

Introduction

By Ron Buford

We introduced the phrase “God is still speaking,” as 21st century shorthand for John Robinson’s famous words in his farewell sermon to the Pilgrims as they set sail from Holland: “God hath yet more light and truth to break forth from God’s Holy Word.”

Connecting with John Robinson’s hopeful phrase reminds us to take the Bible seriously, even though we may not take it literally. Today, Robinson’s words call us to question, explore, and make faith our own in reality of worship, in honesty of thought and expression, and in purity of heart before God.

It’s ironic that religion has so often clung to the past despite our faith in a God who made everything, who knows everything. Praying and other engagement with the living God of mystery and creation should open our hearts and minds to the future, to the work of God in our midst, to the not yet known.

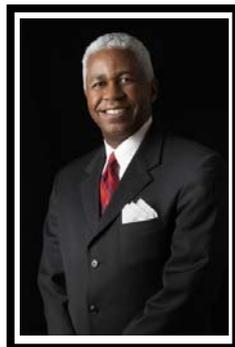
Religion has not always clung to the past. Even in the fourth century, Augustine wrote that when there appears to be a conflict between demonstrated knowledge and a literal reading of the Bible, scripture should be interpreted metaphorically. Further, Augustine held that humans were endowed with “seed principles” from which they could develop the forms conceived for them in the mind of God. [\[1\]](#)

Medical advances continually change our expectations. Think of the progress made curing or treating some cancers, AIDS, depression, and so much more. Given these rapid advances, who wants to go to a doctor who has not been to a conference or opened a professional text or journal since medical school to develop new understanding?

We have grown beyond accepting changes in medicine. We expect them. Why don’t we take the same open and inquiring approach to God? Our knowledge of a mysterious God is a barely explored infinite and inexhaustible frontier.

Like the calls to freedom heard by our Pilgrim, African, German and other European forebears, a mysterious God still calls to open and listening souls whispering, “Explore.” And yes, new worlds will always appear, not only in science and technology, but in justice, and peace, and relationships with God and all creation.

Our prayer for you as you work with these theological reflections is that more light and truth will break forth for you and me from God’s Holy Word in the world around us. May the illumination of the Holy Spirit advance our understanding of both the profane and the holy. Amen.



Ron Buford serves as Team Leader of The Stillspeaking Initiative. Earlier, he acted as spokesperson to outside media for the UCC. Mr. Buford has significant professional experience in public relations and marketing for companies large and small. He joined the United Church of Christ in 1988 and is a member and part-time staff at Pilgrim Congregational UCC in Cleveland.

[\[1\]](#) Ian G. Barbour, *When Science Meets Religion* (New York: HarperCollins 2000), 8, 103.