

Religion

Advent gives us the courage to live with reality

Third Sunday in Advent
John 1:6-8, 19-28.
Dec. 16, 1990

A QUESTION: WHO ARE YOU?
"Who are you?" is a central question in the Gospel of John. It is asked of John the Baptist in today's reading, and it is asked of Jesus later on in the Gospel.

John, the writer of the Gospel, isn't coy with us. He tells us who the Baptist is, and who Jesus is. In fact, John spends the whole Gospel telling us who Jesus is. The seven "I am" statements in the Gospel are one of the ways that he answers the question:

I am the Good Shepherd.
I am the Way, the Truth and the Light.

At the end of his Gospel, John writes: "These things are written so that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you might have life in his name."

A CITATION FROM AN AUTHORITY
According to Rudolph Bultmann, the Gospel of John focusses on the person of Christ in a way that none of the other Gospels do. The Gospel of Mat-

thew, Mark and Luke focus on the Kingdom of God, or on the salvation effected by Christ; John focusses on Christ, Christ beneath the skin if you like.

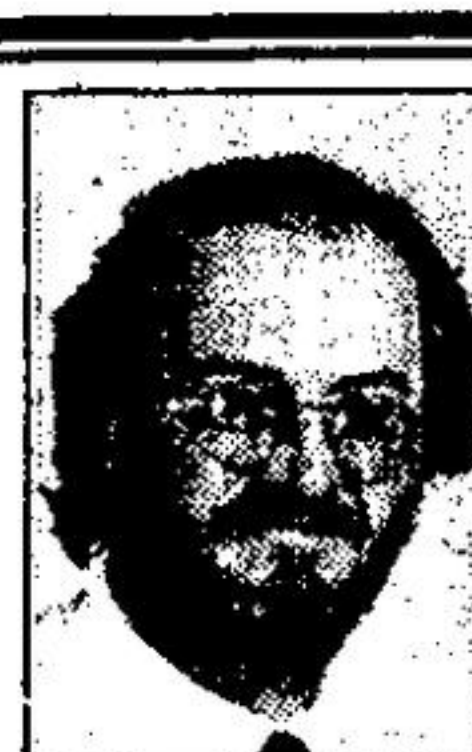
AN INTERESTING SIDELIGHT
There were some people in the first century A.D. called Docetists, who didn't believe that Christ was a real man. They thought of him as an appearance, something like a T.V. soap opera star.

John wanted to counter this. "We have seen him with our eyes, and touched him with our hands."

BACK TO BULTMANN
Bultmann says that in John's Gospel the question addressed to the Baptist and to Christ is also addressed to each of us. We are asked, "Who are you?"

John believes that Christ is so central to our understanding of reality, that our view of him will alter our view of ourselves and our view of reality.

BACK TO THE QUESTION: WHO ARE YOU?
A good question; even if posed in a threatening way. Anger is a great motivator.



Religion and Reality
By JIM RYAN

There's a school of therapy developed by Fritz Perls, called Gestalt Therapy, which takes the attack approach of the priests and Levites in today's Gospel. They're the ones who want to know who the Baptist is. (I'm sure that the Baptist was as aggressive in his questioning as the agents of the Pharisees.)

Fritz Perls believes that living in the present is the way to be in touch with reality and with oneself.

An aggressive question directed to a patient can free the patient from roles played in the past, and enable him to get in

touch with himself and with reality.

These roles, which become habitual responses to the world, are like appearances, illusions, or what Perls calls maya. It's like being a T.V. soap opera star when you're with your girl or boyfriend, and never being yourself.

Advent is a time to be yourself. It might take the aggressive, impolite, sarcastic, even vulgar question of a John the Baptist to wake us out of our roleplaying, and give us the courage to live

with reality.

A JEWISH CELEBRATION
Jews are celebrating Chanukah this week. They started Tuesday evening and continue until next Wednesday.

The Festival of Lights refers to the Maccabean War of 166-164 B.C., when Jews overcame Syrian attempts to make them less Jewish.

Jews light the nine-branched candelabrum, the Menorah, one on the first evening, two on the second, and so on, to commemorate the miraculous burning of the Temple lamps for eight days.

A season of preparation

By THE REV. MARGARET MURRAY
St. John's Anglican Church, Stewarttown and St. Stephen's Anglican Church, Hornby

It is the season of Advent - a season of preparation. We hustle and bustle about, guided in our every move by our lists. There's the Christmas card list, the gift list, the list of get-togethers, the list of house-cleaning and decorating tasks, the grocery lists, guest lists and who we're expecting ... and the 'list' goes on! In every encounter, someone asks if we are ready. Of course we're not ready so we tell them

which lists are finished and which ones are not. We know about all the lists that help us to prepare.

But what if one of those encounters was with an alien from outer space we were asked to explain our strange behaviour?

• What is it that you are preparing for?

Well - it's kind of a party. There is special food, special decorations and party favours for all.

• But what's the party for?

Well - it's a time for family ... it's a festival of lights in the midst of darkness ... it's a time of singing and laughter ... sharing and giving ... it's a time of peace

and love ...

• That tells me what the party is like! But what is it for?

It's a birthday party.

• Then who is it for?

It's for Jesus.

• And what's so special about this Jesus?

Well - he was born in a stable in Bethlehem many years ago and in everything in his life he showed us the power of love and forgiveness.

• And so he's the guest of honour?

Well - sort of ...

• What do you mean - sort of? You are going to invite him - aren't you?!

Belfountain candlelight service

Belfountain Village Church holds its annual community candlelight service on Sunday, Dec. 23 at 7:30 p.m.

All are welcome at the traditional event which tells the Christmas story in scripture and song.

The program includes singing by The Blythwood Carolers, a quartet from Blythwood Baptist Church, Toronto, and by the Belfountain Quartet, church pastor John Bell, his wife Eleanor and church members Glenda Dolan and Glen Widdifield. Soloist for the service music is Jane Adair of Erin.

The 101-year-old stone church has been decorated with a nativity scene and a giant Christmas tree. There will be refreshments and fellowship in the church hall following the candlelight service.

Located near the junction of Mississauga Rd., and the Forks of the Credit Rd., in the Town of Caledon, Belfountain Village Church is affiliated with the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec.

John Bell has been serving as full-time pastor since Sept. 1 having previously been pastor of two Baptist churches in Chesley and Paisley, near Owen Sound. He is

the first full-time pastor in living memory at Belfountain.

Services at Belfountain are each Sunday a 9:30 a.m. and there will be a special communion service at this time on Sun., Dec. 23. The congregation numbers more than 60 adults and children and runs a Sunday School, with babysitting provided, in conjunction with regular Sunday Services.

Regular church office hours are Tuesday and Wednesday from 9 a.m. to noon when Pastor Bell will endeavor to be in attendance. The church telephone number is (519) 927-3165.



Food bank helping hand

The 326 students of Stewarttown Public School decided to lend a helping hand when they heard of the vandalism at the Georgetown food bank. The results of their efforts came in the form of food and toys for the less fortunate in Halton Hills. (Left to right), students Stephanie Sheffield, Grade 6, and Kim Stevenson, Grade 8, presented the Minister of the Mountainview Baptist Church, David Caldwell, with the food and toys at the school Wednesday. The food bank is located at the church. Stephanie and Kim, between the two of them, donated 39 items of food. (Herald photo)

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RECTOR: Reverend Carol A. Eldmore, L.Th.

Sunday Services: 8:00 a.m. & 10:30 a.m.
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Season's Greetings

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Tues., Dec. 18 - 10:00-7:00	Wed., Dec. 26 - Closed
Wed., Dec. 19 - 10:00-7:00	Thur., Dec. 27 - 10:00-8:00
Thur., Dec. 20 - 10:00-8:00	Fri., Dec. 28 - 10:00-8:00
Fri., Dec. 21 - 10:00-8:00	Sat., Dec. 29 - 9:00-6:00
Sat., Dec. 22 - 9:00-6:00	Sun., Dec. 30 - 11:00-4:00
Sun., Dec. 23 - 11:00-5:00	Mon., Dec. 31 - 11:00-5:00
Mon., Dec. 24 - 11:00-5:00	Wed., Jan. 2, 1991 - Back To Reg. Hours
Tues., Dec. 25 - Closed	

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