theme will be "Modern Youth and the Church," and the special speaker, Professor Jack Wendt of Acadia University.

## SCENES FROM THE SPRING ASSEMBLY 1992

Photographs by Vincent Rushton et al



President



Past President



Devotions Leader



Lecturer



The Assembly at Worship



Crowd scene



Saturday Morning Lunch

## BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION: IS THERE A CRISIS IN CANADA?

by T. RAYMOND HOBBS

### Lecture 1: "Baptist Theological Education: the Context"

Having decided that theological, like many other forms of education, is in crisis, I will here attempt to justify that conclusion. I first want to move things out of a factional setting - the fight between "liberals" and "fundamentalists" - since the matter is far more complex than that, and begin by sketching the social and cultural context in which theological education has to take place. Then I will suggest some alternative strategies which our theological institutions might adopt. My approach is based on twenty-three years of experience in theological education and my strong interest in sociology and cultural analysis both in the Biblical world and North American society.

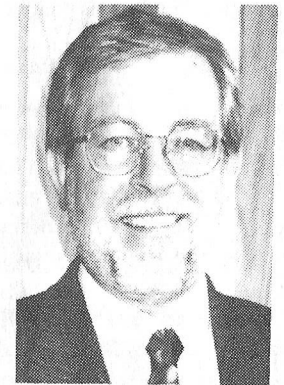
### I. MODERN TRENDS

Certain overt trends, including *economic* ones with their new alignments, have occurred in the world since the end of the 1960's, and have made us all nervous. Movements, such as *political/international* ones, have led to the surprising break-up of the Soviet Union and the return to old tribal values. On the *local political* scene, sectional interests are increasing - such as in Quebec and various minority groups. Our politicians appear powerless in face of them while the citizenry is frustrated. A sense of impermanence and uncertainty, a *loss of centre*, is growing and giving rise to an "us" and "them" syndrome. In both Liberation Theology and Fundamentalist Apocalypticism, for instance, the world is divided into two kinds of people, oppressors and oppressed, saints and sinners. These commonly observed trends have led to political suspicion and loss of faith.

### II. RESPONSES

The responses we make to these trends are not so much planned strategies as instinctive reactions. These are often devoid of moral content although the moral consequences themselves are far reaching.

In the secular world there is a *loss of shared values*, no sense of "the good," or the "common good." Recent political debate reveals a *political loss of principles*. The standard of political debate is deplorably low with much empty rhetoric and character assassination. There also appears to be a loss of a sense of the authentic self and the rise of the artificial person. Hedonistic activity flourishes. Pure pragmatism is the philosophic base. Words like "post-modernism" and "deconstruction" are used to capture the contemporary world which has moved beyond the rational. All assertions of truth and authority are suspect. The result is chaos and collective paranoia. In this context the rise of the appeal of old myths is seen. Among Christians this particular appeal of antiquity is witnessed in restless and dissatisfied churches and church leaders.



Ray Hobbs

In the religious world we note the following responses: 1) the decline of

mainline churches (see Bibby's books); 2) loss of faith in the denominational centre reflected in the rapid decline of financial contributions; 3) growing interest in exotic and freaky forms of "spirituality," e.g. the New Age movement; 4) rise of "alternative churches" that offer some sense of self-transcendence to otherwise dull and meaningless, white, middle-class lives; 5) the adoption of "instrumental activism" by some large and successful churches; 6) renewal of "buzz-words" - such as "biblical Christianity," "leadership," "lay empowerment."

## Lecture 2: "Baptist Theological Education: the Agenda"

### I. GENERAL TRENDS IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

#### A. Decline of "Traditional Disciplines"

1) Biblical Studies. Brevard Childs (1970) challenged the dominance of traditional Biblical criticism and its forced marriage with the Biblical theology movement of the 1950's and 1960's. This has resulted in four general trends: first, a return of radical fundamentalism (shift to right at Trinity Evangelical; second, the attempt to rediscover the religious dimension of the text without sacrificing the mind (the experiment of "Canonical criticism"); third, an investigation of the literary dimension of the text (the most popular form of subjective interpretation); fourth, a more radical application of refined historical methods (the use of social-science's methodologies for the understanding of the text of the Bible). Fragmentation in Biblical studies is the order of the day - the representatives of the four trends are not talking to each other.

2) Theology. Similar things can be said about the discipline of Theology, in which the student's personal choice has become a real option for deciding truth. "Post-modernism" is becoming a new slogan.

3) History. New styles of history are being developed in which words like "fact" and "historical truth" are unacceptable.

4) Christian Education. In an age of dissolution of power, the role of the teacher, or better "pastor as teacher," is being eroded, as somehow indecent.

#### B. Revolutionary Trends in Enrollment

Today there is a larger percentage of women students for ministry than formerly. Many of these are divorcees, older and of better educational standing than the male candidates, even though the job opportunities for them are limited. Were it not for the women the academic and intellectual in seminaries would be mediocre indeed! A smaller percentage of seminary students are opting for the M.Div. degree, the standard qualification for ordination.

#### C. New Form of "Practical Theology" (Mission)

These are being inaugurated without due care. New "buzz words" are being introduced, borrowed from the world of business management consultancy and the helping professions. "Leadership" is spoken of, but this often means little more than manipulation - the art of getting others to do what we want. Phrases like "church planting" and "church growth" come from the market-place and have a competitive spirit at their base.

### D. Scramble for New Social Significance

Theological education is seeking to regain the Church's lost social significance in two ways: first, by spending more money on public relations; second, by offering degree programmes which have an inflated value in terms of nomenclature. I refer to the D.Min. degree. In my judgment, programmes associated with the D.Min. degree are not doctoral programmes and should not claim this status.

### II. SUGGESTIONS FOR A NEW AGENDA

In the literature about the new church and the new style of ministry, in which we are now being encouraged to train people, I detect a triumphal call to pilgrimage. My problem with it is that it does not nourish the mind and soul - it simply provides "tools for the job." This is a systems model in which interpersonal relationships become an instrument in an overall leadership style, and has lost all the relational character of the shepherd.

I would place *critical thinking* at the top of the intellectual demands of the modern seminary. We must enable students to understand and evaluate the times and their place in them. There must be an *awareness*, both of oneself and of the individual's social and cultural context. Students must be trained in the *proper application of the scriptures to modern situations*, which are far more complex than the ancient ones. There must be *no wedge driven between "the academic" and "the practical"* - we need both, in proper proportion. We must be aware of new agenda items, raised for us by others outside the Church.

It seems to me we have two choices in theological education. We can go *with* the culture, or *against* it. The Old Testament prophets knew that opposition contains no glamour, no success, but only suffering and death. Jesus added to that a new interpretive layer of self-sacrifice, self-denial and cross-bearing. To make that into an educational philosophy and practice is challenge indeed.

## RESPONSE TO LECTURES

by Andrew D. MacRae



Ray Hobbs and Andrew MacRae

While appreciative of much of what Dr. Hobbs said in his lectures, MacRae said he disagreed vigorously about the value of the D.Min. degree since the D.Min. programme at the Acadia Divinity College has received the approval of Acadia University and the American Association of Theological Schools which guarantees its academic and professional worth at the doctoral level. At Acadia the alleged gulf between the academic and the practical is

totally avoided. "We never teach a managerial type of ministry." With respect to the *Christian Week* article that dealt with recent changes at the McMaster Divinity School, and which grieved some, MacRae, who serves on its board, said he regretted it as an unfortunate blemish on an otherwise fine evangelical paper which was not fundamentalist. Since the ADC is criticized from both the extreme right and the extreme left in the Atlantic Baptist Convention, MacRae felt that they "must be doing things about right."

## BOOK REVIEW

by Roger H. Prentice

Eric James' *The Life of Bishop John A. T. Robinson* (published by Collins and Eerdmans) is a timely and honourable tribute to a man who has done much to revitalize theological thought and discussion through his life's work as a bishop of the Church of England, dean of a University college chapel, writer and scholar. The book chronicles the years of Robinson's life, giving close attention to all facets of it so that the mosaic of this complex man might be complete. It deals honestly with Robinson's personality, "warts and all," as it affected his training, pastoral work, teaching, writing, travelling, lecturing and development of human relationships.

Of course, Robinson is best known for his little book *Honest to God*, published in 1963. This book caused a storm of controversy within the Church, one which was sorely needed and which still provokes people to deeper considerations of faith. This was not the first notoriety for Robinson. His defence of D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* made the headlines and him widely known. Still, in spite of that, he was appointed Bishop of Woolwich, a suffragan bishop of the South London Diocese of Southwark. It was an inner-city appointment which placed him in the midst of the teeming urban crisis of the Church.

Robinson, deeply interested in this ministry, especially to the run-down central city core, was attempting to articulate the deeper questions of such people in *Honest to God*. His biography skillfully weaves this interest through the story of his life, and its influence on many of Robinson's decisions.

The book moves to the climax of Robinson's life where he deals with the knowledge that he has terminal cancer. The dignity and faithfulness of Robinson and his wife through this terrible time is well chronicled by one who knew intimately the thinking and feeling of his subject. This final test which Robinson undergoes shows the brilliance of his personality and faith, and would be a comfort to others who may also have to share his experience.

If there is a fault in this biography, perhaps it lies in the fact, as it seems to the writer of this review, that the author has not distilled the primary sources, mainly Robinson's writings, papers, and journals, enough. Great chunks are quoted where a synopsis would have better maintained the momentum of the story. At other places in the book copious reference is made to letters written to the biographer who had requested people's memories and impressions of the bishop. Important as these are as primary sources, they would have been better used as background for James' own conclusions and quoted only in an appendix.

The book will lead many to share the biographer's enthusiasm for his subject and to a reading of the bishop's works which still have much to teach us.

**Editor's note.** The Reverend R. H. Prentice, BA (Dalhousie), M.Div. (Acadia), is the Chaplain of Acadia University.

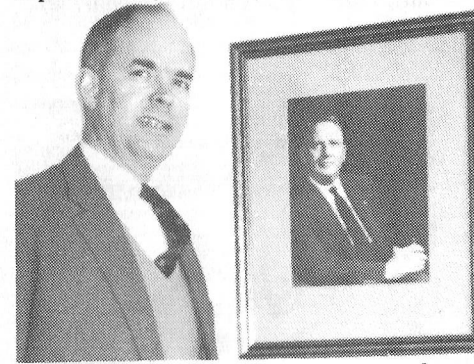


Roger

## LIVING RELIGIONS III - ISLAM

by Bruce Matthews

Given the importance of the fundamentalist revival (*dakwah*) that is confronting many of the world's 925 million Muslims, and the fact that once again the Middle East is the focus of world attention, the subject of the Islamic religion is particularly timely. At once it should be noted that Islam is a sister religion of



Bruce Matthews and C.B. Lumsden

our own Judaeo-Christian faith. Islam (the word is derived from the verb root "to be safe" and "to submit to God's will and grace") comes out of the same Semitic tradition of prophecy and revelation that characterizes our Old and New Testaments. It shares the same theological world-view, the same belief in the same one God. Even more importantly, Islam accepts the authenticity of the spiritual visions that stand behind the Jewish and Christian faiths. Muslims acknowledge the canonical status of the Old Testament, as well as the teachings of Jesus. Jews, Christians and Muslims, they argue, are all "people of the *al-kitab*" or "book," referring to the history of revelation in the bible that is common to all three faiths. There are important points of contact between Islam and Christianity, then. But there sometimes appear to be even more points of conflict. How are we to understand this ambivalent relationship between these two great religions?

We can say something about Islam that we cannot say about Judaism or even Christianity: Islam actually has a precise date on which the religion was established - September, AD 622. That was when the remarkable founder of the religion, a middle-aged Arab merchant named Muhammad, fled from possible assassination by his jealous fellow citizens in Mecca and established his spiritual authority in another city well to the north. There, he continued to set down the ecstatic visions and teachings he claimed he had been receiving for a dozen years, teachings recited to him through an angel from the one God, Allah. These teachings were considered to be in the tradition of Jeremiah, Isaiah and Jesus, but were also claimed as the final prophecy. Within a few years of Muhammad's death in 632, they were firmly fixed in the *Qur'an*.

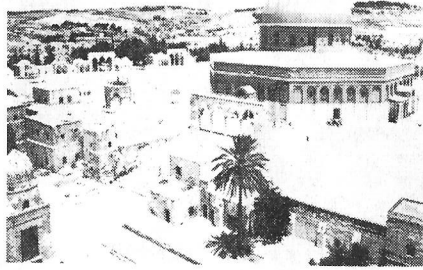
Those who read the *Qur'an* sensitively, even in translation, cannot help but feel that the mind of Muhammad must have been a pure vessel, uncontaminated with worldly greed or egocentric aims. Although it has been compared by some to a mere hymn book, to most it is seen as serene and powerful scripture, a religious testament of the greatest integrity.

But just what did Muhammad teach that was so provocative and inspiring? In fact, his message was arresting because of its simplicity, its lack of theological complexity. Perhaps it is best expressed in the five so-called "pillars" (*rukun*) of Islamic faith: belief in one God, prayers on a disciplined five times-a-day basis to this one God, fasting for one month of each year, a pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca once in the lifetime of the devotee, and charity in the form of strict tithing. One can readily see that the "five pillars" are a complete theological

system emphasizing faith in the power of God to guide one in this parlous life; community in joining together in certain acts of obligation so that no one is left isolated or outside of the circle of salvation; and finally, social action and charity in the great teaching of compassion.

What Muhammad provided, then, was not merely a new monotheistic faith, in the line of Judaism and Christianity. He also offered a new lifestyle for the people of the desert, a compendium of duties and responsibilities a *shari'ah* or "way of life." Those who embraced the new way were thereafter called "the ones who have submitted and are safe," *muslima*, or Muslims.

Early Islam's grandeur, notes the scholar James Morris, was austere. It went well with harsh places, volatile temperaments and warlike desert habits. It was a manly and vigorous creed. Armed by its unquestioning beliefs, newly bound together by its comradeship, Islam and its Arab proponents burst out of their arid



*Mosque of Omar, Jerusalem*

homeland to set their stamp on the world. History shows us that this explosive inspiration went as far west as Spain and as far east as India in scarcely a century. Its authority and power was perhaps best summed up by observing that there was even a time when the pope paid the Arabs economic tribute. Further, unlike Christianity, Islam was never perceived as a "colonial" or "Western" religion. This made its outreach to Asia and Africa all the more successful over the centuries. But the colonial experience deeply affected the world of Islam nonetheless. Subjugated to largely French, British and Dutch powers, the Islamic world from North Africa to Indonesia was completely bypassed in terms of industrialization or modernization. It could be argued that life for most Muslims from 1800 to the 1950's was economically and politically one of drab emptiness.

Since then, random events of history like the end of the colonial era, the discovery of oil and the creation of the State of Israel have all contributed to a great Arab and Muslim awakening. Among the many issues the Islamic nations face today is whether their traditional religious world-view is adequate to meet the demands that participation in the modern world seems to require. There are times when social, economic and political pressures become intolerable, when a retreat into a more understandable and simple world-view seems desirable. Hence the phenomena of religious and cultural fundamentalism, particularly the attempt to isolate a purified Islamic faith from perceived Western contamination. As Bernard Lewis has observed, Muslims are acutely conscious of the contrast between their glorious past and inglorious present. He suggests Muslims essentially ask two questions: what did we do wrong and who did this to us? Dangerous fantasies can arise in response to these questions, especially the notion that the problems affecting Islamic societies are somebody else's fault. These and other factors lead to frustration, resentment, sometimes even terrorism. But they also lead to a stereotyping of Muslims as universally intolerant and only inter-

ested in stepping backwards. Consequently one can note a rising edge of hysteria in the Western media concerning the Islamic world, as if we are somehow doomed to confrontation with an "Islamic wave."

This is irresponsible. Islam, it is true, at times appears as uncompromising and stern. It does this in part to keep "junk Westernization" (defined as Western commercial culture separated from the civilization that manufactured it) at bay, and to preserve social values that it feels are still worthy (such as the veiling of women). Sometimes these things are misunderstood in the West. But since we do not come from this culture, it is better for us, not to cast the first stone. There is too much to admire in the faith of those who believe in the same God as we do.

**Editor's Note.** Bruce Matthews, BA (Acadia), MA (Oxon), STB (Trinity), PhD (McMaster), is the C.B. Lumsden Professor of Comparative Religion and Head of the Department of Comparative Religion, Acadia University.

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## MULTUM IN PARVO

When the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship met in Fort Worth, Texas, at the end of April 1992, one of those who brought "greetings" was Daniel Weiss, general secretary of the American Baptist Churches in the USA. Weiss spoke for only three minutes but he spoke volumes for all Baptists. Here is what he said:

"I am honoured to greet you and salute you on behalf of your sisters and brothers in American Baptist Churches of the USA. It is a delight to be with followers of Jesus Christ who seek to express and live out their faith in ways consistent with historic Baptist principles:

- who believe in soul freedom;
- who affirm the priesthood of all believers;
- who submit to biblical authority without creedalism;
- who hold firm to doctrinal convictions without resorting to 'Theological McCarthyism';
- who speak the truth in love;
- who, in the main, recognize that God is not limited to calling to ministry only persons of the male gender;
- who strive to be racially inclusive people, not simply in number, but in shared leadership and power;
- who are committed to separation of church and state;
- who are dedicated to engage in evangelism without reticence or embarrassment, and who struggle for peace and justice without hesitation; and
- who realize God's circle of friends is always larger than their own, and therefore, seek relationships with the *oikomene*, the whole household of God."

# S E R M O N

by James R.C. Perkin

## “Intellectual Olympics”

### “Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind....” - 1 Peter 1.13

At the end of last February, 1992, the 16th Winter Olympics ended amid colourful pageantry in Albertville, France. This year the dress of the contestants was remarkable for its use of psychedelic colours as well as for its brevity and obvious utility. All of this is a far cry from the original Olympics (between 776 BC, when the games began, and AD 394 when they were suspended) when olympic dress was very simple. The athletes, all of whom were men, either competed naked or they hitched their long outer garment up and tucked it under their belt. So ancient languages have a common phrase - “gird up your loins.” It was the ancient equivalent of saying “roll up your sleeves,” meaning prepare for some vigorous activity.

In the story of the Israelite Exodus from slavery in Egypt we read they were told to sacrifice a lamb and paint its blood on the doorposts of their houses. Then they were to eat the roasted carcass of the lamb. “And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded ... (Exodus 12.11).”

In the Third Gospel Jesus exhorts his disciples to be read, to be on the watch. He uses a figure of speech. “Let your loins be girded about ... (Luke 12.35).”

And now we come to our text in First Peter, a letter written to Christians who were about to face a severe challenge to their faith: “wherefore gird up the loins of your mind (1 Peter 1.13).” We should notice that Peter changed the familiar image of girding up one’s loins from a literal reference to a metaphorical one. He was not speaking of girding up one’s loins for a journey, or a race, or some demanding task. He said “Gird up the loins of your mind.” Be intellectually ready for the conflicts ahead. Let me suggest three reasons why Peter would urge these new Christians to be intellectually ready.

#### 1) *They do not live in a Christian World.*

The Christians to whom Peter wrote did not live in a world in which there was a Church - an organization with officials and a headquarters. There were churches, but no Church. There were pastors and evangelists, but no official ministry of trained personnel. There was no New Testament, only documents written by various leaders of greatly varying quality. It was a world of pluralism, of many gods. In short, it was a pre-Christian world, one without a framework within which Christians could find direction and support.

#### 2) *There was no commonly accepted authority.*

The only effective authority in Peter’s world was the authority of physical force. The Roman Empire demanded obedience. But apart from its rules, people did what they pleased. They fought, got drunk, occasionally committed murder. The great exception to all this was the Jews, who respected their priests and revered their scriptures.



#### 3) *There were no ethical guidelines.*

Life was short and cheap. Unwanted female babies were thrown into the streets. Murder was common and sexual assault almost an everyday occurrence. No wonder there was drunkenness and incest in the church at Corinth; no one had told them that the new faith had anything to do with morality.

To these Christians, living in a world without a Church, with no authority and no ethical guidelines, Peter gave the stirring call, “Gird up the loins of your minds.” He was stressing the need for Christians to think, to be prepared to challenge the world. He was addressing a tiny, minority religion existing in a vast, pagan world.

Peter’s words to a beleaguered group in first-century Asia Minor have a particular relevance to a small group of Christian people on a university campus late in the twentieth century as they approach the season of Lent. “Gird up the loins of your mind.” Be ready to meet the intellectual challenge of the day. And make no mistake, it is a challenge! In fact, it is such a serious challenge that many people including some found on our campus, would rather hide from the issues that face them.

Our world, like that of the Christians to whom Peter wrote, is not a Christian world. His world was pre-Christian; ours is post-Christian. The landmarks of traditional Christendom have been removed from our society. We live and work in a pluralist environment. We can no longer assume that Christianity is the religion. If we wish to make that claim we must be able to demonstrate it in many ways, including the intellectual means.

In Peter’s day, we said above, there was no commonly accepted authority. This sounds remarkably like 1992! Ninety years ago the young men worshipping on this campus would have called their fathers “sir” and young women would have married the men their parents chose. Your grandparents will tell you that in their lifetime the authority of police, teachers, and even of university presidents, has been weakened. Many changes, of course, have been beneficial. But they mean that individuals are left to develop their own internal authority and many simply are not capable of doing that. It can only be done by those willing to gird up the loins of their mind.

We also said above that in the days when First Peter was written there were no ethical guidelines. The early Christians had to try to work out what Christian morality was. In this post-Christian age we face much the same demand. We face ethical questions which even your parents never thought about - questions raised by bio-technology, genetic engineering, contraception, organ transplants, psychotropic drugs .... I urge you not to be afraid of the profound intellectual issues which confront you. A university is the ideal place in which to face the challenge and search for truth. Such a search is not an optional extra to the Christian pilgrimage - it is an essential part of the pilgrimage itself. Gird up the loins of your mind! I exhort you not to overlook the intellectual challenges of our generation. Gird up the loins of your mind.

**Editor’s Note.** The above sermon was preached in the Manning Memorial Chapel on the campus of Acadia University by the president, Dr. J. R.C. Perkin, on Sunday evening, 1 March 1992.