

CONFESSING CHRISTIAN FAITH

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TO THE READER:

This series was prepared for the *Canadian Baptist* monthly magazine which was published in Toronto for a national Canadian Baptist audience under the editorship of Dr. William H. Jones. The circulation at that time was roughly 17,000 (surveys estimated that there were about three readers for every copy circulated, for a total of about 50,000 readers). The series was intended for lay instruction on some key doctrines of the Christian faith. Readers outside of Canada should not ignore references to Canadian issues, for they in most cases applied more generally to the world Christian community, especially in Europe and in Anglophone societies. For example, references to Presbyterians, Methodists, and Anglicans (Episcopalians) applied as much to the United States and the U.K. as they did to Canada. The only exception is the United Church of Canada, which was the first modern experiment in ecumenism, a union in Canada in 1925 of most Methodists, Congregationalists and about half the Presbyterians. The United Church of Canada represents the continuation of established Protestantism in the West, which continues to diminish numerically as at this writing in 2003.

If I were writing this series now in 2003 I would change certain gender references, particularly the use of “man” generically, as it is used less and less to identify humanity in general. I would use the term “humanity,” or “mankind,” as in the case of the title of Chapter 8.

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CONFESSING CHRISTIAN FAITH

A Series of Christian Doctrine Studies

by Dr. Samuel J. Mikolaski

The Canadian Baptist, Toronto, Canada

Note from the Editor, Dr. William H. Jones:

Dr. Samuel J. Mikolaski teaches historical theology at Carey Hall, University of British Columbia. This article is first in a series of articles outlining what Dr. Mikolaski subtitled, "The Christian Way for Canadians," or "The Canadian Life and the Christian Way." CB suggests that readers may wish to clip out the articles and compile them in a three-ringed binder.

1. WORSHIPPING OUR GOD

Dr. Samuel J. Mikolaski

Canadian Baptist, September 1986

Canadian Christianity has become flabby -- flabby, that is, in regard to its public, identifiable Christian commitment. While it is true that many Canadian Christians and Christian churches and organizations have given money sacrificially and have rendered service magnificently for overseas help, Canadians have lost sight of their missionary responsibilities in Canada to Canadians.

Confessional vitality first and foremost concerns mission. To think of confession of faith as antiquarian, as the instrument of the insecure to intimidate other Christians who hold differing views, as the refuge of the weak, or as being of merely archival value is to miss the mark.

Reformation Confessions

Since the 16th century Reformation and its remarkable precursors such as John Wyclif, theological discussion and statements of faith have received a bad press -- not without reason. They are all strongly confessional. As well, they reflect the internecine struggles of the times about what have become traditional denominational distinctives: views about baptism, the Lord's Supper, the nature of the church and its relation to the state and other matters.

Modern Mood

Such issues continue to be of concern. Let no one suppose that modern Christian faith should or can dismiss traditional theological, polity and social issues. Even those most ardently ecumenical in perspective recognize that their goal of the visible unity of the churches faces hard hurdles.

For example, consider statements of biblical truth and concessions to differing inherited practices cited in the BEM (*Baptism, Eucharist, Ministry*) document of the World Council of Churches. This document reflects the injection of incarnational and trinitarian theology into World Council language since New Delhi (1961). The new mood may be seen as (unwitting?) confessional response to the charge made in the 1950-70s that church union interests had become

ideologically vapid and had acquired the dull sound of industrial takeover.

For me, the weakness of the Reformation and post-Reformation documents is evident for another reason. They are an intra-hermeneutic not an hermeneutic. What does this important distinction mean?

Until the French Revolution dialogue among people in the West functioned within the circle of Christian categories, including God, creation, fall, incarnation, redemption, Christ's final triumph. Differences were among and between Christians who shared a common world view. This was an intra-hermeneutic. Roman Catholics and Protestants held common views about major Christian doctrines.

Ideological shifts since 1850 have been dramatic. More recent shifts are even more dramatic. The ethos of Canadian society has ceased to be visibly Christian. Today pains are taken to downplay Christian roots. For some the introduction of the concept of myth has undercut the truth functions of traditional confessional statements such as the Apostles' and Nicene creeds. Christ's uniqueness is widely dismissed. Modern Christology seeks accommodation to the claims of Eastern religions, especially Buddhism. The concept of a unique incarnation of God at Bethlehem in the person of Jesus Christ is deemed impossible.

Christians today must again speak in terms of an hermeneutic, i.e., statements of belief as to the content and meaning of Christian faith addressed not to one another but to a pagan world. Confessional witness today ought to be vital and missionary in character.

Early Christian Genius

Some mistakenly think that fourth century statements such as the Nicene Creed were an artificial theological construct imposed on simple moralistic Christianity. In fact, robust confessionalism characterizes the earliest Christian statements.

Justin Martyr (active about A.D. 130-160) in his *First Apology* (10) confesses that which "we have received," a parallel with 1 Corinthians 11:23 and 15:1. His statements are trinitarian, strongly scriptural (2226) and they end with the best available early description of Christian conversion, baptismal initiation and the Lord's Supper.

The Athenian philosopher Athenagoras makes a powerful statement (*Plea*) to the emperor Marcus Aurelius around A.D. 175-177. His language is theologically sophisticated and is fully incarnational and trinitarian (4, 10, 31). He contrasts Christian understanding of God, creation and morality with pagan ideas.

At about the same time in Gaul, Irenaeus was leading the massive penetration of Christian faith into that province of the Roman empire. His *Against Heresies* is replete with confessional aphorisms and summaries of Christian faith which have been highly regarded (e.g., 3.1.2; 3.4.2; 3.11.9). He says that the apostolic

tradition is written in hearts by the Holy Spirit. The apostolic tradition, the apostolic writings and the word of faith imprinted on the heart cohere.

Canadian Anglicans

Since the Lambeth Conference of 1968 Canadian Anglicans have largely given up required subscription to the *Thirty-nine Articles*. Assent to them by ordinands is occasionally required; however, even in those cases an accompanying pastoral letter has at times been sent to excuse them from literal assent on grounds that the *Articles* do not necessarily reflect current thinking.

Nevertheless, at the lay and pastoral level some Anglicans are paying more attention to confession of faith. Baptism of infants as a cultic rite is on the decline. Infants are currently baptized by many clergy only in the case of believing parents. In some churches the majority of current baptisms are of believing adults.

One Anglican rector described to me the active catechumen program developed in his church which includes adult pre-baptismal classes of ten weeks before Christmas, another post-Christmas series and a spring series, all designed to accommodate the needs of candidates for baptism. Biblical and creedal materials (such as the *Apostles' Creed*) are employed in instruction.

Canadian Presbyterians

Canadian Presbyterians continue to regard highly the *Westminster Confession* and not a few still use it. In 1984 a new statement was written called *Living Faith* which is intended for general church use, though not to supersede the *Westminster Confession*. Some churches still employ the *Shorter Catechism* to instruct youth and new Christians.

Living Faith has been widely and well received. Some churches keep it in the pews and utilize sections of it in church services or at communion. Churches abroad have shown interest in it.

The framers of *Living Faith* sought to contextualize Christian faith for modern Canadians. They listened to those who argue that "God is where the action is," but decided that Christian understanding is prerequisite to Christian activity. Their statement of faith avoids one-sided emphases such as "liberation" and "reconciliation" which would have skewed the document. It is framed in lyrical language to aid public reading and, as one minister commented to me, to avoid critical exactness at some points.

United Church of Canada

The 1925 Basis of Union of the United Church, which includes a confessional statement, is still at the centre of church life. Today the statement is more a heritage document for seminary study than for congregational use. The more

recent *New Declaration Of Faith* is frequently used. It is placed in the inside cover of hymn books by some churches and is read creedally like the *Apostles' Creed*. The eucharistic prayers published in the 1969 service book function as a confessional statement for many (churches vary as to quarterly or monthly eucharistic observance).

As to the catechumenate, officially the confirmation rite (at age 12-14) is still in effect. In practice, however, confirmation or new member classes have tended to shift from junior high to senior high age. More important, while acceptance of the *Remit Document* was defeated two years ago its intent to end confirmation as a separate rite (partly on the ground that the term slipped into the *Common Order* of 1932 unintended) has not died.

In keeping with the thrust of the BEM (*Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*) document, new practice has moved away from confessional emphasis to a participatory model (according to some): if you're part of a Christian family you're "in." If this trend is made official by the United Church in the next years, the denomination will drop confirmation as a separate rite and concentrate upon baptism and the eucharist as the only sacraments of the church. This will parallel (while originating from different directions) the participatory model which is developing in the Anglican Church of Canada.

Canadian Baptists

Confessions of faith among Baptists in Canada have had a torturous role. Along with other Christian denominations in Canada in the period up to World War II the perceived threat of liberalism generated suspicion, polemics and division. In these conditions statements of faith became weapons as much as confessional and didactic instruments.

The 1953 statement of the Fellowship Baptist churches is an archival document not useful for didactic or missionary purposes. It reflects the necessary compromises made on some questions (eschatology, ordinances, church) to achieve the union of the Independent and Regular Baptist churches. The statement on the church is xenophobic. It emphasizes the independence of the local church to the exclusion of co-operation and inter-church loyalty within denominational fellowship and thus mirrors the anxieties of the times.

The Canadian Baptist Federation churches historically have generally eschewed developing statements, partly on the ground that Baptist life is creedless and partly on the ground that such ventures create division. Among the three anglophone conventions only the United Baptist Convention of the Atlantic Provinces has a statement (1905). This was developed as the basis of union of the present convention. It follows from earlier Baptist statements such as the New Hampshire Confession and reflects efforts to accommodate then current disparate Baptist views, for example, on divine election and the Lord's Supper, among others.

The Baptist Union of Western Canada does not have a confessional statement. In the 1925 convention of the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec a series of doctrinal aphorisms was drawn up (published in Lumpkin) in face of the McMaster controversy, but this was never formally adopted. The BCOQ moved in June 1986 to meet this need by promoting for study "This We Believe," a helpful statement similar to that of Canadian Presbyterians.

The need for confessional statement has been filled largely informally. The Baptist Federation published *Basic Baptist Beliefs* written by Gordon C. Warren of the Acadia theological faculty. Harold U. Trinier's pamphlet *What Baptists Believe* has been used in Ontario; *What Baptists Believe* by Harry Renfree was used by many in the West in recent years. William H. Jones' *What Canadian Baptists Believe* (1980) had a wide readership during its publication run.

A persistent criticism of Canadian Baptist churches is "people don't know what you believe." When asked, Canadian Baptists usually cheerfully list traditional concepts such as the lordship of Christ, regenerate church membership, separation of church and state, the autonomy of the local church, the authority of the Bible, the priesthood of believers, soul liberty, the two ordinances as symbols not sacraments. These are surely still crucial. Nevertheless, in this form they are stark, uninviting and retain the musty air of past battles not present vital, missionary faith. We need the mood of "onward Christian soldiers" not "manning the trenches."

Canadian Baptists are badly in need of tools to build up faith. In the age of mass media theology is uninteresting. Public opinion is lively. The result is abysmal ignorance of the Bible and the meaning of Christian commitment. Strengthening the people of God (Ephesians 4:12-13) entails theology. Baptists are not creedless in the sense of being "theology-less," but only in the historically important sense of rejecting politically coercive imposition of credal faith.

Baptists along with practically all other Christians have gladly confessed faith. P. T. Forsyth of the generation before ours commented that a church without a theology is a netful of gas. Canadian Baptists need confessional discussion and a confessional statement to educate their members, instruct catechumens, inform the non-Christian public and to guide Christians in the face of the theological meanderings of our time. What does "Jesus is Lord" mean in the face of the current theological fad of *The Myth Of God Incarnate*?

Study of the Baptist heritage by Canadian Baptists would be richly rewarding. Outstanding traditional confessional statements include: the Second London Confession of 1677-78 which widely influenced subsequent Baptist confessions, including the Philadelphia Confession of 1742 and Keach's *Catechism*, which was put forward by over 100 Baptist congregations in Britain in 1689 and adopted by the Philadelphia Baptist Association in 1742. I have used Keach in Canada to instruct young people and adult converts.

The *New Hampshire Confession* of 1833 is an outstanding statement. Its paragraph

on scripture is one of the finest ever written anywhere. The 1925 Southern Baptist confessional statement was patterned after the New Hampshire. The more recent Southern Baptist statement *The Baptist Faith And Message* (1963) is a splendid modern conservation and expansion of the traditional one as is their *Baptist Ideals*, a pamphlet which elegantly summarizes Baptist life and faith. North American Baptists in the United States and Canada in 1979 at their Niagara Falls triennium adopted a brief, well-written statement as an instructional guide (they did not previously have a statement, only a small list of theological aphorisms).

Paul stood before the Roman governor (Acts 24:14) and unashamedly testified, "that according to the Way ... I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down..." By this Paul at once affirmed his faith in the living Christ and the biblical heritage of his fathers. Let us do the same.

2. ACCORDING TO SCRIPTURE

Samuel J. Mikolaski

The Canadian Baptist, October 1986

I Corinthians 15:3

For Christians the knowledge of God is the most important human value. It is odd that the form of this knowledge is so vulnerable to distortion by finite human beings who function religiously in a context which is a mixture of tradition and scripture, reason and faith. But we should be prepared to accept the revelation on the terms given, not the terms we would like to impose.

For Christians the substance of religious authority is the claim to divine revelation in the specific, added sense of the biblical revelation. Revelation is not the expression of man's own religious instincts. Revelation is not a cosmic religious smorgasbord from which we select a delectable plate of worthy sentiments. Revelation is not the disclosure of God by man. Revelation is not mere process through which the divine is coming to fulfillment in the cosmos.

Revelation is the self-revealing of God to man. Revelation is concrete and particular, not abstract and timeless. Revelation is "a given." Revelation is progressive. In every revelatory situation God is always known as God, though that disclosure later may be seen to be part of a larger unfolding whole.

Revelation and Scripture

From its origins Christianity has always been a scriptural religion. For Christians revelation is biblically focussed. To say that the Bible records the revelation of God is true, but to imply therefore that the Bible contains but is not the word of God is disingenuous. The concept of holy scripture and of the uniqueness of scripture is the air Christians breathe from the time of the apostles.

The Bible of the apostles and the first Christians was the Old Testament. The apostolic writings were quickly added to the classification of scripture. Thus in the earliest complete Christian document outside the New Testament (*I Clement*, c. AD 95) there is a pervasive sense of the authority of the Old Testament, of our Lord and of the apostles. The mood is: the writer of *I Clement* stands and all the rest of us must stand under scripture. The "rule of faith" or the "rule of our tradition" coincided with the apostolic gospel. Three strands combined, namely, the prophets, the gospels and the epistles. In earliest Christian times "this is not the faith of the church" meant the same as "this is not the teaching of scripture."

Early Christians rejected Platonism (which denigrates the actual world), they rejected Gnosticism (a form of degenerative theism which alienates deity from

creation) and they rejected the religious cults (many of which fostered transformation of one's identity by means of ecstatic union with the divine). In contrast, Christians attested to a faith in which the historical events and narratives (i.e., incarnation and inspired writings) are the actual forms the eternal realities take.

Herein is the significance of the Christian claim to historical revelation. Christians do not denigrate the creation. They insist that human discovery and divine revelation complement each other and are logically part of both general and special revelation. General revelation is the knowledge of God given everywhere to everyone in varying degrees (Romans 1:19-20).

The issue in this respect is not the validity of such a revelation but its human sinful distortion. Special revelation is given specifically somewhere to someone and, once enscriptured, thereafter to everyone. The Bible does not identify the categories general and special revelation. Rather, it speaks of God's revelation as Creator and God's revelation as Redeemer. The knowledge of God for Christians entails the conviction that man cannot discover truths behind God's back, that there are no fields where man can discover truth without God's assistance and that God does not give revelations to creatures incapable of receiving them.

By his revelation God has supernaturally communicated his truth to finite and sinful creatures. The agent of this revelation is the Logos, the eternal Son of God who, at the climax of the historical revelation, disclosed God to man personally (Hebrews 1:1-3). The key-feature of God's revelation is Christ himself and he, as well, is the hinge of history (Colossians 1: 15-20; 2 Corinthians 4:1-6).

Scripture Inspiration

The concept and authority of scripture derive from the claim to divine inspiration: "God spake by the prophets" (Hebrews 1:1). Jesus said that scripture cannot be broken (John 10:34-35).

Human literary creativity is a gift, but scripture inspiration though including literary creativity goes beyond creativity. Inspiration guards the authenticity and authority of scripture as God's word. Inspiration is not manticism, ecstasy or divination. Scripture inspiration is the special immediate action of the Holy Spirit upon the writers of scripture to ensure the authenticity and truth of the product. The writers were not merely passive instruments. Their individual characteristics show. The writing is man's but the product is God's word written. This is frequently stated (2 Peter 1: 19-21; 2 Timothy 3:16). Paul says "every (all) scripture is God-breathed and is therefore profitable," or "every (all) scripture being God-breathed is as well profitable."

While the fact of inspiration is frequently stated, its psychological components elude us. 2 Timothy 3:16 states that what is designated scripture is inspired but it

does not state how. It should be borne in mind that one cannot demonstrate the scope of the canon from this passage, only that what is classed as scripture is divinely inspired.

Some have recently sought to make the category of inspired writings wider than the canon but in light of the meaning of scripture canon in earliest Christian usage the claim is unwarranted. This view would open the way to expanding authoritative texts beyond the canon.

Holy scripture is in a class by itself. It is God-given. Inspiration means that God uses ordinary human language (the Bible) as the primary means to authentically convey the truth about himself and his purposes to mankind.

Scripture Canon

Canon designates the scope of scripture, namely, the 66 books of the Bible: 39 Old Testament books and 27 New Testament books. Inspiration is a psychological issue; canon is an historical issue. The canon was assembled by historical processes which, while not fully clear to us, yielded an unambiguous concept and product.

The canon of the Old Testament came to Christians ready made from their Jewish heritage. Recent Jewish scholarship contradicts the notion that the Old Testament canon was not closed until Christian times and affirms the traditional view that the Old Testament canon of 27 Jewish books (our 39) was closed before the time of Christ. From the New Testament there are citations from the gospels, Paul, Hebrews, Acts and the general epistles. There is ample evidence for the scope of the New Testament canon long before Athanasius' AD 367 Easter letter with its first formal complete list.

Language and Truth

The concept of scripture does not create a literary fetish; rather, scripture is the source of divine truth and is the norm of Christian teaching. Truth is not a mystique, or a mood, or an ether which haunts the brain. Nor is revelation mere confrontation. For Christians, revelation, scripture and truth stand together and this embraces human language as the prime vehicle to convey and conserve God's revelation.

There is no reason why it should be beneath God's dignity to use language to convey his truth. Truth and language stand together in this way in all human communication. Revelation has something to do with truth. Truth is a function of language, that is, of statements which purport to state that which is actually the case. The Bible gives us the historical fact-basis of the Christian revelation; the prophetically, dominically and apostolically interpreted key events which are the content of Christian faith.

For example: the cross is more than petty judicium juggling (to Pilate), more than a messy day's work (for the soldiers who crucified Jesus), more than a spectacle (for the blood-thirsty crowd), more than a tragic end to messianic fantasy (for the disciples after the crucifixion). The cross was God's redemptive act to atone for human sin and to conquer evil. How do we know this? Because this interpretation of the events is the truth of what was going on in the things that were happening. We know it only because this is the dominical and apostolic light cast on the events and this light is the truth the Bible records and conveys.

Holy Scripture

Two major concepts have consistently driven Christians in their study of the Bible from early Christian times to the present. These are the concept of preparation and the concept of prefiguration. First, the concept of preparation entails the faith that throughout history, as recorded in the Old Testament, God was preparing the way for Christ's coming. The Old Testament is our school master, said Clement of Alexandria, to bring us to Christ, with all its implications for discerning a meaningful course of history and discerning God's adaptation to the needs of his people. Second, the concept of prefiguration stresses the coherence of the old and the new, that at essential points old and new coincide and there is nothing accidental or irrelevant in scripture.

. A few months ago Huw Wheldon, a noted British author and broadcaster on the BBC, died. His American friend Norman Podhoretz wrote a moving tribute in his memory. In it Podhoretz observed that Wheldon had moved away from his early devout Presbyterian upbringing but that he probably would never have said "there is no God." If he had, notes Podhoretz, Wheldon would have added "and the Bible is his word."

This observation echoes the minor key in Canadian culture today. Modern Canadians don't know what to do with the Bible, but as a nation we can't do without it. Isn't it time Canadian Christians told the rest of the country what the Bible is all about?

We believe that the Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired, and is a perfect treasure of heavenly instruction; that it has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter; that it reveals the principles by which God will judge us; and therefore is, and shall remain to the end of the world, the true centre of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and opinions should be tried. (New Hampshire Confession Of Faith, 1833)

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3. NOT FAR FROM EACH ONE OF US

Samuel J. Mikolaski

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Over 20 years ago Pierre Berton, the well-known Canadian columnist, broadcaster and author wrote a book at the invitation of the Department of Religious Education of the Anglican Church of Canada. He called it *The Comfortable Pew*. It created quite a stir and went through five printings within a few months.

Berton had been confirmed as a young boy in the Anglican church but later left the church an agnostic. In the book he expressed the disenchantment felt by Canadians not only about organized religion but about religious beliefs. Berton recounts that his was a "rebellion born of apathy," a rebellion which intensified when he became church editor for a Vancouver newspaper.

Nevertheless, Berton recounts the openness of his youthful mind to Christian teaching, how dutiful a communicant he sought to be and how little was said or seemed available to satisfy a hungry mind. While unclear as to the meaning of the sacrament, he "accepted it as a part of the mystery," and it was this which gripped him in those formative years. Alas, ritual cannot long remain exotic when it becomes a weekly commonplace, he says. The packaging had intrigued him, not the content, which had lost meaning through singsong repetition.

Traditional Christian beliefs have been evacuated from the modern Canadian consciousness. John Grant, the Canadian philosopher, recounts in a 1977 essay the 19th century Christian establishment ideal of creating a Christian nation in the Canadian colony and how far from this Canadians have moved through a steady process of secularization. Secularization has whittled away at belief in God and, as well, at the foundations of public morality as we have known them without, thus far, furnishing a credible moral (as against purely behavioural) alternative.

This can be illustrated from contemporary dialogue. For example, in a recent exchange between William Buckley and the eminent American philosopher Sidney Hook, the latter writes, "If sin is a violation of a revelation from God, then, obviously, until we can agree whether God exists and what his or her or its commands are, we have no moral guidance," (Letters, *New York Times Magazine*, 11 May 1986). While Professor Hook dismisses both sin and God, his comment neatly encapsulates the contemporary mind. Who or what is God?

Canadian experience mirrors this trend except that, in my opinion, secularization of religion, the media and the public mind in Canada is greater than in the United States.

Faith in God

Protestant statements about God since the Reformation have been remarkably consistent, theologically precise and religiously abstract. They are archival statements, the best of which is probably the Westminster Confession (AD 1647) : "There is but one only living and true God." This sentence is embedded in many subsequent evangelical statements. The New Hampshire Confession (AD 1833) adds, "whose name is Jehovah," which may serve a useful purpose to the minds of modern people.

We have come full circle on arguments for the existence of God. Neo-orthodoxy largely dismissed the rational arguments for the existence of God. Despite this, strong cases have been built since World War II by theologians and philosophers for each of the traditional arguments. Such arguments tend to reinforce faith; they rarely generate faith.

In early Christian times Christian writers complained that riddles tend to mystify religion and impede faith. They distinguished between reasoning and intellectual games which intend to kill by casuistry, between intellectual arrogance which at the same time morally exploits others, and piety and dedication to truth which teach righteousness. Modern examples are the atheistic brilliance of Bertrand Russell and H.G. Wells who cruelly and emotionally victimized the several women in their lives. One notes in the United States the recent court cases as to whether university professors have the right to sexually exploit female students.

In the third century the philosopher Celsus alleged Christians to say, "Do not examine, only believe." Origen replied that not all Christians can be philosophers and that the true test is not Celsus' claim, "I know everything," but the power of faith to transform a man. In our own century P. T. Forsyth commented that the truth we see depends upon the persons we are. Grasping truth entails moral commitment to the truth as well as intellectual acuteness.

What does the Bible tell us about the knowledge of God? The argument for an intelligent first cause of all things is embedded in passages such as "every house is built by someone; but the builder of all things is God" (Hebrews 3:4; note also Psalm 19:1-2; Isaiah 1:3; 40:26; Acts 14:17; Romans 1:19-20). The argument from the moral order of things may be discerned in Romans 1:32; 2:3, 12, 15.

From such passages and the dialogue of philosophers there has developed a powerful array of arguments for purely rational belief in the existence of God: The argument from motion (motion implies an unmoved mover). The argument from causality (causes lead back to a first cause). The argument from contingency (nothing could just happen to be, hence a necessary being must account for reality). The argument from perfection (a highest perfection must be the norm of lesser ones). The argument from design (the world reflects purpose not mere chance or causal push). And so on!

Nevertheless, atheistic philosophers today continue to deny the validity of the proposition that belief in God can be logically demonstrated in a necessary way. The theistic arguments reflect or give a reasoned account of the intuition of faith.

Belief in God as a fundamental human intuition is repeatedly the most powerful point made in the Bible about the knowledge of God. This has a strange likeness to Anselm's famous ontological argument: that the mind grasps immediately that God is a being than which a greater cannot be conceived, and that the very conception of such a being (God) entails his existence. The philosophical merits of this argument continue to be debated. The point made here is that in the Bible testimony to the existence of God is often made on grounds of an immediate intuition which combines with it all the consequent data of observation and reflection.

In the Bible God is experienced as the infinite, transcendent one who makes himself known in finite situations. Awareness of God comes as one leap of thought. It is an immediate intuition or insight. Such occasions in scripture are not used to prove the existence of God, they simply declare the reality of God as the inescapable ground of the experience and of the whole world.

Two characteristic biblical texts which make this point are: "Be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10), and "whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him" (Hebrews 11:6). In the Bible the knowledge of God in stillness does not entail a bombed mind (numbness or ecstasy); rather, it registers a heightened awareness of self and keen alertness in relation to God who addresses us (I Kings 19:12). God is experienced as real and as personal from the start (Romans 1:19-20). The pattern and norm of God's speaking are given to us in the scriptures.

This is the most basic and fundamental function of scripture: to give us the truth as to the reality, nature and experience of God. God is not a pink dwarf standing on the palm of my hand, no matter how firmly I may claim to be experiencing such a reality. God is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ. All statements about God come under biblical scrutiny as to their truth. This shows that for Christians true knowledge "of" God necessarily includes the historical (biblical) knowledge "about" God.

This is why I said earlier that the addition of "whose name is Jehovah" to "there is but one only living and true God" in the *New Hampshire Confession* may be apt for the outlook of modern man. "Whose name is Jehovah" means that God has come to us. He names himself. He identifies himself to us.

Philosophers invent names for deity or for some divine principle to logically round out the order of things in their thinking. Plato spoke of The Good, Aristotle of the Unmoved Mover. The Stoics proposed a universal logos. Plotinus said there

is The One, Hegel proposed the Absolute and Herbert Spencer The Unknowable. In our own time A.N. Whitehead suggested the "Principle of Concretion" to identify the creative force within the world process. But these are not Jehovah, the one only true and living God who speaks for himself.

God declares himself in and by his own name (Exodus 3:13-15; 34:5-6; Deuteronomy 6:4-5; Isaiah 42:8). The living God proclaims himself in his name as personal, the creator, the only Lord (Isaiah 40:12-31). Our affirmation of faith is, "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations" (Psalm 90:1). Our witness to those around us today should be that God made all men and women everywhere, "that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel after him and find him. Yet he is not far from each one of us, for in him we live and move and have our being. ..." (Acts 17:27-31)

The Character of God

In light of biblical teaching Christians have historically sought to state their beliefs clearly and with great conviction. Athenagoras (c. AD 177) said, "we acknowledge one God, who is uncreated, eternal, invisible, impassible, incomprehensible, illimitable. He is grasped only by mind and intelligence, and surrounded by light, beauty, spirit, and indescribable power. By him the universe was created through his word, was set in order and is held together" (Plea 10). He adds, "Let no one think it stupid for me to say that God has a Son," and proceeds to redefine "Father" and "Son," in Christian rather than in the typical pagan terms. Irenaeus, too, said that God the Lord who made heaven and earth has declared himself in and by his names, many of which Irenaeus then recounts from the Bible (Against Heresies 2.35).

J. A. Motyer paraphrases Exodus 6:2-3 as follows: "And God spoke to Moses, and said to him: I am *Yahweh*. And I showed myself to Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob in the character of *El Shaddai*, but in the character expressed by my name *Yahweh* I did not make myself known to them." *Yahweh* is the name of God the Father and Redeemer of his people. It is above all other names the proper, personal name of God. He, the sovereign Lord comes to the rescue of his people.

The greatness, faithfulness and love of God in both Old and New Testaments - gradually unfold and converge upon the truth of the fatherhood of God. It is the genius of the New Testament to give us this richest understanding as to the nature of God (I Corinthians 8:6) in its full sense. The living God is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Who God is and what God is we know in the incarnate Lord.

Christians declare their belief in God best by practising the presence of God in worship, in relationships, in behaviour, in style of life. Modern secular people are less likely to listen to argument than to note lives and bear witness which reflects the presence and grace of God. Through the decorum of tasteful and joyful

worship, the public reading of holy scripture (especially the Psalms), public prayer, inspiring hymns of praise, and the spoken word Christians attest to the reality of God's presence and draw the seeker to that same experience of God. Augustine spoke this truth, "thou hast made us for thyself, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in thee."

GOD
is
SPIRIT
Infinite, eternal, unchangeable
in his
being, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth
(*Keach's Baptist Catechism*, AD 1742.)

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4. NO OTHER NAME

Samuel J. Mikolaski

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Can Christians any longer claim the religious uniqueness of Jesus? The current mood is for accommodation among religions and for pressing the search for common ground upon which the major world religions can stand. As well, many biblical scholars doubt that a common thread of historical data can be found: the New Testament, they say, is a product of a religious self-persuasion the disciples came to, whatever the nature of the resurrection may have been. The disciples were emotionally affected by the death of Jesus but suddenly, they leaped from the notion of the powerlessness of Jesus to the conviction that he was all-powerful.

Common Ground Premise

The relation of Christianity to other world religions is no small issue, which will sharpen in the future as the major non-Christian countries achieve economic strength and protect their cultural heritage in part by re-asserting the hegemony of their traditional religions. Again in our time religion is being seen as the conserver of national identity and proselytizing, including Christian evangelism, as its threat.

The Catholic Japanese novelist Shusaku Endo has struggled with the issue of religious uniqueness and accommodation in his novels, especially *Silence*. Why has Japan been so impervious to the Christian gospel? Is it because Christianity is Western and unsuited to the Japanese mind? Must the Western notion about God be re-thought?

Endo develops his theme in the context of 17th century Japan and the horrific persecution of the Catholic Jesuit mission. The Portuguese priest, subjected to brutal physical and mental torture, recants his faith and tramples the cross.

But Inoue the magistrate does not let him off easily. He probes the priest's defection. Why?

"I've told you," Inoue says, "this country of Japan is not suited to the teaching of Christianity. Christianity simply cannot put roots down here." Then he adds, "Father, you were not defeated by me. You were defeated by this swamp of Japan."

"No," replies the priest weakly, "the struggle was with Christianity in my own heart." "You can't deceive me," says Inoue, for "Christian salvation is not just a question of relying on God. In addition the believer must retain with all his might

a strength of heart. But it is precisely in this point that the teaching has been twisted and changed in this swamp called Japan ... the God whom the peasants serve has gradually changed so as to be no longer like the Christian God at all."

Modern Accommodation

Modern accommodation to a common ground stance has come a long way. For example, the Hindu concept of myth and recent Christian uses of myth cohere: there need be less worry about the historicity of religious data. (Paul Tillich claimed years ago that knowledge of revelation does not imply factual assertions, which seems to say that the validity of Christianity does not stand upon whether Jesus of Nazareth actually ever lived). Revelation has more to do with concealment of God (i.e., speculation about God) than with disclosure from God. There need be no claim to unique divine incarnation because there have been, and continue to be, many divine incarnations in the world.

Professor Maurice Wiles at Oxford contends that Jesus Christ displays the potential union of the divine and the human in the response of every person to God. The incarnation myth simply highlights this. Michael Goulder, theological tutor at Birmingham, advances a christology of function, not substance. Jesus Christ, he says, is the man of universal destiny. Don Cupitt of Cambridge protests that the incarnation myth undermines transcendence. Jesus shows us how to relate our spirits to the ultimate goals of existence.

Confessional Integrity

The modern myth approach is strangely like the ancient myth approach. An example is the degenerative theism of the- ancient gnostics: divinity cannot have contact with the evil-infected world, so there is posited a range of semi-divine intermediaries who through polarization produce levels of reality beneath them and so on until we reach this sorry world.

Thus incarnation is proposed as a solution to the problem of creation. This is something Christians never have said. God, say Christians, directly creates, providentially cares for and redeems the world. As to his essential being, Jesus Christ stands on the other side of the line which divides God from the world but he has come into the world personally. He is God incarnate.

Christians attest to an apostolic faith: that the interpretation of the apostles as to who Jesus Christ is and what he accomplished redemptively is the truth of what was going on in the things that were happening. In principle and in fact the authenticity of the historical record and the validity of the apostolic interpretation are crucial to Christian faith.

Irenaeus in the late 2nd century rejects with considerable finesse the ancient form of degenerative theistic mythology and the denigration of the created order

(*Against Heresies*, 1.1-2). Sheer transcendence (ground of being?) is not enough. Such conjecture is not verifiable under any system of logic and neither is it specifically religious. Rather, the church confesses belief in `one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things that are in them; and in Christ Jesus, the Son of God, who became incarnate for our salvation; and in the Holy Spirit, who proclaimed through the prophets the dispensations of God, and the advents, and the birth from a virgin, and the passion, and the resurrection from the dead, and the ascension into heaven in the flesh of the beloved Christ Jesus our Lord and his future manifestation from heaven in the glory of the Father ..." (*Against Heresies*, 1. 10. 1).

It is supercilious to say that the ancients were people of a pre-scientific cast of mind and thus presumably more susceptible to mythology. A careful reading of key church fathers shows how they strove to dissociate themselves from pagan superstition, anthropomorphic myths and how keen was their logic to conserve the historical character of Christianity.

The framers of the Nicene Creed and the Chalcedonian Creed were not philosophically unsophisticated. They knew very well what they were doing. Modern critics react negatively to "of one substance with the Father" as pre-scientific metaphysic, as if we in the 20th century know what we are talking about when we speak of a process metaphysic in relation to questions of matter, form and identity. Patristic terminology is not a body of Greek concepts alien to simple Galilean faith. It is an attempt by early Christians to embrace the significance of a new reality -- the incarnation -- by means of language which had not previously addressed such a possibility. It was a reality looking for a language.

Thus "being," "substance," "nature" and other classical terms are not used materialistically. There is no ignoring of the continuity of developing process. The early Christian theologians aimed to guard objectivity and personhood. God is personal. God is revealed personally in Jesus Christ. The doctrines of the incarnation and the trinity follow from the historical reality of the experience of the disciples with Christ and from his teaching.

Apostolic Teaching

We have gone as far as we can go to dissect - some would say to dismember - the New Testament witness to Jesus Christ. Recently, Professor Peter Stuhlmacher of Tubingen has urged that in New Testament studies we should resist the unravelling of the New Testament tradition into a multiplicity of single strands which are no longer correlatable. We must, he says, be prepared on grounds of the authenticity of the historical record to accept Jesus Christ the messianic reconciler as the theological and critical centre of the New Testament and the Christian faith. We dare not by means of prior assumption exclude the possibility of God's speaking personally in history. We must transcend unwarranted non-supernaturalist assumptions where such assumptions restrict encounter with his-

torical reality. This, as well, was the plea and challenge of the early church fathers.

Gone is the facile assumption that key New Testament books derive from a second century tradition which allowed to critics the time lag for what they regarded as the myths of orthodoxy to develop. More and more the dating of the New Testament books is being pressed back to the traditional time span of the second half of the first century (note *Re-Dating The New Testament* by John A.T. Robinson, 1976). This trend forces radical critics to rethink their views.

The great christological passages of the New Testament are thrilling witness and attestation: Christ was begotten of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 1-2, Luke 1-2). He is the eternal word made flesh, the Son of God (John 1:1, 14, 18). He is the Messiah - God's redemptive agent (Acts 2:22-36, 2 Peter 1:16-19) . He is the creator, the one who holds all things together (Philippians 2: 111, Colossians 1: 15-20). He is the only mediator and Saviour (I Timothy 2:5, Hebrews 1-2, 9:15). Our true life and end are to be found only in him.

Christians do not claim that their language does or can encompass the incarnation, only that the language attests to the truth and guards the truth at its boundaries. These boundaries are straightforward: that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (truly God) and Son of Man (truly man), the incarnate Lord, in whom and through whom alone salvation is brought to humanity (Acts 4:12, I Timothy 2:5-7).

True God. True Man. Redeemer. These are the realities and parameters of biblical teaching and Christian faith. This three-fold framework summarizes New Testament teaching: At the inmost principle of his being Jesus Christ is true God (John 1:1,17:5, Philippians 2:6, Colossians 2:9). The eternal Son took to himself flesh and became true man (John 1:14, 18; Philippians 2:7-8; Hebrews 2:14). The purpose of the incarnation is redemption from sin, triumph over the powers of evil and reconciliation with God (Mark 10:45, John 3:16, 2 Corinthians 5:18, Galatians 4:4).

The first disciples of Jesus ask us to do this: "Come stand where I stand and see if you can see what I see." Such a stance, as relevant today as then, conserves the reality of the way we see history yet does not impair the objectivity of the data. This is the meaning of the ancient creed, "I believe in God almighty, and in Christ Jesus his only Son our Lord."

This is what it means to say, "Jesus is Lord." Let those who are named Christians confess Christ the Lord, the only Saviour. Otherwise, as H. D. Lewis, late distinguished professor in the University of London, said in a Toronto lecture, if we claim to be Christians and recite the creed while actually we mean to deny the incarnation, we prevaricate.

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5. HE SHALL GLORIFY ME

Samuel J. Mikolaski

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Every generation of Christians thinks it has re-discovered the long-lost doctrine of the Holy Spirit. The doctrine was never lost. In every century there have been the spiritually cold and the johnnys-come-lately, but the Lord through his Holy Spirit has blessed and led his people, has glorified Christ in them and has made them fruitful.

In the Bible the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is intended to be a comfort and joy, not an obscurity. Above all else, essential teaching in scripture is that the Holy Spirit is Christ-centred.

Old Testament Teaching

Revival of interest in Old Testament teaching about the Holy Spirit would be a boon to many Christians. Here the foundation of a creationist view of life is laid: the whole world is God's world. He personally created it, providentially cares for it and the life of every creature is in his hands.

Contrast this with a totally materialistic view of reality, e.g., Bertrand Russell's, "that man is the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving" and "that only on the firm foundation of unyielding despair, can the soul's habitation henceforth be safely built." W. V. O. Quine's materialistic view was that "the world is a multitude of minute twitches in the void." Nor is there comfort in the recent finite God theories, which posit that God is a developing power, itself a non-personal reality struggling toward fulfillment in a universe not friendly to the highest and best.

In the Old Testament many and varied activities are attributed to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, like the wind, is everywhere present. H. Wheeler Robinson, a Baptist Old Testament scholar said, "The primitive and fundamental idea of spirit (ruach) in the Old Testament is that of active power or energy (energeia, not dynamis), power superhuman, mysterious, elusive, of which the ruach or wind of the desert was not so much the symbol as the familiar example."

Old Testament themes about the pervasive working of the Spirit include:

1. The Spirit is God personally present and active in his creation (Isaiah 40:12-31; Zechariah 4:6).
2. The Spirit is the agent of creation and is its sustainer (Genesis 1:2, Job 33:4; 34:14-15; Psalm 33:6; 104:24-30).

3. The Spirit is the life-giver (Genesis 2:7; Job 27:3).
4. The Spirit is the enabler, empowering men and women in the Old Testament for special tasks (Exodus 31:3; Judges 6:34; 1 Samuel 16:13).
5. The Spirit is the agent of revelation and inspiration to convey God's word (2 Samuel 23:1-4; 2 Chronicles 24:20; Nehemiah 9:30).
6. The Spirit renews spiritual life (Psalm 51:10, 13; 139) which truth David probably originally learned from the prophet Samuel (1 Samuel 19:18-19).

New Age Of The Spirit

Side by side with the sombre theme of man's fall and resulting disposition to evil in Genesis is the beautiful haunting theme of a new age to come and a new man for the new age. The Old Testament anticipates renewal of creation (Isaiah 11:6-9; 65:17-25) and a new Spirit-endowed humanity (Isaiah 32:15-18; Ezekiel 36:26-27; Joel 2:28-29). The Spirit-bearing humanity of the Messiah is to become the pattern for the new man in the new age (Isaiah 61:1-2). God promises in the Old Testament to restore the broken created order and to restore mankind by giving to humanity a new heart and a new spirit, a new vision and new power, through the coming Messiah, the redeemer.

This central theme in the Old Testament also predominates in the New Testament. The pattern of the man of the Spirit is the Spirit-bearing humanity of our Lord. Thus the primary sign of the Spirit's coming is not Pentecost, as many suppose, but Bethlehem and the earthly life of Christ. The fulfillment of Joel 2:28-29 occurs first not in Acts 2:16-21. Rather, Pentecost is the consequent sign of the Spirit's coming. The primary sign is the prior, Spirit-bearing humanity of Christ (Acts 2:33). Christ the Lord bears the Spirit according to the pattern of his own sanctified humanity.

The parallel which is drawn in the New Testament between the Spirit-bearing humanity of Christ as the primary sign of the Spirit and our own redeemed humanity is crucial to understanding the chief end of redemption. Consider the following:

1. Christ was begotten by the Spirit of the virgin Mary (Matthew 1:18). We are begotten again by the Spirit at conversion (John 3:1-15; 1 Peter 1:23-25).
2. Christ was baptized in the Spirit to identify him as the Son of God and to mark the inception of his public ministry (Mark 1:10-11). We are baptized in the Spirit at conversion (Acts 2:38; 1 Cor. 12:13). Thus conversion, reception of the Spirit, believers' baptism and being joined to the body of Christians are seen to be several sides of one event.

3. Christ was raised to new, resurrection life (Romans 1:1-4) which is the pattern of our own post baptismal resurrection life (Romans 6:1-11).

4. Christ triumphed over the evil one by the power of the Spirit (Luke 4:1-13). We are taken up into his triumph to live victoriously. He won the victory for us on the same ground on which our ancestor Adam failed (Romans 5:12-20). 5. Christ embodied the Spirit-filled life (Luke 4:1, 14), which we are to share (Romans 8:11). 6. Christ ministered to others in the power of the Spirit (Luke 4:18). Our witness and ministry are to be Spirit-empowered (Acts 1:5, 8).

Every person is called to faith in Christ in order that the qualities of Christ's life should be duplicated in each convert. The purpose of the Spirit is not to magnify himself but Christ: "He shall glorify me" (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:7-14). This is the meaning of his name "The Paraclete" - the one who comes alongside each of us as helper and guide (Romans 5:5; 1 Corinthians 3:16). Christ is the object of his work in us.

Consider this: who had more of the Spirit than Christ the incarnate Lord during his earthly life? He is the pattern of the Spirit-filled life. Hence we strive to be like him. The fruit of the Spirit is the sum total of Christ-like moral and spiritual qualities (Galatians 5:16, 22-25). The true mark of the Spirit is permanent Christ-like change.

The Spirit of Faith, Hope and Love

The truth of the Spirit's presence in believers is expressed in a number of interlocking ways: every believing person is baptized in the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13; Titus 3:5), i.e., it is the Spirit who baptizes us into Christ and into the Christian fellowship as the counterpart of believers' baptism. The presence of the Spirit in every Christian's life is the seal, the guarantee, of faith (Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30; 2 Corinthians 5:5). This presence is in the nature of indwelling us (Romans 5:5; 1 Corinthians 3:16) which is to be understood in deeply personal terms, just as we within a family circle indwell one another and are inextricably part of one another's lives.

The fullness of the Spirit has nothing to do with a bombed mind. Indeed, Paul specifically contrasts the filling of the Spirit with a bombed mind (he uses drunkenness as an example of the latter in Ephesians 5:18). In the New Testament we are never urged to be baptized in the Spirit but we are urged to be filled with the Spirit. What on-going changes in life legitimize the claim to the fullness of the Spirit.

They are fundamentally three: *First*, new power (Acts 1:8)! To be the people of God entails the power of permanent moral change (1 Corinthians 6:11-12, 19) and the power to witness to the life-transforming presence of Christ (Acts 4:29-31).

Second, new insight (1 Corinthians 2:16), which Paul calls the "mind of Christ!"
Third, new outlook (Romans 8:23-25, 28)! This means a totally new outlook on life in respect of a divine purpose (Ephesians 2:10).

The Spirit shines light into the innermost recesses of our darkened hearts. The Spirit brings peace in place of strife. The Spirit inspires creativity and dismisses destructiveness. _The Spirit infuses love in place of hate and anger. Christ is the light of the world and the light of life. The Spirit is the agent of Christ's light. Let us turn our faces to the light of Christ.

Confessing Faith In The Holy Spirit

Few theologians seek to make the Spirit merely divine invasive power, though some have questioned the distinct personhood of the Spirit. Lionel Thornton, the Anglican theologian 'ptly expresses the truth of biblical teaching in the following: "both Christ and the Spirit dwell in the Christian soul but not in the same way. Christ is the indwelling content of the Christian life ... the Spirit is the quickening cause; and the indwelling-of Christ is the effect of the quickening," (*The Incarnate Lord*, 1938, p. 322).

The moral character, life-giving prerogatives and capacity for personal relationship call for understanding the Spirit in fully personal terms. Therefore, the so-called "it" passages (where a personal reading is not necessarily required, as in Matthew 1:18; 4:1; 12:28; Luke 1:15, John 7:39b; Acts 1:8; Romans 8:26-27) must be controlled by the "he" passages. i.e., where a personal reading is required (Mark 3:22-30; Luke 12:12; John 14:26; 15:26; 16:7-15; Acts 8:29; 10:19-20; 13:2; 15:28; 16:6-7; 20:28; Romans 5:5).

We ought not to reduce the Spirit to the indwelling Christ, for the indwelling Christ is never identified with the Spirit in the New Testament. The greetings, salutations, benedictions and baptismal formula all distinguish the Father, Son and Spirit in the unity of the triune God (Matthew 28:19; 1 Corinthians 12:4-6; Ephesians 4:4-6; 1 Peter 1:2).

Our Lord indicated that he would send the Spirit from the Father (John 15:26) and that the Spirit would not attest to himself but to Christ.

"In accordance with the tradition of the gospel and of the apostles we believe in one God, Father all sovereign, framer, maker and providential ruler of the universe, from whom all things come into being.

"And in one Lord Jesus Christ his Son, God only begotten, through whom are all things ...

"And in the Holy Spirit, who is given to them that believe for comfort, hallowing and perfecting, as also our Lord Jesus Christ commissioned his disciples, saying,

'Go ye forth and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit;' namely, of a Father who is truly Father, a Son who is truly Son and a Holy Spirit who is truly Holy Spirit, the titles not being given in a vague or meaningless way but accurately denoting the particular personality and rank and glory of each that is so named, so that they are three in existence but one in agreement," (The Dedication Creed, AD 341).

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6. WE WORSHIP ONE GOD

Samuel J. Mikolaski

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Belief in the triune nature of God is not peripheral to Christian faith. It is revealed truth. It follows from the practice of trinitarian religion by the first Christians in the New Testament. The doctrine is based upon the revelation of the unity of God the creator in the Old Testament, the truth of the incarnation of the eternal Son of God at Bethlehem and the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The doctrine is not a later philosophical attempt to complicate original unitarian faith. The facts of revelation and redemption necessitate trinitarian faith.

The words of the Athanasian Creed (the *Quicumque Vult*) are the most widely used confession in the West as to the triune nature of God, occurring as it does in the English editions of the Book of Common Prayer and elsewhere: "We worship one God in trinity and trinity in unity, neither confounding the persons nor dividing the substance." While this creedal statement probably derives from the period of the later church fathers (early 5th century) it mirrors the confessions of the preceding Nicene age.

Trinitarian Confession

The struggles of Christians during the first four centuries to express their faith theologically reflect no confusion as to the essential doctrinal components of their faith. Rather it expresses uncertainty and debate as to what language best theologically conserves those components. Trinitarian faith was on the prowl for adequate trinitarian language, sometimes in Greek and sometimes in Latin.

At times translations between the two were not consistently clear. The traditional formulation "three persons, one essence" is not without problems (*treis hypostases en mia ousia; tres personae in una substantia*), but anything else multiplies the problems.

Nicene and post-Nicene creedal statements build upon earlier effort. Trinitarian allusion is made in an easy, unforced way in Clement of Rome (AD 95), Ignatius (died AD 107) and Justin Martyr (died AD 165). Justin specifically contrasts Christian trinitarian faith with pagan polytheism (*First Apology*, ch. 6) and beautifully describes trinitarian Christian worship and observance of the Lord's Supper (ch. 65-67).

Around AD 177 Athenagoras wrote his powerful apologetic to the emperor Marcus Aurelius in which he devoted a whole section (*Plea*, 10) to the trinity. He denies the charge that because Christians reject polytheism they are atheists: "Who, then, would not be astonished to hear those called atheists who admit God

the Father, God the Son, and the Holy Spirit and who teach their unity in power and their distinction in rank?" He had already stated belief in one God, "who is uncreated, eternal, invisible, impassible, incomprehensible, illimitable."

The writings of Irenaeus (about AD 130-200) are replete with full-fledged trinitarian language. *In Proof Of The Apostolic Preaching* (6) he declares that belief in God the Father, the Son of God and the Holy Spirit are the three crucial articles of faith. He then relates these directly to our salvation: "Therefore the baptism of our rebirth comes through these three articles, granting us rebirth unto God the Father, through his Son, by the Holy Spirit (7); note also *Against Heresies* 3.6.1: 3.17.1: 4.7.3-4.

Tertullian, the North African Latin theologian (about AD 160-220), fought against attempts to reduce the persons of the trinity to functional temporal modes. He declares the truth of, "the trinity of one divinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit," (*de Pudicitia*).

Biblical foundations of trinitarian faith are that Father, Son and Holy Spirit are each declared to be God in the unity of the godhead.

First. The Father is God. The monotheism of the New Testament is parallel with the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 6:4, 1 Corinthians 8:6: James 2:19). There is but one true and living God (Deuteronomy 4:35, 39: Isaiah 45:5. 22). While recent studies have re-opened the question of trinitarian adumbrations in the Old Testament, most Christians believe that the doctrine emerges clearly only in the New Testament. *Second,* the Son is God (John 1:1, 18: Hebrews 1:2). The New Testament precludes assigning to Jesus Christ anything less than full deity. Thus no form of either subordinationism or adoptionism is adequate to New Testament teaching, i.e., that Christ is a creature less than God but greater than man, or Christ is merely man but uniquely energized by the coming of the Spirit upon him. *Third,* the Holy Spirit is God (John 15:26) whose nature must be understood in fully personal terms (John 16:7-15; Acts 13:2).

The personal language of the Bible calls for seeing that each member of the godhead is personally distinct. The greetings and salutations (e.g., 2 Corinthians 13:14; 1 Peter 1:2), the baptismal formula (Matthew 28:19) and the numerous trinitarian passages put the work of the three persons of the trinity on a common footing as the work of deity (1 Corinthians 12:4-6; Ephesians 1:2-5,13-,4:4-6; 1 Peter 1:2).

Like Augustine, we speak because we dare not remain silent even though our terminology is not adequate. We use the term "God" in the singular along with the name of each divine person (e.g., God the Son) and by this term designate the nature of God not the persons in God.

God is not a person. There are persons in God. Thus the godhead of the Father is

identical with that of the Son and the Holy Spirit. By substance or essence we mean reality not materiality. Person means the distinctive individual reality of each person in the godhead. By "one" and "unity" we do not propose to transfer enumeration from the persons to the essence of divinity. Christians do not seek to reduce the trinitarian language of the New Testament to terms which may be more congenial to a pre-conceived notion of what one must mean. They accept the trinitarian language of the New Testament full-fledged.

Christians do not take the biblical accounts about God, Christ and the Holy Spirit as mere illustration or myth about some higher abstract reality (e.g., Paul Tillich's "God above God") but as declaring the truth about the living, unchangeable, eternal God. Father, Son and Holy Spirit are who God is. This, we declare in faith is the actual nature of the eternal divine reality. There is no higher abstract unity under which the trinity may be subsumed.

Trinity in Unity

Personhood, creation and redemption all cohere with a trinitarian framework.

It is important to observe that Christianity began as a Jewish sect and that its monotheistic trinitarianism yields no trace of embarrassment from any charge of polytheism or tritheism. Should a prior assumption of unity as abstract "one" (absence of multiplicity) determine our conception of unity? This scarcely fits the personal language of the scriptures. The closest to a New Testament definition of unity occurs in John 17:23, "That they may be one, as we are one; I in them and thou in me, that they be perfectly one."

Such an inclusive, complex notion of unity helps to grasp more fully the unity of the godhead. Leonard Hodgson, late Regius Professor of Divinity in the University of Oxford, used to say to me often that internal complexity is a sign of imperfect unity only if all approximations to unity are to be measured by a scale of degrees of absence of internal multiplicity.

But this is not so if the degree of unity is to be measured instead in proportion to the intensity of the unifying power in the life of the whole. The above text from John 17 seems to say just this.

Trinitarian Faith and Life

Unipersonal or non-personal monotheism makes unintelligible the Christian realities as presented in the New Testament. Tertullian quipped that Praxaeus, the modalist, had "put to flight the Paraclete and crucified the Father" (*Against Praxaeus*. 1).

This sentence reaches to the heart of Christian faith. If, as Praxaeus said, God is not eternally three persons but one person who at any given time puts on one of

three masks, then the whole framework of redemption collapses. Not the Father but the Son was crucified on the cross, and it was the Holy Spirit sent from the Father by the Son who came at Pentecost.

At bottom therefore, trinitarian theology and trinitarian religion stand or fall together. The deepest truth of revelation is that it is as true to say that God sent his Son into the world as to say that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.

This is intelligible only on full trinitarian grounds. That God is love, that God in Christ redeems, that God calls us to the fellowship of the Father through the Son and by the Holy Spirit crumble under the claims of unipersonal or non-personal monotheism.

As important as confessional statement is, Christians have conserved trinitarian faith as much by religious practice as by creed. Confessing trinitarian faith takes place, as in the New Testament, by repeated affirmation in worship of the triune nature of God. The baptismal formula "in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit" and the greetings and salutations embed trinitarian confession in customary Christian usage. Christians normally pray in this manner. Prayers are addressed to God the Father (Matthew 6:9; 11:25-27; John 11:41-42; 17:1-4), in the name of God the Son (John 14:13; 15:16; 16:23-26), through the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:14-15, 26). Christian hymns beautifully confess trinitarian faith:

*Holy. holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
Early in the morning our song shall rise to Thee,
Holy. holy, holy! Merciful and mighty!
God in three persons, blessed Trinity!*

Historically, trinitarian religion simply expresses the significance and finality of the revelation God has made in Christ, the redemption accomplished through Christ's cross, and the re-creation of believing men and women who confess faith in the risen Lord. Trinitarian worship enriches Christian experience and it casts a bright light upon the meaning of the resurrection and eternal life as essentially a life of persons and interpersonal relations (John 17:20-23).

For the present, Paul teaches us (Romans 8:10-17) that we receive the Spirit from the Father through Christ. The Father who raised up Christ also quickens us. What God did for Christ he does for us because we share the same indwelling Spirit. As partakers of Christ we are joint heirs with Christ and are able to say "Abba, Father," looking to the day when we shall be called to the fellowship in glory of the blessed God -- Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

*From root, or spring, or fountain one
A threefold lighted form hath shone:*

*For where the Father dwells above,
There dwelleth too his own heart's love,
His glorious Son, wisdom perfect,
And of all worlds the architect;
And in the unity combined
The Spirit's holy Light hath shined.
One root of good, one fount of love,
Whence sprung the bliss supreme above:
And the bright holy lamps divine
In equal glory ever shine.
(Synesius, d. about AD 414).*

Dr. S.J. Mikolaski teaches historical Christianity at Carey Hall, Vancouver. This is sixth in the series.

7. IN THE BEGINNING, GOD...

Samuel J. Mikolaski

The Canadian Baptist, March 1987

With the growth of modern scientific knowledge, fascination with the origin of the universe has intensified. At the same time, the possibility of what we can affirm seems more problematical than ever.

Our popular ways of seeing things are gradually being accommodated to the transformation of the postulates of science which have come about during the past two centuries, especially since Einstein. We have given up the notion that substance can be reduced to hard bits of stuff. The idea that causation ensures absolute mechanical uniformity is gone (oddly, the theological and philosophical hunt by some today is for final causes, i.e., goals in the nature of things which draw out creative development). A more open-ended world seems indicated in which indeterminacy and contingency are real factors.

At the same time the sheer immensity of the universe calls into question that we can ever know its origin and nature (given the time-lag which is immense even taking into account the speed of light). As well, our assumptions as to scientific method are challenged. Karl Popper, emeritus professor at the University of London, has upset many with his claim that scientific induction is a myth; that no "inductive logic" exists: "Since there can be no theory-free observation, and no theory-free language, there can of course be no theory-free rule or principle of induction; no rule or principle on which all theories should be based." Human knowledge, he says, is bound to lead to error and all we can do is falsify, i.e., gradually correct our errors.

The Universe and Our World

During the past half century three views about the origin of the universe have been common.

First, the gaseous mass theory of my childhood, i.e., that originally there existed a vast unstable cloud of gas which through chance occurrences condensed into galaxies and planets. Data that something other than a cloud of gas was involved have largely eliminated this view.

Second, the steady state theory. i.e., matter is being continuously created (replenished) and that the universe is and has always been the same in space and time.

Third, the expanding universe theory which, as a result of more recent measurements, has for most scientists displaced the steady state theory. In this

view, there was a dense primeval atom which exploded and the resulting continuing expansion is the universe as we know it. The universe originated at a finite time in the past and expands to an infinite size at an infinite future time, or else that a concertina effect of expansion and contraction goes on, perhaps endlessly.

Not a few Christians are attracted to the expanding universe theory because it postulates a finite beginning point which they feel is correlatable with the biblical creation account. However, not many exponents of the theory advocate belief in God as an inference from the theory and the rationality of the behaviour of the primeval atom remains obscure.

What about the origin of our world, the solar system? The oldest of modern views is the nebular hypothesis, i.e., that primeval nebula of rotating rarefied gas slowly cooled and that through gravitational contraction rings of gas gradually congealed into the planets of the solar system.

Studies show, however, that small asteroids, not large planets, would form. The more recent encounter theory postulates that tidal gravitation by a passing star drew away matter from our sun to form the planets. This is challenged on grounds that on this model the planets would end up much closer to the sun than they in fact are.

The third, and most commonly accepted view is the accretion theory. On this view, cold particles were drawn together to form planets, which are built up from gradual accretion and millions of incessant bombardings by wandering asteroids.

Such theories make the possibility of additional solar systems, even within our own galaxy, commonplace. Indeed, calculations have been made as to such probability and examination of carbonaceous chondrites suggests that elements common to what sustains life on earth are present elsewhere.

The British space scientist Desmond King-Hale some years ago calculated that on the basis of sheer probabilities there may be as many as one million planets within our own galaxy with inhabitants capable of signalling to us and signalling now. There are active serious listening projects attempting to catch and interpret signals from other planets. No results have been reported. David Lewis, professor of philosophy at Princeton University, has recently (1986) published a book in which he argues for a plurality of worlds. The scriptures are silent on this question.

The Origin of Life

What is the origin of living cells? Rapid progress has been made to simulate cell-like spheres, but to this point no success has been achieved to approximate the complex inner structure of cells. Some biochemists believe that to effect a transition from a coacervate drop to a living cell is more difficult even than

describing organic evolution.

I am reluctant to invoke a "god-of-the-gaps" theory, that is, to invoke God's intervention whenever and wherever scientific explanation is lacking. Somehow, as a Christian, I must see God as the creator of all and as standing behind the whole process. I have no problem in principle hypothesizing that at some time in the future scientists may succeed in synthesizing a living cell. This would not undercut my faith in creation because they would be combining and recombining existing materials, whereas I must distinguish this from creation.

We must, I believe, distinguish creation *ex nihilo* (absolute creation, or creation out of nothing) and creation in the sense of bringing life into existence from existing substances. This could well be the distinction between Genesis 1:1 ("God created the heavens and the earth") and Genesis 1:11, 20 ("let the earth put forth vegetation ... let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures").

Thus I think that not a little of the argument between creation and evolution is disingenuous. Beyond the semantics of the Genesis account is the sheer logic of the questions entailed. So far as semantics is concerned, it is simply unrealistic to posit that "kinds" in Genesis 1:11-12, 21, 24-25 means "species" in the fixed, inviolable, 17th century sense of John Ray and C. Linnaeus. The Hebrew word for "kinds" allows "in all its varieties," which does not support the theory of the fixity of species. Our notion of species is probably as much a philosophical as biological notion.

While I reject naturalistic evolution (which is philosophy not science), I also reject that creation and evolution are necessarily (though advocates of each often are) in conflict. In fact, they are mutually independent concepts. They need not be contradictory and they may be complementary. I question the logic of denying the truth or alleged truth of evolution to establish the doctrine of creation. The true antithesis of evolution is spontaneous generation and the correct antithesis of creation is materialism (or, as we say in North America, naturalism). Evolution can say nothing about ultimate origins.

Orthodox Darwinianism is under severe pressure in its own house. In the past few years vigorous public disputes have broken out at the New York Museum of Natural History, the British Museum and in the responsible media (examples of reports I have read include the London *Observer*, the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*) to say nothing of the scientific journals. It is charged that current theory is for the most part consensus fostered by the persuasiveness of a few talented biologists. A growing band of "heretics" (as they have been called) are challenging on several grounds received opinion that the marriage of natural selection and modern genetics accounts for all life forms (which one biologist has called a farce).

In the 1981 controversy in London, Stephen Jay Gould and Richard Lewontin of

Harvard University are reported to have said, "natural selection may help us understand why ducks have webbed feet. But does it explain why ducks exist at all?" The answer of most scientists today is evolution -- some form of it. What the final answer will be (if one can use that term) will be irrelevant to the question of creation or materialism. What the Christian cannot accept is the joining of materialistic or naturalistic assumptions to evolutionary theory.

In the Beginning

The question of ultimate origins is highly relevant. It haunts the minds of moderns just as it did the minds of earlier generations. This is reflected in the powerful sentiment of Ludwig Wittgenstein of Cambridge, "not how the world is, but that it is, is the mystical."

Evolution is unable to answer this last question. So compelling are the issues, that recently some physicists have proposed that our universe was created out of the void; that the universe can randomly change from a state of absolute nothingness to a state of a very small universe (the original primeval atom of the expanding universe).

For the Christian, "*in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*" is a profoundly rational statement as well as being a deeply spiritual one. The articulate British atheist Anthony Flew has remarked that the Genesis creation narrative is quite different from other creation narratives (such as the *Gilgamesh Epic*). He mentions: insistence upon absolute dependence of the world upon God, rejection of dualism, indication that certain conduct is appropriate, assertion that the world had a beginning. These are surely crucial theologically and metaphysically, added D.M. MacKinnon in the recorded conversation with Flew. For me, it is no accident that this is the first sentence of the Bible. What does the biblical doctrine of creation say to the Christian?

First, the universe is good and derives its existence from God its creator.

Second, God is responsible for the existence of everything, including the fact of evil though he did not create evil -- he created the conditions in which it could arise.

Third, God is wholly good and he providentially cares for us as our heavenly Father. He acts personally in the universe.

Fourth, God has created man for himself and has given to man a certain freedom and moral responsibility for his own life.

Fifth, man's end is in God. God created man for his fellowship and service, not to be an automaton but to be a co-worker with himself.

Sixth, Jesus Christ is the divine creator and, as incarnate, our redeemer in order to bring to fruition the divine purposes in creation (John 1:1-5. 14. 18: Colossians 1: 16-17; Hebrews 1:1-4). He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

Dr. S.J. Mikolaski teaches historical Christianity at Carey Hall, Vancouver. This is seventh in the series.

8. MAN: LITTLE LESS THAN GOD

Samuel J. Mikolaski

The Canadian Baptist, April 1987

The translators must have had a lively time: "thou hast made him little less than God" in the RSV reads "thou hast made him little less than a god" in the NEB (Psalm 8:5). David the psalmist may have had in mind the angels who in scripture are often associated with God in his work, hence the use of God's plural name (Elohim). "A little less than God?" "A little less than a god?" How should one translate it?

It is odd that this psalm, which sings God's glory and intends to contrast that glory with man's puniness should at the same time embed within itself the truth about man's place in the nature of things. I like best the rendering by Franz Delitzsch over a hundred years ago, "and hast made him a little less than divine." Man, like angels is created in the image of God but man also in himself reflects a bond between earth and heaven which angels do not. This uniqueness is the starting point for understanding man despite the modern trend to see man in purely earthly and behavioural terms.

Uniqueness of Man

The question of the antiquity of man is a never-ending debate. To begin with we cannot determine, as the vast majority of biblical scholars of all points of view agree, the time-frame of Genesis 1-11. For me, these chapters embrace a very long period of time, probably age upon age. It is virtually impossible to date biblical history prior to Abraham.

I cite the work of William Kornfield, anthropologist and evangelical missionary in the Andes of South America. He writes of personally knowing of approximately 300 stone workshop sites that predate Abraham by several thousand years (*Christianity Today*, 8 June, 1973). Carbon and other dating methods indicate that man is very old, even in the New World. He urges Christians to take more seriously dating and evidence of the capacities of Neanderthal and Cro-Magnum man (approx. 50,000, 30,000 B.C. respectively). Parallel data from other parts of the world abound. He also said at that time that evidence of the far earlier existence of *homo sapiens* (modern man) was clear.

Renewed controversy on the origin and dating of man is intense -- bitter, even fratricidal, not only among Christians but within the scientific community as well. That man goes back millions of years is now fiercely debated between the Leakeys (anthropologists working in Africa) and others in major universities.

Colin Patterson, senior paleontologist at the British Museum of Natural History said in a 1981 New York lecture that there is "not one thing" that he knew about

evolution. "Question is," he went on, "can you tell me anything you know about evolution...?" He repeated the question in a 1985 address (reported in the *Wall Street Journal*, 9 Dec., 1986). There is currently reported great frustration among anthropologists and biologists at the dogmatism and authoritarianism that saturates evolutionary biology, just as I am equally frustrated by the anger and unfounded claims of some Christians about the issues involved. Matters of fact and questions of philosophy can never be fully separated but we must do our best by a process of falsification.

As a Christian, should I view all divine creative activity as being purely *ictic* (sudden, at a point in time) or may it also be *continuous*? Any answer to the question of the ultimate origin of the universe, I believe, demands the first.

What is the place of the second? I am convinced that both are biblically true. So far as man is concerned, I'm left with believing either that man was created by God at a point in time, but parallel organically with the rest of animal creation; or, that God breathed his own life -- the image of God -- into man who had been evolving through God's creative activity long before.

If I could know what "evolving" means I would feel more comfortable, but I don't and I don't know anyone else who has convinced me that he does. I have read many books espousing theories about the naturalistic evolution of man. They rival fairy tales for their ingenuity. From the point of view of the biblical account the issue boils down to whether man's biblical continuity with the dust (Genesis 2:7; 3:19; Job 34:15; Psalm 103:14; Eccl. 12:7) may imply an intermediate stage, namely, dust, animals, man. Clearly in scripture man has a dual linkage, with animals by his organic features (*nephesh*) and with God by his spiritual nature (*ruach*).

Christians must resist naturalistic evolution, which is more philosophy -- erroneous philosophy, I believe -- than science. At issue is an understanding of the nature of man. I urge readers who are interested in this topic to read widely and diligently and critically. Christians affirm that man is biologically a part of creation and that, as the product of God's hands, all creation is good. Nevertheless, man as a spiritual being is unique. His uniqueness is something I believe the exponents of naturalistic evolution have been unable to cope with adequately. An excellent study of the issues and limitations on both sides of the question is the book by the British biologist David Lack, *Evolutionary Theory And Christian Belief* (1961).

Image of God

Recent biblical studies in both Old and New Testaments have urged us to think of man as one, i.e., to get away from the body/soul disjunction. The trouble with this is that it fails to define how we are to think of "one" or how we are to grapple with the inherent duality of human experience and, hence, nature.

The Old and New Testament terminology about human nature is roughly, but not

exactly, parallel, as follows (first the Hebrew then the Greek terms) soul: *nephesh* and *n'shamah*, *psyche*; spirit: *ruach*, *pneuma*; flesh and body: *basar*, *sari* and *some*; heart: *lebh*, *kardia*; image and likeness: *selem* and *demuth*, *eikon* and *homoiosis*. Importantly, the personal pronouns which identify the self are '*ni* and '*noki*, *ego*. As well, many passages refer to human nature in other ways: 2 Cor. 4:16 (inner and outer nature), Romans 7:22 (inmost self), Eph. 3:16 (inner man), 1 Cor. 15:44-46 (spiritual and physical body), Romans 7:14 (of the flesh).

Crucial to the Christian understanding of man is the nature, value and permanence of personhood. Thus "spirit," "person," "self," "mind," are interchangeable terms. For the Christian, the self cannot be reduced to physical functions of the brain or body.

This is of first rank importance and parallels the extensive recent philosophical discussions on the relations between mind and brain) such as the work of Ian Ramsey, J.C. Eccles, Karl Popper, Arthur Koestler, H.D. Lewis and many others). Lewis has said, "I do not think that any case for immortality can begin to get off the ground if we fail to make a case for dualism" as to human nature. Much hangs on this for the doctrine of the resurrection. It means that the self is a permanent spiritual reality and ultimately will have a home either with God or banished from him.

How can the image of God in man (Genesis 1:26; 5:3; 9:6) be understood? Options put to Christians all argued from scripture, include that it is the male/female relationship, man's rational constitution, man's moral capacity, love and dominion (in the sense of dominion granted by God over nature). Most commonly it is argued that relationship or capacity for personal relationship (with God and man) is the essence of the image of God.

I find none of the foregoing satisfying biblically or philosophically. The recent emphasis upon relationship is an attempt to protest earlier emphases upon metaphysics; nevertheless, I think that the biblical term is precisely that. It is as much metaphysical as relational in nature. In fact, it is relational because it is of such and such a kind. The best biblical candidate for the image of God is spirit (selfhood, personhood).

It follows from this that the kind of self man is includes his being a rational self, a moral self and a purposing self, which embraces man's God-given capacity for personal and moral relations with other persons and with God (note the language of John 17:21, 23-24). The Christian must resist the reductionist conclusions of modern behaviourism. I do not think that we can ever escape from the reality of the self as a primary datum of experience.

Personhood and Grace

All of this bears strategically upon the modern Christian's understanding of self and of the individual's place in society and the order of nature. Secular modern society is increasingly behaviourist in its intellectual outlook. Indeed, some

behaviourists such as B.F. Skinner have advocated the abandonment of the concept of freedom.

Baptists historically have been front runners in defence of freedom. This is ever more important today because of modern ability to coercively modify behaviour chemically and psychologically.

A naturalistic view of the world (as does a pure idealistic one) eliminates contingency and freedom from its understanding of the world and man. For Christians, however, persons are not reducible to some higher or lower reality. Contingency is a reality within the created order and freedom is crucial to understanding the essential nature of man.

This is where the Christian doctrine of grace fits, but not first and foremost in the marvellous sense of "saved by grace." That follows -- but later. I mean grace as the mode of the relations between God and the world in virtue of which God remains sovereign creator and Lord and man remains free. Grace is the form and mode of that relationship. It is not push-button, nor manipulative, nor coercive, nor mere command. It is personal and interpersonal and its end is full growth in freedom.

Example: as my children grow, I relinquish behavioural control of them to allow them to develop into full personhood which includes freedom. Grace is the way persons treat each other where personhood is respected. Thus grace is of the essence of personal relationships.

This is the crucial difference between spirit and matter. The behaviourist view sees humans as blobs of matter or as centres of energy or as biological machines. In the spiritual view, human beings are persons, more or less free, who through God's love in Christ are called upon to spiritualize their bodily life, i.e., to become more free. Here is the deepest meaning of becoming a co-worker with God because our acts are viewed not as determined but as consciously and morally chosen to affect the course of events for good.

The Christian sees it as a moral ideal to relate to and to treat others as persons, in love, altruistically, for their full development and freedom as creatures created in God's image.

Dr. S.J. Mikolaski teaches historical Christianity at Carey Hall, Vancouver. This is eighth in the series.

9. ALL HAVE SINNED

Samuel J. Mikolaski

The Canadian Baptist, May 1987

It was an interesting exchange: a prominent American columnist and a prominent American philosopher at each other's throats over sin. William F. Buckley and Sidney Hook (*New York Times Magazine*, 11 May, 1986). Buckley argued that the sense of sin can serve as a guide to moral behaviour. Hook replied that people worship gods in their own moral image, which can justify just about any atrocious behaviour.

The moment one, like Buckley, attempts to defend the concept of sin, the roof of modernity caves in. "Good night," people say, "we thought we had gotten past that sort of thing ages ago. Undesirable behaviour? Yes. But sin? No!"

All the while other voices have been calling for a rethinking of modern assumptions about human nature and behaviour. Years ago O. Hobart Mowrer, once a president of the American Psychological Association, warned that a sickness rather than a moral approach to human behaviour is fatuous. This was just at the time when clergy were jumping on the Freudian therapeutic bandwagon as to the nature of guilt, which Mowrer said psychologists were abandoning (*The Crisis in Psychiatry and Religion*, 1961). Guilt is real and must be accepted before emotional and moral reorientation can take place, he said.

Karl Menninger, the crusty Kansas psychiatrist, wrote *Whatever Became of Sin?* (1973). The best book on sin that I have read in the past twenty years (not written by a professing Christian) is Henry Fairlie's *The Seven Deadly Sins Today* (1978). M. Scott Peck's *People of the Lie* (1983) has had exceedingly wide circulation. These books will do your soul sobering good. They take up the issue of what the philosopher Immanuel Kant called radical evil, a concept which few students of philosophy and psychology are inclined to tackle.

Original Sin

While regarded by some evangelicals as liberal theologically, few in modern North American theology have more insistently called attention to original sin than has Reinhold Niebuhr. He points out that the Jewish doctrine of evil inclination (*yetzer ha-ro*) is almost identical to the Christian doctrine of original sin: a taint which all men inherit from Adam.

Luther called it the tinder of sin -- the flammable sin proneness of human nature. Paul speaks of this in Romans 5:12-14, where he differentiates between original sin and actual sin: sin, condemnation and death are due to the one sin of the one man Adam. Hence both original sin and actual sin are at work in man's present condition.

How does this work? We are at a loss to know fully. Niebuhr regarded the universal sinful inclination in the human heart of self as not only meaningful but

also as empirically verifiable. He regarded it as "universality of corruption which results from undue self-regard." This, for me, is more realistic than the traditional Protestant notion of representation. i.e., that by God's ordinance Adam represented us in his fall. Something more than moral or legal representation is needed.

Recently the genetic solidarity of the race as to traits of personality has been claimed to a startling degree (report from research at the University of Minnesota). In this study 350 pairs of identical twins (some of whom were raised apart) were measured between 1979-1986. The study claims that the genetic makeup of the child is a stronger influence on personality than child rearing (the latter for a long time has been claimed to be the overwhelmingly dominant influence). More than half the variants of a complex 11-component matrix were found to be due to heredity (social potency, traditionalism, stress reaction, absorption, alienation, well-being, harm avoidance, aggression, achievement, control, social closeness). Of particular interest was the following: "one would not expect the tendency to believe in traditional values and the strict enforcement of rules to be a more inherited than learned trait ... but we found that, in some mysterious way it is one of traits with the strongest genetic influence" (Dr. David Lykken, *New York Times*, 2 Dec., 1986).

This is significant not only for our understanding of moral behaviour but also for our views of the solidarity of the race in regard to the origin of the soul. Most Christians believe, since Tertullian, that the human race reproduces itself whole: body, soul and spirit, not that God separately creates a soul for each birth.

Christian understanding of human nature as sin prone is crucial in practical ways. For example, some form of the doctrine of original sin is assumed in a democratic society: we limit the power of men and women because of their proneness to abuse power. The genius of democracy is not the right to elect (which some totalitarian regimes also allow) but the right to eject (which totalitarian regimes do not allow). One would go mad thinking upon the prospect that political leaders could be permanently ensconced in Ottawa with no fear of ever being turfed out! The doctrine of original sin is important in politics and in many other areas of life.

Sins, Sins and More Sins

When it comes to sinning the list is long and tedious. Human ingenuity to do wrong is quite remarkable.

Most important is to understand that sin comes from the heart. Kinds of evil vary: ignorance, distortion, suffering. But the worst evil is sin because sin is not something that happens to a person; it is something that happens within a person. Sin is inner distortion of the spirit so that we do that which is wrong. It is a corruption of the will and in the Bible sin is probably the fountainhead of all other forms of evil.

The biblical words for sin are too numerous to list here. There are at least thirteen Old Testament and twelve New Testament terms which describe sin, plus their cognates. Meanings range widely: missing the mark, capacity to distort,

transgression, disobedience, disgraceful behaviour. The mediaeval list of the seven deadly sins is still apt and serves as a useful didactic purpose. They are: pride, envy, anger, sloth, avarice, gluttony, lust. The study of these should be balanced by the study of the four philosophical virtues (wisdom, courage, temperance, justice) and the three theological virtues (faith, hope, love).

Significant scripture passages include Psalm 51; Isaiah 5:8-16; Romans 1:18-32, 3:23; Ephesians 4:17-20. Beyond scripture vocabulary for sin are the biblical biographies of men and women whose moral failures and spiritual victories are instructive. As well, the literature of mankind, especially history and biography, are replete with insights on human sinfulness.

The Fall

In the Bible the origin of sin is tied to the fall. Far from being a comical notion, the fall is a perfectly rational idea, given the Christian doctrine of creation. Christians reject dualism: the idea that good and evil are two eternal competing principles. Christians reject materialism: that there is no final standard by which to judge good or evil. Christians reject idealism, that evil can somehow be subsumed under good or be reinterpreted as good. Christians must reject the concept of the fall as non-historical myth (I'm puzzled as to what "events" which don't happen can be).

Given the Christian doctrine of creation the fall must have been an event in time. It is a standing truth for Christians that evil originated within creation through creaturely rebellion permitted by God. Whether we understand this to include one fall (man's) or also, as I do, the pre-mundane fall of angels, the notion is in principle the same; we know how evil is caused by bad acts of human will, and the teaching that angels (or an entity such as Satan) rebelled coheres with what we know about the ultimate nature of reality (Genesis 3:1; Matthew 25:41; John 8:44; 1 Timothy 3:6; 2 Peter 2:4).

The Judgment of Sin

There remains to consider the sober fact of judgment, which indicates how seriously we ought to take sin because God takes it ever so seriously.

Some recent theology has rejected the idea of divine wrath against sin -- at best it is allowed that in this life we bear some of the consequences of our sinning. It is argued that God is love and that attributing wrath to him is inappropriate.

To begin with, such a view misconstrues the nature of God's love which is not only affection but in scripture is qualified as holy love. Hence God's covenant love is sometimes called jealous love (Exodus 20:4-6; Deuteronomy 4:24; 5:9; note John 3:16 and 17:11). A brief but useful study of the questions involved is Leon Morris's *The Biblical Doctrine of Judgment* (1960).

Most important is to understand the nature and function of punishment. Punishment may reform and it may deter. To be moral, however, punishment must first and foremost vindicate a just moral standard and must be justly

retributive. At bottom the final justification of punishment must be that it is deserved. This, by the way, is the core of Paul's argument about the atonement: God is both just (in judging sin in the cross) and the justifier of him who believes in Jesus (Romans 3:26).

Punishment is a function of a community. The community says, "You may go so far, but no further." One cannot get rid of penalty without inhibiting or destroying freedom. By maintaining his own righteousness in law and penalty God allows to us the maximum opportunity for the development of human moral responsibility.

The marvel of grace is that God loves us as sinners, and that judgment reinforces to our understanding God's love. P. T. Forsyth, the British theologian of a generation ago, expressed this truth in a splendid aphorism: "If he cares enough to be angry he cares enough to redeem."

For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners. Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him (Romans 5:6-9).

Dr. S.J. Mikolaski teaches historical Christianity at Carey Hall, Vancouver. This is ninth in the series.

10. THE CROSS OF CHRIST

Samuel J. Mikolaski

The Canadian Baptist, June 1987

How can something as precious to Christians as the cross become ambiguous in modern theology? The deeply moving words of John 3:16, "that he gave his only begotten son" have become for some a throw-back to pre-scientific mythology. Rudolf Bultmann in *Jesus and the Word* says that the church is wrong to "see event, the decisive act of deliverance in the death of Jesus, or in his death and resurrection," insofar as they are regarded as "given facts of history which may be determined or established by evidence."

Modern scepticism about the relation between event and interpretation continues in the so-called "hermeneutical" method: There is no basis in the gospels, it is said, for the major elements of confessional Christianity. Incarnation, atonement and resurrection are alleged to be later church inventions. The central point about Jesus' life and teaching is at best, says Bultmann, that he came not to win but to proclaim forgiveness. Bultmann's successors have found even this to be a discipleship accretion.

Today many scholars, notably within the Catholic community, are espousing even more radical views. For example, Thomas Sheehan (*How the Kingdom of God Became Christianity*, 1986) sees Christ's mission simply as "an invitation to live God's future in the present."

Trinitarian Faith

I don't think that the simplicities of the biblical faith of Christians in every generation have ever, or were ever intended to, obscure the complexities of the New Testament realities. It is superciliously overweening to imagine that modern sophistication has finally unravelled an overlay of complex theological myths which it is thought hedge about the earliest, presumably authentic, snatches about the historical Jesus.

The complexities of trinitarian theology belong to the New Testament, in the sense of being inherent and explicit in the faith and teaching of the first century Christians who accompanied Christ. They belong to the earliest stratum of Christian teaching. The complexities were acknowledged from the beginning. Over a century ago R. W. Dale, the great Birmingham preacher, said that propitiation "is not an insulated idea ... it is a part of a system of ideas." James Denney, P. T. Forsyth and others have said the same.

Irenaeus, Athenagoras and Athanasius in the early history of Christianity can also be cited. The complex theological matrix is original. Awareness of it grew gradually. New Testament writers were aware that the deepest meaning of Christ's work is linked to the ultimate Christian paradox: it is as true to say that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. Thus the crux for understanding the cross is to grasp the truth and reality of New Testament teaching about Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

God Loved -- God Gave

Believing Christians begin their discussion about the cross not with a philosophy about the human condition or any human utopia, but with love - God's love for mankind.

Pause to consider this: love is the essence of God's nature (1 John 4:8). That God is love and that he loves us is a problem in modern theology. Love is not God's way metaphysically to the world, nor is love the world's aspiring way to God, nor is divine love man's way to himself as is currently said. Rather, God is love means he is personal and he personally loves us.

Everything essentially Christian hangs on this truth. It is very difficult to find current discussion about love being the nature and activity of God, except obfuscations as in process theology that love is a form of the world's upward evolution. C.H. Dodd wrote on 1 John 4:8 "if the characteristic divine activity is that of loving, then God must be personal, for we cannot be loved by an abstraction, or by anything less than a person."

This truth coheres with the full range of Christian teaching: God is triune and love is the essence of divine interpersonal relations (John 17:23). Consequently, this love becomes the sphere of the Christian life (John 15:9) and this mode of God's dealing with us becomes the pattern of our own relationships with one another (1 John 4:16-21).

Sacrifice For Sin

In light of these truths, meditation upon Romans 5:8 elicits warm, believing faith not abstraction and puzzles: "God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us."

One may summarize biblical teaching as follows: the salvation of the world depends upon and is the issue of the death of Christ. The cross originated in the loving purpose of God and is his act to save us. The cross has a direct bearing upon the world's evil and upon human sin. By that death we are saved from sin, death and hell to new life in Christ as God's redeemed people. Consider representative New Testament literature which teaches these truths: Gospels (Mark 8:31; 14:36); Acts (2:23, 38; 4:27; 5:30-31; 10:39, 43); Paul (Romans 3:25; 5:6-8; 8:3; 1 Cor. 15:3; 2 Cor. 5:14-15, 21; Galatians 1:3-4; 3:13; 1 Thess. 5:9-11); Peter (1 Peter 1:18-21; 2:24); writer of Hebrews (1:3; 2:9; 9:25-28; 10:12); John (1:29; 3:14-16; 10:14-18; 12:31-33; 1 John 2:1-2; 4:10).

In scripture the language of the cross is probably more complex than for any other doctrine. The full range of meaning of the biblical metaphors and images is exceedingly difficult to grasp. Nevertheless, the challenge is intellectually rewarding and spiritually refreshing. I will identify 15 major concepts, grouped under five key headings.

First, *Sacrifice*, which includes the concept of the Lamb of God and forgiveness or purification (Mark 10:45; John 1:29; Acts 3:18-19; 1 Cor. 5:7; Ephesians 5:2).

Second, *Atonement*, which includes propitiation, expiation and the meaning of the blood of the sacrifice. Atonement intends reconciliation; however, the reconciliation is accomplished on grounds of propitiation (which means reparation for wrong of injury as well as expunging the sin, Romans 5:10-11). In 1931 C.H. Dodd provided what appeared to be strong exegetical evidence for translating an obscure but important Greek verb (*hisaskesthai*) expiation (of sin) rather than propitiation (of God's wrath). This is now embedded in the RSV (Romans 3:25; Hebrews 2:17; 1 John 2:2; 4:10).

This conclusion seemed to corroborate previously held opinion, which on moral grounds rejects the notion of divine wrath. However, other research shows that Dodd's distinction is overdrawn. No one ever said that God was appeased by Christ's sacrifice in the manner of appeasing pagan gods.

What cannot be avoided is the truth that averting divine wrath against sin is valid biblical teaching. Also, propitiation as a concept does not stand alone; it is part of a complex of ideas. In the New Testament, turning away divine wrath by the judgment death of the cross and expunging sin belong together. Similarly, the concept of the blood of Christ stands for the death of the cross (in scripture blood in the veins stands for life, but as spilt it stands for death -- Romans 3:25; Colossians 1:20).

Third, *Redemption*, which includes ransom, substitution, representation and the general concept of a vicarious act. Most important is to recognize that redemption in the New Testament is not simply deliverance (i.e., by power, authority, cleverness) but deliverance by payment of a price, which price is the precious blood of Christ (Mark 10:45; Ephesians 1:7; 1 Timothy 2:6; Titus 2:14).

"For us" conveys the sense of both representation (he represents us) and substitution (he died in our place), as is clear from the language of key passages where the New Testament can range easily between "in the interests of" and "in the place of." The death Christ died for us is not viewed at arms length. Paul says that Christ died the death of each of us and that in that death each of us died (2 Cor. 5:14) as symbolized in the burial of baptism (Romans 6:1-4).

Fourth, *Mediation*, which includes reconciliation and the new covenant through Christ's high-priesthood. Christ our advocate accomplishes our reconciliation to God not through some other (animal) sacrifice, but by his own (Hebrews 9:11-14).

Fifth, *Victory* (Philippians 2:9-10; Colossians 2:14-15; Revelation 17:14). How can something so ignominious as the cross be a triumph? The answer lies not in the triumphant, kingly return of Christ, but in the mode of his passion. Luther had it right: the victory lies in Christ's moral incorruptibility. Evil did its worst to him, nevertheless he still prayed, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." This triumph forever after serves as the ground and energy of our own victory over sin and evil (Romans 8:17; Philippians 3:10; Colossians 1:24; 1 Peter 4:12-13).

The Power of the Cross

Despite all of the foregoing, the power of Calvary does not lie in debate about complex biblical language; rather, it lies in the offence of the cross and the preaching of the cross.

Take Paul's seminal utterance, *Christ died for our sins* (1 Cor. 15:3). Every word is filled with meaning: 1. It was *Christ* the incarnate Lord who died. 2. He *died* for our sins. His death was essential to our salvation. 3. He died *for* our sins. His death was vicarious, substitutionary, representative. 4. He died for *our* sins -- for me, for me, for me. 5. He died for our *sins*. No verbal cure for sin will do. Uttering forgiveness is not enough. The death he died was, once and for all, the judgment death of all sin.

In an age of pseudo-sophistication Christians need again to reflect the humility and grace of the childlike faith that "Jesus died for me."

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11. BECOMING A CHRISTIAN

Samuel J. Mikolaski

The Canadian Baptist, July 1987

Becoming a Christian for Christians means the same thing as believing in Christ or receiving Christ. It means conversion.

The world of the first Christians and of the early church was more like our world than any period in between for a crucial reason: conversions of all kinds were common, even popular. In those days ease of conversion to and among the proliferating cults was a noteworthy feature of social life. A common theme was that of the real divine self emerging through a transcendental experience to displace the individual's ordinary social identity.

For example, in the Magna Mater cult of Attis and Cybelle there was practised the taurobolium. The devotee stood under a grate while above a bull was slain, the blood bathing the devotee for rebirth. The impersonal character of many of the ancient cults may be contrasted with the Christian gospel. Nevertheless, aspiring to a new social identity was common and, I believe, in part set the stage for the rapid spread of Christianity because of its personal character and morally transforming power.

The cheapening of conversion today is striking. The popularization of "Amazing Grace" and "born again" language has become a feature of media hype. What reality does it identify?

Christian conversion entails two distinct elements: repentance and faith, which are meaningfully correlated by Paul in Acts 20:21.

Repentance is tough for moderns because it presumes sin and guilt. We ought to heed the words of Henry Fairlie, not a professing Christian (*The Seven Deadly Sins Today*, 1978), who said that modern solutions to human problems have reached an impasse because they shirk the problem of evil and they shirk it because of a major false premise upon which they rest: "that our faults and those of our societies are the result of some kind of mechanical failure, which has only to be diagnosed and understood for us to set it right." Repentance means facing up to sin and guilt, in the deeply personal and moral sense that sin is ultimately against God (Psalm 51:3- 4).

True repentance involves intellectual, emotional and volitional elements. Recognition of sin (2 Tim. 2:25) and deep emotion over the wrong of sin (2 Cor. 7:10) are surely present. Repentance is, however, more than sorrow or remorse. To repent is to turn - to turn away from the sin; to do an about face. That is the fundamental biblical meaning of repentance in both Old and New Testaments

(Jer. 25:5; Acts 2:38; 14:15; 28:27; 1 Thess.1:9).

Conviction of sin, in relation to a standard higher than our own, is distinctly the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts (John 16:7-11).

To turn away from sin is repentance; to turn to God is faith. They belong together, like head and tail of a coin. Key texts which show the nature and function of faith are John 3:16, Acts 13:39, Romans 3:24-26, 10:17, Hebrews 11:6. Christian faith includes both belief and trust; belief that and belief in. They always go together. Error creeps in when a disjunction is forced between them. Note in the following how the subtleties of the Greek text of the New Testament convey the functioning of faith: belief that Jesus is Lord, the Son of God (Romans 10:9; 1 John 5:1); acceptance of a true statement (John 4:21); trust in a person (John 14: 1) ; believing commitment to Christ (Acts 16:31; 1 John 5:10).

Christian faith includes assent to the validity of certain historical facts, conviction as to the truth of those apostolically interpreted events and personal trust. Truth and trust belong together. To say that at its highest and best faith is trust does not diminish the fact-basis of Christianity, namely, that Jesus Christ actually lived, died and rose again. But the facts in and of themselves are not the genius of faith even though they are essential to it.

The genius of faith is personal trust in Christ as one's Saviour and commitment of life and destiny to him. Thus faith is not a vague feeling that haunts the brain (though one's spiritual pilgrimage may include haunting longings which are steps to faith) but a personal commitment to Christ -- the Christ of the apostolic gospel. Faith in man answers to grace in God.

Being Forgiven

In response to faith in Christ the believing person is granted God's forgiveness. Forgiveness is one of the most characteristic words of Christianity but modern people find it difficult to receive and difficult to give. Consider Luke 7:45, 17:3-4, 23:34; Acts 5:31, 13:38, 26:18; Ephesians 1:7, 4:32. Forgiveness is not something merely spoken. It costs, and the true cost is the passion and death of Christ on the cross.

.In forgiveness the evil is absorbed and its energy turned for good: "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." Through Christ's cross a new principle has entered the world, the principle of vicariousness: that it is greater to bear suffering than to inflict it. This is what Christ has done for us. He bore our sins and their penalty. He has made our burden his own. He is the Lamb of God who has borne away the sin of the world.

New Birth

While "born again" has been cheapened by media attention and, at times, grotesque religious popularization, this biblical term, which originates in the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus in John chapter 3, refers to a marvellous reality. The penitent, forgiven sinner becomes a child of God through faith in Christ. We become partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1: 4).

Jerome, the great Catholic scholar of the fourth century said, "Christians are not born but made" through belief in Christ. Whether our Lord's comments may have been triggered by Ecclesiastes 11:5, the mystery of the new birth derives from the untrackable work of the Holy Spirit who creates new life in each soul which pledges faith in Christ.

The best understanding of the new birth is, I think, to follow on with Peter who translated the biological metaphor into a spiritual and moral reality. The new birth happens, he says (1 Peter 1:23-25), when the seed of the imperishable word of the truth of the gospel is implanted in the heart. It begets new life. This casts a bright light on the meaning of John 1:12-13 (note also 1 Cor. 4:15, James 1:18). The birth is from above. Through God's own work in our hearts we are born into his family.

Christian Commitment

Baptists have always been restorationists. The norm of Christian faith and life is set for us in the New Testament. We have sought faithfully to hold, as Jerome said, to the truth that Christians are made not born. They are born again. That means that we are made over as new persons in Christ. While precious as an heritage in our religious traditions, such a truth as conversion to Christian faith ought first and foremost to be personal and life-transforming.

Christ's Call

How better to close a study of what it means to become a Christian than to cite a passage from the sermon "The Method of Grace" by George Whitefield (1714-1770), the eloquent preacher of the Great Awakening in Britain and America:

"First, then, before you can speak peace to your hearts, you must be made to see, made to feel, made to weep over, made to bewail, your actual transgressions against the law of God ... Before ever, therefore, you can speak peace to your hearts, you must be brought to see, brought to believe, what a dreadful thing it is to depart from the living God.

"And now, my dear friends, examine your hearts, for I hope you came hither with a design to have your souls made better. Give me leave to ask you, in the presence of God, whether you know the time, and if you do not know exactly the time, do you know there was a time, when God wrote bitter things against you, when the arrows of the Almighty were within you?

"Was ever the remembrance of your sins grievous to you? Was the burden of your sin intolerable to your thoughts? Did you ever see that God's wrath might justly fall upon you, on account of your actual transgressions against God? Were you ever in all your life sorry for your sins? Could you ever say, my sins are gone over my head as a burden too heavy for me to bear? Did you ever experience any such thing as this? Did ever any such thing as this pass between God and your soul? If not, for Jesus Christ's sake, do not call yourselves Christians; you may speak peace to your hearts, but there is no peace. May the Lord awaken you, may the Lord convert you, may the Lord give you peace, if it be his will, before you go home! ...

"I am persuaded the devil believes more of the Bible than most of us do. He believes the divinity of Jesus Christ; that is more than many who call themselves Christians do; nay, he believes and trembles, and that is more than thousands amongst us do. My friends, we mistake an historical faith for a true faith, wrought in the heart by the spirit of God.

"You fancy you believe, because you believe there is such a book as we call the Bible -- because you go to church; all this you may do, and have no true faith in Christ. Merely to believe there was such a person as Christ, merely to believe there is a book called the Bible, will do you no good, more than to believe there was such a man as Caesar or Alexander the Great.

"The Bible is a sacred depository. What thanks have we to give to God for these lively oracles! But yet we may have these, and not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. My dear friends, there must be a principle wrought in the heart by the Spirit of the living God. Did I ask you how long it is since you believed in Jesus Christ? I suppose most of you would tell me, you believed in Jesus Christ as long as ever you remember -- you never did misbelieve.

"Then, you could not give me a better proof that you never yet believed in Jesus Christ, unless you were sanctified early, as from the womb; for, they that otherwise believe in Christ know there was a time when they did not believe in Jesus Christ. You say you love God with all your heart, soul, and strength.

"If I were to ask you how long it is since you loved God, you would say, as long as you can remember; you never hated God, you know no time when there was enmity in your heart against God. Then, unless you were sanctified very early, you never loved God in your life.

"My dear friends, I am more particular in this, because it is a most deceitful delusion, whereby so many people are carried away, that they believe already ...

"Once more, then: before you can speak peace to your heart, you must not only be convinced of your ... sin ... but you must be enabled to lay hold upon the perfect

righteousness, the all-sufficient righteousness, of the Lord Jesus Christ; you must lay hold by faith on the righteousness of Jesus Christ, and then you shall have peace. "Come," says Jesus, "unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." This speaks encouragement to all that are weary and heavy laden; but the promise of rest is made to them only upon their coming and believing, and taking him to be their God and their all."

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12. ONE SPIRIT; ONE BAPTISM

Samuel J. Mikolaski

The Canadian Baptist, July – August 1987

Baptism and church membership are part of salvation. Now, before you leap from your seat to protest, let me explain. My theme very much belongs to the previous chapter, "Becoming A Christian." The New Testament teaches that we are saved as individuals but not to individualism. Granular individualism as practised by many Canadian Christians is alien to the New Testament.

In the New Testament, becoming a Christian is a complex of realities which includes repentance and faith (i.e., conversion), forgiveness, the new birth and as well, reception of the Spirit and union with Christ and his church, which is portrayed (symbolized, if you will) in baptism. Unfortunately, in Canada many Christians think that baptism and public identification with the body of Christ are optional, even inconsequential. However, the realities I have identified are seen to be one event in the New Testament. They coincide in time. We have tended to parcel them out sequentially and have marked them with our own imprimatur as having varying degrees of importance. Such differences are now embedded in distinct Christian denominational cultures.

I illustrate:

First, in the Eastern Orthodox rite, in which I was born and reared, the infant is baptized (sometimes by immersion) and the act of Chrismation is then performed by the priest on the child. This is defined as "a divine mystery through which a baptized person is armed by the Holy Spirit with strength and wisdom and other gifts to keep the right faith and to live a holy life." The priest anoints the body with holy chrism (oil), saying, "The seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

The parts anointed, which represent sanctification of the whole person are forehead, breast, eyes, ears, cheeks, mouth, hands and feet. The significant point about the Eastern rite is that the child becomes fully part of Christ and the church: union with Christ, baptism, reception of the Holy Spirit and becoming a full member of the church are one event. Among infant baptizing churches this Eastern Orthodox unified rite comes closest to New Testament practice except that it is applied to infants rather than to believers in response to confessed faith.

It is ironic that since the New Delhi meetings of the World Council of Churches in 1961 Orthodox theologians have filled the theological vacuum created by the liberalism of British, European and American Protestant theologians. This is strongly reflected in the currently widely circulated document *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (BEM).

Second, among the Western churches (Anglican, Catholic, Protestant) a distinct division was created between baptism on the one hand and confirmation and church membership on the other. The Western tradition is not only wrong to baptize infants, it is equally wrong to separate confirmation and membership from baptism. In the Anglican and Catholic traditions, the Holy Spirit is said to be conferred at confirmation, hence the mandatory presence of the bishop at confirmation as the episcopal conveyer of the Holy Spirit. Recently, the validity and need of confirmation has been called into question as in the recent attempt in the United Church of Canada to dispense with confirmation.

Third, the disjunction in Western practice between baptism and confirmation has produced carelessness about baptism and church membership among Western evangelicals, such as Baptists, Christian Missionary Alliance, Pentecostal and para-church bodies. The doctrine of justification by faith without a complementary emphasis upon the New Testament theology of initiation has produced the unbiblical granular individualism which characterizes Canadian evangelical Christianity. Those churches which minister conversion, baptism and membership in the local body with the least possible delay, as in the book of Acts, come closest to New Testament practice.

Evangelical Pattern

What New Testament teaching bears upon the complex of realities which make up conversion and initiation into the Christian body?

It includes conversion to Christ through repentance and faith, reception of the Spirit, public identification with Christ in believers' baptism, and inclusion in Christ's body. As much as we have separately stylized these varyingly in our Christian traditions, they are in fact one event or one complex of events. No one can be converted to Christ or receive Christ apart from the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit indwells every believer. Immediate baptism following upon confession of faith is part of that conversion and attests to the new Christian's being joined to Christ in his death, burial and resurrection. Baptism, which is public identification with Christ, is as well identification with the body of Christ. The simple truth is that baptism is the real act of becoming a member of the church; the traditional "right hand of fellowship" is a pleasant public welcome of the convert to the fellowship of the body (Acts 2:38, 41; 8:12, 36, 38; 10:47-48; 11:15-18; 22:16).

The church which practises this evangelical sequence with least delay approximates most closely the New Testament pattern. No one should counsel a seeker after the Lord to conversion and then add as an afterthought that at some time in the future he or she might consider baptism, or might consider membership.

Such tentativeness betrays the gospel. It is truly ironic that only some Baptists and certain other evangelicals who claim to be biblically oriented allow membership without baptism. During my years of ministry as a pastor I baptized hundreds of converts. Often these were converted in the week previous to the baptism. They were also immediately received into the church.

Nurturing instruction of converts may occur as much after baptism as before. There is no biblical warrant to delay baptism, to make baptism optional, to impose tests of knowledge beyond personal profession of faith in Christ the Lord as Saviour, or to accept candidates for baptism who reject inclusion into the church.

I have experienced resistance in only one case when a young man declined to unite with the church and I declined to baptize him. Shortly afterwards, I left that ministry but was thrilled to hear that he was later baptized and received into the church. He is now a Baptist Federation pastor and we remain very good friends.

In view of the many studies made in recent years from various denominational perspectives which corroborate the confluence of events in conversion and initiation which I have described, Baptists ought to give the more earnest heed to their heritage. It remains to add, however, that the best implementation of these things comes not merely through insistence upon confessional integrity, as important as that may be.

It depends equally upon love. There are many Christians in our churches who attend church and are part of congregational life but who are not baptized or, if baptized, are not members. The loving embrace of family and a loving call to follow Christ in his appointed way are surely the better way to deal with adherents, rather than by strident insistence. How important to stress that the New Testament knows nothing of unbaptized Christians or of spiritual orphans. The call of Christ is a call to public discipleship and to the household of faith.

By One Spirit

The episcopal traditions, Anglican and Roman, divide confirmation from baptism. This is doubly wrong: it locates the gift of the Spirit as an episcopal prerogative at confirmation and it divorces the gift of the Spirit from baptism (i.e., the biblical sign of conversion). The Pentecostal traditions have tended to divorce Spirit baptism from water baptism. This too is, I believe, an error. Conversion-baptism, or faith baptism is coincident upon union with Christ and no one comes to Christ apart from the Holy Spirit.

Consider the significance of 1 Corinthians 12:13, "by (or "in") one Spirit we were all baptized into one body -- Jews or Greeks, slaves or free -- and all were made to drink of one Spirit" (RSV).

This is neither purely symbolic of endowment by the Spirit nor is it a claim for

spiritual renewal by purely external washing. However, neither is baptism merely external. Baptism entails a pledge of faith in Christ (1 Peter 3:21). It is the act of the heart. Thus, faith in Christ and baptism in the name (or, into the name) of Christ amount to the same thing. Paul is saying that faith-baptism in water is baptism in the Spirit.

Dr. George Beasley-Murray translates as follows. "We are all brought into one body in baptism, in the one Spirit."

To be a baptized believer is to be in Christ. To be in Christ is to receive the Spirit. These are aspects of the one spiritual reality.

I cite the splendid and apt description of believers' baptism written by Justin Martyr in his *First Apology* (about 155 A.D.): "This washing is called illumination, since those who learn these things are illumined within. The illumined is also washed in the name of Jesus Christ, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and in the name of the Holy Spirit, who through the prophets foretold everything about Jesus."

Buried and Raised

Baptism is a threat to life: we are buried in the grave of the Lord Jesus. Baptism registers the promise of new life: we are raised to newness of life. These themes occur and recur in the New Testament (Romans 6:1-11). Many of us believe that 1 Peter was written as a baptismal homily. From the opening lines (1:1-3) which highlight the death and resurrection theme the epistle goes on to embrace the whole of the life of the new convert for transformation by the power of the risen Christ (note also 2 Peter 1:3-11). The New Testament knows nothing of secret discipleship, only of open, public, identifiable discipleship.

It is appropriate to close this discussion with Justin Martyr's sequel, which movingly brings the convert from the pool of baptism to the fellowship of the church and the table of the Lord in that household of faith and aptly illustrates the unity of conversion, reception of the Spirit, baptism and the fellowship of the saints:

"We, however, after thus washing the one who has been convinced and signified his assent, lead him to those who are called brethren, where they are assembled. They then earnestly offer common prayers for themselves and the one who has been illuminated and all others everywhere, that we may be made worthy, having learned the truth, to be found in deed good citizens and keepers of what is commanded, so that we may be saved with eternal salvation.

"On finishing the prayers we greet each other with a kiss. Then bread and a cup of water and mixed wine are brought to the president of the brethren and he, taking them, sends up praise and glory to the Father of the universe through the name of

the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and offers thanksgiving at some length that we have been deemed worthy to receive these things from him.

"When he has finished the prayers and the thanksgiving the whole congregation present assents, saying, "Amen." "Amen" in the Hebrew language means, "So be it."

"When the president has given thanks and the whole congregation has assented, those whom we call deacons give to each of those present a portion of the consecrated bread and wine and water, and they take it to the absent" (transl., C.C. Richardson, *Early Christian Fathers*, 1953).

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CONFESSING CHRISTIAN FAITH SERIES

13. THE NEW MAN

Samuel J. Mikolaski

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Unscrambling the meaning of important terms which describe Christian experience is not easy, but let's try:

Conversion signifies a dramatic change of attitude toward God and direction of life through accepting Christ the Lord and his ways. *Regeneration* refers to a change of nature: we become sons and daughters of the Lord. *Justification* means that we have a new standing before God. *Sanctification* encompasses all of the foregoing in the sense of describing the development of true Christian character by virtue of our new nature and standing. These terms define what it means to be "in Christ," as the apostle Paul puts it, the "old has passed away, behold, the new has come" (2 Cor. 5:17).

How can terms such as justification and sanctification be made meaningful to modern people yet remain faithful to their biblical sense? Some reject the term justification on grounds that it suggests a legal fiction. Others are leery about the term sanctification on grounds that it suggests a bombed mind.

The answer to such anxieties is that the truth of scripture has nothing to do with either legal fictions or bombed minds. Biblical understanding calls for serious attention to what being "in Christ" means so far as the spiritual and moral transformation of human life is concerned.

True Relation With God

Justification by faith was the cornerstone doctrine of the Reformation. It is solidly embedded in the writings of Luther, Calvin and Knox and in all Protestant theology ever since. What is it?

"Justification by faith alone" answers the crucial question, "how can a person be just with God?" We are sinners. The consequences of sin are guilt, condemnation and estrangement. Estrangement is overcome by reconciliation (Rom. 8:35, 39). Condemnation is removed through forgiveness (Rom. 8:34). Guilt is cancelled by the reckoning of righteousness (Rom. 8:33). All of these spiritual realities come to us through God's grace in Christ (Rom. 8:1; 5:11-12).

The critical passage on justification is Romans 3:21-26 where Paul declares that justification is a gift through Christ's redemption, which each one of us receives by faith. The entire book of Galatians amounts to reaffirmation of this teaching. Parallel passages include Acts 10:43, Ephesians 2:8-9 and Titus 3:5. The earliest promise is given in Genesis 15:6. More is added in Psalm 32 and Habakkuk 2:4.

The full-orbed teaching occurs in Acts 13:28-29, Romans 3-5 and Galatians 3.

Without question, the Hebrew and Greek terms for justification are employed in a forensic (judicial) sense: that is, it is not moral influence which evokes change, but a declarative judicial act. To declare what? That the just condemnatory demands of the law against sin have been fully met in the judgment death for sin which Christ died. That in virtue of this satisfaction a new, objective relation between God and man, a state of righteousness has been created through Christ's death (Romans 4:25; 5:18).

In Christ we are accounted righteous, says Paul. We enter upon a new relation with God (in the New Testament the terms righteousness and justification are correlatives). We are forgiven many times; but we are justified in God's sight only once. Justification is once for all complete, never to be repeated.

This is the subtle, but vital difference between justification and sanctification. The eminent British New Testament scholar E. K. Simpson writes that justification means "to account righteous and no amount of ingenuity will enable us to modify this interpretation; it does not mean "to be made righteous" and all attempts to confuse it with sanctification must therefore be abandoned."

The decisiveness of this spiritual fact is the ground of Paul's joy and confidence, not any claim on his part to continuing faithfulness or goodness (Romans 4:1-2). The grounds for justification is not our own righteousness; rather, it is the unrepeatable atoning work of Christ who by his death took upon himself our guilt.

Thus the basis for reconciliation is established because sin is atoned for. Faith is the means to receive justification; it is never the grounds for justification. Bishop Richard Hooker (1554-1600) a famous British theologian wrote, "God doth justify the believing man, yet not for the worthiness of his belief, but for his worthiness who is believed." The truth of justification is the indispensable foundation of spiritual wholeness, which is peace with God and hope of the final glory of God.

Developing True Character

Sanctification builds upon justification. It is presented in the New Testament as both decisive event and continuing process. At conversion, Christians are sanctified in their turning to God, which is analogous to justification (Heb. 10:10); as well, Christians are in the process of being sanctified (Heb.10:14). These two verses sum up New Testament teaching regarding sanctification.

"Set apart" for God's fellowship and service is fundamental to the meaning of sanctification. Thus spoken, it is analogous to "holiness," a quality which accrues to those who walk in close fellowship with God (Isaiah 6). The ethical impact of one's feeling profane derives from awareness of sinfulness before the glory of God. The God of love made known in Christ is also the holy Father.

Sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit. He brings forgiveness in response to faith and renews us day by day in the image of Christ. Thus forgiveness (being washed), justification and sanctification coincide as the true work of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:11). Paul proceeds to show that true liberty entails our commitment to goodness as temples of the Holy Spirit, not enslavement to fleshly impulses (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

The Holy Spirit himself is the seal of our sanctification, which is not an abstraction but the Spirit's personal presence in each Christian's heart (Rom. 5:5; 1 Cor.3:16; 2 Cor. 1: 20-22; Eph. 1:13-14).

The Primary Sign of the Holy Spirit

The task of the Holy Spirit is to glorify Christ in us (John 16:12-15). Christ is intended to be both the reality and fullness of the Spirit in every Christian's experience.

The Anglican scholar Lionel Thornton has correctly summarized the relation of the spirit to Christ in each Christian's life: "Both Christ and the Spirit dwell in the Christian soul but not in the same way. Christ is the indwelling content of the Christian life ... the Spirit is the quickening cause; and the indwelling Christ is the effect of that quickening."

The unfolding promises in scripture about the Holy Spirit reinforce the foregoing truth, but this is missed by many Christians. Usually we reckon the fulfillment of the promise of the Spirit (Isaiah 42:1-4; 61:1-2; Ezekiel 36:27; Joel 2:28-29) to have had its primary fulfillment at Pentecost in Acts 2. This is a mistake. The primary fulfillment occurred in the new man, namely Jesus Christ (Lu. 4:18-21). Jesus Christ himself is the primary sign of the Spirit in humanity for the new age.

Christ's Spirit-bearing humanity is the pattern of the life which God intended for mankind. It is this life which the Spirit desires to duplicate in each one of us (Rom. 8:11). Significant parallels are drawn in the New Testament between his life and ours, which induced Irenaeus, the second century church father, to speak of the recapitulation of the race in him. Christ is the file-leader of the new humanity. We are begotten of the Spirit, as he was begotten of the Spirit (John 3:115). We are baptized in the Spirit as he was (1 Cor. 12:13). We may triumph over the tempter as he did (Eph. 6:10-11; 1 John 2:14). We, as he, may live and minister in the Spirit (Acts 1:8).

Christ the Lord is the giver of the Spirit, the model of life in the Spirit and the example of fullness of life in the Spirit. Who had more of the Spirit than the Lord Jesus? We are converted to Christ to become like Christ. Let no one put you down for aspiring to be like Jesus as the pattern of true life in the Spirit. This quality of life, says Paul, is the meaning of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:16-26). Paul

concludes the foregoing passage with the command, "Walk in the Spirit." This is the mark of true sanctification. In the New Testament we are never commanded to be baptized in the Spirit (that happens at conversion when we are joined to Christ by faith). We are, however, commanded to be filled with the Spirit and to walk in the Spirit. This has nothing whatever to do with a bombed mind, which Paul specifically excludes (e.g. bombed by alcohol, Eph. 5:18). Rather, the fullness of the Spirit embraces the fullness of Christ. By his presence and power the first Christians witnessed, lived chaste lives, opened new fields, confronted evil forces and rejoiced in hope of God's final kingdom and glory.

Death has a part to play in sanctification. Christians are to die to sin (Rom. 6:1-11; Titus 2:14; 3:5-7), which is symbolized in our baptism where we are laid in the grave of the Lord Jesus yet raised in order to live to God. Christians are to die to the world (Gal. 6:14) in the sense of rejecting the categories and forms of its godless way of life. Christians are to die to self (Gal. 2:20) in the paradoxical sense that though we die with Christ the same self nevertheless lives, renewed to live the life of faith. The death of the Christian to the world, the flesh and the devil does not mean detachment from life and society but identifiable discipleship which exhibits Christ-like characteristics.

The on-going sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit is quiet, unobtrusive, tender. The Spirit works by persuasion not coercion. Hence the biblical analogy of the tenuous smoking flax which may easily be snuffed out as the mode of Messiah's work (Isaiah 42:3) to which may be joined Paul's parallel warning about the ease with which the Spirit can be quenched (1 Thess. 5:19). Surely the delicate virtues described by Paul as the Christ-like fruit of the Spirit are the signs of the Spirit's presence and working in our lives: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.

These marks of abiding in Christ are the imprimatur of the Spirit's presence. Said our Lord,

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:4-5).

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14. IDENTIFIABLE CHRISTIANS

Samuel J. Mikolaski

The Canadian Baptist, November 1987

Less than 100 years after the first Christians were in the midst of their struggle to survive and to spread Christ's gospel, a converted Athenian philosopher wrote a splendid defence of Christians. His name was Athenagoras and he addressed his essay to the Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius, himself a famous Stoic philosopher.

What do you think Athenagoras emphasized as being distinctly Christian? Of course he refuted falsehoods about Christians. As well, he wrote concise and clear doctrinal sentences as to the beliefs of Christians.

Beyond this he stressed two points: first, Christians centre their attention not on the skill of making speeches (we call that media hype or political wind-baggery) but on the proof and lessons of actions. God's teaching, he says, "requires us to have right relations with ourselves and with our neighbours." Second, God the creator of the world gives us ample reasons to adore him because of "the order, harmony, greatness, colour, form, and arrangement of the world."

"Beauty on earth is not self-made," he adds, "but has been created by the hand and mind of God." Hence, he goes on, Christians do not abuse the beauty of what God has made either by sexual exploitation such as harlotry and homosexuality or by other base practices.

Personal Devotion

Devoted discipleship honours God's splendid creation. Devoted discipleship accepts responsibilities of stewardship for God's creation in the original sense of well-meaning "dominion" (Gen. 1:28; 2:15).

This is a beautiful attitude to life. It says that Christian devotion is greater, larger and richer in meaning than mere withdrawal or other-worldly absorption. Highest and best devotion entails our involvement in life and work as co-workers with God, not detachment from the world as if the created order is a hindrance to spirituality. Spirituality which denigrates life falls foul of much of our Lord's teaching, such as the parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14-30; note Lu. 16:1-9).

The Bible presents to us a subtle but important distinction as to the nature of true contemplation. Christian prayer is different from contemplation of the divine in a beatific vision, like Plato's mythical charioteer whose horse he envisioned conveying the rapt soul upward beyond or behind earthly phenomena to behold and be enthralled by "the good."

Christian contemplation and prayer surely lead to the personal experience of God (I Kings 19:9-18; Psalm 46:10; Isaiah 6) but, as in the case of Elijah, the vision issues in a clear interpretive message which is both conceptual and verbal and which demands the response of obedience. In both the Old Testament and the New Testament "seeing" God is the aspiration of his people but "hearing" God is the basis of fellowship. The object of devotion is not final union of the devotee with the sublime but obedient response of saintly lives as divine co-workers.

Prayer and disorder cannot go together. Prayer reflects an orderly life and orderly worship. As communion with the living, holy God, prayer calls for reverence, orderliness, confession and humility. In prayer we confront the holy Father, the Creator, the Lord of the universe, our Redeemer through Christ. It is well to consider the biblical pattern of prayer: to the Father, in the name of the Lord Jesus, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Certain patterns, common to both private and public prayer, have proved to be valuable guides. The first of these are the examples and place of prayer in the life of Christ. The second are the psalms. These are records of the soul's converse with God and are useful for private devotions and for corporate worship. One could wish for revival of public reading of the psalms and the singing of their traditional metrical (Presbyterian) version in church services. Suffusion of the mind and spirit with the worship language of scripture generates a worshipful, obedient attitude of life without which formal habits of prayer have little meaning.

Intercessory Prayer

Trust in God's providential dealings tends to reduce our inclination to appeal frequently to the supernatural to suit our own personal inclinations. Today, the manipulation of the supernatural has become, without valid biblical warrant, a feature of some types of media spirituality. It is a striking fact that when Christians first challenged the pagan world, their trust in God's love and care put them at odds with pagan practices which, almost daily, sought to manipulate the universe to one's own ends.

An example is the powerful faith evident in the works of Irenaeus in the late second century, in contrast to superstitious pagan attempts to wheedle the gods and manipulate the environment. This in no way undercuts Christian belief in the sovereignty of God over nature.

It rarely occurs to us Christians that intercessory prayer may well be a form of meddling in other people's lives and should therefore be practised with great love, understanding and care.

Consider the fact that the dependableness of the world order reflects the will and purpose of the creator. As well, contingency (that things could go this way or that)

is necessary to our growth in freedom. Thus, as creationists, Christians believe in the reality of two modes of control in the world: first, that the world has been created as a stable, dependable world order, otherwise rational study of the world would be impossible; second, that conscious, intelligent purpose is another mode of control through which God invites us to share with him a part of his work.

To believe in intercessory prayer, as I think Christians must, we must believe that God is able to control creation without either disorganizing its dependableness or inhibiting our growth in freedom and responsibility.

May we then pray for healing? Yes, provided we don't assume a right to the answer we want. May we pray for rain, for a job, for bread, for guidance?

We may. Nevertheless, we must pray with the sense that we do not know what is or is not necessary to the achievement of God's purposes and leave the answer to him. Bear in mind that the answer to Paul's prayers about his own personal problem was the divine "no," and that it is only in the context of God's "no" that "my grace is sufficient for you" takes on its special meaning (2 Cor. 12:7-10). This passage serves as an indictment of current doctrines which advocate easy manipulation of the supernatural. The first lesson of prayer is "not my will but yours be done."

Graceful Living

The fruit of faith and devotion is good works. Indeed, James tells us that apart from good works faith is dead. Christians ought to be "doers of the word, not hearers only" (James 1:22; note 2:14-26).

As easy as it is to satirize good works, or claims to good works, the Bible intends a marvellous message, which I have hinted at in the sub-heading "graceful living." It is purposely ambiguous and reflects a splendid parallel ambiguity in the Greek text of the New Testament. We are saved by grace. but "grace" produces that which is "gracious" (*charis* and *charismata*).

Two key terms are instructive as qualifiers of good works: first, *agatha* (which we have turned into a woman's name), which is used to mean "intrinsically good" (Eph. 2:10; Phil. 1:6; I Tim. 2:10), i.e., good as to inner nature; second, *kala*, which is used to mean "beautiful" or "attractive" (I Tim. 3:1; 5:10; Titus 2:7,14), i.e., lovely, gracious, fitting deeds. In the New Testament to do good is to do what is fitting, beautiful and memorable.

Christian behaviour is not the product of constrained legalism but the lovely fruit of joyful obedience. John Calvin had it right, "It is faith alone which justifies and yet the faith which justifies is not alone."

Money Stewardship

Christian stewardship of money is based upon God's generosity to us: We have freely received; we ought freely to give (Rom. 5:15; 6:23). It operates on a basic altruistic principle: "it is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35; Gal. 6:9). It requires a counting of cost: "as he may prosper" (I Cor. 16:2), i.e., proportionate to prosperity. These elements reflect liberality of heart (Rom. 12:8) and the sheer joy of grateful giving (2 Cor. 9:7).

Baptists ought to re-establish teaching about the tithe: that a 10th belongs to the Lord. How can we give less? Malachi warned against robbing God (Mal. 3:8). Surely under grace Christians can be persuaded to give at least as much as the law required (Abraham gave a tithe long before the Mosaic law, Gen. 14:20). Generosity on the part of Christian people has always been a part of genuine spiritual renewal, missionary vision and social compassion.

Resources Stewardship

Finally, consider the words of the psalmist: "How clearly the sky reveals God's glory! How plainly it shows what he has done!" (Psalm 19:1, TEV). "Beautiful, indeed, is the world in all its embracing grandeur," wrote Athenagoras.

For Christians, all the world is God's world to be honoured, conserved and used wisely. I recall my youth on our humble farm at Cooksville, Ontario (now Mississauga). How lovely to lie on one's back on a warm summer's day among the pitch-forked hay bundles and admire the fragrant earth, plants, birds and flowers!

Equipped with science and technology, modern Christians can work wonders in our world which even our grandparents could scarcely have imagined -- if Christians develop a new appreciation of the Creator's handiwork. This is part of the future for Christian discipleship: help humanity and husband the creation as co-workers with God.

Consider stewardship as life-embracing, humanity embracing, world-embracing. The reformers called it their doctrine of vocation. In our time consumerism has reached dizzying heights. Christians can point the way to a fresh understanding of the values of life. A recent essay in the *New York Times* (15 March, 1987) was entitled "A Sense of Limits Grips Consumers." It reported that after four years of furious buying, many say they are bored, satiated or deep in debt.

Here is the Christian alternative: stewardship of one's life as God's gift: of talents, time and possessions not as vehicles merely for gratification but as opportunities to creatively do good. People who are prudent, diligent and honest; people who know how to defer gratification in the interests of spiritual rather than merely material goals, are usually inevitably upwardly mobile. In giving themselves away to the interests of higher ideals they are surprised later to realize that self-sacrifice is the true path to fulfillment, the true path to joy.

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15. THE BODY OF CHRIST

Samuel J. Mikolaski

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Who invented the perverse notion of the invisible church? Perverse, that is, in the sense in which the idea is current across Canada! I mean the idea that one is a Christian and belongs to Christ and the church in general, i.e., the "invisible church," but not anywhere in particular!

Add to this a certain pride which conveys the impression that this conception and practice are spiritually superior, and the undermining of what the church in the world is supposed to be is complete.

Do I believe that Christians, though strangers, sense an instant bond as fellow-believers whenever they meet in the course of business, on the golf course or on an airplane? Of course. But to maintain that such an encounter and relationship is the sum and substance of the body of Christ distorts New Testament teaching.

This mood is now worsened by the electronic media, especially TV. Consider that behind the idiot-box there is nothing but a machine running a tape. Ask the tape to visit the sick, comfort the bereaved, encourage the lonely! To think that it can is one of the comical illusions of our time. A friend of mine who is pastor of a large Baptist church in Ohio told me about a middle-aged couple they came across in the course of community visitation. Each Sunday the couple would dress up for church, go into their living room, turn on the TV, watch a religious broadcast, then change into casual clothes and go about their usual work. How quaint and how sad!

Mixed Company

The idea of the invisible church has a fascinating and convoluted history. At any given time it is a complex of many ideas which are generated by contemporary events and trends.

For example, was it fostered by the views of Augustine in the early fifth century AD as some think? In the preceding century Christians euphorically adopted a doctrine of kingdom fulfillment in the Roman Empire. When the emperor Constantine professed conversion the remainder of the fourth century was dominated by rapturous Christian literature acclaiming the arrival of God's final kingdom and eulogizing the church-state combination as fulfillment of God's purposes.

Then disaster struck. In AD 410 the Goths under Alaric sacked Rome. There ensued decades of disorganization in the empire and confusion among Christians.

Augustine wrote *The City of God* to reinterpret human society and history. Earthly kingdoms are never the kingdom of God, he said. They are always a mixture of good and evil. This concept was also applied to the church, hence the rise of the doctrine that the church in the sense of Christendom is inevitably, even properly, a mixture and that the true church is invisible to us, known only to God.

Or, consider John Wycliffe who in the 14th century attacked the spiritual and economic corruption of the mediaeval church. He sought "to purge the church militant of false shoots not embedded in the highest pastor, who is the vine of the entire church."

The true church is not the earthly organization which craves power and wealth. True leaders are marked by holiness and wholesomeness. A century and a half later this became a dominant theme of the Protestant Reformation. We have argued ever since about the true nature of the church: is it the inclusive, mixed multitude of state churches, or Christendom, or the separatist church, or the invisible church, or what?

Since our Baptist forefathers aspired to New Testament ideals, what does it say to us about the essential nature of the church?

Ecclesia – Soma

Two key terms stand out in the New Testament: *ecclesia*, which we translate church; and *soma*, which we translate body. Actually, the Greek terms have become English words as in "ecclesiastical" and "somatic."

The term *ecclesia* is used in the collective sense (1 Cor. 15:9); of an individual church in a town or house (Rom. 16:1, 5; 1 Thess. 1:1); and of a number of churches (Acts 15:41; 1 Cor. 7:17; 16:19). The term was widely used in Roman times to identify any number of organizations, societies, even whole towns or communities. While it has been tiresomely said the point is nevertheless important: *ecclesia* designates a "called-out-assembly," a duly constituted association which is organized for a specific purpose. (For example, in ancient times a burial society, a trades group, a social club.)

The term *soma* is used in the New Testament of many different kinds of bodies: human and animal, corporeal and incorporeal, living and dead. Most commonly it is used of the living human body and metaphorically of a number of persons united by a common bond.

It is this latter sense that the term is used of the spiritual body of Christ (Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 1:23; 5:23; Col. 1:18, 24). The difficulty is how to understand the term "spiritual" in relation to actual persons and associations or persons in concrete situations. "Spiritual" cannot mean an ether which haunts the brain; rather it identifies real people who live and move; who are often good, and

who are just as often troublesome.

Grasping the ways in which these two terms qualify each other is crucial to correctly understand the nature of the church. The church is an *ecclesia*, a called-out-assembly, not in the sense of useful human social compacts such as clubs and corporate entities. There is a plus factor, namely, that the church is an *ecclesia in the sense of being a soma*. It is a fellowship of Christians in the sense of constituting an actual, concrete, historical body, not merely of belonging as individuals to an "invisible" or "mystical" body of Christ. They comprise the body of Christ in that place.

Paul's insight is the cornerstone of Baptist faith. The local church expresses the universality of the church. The important *Second London Baptist Confession of 1677* speaks of the "Catholick universal church" made up of those whom Christ calls by his Spirit and that "those thus called he commandeth to walk together in particular societies, or churches, for their mutual edification; and the due performance of that publick worship, which he requireth of them in the world," (26.1, 5).

Hence Baptists customarily speak of "churches" in the plural not of "The Baptist church." Baptists form associations and conventions of churches; however, neither individually nor corporately are they viewed exclusively as "The" church.

Each church in its locality becomes the body of Christ. Its reality is constituted by the interpenetrating life of its believing fellowship. This reality is not dependent upon its being an institution nor even upon the two groups of leaders which the New Testament identifies, i.e., pastors (bishops or elders) and deacons.

Metaphysically, this reality is hard to describe. It is the body of Christ "in that place;" it is the fellowshiping "new creation" of the redeemed; it is the "household of faith" here, there and everywhere; it is the outcropping of the redeemed in that place. Empirical verification, or what our forefathers called public, identifiable discipleship in congregational form is essential in understanding the nature of the body of Christ.

Consider the metaphor of the body which Paul employs. Distortions of the concept of the church at large easily make nonsense of Paul's meaning. When the apostle addresses the church at Corinth or Ephesus or Thessalonica he does not mean that one is an eye, another an ear, another the foot of an invisible body. Understanding the term body as primarily the invisible church thus violates his teaching. Rather, he means that at Corinth, Ephesus and Thessalonica is the body of Christ. Each of the churches ought to function as the body of Christ in that place under the headship of Christ.

This is eminently clear from 1 Corinthians 12:27 which caps the discussion of that chapter on the church as a body. Paul's sentence, "You are the body of Christ," is

accurately rendered but is not fully rendered. The article-less Greek form (there is no "a" or "the") makes translation into English difficult. He means, "you at Corinth are body." Here, concretely, locally, historically is the body of Christ. This must be understood and applied to every local church. The universal fellowship of believers (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:12-16) finds its body-life expression in any and every place.

Membership

In the New Testament membership in the church is not optional. The theology of the New Testament does not allow for Christians who think that individual salvation leads to granular, unattached individualism so far as churchmanship is concerned.

As the study on discipleship and baptism showed, baptism is baptism to one another as well as into Christ. Here is a solid biblical principle: if a church is good enough to attend, good enough for fellowship, good enough to receive calls from when one is sick or absent, good enough to serve in, then it is good enough to join. "Joining" is merely the act of public identification of what is already materially the case.

Consider this: no infant can survive or prosper in isolation from humanity. God has so created us. Neither can a spiritual infant survive in isolation. We need one another. It is surely true that churches are abrasive as well as nurturing places. Nevertheless; this is the stuff of life. One cannot grow without the abrasions caused by failing human beings. Christians are human beings who are committed to the Lord gradually moulding them into the image of Christ.

All Christians of all ages and of all places constitute a brotherhood (Rom. 14:10), the family of faith (Gal. 6:10; Eph. 2:19), the holy temple of the Lord (Eph. 2:21); the kingdom of God realized in history (1 Cor. 6:9-11); the new begotten (1 Pet. 1:23-25); the new exodus who look for a new city (1 Pet. 1:17- 21).

The seven-fold foundation of this unity (Eph. 4:4-6) is: one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God. It is unity designed to nurture its members into "mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" through "equipping the saints for the work of ministry" (Eph. 4:12-13).

The church is the workshop of Christ-like character and the college of commissioned ministry skills.

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16. IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME

Samuel J. Mikolaski

The Canadian Baptist, February 1988

It is ironic that some of the most precious things in life become hedged about with ambiguity. This is true of the Lord's Supper. How is it that the significance of this memorial observance reminding Christians of Christ's passion should be so troublesome?

Biblical Accounts

Two main groups of New Testament data conserve the earliest traditions about the Lord's Supper: the teaching of Jesus as cited in the synoptic gospels, and the teaching of Paul. The Lord's Supper succeeds the Passover and anticipates a climactic event in the future as well as commemorating a past event, the cross.

First, the synoptic accounts (Mark 14:22-25; Matt. 26:26-29; Luke 22:15-20). Mark is probably the oldest strand of the record. It includes the two remarkable sentences, "Take, this is my body" (14:22) and "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many" (14:24). This is a striking addition to the Passover observance. The Passover was not a sacrifice for sin, but a remembrance of the Exodus deliverance. Further, a goat was used on the Day of Atonement.

Thus the Supper is not a re-enactment of sacrifice as in the Catholic mass. Jesus is anticipating his own death. His stress is upon the bread and wine of the Passover meal not upon the flesh and blood of the Passover sacrifice. "This is" betokens "represents," "means," or "stands for." Jesus gives a new, unique meaning to the unleavened bread and cup during the Passover supper at the strategic points when bread and wine, not the flesh of the lamb, are eaten. He invites his disciples to share by remembrance the coming benefits of his death and by anticipation the final supper in the kingdom of God.

Matthew appears to be a slightly expanded form of Mark. It adds "eat" after "take" and the bidding statement "drink ye all of it." As well, "for" (28) gives a reason for the act, beyond the bare statement of Mark, i.e., "for the forgiveness of sins." Luke's shorter text (see the footnote in the RSV, which omits 19b-20) has the peculiarity of the cup preceding the bread. Inclusion of 19b-20 leaves us with the problem of reference to two cups (17, 20). I accept the longer text and conjecture that its ambiguity is probably due to conflation by the editor of two early accounts. Luke stresses joyful anticipation of the final reunion in the kingdom.

Paul's teaching is found in 1 Cor. 5:6-8; 10:1-22; 11:23-34. In 5:6-8 the appeal to purge out the evil is made on grounds that Christ has been (not is being)

sacrificed. In 10:1-22 Paul warns that the ordinances (baptism and the Lord's Supper) of themselves have no efficacy apart from faith. In 10: 16a the cup signifies communion with the crucified Christ; in 10:16b the fellowship of the one body.

First there is faith, then follows expression of that faith in the common cup and loaf. In 11:18-34 Paul urges unity and solemnity. There are significant variations in Paul as compared with Mark. In 11:24 Paul adds "which is for you" to "this is my body." He adds "new" to covenant in 11:25. Paul strengthens what he has received, namely, that Christ's sacrificial work is unique, unrepeatable and that it inaugurates the new era. This may well be the reason for Paul's striking inclusion of the injunction to repeat the ordinance as a way of remembering and reinforcing the significance of Christ's death until the day of the Lord's return (11:24-26).

Three Traditions

Variations in the transmitted texts almost certainly reflect the preciousness of the records as they were conserved by more than one hand in the early church. Difficulties of interpretation have troubled Christians ever since. Consider the three major traditions in the West:

1. *Sacral Matter*. This view takes two forms, the Eastern Orthodox and the Roman Catholic. In Orthodox teaching, matter is never viewed as being merely neutral, else it becomes the locus and bearer of the demonic. It must be "referred" to God, i.e., seen and used as a means of communion with him and life in him. While this is applied to all elements and aspects of life, for example marriage, it applies especially to the eucharist in which the bread and wine become divinely furnished food to mingle Christ's flesh and blood with ours.

In the West we are more familiar with the transubstantiationist claims of the Roman Catholic Church. Anthony Kenny, now master of Balliol College, Oxford, and a former Catholic theologian, movingly recounts the profound impact the thought of re-enactment of the sacrifice of Christ in the mass had on him. In his first years as a priest before he forsook the church: "It was touching the body of Christ, the closeness of the priest to Jesus, which most enthralled me. I would gaze on the host after the words of consecration, soft-eyed like a lover looking into the eyes of his beloved," (*A Path From Rome*, 1985, p.101).

He recalls the excitement over what he thought he was doing in consecrating the elements. Nevertheless, this proved "too fragile to last, like a romantic love-affair brought up short by the reality of an ill-assorted marriage." What transubstantiation can mean, i.e., that, while as to their accidents the bread and wine appear to be merely bread and wine, in fact the body and blood of Christ are sacramentally present, remains a profound metaphysical and. theological problem for catholicism.

2. *Sacral Carrier.*

A differing view is that traditionally held in various forms by Lutherans; sometimes called consubstantiation. This is the view that along with the bread and wine after the act of consecration there co-exists the body and blood of Christ in union with each other.

More recently, Lutherans have stressed the act of participation more than the metaphysics of the elements. The church's act (the priestly act of consecration) is something that God makes his own so that we become partakers of the body and blood of Christ as our spiritual meat and drink. This is a variant of a longstanding mediaeval view, now little discussed, which antedated claims to transubstantiation.

An example is the opposition of John Wycliffe to transubstantiation a century-and-a-half before Luther. The elements are not numerically identical with the body of Christ, Wycliffe said, but neither are they mere symbols of it either. The host is not itself the body of Christ; the body of Christ is sacramentally hidden in it. The priest does not make the body of Christ; he makes the host be its sign or covering (Anthony Kenny, *Wyclif*, 1985. p.89).

3. *Spiritual Symbol.*

Baptists along with most Protestants believe that the elements of the Lord's Supper must be understood as symbols of Christ's body and blood. Our Lord's words, "This is my body" and "This is my blood" can only signify "means," "represents" or "stands for" my body and blood. For the first disciples the idea that they were literally eating Christ's flesh and drinking his blood would have been intolerable theologically.

John Smyth, the early leader who led a persecuted band of English Baptists to exile in Amsterdam wrote, "The Lord's Supper is the external sign of the communion of Christ, and of the faithful amongst themselves by faith and love," (Short Confession, 15, 1609). This belief reflects the widespread reaction to mediaeval sacramental theology.

Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531), the Protestant leader at Zurich, said that a sacrament "cannot have any power to free the conscience." "By the Lord's Supper we give proof that we trust in the death of Christ, glad and thankful to be in that company which gives thanks to the Lord for the blessing of redemption which he freely gave us by dying for us," (*On True And False Religion*). "But that the body of Christ in essence and really, i.e., the natural body itself, is either present in the supper or masticated with our mouth and teeth . . . we not only deny, but constantly maintain to be an error, contrary to the word of God ... it becomes very evident that the ancients always spoke figuratively when they attributed so much to the eating of the body of Christ in the Supper; meaning, not that sacramental

eating would cleanse the soul, but faith in God through Jesus Christ, which is spiritual eating, whereof this external eating is but symbol and shadow," (*An Account Of The Faith*).

Our forefathers meant that the symbol is a powerful spiritual datum. Nowadays some attach the word "mere" to the word symbol and thereby prejudice the issue before the discussion begins. What is meant by the bread and wine being symbols of Christ's body and blood?

The Ordinance

The New Testament description follows: Our Lord took bread and the cup. He gave thanks over them. He blessed them to a new use. He gave them to the disciples. He bade them "take eat" and "drink ye all of it." He indicated the meaning to be attached to these acts: "this is my body which is broken for you" and "this is my blood of the new covenant which is shed for many for the remission of sins." He stated the reason for doing this: "this do for my memorial until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

The Lord's Supper was deliberately instituted by Jesus and as Charles Hodge, the Princeton theologian of the last century, said, is thus an ordinance of perpetual obligation for Christians. It commemorates the sacrificial death of Jesus. The bread symbolizes his broken body; the wine his shed blood which atoned for sin. As we partake we ponder the horror of Christ's passion and thankfully rest our souls upon the merit of his finished work. There should be a solemn retrospective look, an intense inner self-examining look and a joyful prospective look to Christ's coming in glory.

As well, Paul says that by this act we declare the Lord's death, which means that the Lord's Supper, like baptism, is a demonstration of the gospel. P.T. Forsyth said that it is the acted word, a variant of the preached word. Christ alone is our salvation, life and hope. Together we meet our host, the Lord Jesus. We identify with him and with one another. We call ourselves and one another to self-sacrifice. We remind ourselves that we are pilgrims, that this is an interim feast, that we look for a better city, and that therefore we had better not put down roots too deep in this world. There are solemn warnings given by Paul against insincerely partaking of the Lord's Supper because of inner pollution (I Cor. 5:8-10; 11:27-32).

The Lord's Supper is an ordinance. For Baptists, the observance is not a sacramental act performed by an episcopally sanctioned priest on behalf of the people. It is, rather, an act of congregational fellowship around the table, which is why Baptists usually design the order of service so that pastors, deacons and congregation sit together on the same level around the table. Christ is the true host, present among his people.

The significance lies not in the role of a celebrant, nor in the transformation of elements, nor in correct words of consecration which God makes his own so that divinity co-exists with matter, nor in re-enactment of sacrifice. The bread remains bread and the wine remains wine. As we take them and together eat them we say, "This bread reminds me of Christ's body broken for us and this wine reminds us of his shed blood" ... "For me, for me, for me..." The symbolism is apt, but the faith must be real.

In about 155 A.D. Justin Martyr beautifully described the initiation of new Christian converts (First Apology, 61, 65, 66) : "How we dedicated ourselves to God ... I will explain ... Those who are persuaded and believe ... are then washed in water in the name of God the Father and Master of all, and of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit . . . after thus washing the one who has been convinced and signified his assent, lead him to those who are called brethren, where they are assembled ... Then bread and a cup of water and mixed wine are brought ... This food we call eucharist, of which no one is allowed to partake except one who believes that the things we teach are true, and has received the washing for forgiveness of sins and for rebirth, and who lives as Christ handed down to us."

Such a frame of mind and devotion of heart have no place for self-will. Christians should take care. Participating in the Lord's Supper is a pledge to sincere faith, to willing obedience and to devoted service. What evidence is there that we stand convicted of these?

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17. CO-OPERATIVE CHURCHMANSHIP

Samuel J. Mikolaski

The Canadian Baptist, February 1988

Canadian Baptists are on a plateau and are in danger of losing their historic soul. Ministers have lost their traditional leadership and denominational "representation" status. Men are virtually invisible and youth no longer receive or convey a sense of Baptist identity (Baptists in Atlantic Canada are a possible exception). Only the women continue to conserve and convey Baptist identity through their mission and fellowship circles.

Unfruitful Experimentation

What is happening? A great deal; some of which is very good and some very worrying. First, the good. All across the country during the past 25 years strengthened churches register a groundswell of evangelical renewal. The best growth rate has occurred in the French Baptist Union. In Atlantic Canada and Ontario, thankfully, churches have reaffirmed their evangelical heritage and sought ways to move from dead centre to outreach, growth and helping ministries. In the West, numerically, the Baptist Union can claim growth but much of this has been transfer growth. In fact there has occurred a significant decline in the denomination as a percentage of population. The Baptist Union is losing its place as the evangelical representative of mainline Christianity.

Denominational leadership and programs have not been effective to move Canadian Baptists from the recovery plateau of the past decade. We are losing significantly as a percentage of the Canadian population (the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada and the Christian and Missionary Alliance both have tripled their percentage of population during the past 40 years). Bible teaching ministries (Sunday School) are inadequate. At usually higher than 30, the baptisms ratio (how many members does it take to produce one baptism each year?) signals denominational decline. (The ratio ought to be no higher than 23).

Attention has been drawn to such data and to challenging patterns of growth among other Baptist bodies in North America, but few are listening. The mood is: "Don't bother me with the facts, I've already made up my mind" (see my studies in CB May and June, 1979; and "*The Believers Church In Canada*," 1979). A disturbing trend is that Canadian Baptist leadership nowadays too often looks to non-denominational sources rather than to fellow Baptist conventions within the Baptist World Alliance for resources, both human and printed. (An exception is the simultaneous crusades in Atlantic Canada when Baptist pastors from the USA are invited as missionaries).

In the face of inadequate growth, Baptist conventions in Canada are reacting

traditionally -- they are playing with structure which, as anyone acquainted with church growth and administrative theory and practice knows, tends to reinforce ineffectiveness.

Several other worrying trends are noteworthy: *Conciliarism*: the trend away from democratic populism (the authority of the local church and association) to decisions made by councils. In the West, ordination is now presbyterial in form, which is reinforced by the bureaucratization of procedures and the heightening of control of pastoral appointments. *Authoritarianism*: the trend to brethrenistic eldership which is a claim to personal, usually male, authority and which negates the teaching of the New Testament about pastors and deacons.

What seems to be losing ground is that in Baptist life membership is the primary political office -- members are the ruling class under Christ. All other officers and leaders retain leadership only in so far as mission is accomplished, not by virtue of office. *Granular individualism*: the pursuit of uniqueness which makes Baptist life across the country so disparate as to confuse and discourage people as they move from one part of the country to another. They don't know how to fit in.

Sectarianism: an anti-denomination mood which is constantly self-deprecating so far as Baptist life and faith are concerned. This reflects the serious renewed para-denominationalism which has invaded Baptist ranks during the past decade under the banner of non-denominationalism or trans-denominationalism, which in themselves are denominational moods aiming to undercut Baptist church life. In the West, an earlier generation of Baptists created the Baptist Leadership Training School to counter sectarian influences on Baptist youth. In this generation these influences are invading convention policy and strategy.

Vision and Leadership

In Ephesians 4:11 Paul signaled a watershed in New Testament times as the church extended its mission away from Jerusalem and the immediate personal presence and attention of the apostles. He spoke of apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastor-teachers. In this series the evangelist who reaches out into the non-Christian world is the bridge between the Jerusalem centred apostles and the necessary accommodation to find local pastoral leadership wherever a church is planted.

Thus, "pastors (bishops) and deacons" became the pattern and the standard which has governed Baptist church life (Phil. 1:1-2; see "Who Shall Lead The Church," CB, May 1985). Add to this the fact that, as in Romans 16:1 (where Phoebe is called a deacon) and in 1 Timothy 3:11, women are identified in leadership roles, -- the straightforward pattern of recognizable, duplicable leadership from church to church.

This does not mean servant leadership which is mousey or which conveys the

mood of a "hired hand." Rather, the congregation says. "We elect you because we have confidence in you as pastor or deacon under Christ to lead us. So get on with it."

This means leadership with a view to mission. When we understand this truth, we will recognize that all of us -- pastors, deacons, other leaders and members -- together stand under the judgment of the Great Commission. We must press one another in relation to the task because Christ's command impinges upon us all.

Canadian Baptists need to renew their people-hunger. We have ceased thinking of Canada as a mission field. Leadership entails considering ourselves to be slaves of Christ, not servile to one another; as under great responsibility to fulfill the Great Commission, not as entitled to enjoy special privileges of office.

Co-operative Ministry

Spiritual harmony and willing, voluntary co-operation to accomplish common intentions is a fundamental characteristic of New Testament Christianity. Canadian Baptists are leery of factionalism. Rightly so. But can we kindle afresh the flame of passion for our own land? We do co-operate in education, caring ministries and overseas missions. What about missions at home? What about local church-centred evangelism which reflects planning, passion and prayer within the local association of churches which are constantly challenging one another?

It is no infringement of individual autonomy to plead for consistent co-operative effort to enlarge Sunday Schools and outreach, to plant new churches and to jointly intercede for a society drifting further and further away from Christian faith and understanding.

Corporate Culture

Some are accusing Canadian Baptists of culture block which inhibits and blocks outreach to others, especially ethnic groups. This is wrong-headed. Let me, as an immigrant child and bi-cultural Canadian, speak to this matter.

No Christian work can succeed without its own culture. The heritage of Canadian Baptists ought not to be abandoned. Organizations and churches succeed in direct proportion not only to their spirituality but also in proportion to the strength, coherence and cohesion of their "corporate" culture.

Three key characteristics must be present: subtlety, intimacy and trust. These have been present in all revival movements and spiritual awakenings. Such churches magnetically draw people, as bees to honey. Which is to say that effective outreach entails drawing people as much to ourselves as to Christ.

We *cannot* draw people to Christ unless an atmosphere of trust prevails so that at

the same time they are drawn to ourselves. The life style, values, priorities and outlook of the church are what they adopt for themselves and at the same time they bring elements of their own culture to infuse ours.

A significant and regrettable contemporary Canadian Baptist defection is our unnecessarily abandoning our place in the mainstream of Canadian Christianity coupled with the rise of sectarian attitudes among us. This will work disaster. Canadian Baptists must work very hard to develop their own Canadian denominational life and characteristics in relation to their God-given mission and tasks, as heirs of a major Canadian heritage.

Important to this is liaison with fellow Baptists. Is it reasonable to press for liaison with non-Baptists and to develop strategies which bring non-Baptist influences to bear upon our churches while ignoring and even excluding contact with and influence from fellow Baptist believers, especially those within the Baptist World Alliance? We have much to learn from our brethren abroad, especially in the USA.

Ownership

Bureaucracy generates alienation; ownership evokes commitment. At a recent conference of pastors, mostly young pastors, I noticed how much longing was expressed for a sense of local ownership and initiative. Historically this has been the indispensable function of the association: local churches bound together and meeting regularly to pray, plan, give and work to extend the gospel and Christian understanding in their community. In any bureaucracy, power and benefits tend to drift to the top. It is necessary periodically to push responsibility to the bottom; i.e., to the churches and associations. Whenever this has happened among Baptists, rapid growth has ensued. People tend to support and be involved in the things which they help to create.

Co-operative ministry under the great umbrella marked "mission: " this should be our task and vision. Canadian Baptists have the opportunity to recapture the significance of their heritage. Men should do it. Young people should do it. Pastors should lead in doing it. The women should re-teach the rest of us how.

In about AD 1600 John Smyth, one of our English Baptist forefathers, expressed the truth of our commitment and stand in the mainstream of the Christian faith: "The Articles of Religion which are the grounds of my salvation are these, wherein I differ from no good Christian: That Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Son of Mary, is the anointed King, Priest and Prophet of the Church, the only mediator of the New Testament, and that through true repentance and faith in him who alone is our Saviour we receive remission of sins and the Holy Ghost in this life, and therewith all the redemption of our bodies and everlasting life in the resurrection of the body. And whoever walketh according to this rule, I must needs acknowledge him as my brother; yea, although he differ from me in divers

other particulars."

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18. CHRISTIAN CITIZENSHIP

Samuel J. Mikolaski

The Canadian Baptist, March 1988

Canadian Baptists are not Anabaptists. To be sure, there are common elements of faith in British independency and European Anabaptism. Included are: the church as a gathered fellowship of believing people; the crucial importance of public, identifiable discipleship accompanied by believer's baptism; the separation of church and state; and the autonomy of the local congregation.

Society and Liberty

Nevertheless, there was and continues to be a crucial difference of perception between these two traditions as to the relation of Christians to society. The Anabaptists, (Mennonites, Hutterites, Amish) espoused inner freedom as the haven of the soul for those who were oppressed by the mediaeval church. They usually created counter cultures which at times achieved quasi-independent social, economic and even political status (an extreme form are the present Hutterite communities in Alberta).

The genius of British independency lay in the soil of the English character which nurtured the principle of a democratic society and political freedom. The English ideal rejected Anabaptist passivity, non-resistance, freedom merely as an existential or eschatological goal and neutrality to government.

For Baptists, freedom became a constitutional issue; it was organic to national life. For this reason, Baptists in Britain, the United States and Canada have never regarded themselves as sectarian. They have felt themselves to be part of the mainstream of (Protestant) church life; hence the recent sectarian tendencies among Canadian Baptists are deeply worrying to many.

While Baptists welcome the change of heart among the present generation of Mennonites in Canada, some of whom now participate in public life including election to public office. Baptists have traditionally seen themselves to be organically part of society and have participated in civic and national life, including law enforcement and military service as a Christian duty. For the vast majority of Baptists in Canada, commitment to peace has never meant isolation from society or rejection of peace-keeping responsibility.

Three-quarters of a century ago P. T. Forsyth, the British theologian, expressed the truth of the relation between personal commitment to Christ and the ideal of public liberty in words which should be studied with care. Inwardness cannot be all, he said. Subjectivity, spiritualist egoism and sentimentalism are not enough. But, "when that earnest inwardness was saved from its own inner weakness by

union with the English genius leavened by free grace, it became the mother of public liberty in the modern world."

Church and State

This is the ideal which created the libertarian pluralism of the American Constitution and of Canadian Society. The forms of religious and political liberty which exist in the United States and Canada are unique. It is not a pluralism which welcomes anything and everything (such as, say, Islamic Law, though it accords religious liberty to Moslems). It espouses the ideal of an open society -- not an optionless, monolithic society such as Marxism or militant Islam or militant Catholicism which historically repressed dissent (note the landmark study by Karl Popper, *The Open Society And Its Enemies*).

In his reply to President Ronald Reagan's address to the Canadian House of Commons and Senate in April 1987, the Honourable Guy Charbonneau, the speaker of Canada's Senate, said: "The bicentennial of your Constitution has a profound significance for us -- without it our own Canadian Constitution might well have been different." He was referring to a federative system of government as against unitary systems and to the principles of toleration enunciated by leaders of the Enlightenment.

I cite the earlier words of Abraham Lincoln in his Gettysburg address: government of the people by the people and for the people. While representative government can be said to be by the people and usually claims to be for the people, is it always of the people? This is one of the crucial issues leading to the Meech Lake accord, namely, consensual democracy. Consensual democracy is historically for Baptists an indispensable ideal.

The struggle to separate religion from the power and duty of the state is little understood and much too little valued. The historical hinge was the adoption in 1786 of "A Statute for Religious Freedom" by the Virginia General Assembly. Thomas Jefferson, the great libertarian and then American ambassador to France, had written it seven years before. James Madison finally got the Virginia Assembly to pass it into law. This was the first law in Western history to outlaw religious persecution (efforts were being made to establish a general tax assessment for Christian worship and there were known cases of the persecution of Baptist preachers).

Jefferson never had any doubts about the importance of this legislation. He later explained. "The legitimate powers of government extend to such acts only as are injurious to others. But it does me no injury for my neighbour to say there are twenty gods or no god. It neither picks my pocket, nor breaks my leg."

The Baptist principle of separation of church and state is a cornerstone of our democracy. We value it little. The fraying of its edges seems to concern us little.

Why should not churches pay their fair share of property tax? Why should clergy receive income tax benefits as clergy (as professionals who have professional expenses such as doctors and lawyers do, yes; but why as clergy)? Why should taxpayers subsidize Baptist, Catholic, Anglican or United Church religious or theological education as now happens? Why should tax dollars support summer church workers (called by some "passive evangelism")? Why should taxpayers subsidize departments of religion in our universities when in some cases religion is peddled, especially far east non-Christian religions which in recent years have become something of a fad? Why should public money be given in the name of culture to ethnic groups which really entails in some cases the propagation of religion?

Other ambiguities can be cited. Suffice it to say that the practice and propagation of religion should be funded by its devotees, not by the rest of society.

Consider carefully: If ours were a Moslem-dominated society, would Christians not resent being forced through taxation to support Moslem causes? Why should Moslems in Canada be forced by taxation to support Christian religious or theological education? We have learned by a long trail of suffering that it is better in the long run to separate religion from the powers of the state. Baptists helped forge that principle with their blood. Today they had better conserve it with tenderness and due attention or else tomorrow Baptists may find themselves coerced to subsidize sectarian ideals even more than at present.

Church and Society

Baptists believe that the church and the state are each ordained of God. The Christian is a part of both. And it is a Christian obligation to live and work as a responsible citizen in society, motivated by the teachings of Christ and the moral ideals of the scriptures.

Such motivation includes ensuring that the principles of righteousness and justice prevail in society and that opportunity is open to all, regardless of race, colour or creed. The Christian should oppose vice, greed and selfishness. In the battle against impurity it should be remembered that freedom of speech allows for more than the clucking of tongues, which accomplishes precious little. Christians should strive to bring the operations of government, business, industry and the professions under the scrutiny and influence of the principles of truth, goodness and altruism.

The prophet Amos surely indicts Israel's leaders for oppressing the poor. It is not recognized by many, however, that the central abuse indicted was restriction of opportunity and rigging of rules by the privileged to prevent economic advancement by others,(see "Work, Wealth and Welfare," *Canadian Baptist*, Sept. 1985).

What values should inspire and guide Christians" Recent discussion as to the teaching of values in society has been as confused as it has been vigorous. In April 1987, representatives of a number of organizations and lobby groups met in Washington to discuss ethics in society (*New York Times*, 19 April, 1987). Of five excerpts four decried the loss of values but offered little as to what they should be (the four were a state superintendent of public instruction, the president of a public lobby group, the vice-president of a Jewish lobby group, and the superintendent of schools of a district). Only the Baptist concretely outlined what such values ought to be (he is Dr. Foy Valentine, executive director, Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention). He said. 'Selfishness and dishonesty and comfort and greed and pride and laziness and lawlessness and nihilism and irresponsibility and materialism and preoccupation with trying to find new nerve endings to stimulate every day have come close to bringing civilization to ruin.'" But he didn't stop there.

What values should be taught? Those of the Classical and the Judaeo-Christian traditions? I would insert first the Stoic ideal of public justice (*dike*) and the universal respect for humanity (*polites kosmou*) which parallels the biblical concept of public justice as in the Pentateuch and Amos. Dr. Valentine listed the seven standard virtues, which you and I also have often used: the four philosophical ones of wisdom, courage, prudence (temperance) and justice; and the three theological ones of faith, hope and love. To this he added the ideal of democratic freedom, and to that I say "Amen!" Surely these are a basketful of treasures which ought to be distributed afresh to each generation.

Are there among Canadian Baptists hundreds of teenagers and hundreds of young adults who will pledge themselves to excellence, high morality and deep commitment to Christ and his gospel? Needed are those who will embrace old values and move forward to new solutions for human problems. They are needed in business, social service agencies. Education, administration, local and national politics, industrial development, as well as in vocational Christian ministry.

Is it not a high calling to shape the future of a society according to high ideals? To create opportunity for others? Are we in this generation to succumb to cynicism that wonders if anything good can come from public office? Christian ideals ought not only to shape individual life: they ought also to extend from vocation as loving and loyal arms to embrace national life.

Roger Williams' Parable

I close with a delightful parable spoken by Roger Williams (1603-1683), the crusty Baptist who was ejected by the Puritans of New England because of his love of liberty and who then established the community which became the state of Rhode Island. In it he highlights liberty of conscience in a pluralist society:

"There goes many a ship at sea with many hundred souls in one ship, whose weal

and woe is common and is a true picture of a commonwealth, or human combination of society. It hath fallen out some times that both papists and Protestants. Jews and Turks may be embarked in one ship; upon which supposal I affirm, that all the liberty of conscience that ever I pleaded for, turns upon these two hinges -- that none of the papists, Protestants. Jews or Turks be forced to come to the ship's prayers or worship nor compelled from their own particular prayers or worship if they have any. I further add that I never denied, that notwithstanding this liberty, the commander of this ship ought to command the ship's course, yea, and also command that justice, peace, and sobriety, be kept and practised, both among the seamen and all the passengers. If any of the seamen refuse to perform their services, or passengers to pay their freight; if any refuse to help in person or purse toward the common charges or defence; if any refuse to obey the common laws and orders of the ship concerning their common peace or preservation; if any shall mutiny and rise up against their commanders and officers; if any should preach that there ought to be no commander or officers, no laws, nor orders, nor corrections, nor punishments; -- I say. I never denied but in such cases, whatever is pretended, the commander, or commanders may judge, resist, compel and punish such transgressors, according to their deserts and merits."

Dr. Samuel J. Mikolaski teaches historical Christianity at Carey Hall, Vancouver. This article is 18th in the series.

19. LIVING HOPE

Samuel J. Mikolaski

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There is something delightful about the unbounded, if unfounded, optimism of the late 19th century. Usually post-millennial in biblical perspective, Christians of that era looked forward to the final establishment of Christ's kingdom after a long process of human betterment. That this positive outlook fed into the later aberrations of liberal theology is for me neither here nor there. Two world wars and many other human evils have blunted liberalism's supreme confidence that man is fundamentally good, having within himself the seeds of a divine nature.

Nevertheless, I long for a changed mood among Christians today. I long for a more open, positive view of life, less disaster oriented, less therapy oriented, more open as to the God-given possibilities for life. The gloomy nihilism of Friedrich Nietzsche which pervades the modern mood is intolerably stifling. And even if, as Allan Bloom in his recent book *The Closing of the American Mind* (1987) said, this has with the usual North American flair become an easy-going nihilism, it continues to reflect a despairing mood -- despairing of any meaning or value to life and thus reluctant to make life-long, life-encompassing commitments to vocation, love, marriage, family or community.

Death's Sting

Moderns are trying to come to terms with death by styling it: "Let's calmly discuss it over a cup of coffee. How would you like to die? With the spring flowers out and the birds twittering? Don't forget to pull the plug after a decent interval. Try not to do it in the midst of a Canadian blizzard!"

But there is a radical difference between discussing the stages of life and suddenly discovering, as yuppies are, that as we age death seems a more familiar theme -- a loved one here and the untimely death of a friend there tends to freeze the dialogue. Being young forever doesn't hold up any more. The still small voice in the back of the head calls insistently. As we get older we go to more funerals and finally one will be our own.

The *Vancouver Sun* columnist Pete McMartin some months ago characterized the current "Wellness" and "Aging in Fashion" campaign as middle-aged lip-biting. Our generation, he says, fell for the canard that we're unique, "that somehow things like self-cleaning ovens, dieting, home computers -- the whole glossy slimmed-down package -- can insulate us from the constant erosion of life ... that life can be lived out as a trend." All of this, he adds, is a cowardice of sorts, "the more preoccupation we have with health, the greater fear we have of death."

Only man has a clear awareness of the horror of death, which awareness goes beyond the mere sadness of reaching our allotted time. It is to this awareness that the Bible appeals poignantly: At mankind's fall we became dying creatures (Gen. 2:17). Spiritual death because of sin is our even more tragic condition, namely, separation from God (Eph. 2:1). Physical death and spiritual death are correlatives; the outward condition corresponds with the inward state. This is the sting of death (1 Cor. 15:56). The terror of death is its moral issue - the exclusionary force of the holiness and judgments of God (2 Thess.1:9).

Modern Ambiguity

What awaits human beings after death? Materialists are clear: nothing. We cease to exist. Christian theologians in our time fill the air with ambiguity. Most deny reunification of the material elements of the body in the resurrection; nevertheless, many affirm that there will be a spiritual body capable of performing corresponding functions in the conditions of that life. Some, especially the German theologians, waffle about the resurrection of Christ by redefining "event" as something that happened only in the faith of the disciples. I fail to comprehend what an event is which does not happen. And if it happened only in the faith of the disciples, is not any resurrection language fraudulent?

Others argue that we shall not rise like Christ but in Christ, though the meaning of this is left unclear. Sufficient to say that, for many, these bodies of ours seem to get in the way of any neat solution; nevertheless, to be human entails bodily life. Most do not wish to materialize spirit, but what it means to spiritualize the material body while still having a physical body remains uncertain.

Traditionally, British theologians, especially the Anglicans, have been much more empirically-minded, hence more chaste and direct in their use of language. Those who, like Leonard Hodgson and S. H. Hooke, have rejected Bultmannian demythologizing, have simply stated their ignorance, expressed their faith, and left it at that. Hodgson confronted the evidence of Christ's resurrection and concluded that our bodies must be different: "Christ's body underwent some process other than is the destiny of our own, a process of which the nature is completely mysterious to us but which resulted in there being a more direct connection between his earthly body and his resurrection body than we can expect for ourselves." Hooke agrees. I appreciate the candor even though I am reluctant to accept the conclusion.

Christ's Victory Over Death

Two elements of faith have been confessed by most Christians over the centuries: the rational argument for life after death and the teaching of the Bible.

The rational argument is that there is in human experience a spiritual principle which survives the temporal. This is reflected in man's capacity to devote himself

to spiritual ideals. As well, if we believe that the cosmic process is purposeful, then it would appear to make nonsense of the process to think that just as persons are about to become fully personal they are extinguished.

Christian faith in the life to come rests upon the biblical revelation that God has made us for himself. that despite our sin and its consequence, death, God through Christ redeems us to life eternal, which includes the guarantee of being with Christ at death, bodily resurrection from the dead and life evermore in our heavenly home.

In the Old Testament there are dramatic examples of resurrection, such as Elijah's raising of the Zarephath widow's son (1 Kings 17:17-24), but the most pervasive theme is that God's rule extends to the underworld and men have direct personal responsibility to God not only in this life but also in the next. Two key passages unambiguously speak of resurrection: Isaiah 26:19; Daniel 12:2.

In the gospels Jesus rebukes the Sadducees for their disbelief in the resurrection (Matt. 22:23-33, note Acts 23:6-8). His teaching is replete with references to and inferences about resurrection and judgment: the tares and the net (Matt. 13), the last judgment (Matt. 25:31-46), the men of Nineveh (Matt. 12:41), his own raising of the dead (Matt. 5:22; 11:5; Luke 7:12-17; John 11:17-44) and his own death and resurrection (Mark 8:31; 9:31).

The truth of the resurrection of Christ is absolutely foundational to Christian faith (1 Cor. 15:14). It stands as the triumph of God over sin, death and hell; as the guarantee of our own resurrection; as the foundation for a life of useful work which carries the assurance that what we do in life is to some purpose (1 Cor. 15:51-58).

Paul gives us the earliest form of the data about Christ's resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15:1-11, which he affirms in verse 11, "so we preach . . . so you believed."

Mark briefly records the visit of the two Marys to the tomb where they find the stone rolled away (16:18). Verses 9-20 are ancient parallel accounts which translators include as supplements. Matthew (ch. 28) adds the appearance of Christ to the 11 disciples in Galilee. Luke (ch. 24) records only the appearances around Jerusalem and begins the process of apostolic reminder of the words of Jesus and interpretation of the resurrection: Christ's death and resurrection are part of God's plan which was foretold in the Old Testament (v. 44-49). Christ was truly raised, "See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me, and see, for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see that I have" (v. 39). In John, all of these elements are combined not only in the summaries of chapters 20-21, but throughout the gospel: Jesus Christ is the resurrection and the life.

Finally, the resurrection of Christ and its promise for repentant sinners is the

dominant theme in the preaching of the Book of Acts: 1:1-5; 2:24, 31-33; 5:30; 17:18, 31-32. Paul's conversion was due to the appearance of the risen Christ to him on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3-6), to which he ever after attests as the crux of Christian faith (Acts 26:12-18. 23) and cutting edge of the gospel's proclamation (Acts 24:14-15).

The New Testament witnesses are reliable. Jesus Christ was crucified and was dead. He was buried. He was raised from the dead. The apostles should be allowed to mean what they say even though they, as we, can give only a statement, not adequate explanation of it. With our modern assumptions about the quarrel between reason and revelation we want to make the Bible undangerous. It won't do.

Christ's Final Victory

In view of the resurrection of Christ and the guarantee of new life in him, Christians live "between the times;" between the present reality of Christ in our hearts and the "not yet" of the final kingdom. During this time death does not mean the end of human existence; rather, it marks the transition from this life to one where he will be with Christ (Luke 23:43; 2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23).

The New Testament says that there will be a peaking of evil toward the time of Christ's return, which will focus in political and religious repression and a man of evil (Matt. 24; 2 Thess. 2; Rev. 12-13). There will be a time of great upheaval and tribulation. Jesus says; nevertheless, the final word and judgment stands with God. Christ will come; he will come again personally, visibly, gloriously and victoriously to vindicate righteousness and to judge evil (Matt.25:31-46; Acts 1:11; 2 Thess. 2:7-10). This is the "blessed hope" of every Christian (Titus 2:13).

At Christ's coming the dead will be raised. Like Christ at his resurrection, Christians hope for a real resurrection and a body which conserves continuity with the natural body (Rom. 8:23; 1 Cor. 15:35-50), a body transformed, a body redeemed, a body for which mortality has been swallowed up in life (2 Cor. 5:4).

The redeemed of Christ will have a heavenly home (John 14:2-3) and a life inseparable from the love of God (Rom. 8:38-39). In the book of Revelation the description of the life to come - the city of God. the New Jerusalem - points to a new heaven and a new earth. which prospect lifts us in seasons of our present distress. "for this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison" (2 Cor. 4:17). John describes the final home in Revelation 21:10-22:5.

The New Testament paints a dark picture of judgment of the wicked who reject God's grace and forgiveness. They will be judged according to their works (Rev. 20:11-15). The truth of the banishing holiness of God is repeatedly stated in scripture (e.g., Heb. 9:27). It is a mark of contemporary frivolity either not to

think about it or to mock it. The two paths and two destinies are essential biblical teaching (Matt. 7:13-14; 25:46; Rom. 2:7-8; Heb. 2:3). Divine punishment should be viewed as a corollary of God's love. It is a function of freedom -- the freedom of men to say no to God and the righteousness of God to judge evil.

Living Hope

The Bible teaches that history is moving not to a black hole but to a divinely purposed end. These are the options before us. Modern conclusions about man and his future have been doleful: that he is shot through with hypocrisy, that he is afflicted with unrelievable anxiety, that he is burdened with inescapable guilt, that he is profoundly ambivalent, that he is irrationally egocentric, that he is incurably violent and power-mad and that his chief end is bodily gratification. I shall not trouble you with the names of modern authors who have advanced these and other sobering estimates of human nature.

I cite the confession of W. V. O. Quine, the modern logician, whose logical theory profoundly influenced my philosophical study and who, not a Christian, said that "the world is a multitude of minute twitches in the void." Not even particles can be talked about, he added, because in modern physics even they have an identity crisis! Add to this the comment of Percy Walker, whose novel *The Thanatos Syndrome* (1987) has received wide notice. He says that man's inability to survive in the cosmos leads to the conclusion that "death is winning, life is losing." Is utter pessimism the end result of modern thinking?

I recall a lecture years ago by Emil Fackenheim, a Jew and professor of philosophy at the University of Toronto, who remarked that in the Hebrew Bible the Jew is allowed discouragement but not despair. In the Hebrew Bible God *commands* hope.

Hope brightly fringes the biblical teaching about life, history and the future. It is remarkable that in times when even Marxists (such as Ernst Bloch) are looking for a more open, less deterministic view of history so many Christians live a "downer" existence.

Hope is like the wings of an angel carrying us to heaven. Hope is like a cork keeping the soul from sinking to despair. Hope is like a beautiful mural decorating a prison wall. Hope is like a vision which draws a pioneer onward. Hope is like an anchor gripping the rock - the harder the pull, the firmer the grip (Rom. 12:12; Col. 1:27; Heb. 6:19).

Hope? To what point in the modern world? Hope to grow, study, choose a vocation and work productively! Hope to marry faithfully and to build a home! Hope to have children, educate them and launch them into life! Hope to remain single, avoiding the debilitating power of lust while joyful in the fellowship of others! Hope to see God's hand in the world, in the lives of others and in the

history of nations!

Hope assigns meaning to life, it envisions a goal it gives purpose to creative planning and diligent work. It makes us co-workers with God.

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20. THE INVISIBLE UMBRELLA

Samuel J. Mikolaski

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There ought to be an invisible umbrella over the entire life and ministries of each Baptist church. The invisible name on the invisible umbrella is Outreach. In this last of my series on "Confessing Christian Faith" I write about the mission of Baptists in Canada.

By invisible umbrella I mean an overshadowing or permeating mood: that every ministry, every organization, every activity, every service should be pervaded by a mission-mood. This is so different from the maintenance mentality which dominates much of what we do in church. In this generation we Canadians have deluded ourselves that "mission," "evangelism," and "outreach" are special, add-on programs.

To be sure, I believe in evangelistic crusades and outreach missions, but these rarely are of much help to churches which to begin with don't know how to do evangelism. Bear in mind that evangelism is first a mood; only second is it a method. Further, evangelism without integration fails.

A mission mood is emotionally inclusive of people from their first visit to a church. They feel included long before they are converted. Finding a place for them after conversion is usually too late.

Don't think that this comment disparages activities which go on faithfully year after year such as men's prayer breakfasts, youth meetings, sewing circles, Sunday School classes, women's mission circles. The importance of these is beyond measure. Indeed, they are what is holding Canadian Baptists together in this generation. Can such organizations and groups change their outlook to become, as well, outreach groups? Certainly.

Distinctively Canadian

Is there anything distinctively Canadian which precludes rapid growth among our churches? Yes. a certain mindset which is a mixture of hubris and dependency! Hubris -- an unwarranted pride -- for example, Americans can experience church growth but "we don't herd people."

How silly! Such comment displays ignorance about American churches generally and failure to recognize that secretly substantial numbers of Canadians support American TV evangelists. Dependency is a significant component of recent Canadian life. It is hard to cure. "Someone else will do it for me." "Someone else will provide." The mind-set of "they" ought to do it, not "I'm responsible to do it,"

is damaging.

This diffidence is legendary. Peter Newman, once editor of *Macleans* magazine, tells of a contest the magazine ran. Readers were challenged to complete the sentence, "As Canadian as . . ." The winner was, "As Canadian as possible under the circumstances." We Canadians expect to limit ourselves and too often we're inordinately proud of it. Newman also reports that when *Macleans* wanted to become a weekly, Canadian business men were reluctant to place ads in a venture they thought might not succeed. American business men were enthusiastic. Thus *Macleans* became a Canadian weekly because Americans initially supported the idea.

We tend to disparage, to be cynical. There is the story about the elderly Canadian lady who, when she learned that Lester Pearson had won the Nobel Peace Prize, remarked, "Just who does he think he is?" Can we change this mood about our church work?

It is instructive to note that every generation of Christians finds or invents reasons why churches do not or cannot or ought not to grow.

The environment in England in which the great William Carey tried to generate missionary interest is an example. The Puritan theology which dominated Baptist thinking precluded offering the gospel freely to all men. Carey's contemporary and colleague Andrew Fuller (1754-1815) vigorously and eloquently opposed this unbiblical sentiment. Today we forget that while Carey laboured in India Fuller was trying to change the mind-set of English Baptists about outreach.

In an address entitled "The Gospel Worthy of all Acceptation" Fuller said, "We have sunk into such a compromising way of dealing with the unconverted as to have well nigh lost the spirit of the primitive preachers; and hence it is that sinners of every description can sit so quietly as they do, year after year in our places of worship. It was not so with the hearers of Peter and Paul."

How shall we account for the difference between New Testament preaching and our own, he asked? It has more to do with the ethos of the times than theology: "I hope no apology is necessary for an attempt to exhibit the scriptural manner of preaching. If it affects the labours of some of my brethren. I cannot deny but that it may also affect my own. I conceive there is scarcely a minister amongst us whose preaching has not been more or less influenced by the lethargic systems of the age." In contrast, Christ and his apostles, without hesitation, called on sinners to repent and believe the gospel, he adds.

In the past hyper-Calvinism precluded some churches from issuing an open call to Christ. As predestined to be lost, the gospel is beyond the "powers" of the non-elect, it was said. Today, a different kind of exclusivism prevails among us; namely, snobbery. Canadians are too nice to need something so crass as conver-

sion. After all, we're cultured people, refined, not flamboyant. We're different.

It is time to divest ourselves of our rationalism, our diffidence, our snobbery. We need to have the blinders removed from our eyes and our cold hearts warmed.

Consider that Baptists in Canada have grown faster than population rate only once in Canadian history and that was by immigration at the end of the last century. Consider that none of our conventions (excepting the French Baptist Union) is experiencing significant growth through evangelism in these years. Consider that Canada is rapidly becoming a mission field through the biblical and confessional deviations of the established denominations and the lukewarmness of Baptists to their mission task within Canada. Who will weep for the conversion and Christian nurture of Canadians?

Strategic Orientation

Baptist churches -- indeed all Christian churches -- exist as centres of devotion to Christ. What is the constitution of such a body? This has first and foremost to do with the mission of our Lord to the world, not with formal terms of association and business. Here is that constitution:

First, "I will build my church" (Matt. 16). The local church is the body of Christ in that place. Each church is established and commissioned to be Christ's instrument to do his work.

Second, "You shall be my witnesses" (Acts 1:8). Christ established the church to be missionary in an ever widening circle of embracing love.

Third, "We are all here present" (Acts 10:33). As the church obediently witnesses, God prepares the way and opens the hearts of people to hear his word of grace.

Fourth, "By the encouragement of the scriptures" (Rom. 15:4). The church is given the task of teaching the Bible -- the whole Bible -- faithfully, patiently, persistently, with the assurance that God will work its truths into human life.

Fifth, "All that I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:18-20). To make disciples means to call people to Christ, to baptize them and then to nurture them within the fellowship of the church in faith, hope and love.

For Baptists "confessing faith" entails far more than a statement of beliefs. Confessing faith is a task, a mission to propagate and reproduce that faith in others. Statements of faith are surely important. but they can be confessed in a barren manner. Conversely, witnessing for Christ demands more than emotion. It necessitates communicating the content of the gospel.

Pattern for Growth

How can Christian mission to modern Canadians best be fulfilled? There is no secret about the proven formula. It reflects the genius of the New Testament. Effective outreach by a congregation is the end result of the elements which follow; however, an open heart which welcomes people must be apparent from the beginning. The welcoming mood ought to pervade all activity, organizations and services of the church.

First, *worship (leiturgia)*. What Christians believe and what they are is crucially evident in the public worship service of each church. The worship ought to convey awareness of the holiness of God, it should express joy in the love of God, and it should communicate the truth of the gospel. The unity of spirit within the congregation, joy and devotion to Christ are infectious. This is what Paul meant about devout, orderly, instructive worship.

Second, *fellowship (koinonia)*. The Holy Spirit touches the hearts of those who are on the way to faith through the welcoming affection of God's people. Fellowship is the life-blood of the body of Christ. Fellowship is inclusive. Fellowship affirms personhood. Fellowship elevates identity. Without the trust that fellowship evokes there is little chance of drawing people to Christ.

Third, *teaching (didache)*. A new commitment to biblical instruction by churches in Canada is sorely needed. Christian education has become a haphazard and marginal activity. The decline in Sunday Schools among us Attests to this fact. Needed is fresh involvement by pastors and leading men and women to embrace the importance of a canonical curriculum in the Sunday School (as a program for the entire church), in Bible study groups and from the pulpit, along with auxiliary materials which bear on special needs and interests. There is a dearth of systematic Bible study in Canada.

Fourth, *loving care (diakonia)*. Care embraces more than practical help. To be sure, helping the impoverished and hungry has traditionally been a feature of Baptist church life. Today the church needs to be an extended family to many. It should be a family to single parents, to the divorced and hurting, to lonely seniors to direction-seeking young adults, to high schoolers needing a supervised place to study. One of the important values of stable, long term Sunday School classes is that people are in touch weekly. The Lord knows us each by name -- so should we.

Fifth, *evangelism (kerugma)*. Given the practice of the foregoing aspects, reaching new people and integrating them into church life follows readily. Evangelism is the final act in a series of acts through which God's Spirit has already been working.

No church can grow unless a people-welcoming mood pervades all the activities and ministries of the congregation. Growing churches are warm churches.

Growing churches invariably have an open, welcoming character. Converts find a new identity among Christians. Here seekers after the Lord are valued individually and are taught the Christian way by example and precept.

The present pursuit of Canadian identity represents national confusion as to who Canadians are. The modern pursuit of personal identity reflects deep concern about the nature and future of man. Treating human beings in purely behavioural terms is not good enough.

Nor is human life merely a transient mode of existence which will be jettisoned for some non-personal reality. As fashioned in the image of God, man has an ultimate value in himself. God loves each person individually. Baptist churches in Canada today can accept in a fresh way the commission to teach, win and nurture Canadians. Redemption and reclamation flow from a heart of love.

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