

Worship services are being cancelled until further notice because of Covid-19. However, we will have worship services through the Internet Zoom platform every Sunday at 10:30 AM in NB, NS and PEI. The Zoom link for this service will be sent to you by email. The telephone numbers for Zoom always remains the same but the Meeting ID and password number change every week.. Please let Mr. Vautour know if you would like to be added to the weekly email list. See the bottom of the bulletin for the contact information

If you have friends or acquaintances who want to join in the worship service, please do not hesitate to share with them the Zoom links to join with us in the worship our great God.

Please note that audio and video sermons and other material are also available on our local website at www.gcine Brunswick.org

Session 10 on the study of the book of Acts by Mr. Gary Deddo is now available on our local website under "Members Only". It is an excellent Bible Study. You are encouraged to take the time to study it.

Bible Study: Our next Bible Study, continuing in James 1 will be on Thursday February 11, @ 7:30 p.m.

Thursday February 18 at 7:30 p.m. is the tentative date for our next meeting with the Halifax congregation.

To see specific prayer requests from the church, please go to www.gcine Brunswick.org – under "Members Only" and type the password. If you do not know the password, please contact Mr. Vautour.

- Let us pray for the Church to put first things first which is **to love God with all of our heart, with all of our soul and with all of our mind.** The secondary commandment and flowing from the first is **to love our neighbour as ourselves.**
- Let us pray according to God's will as per his instructions: **"1 ¶ First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, 2 for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. 3 This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." (1Ti 2:1-4 ESV)**
- Let us pray that God will strengthen his people with faith, perseverance, and love during this difficult pandemic period and that the good news of the Gospel will be spread widely.
- Please pray for the leadership of GCI as they seek to lead us in the will of God to help all of us participate in what Jesus is doing now.
- Please thank God for his church and pray for God's universal church as Jesus is directing it and causing it to grow in his grace by the Holy Spirit.
- Please pray for all people in Canada and elsewhere who are increasingly suffering from various kinds of mental and emotional problems sometimes leading to increasing violence in families, overwhelming the health care system and damaging so many lives.
- Please pray for the children who are negatively affected by this pandemic and for their parents who are too oftentimes feeling overwhelmed juggling work responsibilities, distant learning, etc.
- Let us pray that God will give us to wisdom to know how he is working and how he wants us to humbly participate in his work of salvation. **"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." (Eph 2:10 ESV)**
- Let us pray, **"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven". (Matt. 6:9-10)**

Offerings: (Paraphrase of some information given by Mr. Hall, GCI Canadian Director): Just a reminder that any donations we receive via either Credit Card or Canada Helps are subject to about a 3-3.5% fee which means any donations we receive for your congregation, are reduced by that amount. Direct Debit (Pre-authorized Payment) or E-Transfers have much lower transaction fees, that we do not back charge to the local congregation. (Cheques do not have a transaction fee). A person can send E-transfers to khorwood@gcicanada.ca if their bank uses INTERACT. In the subject or message line, write the name of your church and your member number. If your bank permits, you can also write your name and address. If you do not know your member number, please write to Mr. Vautour at the email address below. You can send your offering directly to the following address: **Grace Communion International- Canada, Suite 203A, 2121 Airport Dr., Saskatoon, SK 7SL 6W5.** If you prefer, you can also call **1-306-653-2705.** You can also donate via phone using a credit card, or via Canada Helps using **the donate button** on our website at <https://www.canadahelps.org/en/dn/7735>. We will credit all donations received via Canada Helps to a member's local congregation, if we can identify where they attend."

Culture of Liberation (from GCI January 27, 2021)



Mr. and Mrs. Greg and Susan Williams

Dear Family and Friends,

You may recall seeing the Support/Challenge Matrix in some of our publications. This diagram effectively demonstrates ways of being and operating that create a cultural pattern for a person or organization.

I was recently challenged to define what I mean by a culture of liberation. Is the concept biblical? Does it fit with our Incarnational Trinitarian Theology? The short answer is yes, it is biblical, and it fits with our theology. Further, it describes the

emerging culture of GCI.

One of the greatest gifts Jesus gave us is freedom. Luke tells us Jesus has set us captives free ([Luke 4:14-21](#)). He is the one who has freed us from the dominance of legalism and the culture of fear and manipulation. He is the one, through the power of the Spirit, who has filled us with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. He is the one who moves out of the culture of apathy. He joins us to the purpose of the Father in pointing us to the eternal kingdom and away from the culture of self-centeredness and entitlement.

And yet we are called to participate. To do so, we must come out of the prison cells of our old self and our old surroundings and embrace the freshness of life in him. We are free because of him and through him. He is the one establishing the culture of empowerment and opportunity in us. It is his good pleasure to do this work in us.

In his letter to the church at Ephesus, Paul talks plainly about what a healthy church community looks like. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. ([Ephesians 4:14-16](#))



Rather than a community that gets swept up in and entrapped by the noise, rhetoric, and false news of the day, in Christ we are freed to be a community that boldly “speaks the truth in love.” Striking the balance of high support and high challenge toward one another—out of “grace always”—is the sign of a healthy church, where leaders and members speak honestly and lovingly to one another. Being honest and loving is how we are joined and held together, and it is all from him who is the head of the church—the one who empowers us through the Spirit.

This may seem like a nuance, but a culture of liberation is not license. Rather it is a strong commitment to Christ and to one another.

Empowerment and opportunity do not let us off the hook for being our brother and sister’s keeper.

Being united in Christ means that we are for one another; we are accountable to each other—even (and maybe especially) when we experience differences of opinions. If it takes strong bones, toned muscles and elastic ligaments all in alignment for a human joint to operate smoothly and effectively, imagine how much active participation it takes from you and me to be a part of a mature healthy church?

The culture of liberation that we are growing into allows us to be free from sin, death, guilt, and shame, and yet it goes further. Not just “free from,” but “free for.” We are free to become the best versions of ourselves as we grow in relationship with Jesus and with one another. I think of freedom in Christ as an invitation and empowerment. I am free to join him and participate in much of what he is doing. I am free to see how he is at work in people around me, and I am free to share his love that he has liberally bestowed on me.

Brothers and sisters, it is Jesus who has joined us together. It is Jesus who liberates and empowers. May we embrace, celebrate, and perpetuate the culture of liberation that he is showering upon us. Praising him for my liberation, Greg Williams

The following link is an example of a congregation in the USA of letting the love of Christ overflow to their community. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1NA9RDobDe8> . If you have ideas about how we, as a GCI congregation, can extend God’s love in our community in a way that will promote the Gospel, please feel free to call Mr. Vautour and discuss.

Devotional – Moved with Compassion (From gci.org January 27, 2021)

But when he saw the crowds he was moved with compassion for them, because they were harassed, and cast away as sheep not having a shepherd.” (Matthew 9:36 – Darby Bible Translation)



By Davina Winn, Assistant Pastor
Hanover, VA

The Greek word here for compassion is “splanchnizomai”. The word literally means to “be moved in the bowel.” When Jesus saw the crowds, he noticed and *felt* their pain and suffering deep within his gut. He “experienced” their trouble and helplessness and he was stirred with profound, intense emotion to do something about it. He gathered his disciples and empowered them with authority to cast out demons and to heal every disease and sickness.

Have you ever encountered others who seemed abused or abandoned? What about the young man begging for money on your way to work? What about your neighbor who is a single mom? What about your family member who just needs you to sit down and listen with an open heart? How can we show compassion to those around us? First...stop and take

notice. It is so easy in our busy lives to rush on by without a second glance for those who are lost and hurting. Second, ask God if there is a way for you to truly help them. God might say “no” but he also might say “yes.” He might tell you to give the young man the money in your pocket or buy him a sandwich. He might tell you to ask your neighbor if you can babysit a few hours her. He might tell you to share some encouragement and pray for someone. The important thing is to stop, notice, pray and do something.

Prayer: Lord, help us notice and see others as you see them. Help us feel what you feel about them. Help us take appropriate action as we are led by the Holy Spirit. Lord, give us your compassion for those around us.

REVELATION: BOOK OF COSMIC SYMBOLS (from [Revelation: Book of Cosmic Symbols | Grace Communion International \(gci.org\)](http://www.gci.org))



To understand Revelation it is helpful to think of this writing as first and foremost a book of *symbols*. For example, we see the victorious Christ, riding on a horse (19:11-16). He wields a sword with which he smites the nations. That picture is symbolic of an *event* and divine power — the return of the Messiah, who destroys the forces of evil.



Revelation's symbols are often juxtaposed one against another. This use of comparison and contrast is seen throughout the book. In the middle chapters of Revelation, Satan's forces — the beast and false prophet — are pitted against God's earthly representative, the church. The book describes two ages of human existence, each contrary to the other. Satan, the dragon, is the remorseless adversary of God, and dominates this present world. Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, rules a world of peace, popularly known as the millennium.



Revelation portrays and compares two opposing ways of life. Two symbols embody these conflicting lifestyles. A harlot pictures the deceived group, deluded by what's called her "spiritual fornication." This refers to her illicit spiritual liaisons with political rulers. Another group of people follows the Lamb, who is Jesus. These are called the spiritually pure Bride of Christ. The image of an enormous metropolis — Babylon the Great — stands for the corrupt system that seduces the world. Revelation contrasts this wicked city with the purity and perfection of the New Jerusalem. Ultimately, the latter stands for the ideal and eternal congregation of those who are faithful to Christ.



Even the promise to share in salvation is represented by this – worldly symbols. This use of



symbolism occurs in the seven letters to Christian congregations in the province of Asia. For example, the church in Ephesus is promised salvation by being told it will have **"the right to eat from the tree of life"** (2:7). That is a metaphor for salvation and eternal life.

Norman Perrin clearly outlined this dualistic and symbolic structure of Revelation in which the spiritual realm, the church, and the world system are given their parts to play. He wrote:



At the pinnacle of power on one side is God, the Pantocrator, ruler of all (1:8). On the other is Satan, the Dragon, who has power, a throne, and great authority (13:2). Allied with God is the Lamb who was slain (5:6).... Allied with Satan is the beast from the sea (13:1-2). . . . All the people on the earth are divided into two groups; those who have the seal of God on their foreheads and whose names are in the book of life (3:5, 12; 7:3; 20:4; 21:27; 22:4) and those who bear the mark of the beast and worship it (9:4; 13:8, 17; 14:9-11; 16:2; 20:15). There is also a sharp contrast between the luxurious and voluptuous harlot, who represents Babylon, the earthly city of abominations (ch.17) and the pure bride of the Lamb, who symbolizes Jerusalem, the heavenly city of salvation (19:7-8; 21: 2, 9-11). This literary tension reflects the political tension between the adherents of the kingdom of God and those of the kingdom of Caesar (11:15; 12:10; 16:10; 17:18) (*Jesus and the Language of the Kingdom*, p. 142).



To the modern western world, Revelation's symbols seem weird and alien. They include a multi-headed dragon; two strange beasts; a city shaped like a cube 1,500 miles high, wide and

long; marks on heads and right hands; a figure's mouth with a sword emerging from it, and so on.

These symbols were not strange to John's original audience for whom the book was written. Revelation drew on commonly known pagan myths, Old Testament and Jewish typologies, as well as New Testament Christian traditions and beliefs. These symbols were generally understood to refer to spiritual truths and historical realities. For example, in the Roman world of John's time there were various stories about a god of heaven slaying the sea monster.

Some of Revelation's symbols played off of such myths circulating in the pagan world. However, the book's symbols are heavily based on Old Testament themes, which in turn had been reinterpreted by Jewish apocalyptic literature.

In Revelation, the meanings of symbols existing in the Jewish and pagan world were again reinterpreted in the light of the Christian's experience in Christ. The point is that the symbols were not strange codes that one had to have special knowledge to understand. It's safe to say John's readers knew what he meant. In the words of G. B. Caird:

The first readers were almost certainly well versed in the sort of symbolic language and imagery in which the book is written. Whether they had formerly been Jews or pagans, they would read the language of myth as fluently as any modern reader of the daily papers reads the conventional symbols of a political cartoon. Much of this language we can reconstruct for ourselves from the Old Testament and Jewish apocalyptic writings on the one hand and from Greek and Roman literature, inscriptions, and coinage on the other (Black's New Testament Commentaries, "A Commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine," 2nd edition, p. 6).

This makes sense if we consider a type of modern graphic genre, the political cartoon. G. R. Beasley-Murray calls the political cartoon "the closest modern parallel" to Revelation's symbols (*The New Century Bible Commentary, "Revelation,"* p. 17).

Political cartoons use stereotyped images. Beasley-Murray gives some examples of modern cartoon symbols. Two examples are John Bull, who represents the temper of Britain, and Uncle Sam, the spirit of the United States. The lion also represents Britain and the eagle the United States. Two other symbols are the bear for Russia and the dragon for China.

Often these and other political figures are drawn as caricatures. Says Beasley-Murray, "*Frequently the situations depicted are deliberately exaggerated, and even made grotesque, in order that the message may be made plain*" (*The New Century Bible Commentary, "Revelation,"* p. 17). The operative word here is plain. That's what the symbols of Revelation were to John's congregations. They were plain, simple and quickly understood. Beasley-Murray explains the point further:

The symbols by which the contemporary political forces and the spiritual powers of heaven and hell are portrayed [in Revelation] were as traditional as Britannia and the British lion, the Russian bear, and the Chinese dragon.... What to the uninitiated modern reader appears grotesque imagery, spoke with power to John's fellow Christians (The New Century Bible Commentary, p. 17).

Most people are familiar with George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, in which animals speak. The book itself is a political-social statement about the excesses of political leadership and the subjugation of the weak. We do not think the book bizarre because animals talk in it. We know it is symbolic. We also readily understand the meaning of Orwell's symbols — and enjoy them. In fact, it was precisely because of the form in which *Animal Farm* was written that has made it a timeless piece of literature.

There are several lessons in this for us. First, we should not consider Revelation strange or bizarre. The book was probably easy to understand, extremely interesting and thoroughly meaningful to the original readers. If we can put ourselves in their place, this biblical writing can be all these things to us as well.

Second, we should not force Revelation's symbols into a literal mode. If the book is a kind of painting of God's purpose, it is much more expressionistic or impressionistic than realistic. In the words of George Eldon Ladd: "*Apocalyptic language does not convey its message in precise photographic style, but more in the style of modern surrealist art with great fluidity and imagination*" (*A Commentary on the Revelation of John*, p. 111). Ladd explains that Revelation's symbols are "*not meant to be photographs of objective facts; they are often symbolic representations of almost unimaginable spiritual realities,*" p. 102.

M. Eugene Boring explains it this way:

*Many of the scenes John describes simply cannot be imaged. Not only can they not be placed on a canvas or movie screen, they cannot be placed on the screen of the mind. The vision of the exalted Christ in **1:12-16**, for example, simply becomes grotesque if one attempts to understand it as a reporter's account of what John actually saw in the objective world (Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching, "Revelation," p. 54).*

Here Christ is pictured as speaking through a mouth out of which a sharp double-edged sword protrudes. If an attempt is made to understand the anthropomorphic picture of Christ in Revelation 1 as a literal representation of what he looks like, this part of the portrait admittedly is bizarre. The portrait becomes meaningful only if we understand John's portrayal of the sword as a symbol of the sharpness and power of God's word ([Hebrews 4:12](#); [Ephesians 6:17](#)).

Of course, we need to be careful about overly allegorizing Revelation, as much as we need to avoid a strict literalism. As mentioned, this was probably not a difficulty John's original readers faced. They knew the situation in which they lived and the meaning of the symbols. But we are divorced from both. In the words of G. B. Caird: *Our difficulties begin when we try to decide how far to take this picture language literally and how far to take it figuratively. When John echoes the Roman legend that the dead Nero was about to return, how literally does he mean it? Does he believe that Nero was not in fact dead, or that he would be resurrected, or that another paranoiac would come to fill his empty shoes? (Black's New Testament Commentaries, "A Commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine," 2nd edition, p. 7).*

In one sense, these issues are only of historical importance, vital only to John's original readers. But if that was all that Revelation's symbols pictured — that is, events, situations and people in John's day — they would have little meaning for us.

However, since Revelation uses symbols to represent spiritual realities, the book has universal meaning for all times and generations. Having said this, another caution is in order. We should not dismiss the historical context and meaning of the symbols, nor their possible application to specific situations and individuals. These, however, are not the primary meanings.

The point is, symbols can have different kinds of meaning. The symbol "bear" can have a simple meaning when referring to Russia. That is, bear = Russia. On another level, the bear says something about the kind of political power the nation embodies. On a third level, "bear," already known to be symbolic of a lumbering political giant, can stand for all such empires—including perhaps the massive ancient Persian empire.

The American flag can be described as composed of 13 stripes and 50 stars. That is what the flag is, literally. It also is a symbol representing 13 original colonies and 50 states. The American flag also represents the nation. That is, when we see the flag, we think "United States." But the American flag waving in the breeze during a patriotic parade represents something much more. It symbolizes a concept — a big idea — the pride of being an American. In the same way, Revelation's symbols can have various kinds and levels of meanings. Its symbols are not what are called "steno-symbols," that is those that have only a single reference point. For example, if the symbol "bear" were such a symbol it could only be a nickname for the nation. But as we saw, the "bear" symbol has diverse meanings on several levels.

Revelation's symbols are often what are called "tensive" symbols. They are open-ended to some degree in that they can represent several conceptions or ideas. For example, if the first beast of Revelation 13 can be identified with the city of Rome in John's day, this does not exhaust its meaning. The tensive symbol "beast" may also represent the Roman Empire, or refer to a specific individual such as the emperor Nero or Domitian. "Beast" may also stand for all human empires that oppress Christians.

G. B. Caird is correct when he says that it is, "*Misleading to say that in Revelation the monster is Rome, and still more misleading to say that it is ruler worship. The monster is both an older and a newer phenomenon than Caesar, and the great city is more ancient and more modern than Rome*" (*Black's New Testament Commentaries*, "A Commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine," 2nd edition, p. xii).

It's important to understand that Revelation speaks of concepts that deal with an ultimate reality about which we have no direct experience or knowledge. That's why it uses symbols and why the book can indicate earthly and heavenly realities only in extremely rough outline.

To cite an example, God is pictured as sitting on a heavenly throne in Revelation. The throne represents, in symbol, to us who are limited to this physical world, the glory, the lordship and universal authority of God. Admittedly, the throne symbol is a rather poor reflection of God's universal supremacy. But those are the limitations of human language and our experiential knowledge of God.

Some commentators suggest that the symbols Revelation used were not readily understood by those of John's time. This idea claims John used coded language so that the criticism it contained of the Roman government would be kept secret from outsiders.

However, the average reader would have quite easily picked out the possible references to Rome. For example, Jews typically equated Rome with Babylon in apocalyptic writings. It was also common knowledge that Rome was the city built on seven hills. Both images are used in Revelation.

Assuming the Roman police were of at least average intelligence and could read, it hardly seems they would have missed this. M. Eugene Boring points out that the mere reference to God or Christ as king (11:15) would have clearly appeared subversive to Roman authorities.

On the other hand, only a small portion of Revelation's material could be construed as applying to Rome. Then, if John's use of symbolic material was meant to confound the Roman secret police, why is virtually *all* of the book written in symbolic, apocalyptic form?

Whatever the answer, John's purpose is clearly stated: it is to reveal, not conceal. M. Eugene Boring points out: "*With reference to the Roman government, John does not veil whom he means; he writes to reveal the essential nature of Roman power, which was not at all obvious to many members of John's churches*" (*Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, "Revelation," p. 55).

We must again remind ourselves that Revelation is not written as an attack against the outside world. It is written to be read in the church — the worshipful community of the saints. The book would not be that concerned with outsiders' reactions.

But the book is not simply a straightforward letter such as a Colossians or 1 Peter. Revelation seeks to create a symbolic world for its readers and to put them into it. The book attempts to create for them the same wonder and awe that John experienced. In modern language, we might call Revelation a “virtual reality” experience. In the words of G. B. Caird: *John uses his allusions not as a code in which each symbol requires separate and exact translation, but rather for their evocative and emotive power. This is not photographic art. His aim is to set the echoes of memory and association ringing* (Black's New Testament Commentaries, “A Commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine,” 2nd edition, p. 26).

In conclusion, Revelation does not have as its primary purpose the aim of providing the curiosity seeker with information to bolster speculations about an apocalyptic “end-time.” The symbols in the book are meant to bring forth a response on the part of God's people of continued faith in Jesus Christ as Lord of creation, the world and the church.

Author: Paul Kroll

GCI principle website and Moncton Websites—a) www.gci.org, b) www.gcinewbrunswick.org, c) www.gcicanada.ca; d) www.facebook.com/GCIMoncton ;

For a wealth of helpful articles about God, grace, and his plan for salvation, who we are, etc., please see the GCI.org website. Contact Information: Pastor's contact information: email—evautour47@outlook.com