

The Gathering NEWSLETTER

**Baptists gathering to foster
wholeness and integrity
following the example of Jesus**

Spring 1998

Vol. 4 • Issue 2

Friendships?

by Gerald Hunt

*I define evangelism as making
new friends for Christ. —*

T.W.K. Gillespie

It's Christmas Day as I muse on the condition of Baptist fellowship. My question is, whatever happened to friendship?

I hardly need to review the theory. Issues arise and polarize our affections and relationships. Dealt with and resolved, at least to a comfort level, issues are not allowed to destroy our basic loyalty to one another. Affections and associations will continue, a little frayed perhaps, but strong enough for survival and continuation of growth and collaboration among Jesus' disciples. We pray that friendships may grow like weeds.

But there are irritants — thorny issues — which, if not carefully removed, cool friendships, threaten working partnerships and create feelings like those which arose after 1925 in our Convention.

My grandfather, then a vice-president of BCOQ, spoke little to me of the acrimony and suspicion of that time because he had

continued on page 3

The Way of a King

by Ray Hobbs

In 1 Samuel 8:10-18 Samuel the prophet outlined to the elders of Israel what they were letting themselves in for when they asked for a new form of leadership. Out of what they considered a pressing necessity they had requested a king. Their request, finally granted by the prophet and God, led them on a path they had never even dreamed of. This was one way in which change — not always for the better — happened in ancient Israel.

This illustration may seem out of all proportion to the context in which I raise it. As a fellowship *The Gathering* is thinking about organizing itself on a different basis than we have done thus far. In sociological terms, we are thinking of moving from being a faction, to an organization. We are talking of a constitution, membership lists, etc. This for some is good, and puts us on an identifiable foundation. Perhaps it tells the world what we are about, but it also regulates our

relationships in a new way. But in so doing, let us, like Samuel, reflect on the nature of the new thing we wish for. Samuel uses a strange word in his context, and I think it is used in an ironic sense. The word translated "way" is the Hebrew word *mishpat*, which is usually associated with legal

matters and frequently found in the company of *tsedakah*, and together they are often translated "justice and righteousness." What Samuel seems to be saying is "here is a taste of royal justice!" And what follows is not a pretty picture. Our wish to regulate our relationships and place

them on a slightly different footing by becoming an organization is an understandable one. Anarchy, in the best sense of the word is always a bit messy, or uncontrollable. But that is precisely its point, it resists control. Structures can be manipulated, and taken over, as we have witnessed in the Southern

continued on page 5



The next Gathering is Saturday, April 25, 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at Calvary Baptist Church, Toronto with Barry Morrison speaking on Worship





Baptists and Worship

For a denomination whose beginnings were radically sectarian and anti-ritualistic, it is significant that some Baptist theologians have been concerned to re-establish a liturgical theology as central to the Church's worship and mission. Writing for Baptist clergy in 1960, almost 350 years after the appearance of Baptist congregations in Great Britain, Ernest Payne and Stephen Winward articulated the meaning of worship in the following terms:

It is in worship, [our] highest activity, that [we] realize the true purpose and end of [our] existence ... Not only our private prayers and our corporate worship, but the whole of life should be involved in this recognition of God's glory and grace. 'Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.' But this oblation of the whole personality, this consecration of all life, is made possible only by those specific acts of personal and corporate worship ... For it is in worship that we receive the vision, the inspiration, the guidance, and the strength for living the holy life, which in turn is offered up to God in worship. Because worship is both the end of our existence and the only means whereby common life can be transformed and made holy, the Church must always be deeply concerned with the vitality and the quality, the content and the ordering of her corporate worship.

"the Church must always be deeply concerned with the vitality and the quality, the content and the ordering of her corporate worship."

Not all Baptists would be in agreement with such thinking. Indeed, John Smyth, founder of the English Baptists, insisted that no external forms were acceptable in worship. Probably in reaction to the rigidly enforced worship of the Church of England of the time, the use of books, prepared sermons, even memorized material was not allowed on the grounds that such use would rely on human invention rather than the Holy Spirit. "We hold that the worship of the New Testament properly so called is spiritual, proceeding originally from the heart: and that reading out of a book (though a lawful ecclesiastical action) is no part of spiritual worship, but rather the invention of the man of sin, it being substituted for a part of spiritual worship ... The Spirit is quenched by set forms of worship for therein the spirit is not at liberty to utter itself, but is bounded in." (The Works of John Smyth, p. 270, 273.)

Seeking freedom from the accrued errors of nearly 16 centuries of tradition, Smyth expresses his vision for the worship of the Church thus: "We will never be

satisfied in endeavouring to reduce the worship and ministry of the Church to the primitive apostolique institution from which as yet it is so far distant."

Hence the observation that Baptists are not 'reformers' but 'restorationists.' By this is meant that the main thrust of the Baptist reconstruction of the church was not to inject new life into old forms, or even to recover the truest meaning of those forms, but to abandon them in an attempt to rediscover the only acceptable form of the Church in its organization and worship — that contained in the New Testament.

Although few contemporary Baptists would go as far as Smyth in the attempt to reduce worship to its barest essentials, it is clear that many Baptists have continued to distance themselves from the so called "liturgical tradition" in favour of freer forms of worship.

The tension between these differing approaches may be indicative of the continuing Baptist struggle for self-identity. Divergence at this level often demonstrates something far more important than mere differences of taste or opinion. Rather, it has to do with radically different interpretations of the history and theology of the Baptist movement. One group sees the early Baptist view of the nature of the Church and its worship as foundational for future Baptist polity and practice. A dominant thrust continues to be the articulation of Baptist distinctives — how is this denomination

different from other parts of the Church, and what is the special reason for its existence?

In contrast, there is another group which, while appreciative of the historical exigencies which gave rise to the denomination, sees Baptist identity as rooted in the larger tradition of the Church. Tradition here is understood as the way the Church sees her present life as in faithful continuity with her past. According to this way of thinking, early Baptist principles must be followed through to their logical conclusions in the light of up-to-date historical and biblical research. When employed in the service of the Baptist desire to fashion the Church and its worship after the model of the New Testament, the use of such a methodology may lead to results quite different from those of the denomination's founders.

In his book *The English Free Churches*, Horton Davies questions the pneumatology of the Free Churches. "In their enthusiasm to root out the errors of antiquity, they ignored the wisdom of antiquity ... They had so extolled the principle of reverence for the Scripture as to ignore

Friendships? *continued from front cover*

put it most of it behind him. His cheerful and infectiously jolly disposition mixed with generous good will would not permit bitterness to sully the Gospel he preached. But he spoke about old friends who, after the rift, would cross the street to avoid meeting. For him the question, "whatever happened to friendship?" had answers in the ongoing irritants that were kept prominent and sharp deliberately to upset peace and preclude reconciliation. Friendships among pastors, church members and even within families were cooled or fractured. In the factions which formed there was not enough will to explore psychological and devotional resources that could open hearts, change minds and create healing.

I hope we're much better off now than we were 70 years ago. But there are irritants today, different indeed from the earlier ones, but just as likely to cool friendships and make happy and fruitful collaboration difficult.

On this Christmas Day, my gift wish for BCOQ is a body free from corroding and carcinogenic irritants. I don't want my heart to tell my hands to withhold offerings to this or that because I have become a non-friend for some reason or other. I don't like throwing out letters of request from somebody within our Baptist family because conscience and emotions have continued to raise objections. I don't want to leave persons out of my prayers because I entertain negative feelings toward them. I don't want to see the brothers and sisters gathered for annual assembly as split into friends and non-friends because of some issues that were allowed to fester. I want to sense fairness and justice. Being nagged by joyless feelings to close my heart will surely threaten my spiritual health and weaken my witness for Christ.

I used to get around to a lot of our churches and found great wells of friendship and goodwill. The Holy Spirit was there and still is, surely! Now retired, suspecting that there are metastatic irritants within the system, I want someone to persuade me truthfully that I'm just out of touch and what I hear of disagreement is strictly a lovers' quarrel. Then I can bend all efforts to foster and enjoy the friendships I have always sought and cherished among the people with whom I belong. As long as irritants remain, that is not possible.

Hackneyed perhaps, a definition of fellowship is "the fellows in the ship." There can be huge storms at sea which serve only to quicken those on board to secure the vessel. But when many of the storms are below deck, watch and pray! Are you my friend in Christ? Does not his Cross tear down partitions and restore bridges? I pray.

Why God Never Got Tenure

1. Only one major publication — in Hebrew.
2. No references.
3. Wasn't published in refereed journal.
4. There were some doubts that he wrote it himself.
5. May be true he created the world, but what has he done since then?
6. Scientific community has had a hard time replicating his results.
7. Never applied to the ethics board for permission to use human subjects.

8. When experiment went awry, tried to cover it by drowning subjects.
9. When subjects didn't behave as predicted, deleted them from sample.
10. Rarely came to class and just told students to read the book.
11. Had son teach certain classes.
12. Expelled first two students for learning too much.
13. Only had 10 requirements, but most of his students failed them.
14. Office hours infrequent and usually held on mountain top.

"Gathering Archives & Collection Committee" Begins its Work

Recently a few of us met at Burlington Baptist Church to consider how we might go about establishing a "Gathering Archives and Collection." We have become increasingly certain that our group needs to continue to develop on the basis of its stated principles, values, and purposes. (See our brochure, or contact Barbara Bishop.) To do this, we need to both believe in our future and honour our past. So we came together at Burlington (Thank you, BBC) one winter's day. We addressed two issues:

1. Our movement, *The Gathering*, needs to document its own group history in a routine way — minutes, newsletters, etc. This is the "archives" part.

2. In order to fully "tell our story," we need a collection of documents and writings that pertain to issues which concern the Gathering: McMaster Divinity College, BCOQ's relationship to churches, Baptist history, the move to join the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada and our response, and so on.

We have developed agreement forms which protect and respect each person who donates or loans materials, and those who simply wish to tell us what they have. These agreement forms are available.

It is our intention to begin this work. We commit to solicit and gather materials, to safeguard them, to store them in an organized fashion, and to control access to them. For more information or to donate or deposit materials, contact Bryan Harris at 905-632-7726.

And Now I Will Show You a Most Wonderful Way

If I sit in the very front pew, my family and neighbours at my side,
But do not come to God
I am only a seat-cushion or empty suit.
If I sing the hymns with proper tone,
and read aloud the Scriptures clearly, emphatically,
But do not encounter God,
I am a muffled voice or unspoken apology.
If I give fully more than a 10th of my money
and serve on every committee,
But do not abide with God,
I am a mannequin, without life.

Worship approaches, worship listens, worship answers.
It does not run ahead, it is not clangorous, it is not me-first.
It is not scripted, it is not memorized, it is not forced,
and keeps no watch on the clock.
Worship does not inspire guilt but rejoices in forgiveness.
It is always gracious,
always accepting,
always hopeful,
always life giving.

Worship is of and for God; from and to God
through Jesus Christ.

Where we are concerned about self-display,
the mirror of the gospel reveals our true selves;
Where we are content with self-indulgence,
the windowed Word displays the work of love;
Where we are cornered by self-satisfactions,
the way of the Spirit opens before us — new creation.
For our true selves are our starting point,
And the work of love is our calling.

Once we treated worship as a thing, as an objective,
a means to our own ends.
When we came to believe, we entered into worship's Who.











Oh, our clumsy steps yet muddle and muddy the Water of Life,
But in Christ we are making progress;
Our handling of holy hours is shaky, at best,
But with the Spirit we are reassured.
So now worship remains in these three: faith, hope and love.
And the greatness of these is God.

Frederick D. Rupert, 1997

page 4

Announcements

Workshop
Saturday, May 9 at
Martingrove Baptist Church
led by Judith Colwell, Archivist

-  How does a church take care of its history?
-  What is valuable?
-  Important to keep?
-  How do you organize it, and keep a current "archives" going?
-  Why is church history important anyway?
-  If you removed your "stuff" from the Archives, how would you responsibly care for it?
-  In what?
-  Where?
-  Can you actually have fun doing this stuff?
-  Can all generations be involved?

Time: 9 - 12 a.m.

(We're hoping to find a lunch place afterwards for some fellowship)

Cost: \$40 per church (no limit on attendees)

*To register: contact Rick Maxwell,
416-626-1026 at Martingrove BC.*



***You are Invited to a Discussion
Evening with ...
Dr. Andreas d'Souza***

Director of the Henry Martyn Institute,
India, at Dundas Baptist Church, Tuesday,
June 14, 7:30 p.m.

Dr. d'Souza specializes in justice and reconciliation ministries. *(From the office of David Phillips).*

Baptist Convention, to a large extent within the BCOQ, and the same is happening in Europe. Organizations invite politics, and I often have the heretical thought that politics (in its lower case form) is no proper place for a decent Christian to be. My favourite anthropologist, F.G. Bailey (yes, him again!) has written a perceptive book on the nature of organizations and the relationships of individuals to them. The one shapes the other. Because organizations behave the way they do, they often determine the behaviour of the individual who interacts with them. Organizations have an almost genetic predisposition to become self-protective at the expense of the individual. Bailey singles out two characteristics of organizations which are worth bearing in mind. The first is a poorly developed sense of right and wrong. "Expediency," he states, "often comes out ahead of morality." Actions are determined not necessarily because they have any moral value, but more often because they are proposed by those who have the power to enforce them. The individual's morality then becomes determined by her/his relationship to the centres of power — look at the story of Joab. Daring to be different is seen as deviance, not being a "team player," or "breaking ranks" (language I have heard in the McMaster situation, and here at IBTS). Having "members" also allows for the possibility of dismemberment.

The second characteristic is that organizations are prone to excess. Excess of detail (the bureaucratic mind) and excess of "company spirit" which often hides some of the real issues which damage the functioning of human beings within the organization. Bailey states again "Failing to be efficient, the bureaucracy gives more and more attention to detailed prescription of what should be done," and to enforce this the organization produces a "surfeit of organizational religion. If called into question, the ritualization of work and the ceremonial performances ... may be justified as ends in themselves or they may be justified instrumentally, as being necessary for the performance of the organization's task in the world."

This all sounds so familiar somehow, and many of us have witnessed it in many spheres of our lives. The

the accumulated liturgical wisdom of the centuries, and to deny, in theory, the continued guidance of the Holy Spirit in the Church" (p.257).

It is suggested, therefore, that there is no static and definitive Baptist "position" on worship. There is, rather, a Baptist "approach." Such a dynamic view would suggest that it is inaccurate to speak of Baptist worship and theology as being non-liturgical. On the contrary, inasmuch as it was the urgent desire of the first Baptists to recover the worship of the New Testament and the early Church, it may be said that at its inception, Baptist life and thought was rooted in a liturgical movement.

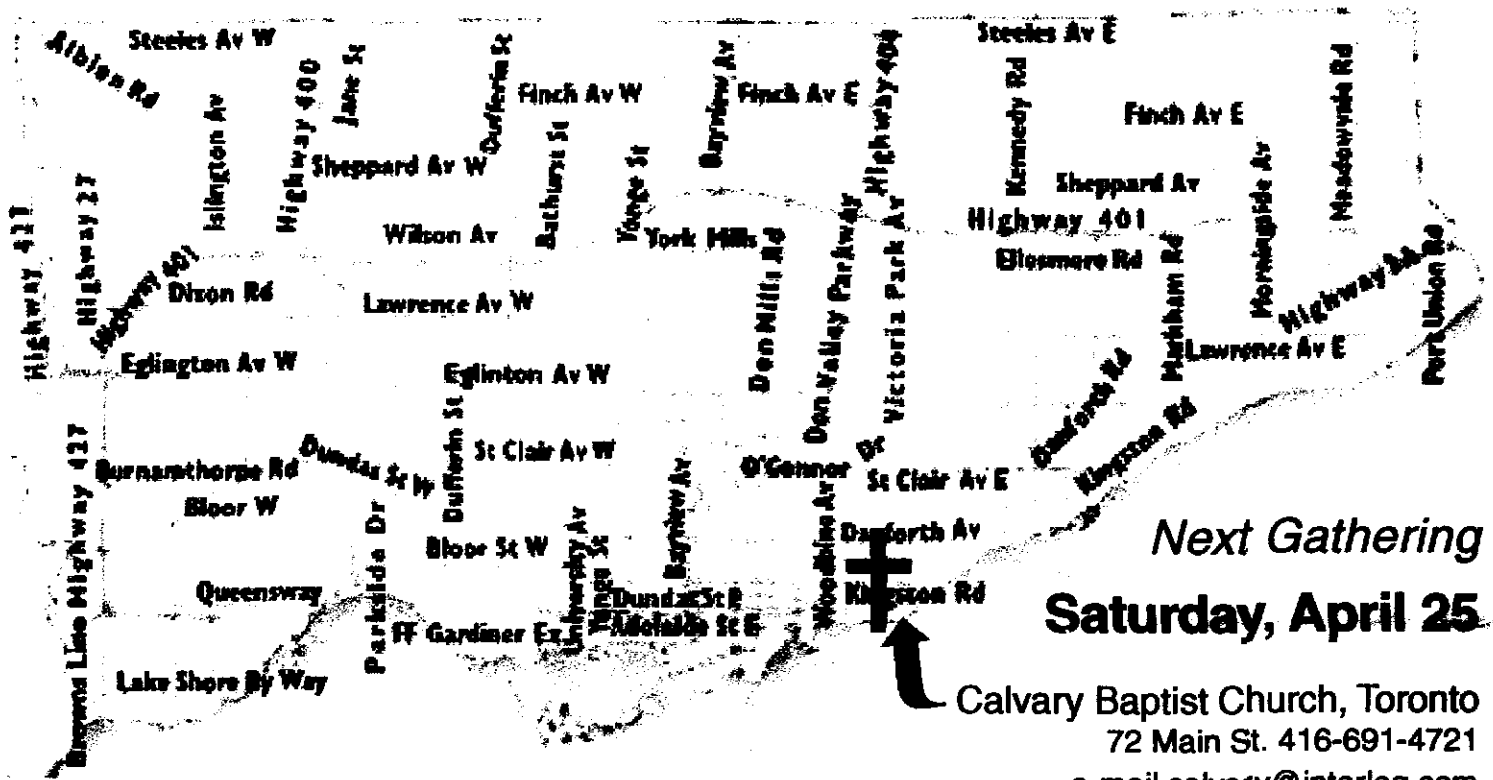
Writing in 1960, Payne and Winward sounded a note which is increasingly relevant today. "In reaction against the arid formalism of so much contemporary ecclesiastical worship, our fathers sought to make room in the assembly for the 'inspired spontaneity' of the Holy Spirit. This led to a deep suspicion of anything read or sung from a book ... Such a reaction was inevitable, and its extreme forms have long since been overcome. We have to retain the truth they grasped and to supply its complementary ... We need to preserve and combine freedom and tradition, making both alike channels of the Holy Spirit."

sad thing about ancient Israel is that they went ahead with their plan to install a king — a brand new kind of social organization — to their eventual peril. The other sad thing is that they never considered any alternatives. It was either tribal society, based on important things like kinship, mutual aid, and devotion to Yahweh, or it was kingship. In choosing the latter they lost so much of what was good in the past, and royally screwed up their future.

I suppose I am using the story of Israel as a kind of cautionary tale. Maybe we need to change how we relate, and put it on a firmer footing — maybe. But we also need to cherish those things which have made *The Gathering* somehow special for our lives and ministries — fellowship, support, genuine expressions of love, tolerance for diverse opinions and above all the desire to exemplify what it means to be a Christian in the modern world in a Baptist way.

The
Gathering
NEWSLETTER
is published at least twice yearly

Editor: Ray Hobbs Layout & Production: Victoria Drysdale
Distribution: Barbara Bishop
Editorial Board: Victoria Drysdale, Ray Hobbs, Daphne Hunt, Annette Martell, Bert Radford, and Barbara Bishop as Steering Committee Liaison
Feedback can be directed to *The Gathering Newsletter* c/o V. Drysdale 175 Kingsmount Pl. Rd. Toronto, ON M4L 3L7 fax 416-694-4521 e-mail drysdale@interlog.com



Next Gathering
Saturday, April 25

Calvary Baptist Church, Toronto
 72 Main St. 416-691-4721
 e-mail calvary@interlog.com

9:00 a.m. Registration & Coffee
 9:30 a.m. Worship • 9:50 a.m. Speaker
 12:00 Noon Lunch
 1:00 p.m. Speaker • 2:30 p.m. Business
 3:30 p.m. Adjourn

Lead me to Calvary

From the east: 401 to Kingston Rd., west to Main St., then right one block north to Benlamond.

From the west: QEW through to Gardiner East until ends. Continue on Woodbine, then right at Kingston Rd., left at Main St. to Benlamond.

From the north: Don Valley Parkway south to Don Mills Road South. Turn left at O'Connor, then right at Woodbine, left at Gerrard St., right on Main St. then right at Benlamond.

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES

Since its initial meeting in October of 1993 *The Gathering* has managed to operate on registration fees and one single membership fee from its members. However, our treasury is depleted and in a \$100 deficit.

A Gathering generates about \$250 beyond meal costs. Newsletters cost us about \$125 per issue. We give our speakers an honorarium of \$150 plus we pay travel costs.

At our October meeting the motion was unanimously approved "That a membership fee of \$20 per family be levied annually, beginning January 1, 1998." Current memberships will continue but payment is due during the year '98.

Membership fees are payable to Gary Caldwell (*The Gathering*) at 2464 Concession 2 West, RR 1, Lynden, ON, L0R 1T0.

PLEASE REGISTER by:

Monday, April 20, for *The Gathering* on Saturday, April 25 so that we have a lunch count. \$10 for members/\$15 for non-members payable at the door. Includes lunch and travel costs of speaker.

Name _____

Telephone _____

Mail to/telephone:

Gary and Merle Caldwell
 2464 Concession 2 West
 RR 1, Lynden, ON L0R 1T0
 519-647-3504