

## **Baptists and other Christian Churches in the first half of the Twentieth Century**

This study of one aspect of the collective life of some Baptist bodies in the first half of the twentieth century will of necessity be a very brief overview of their relationships with other Christian Churches. Baptists have been committed to world mission as part of their core identity, at least since the 1790s. The first part of this study will note the different Baptist groups that participated in the 1910 World Mission Conference, a highly significant event in the history of the Protestant missionary movement. Edinburgh 1910 laid the foundations of interdenominational understanding for the ecumenical movement of the twentieth century and is, therefore, an appropriate place to begin a study of the relationship of Baptists with other Churches in the first five decades of the twentieth century. The second theme under consideration will be the relationship of Baptists with other Churches in their own countries, followed by their approach to international ecumenical initiatives, in particular the founding of the World Council of Churches.

### **Baptists and World Mission**

The key event that had a major impact on ecumenical relations between Protestant Churches in the early twentieth Century was the World Missionary Conference held during 1910 in Edinburgh. It has been with hindsight that historians have recognised its pivotal importance.<sup>1</sup> John Mott, the chairman of that event described it as: ‘the most notable gathering in the interest of the worldwide expansion of Christianity ever held, not only in missionary annals, but in all Christian annals.’<sup>2</sup> However, as C.E. Wilson, the foreign secretary of the Baptist Missionary Society openly acknowledged in *The Baptist Times and Freeman*, the English Baptist periodical, this conference would be a Protestant, primarily Evangelical conference ‘because the great Romanist and Greek Churches will not be represented’.<sup>3</sup> A number of scholars have suggested that this gathering of Protestant Church leaders was more limited in its scope than is sometimes assumed.<sup>4</sup> This Missionary Conference was restricted to delegates from missionary societies operating among non Christian peoples. This policy was carefully upheld to ensure that a greater variety of ecclesiastical and theological convictions would be represented than at any previous gathering of this kind.<sup>5</sup> The Baptist Union of Scotland wholeheartedly welcomed this event taking place in Edinburgh.<sup>6</sup> Two Scottish Baptists were included in the twenty-two strong (male) Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) delegation<sup>7</sup>, though four female British Baptists attended as representatives of the Baptist Zenana Mission

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<sup>1</sup> S.P. Mews, ‘Kikuyu and Edinburgh: The Interaction of Attitudes to Two Conferences’, in G.J. Cuming & D. Baker (eds), *Councils and Assemblies*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), p. 346. K.S. Latourette, ‘Ecumenical Bearings of the Missionary Movement and the International Missionary Council’, in R. Rouse & S.C. Neill (eds), *A History of the Ecumenical Movement, 1517-1948*, (2<sup>nd</sup> edition, London: S.P.C.K., 1967), pp. 356-357. A.R. Vidler, *The Church in an Age of Revolution: 1789 to the Present Day* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961), p. 257.

<sup>2</sup> Cited without a reference in C.H. Hopkins, *John R. Mott 1865-1955* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), p. 342.

<sup>3</sup> C.H. Wilson, *The Baptist Times and Freeman*, 3 June 1910, p. 362.

<sup>4</sup> For example, B. Stanley, ‘Edinburgh 1910 and the Oikoumene’, in A.R. Cross (ed.), *Ecumenism and History: Studies in Honour of John H.Y. Briggs* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2002), pp. 89-105. H.H. Rowden, ‘Edinburgh 1910, Evangelicals and the Ecumenical Movement’, *Vox Evangelica*, 5 (1967), pp. 53-54.

<sup>5</sup> Latourette, ‘Missionary Movement’, pp. 357-362. Stanley, *World Missionary Conference Edinburgh 1910*, p. 320.

<sup>6</sup> BUS Council, 10 May 1910, Baptist Union of Scotland Minute Book, 1906-1915, n.p.; *Scottish Baptist Magazine*, 36.6 (June 1910), pp. 86-87.

<sup>7</sup> Details given in B.R. Talbot, ‘Fellowship in the Gospel: Scottish Baptists and their relationships with other Christian Churches 1900-1945’, *Evangelical Quarterly*, 78.4 (October 2006), p. 342.

and some other British Baptists were present in some other capacity.<sup>8</sup> Half of the British delegates were Anglican and a quarter Presbyterian, with the other quarter comprising of Baptists, Congregationalists and Methodists in roughly equal numbers.<sup>9</sup> Baptists from North America were well represented at this event. The largest contingent that included nine women in its forty-three representatives came from the American Baptist Foreign Missions Society (ABFMS). The Northern Baptist Convention had been enthusiastic about working with other Protestant Churches since its own inception in 1907. Prior to that date these American Baptists had participated in the Foreign Missions Conference of North America in 1893.<sup>10</sup> The Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptists had eight delegates, two of whom were women. Three other American Baptist agencies were present in Edinburgh. The Foreign Mission Board of the National Baptist Convention, the Foreign Mission Board of the General Conference Free Baptists and the Missionary Society of the Seventh Day Baptists had two, three and one representative respectively. There were two societies present from the ranks of Canadian Baptists, the United Baptist Foreign Mission Board with two delegates and three from the Baptist Foreign Mission Board in Canada.<sup>11</sup> Baptists in the rest of the world had only one delegate, W.T. Whitley, on behalf of the Victoria Baptist Foreign Mission from Australia. Overall, out of the 1,215 official delegates 509 were British, 491 came from North America, 169 from Continental Europe, 27 from the white colonies of South Africa and Australasia and only 19 from the non-western world, of whom eighteen came from Asia. Only one black African attended, Mark Hayford from Ghana, and his name was not on the list of official delegates.<sup>12</sup> No-one was present from the Pacific islands and the Caribbean. Latin America was also unrepresented as Protestant missionary representation from those countries would have led to the withdrawal of Anglo-Catholic Anglicans who considered those countries to be Roman Catholic and therefore without a need of any Christian missionaries. A similar view was taken by these High Churchmen of Protestant missions in Orthodox territories. Protests from various independent Evangelical mission agencies went unheeded.<sup>13</sup> The pragmatic rather than doctrinal basis of invitations to prospective delegates has been viewed as a major error by some Baptists and other conservative Evangelicals,<sup>14</sup> but no-one, including the various Baptist bodies from around the world, in the early twenty-first century, could be comfortable in hindsight with the balance of ethnic representation in evidence at the 1910 World Missionary Conference.

Edinburgh 1910 had been viewed at the time as ‘The Third Ecumenical Missionary Conference’, following previous Protestant international missionary gatherings held in London in 1888 and New York in 1900.<sup>15</sup> The term ‘ecumenical’ in the title of these events

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<sup>8</sup> For example, Sir G.W. Macalpine president of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland and Rev. Timothy Richard, a BMS missionary in China were special delegates of the British Executive Committee. *World Missionary Conference, 1910 The History and Records of the Conference*, Vol. IX (Edinburgh: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier, 1910), pp. 39-41.

<sup>9</sup> Ashley Carus-Wilson, ‘A World Parliament on Missions. The Meaning and Methods of the Edinburgh Conference of 1910’, *The Quiver* (45, 1910), p. 632. This article viewed on 29 May 09 at

[www.theologicalstudiesorguk.blogspot.com/2007/02/contemporary-account-of-edinburgh-1910.html](http://www.theologicalstudiesorguk.blogspot.com/2007/02/contemporary-account-of-edinburgh-1910.html)

<sup>10</sup> R.G. Torbet, ‘American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A.’, in J.L. Garrett (ed.), *Baptist Relations with Other Christians* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1974), p. 54.

<sup>11</sup> *World Missionary Conference 1910 The History and Records of the Conference*, Vol. IX, pp. 52-53.

<sup>12</sup> Contra J.J. Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2008), p. 123, who stated that ‘not a single African was present’.

<sup>13</sup> B. Stanley, *The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), pp. 12-13. Talbot, *Fellowship in the Gospel*, p. 342

<sup>14</sup> D.J. Hesselgrave, ‘Will We Correct the Edinburgh Error? Future Mission in Historical Perspective’, *Southwestern Journal of Theology*, 49.2 (Spring 2007), pp. 121-149.

<sup>15</sup> W.R. Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations A History of the International Missionary Council* (New York: Harper Brothers, 1952), pp.102-103.

implied a global geographical reach rather than a comprehensive or inclusive conference at which all the major sectors of Christendom were represented.<sup>16</sup> At these events in London and New York their purpose had been to impress and inspire the Christian public. However, an alternative model of a ‘consultative conference’ of authorised delegates had been in evidence at the fourth Indian Decennial Missionary Conference, held in Madras in 1902 and the Shanghai Missionary Conference in 1907 and this approach was adopted for Edinburgh 1910.<sup>17</sup> Following these meetings in Scotland a ‘Continuation Committee’ had been formed to continue the work commenced at Edinburgh. A quarterly journal *The International Review of Missions* was launched under the editorship of J.H. Oldham, with the first issue appearing in January 1912.<sup>18</sup> John Mott, chairman of the Continuation Committee undertook a tour of the Far East between October 1912 and May 1913. He held no fewer than eighteen regional and three national conferences in Ceylon, India, Burma Malaya, China, Korea and Japan.<sup>19</sup> These initiatives gave birth to a series of national and regional missionary councils or congresses. In China, for example, the China Continuation Committee took seriously the model of Edinburgh 1910 for its National Christian Conference in Shanghai in 1922 with half of all delegates Chinese and a large proportion of those present representing Chinese Churches. This event was followed by the formation of the National Christian Council in China. It became a member of the newly-formed International Missionary Council. As early as 1917 a comity agreement had been drawn up setting out principles for Protestant mission agencies proposing to work in an area in which another Protestant society was already established. Most mission agencies had signed up by 1919, including the BMS. H.R. Williamson, who served with that body in China from 1908-1938, stated that its missionaries did their utmost to promote the spirit of comity and co-operation between the different denominational missions and Churches in the vicinity of their own work and played a full part in the work of the National Christian Council.<sup>20</sup> American (Northern) and Southern Baptists from the USA had jointly established the Shanghai Baptist College in 1908 and were full partners in Ginling College in Nanking, founded in 1911. They were also committed to a Union Educational Commission that represented five American missions (Southern Methodist, Northern and Southern Presbyterian, together with Northern and Southern Baptist). It became the East China Educational Union for the entire lower Yangtze Valley co-ordinating a programme of higher education. The East China Missionary Conference of 1912 had approved a Baptist share with two Presbyterian Missions in a Union Institutional Evangelistic Centre in Hangchow. Baptists had also agreed to work with the China Inland Mission in evangelistic and educational work in the Kinhwa region.<sup>21</sup> The American Baptists had also attended comity meetings, for example in Shanghai in 1913, and agreed to co-operate in future union projects in education and medical missions, but had declined to enter into any organic union with other denominations in China.<sup>22</sup> Most of the Lutheran agencies and American Southern Baptists had also declined to participate in supporting the National Christian Council in that country. Within a few years a number of other conservative Evangelical bodies, for example the Christian and Missionary Alliance and the China Inland Mission, together with some national Chinese Christian groups withdrew, due to what they

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<sup>16</sup> Stanley, *World Missionary Conference Edinburgh 1910*, pp. 18-19, 23.

<sup>17</sup> W.H.T Gairdner, *Edinburgh 1910* (Edinburgh: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier, 1910), p. 13; Stanley, *World Missionary Conference Edinburgh 1910*, pp. 26-28.

<sup>18</sup> *Report of Commission VI*, pp.53-54; K. Clements, *Faith on the Frontier A Life of J.H. Oldham* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1999), pp. 105-108.

<sup>19</sup> Latourette, ‘Ecumenical Bearings of the Missionary Movement’, p. 364.

<sup>20</sup> H.R. Williamson, *British Baptists in China* (London: Carey Kingsgate Press, 1957), p. 216.

<sup>21</sup> R.G. Torbet, *Venture of Faith The Story of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society and the Women’s American Baptist Foreign Mission Society 1814-1954* (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1955), pp. 291, 310-311.

<sup>22</sup> Torbet, *Venture of Faith*, p. 295.

perceived as the increasingly modernist or liberal tendencies of the National Christian Council in China. A rival League of Evangelical Churches was formed under mainly Chinese leadership.<sup>23</sup> The future tensions in relationships between theologically liberal and conservative Christians, that would become a major problem by the second half of the twentieth century, were already in evidence amongst the various mission bodies working in China, but not uniquely in that country.<sup>24</sup>

The International Missionary Council (IMC) had been constituted in October 1921 with sixty-one representatives present from fourteen different countries<sup>25</sup>, though overwhelmingly from the West with only seven delegates from the younger churches in the two-thirds world.<sup>26</sup> However, it was only a small natural step forward in uniting mission agencies because it built on the successful work of regional mission bodies amongst the Christian Churches. For example, The Committee of (Twelve) German Evangelical Missions had been founded as early as 1885 and the Continental Missionary Conference of Europe in 1886. This later body had brought together representatives of missionary societies in Germany, Denmark, Finland, France, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland in Bremen, Germany, every four years from 1886 to its last meeting in 1935.<sup>27</sup> The largest of the member bodies of the IMC was the Foreign Missions Conference of North America, founded in January 1893 by twenty-three organisations in Canada and the United States. Edinburgh 1910 undoubtedly contributed to the founding of the Conference of Missionary Societies of Great Britain and Ireland in 1912.<sup>28</sup> Other national Missionary Councils were formed after the IMC. These included in Europe The Northern Missionary Council in 1923, with representatives from Sweden, Norway and Finland and further afield, The United Missionary Council of Australia constituted in 1920 together with its sister body in New Zealand in 1926, both agencies formed after visits by John Mott to these countries.<sup>29</sup> Although Edinburgh 1910 had not created the conditions for the formation of National Missionary Councils, it had encouraged the spirit of co-operation between different denominational mission agencies in a number of countries and enabled the formation of the IMC to take place with a much wider representation of participating countries.

One example of the impact of Edinburgh 1910 on a specific country can be seen in its influence on the host country. In Scotland 'The Missionary Congress of Scottish Churches' that took place in Glasgow in October 1922 was inspired by the 1910 World Missionary Conference. Baptist minister John MacBeath, the conference secretary<sup>30</sup>, was convinced that this 'occasion would be a landmark in the history of the Scottish Churches and their missions overseas'. There were seventy-five Scottish Baptists registered as official delegates, a significant number of representatives from a small denomination. MacBeath was convinced that a people with vision who prayed hard for God to be at work in the world would see that

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<sup>23</sup> Latourette, 'Ecumenical Bearings of the Missionary Movement', pp. 378-382.

<sup>24</sup> Adrian Hastings in *The Church in Africa 1450-1950* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), pp. 550-552. perceptively noted that the majority of Protestant missionaries were more conservative in their theology than their respective denominations prior to Edinburgh 1910. This conference had retained the famous Student Christian Movement motto 'The Evangelisation of the world in this generation', but it was quickly dropped thereafter.

<sup>25</sup> Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations*, p. 202.

<sup>26</sup> Latourette, 'Ecumenical Bearings of the Missionary Movement', p. 366.

<sup>27</sup> 'Zahn, Franz Michael, 1833 to 1900, Bremen Mission, Germany', *Dictionary of African Biography*, (New Haven, CT: Overseas Ministries Study Centre, 2002), n.p. This information obtained from [www.dacb.org/stories/non%20africans/legacy\\_zahn.html](http://www.dacb.org/stories/non%20africans/legacy_zahn.html), accessed 20 June 2009; See also Latourette, 'Ecumenical Bearings of the Missionary Movement', p. 373.

<sup>28</sup> Stanley, *World Missionary Conference Edinburgh 1910*, pp. 318-320

<sup>29</sup> Latourette, 'Ecumenical Bearings of the Missionary Movement', pp. 373-377.

<sup>30</sup> *SBM*, 48.11 (November 1922), p. 125.

'the churches shall be full of increase and all lands shall see the glory of the Lord'.<sup>31</sup> One of the follow-up events to this gathering was a major mission week in Aberdeen in which all the Protestant churches participated. 'The campaign from Monday, October 30, to Sunday November 12, succeeded in arousing interest in Aberdeen as no religious effort has done for the past decade... All the churches...co-operated in the enterprise, thus affording a superb demonstration of the unity that lies deeper than their differences.'<sup>32</sup> MacBeath, in his summary of the two year missionary campaign in Scotland, sought to underline the uniqueness of its successes.

It was the first effort in which all the Reformed Churches united together. There were no precarious negotiations concerning union – there was rather the impulse of a great task that could best be done together. The Campaign has created a new spirit of fraternity throughout the churches which will do much to facilitate common service in the future.<sup>33</sup>

This event underlined the benefits of co-operation, first of all in mission and then to other forms of united action.

### **Baptists and Other Churches in their own countries**

Baptists, like other branches of the Christian family in the first half of the twentieth century, recognised that closer ties with other Churches would be beneficial for work at home as well as overseas. American Baptists in the Northern Baptist Convention had joined the Home Mission Council in their country in 1908 and that same year were charter members of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America. In 1950 this denomination participated in the formation of the National Council of Churches of Christ. However, working closely with other churches is not the same as merging with them unless core principles were held in common. As a result a merger with the Free Will Baptists in 1911 was acceptable, but a potential union with paedo-baptist denominations in 1919 and the Disciples of Christ between 1930 and 1947 was rejected.<sup>34</sup> The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), by contrast, was more cautious about ecumenical relationships.<sup>35</sup> In 1914 it produced its most conciliatory statement on inter-church relations in America entitled: 'Pronouncement on Christian Union and Denominational Efficiency'. However, the American War Department's decision to continue allowing Roman Catholics freedom to promote their principles amongst men in the armed forces in 1917, a concession that had previously been available to the various Protestant Churches, whereas Protestant bodies were forced to channel their efforts through interdenominational agencies like the YMCA, led to growing protests from Southern Baptists. James B. Gambrell, who gave the first Presidential address to the SBC in its history, in 1919, reversed his earlier favourable thoughts on inter-church co-operation and thundered against the government plan that 'allowed three expressions of religion in the camps: "Judaism, Catholicism and YMCA-ism"'.<sup>36</sup> A minor concern in 1917 had grown into full-scale resentment of this policy in 1919. As a result, the SBC decided in 1919 to reject participation in further ecumenical initiatives, a policy that continued to express the

<sup>31</sup> *SBM*, 48.8 (August 1922), p. 92. MacBeath echoed similar sentiments in a final article before the conference in the same periodical, 48.10 (October 1922), pp. 115-116.

<sup>32</sup> *SBM*, 48.12 (December 1922), p. 147.

<sup>33</sup> J. MacBeath, 'The Close of the Missionary Campaign', *SBM*, 49.6 (June 1923), pp. 75-76.

<sup>34</sup> Torbet, 'American Baptist Churches in the USA', p. 54.

<sup>35</sup> J.C. Fletcher, *The Southern Baptist Convention* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1994), p. 121.

<sup>36</sup> W.W. Barnes, *The Southern Baptist Convention 1845-1953* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1954), pp. 270-284. See also J.B. Gambrell, *Baptists and Their Business* (Nashville: Sunday School Board, Southern Baptist Convention, 1919), pp. 95ff; cited by R.O. Ryland, 'Southern Baptist Convention' in Garrett (ed.), *Baptist Relations with Other Christians*, p. 76.

convictions of a majority of its constituency for at least the next fifty years.<sup>37</sup> The two major African-American denominations, the National Baptist Convention of America and the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc. were both full participants in the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA in the twentieth century.<sup>38</sup> Of the smaller Baptist bodies in the USA, only the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference has been a constituent member of the National Council of the Churches of Christ.<sup>39</sup> The overwhelming majority of American Baptists were happy in this period to work with other Christians on a wide range of issues, but were equally opposed to attempts at organic unions or mergers between Baptist and paedo-baptist bodies.

Inter-church relations in Canada in the first half of the twentieth century were dominated by the foundation of the United Church of Canada in 1925<sup>40</sup>, by the merger of the large Methodist Church, the small Congregational Church and around half of the Presbyterian Church. The Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec (BCOQ) articulated a clear and unequivocal rejection of the invitation to join this new body in 1907 declaring that Baptists had a necessity to ‘maintain a separate organised existence’ and also had a distinctive baptistic witness to proclaim to the world, although they commended these paedo-baptist denominations on their plans for union.<sup>41</sup> A year earlier The United Baptist Convention of the Maritime Provinces (UBCMP) had also replied to this invitation with a similar response.<sup>42</sup> The wide range of beliefs and cultural backgrounds of the small Baptist bodies in a vast country hindered attempts to form any kind of workable organisation amongst Canadian Baptists until 1944 when the Baptist Federation of Canada (BFC) was constituted, embracing the three regional conventions, The United Baptist Convention of the Maritime Provinces (UBCMP), The Baptist Union of Western Canada, together with their sister body in Ontario and Quebec. Although an organic union with other Christian bodies was ruled out, Canadian Baptists willingly agreed to participate in the production of a new hymnbook with the United Church of Canada in the 1930s. Further collaboration with the United Church resulted in the publishing of the Canadian Baptist-edited Sunday School materials as well. However, a minority of Baptist churches declined to use these publications.<sup>43</sup> Baptists on the Atlantic

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<sup>37</sup> Ryland, ‘Southern Baptist Convention’, pp. 73-77. A good analysis of why Southern Baptists held this conviction is given in S.J. Grenz, ‘Baptist and Evangelical: One Northern Baptist’s Perspective’, in D.S. Dockery (ed.), *Southern Baptists & American Evangelicals* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1993), pp. 64- 67.

<sup>38</sup> E.A. Freeman, ‘Negro Conventions (U.S.A.)’, in Garrett (ed.), *Baptist Relations with Other Christians*, pp. 88-92. More details on the witness of Black Baptist Churches in the USA are found in L. Fitts, *A History of Black Baptists* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1985).

<sup>39</sup> G.L. Borchert, ‘Other Conferences and Associations (USA)’ in Garrett (ed.), *Baptist Relations with Other Christians*, pp. 93-104.

<sup>40</sup> The movement towards church union both within denominations and then across their boundaries since the formation of the Confederation of Canada in 1867 is explained succinctly in P.D. Airhart, ‘Ordering a New Nation and Reordering Protestantism 1867-1914’ and R.A. Wright, ‘The Canadian Protestant Tradition 1914-1945’, in G.A. Rawlyk (ed.), *The Canadian Protestant Experience 1760-1990* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1990), pp. 98-101 and pp. 149-154.

<sup>41</sup> *The Canadian Baptist*, 12 September 1907; *Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec Year Book*, (1907), pp. 223-225; E.L. Morrow, *Church Union in Canada* (Toronto: Thomas Allen, 1923), pp. 34-39. See also H.A. Renfree, *Heritage and Horizon: The Baptist Story in Canada* (Mississauga, Ontario: Canadian Baptist Federation, 1988), pp. 205-206.

<sup>42</sup> *UBCMP Year Book*, (1906), pp. 128-129. For more details on Canadian Baptist responses to ecumenical initiatives in their own country see C. Jones, ‘Western Canadian Baptists and Ecumenical Initiatives in the Early Twentieth Century’, a paper given in July 2009 at the International Conference on Baptist Studies, V, Melbourne, Australia. I am grateful to Callum Jones for information on the approaches of the different Canadian Baptist bodies in this period.

<sup>43</sup> Renfree, *Heritage and Horizon*, p. 241. J.K. Zemen, ‘The Changing Baptist Identity in Canada since World War II Prolegomena to a Study’, in P.R. Dekar & M.J.S. Ford (eds), *Celebrating the Canadian Baptist Heritage* (Hamilton, Ontario: McMaster University Divinity College, n.d.), p. 3

coast, unlike their denominational colleagues in the rest of Canada played a more central role in the life of their region and were happy to work with other Churches in most initiatives that stopped short of formal mergers.<sup>44</sup> During the early 1940s, for example, the UBCMP showed its confidence in the co-operative principle in Christian Education through the Maritime Religious Education Council. Its social service board recorded its links with the Christian Social Council of Canada. Also a strong inter-church Committee on Protestant-Roman Catholic Relations was formed in 1943 to watch for movements infringing on religious liberty and to promote Protestantism. In addition, the new general secretary of this Baptist convention was appointed to attend the organisational meeting of a proposed national Christian agency, the Canadian Council of Churches that was operational by 1946.<sup>45</sup> It is not surprising that the branch of the Canadian Baptist family most secure in its own identity, the UBCMP, was the one that had the closest ties with other Canadian Churches.

Baptists in East Asia like their colleagues in Latin America were a small minority that sought to promote their distinctive witness in countries where other Christian traditions had established a presence a good number of years earlier. Congregations planted by various Baptist mission agencies in China, for example, tended to reflect the ecumenical sympathies or otherwise of their 'parent' body. As a result those causes associated with the BMS joined with others planted by missionaries from some Presbyterian, Congregational, United Church of Canada, Reformed Lutheran, United Brethren (USA) and Swedish Missionary Society, together with some independent Chinese Churches to form the Church of Christ in China. This denomination by 1950 had a membership of 177,000 out of a registered total of 950,000 Protestant Christians in that country. However, congregations associated with Baptists from North and South America and Sweden made the decision not to seek formal affiliation with this national institution.<sup>46</sup> Burmese Baptists were enthusiastic about partnership with other churches in their country and joined the Burma Christian Council at its formation in 1950.<sup>47</sup> Japanese Baptist Churches began through the work of Northern and Southern Baptists in the second half of the nineteenth century. Prior to the 1930s under the influence of American missionaries these causes had held back from significant ecumenical involvement until Dr William Axling (ABFMS), together with some Japanese colleagues, encouraged congregations associated with his mission agency to retain an affiliation with the United Church of Christ in Japan. After Axling left Japan some of these Baptist churches left the United Church to form the Japan Baptist Union, though others remained and lost their Baptist identity. By contrast, congregations related to the Southern Baptists remained aloof from ecumenical engagement until forced to do so between 1941 and 1946 when together with most denominations they were forced to join the United Church of Christ (Kyodan). In 1946 when free to do so these churches withdrew and formed the Japan Baptist Convention (JBC)), though they were willing to work with other Christian Churches through the National

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<sup>44</sup> 'Convention Minutes', *Yearbook of the UBCMP*, 1921, p. 15; cited by Renfree, *Heritage and Horizon*, p. 236. The Regular (Calvinistic) Baptists in the Maritime Provinces had united with their Free Will Baptist colleagues in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, five years earlier than a similar merger of Northern and Free Will Baptists in the USA, in 1906, and for similar reasons. For details of these mergers see G.E. Levy, *Baptists of the Maritime Provinces 1753-1946* (Saint John, New Brunswick: Barnes Hopkins, 1946), pp267- 282.

<sup>45</sup> *Yearbook of the UBCMP*, 1939, pp. 18, 153-154; 1944, pp. 44, 179-180; 1946, p. 211; cited by Renfree, *Heritage and Horizon*, p. 243.

<sup>46</sup> Williamson, *British Baptists in China*, pp. 216-219. P. S. Hsu, 'East Asia', in Garrett (ed.), *Baptist Relations with Other Christians*, pp. 155-157, while broadly agreeing with Williamson's position, disagreed over the position of churches associated with the American (Northern) Baptists. Hsu maintained that some of these churches affiliated with the Church of Christ in China, though none associated with Southern Baptists had taken this step.

<sup>47</sup> I am grateful to Samuel Ngun Ling from the Myanmar Institute of Theology for providing this information.

Christian Council of Japan.<sup>48</sup> East Asian Baptists were inclined to engage in ecumenical initiatives, mindful as they were of being a small religious minority in these countries<sup>49</sup>. However, guidance from the mission agencies whose workers had planted these churches provided, in some cases, advice that pointed in a contrary direction. As a result, some East Asian Baptists were significantly less open to working with Christians from other Churches in formal inter-church bodies.

Australian Baptists in general have worked happily with all other Protestant denominations in their own country, although their involvement in ecumenical initiatives in the first half of the twentieth century had been limited due to a fear of increasing the power of the Roman Catholic Church, which represented around 30% of the population.<sup>50</sup> On 1 January 1901 by an Act of the British Parliament, Australia was made a nation. Federation between the different Australian colonies led to a Presbyterian General Assembly of Australia that same year and a Methodist Union was achieved as early as 1902, but Baptists, although stimulated both by political union in the nation and denominational union amongst other Churches, could not agree on a federal structure in their own ranks. There were even moves at that time to establish a United Evangelical Protestant Church, but this initiative did not succeed.<sup>51</sup> However, in the different regions of Australia there had been a variety of approaches to inter-church relations. The largest Baptist Union, New South Wales, the dominant power in national Baptist life, was firmly opposed to ecumenical engagement whilst South Australia and Victoria were far more open.<sup>52</sup> It had taken until 1925 for the different state Baptist Unions to agree on a constitution for the newly-formed Baptist Union of Australia.<sup>53</sup> As a result, a much longer timescale would be required for the formation of an agreed position concerning relationships with other Australian denominations.<sup>54</sup> New Zealand Baptists, by contrast, had always had cordial relationships with the other Churches, even in the settlements which had a distinctly ecclesiastical origin such as Christchurch and Dunedin. A possible merger with the Congregationalists in Timaru led to discussions between the two denominations, but by 1912 the Baptists had decided to maintain a separate witness, both locally and by implication as a denomination. Relations were also good with the other Free Churches, and this experience had led to a New Zealand equivalent of the Free Church Councils in Britain being established in various parts of the country.<sup>55</sup> It was, therefore no surprise that when the New Zealand Council of Churches came into being in April 1941 that

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<sup>48</sup> Hsu, 'East Asia', pp. 157-158. There was, though some pressure from the SBC as its money and missionaries would not have been sent back to Japan to work with JBC congregations after World War Two had these churches remained in the United Church of Christ. I am grateful to Dr Eiko Kanamaru from the Seinan Gakuin University, Fukuoka, Japan, for providing this information.

<sup>49</sup> Torbet, *Venture of Faith*, p. 349.

<sup>50</sup> D.M. Himbury, 'Australasia', in Garrett (ed.), *Baptist Relations with Other Christians*, pp. 178-179. A more detailed study of the relationship of Australian Baptists with other Christian Churches is found in D. Parker, 'Baptists and Other Christians in Australia', a paper given in July 2009 at the ICOBS, V, Melbourne, Australia.

<sup>51</sup> K.R. Manley, *From Woolloomooloo to 'Eternity': A History of Australian Baptists, Volume 1: Growing an Australian Church (1831-1914)* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2006), p. 182; See also F. Engel, *Australian Christians in Conflict and Unity* (Melbourne: Joint Board of Christian Education, 1984).

<sup>52</sup> Manley, *From Woolloomooloo to 'Eternity': Volume 2: A National Church in a Global Community (1914-2005)*, p. 580. See also K.R. Manley, 'The Shaping of Baptist Identity in Australia', I.M. Randall, T. Pilli, & A.R. Cross (eds), *Baptists Identities* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2006), pp. 291-294 for more details of different Australian Baptist identities in this era.

<sup>53</sup> *The Australian Baptist*, 10.31 (1 August 1922), p. 1; 14.30 (27 July 1926), p. 1; 14.33 (17 August 1926), pp. 1-2; 14.35 (31 August 1926), pp. 1-2; 14.36 (7 September 1926), pp. 1-3, 8;

<sup>54</sup> Parker, 'Baptists and other Christians in Australia', p. 13, after acknowledging some support for ecumenical initiatives noted that; 'most Australian Baptists have been indifferent, opposed, or in some cases, vociferously hostile' to such ventures.

<sup>55</sup> J.B. Chambers, *"A Peculiar People" Congregationalism in New Zealand* (Levin: Congregational Union of New Zealand, 1984), pp. 282-286.



the Baptist Union was a founder member of that body.<sup>56</sup> Although New Zealand Baptists had been committed consistently to ecumenical engagement, they were equally opposed to any involvement in the moves towards reunion which had been a feature of the life of the other major denominations in that country in the twentieth century.<sup>57</sup> In addition, like Australian Baptists, the majority in their ranks were deeply hesitant about ecumenical engagement with the Roman Catholic Church. It is likely that the slight differences between Baptists in the two countries on this subject can be accounted for by a more powerful and influential Roman Catholic Church in Australia, together with the geographical and communication challenges Australian Baptists faced in seeking to work together in the first half of the twentieth century.

Baptists in Continental Europe presented a varied series of responses to the subject of inter-church relations. In Northern Europe Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Norway, together with Germany, Switzerland and the Netherlands, these countries were historically Protestant, holding the Lutheran or Reformed understanding of the Christian faith, although sizable numbers of Roman Catholics were found in Germany and Switzerland. The State Churches, to which the vast majority of the population were nominally associated, had severely persecuted smaller denominations, for example, the Baptists, in the nineteenth century. Although this oppression had ceased it had been replaced merely by a civil toleration until the second half of the twentieth century. Baptists in these countries had close ties with the other smaller Free Churches, for example Methodists and Congregationalists, and were associated with the Evangelical Alliance.<sup>58</sup> Conditions for witness in the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in this period were extremely difficult. In 1944 the Baptists and Evangelical Christians united to form the All Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists (AUCECB) and a majority of Pentecostals also joined this body the following year.<sup>59</sup> In Eastern Europe prior to World War Two Baptists there had also suffered greatly at the hands of the larger denominations. For example, from Roman Catholicism in Poland, the Orthodox Church in Romania and Reformed and Lutheran Churches in Hungary; Baptists were considered to be sectarians and ecumenical engagement with State Churches only became possible much later in the century. The small Baptist community in Poland has been an enthusiastic participant in the Ecumenical Council with the majority of other Churches in that country.<sup>60</sup> However, it has always been determined to maintain a distinctive witness in Poland since that country gained its independence in 1918. After World War Two, for example, Polish Baptists refused to enter the United Evangelical Church, a body that contained the various Free Church denominations, because they feared the influence of Pentecostals.<sup>61</sup> Some of the most intense persecution experienced by Baptists in this era took place in Romania at the hands of their government, at the instigation of the Orthodox Church. This problem was at its most severe in the 1930s when, in spite of all their claims to be in favour of promoting religious tolerance, Archbishop Colan was the Minister of Cults and the Patriarch of the Orthodox Church was the Prime Minister.<sup>62</sup> This oppression culminated in the notorious 1938 decree enforcing the closure of all the approximately 1600 Baptist

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<sup>56</sup> 'Baptists and the ecumenical movement', *New Zealand Baptist*, (June 1972), pp. 8-9, cited by L. Guy (ed), *Baptists in Twentieth Century New Zealand* (Auckland: New Zealand Baptist Research and Historical Society, 2005), pp. 56-57. See also M. Sutherland, 'The Basis of Union: New Zealand Baptists forge a Denomination in the 1940s' in *The Journal of Religious History*, 27.1 (February 2003), pp. 72-73, gives an unusual example of ecumenical co-operation in which Baptists played a leading part.

<sup>57</sup> Himbury, 'Australasia', pp. 182-184.

<sup>58</sup> R. Thaut, 'Northern Europe', in Garrett (ed.), *Baptist Relations with Other Christians*, pp. 21-24.

<sup>59</sup> A. Bichkov & I. Ivanov, 'The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics' in Garrett (ed.), *Baptist Relations with Other Christians*, pp. 30-33.

<sup>60</sup> D. Lotz, 'Eastern Europe', in Garrett (ed.), *Baptist Relations with Other Christians*, pp. 35-36.

<sup>61</sup> A.W. Wardin (ed.), *Baptists Around the World* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), pp. 206-208.

<sup>62</sup> *SBM*, March 1938, p. 4.

Churches in Romania, a policy enforced for over five months.<sup>63</sup> Baptist protests at this infringement of basic religious and civil liberties had some impact on the Romanian Government, especially when presented in person in Romania by J.H. Rushbrooke, a leading English Baptist and a passionate advocate for human rights.<sup>64</sup> Relations with Lutherans and Reformed Christians in this era were minimal but good.<sup>65</sup> Baptists in Hungary, like the other Free Churches, were persecuted not only by Roman Catholics, but also by the other two 'accepted' denominations, the Lutheran and Reformed Churches. However, Hungarian Baptists were committed to working with other churches and were members of the Free Church Council of Churches, and the Hungarian Evangelical Alliance.<sup>66</sup> In a context where religious liberty was often significantly restricted Baptists, along with other Free Churches, struggled to maintain an effective witness for their faith. Inter-church relations with other oppressed denominations were cordial, but having any kind of ecumenical engagement with State Churches needed to wait until after World War Two.

British Baptists in England and Wales, in the Baptist Union of Great Britain (BUGBI), in the last decade of the nineteenth century, had played a leading part in the establishment of local Free Church Councils and in the formation of the National Council of the Evangelical Free Churches (NCEFC) in 1896. Dr Richard Glover (Bristol), C.F. Aked (Liverpool), Alexander McLaren (Manchester) and J.C. Carlile (Folkestone) were amongst the prominent Baptist members of this body.<sup>67</sup> Welsh Christians had shown great enthusiasm for the new bodies and by 1908 167 local Free Church Councils had been established in Wales. However, Welsh Baptists, in the largely Welsh-speaking Baptist Union of Wales (BUW), had felt unable to join the Councils because these bodies by celebrating the Lord's Supper at some of their meetings had violated their Baptist conviction that only those baptised on profession of faith could participate in this ordinance. Interdenominational communion services, therefore, on these terms was impermissible.<sup>68</sup> Some British Christians, including John H. Shakespeare, secretary of BUGBI from 1898 to 1924, had been dissatisfied with the NCEFC's perceived lack of vision for a closer federation of Free Churches<sup>69</sup> and formed a rival Federal Council of the Evangelical Free Churches in 1919 as a step towards a United Free Church of England. These two bodies were later united at a meeting held in Baptist Church House, London, in September 1940.<sup>70</sup> The vast majority of Baptists in BUGBI did not share Shakespeare's vision for a United Free Church, but ironically his 1912 proposal for a United Board to supervise a redistribution of Free Church resources and to undertake a wide social and evangelistic ministry<sup>71</sup> was later accepted with reference to one particular form of Christian ministry, namely army and navy chaplaincy. The British Government had declined to accept chaplains from a number of Free Church denominations, including Baptists, for service with regiments in World War One. In response to this problem the United Navy and Army Board

<sup>63</sup> Decizie [Law] No.26, 208, cited by B. Green, *Tomorrow's Man: A Biography of James Henry Rushbrooke* (Didcot: Baptist Historical Society, 1997), p. 152. The BWA letter of protest at this Decizie is printed in the *SBM*, October 1938, p. 16.

<sup>64</sup> *SBM*, November 1935, p. 2; May 1938, p. 7, are examples.

<sup>65</sup> Lotz, 'Eastern Europe', pp. 39-40.

<sup>66</sup> Lotz, 'Eastern Europe', pp. 57-58; Wardin, *Baptists Around the World*, pp. 262-263.

<sup>67</sup> A.R. Cross, 'Service to the Ecumenical Movement: The Contribution of British Baptists', *Baptist Quarterly*, 38.3 (July, 1999) pp. 108-109.

<sup>68</sup> M.J. Collis, 'Baptists and Church Unity in Wales in the Twentieth Century', p. 4; a paper given in July 2009 at the ICOBS, V, Melbourne, Australia.

<sup>69</sup> P. Shepherd, *The Making of a Modern Denomination John Howard Shakespeare and the English Baptists 1898-1924* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2001), pp. 94-95.

<sup>70</sup> E.K.H. Jordan, *Free Church Unity History of the Free Church Council Movement 1896-1941* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1956), pp. 127-135. See also Cross, 'Services to the Ecumenical Movement', pp. 108-109; E.A. Payne, 'Great Britain', in Garrett (ed), *Baptist Relations with Other Christians*, p. 15.

<sup>71</sup> Jordan, *Free Church Unity*, p. 127.

was constituted in March 1915 with Shakespeare and R.J. Wells, secretary of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, as its joint secretaries.<sup>72</sup> Shakespeare was delighted with its success. In 1916 he declared: ‘we have seen the working in miniature and for a specific purpose of a partially United Free Church of England. It has worked well.’<sup>73</sup> Shakespeare had sought reunion of all the Free Churches with the Church of England, but this vision had died after an Anglican conference in July 1923, in which it was suggested that Free Church ministries might be ‘irregular or defective’ without Episcopal ordination.<sup>74</sup> However, many British Baptists had accepted the need for closer ties between the Churches and when the two Free Church bodies merged in 1940 the Federal Council was the model for the amalgamated body.<sup>75</sup> This crucial decision paved the way for the next steps in inter-Church relations in the 1940s. A further milestone in British ecumenism took place in the Council Chamber of Baptist Church House, London, when the British Council of Churches (BCC) was formed in September 1942. A number of Baptists from the BUGBI played key roles from the very beginning of the BCC. These included Dr M.E. Aubrey, BCC Vice President, 1948-50; Dr Hugh Martin, Chair of BCC Administrative Committee (1943-1956); Dr J.H. Rushbrooke, Acting Chair of International Affairs (1945) together with Clifford Cleal, Secretary of the BCC Social Responsibility Department from 1948 to 1953.<sup>76</sup> Baptists in Scotland were more cautious than the BUGBI over ecumenical engagement, but did not hesitate to join the Scottish Council of Churches (SCC) on its formation in 1924.<sup>77</sup> The success of the SCC was the reason why Scottish Baptists were to reject a Continuing United Free Church proposal for the establishment of a Free Church Council in Scotland.<sup>78</sup> British Baptists in the BUGBI had been committed to developing ever closer ties with other Churches in the first half of the twentieth Century, but stopped short of any thoughts of a merger with other denominations. Scottish Baptists had taken a similar approach. Welsh Baptists in the BUW, by contrast, had struggled over ecumenical engagement due to their strict communion principles.

### **Baptists and Other Churches on an International Level**

After the traumatic events of World War One, progress in inter-Church relations was inevitably slow. A small gathering of ninety delegates from fifteen countries assembled at Geneva in 1920 and began the process of rebuilding and strengthening relationships damaged during the previous decade. Momentum increased following the Universal Christian Conference on Life and Work at Stockholm (1925) and the First World Conference on Faith and Order at Lausanne (1927), which bore fruit in the increased representation at the Second

<sup>72</sup> For more details of the work of this organisation see N.E. Allison, *The Official History of the United Board Volume One The Clash of Empires 1914-1939* (Great Bookham: United Navy, Army and Air Force Board, 2008).

<sup>73</sup> J.H. Shakespeare, ‘Forward’, in F.C. Spurr, *Some Chaplains in Khaki* (London: The Kingsgate Press, 1916), p. 8. See also Shepherd, *Making of a Modern Denomination*, pp. 96-100. Idealist chaplains in the RAF during World War Two did call for the creation of a United Free Church after the war, although it was recognised that there were serious obstacles to overcome before Baptists could be incorporated into such a body, due to their understanding of baptism. See W.E. Mantle, ‘The Theological Significance of the P.M.U.B. Church of the Royal Air Force and its Contribution to the Reunion of the Churches’, (M.A. dissertation, University of Bristol, 1965), pp. 76-77.

<sup>74</sup> G.K.A. Bell, *Documents on Christian Unity 1920-1924* (London: Oxford University Press, 1924), pp. 156-163; cited by Shepherd, *Making of a Modern Denomination*, p.126.

<sup>75</sup> Shepherd, *Making of a Modern Denomination*, p. 129.

<sup>76</sup> Cross, ‘Service to the Ecumenical Movement’, pp. 107-111.

<sup>77</sup> D.B. Forrester, ‘Ecumenical Movement’, in N.M. de S. Cameron (ed.), *Dictionary of Scottish Church History & Theology* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1993), pp. 273-274.

<sup>78</sup> BUS Council, 25 May 1943, Baptist Union of Scotland Minute Book, 1942-1945, p. 245.

World Conference on Faith and Order at Edinburgh in August 1937, where 344 delegates from 123 denominations were present.<sup>79</sup> This latter Conference had been preceded by two smaller meetings in London and Oxford in July 1937 in which the proposal for a world Council of Churches had been promulgated. At the Oxford Conference Anglican Archbishop William Temple had proclaimed ‘the need for a body which would provide “a voice for non-Roman Christendom”, and the desirability of basing the whole ecumenical movement more directly on the Churches themselves.’ His proposal was adopted with only two dissentient voices. After a vigorous debate the Edinburgh 1937 delegates approved the Oxford resolution with only one expression of dissent.<sup>80</sup> A special advisory conference met in Utrecht in May 1938 to draw up the basis for the proposed World Council of Churches. The agreed statement which was confirmed at the first Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Amsterdam, in August 1948, read: ‘The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of Churches which accepts our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour.’ Utrecht delegates had not imagined the length of the delay that resulted, due to World War Two, before the vision for the WCC became a reality.<sup>81</sup> The work of the International Missionary Council (IMC), although distinct from this process, was not in competition with it. In fact through its engagement with Churches in parts of the world virtually unrepresented at Edinburgh 1910 it enabled interaction between and fellowship with Christian bodies from a greater proportion of countries in the world. Its 1928 Jerusalem conference attracted nearly a quarter of its delegates from the ‘younger churches’ in lands traditionally viewed as ‘mission fields’. A major breakthrough came at its 1938 gathering at Madras Christian College, Tambaram, India, where 471 representatives from sixty-nine countries were present, with the majority of those present coming from the ‘younger Churches’. This truly representative conference of Christian Churches was also the first IMC event held in Asia.<sup>82</sup> The groundwork had been laid for Amsterdam 1948, at which 351 official delegates of 147 Churches in forty-four countries had gathered, together with many other invited guests to launch this new body. Of the major Christian denominations only the Roman Catholic Church, the Russian Orthodox Church, the Southern Baptist Convention and the Missouri Synod of Lutherans were not officially represented. In assessing the significance of Amsterdam 1948 it is clear that it was in many respects only a significant milestone on an ecclesiastical journey, but one in which the Churches themselves had accepted responsibility for this process and that the ecumenical movement had gained a firm foundation in the continuous life of the Churches.<sup>83</sup> However, Churches in Asia, Africa and Latin America were still under-represented<sup>84</sup>, but this new venture had gained significant momentum and represented the ecumenical mobilisation of the vast majority of Christian Churches.

How did the various branches of the Baptist family interpret the formation of the WCC and its vision for future inter-Church co-operation? The majority of American Baptists had seen the formation of the World Council of Churches (WCC) as a natural development for Churches already in membership with the National Churches of Christ in the USA. They did

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<sup>79</sup> A helpful summary of this process of events is given in W.R. Estep, *Baptists and Christian Unity* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1966), pp.26-40.

<sup>80</sup> William Temple cited by W.A. Visser’T Hooft, ‘The Genesis of the World Council of Churches’, in Rouse and Neill (eds), *History of the Ecumenical Movement, 1517-1948*, p. 703.

<sup>81</sup> Visser’T Hooft, ‘The Genesis of the World Council of Churches’, in Rouse and Neill (eds), *History of the Ecumenical Movement, 1517-1948*, p. 705.

<sup>82</sup> Estep, *Baptists and Christian Unity*, pp. 40-44.

<sup>83</sup> Visser’T Hooft, ‘The Genesis of the World Council of Churches’, pp. 719-724. See also Estep, *Baptists and Christian Unity*, pp. 49-54.

<sup>84</sup> W.A. Visser’T Hooft, ‘The General Ecumenical Developments since 1948’, in H.E. Fey (ed.), *The Ecumenical Advance A History of The Ecumenical Movement Volume 2 1948-1968* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1970), p. 4.

not see it in any way as compromising the unique witness of their Baptist constituency.<sup>85</sup> However, a minority of their members holding firmly to a more conservative theological position than many in their ranks, left the connexion in 1933 to form the General Association of Regular Baptists. Others with a similar theological framework who remained in the Convention opposed these ecumenical developments. In 1939 a motion was passed at the Convention declaring that the Northern Baptists could continue their relationship with the ecumenical organisations only if ‘their unique and historic Baptist principles’ were recognised. The decision to affiliate with the WCC, taken in 1947, led to a further secession of members known as ‘the Conservative Baptist Association’. The majority of members had won the day, at the price of the withdrawal of a significant proportion of their constituency.<sup>86</sup> The National Baptist Convention of America joined the WCC at its inception<sup>87</sup>, as did the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference.<sup>88</sup> The National Baptist Convention U.S.A., Inc., took a more cautious line, but joined the WCC outside the time frame of this study.<sup>89</sup> Southern Baptists, by contrast had a minimal involvement in such initiatives. In 1937 the President of the SBC was authorised to attend the Edinburgh Conference on Faith and Order and George Truett from Dallas was appointed as the delegate for the Oxford Conference on Church Community and State that same year. As Truett was unable to attend, Convention President John R. Sampey and his wife and two others represented the SBC at both these events. Three times in 1938, 1940 and 1948 the SBC affirmed its policy of isolation from the ecumenical movement. The 1948 rejection letter included the phrase ‘with perhaps increased conviction’ indicating the strength of feeling in that constituency.<sup>90</sup> On this subject Canadian Baptists were closer in sentiments to the Southern Baptists. Full consideration was given to joining the WCC in 1948, but only the Convention of Ontario and Quebec, in 1949, voted to affiliate to this world body. The Union of Western Canada did not approve the proposal and the Maritime Baptist Convention voted formally against it in 1951. As a result of these decisions the Baptist Federation of Canada was prevented from joining the WCC.<sup>91</sup> The majority of Baptists in the Americas had not joined the WCC in 1948. This decision was in line with the majority of Baptists in other countries.

Australian Baptists were open to joining the WCC<sup>92</sup>, but were determined to take time to work through their collective viewpoint through the various state Unions. They were represented in Amsterdam by ‘the Right Honourable Ernest Brown of England’<sup>93</sup>. Many Australian Baptist leaders believed that their denomination would join this body early in 1949, but the meetings of the state Unions later that year revealed very mixed opinions about the way ahead. The leaders of the Tasmanian Baptists appeared to be committed to joining the WCC, but had delayed taking a formal vote on this matter. However, the Western Australian Baptists voted against affiliation by what *The Australian Baptist* called ‘a surprisingly large majority’. New South Wales Baptists at their assembly referred the subject to their Council so that both sides of the argument could be thoroughly considered. At the triennial meeting of the Baptist Union of Australia in 1950 it was reported that Queensland,

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<sup>85</sup> Torbet, ‘American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A.’, p. 62.

<sup>86</sup> Estep, *Baptists and Christian Unity*, pp. 135-141.

<sup>87</sup> Estep, *Baptists and Christian Unity*, p. 141.

<sup>88</sup> Borchert, ‘Other Conferences and Associations (U.S.A.)’, pp. 99-100.

<sup>89</sup> Estep, *Baptists and Christian Unity*, p. 141.

<sup>90</sup> ‘Proceedings of the Southern Baptist Convention’, 1948, p. 58, cited by Ryland, ‘Southern Baptist Convention’, pp 77-79. Helpful information on the Southern Baptist position is given in E.A. Payne, ‘Baptists and the Ecumenical Movement’, *Baptist Quarterly* 18.6 (April, 1960), p. 263.

<sup>91</sup> Zeman, ‘Canada’, in Garrett (ed), *Baptist Relations with Other Churches*, pp. 112-113.

<sup>92</sup> *The Australian Baptist*, 36.47, (23 November 1948), p. 4.

<sup>93</sup> Brown was appointed to the WCC Central Committee from 1948 to 1954, despite the withdrawal of Australian Baptists from the WCC. Cross, ‘Service to the Ecumenical Movement’, p. 113.

New South Wales and Western Australia had voted against affiliation; Victoria and South Australia were in favour with Tasmania having postponed a vote. The Baptist Union decided not to seek affiliation with the WCC, but requested the right to continue to send observers to WCC meetings. However, at the 1953 Baptist Union Assembly even the attendance of observers at WCC meetings was questioned.<sup>94</sup> Australian Baptists were enthusiastic about working with other Christians, but attitudes concerning the WCC became increasingly polarised, with the majority against any involvement with it. The majority of New Zealand Baptists, by contrast, chose to affiliate with the WCC in 1948 and the East Asian Christian Conference in 1957, though up to a quarter of its constituency was unconvinced of the wisdom of taking this course of action.<sup>95</sup> Like Baptists in the Americas Australasian Baptists were divided over the extent of their involvement in the ecumenical movement.

The responses from Baptists in Europe were very similar to their sister bodies in other parts of the world on this subject. In 1948 Baptists in Holland and Great Britain had chosen to join six other Baptist bodies represented in Amsterdam. In addition to the three American Conventions and Baptists in New Zealand already discussed, Baptists from the Burma Baptist Convention and the China Baptist Council had also chosen to affiliate with this new venture. However, Chinese Christians were forced to withdraw from the WCC after the Communist takeover in China, no later than 1950.<sup>96</sup> The Dutch Baptist were to leave the WCC in 1963,<sup>97</sup> though Baptists in Denmark joined shortly after the formation of the WCC in 1948<sup>98</sup> and Baptists in Hungary a few years later in 1956.<sup>99</sup> Baptists in BUGBI were committed to the work of the WCC and a number of its members took an active part in its proceedings. These included, in 1948, Dr Ernest Payne who became a member of the Faith and Order Commission of WCC that year and who was then elected to the WCC Central Committee, becoming its Vice Chair in 1954 and retiring as its President at Nairobi in 1975. Dr Percy Evans, Principal of Spurgeon's College, London, who was both a BUGBI delegate and a Faith and Order Commission member, like Ernest Payne in 1948, was also a participant in a follow-up WCC Commission on the Church at Cambridge in 1950.<sup>100</sup> M.E. Aubrey, secretary of BUGBI and C.T. LeQuesne, the BUGBI President 1946-1947, were the other two delegates from this Baptist Union.<sup>101</sup> The Baptist Union of Wales was not represented at the formation of the WCC in Amsterdam in 1948.<sup>102</sup> Scottish Baptists, likewise, had no representation at Amsterdam, though they had decided to affiliate with the WCC by one vote that year. However, there was much opposition to this decision in the years that followed, leading to a withdrawal from membership in 1955.<sup>103</sup> Only a minority of European Baptist

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<sup>94</sup> Opposition to involvement in the WCC was equally clear in 1955. See *The Australian Baptist*, 43.1 (12 January 1955), pp. 1, 8; 43.3 (26 January 1955), p. 15; together with Manley, *Woolloomooloo to Eternity*, Volume 2, pp. 579-588 and Himbury, 'Australasia', pp. 180-181.

<sup>95</sup> Himbury, 'Australasia', pp. 182-183.

<sup>96</sup> Payne, 'Baptists and the Ecumenical Movement', pp. 258-267.

<sup>97</sup> Thaut, 'Northern Europe', p. 25.

<sup>98</sup> B. Hylleberg, 'Denmark' in Wardin (ed.), *Baptists Around The World*, pp. 238-239. Danish Baptists had been prevented from joining the WCC in 1948 due to interference with its application to join this body by the Danish State Lutheran Church. See K. Jones, *The European Baptist Federation: A Case Study in European Baptist Interdependency 1950-2006* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2009), p. 73, n.60, for more details.

<sup>99</sup> Payne, 'Baptists and the Ecumenical Movement', p. 265.

<sup>100</sup> Cross, 'Service to the Ecumenical Movement', pp. 112-114

<sup>101</sup> I.M. Randall, *The English Baptists of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (Didcot: The Baptist Historical Society, 2005), pp. 254-255.

<sup>102</sup> Nor did it join the WCC that year contra Payne, 'Baptists and the Ecumenical Movement', p. 263. See Collis, 'Baptists and Church Unity in Wales', pp. 7-9, for more details of BUW engagement with the ecumenical movement in the twentieth century.

<sup>103</sup> Details are given in Talbot, 'Fellowship in the Gospel: Scottish Baptists and their relationships with other Christian Churches 1900-1945', pp. 352-353.

bodies joined the WCC. British Baptists in the BUGBI were amongst the most enthusiastic advocates on this continent for this inter-Church body.

Baptists in the various Unions and Conventions covered in this brief study showed a willingness to work with Christians of other denominations throughout the first half of the twentieth century. Although the total number of Baptists present at the World Mission Conference in Edinburgh in 1910 was limited, their commitment to world mission was not in doubt. They, together with other Christians, formed various inter-denominational mission bodies to facilitate good relations on the mission fields and to aid effectiveness in the task of world evangelisation. Co-operation overseas was largely mirrored by partnerships in the gospel at home. Baptists were often serving as a bridge between various mainline denominations and some of the more separatist Evangelical Churches and mission agencies. However, within the different Baptist bodies there had been tensions over the extent to which ecumenical engagement was desirable or permissible. Establishing good relations with some State Churches had proved to be problematic as they often refused to recognise Baptists as equal partners in the work of the Gospel. There was, though, far less enthusiasm for the proposed WCC. A minority of Baptist bodies did affiliate, but the majority of this constituency were unconvinced of the wisdom of such a course of action. Overall, though, relationships within and across Christian denominations had taken major steps forward between 1900 and 1950. As a result, this pointed forward to further encouragements in inter-Church relationships in the second half of the century.

Dr Brian Talbot July 09