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The theology and practice of baptism
amongst British Baptists,
1900-1996.

Volume 1

by

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Abstract.

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'The theology and practice of baptism amongst British Baptists, 1900-1996'.

This study sets out to examine the theology and practice of believer's baptism amongst Baptists associated with the Baptist Union of Great Britain in the twentieth century and to identify the major influences which have caused both the theology and practice of baptism to develop. As such, this study aims to be a complementary study to that by Dr. Michael Walker, *Baptists at the Table. The Theology of the Lord's Supper amongst English Baptists in the Nineteenth Century* (1992), and Dr. J. R. C. Perkin's unpublished Oxford DPhil, 'Baptism in Non-Conformist Theology, 1820-1920, with special reference to the Baptists' (1955). The thesis recognizes throughout that both discussion of the theology and practice of baptism have taken place within the context of the developing ecumenical movement.

After a brief introduction to the theology and practice of baptism amongst nineteenth-century Baptists (Part 1. Chapter 1) there is a summary discussion of those areas of twentieth-century baptismal theology on which Baptists have either spoken with one voice or which have not been contentious (Part 2. Chapter 2).

This is followed by Part 3 covering the period 1900-1937, when, as in the nineteenth century, Baptists consistently emphasized the issues of the mode and subjects of baptism. A few scholars, however, began to see the inadequacy of this position, and turned to the investigation of the theology of baptism. Chapter 3 discusses the ecumenical developments which took place, including the beginnings of the Free Church movement and Faith and Order, and how Baptists were affected by them. Chapter 4 sets out the Baptist theology of baptism during this period.

Part 4 examines the period 1938-1966. Chapter 5 discusses the ecumenical developments, which were marked by a new phase in the discussion of the theology of baptism inspired by the studies by Emil Brunner (1938) and Karl Barth (1943) and taken up by biblical scholars and theologians from various denominations. It also discusses the effect of the establishment of the British Council of Churches and World Council of Churches. Chapter 6 discusses the Baptists' response to these developments, whilst Chapter 7 details the establishment and consolidation of a Baptist sacramentalism.

Part 5 deals with the period 1967-1996. Chapter 8 investigates the ecumenical developments, which included the establishment of Local Ecumenical Projects/Partnerships and the work leading up to *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (1982), and the effect these have had on the baptismal rite amongst Baptists. Chapter 9 sets out new perspectives and developments which have resulted, including the shift in emphasis to Christian initiation, changed attitudes towards infant baptism, the charismatic movement and the present move within Churches Together in England advocating a 'common baptism'.

Part 6 concludes with Chapter 10's discussion of the practice of baptism in the twentieth century, which includes discussion of liturgical developments.

The study concludes that there is no single Baptist theology or practice of baptism, only theologies and practices, and that the main influence upon the development of these has been the ecumenical movement, but also, to lesser extents, changes within society, such as increased population mobility and attitudes to change, and the continued influence of individualism. Two final Appendices briefly set out the study's use of sources and a discussion of Baptist Trust Deeds.

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Contents.

Abbreviations.	
Introduction.	1-7
PART ONE	
Chapter 1 The Theology and Practice of Baptism Amongst British Baptists in the Nineteenth Century.	8-21
PART TWO Undisputed Aspects of Baptismal Theology	
Chapter 2 Common Ground.	22-49
Introduction	22
The Mode of Baptism	22-26
The Subjects of Baptism	26-34
Baptists and Infant Baptism	28-31
Baptist Anti-Sacerdotalism	31-33
Baptists and Baptismal Regeneration	33-34
The Theology of Baptism	34-49
Ecclesiology and Baptism	35
Baptism as a Profession of Faith	36-37
Baptism and Death, Burial and Resurrection	38-40
Baptism and Union with Christ	40-41
Baptism: Not Essential for Salvation	42
Baptism and Morality	43-44
Baptism as an Act of Obedience	44-47
Baptism as Gospel Proclamation	47-49
PART THREE 1900-1937	
Chapter 3 Ecumenical Developments.	50-116
Introduction	50
The Early Days of the Free Church Movement	51-61
The <i>Lambeth Appeal</i>	62-79
Baptists and the Churches of Christ	79-80
Baptist, Congregational and Presbyterian Reunion	
Discussions	80-99
Faith and Order	100-108
Union Churches	109-115
The Influence of Ecumenism	115-116
Chapter 4 The Theology of Baptism.	117-151
Baptism: Ordinance or Sacrament	117-123
'Ordinance' or 'Sacrament'	118-119
Definitions	119-123
Baptism As A Means Of Grace	123-129
Baptism and the Holy Spirit	129-141

The Subjective and the Objective in Baptism	141-150
The Internal and External Aspects of Baptism	141-146
Subjective and Objective In Baptism	146-150
Conclusions	150-151
PART FOUR 1938-1966	
Chapter 5 Ecumenical Developments.	152-218
Introduction	152-157
'Official' Reunion Conversations	158-189
Free Church Union and Free Church- Anglican Reunion Conversations	158-177
Baptists and Churches of Christ	177-182
Faith and Order and the World Council of Churches	182-189
The Reunion Debate Discussed	189-212
Union Churches	212-218
Chapter 6 The Baptist Response.	219-250
Chapter 7 The Consolidation of Baptist Sacramentalism.	251-289
PART FIVE 1967-1996	
Chapter 8 Ecumenical Developments.	290-371
<i>Baptists and Unity: Before and After</i>	291-301
<i>The Ten Propositions</i>	301-315
<i>Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (BEM)</i>	315-328
The Inter-Church Process (ICP)	328-339
Local Ecumenical Partnerships (LEPs)	340-368
Baptismal Policy in LEPs	340-356
Baptismal Practice in LEPs	357-368
The Way Forward	368-371
Chapter 9 New Perspectives and Developments in the Theology of Baptism.	372-444
Introduction	372-373
Christian Initiation	373-389
Infant Baptism	389-397
Sacramental Interpretations	397-405
The Holy Spirit and the Charismatic Debate	405-415
Common Baptism	416-423
Baptist Identity	423-432
1996: Three Important Studies	432-444
Baptism and Re-baptism	432-437
The Declaration of Principle	437-441
A Radical Departure	441-444

PART SIX

Chapter 10 The Practice of Baptism: 1900-1996.

445-517

Introduction	445-446
Pre-Baptismal Preparation	446-454
The Baptismal Service	454-465
Post-Baptism	465-468
Baptistries	468-475
Closed or Open Communion	475-477
Closed or Open Membership	478-487
Liturgical Developments	488-513
1900-1937	488-494
1938-1966	494-500
1967-1996	500-513
<i>The Liturgical Movement</i>	501-507
<i>Biblical Worship</i>	508-509
<i>The Influence of Charismatic</i>	
<i>Renewal on Worship</i>	509-510
<i>The Laying on of Hands</i>	510-512
<i>Conclusion</i>	512-513
Pioneers in the Baptism of the Handicapped	513-515
Conclusion	515-517

Conclusion.

518-529

Appendices

Appendix 1 Sources.

530-532

Appendix 2 Trust Deeds.

533-539

Bibliography.

540-589

Journals/Periodicals	540-541
Festschriften	541-542
Theses	542
Unpublished Papers	542-543
Unpublished Baptismal Study Material	544
Minutes	544
Church Constitutions and Procedures	544-545
Videos	545
Undated Tracts	545
Bibliography of Sources on the Nineteenth Century	546
Chronological Bibliography of Primary Sources - 1900-1937	547-553
Chronological Bibliography of Primary Sources - 1938-1966	554-567
Chronological Bibliography of Primary Sources - 1967-1996	568-580
Bibliography of Secondary Sources	581-589

Abbreviations.

Dates are recorded where available, but when undated and a date is recorded in either the BLC, CUL, or from some other source, this is placed in square brackets, approximate dating accompanied by 'c./circa or 'probably'.

ACCR	Advisory Committee for Church Relations.
ACTS L&P 9&10 Geo5 1919	<i>The Local and Private Acts Passed in the Ninth and Tenth Years of the Reign of His Majesty King George the Fifth; Being the First Session of the Thirty-First Parliament of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland with an Index (1919).</i>
BCC	The British Council of Churches.
BCH	<i>The Baptist Church Hymnal (1900).</i>
BCHR	<i>Baptist Church Hymnal (Revised) (1933).</i>
BEM	<i>Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (F&O Paper No.111, Geneva, 1982).</i>
BH	<i>The Baptist Handbook.</i>
BHB	<i>The Baptist Hymn Book (1962).</i>
BLC	British Library Catalogue dating.
BM	<i>Baptist Magazine.</i>
BMJ	<i>Baptist Ministers' Journal (formerly The Fraternal).</i>
BMS	The Baptist Missionary Society.
BPW	<i>Baptist Praise and Worship (Oxford, 1991).</i>
BQ	<i>The Baptist Quarterly.</i>
BRF	Baptist Revival Fellowship.
BRG	Baptist Renewal Group.
BT	<i>The Baptist Times.</i>
BT&F	<i>The Baptist Times and Freeman.</i>
BU	The Baptist Union.
BUD	<i>Baptist Union Directory.</i>
BUGB	The Baptist Union of Great Britain.
BUGB&I	The Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland.
BUild	Baptist Union Initiative with people with Learning Disabilities.
BWA	Baptist World Alliance.
BWC	Baptist World Congress.
CCBI	The Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland.
CCC	Churches' Council for Covenanting in England.

CCLEPE	Consultative Committee for Local Ecumenical Projects in England.
CTE	Churches Together in England.
CTP	Christian Training Programme.
CU	The Congregational Union.
CUC	Churches Unity Commission.
CUL	Cambridge University Library dating.
EMBA	East Midland Baptist Association.
E.T.	English translation.
f.	Founded.
FBCC	Fellowship of Baptist Churches for Covenanting.
FCC	Free Church Council.
FCEFC	Federal Council of the Evangelical Free Churches.
FCFC	Free Church Federal Council.
FoR	The Friends of Reunion.
FUE	Faith and Unity Executive.
F&O	Faith and Order.
<i>GBM</i>	<i>General Baptist Magazine</i> .
ICP	Inter-Church Process.
JLG	Joint Liturgical Group.
LBA	London Baptist Association.
LEP	Local Ecumenical Project/Partnership.
n.	Footnote/note.
NCEFC	National Council of the Evangelical Free Churches.
NFCC	National Free Church Council.
n.d.	No date.
nn.	Footnotes/notes.
n.p.	No pagination.
n.s.	New series.
o.s.	Old series.
SCM	Student Christian Movement.
<i>TBHS</i>	<i>Transactions of the Baptist Historical Society</i> .
URC	United Reformed Church.
YBA	Yorkshire Baptist Association.
WCC	World Council of Churches.
WORGLEP	The Baptist Union's Working Group on Local Ecumenical Projects.

LEP Classifications.

Up to 1994.

LC	Local Covenant
B	Shared Building
C	Shared Congregational Life
M	Shared Ministry

From 1994.

1	Congregations in covenant
2	Single congregation partnership
3	Shared building partnership
4	Chaplaincy partnership
5	Mission partnership
6	Education partnership

Introduction.

Christian baptism has been one of the most contentious doctrines and practices the Church has ever had, and this perhaps never more so than in the twentieth century when it has been one of the key issues facing the denominations involved in the burgeoning ecumenical movement. It is also a fact that the most distinctive characteristic of the Baptists is their restriction of baptism to that of believers by immersion, a practice which sets them apart from the other major, historic denominations.

There are a number of main as well as subsidiary reasons for this study. The first is to set out a history of the beliefs and practices of one of the mainline denominations on the Christian rite of initiation in the twentieth century, something which, it is believed, is of itself intrinsically valuable and has not been done before.¹

Secondly, the work of the Baptist historian, David Bebbington, on the history of Evangelicalism has cogently and convincingly argued that the movement is not and never has been a single homogenous whole,² and has explored 'the ways in which Evangelical religion has been moulded by its environment'.³ The significance of the analogy between Evangelicalism and Baptists lies in two observations: both

¹ To this end, the present study's title has deliberately paralleled the study of Dr. M. J. Walker, *Baptists at the Table. The Theology of the Lord's Supper amongst English Baptists in the Nineteenth Century* (1992), and has continued the earlier work by Dr. J. R. C. Perkin, 'Baptism in Non-Conformist Theology, 1820-1920, with special reference to the Baptists', unpublished Oxford DPhil, 1955.

² D. W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain. A History from the 1720s to the 1980s* (1989), 2-17, shows that it is a grouping comprised of various theological positions and practices unified by a four-fold emphasis on conversionism, activism, biblicism and crucicentrism.

³ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, ix. He concluded that Evangelicalism has been 'Moulded and remoulded by its environment...', 276. He also noted that 'Nothing could be further from the truth than the common image of Evangelicalism being ever the same', p.271. Bebbington has demonstrated that it has developed by its interaction with and response to three major cultural movements: Enlightenment rationalism, Romanticism and Modernism, see *Evangelicalism, passim*. In this he has been followed by Derck Tidball, *Who Are The Evangelicals? Tracing the Roots of Today's Movements* (1994), *passim*. Bebbington's book was enthusiastically reviewed in J. H. Y. Briggs' Editorial, 'Evangel, Evangelicals and Evangelicalism', *BQ* 33.7 (July, 1990), 297-301, in which these influences were duly noted.

movements incorporate diversity within unity, and the Baptists are arguably the most evangelical of all the mainline denominations, therefore it is likely that they too have been affected by these same influences.⁴ This view has been expressed with regard to Baptists in the nineteenth century, whose baptismal and eucharistic theology were clearly influenced, by Tractarianism and individualism.⁵ The present study, then, will seek to test the theory that the Baptist doctrine and practice of baptism in the twentieth century is contextual, something that has only rarely been admitted by Baptists,⁶ and that as contexts have changed so too have Baptist baptismal beliefs and practices. The study will, therefore, seek to identify and examine what these influences have been and accordingly will examine how the doctrine and practice of baptism has developed.

This serves two subsidiary purposes, both of which grow out of the fact that the Baptist theology and practice of baptism, and this study itself, is written within an ecumenical context which sets the twentieth century apart from any previous Christian century.⁷ These are: to help Baptists understand the breadth, depth and

⁴ The relevance of this line of approach is supported by observations made by John Briggs discussing baptism in the nineteenth century, *The English Baptists of the Nineteenth Century* (1994), 52, when he commented, 'All too many Baptist apologists were at once too protestant, too rational, too didactic and too individualistic. Sacraments smacked of magic; by contrast, post-Enlightenment Baptists saw believer's baptism as the mental response to the revelation of truth, undertaken with free volition by rational men and women'.

⁵ Eg, Briggs, *English Baptists of the Nineteenth Century*, chapter 3 'Baptism and Communion', 43-69; and M. J. Walker, *Baptists at the Table*, chapter 3 'Baptists and the Catholic Revival', 84-120.

⁶ This was recognized at the F&O Louisville Consultation in 1979, see W. M. S. West, 'Towards a Consensus on Baptism? Louisville 1979', *BQ* 28.5 (January, 1980), 225-32, and J. F. V. Nicholson, 'Baptism in Context: Further Reflections on Louisville 1979', *BQ* 28.6 (April, 1980), 275-79.

⁷ Horton Davies, *Worship and Theology in England. The Ecumenical Century 1900-1965* (Oxford, 1965), 5, explained the reason for his subtitle as being 'to emphasize the fact that for Christian life in England as elsewhere this marks the decisive difference between the *competitive* character of nineteenth and the *cooperative* character of twentieth century Christianity'. Similarly, Stephen Neill, 'Towards Christian Unity', in S. Neill (ed.), *Twentieth Century Christianity. A Survey of modern religious trends by leading churchmen* (1961), 340, 'The nineteenth century was the great century of Christian expansion; the twentieth century so far has been the great century of Christian union'. The importance of the ecumenical context for twentieth-century Church life in England is evident throughout Adrian Hastings' *A History of English Christianity, 1920-1985* (1986).

variety of their own beliefs and practices of baptism, and to help their ecumenical partners understand Baptist convictions, beliefs and practices.

From the outset it is important that terms are clearly defined. 'British Baptists' here refers to those Baptist churches in membership with the BUGB&I/BUGB (throughout abbreviated to BU), those ministers serving these churches, most of whom have been included on the BU's list of accredited ministers or serving in various capacities with organizations associated with the BU (such as within the BU itself, the Baptist Colleges, BMS, etc.), and those in membership of Baptist churches. The unqualified use of 'Baptist' at any point signifies a 'British Baptist' as so defined, any other type of Baptist being specifically identified as such, eg, Strict Baptist.

The title of this thesis speaks of 'baptism', by which is meant believer's baptism as this is the only form of baptism practised by Baptists. In this unqualified usage, 'baptism' will always refer to believer's baptism, and, when referring to another form, for example, infant baptism, this will always be stated.

The present study focusses on the period 1900 to 1996, recognizing that any periodization of history must always be arbitrary. Thought, religious or otherwise, develops and leading figures from one passing era overlap and participate in the new. Twentieth-century Baptists were inheritors of their nineteenth-century forebears, and many of the leading contributors to the denomination's baptismal theology and practice in the early decades of the present century were participants in the last, for instance, Charles Williams, John Clifford and Charles Brown. Willis Glover's words on this are, therefore, apposite: 'The necessary limitation of projects in historical research always do some violence to the unity and continuity of history'.⁸

The year 1900 is a most appropriate starting date for the present study because the dawn of a new century was looked forward to by the denomination with a general

⁸ W. B. Glover, *Evangelical Nonconformists and Higher Criticism in the Nineteenth Century* (1954), 9.

mood of 'confidence and expectation'.⁹ The year 1900 provides an appropriate beginning to the present study, because, in the words of Ernest Payne, it witnessed a 'new century, a new leader,¹⁰ a new paper,¹¹ new resources¹² and with these a revised constitution,¹³ a new hymnbook,¹⁴ new departments and new responsibilities',¹⁵ to which can be added the last significant rise in membership in 1905.¹⁶ The closing date, 1996, brings the study up to the present day, when Baptists are gearing themselves up for the beginning of the new millenium.

⁹ E. A. Payne, *The Baptist Union: A Short History* (1959), 169.

¹⁰ Though J. H. Shakespeare requested that no biography be written, there are a number of sources for his life, work and significance to both Baptists and to the twentieth-century ecumenical movement. See 'John Howard Shakespeare: The Story of His Life', *Supplement of the Baptist Times* March 15, 1928, i-iv; G. Shakespeare, *Let Candles Be Brought In: The Memoirs of the Rt. Hon. Sir Geoffrey Shakespeare Bt* (1949), 335-47; M. E. Aubrey, 'John Howard Shakespeare, 1857-1928', *BQ* 17.3 (July, 1957), 99-108; R. Hayden, 'Still at the Crossroads? Revd. J. H. Shakespeare and Ecumenism', in K. W. Clements (ed.), *Baptists in the Twentieth Century* (1983), 31-54; K. Hipper, *Rev. J. H. Shakespeare MA, 1857-1928* (n.d.); A. R. Cross, 'Revd. Dr. Hugh Martin: Ecumenist. Part 2', *BQ* 37.2 (April, 1997), 71. Rev. Peter Shepherd of Middlesborough is presently undertaking doctoral research on Shakespeare at Durham University.

¹¹ In October 1898 Shakespeare had successfully negotiated the purchase of the previously privately owned *Freeman* (f.1855) which was then combined with *The Baptist Times*, and the assistance of his brother, Alfred, was secured to run the paper. In 1910, the BU acquired *The Baptist* (f.1872) which was amalgamated with *The Baptist Times and Freeman*, see Payne, *The Baptist Union*, 160. See also 'The Editorial Succession', *BT* February 28, 1991, 2, which also lists the editors of the paper. From September 10, 1925 the paper became known simply as *The Baptist Times*.

¹² In 1899 the Twentieth Century Fund was launched, aiming to raise £250,000 for church extension, stipend maintenance, various educational and propaganda purposes, scholarships and a new denominational headquarters, a figure achieved within three years, see Payne, *The Baptist Union*, 157-159; and J. H. Shakespeare, *The Story of the Baptist Union Twentieth Century Fund, with the Financial Report* (1904). In April 1903 the Baptist Church House was opened in Southampton Row, see E. A. Payne, *The Baptist Union and Its Headquarters* (1953), 5-6.

¹³ In 1904 the BU revised its constitution and adopted the threefold Declaration of Principle which has, with a number of amendments, formed the basis of the BU ever since. See D. C. Sparkes, *The Constitutions of the Baptist Union of Great Britain* (1996), 19-55, and R. L. Kidd (ed.), *Something to Declare. A study of the Declaration of Principle* (1996), 20-25.

¹⁴ *The Baptist Church Hymnal* (1900). See Ronald W. Thomson, *The Psalms and Hymns Trust. A Short History of the Trust and the Work of Publishing Baptist Hymn Books* (1960), chapter IV 'Into the Twentieth Century', 15-19.

¹⁵ Payne, *The Baptist Union*, 160.

¹⁶ Payne, *The Baptist Union*, 169, reported that in the early years of Shakespeare's secretaryship, which began in 1898, denominational statistics rose steadily, to the point in 1905 when an increase of nearly 32,000 was recorded, a growth attributed to the previous year's Welsh Revival.

The century is then divided into three sub-sections: 1900-1937, 1938-1966 and 1967-1996. The theological debate throughout the first period was conducted largely around the twin poles of the mode and subjects of baptism, with only the beginnings of the realization that it was the theology of baptism which would provide the most profitable way forward in the discussion of the baptismal issue from both the Baptists' and also Paedobaptists' point of view.¹⁷ The beginning of the second period coincides with the seminal work by the Swiss theologian, Emil Brunner, which was quickly followed by the better known work by Karl Barth, and together these works set the theological agenda as far as baptism was concerned for the next three decades.¹⁸ Baptists were late to join this debate, which they did so predominantly from the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s, the latter providing the close of the second period, which was also marked by the publication of two important books by George Beasley-Murray and Alec Gilmore. The third period, examines the developments which have taken place since 1967 up to the present, 1996, which has witnessed unprecedented developments within the domestic ecumenical scene. Whilst there is the inevitable arbitrariness with these divisions, with many issues spanning more than one period, they provide a convenient framework for the present study.

There are, broadly speaking, two general approaches to writing history - the chronological and the thematic, both of which are well represented by Baptist historians.¹⁹ The chronological is suited to reflect developments in thought and

¹⁷ This was also recognized in the review of Baptist baptismal theology by the Presbyterian J. M. Ross, 'The Theology of Baptism in Baptist History', *BQ* 15.3 (July, 1953), 100-112.

¹⁸ E. Brunner, *Wahrheit als Begegnung* (Zürich, 1938), E. T. *The Divine Human Encounter* (1944); K. Barth, *Die Kirchliche Lehre von der Taufe* (Zürich, 1943), E. T. by E. A. Payne, *The Teaching of the Church Regarding Baptism* (1948). D. M. Thompson, 'Baptism, Church and Society in Britain Since 1800' (1984), 86-87, commented that, 'By the 1950s...baptism in particular and sacramental theology in general had become an ecumenical concern. They were no longer the property of any one school of thought in the Church. Most fascinating of all, the concern over baptism owed next to nothing to the discussion of the subject among the defenders of believer's baptism'. Thompson, p.87, remarked that the work of the Congregationalist, P. T. Forsyth, *Lectures on the Church and the Sacraments* (1917), had foreshadowed this development.

¹⁹ The difference in approach is clearly seen by comparing the three volumes so far published in the 'A History of the English Baptists' series. Within the chronological will be found B. R.

practice and to show the pioneer thinkers and innovators on whose work others have built. The thematic is suited to the examination of doctrines and the relationships between them, for baptism is not simply a practised rite but a doctrine built on and related to other doctrines, and Baptists believe that their practice grows out of their beliefs.²⁰ The approach, therefore, which has been adopted here has been to try to mix these two methods of approach, discussing the various themes within an overall chronological framework, thereby seeking to reflect accurately the developments in both the theology and practice of baptism, recognizing that this has led to some repetition, though an attempt has been made to minimize this.

The sources available for this study have been many and various, but the attempt has been made to examine not just the work of Baptist scholars but, as far as it is possible, the views of grass-roots Baptists.²¹ However, there have only been several Baptists who have sought to present a systematic discussion of the theology of baptism (principally H. W. Robinson, N. Clark, G. R. Beasley-Murray and R. E. O. White), therefore the present study has had to glean the theology of baptism from more fragmentary sources and many different writers using a wealth of divergent forms, including academic books and articles, apologetic works, catechetical and liturgical materials, studies of other themes which have included discussion of baptism, popular books and articles, church constitutions and letters.

Finally, because of the sheer volume of sources for this study, extensive footnotes have been used for the purpose of supplying background, additional and/or supportive information. When a statement has been made that such and such is a common or

White, *The English Baptists of the Seventeenth Century* (1996²) and R. Brown. *The English Baptists of the Eighteenth Century* (1986), and within the thematic is Briggs' *English Baptists of the Nineteenth Century*.

²⁰ This is reflected in the first Declaration of Principle: 'That our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ... is the sole and absolute authority in all matters pertaining to *faith and practice*, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures...', italics added, see *BUD* 1996-97, 7.

²¹ The issue of sources is discussed in Appendix 1 'Sources'.

widely held view, the footnotes have sought to corroborate such statements in the attempt to avoid sweeping and unsubstantiated generalizations.

PART ONE

Chapter One.

The Theology and Practice of Baptism Amongst British Baptists in the Nineteenth Century.

David Thompson has written: 'One of the most striking differences in the life of the British Churches between the last quarter of the eighteenth century...and the last quarter of the twentieth..., must surely be the changed attitude to the sacraments'. A sacramental revival has taken place within the Church of England, Church of Scotland and in some parts of Nonconformity within the modern period.¹ From the fifth century to the Reformation, infant baptism had been virtually the sole form of baptism known in the Church,² a position challenged by the radical wing of the Reformation, when first Anabaptist groups,³ then a century later the General and Particular Baptists and the Society of Friends rejected the practice, though for different reasons. Thompson wrote: 'But their rejection of infant baptism was quite rightly seen as only one aspect of a more broadly based radical religious position; and the touchstone for developments in sacramental theology in the Reformation was the Lord's Supper'. By the early eighteenth century, however, this radical upsurge had become a spent force; Baptists and Quakers had become more defensive and

¹ David M. Thompson, 'Baptism, Church and Society in Britain since 1800', 1, being the Hulsean lectures for 1983-84, unpublished. Thompson provided another overview of this period in his essay 'The Theology of Adult Initiation in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries', in D. A. Withy (ed.), *Adult Initiation. Paper delivered at the Conference of the Society for Liturgical Study 1988*, Alcuin/GROW Liturgical Study 10 (Grove Liturgical Study 58), (Nottingham, 1989), 6-23.

² Though the first undisputed reference to infant baptism is to be found in North Africa at the beginning of the third century in the writings of Tertullian, who disapproved of the practice, *De baptismo* 18, it was not until the fifth century that it gained the ascendancy over believer's baptism. See the Anglican liturgist, Prof. Paul Bradshaw, now of the University of Notre Dame, Indiana. *Early Christian Worship. A basic introduction to ideas and practice* (1996), 31-36.

³ See W. M. S. West, 'The Anabaptists and the Rise of the Baptist Movement', in A. Gilmore (ed.), *Christian Baptism. A Fresh Attempt to Understand the Rite in terms of Scripture, History, and Theology* (1959), 223-72.

introspective, threats to religious orthodoxy coming from within in the form of socinianism and unitarianism, and in deism and scepticism from without. The Evangelical Revival, however, changed this, old issues re-emerging and new ones appearing. Its emphasis on personal religious experience 'brought out the tension between individual and social religion, placing the debate between infant and believer's baptism in a new light. The emphasis on the Bible brought a new interest in biblical patterns for church life and a re-examination of the biblical evidence for infant baptism. The contrast drawn between vital and formal religion brought a new questioning of sacramental theology. All these issues crystallized around the emphasis on conversion. If conversion was necessary to the Christian life, what was the significance and meaning of baptism? Did baptism, particularly the baptism of infants, effect anything?'⁴

Thompson has convincingly argued that from 1800 to 1830 three sets of issues concerning baptism came to dominate, the Evangelical Revival having significantly affected the way in which they were expressed and discussed. First, was the issue of the proper subjects of baptism which was most keenly debated in Scotland. Secondly, was the terms of communion, whether communion was only for those baptized as believers or whether baptism was necessary for communion, or, by extension, for membership. Thirdly, was the matter of baptismal regeneration, which preoccupied mainly the Church of England.⁵

⁴ Thompson, 'Baptism', 3. A brief survey of Baptists and baptism was provided by D. M. Himbury, Principal of the Baptist College of Victoria, Melbourne, 'Baptismal Controversies, 1640-1900', in Gilmore (ed.), *Christian Baptism*, 273-305.

⁵ Thompson, 'Baptism', 4. He discusses each of these issues on pp.5-10, 10-12 and 12-17 respectively. J. H. Y. Briggs, *The English Baptists of the Nineteenth Century* (1994), 43, agrees with this classification of the issues, and discusses them on pp.43-44, 44-45 and 45-50 respectively. J. R. C. Perkin, 'Baptism in Non-Conformist Theology, 1820-1920, with special reference to the Baptists', (1955), 6, similarly identified this period, but especially 1820-30, as marked by an increased interest in baptism. That baptism was, at this time, a significant and widespread issue 'lies in the fact that books, pamphlets and tracts are being written on baptism in the early nineteenth century, whereas thirty years before they were not. But publication was a response to the fact that the issues were being debated among Christians; and some indication of this is seen in the growth of the Baptists during the period, and also in the divisions that produced new Baptist congregations', Thompson, 'Baptism', 4. Thompson also provided a detailed review of J. H. Y. Briggs, *The English Baptists of the Nineteenth Century*, in *BQ* 37.2 (April, 1997), 96-98.

For roughly the first half of the century the baptismal debate focussed primarily on the mode of baptism⁶ and more specifically on the meaning of the Greek verbs βαπτω and βαπτίζω, leading Jim Perkin to remark that, 'No other single word had so much written about it in the last century as this one'.⁷ As the baptismal controversy wore on, according to Perkin, the tendency was to give more importance to the subjects of baptism:⁸

Here we come to the very heart of the dispute; here we find the basic principle of the Baptist position, and here we find the lesson which the nineteenth century would teach the twentieth. Expressed in simple terms it is this: the doctrine of baptism is not a doctrine which can be worked out in isolation, but must depend largely on the conception of the church which underlies it. This may well be the key to understanding the interminable disputes of the years 1820-1864. The doctrine of the Church was nearly always implied in baptist writings, and not infrequently there was a specific statement of it.

The confusion in the theological situation may be accounted for thus:- Baptists believed that the New Testament doctrine of the Church implied that the church was comprised of believers who had made a credible profession of faith. Those whose sins had been forgiven and who had entered on the new life were the proper subjects of baptism...Faith was the condition of membership in the Church; baptism was the sign of entry into the Church; hence baptism will only be given to those who express their faith.⁹

⁶ Egs of Baptist works are J. Bowes, *Scriptural Reasons for giving up the Sprinkling of Infants* (1839); F. W. Gotch, *A Critical Examination of the Rendering of the Word βαπτίζω* (1841); A. Carson, *The Mode and Subjects of Christian Baptism* (1841); T. B. ~~C~~owest, *Sprinkling the Great Error of the Professing Church of Christ* (1845).

⁷ Perkin, 'Baptism', 25. An example of this is the controversy which took place between 1840-49 between the American, Edward Beecher, a tutor of the Presbyterian College, Jacksonville, and the Irishman, Alexander Carson, who moved from Presbyterianism through Independency to become a Baptist in c.1820, on which see Perkin, 'Baptism', 'Appendix "A" to Part II - The Carson-Beecher Controversy', 312-21. Details on Carson can be found in John Young's 'Biographical Sketch' included in A. Carson, *Baptism Its Mode and Subjects* (1844, reprinted by Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, 1977), xxiii-xlvi; and also in A. C. Underwood, *A History of the English Baptists* (1947), 195-96; W. T. Whitley, *A History of British Baptists* (1932²), 298-99. A second example of controversy over the mode is the dispute between the BMS and the British and Foreign Bible Society in the 1830s over the translation of βαπτίζω. Baptists felt it should be translated 'to dip or immerse' (as in the Serampore Bible versions) and not be simply transliterated 'to baptize'. This led to the withdrawal of Baptist support for the B&FBS and the establishment of their own (Baptist) Bible Translation Society (i.1840). See Briggs, *English Baptists*, 56-59; Perkin, 'Baptism', 126-128; E. A. Payne, *The Baptist Union: A Short History* (1959), 80-81.

⁸ Perkin, 'Baptism', 211.

⁹ Perkin, 'Baptism', 217-18.

More than anything else, it was this concept of the Church which determined the Baptist attitude to infant baptism.¹⁰ In fact, as Perkin rightly said, the nineteenth century proves that the 'distinguishing feature of Baptists is not their doctrine of baptism, but their doctrine of the Church'.¹¹ He argued that this was seldom made explicit in the period from 1820-1920, but the whole controversy cannot be understood unless it is realized that it was this difference in ecclesiology which caused the clash.¹²

Perkin has demonstrated that the decade ending 1864 saw little of the controversy, especially when compared to 1830-40.¹³ Questions other than the philological ones had taken on a new importance and, Perkin observed, in general the books written became shorter and kinder in tone.¹⁴ Though there is an element of arbitrariness about it, Perkin has argued that 1864 is nevertheless the dividing line, for it is not possible to mistake the difference in the controversy between 1850 and 1870. By 1870 it had become clear that the question of baptism had entered a new stage in its history, a stage which he sees as the prelude to the twentieth century debate. The latter part of the nineteenth century saw the virtual passing away of the pamphleteer, writer of theological doggerel and the preacher of unkindly, eclectic sermons.¹⁵

¹⁰ Perkin, 'Baptism', 219.

¹¹ Perkin, 'Baptism', 10-11. This is true even if it is acknowledged that Baptist ecclesiology was not all it should have been. See, for example, John Briggs' discussion of 'John Clifford's Diminished Ecclesiology', *English Baptists*, 22-27, which is set within a larger discussion of the nineteenth century Baptist theology of the Church, see pp. 15-30.

¹² Perkin, 'Baptism', 11. Later, p.207, when discussing baptism as the joining of the invisible and the visible Church, Perkin wrote, 'the whole foundation of the doctrine of baptism is the doctrine of the Church, and that although many realised it in the years 1820-64, there was a larger number who did not'. The implications of the primacy of ecclesiology for baptismal theology can best be shown in recognition of the fact that Baptists maintain that baptism is solely for *believers*, those already converted.

¹³ Perkin, 'Baptism', 335.

¹⁴ Perkin, 'Baptism', 336.

¹⁵ 1864 was the year of C. H. Spurgeon's vitriolic attack on evangelical Anglicans through his famous sermon condemning baptismal regeneration, the fullest recent discussion of which is in M. Nicholls, *C. H. Spurgeon. The Pastor Evangelist* (1992), 122-29; Briggs, *English Baptists*, 48-50.

Men were trying to use the Bible as a basis and guide for their theology, not a hunting ground for proof-texts; sermons took on a new note of practical application of the gospel and denominational rivalry began to change into toleration. In the womb of the nineteenth century the twentieth was already being formed.¹⁶

Thompson agrees with Perkin that baptism receded from the forefront of theological debate from the early 1860s, offering four reasons for this.¹⁷ First, the Gorham judgment of 1850 resulted in a stalemate as far as baptismal doctrine in the Anglican communion was concerned, though it had established the legitimacy of an Evangelical reading of the *Book of Common Prayer*.¹⁸ Secondly, controversy over the Eucharist became more widespread in the 1850s with the development of the ritualist movement.¹⁹ Thirdly, the transformation of Calvinist Dissent into an evangelical theology which attached relatively little importance to the sacraments. The 1860 Norwich Chapel Case effectively settled the Baptist communion controversy which had flared up in the second decade of the century around the two figures of Rev. Robert Hall of Leicester, and Rev. Joseph Kinghorn of Norwich.²⁰ From this time, the

¹⁶ Perkin, 'Baptism', 337.

¹⁷ Thompson, 'Baptism', 72. He substantiates this by reference to a remark by Bishop Westcott at the turn of the century that, in G. W. H. Lampe's words, *The Seal of the Spirit. A Study in the Doctrine of Baptism and Confirmation in the New Testament and the Fathers* (1951), vii, that 'the next great theological controversy would be centred on baptism', and Alec Vidler's comment when editor of *Theology*, from his *F. D. Maurice and Company* (1966), 87, that he had more manuscripts submitted on baptism than any other topic. From the Baptist perspective this is reflected in Walker's discussion of C. H. Spurgeon's and John Clifford's theologies of communion, see *Baptists at the Table*, chapter 5 'The Lord's Supper and Two Baptist Preachers', 164-96, both preachers having more to say on communion than baptism. According to Nicholls, *Spurgeon*, 158, the 1899 index to the *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* lists only 4 sermons by Spurgeon on baptism.

¹⁸ On the Gorham case see Thompson, 'Baptism', 30-33.

¹⁹ Thompson, 'Baptism', 72, commented that, 'In so far as the baptismal controversy in the first half of the century had been one between catholic and Calvinist sacramental theology, this division received much sharper focus in the second half of the century over Holy Communion. Antipathy to the Mass, transubstantiation, the real presence etc., was more easily mobilised than suspicion of baptismal regeneration'.

²⁰ The most recent discussions of this controversy are to be found in Walker, *Baptists at the Table*, 32-83, and Briggs, *English Baptists*, 61-68. Briggs, p.65, writes: 'The close communionists defended a higher view of the sacraments than that to which Hall by default was driven. As relations across denominational boundaries opened up, so the pressures for open communion - and later open membership - developed. In such a context it was all too easy for the low view of the sacraments Hall had come to support to become widely pervasive, especially as it accorded with evangelical antipathy to a revived catholicism, which

practice of open communion began to spread, to the point that, by mid-century, it had become the norm amongst Baptists.²¹ Fourthly, the development of biblical criticism and historical scholarship began to undermine the simpler defences of existing baptismal practice, thereby forcing a reassessment of the basis of baptismal theology within the churches.²²

Perkin correctly identified Baptist antipathy to the theory of baptismal regeneration as a major factor in the 'down grading' of baptismal theology: 'The vehemence of the rejection of baptismal regeneration, particularly by Baptists, led to the reduction of the rite to a mere sign in many quarters'.²³ But other factors were also involved. In his detailed study of the Baptist theology of the Lord's Supper, the late Michael Walker showed that the majority of Baptists were influenced in their eucharistic theology by both Zwinglianism and Calvinism, whilst others had inherited more from the radical Anabaptists with their separation of spirit and matter and their suspicion of anything approximating to ritualism.²⁴ These influences equally affected Baptist baptismal theology, as none of these 'controlling' influences predisposed Baptists to think 'sacramentally' about baptism. The Catholic Revival of the 1830s-40s received a

made Baptists far too negative and reactive in their thinking about the sacraments, now more frequently referred to as ordinances, although all too often conceived in such minimalist terms as even Zwingli would not own'.

- 21 Thompson, 'Baptism', 68. Those churches which retained closed communion, generally left the Baptist Union to form the Strict and Particular Baptist churches. However, the Baptist Evangelical Society was formed in order to defend strict-communionist principles, whose work was not seen as antagonistic to that of the BU. See Geoffrey R. Breed, *The Baptist Evangelical Society - an early Victorian Episode* (Dunstable, 1987), who is careful to distinguish between 'strict' and 'strict communion'. See also J. H. Y. Briggs's review of Breed's lecture, 'Geoffrey Breed, *The Baptist Evangelical Society - An Early Victorian Episode*', *BQ* 33.6 (April, 1990), 294.
- 22 Thompson, 'Baptism', 72, believes that in the long term this was the most significant development.
- 23 Perkin, 'Baptism', 160-61.
- 24 M. J. Walker, *Baptists at the Table. The Theology of the Lord's Supper amongst English Baptists in the Nineteenth Century*, posthumously edited by Dr. David W. Bebbington, (1992), 3. This is the published version of his King's College, London, PhD, 1986. All references are from the version published by the Baptist Historical Society. Michael Walker, a leading Baptist liturgist, was tutor in Christian Doctrine at the South Wales Baptist College, Cardiff, until he died, see 'Michael Walker dies age 56', *BT* August 31, 1989, 5, and *BUD* 1990-91, 329-30.

very negative reaction from Baptists, so much so that anything which could be construed as in any way 'Catholic' was vehemently repudiated. For instance, Charles Williams of Accrington stated, 'Baptists do not regard either baptism or the Lord's Supper as a sacrament in the ecclesiastical sense of the word...To them the ordinance is neither the cause nor the medium of grace'.²⁵ Walker's study highlights Baptist antipathy to the Catholic Revival, but it is one of the weaknesses of Perkin's work that he only alludes to this, never really bringing it to the fore and giving it the treatment it warrants.²⁶

Whilst some Baptists allowed their Zwinglianism to lead them into an extreme subjectivism, others were discontented with the memorialist position imposed by the denominational norm.²⁷ Contrary to the prevailing closed-communion stance of the majority of the denomination, Robert Hall contended that Paedobaptists should be welcomed to the Lord's Table, rejecting bare memorialism in favour of the Supper as a participation in the sacrifice offered by Christ.²⁸ Careful to ensure that his views were incapable of being interpreted as speaking of the presence of Christ in the eucharist, Hall maintained that it was the Holy Spirit's presence in communion who raised the believer into Christ's presence where he/she could feed upon him by sharing in his risen and glorified life, enabling him to speak of a 'spiritual participation' in the body and blood of Christ.²⁹ Walker pointed out the irony that Hall's belief in the value of the Lord's Supper eventually led others to value both it

²⁵ C. Williams, *The Principles and Practices of the Baptists* (1879), 23. On Williams see J. H. Lea, 'Charles Williams of Accrington, 1827-1907', *BQ* 23.4 (October, 1969), 177-91.

²⁶ Perkin, 'Baptism', 111-12, where he lists the Oxford Movement as one of the causes which gave added impetus to Baptist baptismal thinking, the other, in agreement with Thompson, being the Second Evangelical Awakening

²⁷ Walker, *Baptists at the Table*, 8-9, where he cited Robert Hall as an example, see the discussion on pp.8-11.

²⁸ R. Hall, *On Terms of Communion*, in O. Gregory (ed.), *The Entire Works of the Rev. Robert Hall, A.M., with A brief Memoir of his Life, and a Critical Estimate of his Character and Writings*, Vol. II (1831), 63-64, where Hall referred to holy communion as a 'federal rite'.

²⁹ Hall, *On Terms of Communion*, 64.

and baptism less highly than he did. Hall argued that a rite which had such implications for the Christian life should not be kept from fellow Christians on the grounds of baptismal 'irregularity', believing that admission to the Lord's table was more important than whether the communicant was a Baptist or Paedobaptist. This eventually led him to relegate baptism to the status of merely the 'ceremonial', a view which later Baptists also assigned to the Lord's Supper.³⁰

Both Perkin and Walker stand within the Baptist tradition which has sought to re-establish the sacramental nature of baptism, and both highlight those nineteenth-century Baptists who recognized in baptism the nature of a sacrament. Perkin, for example, commented that, 'A large part of the dearth of sacramental theology among Baptists must be laid at the door of the Victorians. On the other hand, there was throughout the whole period a "minority movement" within the Baptist denomination which stood for a sacramental view over against the *nuda signa* doctrine of its contemporaries'. He then stated: 'This movement has been brought to the forefront in this thesis', giving two reasons: it was generally stronger than previous writers have been prepared to admit, and, whereas the orthodox view hardly varied from one writer to the next, the 'progressive' view was much more fluid. For most Baptists of the last century, baptism 'was an empty sign which indicated something previously done at conversion'.³¹ It was only necessary as a following of Jesus' example, not because it did anything for the candidate. Even Non-Conformist Paedobaptists tended to regard baptism merely as a sign rather than a sacrament, 'an efficacious sign symbolising all that Christ had done, even before man knew anything about it'. The minority sacramentalists, however, contended that only a sacramental interpretation of baptism could adequately accord with New Testament teaching.³²

³⁰ Walker, *Baptists at the Table*, 9-10.

³¹ Perkin, 'Baptism', 11.

³² Perkin, 'Baptism', 11-12. Later he reiterated this: 'It must be regarded that the majority of Baptists did not regard baptism as a sacrament at all; at best it was a sign of something already accomplished', p.244.

Perkin observed that those who became Baptists later on in their lives tended to have more sacramentalist views of baptism than life-long Baptists.³³ Though a minority, there were nevertheless a sufficient number of them who believed baptism to be a sacrament in which God performed some objective act in response to the faith of the believer.³⁴ The best known of these was the former Anglican, B. W. Noel, who commented on Acts 2:38: 'Since, then, baptism is thus necessary to remission of sins, and is so closely connected with it...Repentance and baptism are declared in the text to secure the gift of the Holy Ghost'.³⁵ A number of 'life-long' Baptists also used sacramental language of baptism. Rev. William Hawkins of Portsea interpreted baptism as a Roman soldier's *sacramentum*, 'a sovereign oath...to our Sovereign Prince, in which we swear allegiance to him...', a use which was followed by the anonymous author of six articles in the *Baptist Magazine* in 1857.³⁶

The sacramental interpretation was attacked, especially by advocates of personal religion. Isaiah Birt, recently retired on the grounds of ill-health from the pastorate of Cannon Street BC, Birmingham, understood baptism in terms of a personal contract between God and the individual, 'that baptism was not instituted either to be a substitute for any graces, or to convey any blessing', and 'If religion be personal, all religious acts and ordinances must be so'.³⁷ Charles Williams declared that 'blessing

³³ Perkin, 'Baptism', 197.

³⁴ Eg, the former Independent Isaac Orchard's sermon, *Christian Baptism* (1829), 11, 'Baptism is an appointed means for obtaining a greater outpouring of the Holy Spirit'; cited by Perkin, 'Baptism', 197.

³⁵ B. W. Noel, *Essay on Christian Baptism* (1849), 99. On Noel, and for this reference, see Perkin, 'Baptism', 322-34. Perkin added, 'To the best of our knowledge no other Baptist in this period said that baptism was necessary. True it was generally regarded as a primary moral obligation, but that is not quite the same thing', p.329. Also on Noel see K. R. Short, 'Baptist Wriothesley Noel. Anglican - Evangelical - Baptist', *BQ* 20.2 (April, 1963), 51-61; D. W. Bebbington, 'The Life of Baptist Noel: Its Setting and Significance', *BQ* 24.8 (October, 1972), 389-411; and Briggs, *English Baptists*, on his views on baptism, pp.46-47, 49-50, 54, and *passim*.

³⁶ W. Hawkins, *A Sermon on Baptism* (1827), 22, cited by Briggs, *English Baptists*, 51-52; and Anonymous, 'Sacramental Meditations', *Baptist Magazine* 49 (January, 1857), 22-23.

³⁷ I. Birt, *Personal Religion Vindicated in Relation to Christian Baptism* (1833), 25 and 27. On Birt's individualistic understanding of faith and baptism, see Briggs, *English Baptists*, 53, see also Briggs' discussion of his views on p.44.

was not present in the baptism, it was not communicated by the baptism. Those baptismal waters were not either the cause or the means, though they may have been the occasion of these blessings'.³⁸ John Howard Hinton asserted, 'I affirm, in the most unqualified terms, that baptism is not a means of conferring any spiritual blessings whatever', later adding, 'Baptism...cannot be any part of the terms on which spiritual blessings are enjoyed'.³⁹ Believing that he was speaking for all Non-Conformists, Dr. John Clifford, minister of Westbourne Park BC, Paddington, wrote:

The 'Sacraments' of themselves do not bring the soul into living union with the Saviour. They cannot. They are of the earth, earthy. They reveal truth of such peerless worth, that they are its supreme symbols...But the 'real presence' of the Christ is the Divine answer to the penitence, trust and worship of the humble and devout soul.⁴⁰

Earlier he had said: 'Broadly speaking, we hold that Baptism and the Lord's Supper are not "Sacraments" in the ecclesiastical sense, i.e. they are not mysteries or miracles, not causes of grace, not in themselves vehicles of grace'.⁴¹ Of this, Walker wrote, 'His description of them as "of the earth, earthy", coupled with his passionate claim that religion was essentially inward and individualist, and his unwise polarisation of matter and spirit, placed him at the extreme wing of the radical anabaptist position'. In

³⁸ C. Williams in H. Pitman, *A Discussion of Infant Baptism* (1858), being the report by Pitman, reporter for the *Manchester Courier*, of a public debate between Williams and Rev. Dr. Joseph Baylee, Principal of St. Aidan's College, Birkenhead, which took place on three consecutive evenings in September 1858, on which see Perkin, 'Baptism', 254-55; Briggs, *English Baptists*, 50.

³⁹ J. H. Hinton, 'The Ultimatum', based on the text 'What saith the Scripture?' (Romans 4:3), a lecture delivered at Devonshire Square Chapel, London, on Sunday April 7, 1850, in *The Theological Works of the Rev. John Howard Hinton, M.A.*, Vol. 5 'Lectures' (1865), 465-79, quotations from pp.466 and 472.

⁴⁰ J. Clifford, *The Ordinances of Jesus and the Sacraments of the Church* (1888), 19, cited by Walker, *Baptists at the Table*, 188.

⁴¹ Clifford, *Ordinances of Jesus*, 4, cited by Walker, *Baptists at the Table*, 188. In a number of places, John Briggs discusses the widespread view which saw baptism as an individual rite: eg. J. A. of Perth, *New Baptist Miscellany*, October 1830, 415-16, 'baptism is simply a personal obligation, over which [churches] ought to have no control'; Dr. Richard Glover of Tyndale BC, Bristol, 'The Baptist Church', in *Our Churches and why we belong to them* (1898), 86, '[baptism is] an individual rite, in which each simply confesses his submission to the Lord'; Briggs, *English Baptists*, 102 and 28 respectively.

this, Clifford's 'reduction of the sacraments to mere symbols placed him in a position no different from many of his fellow Baptists'.⁴²

This individualistic understanding of baptism was often linked to an unecclesial view of the rite. Clifford was the best known advocate of this position, which was worked out in practice by the few churches which practised open membership.⁴³ According to Clifford baptism was associated with a man's spiritual welfare, but was never described as a condition of admission to the church. 'Uniformly and exclusively it is prescribed as a solemn transaction between the soul and the Saviour - nowhere as a portion of church government, or as indispensable in order to entrance upon a church state'. Extending this line of argument to the issue of church relations, Clifford believed that when baptism was viewed in this way and the Congregational churches accepted people into membership by profession of faith then the argument for union between the two denominations was compelling.⁴⁴ In his discussion of the Baptist

⁴² Walker, *Baptists at the Table*, 188. For a detailed discussion of Clifford's theology of, specifically, the Lord's Supper, but, by extension, baptism as well, see pp.182-92. A concomitant of this impoverished theology of baptism was a discomfort with the relationship of the Holy Spirit to the rite. Perkin, 'Baptism', 13-14, observed that Baptists 'did not feel happy about the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, whether in conjunction with baptism or not. This constitutes a serious lacuna in the theology of the period'. As a reason for this he suggested that at this time 'Baptist theology...was essentially empirical and practical rather than theoretical. Obedience, faith, the church, dying, rising - all these were concrete ideas, readily interpreted and understood. But the gift of the Spirit belongs to a realm of experience and theology only spoken of by the very learned and the very ignorant', p.261. In this he was followed by Himbury, 'Baptismal Controversies', 274. Briggs, *English Baptists*, 54-55, however, has noted that this inhibition did not extend to Baptist hymn-writers - eg. Maria Saffery, 'Blest Spirit! with intense desire', 1818, *Psalms and Hymns* 707; B. W. Noel, 'Lord, Thou has promised to baptize', 1853, *Psalms and Hymns* 713.

⁴³ The best known ^{open membership} Particular Baptist churches at this time were Bloomsbury, Regent's Park, Hampstead, Clapton and Camden Road, all in London, Broadmead and Tyndale in Bristol, St. Mary's, Norwich, all the Birmingham churches except the New Connexion church, and all but one of the new churches founded by the London Baptist Association. See Briggs, *English Baptists*, 137, citing J. Clifford in the *General Baptist Magazine* February 1883, 53-54.

⁴⁴ Clifford in *General Baptist Magazine* December 1877, 448-49, April 1881, 122, and March 1883, 89, cited by Briggs, *English Baptists*, 135-36. Clifford was followed by W. L. Jones of Spalding in his General Baptist Association Letter for 1882, but he was opposed by Joseph Fletcher, see Briggs, pp.136-37. That this was no innovation is shown by the fact that in 1797 Rev. John Fawcett of the Wainsgate church, Hebden Bridge, *The Constitution and Order of a Gospel Church considered by John Fawcett*, 24, had written, 'Baptism is not properly a church ordinance, since it ought to be observed before a person be admitted into this relation', cited by Briggs, *English Baptists*, 15. On the possibility of union with Congregational churches, see Briggs, pp.121-22, and also p.176 where he quotes Clifford, *General Baptist Magazine* March 1887, 103: 'Will it be long before Baptists and Independents are able to unite in the New Testament principle that "the obligation to be baptized springs out of the

understanding of faith, baptism and the church, John Briggs writes, 'All too many Baptist apologists were at once too protestant, too rational, too didactic and too individualistic. Sacraments smacked of magic; by contrast, post-Enlightenment Baptists saw believer's baptism as the mental response to the revelation of truth, undertaken with free volition by rational men and women'.⁴⁵

There were, then, three distinct phases of the baptismal debate in the nineteenth century running from approximately 1800 to 1840, 1840 to 1864, and from 1864 to the twentieth century, and four major factors can be identified as having influenced Baptist baptismal theology in the nineteenth century. The first factor was individualism. Walker wrote:

The nineteenth century was the century of the individual and the voluntary society and some Baptists in the early years of the century saw themselves as pioneers breaking away from the old ways. Impatience with forms and ceremonies and emphasis on the inner and spiritual forces at work in the life of the individual were to be the hallmark of a new breed of Christian men, a breed that was to find its most eloquent spokesman amongst the Baptists in John Clifford. The church too, believed that it was discovering a new freedom, liberated from the restraints of the past, the concern for right order and what was viewed as the theological bickering that went with it.⁴⁶

Walker immediately proceeded to identify the second factor. 'This process', he continued, 'could only have greatly accelerated with the coming of the catholic revival',⁴⁷ at the centre of which was the doctrine of baptismal generation.⁴⁸ Thirdly,

relationship of the soul to the Saviour, and not from the relationship of the believer to the church", and that therefore "the whole question of baptism must be left to the individual conscience", quoting from the Constitution of Westbourne Park BC, which is printed in Sir James Marchant, *Dr. John Clifford, C.H.. Life, Letters and Reminiscences* (1924), 45-46.

⁴⁵ Briggs, *English Baptists*, 52.

⁴⁶ Walker, *Baptists at the Table*, 130-31.

⁴⁷ Walker, *Baptists at the Table*, 131.

⁴⁸ Almost all English Nonconformity rejected the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, which has been described as 'the very foundation of the Oxford Tracts', see the *Christian Observer* 36, 1837, 179, in its comments on a letter by J. H. Newman in defence of the Tracts for the Times in March 1837. R. W. Church, *The Oxford Movement: Twelve Years, 1833-1845* (1892³), 136, likened Pusey's Tracts on Baptism of 1835 (numbers 67 to 69 which contained the main tractarian teaching on baptism) to 'the advance battery of heavy artillery on a field where the battle has hitherto been carried on by skirmishing and musketry'. Both cited by Thompson, 'Baptism', 18. Thompson's detailed discussion of 'The Oxford Movement and After' is to be found on pp.18-35. Briggs, *English Baptists*, 45-53, 223-27, discusses the whole issue of

there was the impact of increased population mobility which caused Baptists, amongst others, to think carefully as to who they could share fellowship with.⁴⁹

Fourthly, there were the beginnings of movement towards ecumenism. Walker called this 'the age of initiative', when 'Christians were not so much drawn together as thrown together' in, for instance, missionary endeavour and philanthropic work. 'For Baptists, these changes called for a reappraisal of their doctrinal position', for their ecclesiology 'drew a clear line of demarcation between the church and a world in whose life and welfare they were increasingly engaged. Their doctrine of baptism, especially when accompanied by the corollary of closed communion, separated them from Christians with whom they increasingly worked in common cause'. The communion controversy, then can be understood in terms of the way Baptists responded to a situation vastly different from the seventeenth and eighteenth century.⁵⁰

baptismal regeneration and the threat of tractarianism as they affected Baptist thought, as has Walker, *Baptists at the Table*, chapter 3 'Baptists and the Catholic Revival', 84-120. Broader studies of anti-Catholicism are to be found in P. Toon, *Evangelical Theology 1833-1856. A Response to Tractarianism* (1979), and J. Wolfe, *The Protestant Crusade in Great Britain, 1829-1860* (Oxford, 1991).

⁴⁹ Differences over the terms of communion led many churches which wished to remain closed in membership and communion to separate from the 'Baptist Union' churches, forming the Strict Baptists, on which see Payne, *BU. Short History*, 40-41, 86-87. Hall's rejection of closed communion has been examined in detail by Walker, who has drawn attention to the three major areas which influenced his theology of communion, *Baptists at the Table*, 45: 'The first is his basic conviction that it is a sign of the church's unity. The second is his argument that faith takes precedence over "ceremonial". Thirdly, Hall deals with the way in which the church is historically conditioned, thus making it impossible in any dispute to return to an original and pristine state in which the world of the New Testament is reproduced in later centuries'. See Walker's wider discussion of 'The Unity of the Church: Robert Hall', pp.45-65.

⁵⁰ Walker, *Baptists at the Table*, 42-43, referring also to W. R. Ward, 'The Baptists and the Transformation of the Church, 1780-1830', *BQ* 25.4 (October, 1973), 168-69. The attitude of Baptists towards unity received considerable impetus internally in the process which led to the formation of the BU in 1812-13, on which see Payne, *BU. Short History*, chapter 2 'Earlier Efforts', 28-42, and externally when, for example, the Evangelical Alliance was formed in 1846, see Payne, *BU. Short History*, *passim*, and through participation in the many philanthropic societies, on which see Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain. A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (1989), *passim*; Kathleen Heasman, *Evangelicals in Action* (1962); and the various essays in J. Wolfe (ed.), *Evangelical Faith and Public Zeal. Evangelicals and Society in Britain 1780-1980* (1995), *passim*.

John Briggs has stated,

The history of Baptists in the nineteenth century is very largely a reactive and responsive one: consciously to the Catholic Revival, which must be held partly responsible for the development of low views of church-manship, ministry and the sacraments; and unconsciously to the many secular pressures which also shaped the pattern of church life...Baptists particularly faced difficulties as Christians became more tolerant of one another, because their restrictive baptismal practice, that is their distinction in confining baptism to believers only, necessarily challenged any easy accommodation even to other recognizably evangelical groupings; the consequences of that are to be seen in the debates about open communion and open membership, and the long-running dispute with the Bible Society on the legitimacy of translating βαπτίζω by words signifying immersion.⁵¹

⁵¹ Briggs, *English Baptists*, 11-12.

PART TWO

Undisputed Aspects of Baptismal Theology

Chapter Two

Common Ground.

Introduction.¹

Whilst the present study will quickly reveal that there is no *one* Baptist theology of baptism, there is, nevertheless, a common core on which Baptists are almost unanimously agreed or over which there is little contention. The aim of this chapter, then, is to outline these areas of the theology of baptism on which Baptists have spoken with a common voice, though recognizing that there have been, from time to time, exceptions, which will be discussed throughout the rest of the study. Three main divisions will be examined here: the mode, the subjects and the theology of baptism.

The Mode of Baptism.

On the issue of the mode of baptism modern Baptists have been all but unanimous: baptism is by immersion and its basis in Scripture is enshrined in the second Declaration of Principle of the BU: "That Christian Baptism is the immersion in water into the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, of those who have professed repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ who "died for our sins according to the Scriptures; was buried, and rose again the third day."² This

¹ It is not the intention of this chapter to provide exhaustive references for every point or issue, merely to provide an introductory overview of the undisputed aspects of baptismal theology which will provide the essential background for the subsequent chapters. References, then, will be brief and highly selective. It should be noted that many examples of these themes will be mentioned within the main body of the study.

² This second principle has remained unchanged through the four revisions of the Declaration of Principle, the last one being in 1938, and it has been supported most recently by the four English Baptist College Principals in their study of the Declaration, see R. L. Kidd (ed.), *Something to Declare. A Study of the Declaration of Principle* (1996), 20-24. See also Douglas C. Sparkes, *The Constitutions of the Baptist Union of Great Britain* (1996).

understanding of immersion has been substantiated by scholarly research.³ Though the original mode adopted by the early Baptists was affusion and it is unclear precisely when immersion was adopted, by 1642 it was being advocated by the General Baptists.⁴ Whilst comparatively few Baptist authors have acknowledged this historical fact,⁵ much Baptist writing has given the impression that Baptists have always practised immersion. For the overwhelming majority of Baptists it is true that the only legitimate form of baptism is immersion.⁶

A further reason for the retention of immersion is the belief that it is important that a symbol be appropriate to that which it symbolizes. A. C. Underwood wrote, 'The mode...is not so important as the question as to the person..., but it *is* important'. Immersion is much more impressive and memorable than sprinkling and a much better symbol, representing complete surrender to Christ, burial with Him, death to sin and resurrection to newness of life. Further, in a sacrament, it is most important that the symbolic actions should be appropriate 'if they are to mediate God's help and grace to men in response to their faith and love'. A properly chosen religious symbol, then, will feed and nourish faith as well as express it.⁷

³ The most important Baptist discussion of βαπτίζω and its cognates and related Greek words is G. R. Beasley-Murray, 'Baptism, Wash', in C. Brown (ed.), *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology. Volume I:A-F* (Exeter, 1975), 143-54 (which was accompanied by the article by R. T. Beckwith, 'Infant Baptism: Its Background and Theology', 154-61).

⁴ See B. R. White, *The English Baptists of the Seventeenth Century* (1996²), 29, where White cites Edward Barber, a merchant tailor of Threadneedle Street, London, *A small Treatise of Baptisme or Dipping* (1642), 11-12, in which he assumed baptism to be by immersion and not any other mode. However, it is possible that there is an earlier reference to the practice of immersion, though the reference is inconclusive, see W. T. Whitley, 'Baptized - Dipped for Dead, 1560 Text, 1614 Comment, 1640 Practice', *BQ* 11.4-7 (January-December, 1943), 175-177.

⁵ Amongst these are H. W. Robinson, *Baptist Principles* (1938³), 16; 'The Baptist Doctrine of the Church', *BQ* 12.12 (October, 1948), 445; W. M. S. West, *Baptist Principles* (1960), 29.

⁶ Eg, 'H', 'Some Thoughts on Baptism', *BT&F* June 15, 1900, 480; Rev. Alfred Phillips of Leamington Spa, *What Baptists Stand For; and Gleanings in the Field of Baptist History* (1903), 39-40. This has often been combined with an appeal to the archaeological evidence, eg, by F. F. Whitby, *Baptist Principles from a Layman's point of view* (n.d., [BLC 1908]), 53.

⁷ A. C. Underwood, 'Why Be Baptised? An Imaginary Conversation', *BT* September 1, 1938, 675. C. H. Watkin, 'The Meaning of Baptism', *BT&F* January 10, 1913, 19, in a sermon delivered at Westbourne Park Chapel in 1913: 'The primary or external meaning of the

Dr. Charles Brown developed the symbolic significance of baptism when he referred to it as an enacted word, a dramatic symbol. In this ordinance the doctrine of regeneration was taught: the meaning of baptism being the death of the old life and the beginning of the new.⁸ Baptists have always been a confessional rather than credal people, and this understanding of baptism as an enacted word developed, chiefly through the many and influential writings of Wheeler Robinson. For example:

Its symbolic significance, *i.e.*, the spiritual death to self, union with Christ, and resurrection of the believer was emphasized by Paul: it expressed in vivid manner the very heart of Christian experience, as he conceived it. It is an action that speaks louder than words; by its unspoken eloquence, it commits those who are baptized to the most essential things. Yet it leaves each generation free to interpret the fundamental truths in its own way.⁹

Drawing chiefly upon Romans 6:1-11, but also Colossians 2:12, Baptists have identified immersion as symbolic of, firstly, the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, and the believer's participation with him through faith,¹⁰ the baptistry being understood as a watery grave;¹¹ secondly, repentance;¹² thirdly, a washing or

ordinance must correspond to the spiritual meaning. A symbol can only have the symbolism for which it is fitted. But further, both must correspond to the state of mind and heart which has been reached by the candidates for baptism'. Three elements to the meaning of baptism were identified: the primary meaning of the word 'baptism' which was simply the immersion of the whole body in water; the symbolism which was rooted in Romans 6, and its connection with death and resurrection but also washing (Acts 22:16), hence dying to sin and rising to new life; and, finally, the subjects - baptism being the outward expression of personal, individual faith. R. E. O. White, *The Biblical Doctrine of Initiation* (1960), 311, wrote, 'The first requirement of any symbol, one would suppose, is that it should symbolise'.

⁸ C. Brown, 'The Old and the New', *BT&F* January 5, 1906, 3, being a sermon preached at Ferme Park BC on 2 Corinthians 5:17 ('if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old has gone, the new has come').

⁹ Robinson, *Baptist Principles*, 27-28.

¹⁰ W. T. Whitley, *Church, Ministry and Sacraments* (1903), 161-164.

¹¹ N. H. Marshall, minister of Heath Street, Hampstead, *Conversion or the New Birth* (1909), 62-63, who explained that water baptism told of a grave in which the past was left behind, while the person rose to newness of life.

¹² Whitby, *Baptist Principles*, 60.

cleansing from sin, implying a new moral life for the believer;¹³ and fourthly, of the baptism of the Holy Spirit.¹⁴

The dominant image of immersion is of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ and the believer's own death, burial and resurrection with Christ by faith.¹⁵ Contrary to the many critics of the Baptist position, this is not to elevate the believer's response of faith over the prevenient grace of God, the subjective over the objective, for without the objective reality of Christ, his death and resurrection, there can be no salvation, therefore, amongst other things, no baptism. W. Y. Fullerton stated:

We are baptized to proclaim that God intervenes in the affairs of men: to set forth the fact of history that Christ died for us and rose again; to assure ourselves that if the God who created us came once in the flesh to our rescue, bearing our sin and reinforcing our humanity, we may expect to receive His grace again and again. Baptism proclaims this fact in symbol. It tells us that God is no passive spectator of the human drama.¹⁶

In baptism the believer acts out the Gospel experiences of Jesus Christ, linked by faith with Christ, thus signifying salvation from sin and the promise of new life.¹⁷

¹³ P. Beasley-Murray, *Radical Believers. The Baptist way of being the church* (1992), 13.

¹⁴ *Reply of the Churches in Membership with the Baptist Union to the 'Appeal to all Christian People' issued by the Lambeth Conference of 1920*, in J. H. Rushbrooke (ed.), *The Faith of the Baptists* (n.d., but 1926), 88.

¹⁵ Eg. A. W. Argyle, 'The New Testament Doctrine of the Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ', *The Expository Times* 61.6 (March, 1950), 188, 'the victory must be appropriated by faith; that is, by self-surrender to, and self-identification with, the Lord Jesus Christ, expressed and symbolized in baptism'.

¹⁶ W. Y. Fullerton, 'The Meaning of Baptism', *BT* August 16, 1928, 592. See also H. H. Rowley, 'The Christian Sacraments', in Rowley, *The Unity of the Bible* (1953), 172-73, 'Baptism is a symbol, and it is the constant teaching of the whole Bible that the symbol has no meaning without that which it symbolizes. As a mere external act it is as dead as the sacrifices which the prophets condemned... The religious ritual that is valid... is that which is charged with meaning in the moment of its performance... The robbing of baptism of its Biblical significance leads to the creation of something else to take its place, something which is not called baptism, but to which the real meaning of New Testament baptism has to be transferred. The symbol is of less importance than that which it symbolizes. It is of importance that Baptists no less than others should remember this. What matters most is not that a man has been voluntarily immersed, any more than that he has been baptized in infancy, but that he had truly died with Christ and been raised again to newness of life in Him,... The symbol is worthless without that which it symbolizes. It must be the organ of the soul's approach in faith and surrender to God before it can become the organ of God's approach in power to him'.

¹⁷ West, *Baptist Principles*, 30. See also 'The Baptist Doctrine of the Church', 445.

Immersion, therefore, is understood to represent and symbolise the religious significance and values of baptism in a way that affusion or sprinkling cannot. The BU's *Report of the Special Committee* of 1937, representing the major views within the denomination, unanimously declared, 'We are all agreed that baptism is incumbent upon every believer and that the proper mode of baptism is immersion and that no other mode so plainly proclaims the full message of the Gospel of the grace of God'.¹⁸

The Subjects of Baptism.

On the matter of who should be baptized Baptists spoke with one voice: baptism is for believers only.¹⁹

For Baptists, baptism is the logical consequence of their belief in the believers' church: 'Because we hold the Church to be a community of Christian believers, the ordinance of baptism is administered among us to those only who make a personal confession of repentance and faith'.²⁰ Henry Cook similarly expressed this priority of

¹⁸ *Report of the Special Committee Appointed by the Council on the Question of Union between Baptists, Congregationalists and Presbyterians* (n.d., [1937]), 7. See also A. C. Underwood, 'Conversion and Baptism', in Rushbrooke (ed.), *Faith of the Baptists*, 32, 'the New Testament mode of administering baptism by immersion helps to make it a means of grace as nothing else can, for immersion gives us in perfect symbolism the core of the evangelical faith - death unto sin and resurrection to a new life in Christ'.

¹⁹ Baptists have variously written and spoken about 'believer's baptism' and 'believers' baptism'. By these phrases they have meant the same thing, though obviously one is singular the other plural. The present study has generally followed the form of expression used by the writer under discussion at any particular moment. However, several writers have been conscious of the difference. Henry Cook, *Why Baptize Believers Only?* (1952), 5, maintained that, 'For them [Baptists] baptism is believer's baptism and the word is believer's, not believers'. There is no such thing as baptism in the mass. Baptism is an individual thing, and it rests on personal acceptance of the gospel. Baptism comes after and not before the declaration of allegiance to Christ, and as such it is a *sacramentum*, literally the oath of allegiance...'. (This was one of the Advance Series of Pamphlets under the general editorship of Rev. Alberic S. Clement of Hearsall BC, Coventry, from 1962 Home Secretary of the BMS.) R. L. Child, *A Conversation About Baptism* (1963), 31, included a footnote (n.2), 'Some writers use the form "believer's baptism"; others prefer "believers' baptism". It seems simplest to omit the apostrophe altogether, as is done in other cases of a similar kind. (E.g. 'Trades Council', 'Commons debate'.)' This procedure can be seen in the title of the volume edited by F. C. Bryan in 1943, *Concerning Believers Baptism*.

²⁰ Eg, *Reply*, 88.

ecclesiology, explaining 'that here our name does us a real injustice' for it suggests that 'our main contention in this matter is the ordinance, whereas in fact our chief point of concern is the nature of the Church. Our fundamental position is that the ordinances of the Church are intended only for members of the Church'.²¹

As the New Testament rite was for believers only,²² personal repentance towards God and faith in Christ were the prerequisites for baptism.²³ For these reasons Baptists have always been both quick and adamant in distinguishing *adult* from *believers'* baptism.²⁴ Alfred Phillips wrote, 'for while we refuse to baptise any who cannot believe, yet we are always willing to baptise those disciples, be they old or young, who are prepared to make a profession of faith in Jesus Christ'.²⁵ Robinson argued that of the subjects and the mode, it is the former which is the more important, and the very fact that Baptists baptize believers and not adults has a 'very important bearing on the constitution of the Church into which such believers enter by their faith'.²⁶ What distinguishes the Baptists from Paedobaptists is not the amount of water

21 H. Cook, *The Why of Our Faith* (1924), 81.

22 G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (1962), 274, 'It goes without saying that this theology of faith and baptism, which is found throughout the New Testament, has been constructed by the Apostolic writers on the presupposition that baptism is administered to converts'. Similarly, R. E. O. White, *Invitation to Baptism. A Manual for Inquirers* (1962), 12, 'It must be remembered throughout our studies that what is here said about baptism is true only of the baptism of those who know Christ, believe in Him, accept Him as their Saviour and their Lord, and are resolved to follow Him throughout their lives'.

23 R. L. Child, 'The Ministry and the Sacraments', *BQ* 9.3 (July, 1938), 136.

24 J. E. Roberts, *Christian Baptism, Its Significance and Its Subjects* (n.d., [1905]), 34; and 'Do We Teach Adult Baptism?', *BF* March 10, 1916, 157; H. Townsend, 'The Free Churches and Ourselves', *The Fraternal* 58 (September, 1945), 4; R. L. Child, *A Conversation About Baptism* (1963), 31-32; P. Beasley-Murray, *Radical Disciples*, 9.

25 Phillips, *What Baptists Stand For*, 38. Robinson wrote, '*The baptism of the New Testament is the immersion of intelligent persons, as the expressive accompaniment of their entrance into a new life of moral and spiritual relationship to God in Christ*', see, *Baptist Principles*, 12, italics his.

26 Robinson, *The Life and Faith of the Baptists* (1927), 80. Cf. E. C. Pike, *Some Unique Aspects of the Baptist Position* (n.d., [BLC 1901]), 54-55, for the similar view that infant baptism made the distinction between 'a converted church and an unconverted world' difficult. Likewise, the *Reply*, 88, stated, 'In our judgment the baptism of infants incapable of offering a personal confession of faith subverts the conception of the Church as the fellowship of believers'.

used in baptism but the subjects of the rite, and they are convinced that this position is no trivial matter, but a question of principle.²⁷

There are a number of consequences which derive from the baptism of believers.

Baptists and Infant Baptism.

The belief that believers are the rightful subjects of baptism has led Baptists to reject infant baptism, and in this they have adopted broadly two lines of argument - the historical and the biblical-theological - though more often than not a combination of the two has been used.

The most detailed historical repudiation of infant baptism by a Baptist was made by Dr. T. Vincent Tymms, who located the beginning of the practice and doctrine chiefly in the middle of the third century,²⁸ but that it did not come to prominence until after Augustine in the fifth century,²⁹ a chronology which has been followed, with only minor variations, by most Baptists.³⁰

²⁷ So Rev. W. H. Rowling of Hamsterley, 'The Paedobaptist Position in Relation to Baptist Principles and Practices', *BT&F* March 8, 1901. This is also reflected by the 5 books written by Baptists with *Baptist Principles* in the title - Charles Williams, F. F. Whitby, W. T. Whitley, H. W. Robinson and W. M. S. West, see bibliography for dates and details. A. Gilmore, *Baptism and Christian Unity* (1966), 63-64, rightly noted that Anglicanism, too, believes in adult baptism, but it is for those who have not been infant baptized, and he believed that this needed to be distinguished from the Baptist practice of believers' baptism, and he proceeded: 'what we...really mean to express by believers' baptism is not the baptism of believers but the making of believers by baptism. Baptism is not to be regarded as an appendage to a man's becoming a disciple; it is rather a focal point of the initiation experience, which finds its culmination in communion and admission to membership'. However, he noted that Baptists had tended to make baptism an appendage, separating faith and baptism, spirit and water, in Christian initiation.

²⁸ T. V. Tymms, former Principal of Rawdon College, *The Evolution of Infant Baptism and Related Ideas* (n.d., [1912]), 220. This dating is confirmed by Robinson's enthusiastic review in *BT&F* May 17, 1912, 360.

²⁹ Tymms, *Evolution of Infant Baptism*, 306-07.

³⁰ See, eg, H. G. Wood, "BAPTISM" (Later Christian), in J. Hastings (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics II* (Edinburgh, 1909), 395; W. T. Whitley, *The Witness of History to Baptist Principles* (1914²), 83-88; Robinson, *Baptist Principles*, chapter 2 'The Abandonment of Believer's Baptism', 31-40; Argyle, 'Baptism in the Early Christian Centuries', in Gilmore (ed.), 192-218; Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, 306.

As Scripture contained no specific reference to infant baptism the strongest arguments against it, according to Baptists, are biblical. As the 1937 *Report* succinctly declared:

Our conviction is that so far as the New Testament is made our authority for faith and practice, Baptists in their practice of Believers' Baptism have firm ground on which to stand and that Paedobaptists must go outside its words to discover any basis for their doctrine. We know that to multitudes of our fellow Christians the practice of Infant Baptism stands for a great deal which is precious to them, but we believe that it means something different from the New Testament rite and that we are in line with the New Testament. The baptism of believers as opposed to the baptism of children is thus justified, as we believe, by the evidence of the New Testament and the practice of the rite in the primitive Church, and to most Baptists that will appear to be a sufficient answer to any critic.³¹

Dr. Underwood stated that it was of the utmost importance to make plain the precise grounds of the Baptist refusal to baptize infants and offered five reasons: there was no trace of it in the New Testament; it perpetuated the outworn dogma that infants dying unbaptized are in peril of the guilt involved in original sin; it fostered the notion that a sacrament could have meaning and effect apart from the faith of the recipient; it obscured the fact that salvation is by faith alone; and obscured the doctrine of the Church as a converted membership.³² Whether by detailed exegesis of the biblical texts³³ or by a more dialogical and interactive approach with specific paedobaptist

³¹ *Report of the Special Committee*, 12-13. Similarly, Keith W. Clements, 'A Baptist View', in R. E. Davies (ed.), *The Truth in Tradition. A Free Church Symposium* (1992), 6, wrote, 'Their rejection of infant baptism in favour of believers' baptism is based on their reading of the New Testament. In rejecting infant baptism they reject one of the most venerable and universal traditions of Christianity, and thereby they invest even more in the authority of scripture, as against tradition, than do others of the Protestant and Free Church family'. It is of the utmost importance to note this place scripture has for Baptist faith and practice. The first Declaration of Principle states, 'That our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh, is the sole and absolute authority in all matters pertaining to faith and practice, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures, and that each Church has liberty, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to interpret and administer His Laws', *BUD* 1996-97, 7, italics added. See, amongst the vast literature on this, Robinson, *Baptist Principles*, 22-24, in which, p.22, he wrote 'Believers' Baptism forms a direct link of relation to the spiritual authority of the New Testament, and of the Lord it reveals to us', italics his; S. F. Winward, 'Scripture, Tradition, and Baptism', in Gilmore (ed.), *Christian Baptism*, 25-53; H. Cook, *What Baptists Stand For* (1964⁵), chapter 1 'The Supremacy of Scripture', 17-31; West, *Baptist Principles* (1975³), 5-11; Richard L. Kidd (ed.), *Something to Declare. A study of the Declaration of Principle* (1996), 28-36.

³² Underwood, 'Views of Modern Churches (g) Baptists (2)', in R. Dunkerley (ed.), *The Ministry and the Sacraments* (1937), 224-25.

³³ The most comprehensive and important of which are the essays in Gilmore (ed.), *Christian Baptism*; R. E. O. White's *The Biblical Doctrine of Initiation* (1960); and Beasley-Murray's *Baptism in the New Testament*.

texts and/or authors,³⁴ or with paedobaptist literature in general,³⁵ Baptists have effectively accused Paedobaptists of faulty exegesis and erroneous theology.³⁶

This has led many Baptists to view infant baptism as no baptism at all. James Mountain went so far as to declare that infant baptism was borrowed from paganism,³⁷ Child spoke of 'Our repugnance to Infant Baptism',³⁸ White described it as the major soteriological heresy because of its contradiction of the whole New Testament emphasis on repentance, hearing the gospel and faith as the pre-requisite to salvation,³⁹ whilst others simply underlined that it was not apostolic practice.⁴⁰ In recent years, however, a more conciliatory and even open attitude has become more in evidence amongst more ecumenically-minded Baptists.⁴¹

The most celebrated rejection of infant baptism came from the pen of George Beasley-Murray in 1962. After an eighty page discussion of the subject he concluded,

³⁴ Eg. J. Brown's *Baptism: True or False* (1905), which was subtitled *A Review of 'Baptised: How, Who, and Why', by the Rev. Hubert Brooke, MA, Vicar of St. Margaret's, Brighton*; the two letters (in actual fact three, as one was the postscript to the first) by B. I. Greenwood of Shoreham, Kent, *Two Letters on Infant Baptism* (1920); P. W. Evans, 'Can Infant Baptism Be Justified?', *Evangelical Quarterly* 15 (1943), 292-297 (this was a reply to the earlier article by D. M. Baillie, 'The Justification of Infant Baptism', *Evangelical Quarterly* 15 (1943), 21-32); E. A. Payne, 'Professor T. W. Manson on Baptism', *Scottish Journal of Theology* 3 (March, 1950), 50-56, (a reply to Manson's 'Baptism in the Church', *Scottish Journal of Theology* 2.4 (December, 1949), 391-403); A Morgan Derham, minister of Chenies Baptist Church, Rickmansworth, 'But Why Baptise Believers?', *The English Churchman and St. James's Chronicle* June 5, 1959, 4, (a reply to David Winter's 'But Why Baptise Babies?', *The English Churchman and St. James's Chronicle* May 22, 1959, 4); G. R. Beasley-Murray, 'The Case Against Infant Baptism', *Christianity Today* 9.1 (October 9, 1964), 11-14 (a companion article to G. W. Bromiley's 'The Case for Infant Baptism', 7-11 in the same edition).

³⁵ See J. E. Roberts' *Christian Baptism. Its Significance and its Subjects* (n.d., [1905]); and the collaborative Baptist-Churches of Christ volume *Infant Baptism To-day*, by P. W. Evans, H. Townsend and William Robinson, (1948).

³⁶ For a combination of these arguments see the *Report of the Special Committee*, 8-13, 25-29.

³⁷ J. Mountain, *My Baptism and What Led To It* (n.d., [1904]), 59.

³⁸ R. L. Child, 'The Ministry and the Sacraments', 136.

³⁹ R. E. O. White, 'New Baptismal Questions - II', *BT* August 24, 1961, 2. For him, paedobaptism destroyed the whole biblical pattern of initiation into experience of God: man's free response in faith to God's prior and gracious initiative to save.

⁴⁰ Eg. Whitley, *The Witness of History*, 87.

⁴¹ See chapters 8 and 9 below.

'It seems that a small amount of water is bestowed on a small infant with a very small result. And this, it is alleged, is *baptism!* Can it be wondered at that Baptists should be strengthened in their determination to strive for the retention of the fullness of baptism, ordained of the Lord and continued in the Apostolic Communities, and that they should continue to lift up their voices among the Churches to plead for a return to this baptism?'.⁴²

Baptist Anti-Sacerdotalism.

Baptists have always had a strong antipathy towards sacerdotalism and this led them to reject what they associated with it, sometimes referred to as sacramentalism,⁴³ at other times to sacramentarianism, but whichever of the two words was adopted the focus of attack was always the same.⁴⁴ When Baptists have contended for the non-sacramental character of the ordinances they have been arguing against any magical or superstitious interpretations of either baptism or the Lord's Supper. R. C. Lemin dismissed the sacramentarian teaching that a Christian was made in and by the sacraments, advocating in its place the Protestant belief that sacraments are a means of grace not a regenerating agency.⁴⁵ The rite of infant baptism lends itself to a mechanical and quasi-magical conception of faith and grace which Baptists have

⁴² Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, chapter 6, 'The Rise and Significance of Infant Baptism', 306-386, quote from pp.385-86.

⁴³ Sacerdotalism is here understood as the priestly control of religion, an understanding associated by Baptists with the Catholic and Anglican traditions and which Baptists rejected in favour of the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. Sacramentalism/sacramentarianism is an understanding of religion as focussed in sacramental acts which only the priests can perform, therefore precluding lay administration of the sacraments.

⁴⁴ Eg, J. D. Freeman, 'The Lambeth Appeal', *The Fraternal* no 13.5 (March, 1922), 6, who drew attention to the 1920 Lambeth Appeal's 'manifest sacramentalism' and its 'undisguised sympathy with sacerdotalism'. Whitley, *Church, Ministry and Sacraments*, 244, discussed Hebrews 8:3 and declared that 'Sacerdotalism and sacramentalism are twin errors'. To believe one entailed belief in the other - to destroy one meant the other would be destroyed. On p.271 he submitted that sacerdotalists appended the Bible to tradition. See also his epilogue 'Sacerdotalism and Sacramentarianism', pp.276-281. However, in order to rediscover a truly biblical sacramentalism, Wheeler Robinson argued that Baptists were anti-sacramentarian, and that 'sacrament' in the sense of the 'oath of allegiance' was acceptable to Baptists, *Baptist Principles*, 26 and 29n.

⁴⁵ Rev. R. C. Lemin of Moseley, Birmingham, 'Protestantism and the Interpretation of the Sacraments', *Supplement to BT&F* October 10, 1913, III, an address to the second session of the 1913 autumn Assembly in Manchester.

found repugnant to the Gospel on the grounds that it perverts the evangelical message. Believer's baptism, on the other hand, stresses and preserves the personal meaning of both faith and grace.⁴⁶ D. R. Griffiths appealed to the Spirit's activity as the safeguard against any notions of magic in baptism: 'The persistent stress on the activity of the Holy Spirit...[is the] feature of the sacramental teaching in general which safeguards it from the materialistic and the magical'.⁴⁷

The doctrine of infant baptism has been closely linked with the origin and growth of the sacerdotal system.⁴⁸ At the turn of the century Dr. Newton Marshall declared, 'We Baptists...may rejoice that we are free from all reproach in reference to the present revival of sacerdotalism', and alerted the denomination to the encroachment of sacerdotalism within the Anglican and Free Churches.⁴⁹ Any hints that baptism acted *ex opere operato* or as 'magic' have been strongly denounced⁵⁰ and sacerdotalism disclaimed as 'Papistical error'.⁵¹

⁴⁶ R. L. Child, 'The Baptist Contribution to the One Church', *BQ* 8.2 (April, 1936), 84-85. H. W. Robinson, 'Hebrew Sacrifice and Prophetic Symbolism', a paper read to the Oxford Society of Historical Theology on November 20, 1941, *Journal of Theological Studies* 43 (January-April, 1942), 137-38, proposed that Romans 6:3-5 could legitimately be regarded as a form of symbolic magic were it not for the fact that baptism was the act of a believer.

⁴⁷ D. R. Griffiths, 'The Fourth Gospel and 1 John', in Gilmore (ed.), *Christian Baptism*, 170. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, 264-65, where he referred to Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 10:1-5 as giving a clear warning against any magical-sacramental view of the sacraments.

⁴⁸ Pike, *Some Unique Aspects*, 44. See also Tymms' *The Evolution of Infant Baptism*.

⁴⁹ N. H. Marshall, 'Priestcraft and Baptism', *BT&F* November 14, 1902, 844. Its presence amongst the Church of England and Free Churches led Mountain, *My Baptism*, 2, to exclaim that the 'perversion of baptism...by sacerdotalists and ritualists is causing many evangelical Christians to depreciate these sacred ordinances, and, in some cases, even to reject them altogether'.

⁵⁰ Eg. J. Clifford, 'The Baptist World Alliance: Its Origin and Character, Meaning and Work', in *The Baptist World Alliance, Second Congress, Philadelphia, June 19-25, 1911* (Philadelphia, 1911), 64. 'We have to lift up our voice against the capital error of Christendom, that source of immeasurable damage to the gospel and to souls, the magical interpretation of baptism and the Lord's Supper, the treatment of the baptism of the babe as obedience to the will of the Lord, as expressed in the New Testament and as a way of salvation. We must stand aloof from it. We can have no part or lot in it. In a word, we must be in a position to give a full, clear, unconfused witness to the cardinal principles of our faith and life'.

⁵¹ Phillips, *What Baptists Stand For*, 29, adding that the Church of England was 'doing with eagerness the work of Rome'.

It should be noted, however, that as the century has progressed Baptists have tended to drop such intemperate tones, choosing instead to refer to the faith of the believer as the guarantee against such superstitious connotations. Child noted that in the New Testament baptism was the outward sign^{of} the candidate's own faith and this was the 'effective safeguard against that tendency to superstition which clings persistently about the rite of baptism'.⁵²

Baptists and Baptismal Regeneration.

As with the rejection of sacerdotalism, Baptist antipathy to baptismal regeneration, though always present, was a particular feature of the first half of the century. Baptists have always staunchly opposed this doctrine,⁵³ maintaining that salvation is by grace through faith, not by a rite of any kind. Regeneration, they believe, is the work of the Holy Spirit and that baptism is the outward sign of this,⁵⁴ and that Paedobaptists have confused the two.⁵⁵

Wheeler Robinson contrasted the regeneration by the Holy Spirit with the theory of baptismal regeneration:

There are two distinct ways of representing the operation of the Spirit of God in regard to baptism. We may think of the external act, and the material means, as the prescribed channel of the work of the Spirit, and then the result is what is commonly known as sacramentarianism. Or we may think of the internal conditions, the personal faith and conversion emphasized in Believer's Baptism, and see in them the true realm of the Spirit's activity...In fact, when we speak of

⁵² R. L. Child, 'The Practice of the Apostolic Church' in Bryan (ed.), *Concerning Believers Baptism*, 17-18, a sermon on Acts 8:12 and 36.

⁵³ A. C. Underwood, 'Baptism and Regeneration', *BT* March 1, 1928, 144.

⁵⁴ Robinson, *Baptist Principles*, 24, 'the Spirit is the agent in that regeneration which is the Godward side of conversion...'. Marshall, *Conversion*, 82, stated that according to 'New Testament usage Conversion and Regeneration are but two aspects of the one experience - two ways of looking at one set of facts'. See his chapter 4 'Conversion Real To-day', pp.80-107. Underwood agreed with Marshall, see A. C. Underwood, *Conversion: Christian and Non-Christian. A Comparative and Psychological Study* (1925), 112-13, who argued that believers were not baptized in order to be regenerated, for their conversion was their regeneration. Rather, they were baptized in order to be admitted into the rights and privileges of God's society; their religious experience was deepened and heightened when they underwent the rite in the proper frame of heart and mind.

⁵⁵ Eg. Whitby, *Baptist Principles*, 136-37, also p.30. Several others sketched the rise of the doctrine of baptismal regeneration and stated their belief that infant baptism was actually the logical result of it. See Tymms, *Evolution of Infant Baptism*, 17; Wood, 'BAPTISM', 395-397.

Believer's Baptism, we mean that baptism in the Spirit of God, of which water baptism is the expression.⁵⁶

The depth of Baptist feeling on this subject can be illustrated by the language used to denounce it: Phillips declared that, 'Against baptismal regeneration we show the necessity for the new birth';⁵⁷ J. D. Freeman repudiated it as 'subversive of the truth of the Gospel';⁵⁸ and Underwood described it as 'a doctrine abhorred by all true Baptists'.⁵⁹ To correct it, J. H. Rushbrooke contended that when the Baptist doctrine of baptism is fully upheld - setting forth the supremacy of faith, its nature and implications, involving an immediate relationship with God in Christ - it cuts at the root of any magical view of the ordinance. 'Baptismal regeneration is to us a doctrine as perilous as it is unscriptural. The paradox of our denominational life is that by means of a rite we offer decisive testimony against ritualism'.⁶⁰

The Theology of Baptism.

The discussion of the theology of baptism will be subdivided in order to aid the presentation of the material, but this is not to suggest any false distinctions between the various aspects of the doctrine of baptism which, it will become quickly evident, frequently overlap. The subdivisions, therefore, are matters of analytical convenience with the intention of showing clearly the non-controversial elements of the Baptist understanding of baptism and to highlight the areas where there has been virtual unanimity, so that later chapters can focus on the areas of controversy and development.

⁵⁶ Robinson, *Baptist Principles*, 24-25. Marshall, *Conversion*, 61-62, believed that advocates of baptismal regeneration had confused 'the symbol with the reality, the material testimony with the spiritual experience'. See also Henry J. Wicks, 'Baptismal Regeneration', *BQ* 5.1 (January, 1930), 20-22.

⁵⁷ Phillips, *What Baptists Stand For*, 31.

⁵⁸ Freeman, 'Lambeth Appeal', 7.

⁵⁹ Underwood, 'What Mean Ye By This Service?', in Bryan (ed.), *Concerning Believers Baptism*, 62.

⁶⁰ Rushbrooke, 'Protestant of the Protestants', in Rushbrooke (ed.), *Faith of the Baptists*, 80-81.

Ecclesiology and Baptism.

Wheeler Robinson declared:

The Baptist stands or falls by his conception of what the Church is; his plea for believer's baptism becomes a mere archaeological idiosyncrasy, if it be not the expression of the fundamental constitution of the Church. We become members of the living body of Christ by being consciously and voluntarily baptized in the Spirit of Christ - a baptism witnessed by the evidence of moral purpose and character as the fruit of the Spirit.⁶¹

Because believer's baptism emphasizes the necessity of conversion and forms a direct link between the spiritual authority of the New Testament and the Lord it reveals,⁶² it carries with it the unmistakable definition of the Church, for which it is the door. Henry Cook wrote, 'It is from this point that our Baptist emphasis takes its rise, not from Baptism. Our whole contention is that Baptism is misunderstood and its meaning completely perverted when the nature of the Church is obscured or ignored; and, on the other hand, only when the nature of the Church is emphasised and understood does Baptism get its rightful place'.⁶³ Believer's baptism, then, provides a constant and much-needed testimony to the spiritual basis of the Church, which is neither a social nor a political but a religious community, grounded in a spiritual relationship with Christ and answerable finally only to him.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Robinson, *Life and Faith*, 84.

⁶² Robinson, *Baptist Principles*, 17-24.

⁶³ Cook, *Why of Our Faith*, 82-83, see also p.92.

⁶⁴ So Child, 'The Baptist Contribution', 85. In this, Baptists are being true to their origins as inheritors of a separatist ecclesiology which they had gained from the Puritan conception of the Church, though they developed it further than either the Puritans or Separatists. So Robinson, *Life and Faith*, 83, for whom believer's baptism was 'the only type of baptism which is properly consistent with the logic of "Separatism" and the whole conception of a separated Church of believers'. Similarly, Underwood, 'Conversion and Baptism', 26.

Baptism as a Profession of Faith.

As the only legitimate recipients of baptism are believers, Baptists have always stressed baptism as a profession of faith. For this reason Robinson argued that 'to equate the practice with the principle would be to stultify the principle itself, which emphasizes the *inner essential of faith*, and declares that without it all external ceremonies are valueless'.⁶⁵ This understanding of baptism as a profession of faith has been the most widely and firmly held Baptist view of baptism, a fact borne out by the sheer volume of references made to this in the literature.

The issue which separates Baptists from Paedobaptists is precisely this: the nature of the faith required in and for baptism. For the former it is the faith of the individual, for the latter the vicarious faith of the church or godparents suffices. Both parties have had to tackle for themselves the nature of the relation between faith and baptism, but Baptists have repudiated the notion of vicarious faith for salvation.⁶⁶ Baptists refer to baptism in a variety of ways, each of which express⁶⁵ essentially the same truth that baptism is the believer's 'profession of faith'⁶⁷ and this language clearly reveals the Baptist understanding and emphasis on the necessity of conversion.⁶⁸

Though Baptists in the seventeenth century declared their beliefs and principles in confessions of faith, over time they became wary of and reluctant to produce formal

⁶⁵ Robinson, *Baptist Principles*, 15, italics added. See also p.27 where he said that 'form can have no spiritual value apart from the attitude of the baptised to it'.

⁶⁶ Whitley, *Church, Ministry and Sacraments*, 35-36 and 91-92.

⁶⁷ 'Baptist Doctrine of the Church', 446. This is expressed by a series of virtually synonymous expressions, including 'profession of discipleship', see Williams, *Principles and Practices*, 20; 'profession of personal repentance and personal faith', see H. Cook, *The Theology of Evangelism* (1951), 111; 'confession of faith', see Rushbrooke, 'Protestant of the Protestants', 8; or the 'witness' to their faith, see Whitby, *Baptist Principles*, 48, 72, 97; their 'expression' of faith, see Marshall, *Conversion*, 64-65; a 'profession of loyalty to Christ', see Robinson, 'The Faith of the Baptists', *The Expository Times* 28 (1927), 455; a 'public' profession or confession of faith, see E. A. Payne and S. F. Winward, *Orders and Prayers for Church Worship* (1960), 132; and a confession of 'His [Jesus'] Name', see West, *Baptist Principles*, 6.

⁶⁸ So 'Our Denominational Witness', *BT* January 25, 1940, 54, 'The Baptists have from the first stood for the fact of Spiritual regeneration, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. For this reason they have emphasised believers' baptism as a personal confession of an experience of conversion...!'

confessions.⁶⁹ Though new Associations/Connexions in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were not against producing such articles, they were more covenantal. In the twentieth century there has been a significant move within the denomination to see baptism not only as an 'acted parable', but as an 'acted creed'. Though the origin of these phrases is unknown, the first mention seems to be a statement by Wheeler Robinson in 1904,⁷⁰ later popularized in his *Baptist Principles*: 'baptism by immersion takes the place amongst Baptists of a formal creed'.⁷¹ He understood both sacraments as acted parables of the Lord's death, burial and resurrection, 'the cardinal verities of evangelical faith and the historical basis of Christianity'.⁷² It was by these expressive acts that the believer identified himself with Christ, professing the simplest form of confession of faith, 'Jesus is Lord' (Romans 10:9, cf. 1 Corinthians 12:3), this later being expanded into the trinitarian baptismal formula of Matthew 28:19.⁷³ One of those who followed this lead, Gilbert Laws, declared, 'When a man goes down into the solemn waters to be buried with Christ by baptism, and thence is raised in the power of a new life, *what a tremendous creed he has professed!*'⁷⁴ Another, Irene Morris, announced, '[Baptism] is an acted parable, and preaches truths hard to express in words'.⁷⁵

⁶⁹ On which see W. J. McGlothlin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith* (1910), and W. L. Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith* (Valley Forge, 1969²).

⁷⁰ Robinson, 'The Confessional Value of Baptism', *BT&F* February 12, 1904, 121. It would appear that he came to this position through his study of the Hebrew concept of 'prophetic symbolism', as reflected in his later article 'Prophetic Symbolism', in D. C. Simpson (ed.), *Old Testament Essays* (1927), 14-16, and his book *The Christian Experience of the Holy Spirit* (1928), 192-95.

⁷¹ This was first printed in the YBA centenary volume, Robinson in C. E. Shipley (ed.), *The Baptists of Yorkshire. Being the Centenary Memorial Volume of the Yorkshire Baptist Association* (1912), 20, and *Baptist Principles*, 28.

⁷² Robinson, *Life and Faith*, 90, cf. also on the Lord's Supper pp.116-17.

⁷³ Robinson, *Life and Faith*, 90.

⁷⁴ G. Laws, 'Vital Forces of the Baptist Movement', in Rushbrooke (ed.), *Faith of the Baptists*, 14, italics added. Robinson, 'The Place of Baptism', 216, expressed this more fully: 'We, less than any other part of the Christian Church, are dependent on creeds, because we have maintained that personal profession of faith in baptism from which these creeds themselves have sprung. Because of that personal profession of loyalty, made in baptism itself more

Baptism and Death, Burial and Resurrection.

More important than symbolizing the repentance and faith of the believer, baptism even more fundamentally symbolises the prevenient grace of God in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. Though logically and theologically this symbolism of grace precedes its symbolism of faith, Baptists have rarely expressed matters in this way, and the profession of faith in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ would be a more accurate description of the way the majority of Baptists have spoken of baptism.

The most important baptismal text to Baptists is Romans 6:1-11, and what Paul said there he succinctly reiterated in Colossians 2:12.⁷⁶ The relationship between the believer in baptism and these events, however, has been differently interpreted by Baptists. Some have been content merely to state that baptism witnesses to Jesus' death, burial and resurrection, and signifies the believer's death to sin and resurrection to a new life,⁷⁷ but others have developed this theology further, believing that, by

clearly and forcibly by us than any other part of the Church, we can afford to make less of any form of words, however true. One of the great reasons for maintaining the method of immersion is its symbolic expression of the historical truths on which our faith rests - the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ - and of that personal union with Him which true faith implies. That is our creed, expressed in a manner far better than mere words'.

⁷⁵ I. Morris of Queen's Road, Coventry, *Thoughts on Church Membership* (1922), 22. Amongst others, this idea is to be found in 'The Baptist Doctrine of the Church', 445; and West, *Baptist Principles*, 31.

⁷⁶ Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, 152, stated, 'Col 2.11ff' provides a significant exposition of the theology we [believe] to lie at the back of Romans 6'.

⁷⁷ See, eg, West, *Baptist Principles*, 30, who noted that repentance and faith were linked with baptism, and this fact demanded for its symbolism 'the immersion of the believer, signifying the dying with Christ, i.e. the identification with the Cross of Christ, and the coming up out of the water, signifying the rising with Christ, i.e. the identification with the resurrection of Christ. In baptism, therefore, the believer acts out the Gospel experiences of Jesus Christ, linked by faith with Christ, and thus signifying salvation from sin and the promise of new life'. See also W. W. Sidey's hymn (1856-1909), *BCH* 502 vv1 and 2: 'Buried with Christ! Our glad hearts say,/Come see the place where once He lay/Risen with Him! Allured by Love,/Henceforth we seek the things above'. This hymn was written by Sidey for his church in Tottenham, probably around the turn of the century, see H. Martin (ed.), *A Companion to the Baptist Church Hymnal (Revised)* (1953), notes on hymn 482 p.127. See also Whitley, *Church, Ministry and Sacraments*, 162.

faith, the believer actually participates in these events.⁷⁸ These issues were summarized by Donald Guthrie:

It is in the passage in Romans 6:1-4 that the apostle sets out most fully his thoughts about baptism. It is essentially connected with death and resurrection, and not with cleansing. Baptism signifies burial with Christ in his death (Rom. 6:4). But baptism also means new life: a sharing of Christ's risen life. It exhibits the transition which has occurred from death to life. Paul goes on to expound the significance of the change, particularly in relation to the death of the old self. He clearly saw the theological meaning in the baptismal act. But the crucial question arises over the time when the radical change occurred. Did it happen at baptism? Or did it happen before baptism, in which case the ordinance has the function of a public demonstration of what had already happened? The issue has been hotly debated.⁷⁹

Whilst Guthrie primarily had in view the academic/theological debate over baptism, his comments also reflect the divided state over the baptized believer and his/her relation to and participation in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. The assessment of which position is the more representative position amongst Baptists is difficult to make, though it is probably the least developed, as less sophistication is often the mark of a popular and widespread belief.⁸⁰ Despite their differences, Baptists have agreed that however else they appropriate the benefits of or participate in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, faith is required from the believer,⁸¹ a fact made explicit in Colossians 2:12 and Galatians 3:26-27, on which Beasley-

⁷⁸ Eg, H. W. Robinson, *The Christian Doctrine of Man* (Edinburgh, 1913²), 124-25, commented that the Romans passage implied not merely a symbolic but a realistic union with Christ; Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, 126-46, discussing Romans 6:1-11; White, *Biblical Doctrine*, 215-16.

⁷⁹ D. Guthrie, *New Testament Theology* (Leicester, 1981), 756.

⁸⁰ This conclusion, it is believed, is borne out by the rest of the present study. The evidence assessed throughout this thesis suggests that grass-roots Baptists (the majority within the denomination) have little interest in or knowledge of the more technical, theological discussions of baptism, and that the latter have not made great inroads into the Baptist constituency at either the level of theology or practice.

⁸¹ Eg, J. B. Middlebrook, 'The Command of Christ', a sermon delivered on Thursday July 21st, in A. T. Ohrn (ed.), *Golden Jubilee Congress (Ninth World Congress), London, England, 16th-22nd July, 1955* (1955), 253; Payne and Winward, *Orders and Prayers*, 131, where one of the sentences stated, 'In baptism we are united with Christ through faith, dying with him unto sin and rising with him unto newness of life'; White, *Invitation to Baptism*, chapter 5, 'Baptized into His Death', 44-50.

Murray commented that, as in the one so in the other 'faith is integrated into the baptismal event. *In baptism* the baptized is raised *through faith*'.⁸²

Baptism and Union with Christ.

The same Romans 6 passage says (verse 5) that if the believer is 'united with [Christ]...in his death, [then he/she] will certainly...be united with him in his resurrection', a union which is clearly relational, entered into through faith and baptism.⁸³ 'For Paul', Robinson argued, baptism 'meant an experimental union with Christ in His redeeming acts, deeper in meaning than words can express...' Citing Romans 6:4, he pressed, 'If it is asked just what the outer act of baptism contributed to these inner experiences of forgiveness, regeneration, faith and fellowship with Christ, we must reply that *the New Testament never considers them apart* in this detached manner. The baptism of which it speaks is no formal act, but a genuine experience; on the other hand, the New Testament knows nothing of unbaptized believers'.⁸⁴

Aware of the separation between conversion and baptism which had taken place in so much Baptist baptismal practice, Underwood believed that at their conversion believers' experience of union with Christ began, but at their baptism that experience

⁸² Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, 154, italics his. Colossians 2:12 reads, 'having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead' (NIV), and Galatians 3:26-27 reads, 'You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ' (NIV).

⁸³ S. F. Winward, *The New Testament Teaching on Baptism. In the form of Daily Bible Readings for the Instruction of Candidates for Baptism* (1952), 46-47. So too A. B. Crabtree, *The Restored Relationship. A Study in Justification and Reconciliation*, being the W. T. Whitley Lectures for 1961, (1963), 65.

⁸⁴ Robinson, *Baptist Principles*, 14-15. That the New Testament 'knows nothing of unbaptized believers' is a key, though seldom expressed, tenet of Baptist belief. The relational aspect of this union was underscored by J. Lewis, 'Baptised into Jesus Christ', 16, 'the form expresses most appropriately, not a formal but a personal and individual union with a person, a union which in the very nature of the case, requires intelligent faith and entire surrender...'. On p.17 he stated, 'My baptism meant more than committing myself to a cause or a church. It meant my vital union with a living Person for ever and for ever'. The *Report of the Special Committee*, 5-6, averred that baptism was a declaration, acted not spoken, of the belief that Christ was crucified and raised from the dead and that in union with him the believer was crucified to sin and raised to newness of life. It was this very fact which made baptism something more than a confession, namely an acted creed and declaration of the gospel.

was so deepened and enhanced that with Paul they could say that baptism united them to Christ and enabled them to 'put on Christ'. Baptism increased joy, enhanced faith, stimulated courage, deepened the sense of sins forgiven, and quickened the sense of union with and responsibility to the Lord Jesus Christ. However, an infant who was baptized was deprived of these sacramental experiences 'which have always accompanied the baptism of believers in Christ'.⁸⁵

Child developed this union beyond the individual when he observed that 'St. Paul speaks of baptism as uniting believers directly with Jesus Christ. They are baptized into Jesus Christ and buried with Him'. He continued: 'the Christian life is essentially a spiritual union of the believer with Jesus Christ' and spoke of baptism as 'first of all an act of uniting the believer with Christ'. Only then was baptism incorporation 'by faith into a spiritual society, the Church, of which Jesus Christ is the Head, and His followers are the living members', which meant that 'the inward and the outward are integrally related, and spiritual union with Christ is perfected through the growing fellowship of His people with one another in mutual love, and through the service which they unitedly render to their one Lord'.⁸⁶ This union with the Church is often described in terms of initiation or incorporation into Christ, hence its proper place at the beginning of the Christian life.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Underwood, 'Views of Modern Churches', 228.

⁸⁶ R. L. Child's sermon on Romans 6:3-4, 'The Significance of Baptism to St. Paul', subtitled, 'Union with Christ in Baptism', in *Concerning Believers Baptism*, 23-25.

⁸⁷ Whitby, *Baptist Principles*, 45. Whitley, *Church, Ministry and Sacraments*, 193, discussing 1 Corinthians 12:13, for whom baptism was joining the Church. Underwood, *Conversion*, 36, argued from Cornelius' baptism by Peter in Acts 10 that baptism is the formal admission into the Christian community, cf. p.112, and in his, 'Conversion and Baptism', 35, the ceremony of reception into the Church. Robinson, 'The Place of Baptism in Baptist Churches of To-day', *BQ* 1.5 (January, 1923), 209, reported that amongst Baptists baptism was usually 'the outward and visible sign of admission into the membership of the Church', and then added the rider that the sign 'derives its meaning from what the Church is understood to be'. Elsewhere, *Life and Faith*, 79, he remarked that believer's baptism seemed to have been an invariable accompaniment, if not definite sign, of entry into the Christian community. This is clearly the logic of closed membership churches.

Baptism: Not Essential for Salvation.

Baptists have spoken with one voice when they contend that baptism is not essential for salvation. This has, however, always proved difficult for them, for they have tried to walk the tightrope between rejecting it as essential to salvation whilst maintaining that it is important for discipleship. The 'Preface' of *Concerning Believers Baptism* stated,

We do not want to magnify the importance of baptism or to give it a position not warranted by New Testament teaching. We do not put it on a level with saving faith or hold that it is necessary for salvation. *But, on the other hand*, we do find that there are a surprising number of references to baptism in the New Testament. It was, as far as the records show, an observance to which a believer invariably submitted when he confessed his faith and was received into the Church.⁸⁸

White wrote, 'To say that in the kerygma baptism was essential to salvation would be to go beyond the evidence, yet baptism is neither optional nor unimportant. It is the one form of response specified in the kerygma...'.⁸⁹ Faith, not baptism, is what is essential for salvation.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ 'Preface', in Bryan (ed.), *Concerning Believers Baptism*, 6, italics added. This position was reiterated later in the volume by R. G. Ramsey, 'Baptism and the Gospel', 29, who also understood it to be subsidiary to preaching and that the gospel had priority over baptism. He continued, pp.29-30, 'In many of their churches baptism is not necessary for attendance at Communion, in some not even for church membership. As much as any other community of Christian people, Baptists are whole-heartedly committed to evangelistic work. In actual practice, therefore, as seen in the varied rules about baptism made in our churches, Baptists preserve the precise scale of values that Paul would confer on the preaching of the Gospel and on baptism'. See also W. G. Channon, *Much Water and Believers Only* (1950), 45-46, 'I grant you [baptism] is not essential to salvation. Although it has to be conceded that we do not discover unbaptised believers in the New Testament'. The importance of this latter tenet needs to be underscored, see G. E. Shackleton **who** made the point in 'Conversion and Discipleship: 13 - The Place of Baptism', *BT* May 17, 1962, 11, where he asserted that baptism was not essential to salvation and went on to remark that there was no record in the New Testament of an unbaptised believer. In the New Testament there was only believer's baptism on repentance and confession of faith. Baptism had its place in conversion but it was only one part of it. See also S. I. Buse, 'Baptism in the Acts of the Apostles', in Gilmore (ed.), *Christian Baptism*, 116, '*baptism may have been the normal rite of admission to the Christian community..., but it can hardly be described as either universal or necessary for salvation*', italics his. In the same volume see also R. E. O. White, 'Baptism in the Synoptic Gospels', 98; and Argyle, 'The Early Christian Centuries', 214.

⁸⁹ White, *Biblical Doctrine of Initiation*. 139.

⁹⁰ C. J. Pike, *Under Christ's Control. Studies in Discipleship and Church Membership* (1950), 12-13.

Baptism and Morality.

Wheeler Robinson wrote: 'When [Jesus] came forward, He was first baptized with John's baptism, and proclaimed John's message, as though to remind us that, whatever else Christian baptism may mean, it means something profoundly moral'.⁹¹ Underwood adopted the phrase 'ethical sacramentalism', by which he meant that grace is conferred in the sacraments but that it is ineffective apart from the faith of the recipient.⁹² One of George Beasley-Murray's conclusions to his *magnum opus* was that 'Our consideration of the New Testament evidence has frequently led us to the recognition that baptism in the Apostolic Church is a moral-religious act'.⁹³ At an early date the baptismal confession of the kerygma was supplemented by an acceptance of certain basic ethical obligations and that the use of the aorist tense in Romans 6:17 supported the view that baptism provided the occasion for the receiving of such teaching.⁹⁴ 'From whatever angle we view it, baptism signifies the end of the life that cannot please God and the beginning of a life in Him and for His glory. In baptism we *put on* Christ; the baptismal life *is* Christ; in so far as it is truly lived it will be Christ-like', concluding that, 'In his baptism, thus, the Christian's participation in the redemption of Christ becomes the means of deliverance, the pattern of living,

⁹¹ Robinson, *Baptist Principles*, 13. On pp.13-15, Robinson progressed from baptism as a moral act to a connection with it implying a cleansing from sin, this being the first of four things New Testament baptism means: cleansing from sin, association with the gift of the Spirit, its administration to believers and experiential union with Christ. Child, 'The Significance of Baptism to St. Paul', in Bryan (ed.), *Concerning Believers Baptism*, 25-26, believed that rightly understood baptism 'is ethical, through and through', earlier having declared that the implications of union between Christ and the Christian will ruled out every tendency to moral slackness and sin.

⁹² Underwood, 'Baptism and Regeneration', *BT* March 1, 1928, 144, and also 'Views of Modern Churches', 225.

⁹³ Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, 284. See also the similar conclusion of White, *Biblical Doctrine of Initiation*, 271. White's views were further expounded in his 2 volume study of ethics, *Biblical Ethics. The Changing Continuity of Christian Ethics Vol. 1* (Exeter, 1979), *passim*, and *The Changing Continuity of Christian Ethics Vol.2: The Insights of History* (Exeter, 1981), *passim*.

⁹⁴ Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, 285, this conclusion, he believed, was probably supported by 1 Timothy 6:12-14 and 1 Peter.

the fount of renewal, and the anticipation of glory'.⁹⁵ Again Romans 6⁹⁶ is a key passage for Baptists, Beasley-Murray noting that Paul's exposition of baptism here is incidental to the process of his argument which is ethical.⁹⁷ Child put it succinctly: 'This is a moral act, or it is nothing',⁹⁸ and such a position led Robinson to the position that the first and foremost contribution Baptists could make to the Church Catholic, like that of the Hebrew prophets, was the essential and primary place of the moral within the religious. 'The moral change wrought within conversion, the personal repentance and faith which are the religious features of that conversion, the open confession which commits the life to a new purpose - these great truths are admirably and forcibly expressed in believer's baptism by immersion, and expressed as no other Church expresses them'.⁹⁹

Baptism as an Act of Obedience.

The least sophisticated understanding of baptism is arguably the most widespread amongst grass-roots Baptists¹⁰⁰ even though in the extant writings it has not held a

- ⁹⁵ Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, 286-87, italics his, and 290 respectively. In *Baptism Today and Tomorrow*, he developed this in the section entitled 'Baptism and the Christian Life', pp.70-79.
- ⁹⁶ Other passages which are frequently appealed to were discussed by Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, 'Baptism and Ethics', 284-90.
- ⁹⁷ Beasley-Murray, 'Baptism in the Epistles of Paul', 132-33. See also his 'Baptism in the New Testament', *Foundations* 3 (January 1960), 25-27. Discussing 1 Peter, S. I. Buse, 'Other New Testament Writings', in Gilmore (ed.), *Christian Baptism*, 181, rejected the notion that 1 Peter suggested the possibility of infant baptism as the preacher appealed to the experience through which they were passing and urged them to keep in mind the ethical consequences of the step they were taking, the whole epistle assuming mature believers. Cf. also his comments to the same effect on p.176. This is recognized by many Baptists, who believe that baptism formed the foundation for Paul's moral exhortations, eg, Robinson, 'The Place of Baptism', 215; Whitley, *Church, Ministry and Sacraments*, 161-164; L. G. Champion, *The Church of the New Testament* (1951), 73; Guthrie, *New Testament Theology*, 647 and 718.
- ⁹⁸ Child, 'The Baptist Contribution', 85.
- ⁹⁹ Robinson, *Life and Faith*, 175.
- ¹⁰⁰ Robinson, *Life and Faith*, 94, commented that this was the motive which in practice appealed most powerfully to many Baptists, 'viz., the desire to obey the direct command of Christ (Matt. xxviii.19) and to imitate His own acceptance of baptism at the hands of John (Mark i.9, 10)'. He continued by explaining why he himself paid more attention to other themes of the doctrine of baptism: 'I do not doubt (whatever be the date of Matt. xxviii.19) that our Lord instituted the baptism of believers, but I believe it is in accordance with His spirit to emphasize the intrinsic meaning of the rite, rather than its extrinsic aspect, as an act of formal

prominent place.¹⁰¹ It is connected to the definition of 'ordinance' as that which was prescribed by Christ in command and example.

The understanding of baptism as an act of obedience, implicit in all Baptist thought, is substantiated by the Baptist appeal to the continuing validity of the New Testament rite which is based on the centrality of the Bible for their faith and practice. That Jesus himself submitted to baptism is reason enough for the believer to follow him through the baptismal waters,¹⁰² but that the Lord enjoined it upon the Church in, for example, the Great Commission is all the more reason,¹⁰³ as is Paul's implicit assumption that all Christians had been baptized (1 Corinthians 12:13) and Peter's injunction on the day of Pentecost that his hearers should 'Repent and be baptized'

obedience'. *The Report of the Special Committee*, 5, in one of its moments of consensus, began its overview of the practice of baptism in the New Testament with recognition of baptism as 'an act of loyalty to the will of Christ and as a following of His example [which] brings the believer into more conscious and more direct relation with Him, such loyalty consisting of obedience to what is regarded as a command of Christ or as the Will of Christ revealed to the Church'. H. Tydeman Chilvers proclaimed, 'The Divine precepts bring us under the obligation to render loving obedience', 'Preachers of the Day. My Witness. A Sermon by Rev. H. Tydeman Chilvers', *BT* May 28, 1936, 419. See also 'Why Should I Be Baptized?', *BT&F* April 24, 1925, 279, 'The all-sufficient reason is, Jesus commanded it'; Underwood, 'Conversion and Baptism', 34; H. J. Wicks, 'Baptismal Regeneration', *BQ* 5.1 (January, 1930), 21; 'The Late Rev. Hugh D. Brown', 'Why I Am A Baptist', *BT* January 1, 1931, 6; R. C. Ford, *Twenty-Five Years of Baptist Life in Yorkshire, 1912-1937* (1937), 31; and see the correspondence in 1949 which clearly highlighted this: 'Northern Baptist', 'Believer's Baptism as Obedience', *BT* February 24, 1949, 6, Joan Armitage, 'Why I am a Baptist', prize essay in the Leeds and district Baptist Festival Competition, *BT* March 3, 1949, 2; W. L. R. of Barry, Glamorgan, 'Believer's Baptism as Obedience', *BT* April 21, 1949, 8; and W. Powell, 'Baptists and Baptism', *BT* November 3, 1949, 6.

¹⁰¹ It is often true that that which is widely believed is often assumed and seldom set down in writing precisely because it is so broadly accepted that it is beyond contest. Popular Baptist tradition, though frequently theologically unsophisticated, has always been tenacious.

¹⁰² Mountain, *My Baptism*, 33, who said that for Jesus' followers his baptism was an example for them to imitate.

¹⁰³ P. Beasley-Murray, *Radical Disciples*, 9-10, 'The first and ultimately the most powerful reason for baptism is found in the Great Commission...Jesus here issues a command, whose validity does not expire until "the very end of the age". Baptism is therefore no optional extra, but an observance ordained by Christ for all who would be his disciples'.

(Acts 2:38).¹⁰⁴ Even if baptism were the least of Christ's commands,¹⁰⁵ baptism is an obligation on every believer.¹⁰⁶

Mountain, though himself christened in infancy and a Christian long before becoming a Baptist, took this a step further, declaring that baptism was still obligatory even if the believer was converted many years earlier, long since having received the Holy Spirit.¹⁰⁷ Though this is the only such extant reference to this effect, it can be taken as certain that it is widely held by most Baptists. This explains why the majority of Baptists have always been prepared to baptize those from Paedobaptist communions who have sought baptism as believers yet who have wished to remain within their own churches and why they baptize their own members even though their baptism has been separated from their conversion sometimes by many years.

Because baptism is an act of obedience, it is also an act of consecration,¹⁰⁸ and has also been described as an act of Christian discipleship.¹⁰⁹ According to Child, the second great contribution of Baptists to the one Church was 'a particular conception of Christian Discipleship and Church Membership which is expressed and fostered by a special Rite, namely, that of Believers' Baptism'. It was not a rite but the 'outlook and temper' which was fostered by that rite which Baptists added to the Church. The truths expressed in believers' baptism were three: the personal meaning of faith and grace, the moral change which took place in conversion, and the spiritual nature of the

¹⁰⁴ See P. Beasley-Murray, *Radical Disciples*, 10-11, in his discussion of 'The Practice of the Early Church', in which he mentioned both passages as well as others.

¹⁰⁵ C. Williams, *Principles and Practices*, 13-14.

¹⁰⁶ Mountain, *My Baptism*, 27. A. H. Stockwell, *Baptism: Who? How? Why?* (n.d., [but 1908]), 12, stressed that baptism was essential in order to complete discipleship, for those who loved their Lord obeyed his command to be baptized.

¹⁰⁷ Mountain, *My Baptism*, 181.

¹⁰⁸ Morris, *Thoughts on Church Membership*, 23; *Report of the Special Committee*, 5.

¹⁰⁹ Pike, *Under Christ's Control*, 11, and Channon, *Much Water*, 77, described it as the 'badge/mark of discipleship' respectively.

Church.¹¹⁰ From a pastoral point of view, Child spoke of baptism's design by God 'to evoke and nurture...discipleship',¹¹¹ and Aubrey remarked that nothing else could so impress on young hearts the privilege and meaning of discipleship.¹¹²

Baptism as Gospel Proclamation.

To the majority of Baptists there is little doubt that baptism is ideally a part of evangelistic preaching as well as part of the instruction of the household of faith. Howard Jones appealed to Philip's baptizing of the Ethiopian Eunuch: 'Doubtless, Philip had woven into his discourse our Lord's parting command to His disciples to go "teach all nations, baptising them...".¹¹³ From his examination of primitive Christian preaching, White concluded that in the presentation of the gospel by the first evangelists 'baptism was *preached* - was part of the message to be presented, expounded, understood and obeyed, in closest accord with the commission to the church by the ascending Lord'.¹¹⁴ This led to the logical conclusion that baptism therefore had a rightful and necessary place in evangelism.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁰ Child, 'The Baptist Contribution', 84. That baptism was viewed as a necessary part of discipleship was similarly reflected in G. Laws' tract, *What is Baptism?* (n.d.), 7, where he observed 'If you have experienced the change of heart which scripture calls a new birth, baptism is for you. It should have been the next step. Do not any longer delay. Arise and be baptised'. Pike, *Under Christ's Control*, 11, lamented, 'We would that in these days people thought of baptism as the badge of discipleship rather than as a badge of the Baptist Denomination'.

¹¹¹ Child, *A Conversation about Baptism* (1963), 72.

¹¹² M. E. Aubrey, 'From the Secretary's Chair. The Forward Movement, Sunday Schools and Baptism', *BT* February 17, 1938, 122.

¹¹³ Rev. G. H. Jones of Derby, 'International Lesson Notes. Lesson for March 16th: The Ethiopian converted. - Acts viii.26-40', *BT&F* February 28, 1902, 171.

¹¹⁴ White, *Biblical Doctrine of Initiation*, 139. Later he argued that the Church's conviction that her baptism possessed the authority of Christ was expressed, in part, by its place in the kerygma, pp.270-71. On p.271 White also noted that the cross made possible the symbolism 'of burial and rising again, so making baptism an appropriate expression of the kerygma's story'. N. Clark similarly characterized baptism as 'the kerygma in action', N. Clark, 'The Theology of Baptism', in Gilmore (ed.), *Christian Baptism*, 306, quoting W. F. Flemington, *The New Testament Doctrine of Baptism*, 73; S. F. Winward, 'The Church in the New Testament', in A. Gilmore (ed.), *The Pattern of the Church. A Baptist View* (1963), 68, 'This kerygma which is declared in words is also declared in deed, enacted in baptism... The baptism of a believer by immersion is the enacted kerygma, the word in action'.

¹¹⁵ Rev. F. G. Hastings of Derby, 'Evangelisation and the Ministry of the Word', *BT* February 16, 1939, 130. A variation of this point can be seen in those who advocated the baptismal service

As a symbol of great spiritual truths,¹¹⁶ baptismal services are frequently occasions and means of proclaiming the gospel. 'Every time a Baptist Church holds a baptismal service, it is saying in plain words: "We believe in the necessity of conversion, and this rite is the symbol of that experience"'.¹¹⁷ Robinson believed that both the Lord's Supper and baptism, in their different ways, have an evangelistic function as they preach the cardinal facts on which an evangelical faith rests, namely, the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. 'More impressively than by any verbal recital of a creed, the historical basis of every Christian creed is constantly brought before a Baptist Church'.¹¹⁸

Underwood noted that 'baptism is in itself a magnificent proclamation of the gospel', and he illustrated this with the recognition that conversions often occur during baptismal services.¹¹⁹ Certainly, many ministers and churches have made baptismal services into evangelistic services. Rushbrooke asked, 'Is there anything in all the world to compare with our Christian baptism as a means of setting forth the supremacy of faith, its nature and its implications?'¹²⁰ Finally, the principle which

as an evangelistic opportunity and vehicle, eg, Rev. Ralph W. A. Mitchell of Gateshead, 'The Evangelistic Use of the Baptismal Service', *BT* December 16, 1943, 6; F. C. Bryan, 'Preparation, Administration and Visitation', in *Concerning Believers Baptism*, 74; Rev. Hugh C. C. McCullough of Clacton-on-Sea, 'Baptism and Evangelism', *BT* March 1, 1945, 6. W. W. Bottoms, *Meet the Family* (1947), 20, discussing the BMS, wrote, 'Our practice of Believers' Baptism helps us to remember our evangelistic call'; P. Beasley-Murray, *Faith and Festivity. A Guide for Today's Worship Leaders* (Eastbourne, 1991), 105.

116 Phillips, *What Baptists Stand For*, 41.

117 F. T. Lord, 'The Value of Baptist Witness To-day', *BQ* 1.2 (April, 1922), 53.

118 Robinson, *Life and Faith*, 92-93, see also p.116. Laws, 'Vital Forces', 15, asserted that around the ordinances, 'you can teach all the gospel, and, except you do violence to them, you cannot teach from them anything else. Baptism and the Lord's Supper....will go on proclaiming the atonement, the new birth, and power through the risen Lord, even if the pulpit be hesitant or dubious'.

119 Underwood, 'Conversion and Baptism', 34.

120 Rushbrooke, 'Protestant of the Protestants', 80. He added, p.82, 'Baptists see in the ordinance a divinely appointed means of ensuring the simplicity and purity of the Gospel. We exist for nothing else than the propagation and defence of the Gospel; in the fulfilment of that purpose, as God gives us light and guidance, we find the final, the only, and the sufficient justification of our existence as Christian churches'.

believer's baptism expressed, Robinson asserted, pledged Baptists to evangelism both at home and abroad.¹²¹

¹²¹ Robinson and Rushbrooke, *Baptists in Britain* (1937), 30.

PART THREE

1900-1937

Chapter Three

Ecumenical Developments.

Introduction.

The nineteenth century witnessed an increasing number of co-operative ventures between the denominations. These movements were many and various, both missionary and philanthropic, and led to a greater closeness and understanding, particularly between the Free Churches, but also with the State Church,¹ which inevitably led to prejudices being dismantled and the cross-fertilization of ideas, including the increasing willingness of some among the Free Churches to recognize the sacramental character of baptism.² The most significant of which for Baptists was the integration in 1891 of the Particular and General Baptists in a series of geographical associations within the fellowship of the Baptist Union (BU), though it must be acknowledged that this was still a union within a denomination.³

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- 1 For examples see D. W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (1989), *loc cit*; D. L. Edwards, *Christian England*, revised and combined edition, (1989), III, *loc cit*; K. Heasman, *Evangelicals in Action: An Appraisal of their Social Work in the Victorian Era* (1962), *loc cit*; E. K. H. Jordan, *Free Church Unity: History of the Free Church Council Movement, 1896-1941* (1956), 15-16, 22-25, 55-56.
- 2 See chapter 1 above; J. R. C. Perkin, 'Baptism in Nonconformist Theology, 1820-1920', (1955), 'Part III - The Years 1864-1920', pp.335-426, incorporating Chapter 6 'Renewed Interest - I' and Chapter 7 'Renewed Interest - II'; and for the broader context, D. M. Thompson, 'Baptism, Church and Society in Britain Since 1800' (1984).
- 3 See J. H. Y. Briggs, 'Evangelical Ecumenism: The Amalgamation of General and Particular Baptists in 1891', Part I, *BQ* 34.3, (July, 1991), 99-115; Part II, *BQ* 34.4 (October, 1991), 160-179, and also his *The English Baptists of the Nineteenth Century* (1994), chapter 5 'General and Particular', pp.96-157.

The Early Days of the Free Church Movement.

The developments of the nineteenth century culminated in the holding of the first Free Church Congress in November 1892⁴ and the establishment of the National Council of the Evangelical Free Churches (NCEFC) at the 1896 congress. Within this movement there were a great many Baptists, often holding and playing key roles: amongst them John Clifford and F. B. Meyer from London, Richard Glover of Bristol, C. F. Aked of Liverpool, Alexander MacLaren of Manchester and J. G. Greenhough of Leicester.⁵

However, the most significant step for Baptists was the appointment of John Howard Shakespeare to the Secretaryship of the Union, for the decisions he took and the influence he had paved the way for all subsequent developments, though at the time of his appointment it is unlikely that Baptists had any idea of the depth of his 'ecumenical' convictions and the path on which he would lead them. His only pastorate, St. Mary's, Norwich, was of a church which had originated as a seventeenth-century mixed Independent congregation,⁶ which had been greatly influenced in the early nineteenth century by the ardent strict communionist who nevertheless possessed a 'catholic spirit',⁷ Joseph Kinghorn, and which had gone

4 D. W. Bebbington, *The Nonconformist Conscience: Chapel and Politics, 1870-1914* (1982), 64, where 30 of the 375 attenders identified themselves as Baptists.

5 As well as Bebbington, *Nonconformist Conscience*, chap 4, 61-83, see also Jordan, *Free Church Unity*, chaps 2-4, 17-76; E. A. Payne, *The Baptist Union* (1959), 151-52.

6 St. Mary's grew out of the Independent congregation founded in the 1640s and made up of Pacdobaptists and Baptists, but it was not until 1667 that Daniel Bedford and his group came to regard themselves as a 'Baptised Church'. Though the separation could have taken place earlier, by October 23rd that year the two groups had formally separated. See C. B. Jewson, 'St. Mary's, Norwich, II', *BQ* 10.3, (July, 1940), 175-177.

7 This is how Kinghorn was described by C. B. Jewson, 'St. Mary's, Norwich, V', *BQ* 10.6, (April, 1941), 346, who also ~~also~~ described him, p.341, as 'A Rigid and uncompromising Baptist, he was a saint of the Church Universal. Inevitably the grace of his personality overflowed the bounds of his denomination', for he helped and worked with non-Baptists, as was reflected in the fact that his funeral was conducted by a Congregationalist and a Quaker. Joseph Kinghorn, minister from 1789-1832, was an ardent strict communionist, and is best known for his twelve year communion controversy with Robert Hall, details and further references of which are included in chapter 1 above.

through a deeply painful split over strict communion in the mid-nineteenth century.⁸ It was into this situation, with all the hurts still fresh in the people's memories, that Shakespeare had come in 1883. Of Shakespeare, one writer paid tribute that, 'The vision of a reunion of Protestant Christendom was no sudden inspiration of the moment. It had been in his thoughts all through his ministerial life'.⁹ The history, then, of St. Mary's considerably influenced the young minister, reinforcing what appears to have been an already existing conviction.¹⁰

More than any other leader the Baptists had known, Shakespeare opposed the old form of independency, becoming increasingly convinced that the Free Church organizations were too individualistic.¹¹ At the 1910 meeting of the National Free Church Council (NFCC), he pleaded with 'impassioned eloquence' for a United Free Church of England,¹² which set in motion events which culminated in 1919 with the establishment of the Federal Council of the Evangelical Free Churches (FCEFC). The International Missionary Conference held in Edinburgh the same year injected added impetus to this movement, not least through its report, 'Co-operation and the Promotion of Unity'.¹³ Free Church Inquiry committees, set up in 1913, carried out detailed investigations into the issue of unity, but nearly petered out because of the

⁸ Despite the respect in which Kinghorn, and all that he had stood for, was held by the church, both of his successors, William Brock and George Gould, were open communionists. This led not only to years of internal friction but also to the infamous court case between 1858 and 1860, which caused a split in the church. In fact it was the presence of a number of non-Baptists regularly in the congregation which led Brock finally to break from the restriction of the pledge he had made on his arrival at St. Mary's not to preach against strict communion. For details of this case see M. J. Walker, *Baptists at the Table* (1992), 36-40.

⁹ 'John Howard Shakespeare. The Story of His Life', *Supplement to The Baptist Times*, March 15, 1928, iii.

¹⁰ M. E. Aubrey, 'John Howard Shakespeare, 1857-1928', *BQ* 17.3, (July, 1957), 100, reported Shakespeare's involvement in the organization of a united Free Church mission early on in his pastorate in Norwich under the lead of the Wesleyan Hugh Price Hughes.

¹¹ J. C. Carlile, *My Life's Little Day* (1935), 158-59.

¹² Jordan, *Free Church Unity*, 127.

¹³ This was one of a number of reports which came from the Conference. See J. W. Grant, *Free Churchmanship in England, 1870-1940* (n.d.), 261-62. For the text of the report see W. H. T. Gardiner, *Edinburgh 1910* (1910).

war,¹⁴ when, in 1916, Shakespeare addressed the NFCC in Bradford.¹⁵ His proposals met with hopeful signs and provided the needed stimulus to rejuvenate the movement.¹⁶ Thousands of copies of the address were circulated by the Free Church Council (FCC), whilst Shakespeare and other unity advocates began tours to rally support.¹⁷ The final proposals submitted by the ecumenical conferences in 1917 to the denominations stated that no attempt was being made to interfere with the autonomy of each federating body, being designed, not for absorption or amalgamation, but to make possible concerted action and economy of resources wherever possible.¹⁸

The BU was the first denomination to consider the proposals at its assembly in April 1918.¹⁹ Prior to this, a committee had been convened under Shakespeare's chairmanship whose purpose was to bring three resolutions before the Assembly, the third of which stated: 'With regard to membership and communion, it is understood that the Federation will not infringe the convictions or practices of any of the Churches of the Baptist Union'.²⁰ Shakespeare presented the report of the

¹⁴ Jordan, *Free Church Unity*, 128.

¹⁵ For the text of the address see the 'The Free Churches at the Cross-Roads', *BT&F*, March 10, 1916, 150-152, and the *Free Church Year Book*, (1916), 9-24.

¹⁶ At the Council meeting F. B. Meyer proposed that the necessary steps should be taken to bring Shakespeare's principles and proposals before the representative bodies of the Evangelical Free Churches of England, 'National Free Church Council. The Bradford Meetings', *BT&F*, March 10, 1916, 155. The resulting discussions filled the newspapers, including correspondence in various publications, and included many favourable responses from religious papers

¹⁷ Jordan, *Free Church Unity*, 130-33. This renewed interest and activity culminated in a series of conferences, the first of which met at Mansfield College, Oxford, in September of the same year, followed in March 1917 at the Leys School, Cambridge, then in London that autumn, to each of which the larger denominations appointed ten representatives, the smaller ones two.

¹⁸ Jordan, *Free Church Unity*, 133.

¹⁹ The text of the report can be found in Shakespeare's *The Churches at the Cross-Roads* (1918), Appendix III, 214-279; also in Payne, *The Baptist Union*, Appendix VIII, 275-279.

²⁰ 'The Closer Co-operation of the Free Churches', *BT&F* March 8, 1918, 148-49. The committee also included Rev. F. G. Benskin of Broadmead, Bristol, Rev. W. E. Blomfield Principal of Rawdon College, and from 1917 to 1919 minister of Harrogate, Rev. Dr. Charles Brown of Ferme Park, Rev. Dr. John Clifford of Westbourne Park, Paddington, Rev. W. Y. Fullerton Home Secretary of the BMS, Rev. Dr. George P. Gould, President of Regent's Park College, Rev. J. G. Greenhough of Victoria Road, Leicester, Mr. Herbert Marnham, a London stockbroker and treasurer of the BU from 1900 to 1935, Rev. Dr. F. B. Meyer of Christ

representatives of the Evangelical Free Churches of England, with the assurance that it was federation, not organic union, that was being sought. Acknowledging that they were the first denomination to consider the report, he urged, 'It is unthinkable that Baptists should wreck the movement or even look upon it with distrust and hesitation'.²¹ After quoshing an amendment from a small group of conservative dissenters who wished the matter to be referred back to the local churches and associations, the original motion was carried with only a small minority in opposition.²²

Whilst many were prepared to go along with Shakespeare and the plans for closer Free Church unity, the movement was not without those who were cautious of it, and those who openly and vigorously opposed it. In an interview in 1901, John Clifford had drawn a distinction between Union churches of Baptists and Congregationalists and the creation of a United Congregational Church, declaring that of the latter Baptists were interested but cautious observers.²³ There had been discussion of Baptists and Congregationalists uniting since the 1880s, and indeed suggestions much earlier, and Clifford noted that there were increasing numbers from both

Church, Westminster Bridge, Rev. Thomas Phillips of Bloomsbury Central, London, Rev. J. E. Roberts of Oxford Road, Manchester, and Mr. H. G. Wood.

²¹ See 'The Union Sessions', *BT&F*, May 3, 1918, 277. For the full report see pp.277-78.

²² The motion was proposed by Herbert Marnham, seconded by W. Y. Fullerton, having received support from Dr. Charles Brown, another leader in the Free Church Movement and whole-hearted supporter of Shakespeare and the cause of a United Free Church. See 'The Closer Co-operation of the Free Churches', *BT&F* April 26, 1918, 253-54. See also Jordan, *Free Church Unity*, 133-34; D. W. Bebbington, 'Baptists and Fundamentalism in Inter-War Britain', in K. Robbins (ed.), *Protestant Evangelicalism: Britain, Ireland, Germany and America, c1750-c1950*, Festschrift W. R. Ward, (Oxford, 1990), 300. On Brown's ecumenical involvement, see H. Cook, *Charles Brown* (1939), 83-85. Brown was another Baptist whose attitude towards re-union was and has often been misrepresented and misunderstood. Cook, p.84, writes, 'The devotion of Dr. Brown to the cause of Re-union has sometimes been misunderstood. On the one hand he has at times been accused by enthusiastic Baptists of a readiness to compromise their fundamental position by his willingness to concede liberty in a reunited Church to those who do not accept the doctrine of Believer's Baptism and Believer's Baptism only; while on the other hand he has been accused by some advocates of Reunion as being unwilling, for the sake of the ultimate cause, to give up some Free Church "prejudices". Probably anyone who endeavours to mediate between divided camps must always run the risk of being misunderstood by both'.

²³ 'Interview with Dr. Clifford. The United Congregational Church', *BT&F* June 21, 1901, 415. Similar caution was being voiced in 1936 by C. E. Wilson, *The Baptist Missionary Society, How It Works and Why* (n.d.), 36.

denominations going to each others' churches, thus evincing a growing mutual respect for one another's baptism.²⁴ The 1901 autumn Assembly had discussed the reunion issue at length,²⁵ and Clifford's address identified some of the issues which would have to be examined. For him, the Baptist interpretation of baptism was a witness to the truth, and reunion could not involve the compromise of truth. He also stated that the unity of the Church was found in the common Christ, not in the sacraments.²⁶ At the 1916 Assembly, J. E. Roberts of Manchester expressed his position as the mind of the denomination: 'I believe I interpret the Baptist conscience...Many of us are prepared to go all the way open to us, short of compromising principle'. Under no circumstances could the admission be made that infant baptism was the New Testament baptism. A United Free Church was possible *only* by federation, after all, the Baptist denomination itself was already a federation of different churches of different patterns, as illustrated by the existence of churches practising closed communion and membership, open communion and closed membership, open communion and membership, Union churches, Scottish churches and Free churches.²⁷ Anything other than union by federation was to Roberts and undoubtedly the majority of Baptists, ~~was~~ unacceptable.

²⁴ Clifford, 'Interview with Dr. Clifford', *BT&F* June 21, 1901, 415. This is perhaps one of the earliest references to the effect of increasing population mobility,

²⁵ See the whole of the *Supplement to the BT&F* October 18, 1901.

²⁶ Clifford, 'The Place of Baptists in the Progress of Christianity', *Supplement to the BT&F* October 18, 1901, v-ix. Others who opposed the compromise of principle included the Welsh Baptist, Rev. G. Hay Morgan, see the report of the Spring Assembly in the *Supplement to the BT&F*, April 27, 1900, vii (Hay was a barrister who had also been the minister of Woodberry Down church, London, but was newly elected as a Liberal MP for Truro in 1906: on his political career see Payne, *The Baptist Union*, 173; S. Koss, *Nonconformity in Modern British Politics* (1975), 95, 111, 116; and Bebbington, *Nonconformist Conscience*, 139-40); and the anonymous 'Surreyside', 'Baptist Principles and the Free Church Council', *BT&F*, February 15, 1901, 113.

²⁷ Rev. J. E. Roberts, 'Christian Unity - Our Relation to Other Churches', *Supplement to the BT&F* May 12, 1916, II-IV, quotations from III.

Apprehensions about where it was all going were further fuelled by the publication of Shakespeare's *The Churches at the Cross-Roads* in 1918.²⁸ Whilst primarily an exposition of the 'federal' conception of unity it went further by envisaging a United Church of England. Shakespeare believed that the three main contentions of the Free Churches was that the Church comprises those who are born again, that it is a spiritual fellowship, and that the Church's authority is vested under Christ in the people of God. Whilst these formed the common ground of the Free Churches, he contended that each could be given a different emphasis, or be expressed in different forms of polity, or the common truth might be witnessed to by a different form of baptism.²⁹ He believed that Free Church differences were like the natural differences of members of the same family, that the process of time had softened them and that the denominations were drawing together in both doctrine and practice.³⁰ 'The ground of the separation is that the conscience of the adherent does not permit him to be a member of a Church which does not avow a certain tenet, or maintain a certain order, or observe a certain rite'.³¹ Later he announced: 'In my judgment we have reached the stage when the gains [of Separation] do not outweigh the loss...'.³²

Though an ardent Baptist,³³ Shakespeare's passionate conviction was that the only way forward was by means of a United Church. To this end he drew a clear distinction between unity and uniformity,³⁴ because uniformity could only be found

²⁸ Both the first and second editions were positively reviewed in the *BT&F*, by H. W. Robinson, November 8, 1918, 663, and M. E. Aubrey, April 23, 1920, 270. The book was also defended by J. E. Roberts, 'The President on Christian Unity', *BT&F* January 17, 1919, 30, against an adverse review in *The British Weekly* of January 9, 1919.

²⁹ Shakespeare, *The Churches at the Cross-Roads: A Study in Church Unity* (1918), 55-56.

³⁰ Shakespeare, *The Churches at the Cross-Roads*, 56-57.

³¹ Shakespeare, *The Churches at the Cross-Roads*, 61.

³² Shakespeare, *The Churches at the Cross-Roads*, 72.

³³ Shakespeare, *The Churches at the Cross-Roads*, 82. He claimed, p.82, that, 'No-one could ever regard me as an indifferent Baptist'.

³⁴ Shakespeare, *The Churches at the Cross-Roads*, 110-11, though in order to demonstrate his point he had to indulge in no small amount of special pleading. One such example is when he

in something dead, whereas Church unity 'is the unity of a living body'.³⁵ The way to accomplish such unity, he was convinced, was through federation so 'that religion itself may be saved', though he recognized that 'nothing is more difficult than to translate visions into actualities'.³⁶

This very maxim had been only too true for Shakespeare himself. In the meetings held to discuss the unity question between 1916 and the publication of his book, he and his fellow advocates of corporate union had been unable to convince others, so they had had to content themselves with the idea of federation. Shakespeare accepted federation somewhat reluctantly, but it was at least a step in the right direction. At their meeting held at Mansfield College he and his colleagues had discovered that 'the desires of no one representative group could be exactly and entirely satisfied'. The different groups were not prepared to sacrifice principles, yet they had agreed that there had to be give and take.³⁷ Shakespeare himself stated that federation would not require any such shredding of principle but that the participating denominations would have to limit the freedom of their actions.³⁸

Much of the rest of Shakespeare's book explored how federation could take place. Of two American plans, 'the Maine Plan' found favour with him. Here, a church in membership with one denomination would be open and free from all sectional restrictions.³⁹ Though he denied it, the only way such a plan could succeed would be if baptism was relegated to a secondary position, and along with it the other distinctives which set apart the different Free Churches, and these were, in actual fact,

stated that 'The Catholic Church has in all ages recognized diversities of faith, rites, ceremonies and operations', p.111.

³⁵ Shakespeare, *The Churches at the Cross-Roads*, 111 and 115.

³⁶ Shakespeare, *The Churches at the Cross-Roads*, 117.

³⁷ Shakespeare, *The Churches at the Cross-Roads*, 118-121.

³⁸ Shakespeare, *The Churches at the Cross-Roads*, 123-24.

³⁹ Shakespeare, *The Churches at the Cross-Roads*, 135.

the very reasons for their separation from each other in the first place. Further, he seemed unaware that the majority of Baptists were not prepared to concede as much as he was, hence the opposition which he felt so deeply and personally. His preparedness to come under episcopacy and submit to episcopal re-ordination might have seemed to him to be small matters, but, along with baptism and other Baptist and Free Church principles which would have to go, they were nothing of the sort.⁴⁰ In this, Shakespeare seriously misjudged the temper and convictions of the denomination as a whole.

The importance of this book cannot easily be overstated. It rings with a kind of idealistic naivete, for it never truly got to grips with the real areas of contention. Baptism was one but by no means the only such issue. Shakespeare's practical and theological goal was unity, all else was subsumed to the cause and relegated in importance in order that a united Church might be born. He did not enter into the debate of the legitimacy of infant baptism, aware that he could not afford to do so because of the convictions of both Paedobaptists and Baptists. To have entered into detailed discussion of the divisive subjects would have been contrary to the stated irenic nature and tone of the book.⁴¹

The book is the seminal ecumenical call this century and the man arguably the leading ecumenist of the first quarter of the twentieth century. Unfortunately, the importance of Shakespeare within both Free Church union and Free Church-Anglican discussions has seldom been adequately acknowledged.⁴² Adrian Hastings has

⁴⁰ Cf. Shakespeare's comment, *The Churches at the Cross-Roads*, 82: 'A yet more serious consequence of the existing divisions is that they tend to belittle the big things of religion and to magnify the small things. In other words, they afford a most striking instance of the tragedy of the misplaced emphasis'. To Shakespeare, Church unity was unquestionably of primary significance, whilst episcopacy and episcopal re-ordination, and presumably baptism, were by comparison secondary.

⁴¹ Shakespeare, *The Churches at the Cross-Roads*, 181.

⁴² For example, G. K. A. Bell's biography *Randall Davidson: Archbishop of Canterbury, I and II* (Oxford, 1935) contains no reference to Shakespeare with regard to reunion or the Lambeth Appeal. Also silent on Shakespeare's involvement is R. E. Davies, *Methodism* (1963), whilst R. Tudur Jones in *Congregationalism in England, 1662-1962* (1962), 363-64, devotes only half a page to him. Greater justice is done to him by J. W. Grant, *Free Churchmanship in*

described *The Churches at the Cross-Roads* as 'in principle one of the most important books of twentieth-century English Christianity because it sets out so clearly the logic of the forthcoming ecumenical movement'.⁴³ All in all he was a man ahead of his time.⁴⁴ He occupied a pivotal position and his eloquent appeals began a movement which has gathered pace throughout the century.

Henry Wheeler Robinson was the first of three key figures who spearheaded opposition to Shakespeare: the other two were T. R. Glover and Dr. John Clifford. From 1895 to 1900, with a break for study on the continent, Wheeler Robinson's College days brought him into constant contact with those of other traditions which clearly had a deep and lasting effect on his attitudes towards other traditions,⁴⁵ and during his early ministry he was also involved in Free Church work.⁴⁶ Robinson, then, was no narrow denominationalist. Favourably disposed towards issues of Christian unity, he played a leading role on the committee which prepared a reply for the BU Council to certain pamphlets on unity,⁴⁷ and his review of Shakespeare's *The Churches at the Cross-Roads* concluded: 'This is a book to make its readers say, "I

England, 263-265, 315; H. Townsend, *The Claims of the Free Churches* (1949), 312-13; and Jordan, *Free Church Unity*, 127-135 and *loc cit*.

⁴³ A. Hastings, *A History of English Christianity, 1920-1985* (1986), 98, italics added.

⁴⁴ For further accounts and assessments of Shakespeare's life and accomplishments see the 'Introduction'.

⁴⁵ Wheeler Robinson read theology at Mansfield College, Oxford, the Congregational College, during which time he also attended lectures in the hall of Balliol College, where over three hundred ministers from many denominations would gather. See E. A. Payne, *Henry Wheeler Robinson: Scholar, Teacher, Principal. A Memoir* (1946), 31-37. The influence of such 'ecumenical' gatherings, with all their opportunities for discussion and debate and an increased appreciation of the differences between the denominations, can only be inferred, but, appear to have been considerable. This conclusion is supported by the fact that in later life Robinson was closely associated with the Quakers and had a keen interest in, eg, the writings of J. H. Newman. See Payne, *Henry Wheeler Robinson*, 59-60. In the same volume cf. also Robinson's 'Lectures. I. John Henry Newman', 110-131.

⁴⁶ During the winter of 1916-17 he lectured on the Christian experience of the Holy Spirit and other devotional themes to Free Church ministers throughout the North of England, Payne, *Henry Wheeler Robinson*, 62-63.

⁴⁷ *Report of the Baptist Union Council* (1937), Appendix IV, cited by Payne, *Henry Wheeler Robinson*, 91 and n1.

must be in that, too".⁴⁸ But in time, like many others, he became sceptical of the possibility of organic union as advocated by Shakespeare. Like many, he did not believe that ecclesiastical compromise or manoeuvrings were the way forward, rather he believed in the need for clearer thinking and greater charity.⁴⁹

The 'Declaratory Statement' which formed the doctrinal basis of the FCEFC was adopted at the meeting of the Council of the Evangelical Free Churches of England on March 26, 1917, and it was this report which went before and was approved by the BU Assembly in April 1918.⁵⁰ It affirmed the autonomy of the federating Churches with regard to faith and practice and, of the two sacraments (it also used the language of 'ordinances', employing the words synonymously), stated that they were 'signs and seals of His Gospel', that they 'confirm the promises and gifts of salvation', and 'when rightly used by believers with faith and prayer, are, through the operation of the Holy Spirit, true means of grace'.⁵¹ The careful wording of the statement made it acceptable to all the Free Churches, but it neither clarified the issue of the subjects or mode of baptism.

Though primarily commending Free Church federation, Shakespeare was also advocating union with the Church of England. This the denominational mainstream was not prepared to tolerate. He clearly alienated himself from the fundamentalists who formed the Baptist Bible Union to oppose any such moves.⁵² Despite the

⁴⁸ H. W. Robinson, 'Churches at Crossroads', *BT&F* November 8, 1918, 663. See also Payne, *Henry Wheeler Robinson*, 92. In his review of the second edition of *The Churches at the Cross-Roads*, M. E. Aubrey noted the growing impatience of the younger generation with the old divisions, *BT&F* April 23, 1920, 270.

⁴⁹ Payne, *Henry Wheeler Robinson*, 92.

⁵⁰ For the 'Declaratory Statement of Common Faith and Practice' see Payne, *The Baptist Union*, Appendix VIII, 275-278.

⁵¹ Section V, see Payne, *The Baptist Union*, 276-77.

⁵² Bebbington, 'Baptists and Fundamentalism', 300. Amongst their ranks was James Mountain, a convert to the Baptist position from the Countess of Huntingdon Connexion. See J. Mountain, *My Baptism and What Led To It* (n.d.). CUL dates the book c.1905, but a comment on p.2 says that the book was written nearly nine years after his baptism in 1893, strongly suggesting the date 1902. However, the book was reviewed in the *BT&F* April 29, 1904, 341, and it is this dating which is being followed here. In the preface to the book, F. B. Meyer stated that the tone of the book displayed Christian charity 'without a word of unkind reflection on those

assurances of the Committee who brought the resolution to the 1918 Assembly that no sacrifice of principle was involved, there were many, less extreme than the Bible Unionists, who followed Clifford and J. E. Roberts, expressing their complete opposition to any surrender of principle, and specifically believer's baptism.⁵³

At the Assembly on April 29th, T. R. Glover led the denominational opposition to Shakespeare in carrying a resolution which indicated that the price of conceding to episcopacy was too high to pay.⁵⁴ This, together with Robinson's reserve concerning organic union, represented the feeling of the mainstream of the denomination.

Whilst the issue of baptism did not figure prominently in these early days of the Free Church movement, it undoubtedly lay beneath the surface, and the developments which were to take place later, in which baptism came to play an increasingly significant role as far as the Baptists were concerned, cannot be understood without a grasp of this important early debate. The establishment of the Free Church movement was, therefore, a necessary first step in the ecumenical process, for, without it, the Church of England would have been unlikely to hold conversations with the separate Free Church denominations.

who differ from him' (n.p.). However, Mountain was not so pacific or conciliatory on other matters. For his later vitriolic attacks on the likes of F. C. Spurr and T. R. Glover on the issue of biblical criticism see Bebbington, 'Baptists and Fundamentalism', 316-318. Mountain's vitriol against those he deemed to be theologically liberal stands in stark contrast to the irenic and pastoral tone of his earlier autobiographical book on baptism.

⁵³ Eg. Rev. D. J. Hiley, of Chatsworth Road, West Norwood, Presidential address to the Baptist Union, 'Baptist Witness and the Problems of To-day', *BT&F* May 7, 1920, 305-307; F. T. Bloice-Smith of Sutton-in-Craven, 'Some of the Real Problems of Reunion', *BT&F* February 4, 1921, 72; Rev. J. H. French, of Banbury, Presidential address to the Oxfordshire Baptist Association, 'The Baptist Witness and Reunion', *BT&F* January 6, 1922, 5-6; F. C. Spurr, Hamstead Road, Handsworth, 'A Baptist Apologetic for To-day', *BT* September 5, 1925, 639, according to whom the spirit of compromise which accompanied the reunion movement had led to the abandonment of anything like specific Baptist testimony in order to avoid division, and that this was, eg, seen in Union churches. Mutual toleration regarding baptism 'does not help the specific Baptist witness'.

⁵⁴ H. G. Wood, *Terrot Reaveley Glover. A Biography* (Cambridge, 1953), 153.

The Lambeth Appeal.

The distrust of Baptists in particular, and Free Churchmen in general, was sufficiently softened by the conciliatory tone of the 1920 *Appeal to all Christian People*⁵⁵ for a series of conversations to take place over a four-year period between representatives of the Free Churches and the Church of England.⁵⁶ The *Appeal* called all the churches to 'unite in a new and great endeavour to recover and to manifest to the world the unity of the Body of Christ for which He prayed',⁵⁷ its proposals for reunion being based upon the 1888 Lambeth Quadrilateral⁵⁸ - acceptance of the Scriptures, the Creeds, the Sacraments, and a ministry authorized by the historic episcopate.

Though Baptists were involved in the formal conversations there still remained the sceptical majority. In a sermon, Charles Brown rejoiced that the *Lambeth Appeal* recognized for the first time the validity of Baptist baptism and their membership of the One Church of Christ, yet he did not consider a great and organic union would be either possible or a great advantage to the Kingdom of the Lord.⁵⁹

It was T. R. Glover's voice which spoke for the denomination as a whole.⁶⁰ His jealous defence of the Baptist and Independent position in relation to the reunion

⁵⁵ R. T. Jones, *Congregationalism*, 364. The Appeal was warmly welcomed by Baptists, see 'The Lambeth Conference and Reunion', and 'The Prospect of a United Church', *BT&F* August 20, 1920, 545-46 and 547 respectively.

⁵⁶ Jordan, *Free Church Unity*, 168-175.

⁵⁷ The text was published in the *BT&F* August 13, 1920, 539, under the title 'Reunion of Christendom', and can also be found in G. K. A. Bell, *Documents on Christian Unity, 1920-4* (1924), 1-5, quotation from p.5.

⁵⁸ The text of which can be found in Shakespeare, *Churches at the Cross-Roads*, Appendix I, 213.

⁵⁹ C. Brown, 'The Appeal of the Lambeth Conference', *BT&F* August 27, 1920, 566-67, a sermon preached at Ferme Park. Three years later, W. E. Blomfield announced that as a result of the joint conversations a few Evangelical/Broad Church Anglican leaders, with some reservations, were prepared to admit that Free Church ministries were real ministries of Christ's Word and Sacraments in the Universal Church, 'Reunion', *BT&F* September 28, 1923, 679.

⁶⁰ Glover was a Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge, Public Orator in the University, member of St. Andrew's Street BC and son of Dr. Richard Glover, long-time minister of

proposals won him the support of the majority in the denomination, and Shakespeare was identified with the policies of which Glover was most distrustful.⁶¹ Glover defined ^{his position} in *The Free Churches and Re-Union*, in the 'Preface' of which John Clifford endorsed the contents of the book as not only the author's views but also 'the convictions and experiences of Baptists everywhere'.⁶²

Due to his opposition to Shakespeare, Glover is often thought to have been totally opposed to any form of reunion, but this is untrue. Glover, and a great many other Baptists, opposed the compromise of principles and believed that the discussions of their day were forcing theology to be set to one side. Glover maintained that the belief that religion was better off without theology had led to an increasing vagueness, that charity covered a good deal of absence of mind, and conviction and principle had come to be identified with bigotry.⁶³ For him, the quest for 'truth' was safer and surer when the great authorities disagreed and, therefore, were compelled by that very fact to re-examine their evidence and add to it.⁶⁴ 'The problem with re-union will not be helped forward by quick talk and impulsive resolutions, whether of individuals or of assemblies'.⁶⁵ Glover, then, was not against re-union proposals per se, but against any compromise of the truth and Glover believed that the Free Church theory of the

Tyndale, Bristol. Wood, *Terror Reaveley Glover*, 9, noted that Glover's 'fundamental Christian convictions were nurtured in the setting of orthodox Dissent, marked by an emphasis on individual responsibility characteristic of the Baptists. Glover grew up a convinced Dissenter and a Baptist'.

⁶¹ Wood, *Terror Reaveley Glover*, 152.

⁶² T. R. Glover, *The Free Churches and Re-Union* (Cambridge, 1921), Preface, n.p.. This began as a series of articles published in the *British Weekly*.

⁶³ Glover, *Free Churches and Re-Union*, 4-5.

⁶⁴ Glover, *Free Churches and Re-Union*, 21.

⁶⁵ Glover, *Free Churches and Re-Union*, 49. Outlining the story of the Arian controversy, pp.49-51, how the creed suggested by Eusebius of Caesarea which included the Arians was set on one side for Athanasius' creed which excluded them, he commented that 'The whole story is a warning to go to work slowly upon any eirenicon till we are clear what fundamental principles are involved. The fatigue of the war, the emotionalism that it induced, the general decline of interest in religious truth, even the practical man's restless wish to 'get things done', may conspire with higher motives to produce a desire to settle the matter, to achieve re-union, and to be done with it. But Truth is not served by decisions reached in fatigue', quotation from p.51.

Church, the ministry and the sacraments more closely approximated to the truth than did the Anglican. If this were so, the Free Churches were not at liberty to give them up, for such would be 'deliberate falsehood'.⁶⁶ There is little doubt that this is a barely veiled reference to Shakespeare's willingness to submit to episcopacy and episcopal re-ordination. Equally, there can be little doubt that the doctrine of baptism, amongst others, was also implied in what Glover said.

Glover was not at all convinced that the quest for truth would be aided by such moves as were being proposed. There were two ways to proceed: by pooling of differences and letting questions drop, or by courteous and Christian determination to be loyal to truth as God had revealed it until he should give clearer light and surer guidance. What the Free Churches had received from their forefathers was not to be surrendered even for Christian charity.⁶⁷

On Jesus' prayer for unity in John 17, Glover, after raising the question of its authenticity, commented: 'We are not yet clear that Jesus did wish to see his Church one organization'. Earlier he had written on the same passage: 'that they all may be one', was a 'notorious passage', often interpreted in an 'unhistorical way', and was the favourite text of a certain type of mind. 'Jesus read human nature far more shrewdly. Men do not quickly harmonize where they are divided on vital issues. It is the false religions that have based faith on tradition, and found truth in compromise, and have therefore most logically been ready to tolerate other religions of the same type'.⁶⁸

This is where interpreters of Glover's position often finish, but he continued: 'This is not to give a negative reply to an overture; even if it were, it might not be wrong, or

⁶⁶ Glover, *Free Churches and Re-Union*, 58.

⁶⁷ Glover, *Free Churches and Re-Union*, 53. He further believed that if the Free Churches were more loyal to Christ, more brotherly, more intelligent and intelligible, they might bring those who held differing views of the Church nearer to the Free Church position, for to bring a man clearer light was more like Christian charity than to let him hold an erroneous view.

⁶⁸ Glover, *Free Churches and Re-Union*, 53 and 12-13.

even discourteous. It is quite plain that any ultimate reunion is still a long way off'.⁶⁹ In favour of pulpit exchanges, sharing work and missions, he by no means ruled out working with Anglicans, and contended that the Churches should 'do everything we possibly can in the direction of common work'. 'What God may have in store for us half a century hence is not our most immediate duty...What He does then is His affair. What does He want us to do now?'⁷⁰ Thus Keith Clements overstated the case when he wrote: 'In part, Glover owed his post-war popularity among Baptists to his opposition to *any form of reunion* of the Churches in response to the Lambeth Appeal, and along the lines being advocated by J. H. Shakespeare...'⁷¹ It is true that Glover opposed the form of reunion being tabled by Shakespeare and the Lambeth Appeal, but he did not oppose reunion as such. Like Wheeler Robinson, Glover was not in any way narrow-minded and his work in the University of Cambridge brought him into contact with many of other denominations.⁷² *Pace* Clements, Glover's main objection was not on the grounds of religious freedom, though this was a secondary reason,⁷³ but on the compromising of truth.

Glover's position has been analysed at length precisely because he spoke on behalf of so many in the denomination, but John Clifford similarly showed a disdain for compromise. In a letter to W. E. Blomfield, Principal of Rawdon College, he expressed his opinion that there was a real and an unreal unity. For him 'material and mechanical unity' was not enough, the real unity was unity 'of soul and spirit and does not depend on the identity of ideas as to forms and policies'.⁷⁴ Clifford was

⁶⁹ Glover, *Free Churches and Re-Union*, 54.

⁷⁰ Glover, *Free Churches and Re-Union*, 54-55.

⁷¹ K. W. Clements, *Lovers of Discord: Twentieth Century Theological Controversies in England* (1988), 119, italics added.

⁷² For a time he wavered on the edge of joining the Society of Friends and frequently worshipped at Emmanuel Congregational Church, P. T. Forsyth's charge in Cambridge, see Wood, *Terrot Reaveley Glover*, 81-83 and 18-19 respectively.

⁷³ Clements, *Lovers of Discord*, 118, citing Glover, *Free Churches and Re-Union*, 13-14.

⁷⁴ J. Marchant, *Dr. John Clifford, C. H., Life, Letters and Reminiscences* (1924), 260-61.

forthrightly opposed to Romish principles and practices, whether in Roman or Anglican Churches. As far as he was concerned the *Lambeth Appeal's* references to baptism were vague generalities, and any concessions towards the like would jeopardize English Baptists' relations with, for example, American Baptists.⁷⁵ He was anti-sacerdotalist, stating in another letter to Blomfield, that the upholders of an Episcopalian type of Christianity stood for 'a materialistic and mechanical interpretation of the grace of God; and that is, and has always been, a menace to the Religion of the New Testament'.⁷⁶

Clifford's ecumenical ambitions were reflected in the constitution of Westbourne Park church, formulated by Clifford himself in the 1870s when the church moved there from Praed Street. Though a convinced Baptist, he led the church to be 'open to all who are members of "His Body" - i.e., to all who confess Christ, strive to learn and obey His law, not only in their individual life, but in and by association for mutual help, common worship, and beneficent work'. The second article stated that while the church taught and practised believer's baptism each applicant for membership was expected to make their own decision before God.⁷⁷ By this, Clifford sought to maintain the tension between the Baptist doctrine of baptism and the liberty of conviction and conscience of the individual which he prized so highly.⁷⁸ He realized and advocated the New Testament mandate for believer's baptism, but recognized and made allowance for the divergence of belief and practice which had grown up in history. It was his ability to maintain this tension without loss of principle which enabled him to be both an ardent denominationalist and also Free Church leader.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ See Marchant's notes to Clifford's letter to Rev. Dr. W. E. Blomfield, June 10, 1922, *Dr. John Clifford*, 262.

⁷⁶ Marchant, *Dr. John Clifford*, 263, letter dated October 7, 1920.

⁷⁷ Marchant, *Dr. John Clifford*, 45. On the Westbourne Park church, see H. Edgar Bonsall and E. H. Robertson, *The Dream of an Ideal City. Westbourne Park 1877-1977* (1978), and on baptism in the church and in John Clifford's views, see pp.11, 83-84.

⁷⁸ See G. W. Byrt, *John Clifford. A Fighting Free Churchman* (1947), 98-100.

⁷⁹ For a useful summary of his Free Church involvement from the movements' inception in the 1890s, see Byrt, *John Clifford*, 113-121.

Clifford had little time for or interest in interdenominational conferences on union, recognizing that the will to unite was weak and, to his mind, the Anglican attitude towards Baptists and the Free Churches was condescending. He, like Glover, despised the kind of union which could only be secured by the absence or sacrifice of personal convictions. 'He gave some the impression that he was intolerant on the subject of "Christian unity". But those who knew him best knew that this was not the real explanation of his attitude...'⁸⁰ He claimed a kinship as a Christian with all other Christians, but with other Free Churches, despite their differences, he believed there was an inner spiritual affinity which warranted an outward expression of unity,⁸¹ hence his involvement with the FCC.

At the Baptist Assembly in April, 1921, a resolution was passed endorsing the report of the Joint Committee of the FCEFC and the NCEFC,⁸² and requested that the BU Council continue its work with a view to a better understanding between the Free Churches and the removal of such obstacles as still remained.⁸³ The Joint Committee report was never intended to be a reply to the *Appeal*, that was for the individual Free Churches to do, rather it was meant to elucidate the Free Church position.⁸⁴ At the same time, it showed Free Church readiness to respond to the idea underlying the *Appeal*, 'the idea of fellowship'.⁸⁵

⁸⁰ Byrt, *John Clifford*, 113.

⁸¹ Byrt, *John Clifford*, 116-17.

⁸² It was entitled 'The Free Churches and the Lambeth Appeal', see G. K. A Bell, *Documents on Christian Unity, 1920-4*, 120-141. See also 'The Free Churches and the Lambeth Appeal - Being the report of a Committee Appointed by the Federal Council of the Evangelical Free Churches and National Free Church Council', *BT&F* March 25, 1921, 180-182.

⁸³ Bell, *Documents on Christian Unity, 1920-4*, 104.

⁸⁴ Bell, *Documents on Christian Unity, 1920-4*, 129. See also p.122. Evidently the Assembly discussed the document before its official publication, as the Assembly considered the report on April 27, whilst 'The Free Churches and the Lambeth Appeal', according to Bell, *Documents on Christian Unity, 1920-4*, 120, was issued on May 22.

⁸⁵ Bell, *Documents on Christian Unity, 1920-4*, 125.

It soon became apparent that most Baptists were not in sympathy with Shakespeare's views and the reunion movement. However, a considerable debate did result from his advocacy. In 1921 two prize essays based on Shakespeare's book were published in *The Baptist Times and Freeman*. J. Ivory Cripps admitted, 'We have not succeeded in converting the paedo-Baptist bodies to our view; they have hitherto ignored our witness. But I believe the whole situation would alter if the rite we stand for could be removed from the denominational atmosphere and be allowed to make its own unanswerable appeal to the membership of a United Church of England. Those who contend that this would destroy our witness seem to me to trust the power of truth too little'.⁸⁶ A. J. Burgoyne drew attention to the existence of Union churches which were sometimes fitted with both a baptistry and a font, and were presided over sometimes by Baptists, sometimes by Congregationalists, 'The only inference that can be drawn is the complete possibility of a Federated Church. Desirability is another matter and must, we suppose, always remain a question of opinion'.⁸⁷ Later that year and the following year there were two lengthy correspondences discussing the pros and cons of reunion, but neither of them referred explicitly to baptism.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ J. Ivory Cripps, minister of Hagley Road, Birmingham, 'On "Christian Unity". With Special Reference to Dr. Shakespeare's Book', *BT&F* January 14, 1921, 22-23, quote from p.23.

⁸⁷ A. J. Burgoyne of Brunswick Road BC, Gloucester, 'Christian Unity. With Special Reference to "The Churches at the Crossroads"', *BT&F* January 28, 1921, 54-55, quote from p.54. In 1927, Burgoyne moved to the pastorate of Hutton and Shenfield Union church and in 1934 to Westbourne Park, Paddington, John Clifford's former church.

⁸⁸ The first series was triggered by the publication of a lecture delivered by M. E. Aubrey at the University of Cambridge entitled 'Baptists and Reunion', the chief protagonists being Aubrey himself and L. H. Foulds, though the discussion did not explicitly refer to the baptismal issue. See M. E. Aubrey, 'Reunion from the Point of View of the Baptist Church', *BT&F* April 15 and 22, 1921, 230-31 and 246. The ensuing letters were all headed 'Baptists and Reunion', see L. H. Foulds of Trinity College, Cambridge, *BT&F* May 20, 310; Aubrey, *BT&F* May 27, 328; Foulds, *BT&F* June 3, 344; Aubrey, *BT&F* June 10, 359. No further details are known about Foulds. See also West, 'The Reverend Secretary Aubrey: Part III', *BQ* 34.7 (July, 1992), 324-25 on Aubrey's Cambridge address. The following year, the debate continued at a pace, though again, the baptismal issue lay implicit within the general discussion. See J. H. French, 'The Baptist Witness and Reunion', *BT&F* January 6, 1922, 5-6, is the exception, explicitly referring to the baptismal question. But see, W. T. Whitley, 'The Right Approach to Unity', *BT&F* February 17, 1922, 100; F. C. Spurr, 'The Trusteeship of the Free Churches and Reunion', *BT&F* May 12, 1922, 301-02; 'Church Unity. Conferences Between Representatives of the Church of England and Federal Council of the Free Churches', *BT&F* June 2, 1922, 351-52; three articles all entitled 'The Lambeth Report on Christian Unity', H. Townsend, *BT&F* June 23, 1922, 402, W. E. Blomfield and J. Leslie Chown, *BT&F* June 6, 1922, 418. See also the lengthy correspondence under the title 'The Problem of Reunion', *BT&F* June 30, 1922, 421; July 7, 434; July 14, 452; July 21, 470; July 28 485; August 4, 503.

In an address delivered at Bristol Cathedral, Shakespeare⁸⁹ set out the Baptist contribution towards a United Church and spent considerable time enunciating the Baptist understanding of baptism. The Baptist Communion, he declared, is constituted 'on a certain view of baptism and the implications to which it leads. In our view Christian baptism should be by immersion. This is entirely secondary to us and is only valid because it is related to our doctrine of conversion and is a symbol of burial with Christ and the rising with Him to newness of life. But the real issue is as to the subject, not the mode'. Baptism was in the name of the Trinity, on a personal profession of repentance and faith, and though sometimes called adult baptism, this he repudiated as an entire mistake. 'We baptize children if it is their desire and if they understand what it is to follow Christ', and he cited the example of Alexander Maclaren, baptized at the age of eleven, and declared that the corresponding Anglican service was confirmation. Though children were not baptized, Baptists believed that through the merits of Christ, they were born into a state of grace and into a redeemed world, that the Lord loved them and called and saved them, but that baptism was not connected with this initial stage.

Shakespeare denied that Baptists were the ritualists of the Free Churches, rather, he explained, the reason for their emphasis on baptism was that 'we are opposed to everything in religion that is magical. We do not like a religion that is by proxy instead of being based on a personal and intelligent act. A saving change is to us always a moral and spiritual change', and this change is an act of God. He then expounded Baptist ecclesiology: 'Our doctrine of baptism is related to our doctrine of the Church'. Since baptism was administered only to those professing personal faith in Christ, and was the symbol of admission to the visible Church, the Church on earth was a community of regenerate persons. Though many Baptists were less ready than Shakespeare to see confirmation as the equivalent of baptism and perhaps to demote the mode to secondary importance, in all other respects Shakespeare clearly presented

⁸⁹ J. H. Shakespeare, 'Baptists and Reunion', *BT&F* December 22, 1922, 836-37, citations from p.836. The following two paragraphs are based on this address.

the common Baptist understanding of baptism.⁹⁰ It was possibly this fact, which confused many Baptists: how their General Secretary could be both a traditional Baptist in so many ways and yet such an advocate for reunion. They could not understand how a United Church could come into existence without the loss of essential Baptist principles.⁹¹

Under the sub-heading 'The Splendid Dream', J. D. Freeman reiterated that the avowed objective of the *Appeal* was nothing less than the organic reunion of all Christendom.⁹² Acknowledging that the war had had a considerable effect upon the Churches, 'disposing us towards this new comradeship', he cautioned that it would be possible to draw wrong inferences from the abnormal state of affairs created by the war.⁹³ Shakespeare had argued that the war was but another sign for the necessity of a

⁹⁰ J. H. Shakespeare also published a tract called *Christian Baptism* (n.d.), however, a copy of this has not been traced. Due to his responsibilities within the BU and Free Church movement, Shakespeare wrote relatively little, though his concern for them both was reflected in his first book *Baptist and Congregational Pioneers* (1906), which only dealt with baptism in a descriptive historical way. In it he defined 'Baptist pioneers' as 'English Separatists, Congregational in Church polity and anti-paedobaptist in practice, who gave rise to indigenous Churches in this country, and with whom the English Baptists of to-day are in historical, theological, and spiritual succession', pp.16-17. In this way he underlined that the Baptist's doctrine of baptism proceeded from their prior understanding of the nature of the Church. It appeared in the thirteen strong series, edited by the Congregationalist, C. Sylvester Horne, entitled *Eras of Nonconformity*, and was a companion volume to E. C. Pike's *The Story of the Anabaptists* (1904). The book was reviewed by James Stewart, 'Baptist and Congregational Pioneers', *BT&F*, February 16, 1906, 114-15.

⁹¹ In 1923 both J. C. Carlile and Shakespeare contributed to James Marchant's collection of essays: see J. C. Carlile, 'Realities of To-day', 54-68; J. H. Shakespeare, 'The Great Need', 79-92, in J. Marchant (ed.), *The Coming Renaissance* (1923). Shakespeare, 'The Great Need', 80, referred to the *Lambeth Appeal* as a 'remarkable advance', stating that, 'All those who believe in our Lord Jesus Christ and have been baptised into the name of the Holy Trinity are sharing with us in the universal Church of Christ which is His Body'. This is almost a direct quotation from the opening of the *Appeal*.

⁹² Rev. Dr. J. D. Freeman, a Canadian by birth and minister of Belvoir Street, Leicester, 'The Lambeth Appeal', *The Fraternal* no 13, (March, 1922), 3-10. For glimpses into his ministry at Belvoir Street see Sheila Mitchell's *Not Disobedient...A History of United Baptist Church, Leicester including Harvey Lane 1760-1845, Belvoir Street 1845-1940 and Charles Street 1831-1940* (Leicester, 1984), 156-161. Freeman arrived at Belvoir Street in 1907 from Bloor Street BC, Toronto, and left in July 1922 for Hinton, Chesham, see *BT&F* March 20, 1925, 189. In 1925, he became minister of First Baptist Church, Winnipeg, and then in 1927 Professor of Homiletics at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary at Mercer University, Macon, Georgia, see *BT* April 28, 1927, 294.

⁹³ Freeman, 'The Lambeth Appeal', 4.

United Church,⁹⁴ but now Freeman added his voice to Glover's. He denied that the soldier fighting in the War would have ever 'asked for any sacrifice of principle',⁹⁵ and identified two formidable barriers to the path of reunion. The first was the 'manifest sacramentalism' and 'undisguised sympathy with sacerdotalism' of the *Appeal* in every reference to the 'ordinances' of baptism and the Lord's Supper, the second was the familiar Anglican claim for the necessity of the episcopate.⁹⁶ Such teaching had been largely responsible for driving Baptists from the Church of England in the first place therefore 'the prospect of becoming re-identified with it seems scarcely likely to woo us back'.⁹⁷ Quoting the opening words of the *Appeal*⁹⁸, Freeman proceeded to clarify the Baptist view of who were incorporated into this Body: 'The Baptism which incorporates souls into that Body of Christ, is not (in our convention) a baptism of water, but a baptism of the Spirit'.⁹⁹ Moreover, the *Appeal's* formula raised the old question of the subjects of baptism. Freeman asserted that Baptists held infant baptism to be 'no real Christian baptism at all', therefore those who were issuing the *Appeal* were 'men who are themselves unbaptised' according to the 'profound conviction of some nine millions of evangelicals known as Baptists and Disciples'. 'Are they hereby called upon to admit a thing to be what they believe it is not? Does not that involve some juggling with conscience?' he questioned before repudiating the doctrine of baptismal regeneration.¹⁰⁰

94 Hayden, 'Still at the Crossroads', 31, 'the event which convinced him...was the trauma of the First World War'.

95 Freeman, 'The Lambeth Appeal', 4. See also p.5.

96 Freeman, 'The Lambeth Appeal', 8.

97 Freeman, 'The Lambeth Appeal', 6.

98 'We acknowledge all those who believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, and have been baptised into the name of the Holy Trinity, as sharing with us membership in the universal Church of Christ, which is His Body'.

99 Freeman, 'The Lambeth Appeal', 6-7.

100 Freeman, 'The Lambeth Appeal', 7.

Addressing the Third Baptist World Congress (BWC) in Uppsala Cathedral in July 1923, Shakespeare accidentally knocked the great Bible off the lectern whilst ascending into the pulpit, an accident which visibly shook him and which he took to be a sign from God that his ministry was effectively at its close. His address on 'No man having put his hand to the plough...' (Luke 9:62) was a plea for both unity and international peace. Over the preceding five years he noted there had been increasing numbers of inter-denominational co-operative ventures, which, he believed, were contributing towards the glorious vision of Paul's Ephesian letter - a clear reference to chapter 4:5, 'One Lord, one faith, one baptism', though it was never clear what Shakespeare would say on 'one baptism' in his proposed United Church.¹⁰¹

In the years that followed the *Lambeth Appeal* and the subsequent conversations, hopes that the matter would proceed speedily quickly receded. For Anglicans intercommunion could only be attained by the settlement of outstanding differences in procedure and Church life, but for the Free Churches intercommunion was intimately connected to mutual recognition, and they also believed that theological differences were being superficially dealt with.¹⁰² To the related theological and practical difficulties was added the fact that in 1921 the Church of England had begun conversations with the Roman Catholic Church at Malines which continued up to 1925.¹⁰³ These alienated the Free Churches, including Shakespeare, who felt that too much had been conceded to the Roman position and as a result withdrew from the reunion movement,¹⁰⁴ and the discussions with the Church of England, which had begun in 1921, came to an end in 1925.

¹⁰¹ See W. T. Whitley (ed), *Third Baptist Congress - Stockholm, July 21-27 (1923)*, 35, the whole address is recorded on pp.32-36.

¹⁰² Grant, *Free Churchmanship in England*, 318. See also G. K. A. Bell, *Documents on Christian Unity, 1920-4*, 130 and 126-27.

¹⁰³ See Hastings, *A History of English Christianity*, 208-212; Carlile, *My Life's Little Day*, 180-81.

¹⁰⁴ Shakespeare wrote to Carlile urging that a statement be prepared to which he would put his signature withdrawing from attempts at Free Church - Anglican reunion, Carlile, *My Life's Little Day*, 181.

To mark the end of the five years of discussions arising from the *Lambeth Appeal*, J. C. Carlile invited W. E. Blomfield to write an article on what he believed were the Baptist objections to reunion.¹⁰⁵ Acknowledging the admirable spirit of the *Appeal*, Blomfield declared that 'it offered no basis for Reunion. It passed from the true assertion that God wills fellowship to the different and very questionable assertion that He wills organic reunion'. The *Appeal* had called for the acceptance of the Nicene Creed as the substance of the faith and the Apostles' Creed as the baptismal confession. Blomfield asked: 'with all due respect to these creeds... "Is there one Baptist minister who would demand such a confession of all candidates for baptism?" If so, would his Church endorse such a demand? I feel sure Baptists would repudiate it'. Citing the *Appeal's* proposal of 'Acceptance of the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion', he commented that such looked hopeful until probed: 'What is Baptism? Who are its proper subjects? What does it effect? Does it regenerate?' and then concluded that, 'Vague formulas are of no value for a united Church'. After discussing other proposals from the *Appeal* he added a personal note: 'The Resolutions convinced me that nothing could come of the Lambeth proposals', a view undoubtedly held by the majority view of Baptists. His closing remark is telling: 'For ourselves let us go on with our own work and bear our own witness. And whilst we proclaim the truth as God has shewn it us, let us cherish an ardent affection for all who love our common Lord'.

The BU's response was released to the press a month before the 1926 May Assembly in Leeds and received extensive and appreciative coverage.¹⁰⁶ Despite poor attendance at the Assembly, the meetings were of the utmost importance. The president that year was J. H. Rushbrooke, but the speakers had been invited to speak

¹⁰⁵ Blomfield, 'Church Reunion. Impasse', *BT* October 22, 1925, 747-48.

¹⁰⁶ See 'Baptists and Reunion', *BT* April 22, 1926, 306. The details of the Reply were reported sometimes in full (*The Times*) and sometimes in extenso (*The Manchester Guardian*) thereby disseminating the contents to the Baptist community and other denominations, a stroke of good fortune because the opening of the Assembly coincided with the beginning of the General Strike so many delegates did not attend, and many who did returned home immediately. See Payne, *The Baptist Union*, 196.

on Baptist belief and polity by the new Secretary of the Union, Rev. M. E. Aubrey, and they all linked their messages with the Baptist *Reply* to the *Lambeth Appeal*,¹⁰⁷ which was unanimously accepted by the Assembly. The *Reply* declared the Baptist belief that the 'Catholic Church' was the 'holy Society of believers', and that personal faith was necessary for membership of this Church.¹⁰⁸ It then dealt at length with the question of baptism and the Lord's Supper, both of which, as dominical institutions, were 'means of grace to all who receive them in faith'. Because the Baptist understanding of the Church was a 'community of Christian believers' the ordinance of baptism was administered only to those who made a personal confession of repentance and faith and the mode was immersion, symbolic of the inner baptism of the Holy Spirit. Infant baptism, however, subverted the conception of the Church as a fellowship of believers. No rite was needed to bring children into relation with God, though the widespread practice of Infant Dedication among Baptists emphasized the duties, privileges and responsibilities of parents, as the Church offered prayers for children and parents.¹⁰⁹ On Christian unity the *Reply* stated that, 'Further progress...can be secured, we are convinced, only by unreserved mutual recognition', and expressed a readiness to join with the Church of England in 'exploring the possibility of a federation of equal and autonomous Churches in which the several parts of the Church of Christ would co-operate in bringing before men the will and claims of our Lord'.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Their addresses were published under the title *The Faith of the Baptists*, edited by J. H. Rushbrooke, (n.d., but 1926), and included in full the text of the *Reply of the Churches in Membership with the Baptist Union to the "Appeal to all Christian People" issued by the Lambeth Conference of 1920*, pp.85-91. The *Reply* was also published in the *BT&F* April 15, 1926, 284. All the messages, with the exception of Gilbert Laws', were published in the *BT&F* May 20, 1926, 344-346, and 349-50. The *Reply* itself had been carefully drawn up by a small committee, under chairmanship of J. H. Rushbrooke and had been convened by Dr. F. Townley Lord. See Payne, *The Baptist Union*, 197. F. T. Lord moved from Acton in March 1926 to be minister of Queen's Road, Coventry.

¹⁰⁸ *Reply*, 86-87.

¹⁰⁹ *Reply*, 88.

¹¹⁰ *Reply*, 90-91.

Though there was no attempt to impose uniformity in the approach of each speaker at the Assembly, there was nevertheless an impressive convergence in outlook, stating clearly what can be taken as widely representative of Baptist views on the subjects discussed, and this is nowhere clearer than when the speakers overlapped on the question of baptism and related themes. Three of the five addresses were of particular relevance to the baptismal issue.

Gilbert Laws believed that Baptists could not live as Baptists without believer's baptism. 'This point is so obvious that I surely need not labour it. If we cease to teach and practise the baptism of believers as part of the whole counsel of God in the gospel, it is pretty evident that we shall come to an end as Baptists'.¹¹¹ It was more than a mere external rite, but as part of the gospel, with the Lord's Supper, it was a proclamation of that gospel, symbolical of the burial and resurrection of the believer with Christ (an enacted creed),¹¹² and it showed a Baptist what his character should be: an utterly consecrated man.¹¹³

A. C. Underwood asserted that baptism arose from Baptist ecclesiology, being the rite of entry into the Church of Christ. The proper subjects of baptism were, therefore, believers, and the proper mode immersion.¹¹⁴ As Clifford had before him, he denied that Baptists were ritualists. Only when baptism was administered to believers by immersion was it able to retain its full value as a sacrament and run no risk of degenerating into a charm. Only so could it be a means of grace to all who submitted to it in faith.¹¹⁵ Infant baptism lost all this. As far as the infant was concerned

¹¹¹ G. Laws of West Croydon, 'Vital Forces of the Baptist Movement', in Rushbrooke (ed.), *The Faith of the Baptists*, 13.

¹¹² Laws, 'Vital Forces', 14-15.

¹¹³ Laws, 'Vital Forces', 19-20.

¹¹⁴ Dr. A. C. Underwood, a tutor at Rawdon College and soon to be its President, 'Conversion and Baptism', in Rushbrooke (ed.), *The Faith of the Baptists*, 26.

¹¹⁵ Underwood, 'Conversion and Baptism', 27-29.

paedobaptism was either a piece of white magic or a meaningless ceremony.¹¹⁶ He continued:

This, then, is our position, and this is our message to the modern world. We are not organised as a separate denomination merely to secure the administration of a rite in a particular way. It is not a question of much water or little. We are organised to secure for baptism its full New Testament significance as a means of grace to the regenerate man and to bar out effectively all magical ideas. And we claim that we are the only people who can secure both ends. Congregationalists and other Evangelicals can bar out magic by reducing baptism to a mere ceremony, but then they lose baptism as a means of grace. And further, we claim that the New Testament mode of administering baptism by immersion helps to make it a means of grace as nothing else can, for immersion gives us in perfect symbolism the core of the evangelical faith - death unto sin and resurrection to a new life in Christ.¹¹⁷

It will be immediately clear just how significant these words were for the issue of reunion. Underwood then proceeded to call Baptist ministers to 'preach up' baptism along these lines - as a means of grace to all who receive it in faith.¹¹⁸ He concluded:

In a word, we can meet all attacks and commend our practice to our age by a return to the full New Testament doctrine of baptism. We have always stressed the New Testament mode and the New Testament subjects. Now let us also stress the New Testament doctrine of baptism as a great spiritual experience. Let us preach baptism not only as an act of obedience, not only as a public avowal of faith in Christ, not only as a ceremony of reception into the church, not only as a symbol of the experience of conversion, but also as a means of grace - as a religious experience of the first rank for all those, and only those, who come to it with the receptiveness of faith.¹¹⁹

In his presidential address, Dr. J. H. Rushbrooke, Secretary of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA), noting the developments towards unity, again called for there to be no 'sacrifice of principles'. For him, 'central, vital, creative Christian truth demands embodiment; and our denomination exists, and so far as we are able to see will persist, as the answer to that demand'. As far as Baptists are concerned, he claimed, the unifying Christian principle was *sola fide*.¹²⁰ 'We are constrained to believe - or

116 Underwood, 'Conversion and Baptism', 31.

117 Underwood, 'Conversion and Baptism', 32.

118 Underwood, 'Conversion and Baptism', 33.

119 Underwood, 'Conversion and Baptism', 35.

120 Rushbrooke, 'Protestant of the Protestants: The Baptist Churches, Their Progress and Their Spiritual Principle', in Rushbrooke (ed.), *The Faith of the Baptists*, 70. There are three biographies of Rushbrooke: M. E. Aubrey, 'J. H. Rushbrooke', *BQ* 15.8 (October, 1954), 369-

we should not be Baptists - that the Evangelical experience of faith has its implications and applications revealed to us by the Spirit of Christ; and therefore that our churches stand for religious values which cannot be surrendered'.¹²¹

Everything said, he believed, had a bearing on baptism. 'Is there anything in all the world to compare with our Christian baptism as a means of setting forth the supremacy of faith, its nature and implications? Faith involves an immediate personal relation with God in Christ; the requirement of personal confession leaves that fact clear and unmistakable'.¹²² Any magical view of the ordinance was excised and baptismal regeneration was a doctrine as perilous as it was unscriptural.¹²³

The paradox of our denominational life is that by means of a rite we offer decisive testimony against ritualism. In its very form the ordinance expresses the believer's reverence for the sole authority of Christ. The symbolism of immersion guards and proclaims great Evangelical truths and experiences: the saving significance of the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, the new life which is the common life of members of the Body of Christ. *Ex opere operato* nothing is effected; but we know in our own lives that to follow Christ in obedience and faith is to find in His ordinance a means of grace. Therefore we assert in action louder than words that self-dedication is an indispensable element.

To regard an infant as baptized was to divest the ordinance of its meaning and to deprive the child of the right and privilege which he alone could have: to make his own confession and as a believer receive baptism in the Lord's way.¹²⁴

77; E. A. Payne, *James Henry Rushbrooke 1870-1947. A Baptist Greatheart* (1954), and B. Green, *Tomorrow's Man. A Biography of James Henry Rushbrooke* (1997). Green, chapter 10 'Searching for Christian Unity', 187-203, examines Rushbrooke's involvement and beliefs on the ecumenical developments and the place of baptism within them, which he sums up in his first sub-heading, p.187, 'Committed But Questioning'. Aubrey, 'Rushbrooke', 370, noted Rushbrooke's change in attitude towards ecumenism when he became Secretary of the BWA. Green, *Tomorrow's Man*, 199-201, identifies this change in attitude to have arisen in 1938-39 when discussing the proposals for the WCC with the Southern Baptist, Dr. W. O. Carver, and these feelings were heightened by seeing how Romanian Baptists were being persecuted by the Romanian Orthodox Church.

121 Rushbrooke, 'Protestant of the Protestants', 71.

122 Rushbrooke, 'Protestant of the Protestants', 80.

123 Rushbrooke, 'Protestant of the Protestants', 80-81.

124 Rushbrooke, 'Protestant of the Protestants', 81.

The reason why Baptists stood apart from other evangelical Christians with unwavering resolve, Rushbrooke explained, was to express and guard the conception of the Church as the fellowship of Christian men. 'Rightly understood, we cannot make too much of Baptism...Baptists see in the ordinance a divinely appointed means of ensuring the simplicity and purity of the Gospel. We exist for nothing else than the propagation and defence of the Gospel; in the fulfilment of that purpose, as God gives us light and guidance, we find the final, the only, and the sufficient justification of our existence as Christian churches'.¹²⁵

The majority of Baptists could heartily consent to the views expressed from the Leeds Assembly platform and in the *Reply*, even if many of the subtleties and intricacies of argumentation would not have been often repeated. It can be little doubted, though, that the addresses¹²⁶ represented accurately the mood if not the opinions of the majority of Baptists regarding reunion. Discussions could continue, as they did, but there was considerable reserve and a determination not to surrender any principles. Together, the addresses and *Reply* registered the Baptist reactions to the conversations which had gone on since 1920. The *Reply* concluded that 'union of such a kind as the Bishops have contemplated is not possible for us'. Further progress 'in the direction' of Christian unity could only be secured by 'unreserved mutual recognition', and the invitation was made 'to join with the Church of England in exploring the possibility of a federation of equal and autonomous Churches in which the several parts of the Church of Christ would co-operate in bringing before men the will and claims of our Lord'.¹²⁷

The importance of the 1926 *Reply* and Assembly addresses lies in the fact that this was the first time in the thirty years since the founding of the official Free Church

¹²⁵ Rushbrooke, 'Protestant of the Protestants', 82.

¹²⁶ Which also included contributions by W. W. B. Emery of Cotham Grove, Bristol, 'The Fellowship and the Table of the Lord', 36-45, and J. O. Hagger of Cambuslang, Glasgow, 'Discipleship and its Implications', 46-59, in Rushbrooke (ed.), *Faith of the Baptists*.

¹²⁷ *Reply*, 90-91.

movement that the Baptist position on the Church, baptism and communion had been clearly and systematically (though briefly) set out. Prior to this, baptism had been subordinated to the broader discussion of the pros and cons of union/reunion and whether or not such could occur without the compromise of Baptist principles, amongst which baptism was included.

Baptists and the Churches of Christ.

In March 1931 two churches previously affiliated to the Churches of Christ, Twynholm and its branch church in Boston Road, were received into the BU. The leading figure in the Twynholm church was Robert Wilson Black, a man of considerable personal means and with great leadership qualities. In 1927 the members of the church had begun to be concerned over the practice of closed communion. Though the church remained closed in membership, in June that year the church withdrew from fellowship with the London Association of the Churches of Christ. In the monthly magazine of the church, the *Joyful Tidings*, June 1928, edited by R. W. Black, the minister, Rev. W. Mander, wrote an article on 'Movements Toward Christian Union', drawing attention to Church unions in Scotland, Canada and the three Methodist denominations in Britain. Mander acknowledged the widespread movement which such unions bore witness to and observed that the Churches of Christ were themselves not unaffected by this popular tendency. He then asked: 'Are Churches of Christ to continue in isolation while there are many other Christian people who practise immersion with divergent emphasis, and among whom it might be possible for members of Churches of Christ to maintain their weekly communion and distinctive witness?' There were those, many young members, yearning for such enrichment and broadening of their vision which such sympathetic fellowship with other baptized Christians would bring. 'Ought not the next movement towards Christian Union in this land to be to enhance the churches which practise believers' baptism?'¹²⁸

¹²⁸ H. Townsend, *Robert Wilson Black* (1954), 70.

The Annual Conference of the Churches of Christ discussed the possibility of such a movement, but while favourable views were expressed towards initiating closer union with baptized believers of other denominations, the majority, including J. W. Black, Robert's brother, voted to maintain the isolation of the Churches of Christ. This decision led the Twynholm quarterly church meeting on October 2nd, 1929, to withdraw altogether from the Churches of Christ.¹²⁹ This set in motion the series of approaches which finally led to the church joining the BU, the principle architect of which was R. W. Black.

Henry Townsend, R. W. Black's biographer, recorded that from 1931 'when Mr. Black was received into membership of the Baptist Union, he soon became one of its most outstanding leaders'. Within his new sphere of service, Black vigorously affirmed that repentance, faith in Christ as Saviour and Lord, believer's baptism and remission of sins were essentials of New Testament ecclesiology.¹³⁰ From this basis he argued that 'unity by the sacrifice of principle would be a grave disaster'. From the denomination's Declaration of Principle, he spoke on behalf of the Baptist majority when he affirmed that, 'They are not Baptists by choice but by conviction, and to recognise infant baptism in any form would, they believe, be in entire opposition to New Testament teaching and practice'.¹³¹

Baptist, Congregational and Presbyterian Reunion Discussions.

Declarations from the Lambeth Conference in August 1930 proved disappointing as far as the Free Churches and their ministers were concerned, yet this did not prevent further conversations taking place. The following March, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Lang, formally invited the Federal Council to resume conversations,

¹²⁹ Townsend, *Robert Wilson Black*, 70-71. See also D. M. Thompson, *Let Sects and Parties Fall. A Short History of the Association of Churches of Christ in Great Britain and Ireland* (Birmingham, 1980), 138-141.

¹³⁰ Townsend, *Robert Wilson Black*, 72.

¹³¹ R. W. Black's letter 'Baptists and Christian Unity', BT Sept 6, 1934, 628.

and in September eighteen representatives were put forward, amongst them M. E. Aubrey,¹³² Gilbert Laws and Hugh Martin, three men of considerably differing views on the ecumenical question. Aubrey, as Secretary of the BU and a participant in both the Free Church and F&O movements, was a cautious and diplomatic figure. Laws needed to be persuaded that reunion was possible without the surrender of principles. However, Hugh Martin, from 1929 the editor of the SCM Press and Joint Honorary Secretary of the 'Friends of Reunion' (FoR) from its foundation in 1933, ardently believed and advocated a reunion which would be attainable without the loss of any distinctive principle.¹³³ These renewed conversations rambled on throughout the 1930s, until 1938 when an *Outline of a Reunion Scheme* and other documents were published.¹³⁴

The renewed round of conferences sparked off other studies into the reunion question. Seymour J. Price discussed in particular the Free Church doctrine of the priesthood of all believers from the lay perspective, drawing out the obvious gulf which this revealed as existing between the Free Churches and such a Church as the Anglican communion, and drew out the implications of this to the sacraments. Of the Free Church context he noted that 'A layman can be appointed minister in sole charge of a Church, and exercise all the functions of a minister, including "administration of the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion..."'¹³⁵ His conclusion was inevitable: 'It is obvious, when account is taken, not only of the Churches which took part in the Lambeth Joint Conferences, but also of the Roman and Eastern Churches,

¹³² A detailed study of Dr. Aubrey has been made by W. M. S. West, 'The Young Mr. Aubrey', *BQ* 33.8 (October, 1990), 351-63; 'The Reverend Secretary Aubrey. Part I', *BQ* 34.5 (January, 1992), 199-223; 'Part II', *BQ* 34.6 (April, 1992), 263-81; 'Part III', *BQ* 34.7 (July, 1992), 320-36.

¹³³ On Hugh Martin see A. R. Cross, 'Rev. Dr. Hugh Martin: Publisher and Writer, Part I', *BQ* 37.1 (January, 1997), 33-49; 'Rev. Dr. Hugh Martin: Ecumenist, Part 2', *BQ* 37.2 (April, 1997), 71-86; 'Rev. Dr. Hugh Martin: Ecumenical Controversialist and Writer', *BQ* 37.3 (July, 1997), 131-46. These studies include discussion of Martin's life and work, and contain full references to sources relating to him.

¹³⁴ See Jordan, *Free Church Unity*, 175-179; Payne, *The Baptist Union*, 198-99.

¹³⁵ S. J. Price, 'Laymen and Reunion', *BQ* 5, (July, 1931), 291-92.

that Church Union in the sense of one organised visible Church is not within the realm of practical religious politics'.¹³⁶ Further, he ruled out the notion that Christian Unity could be achieved on the basis of the minimum formula, believing that the cause of Christian unity could not be helped by avoiding issues which sooner or later would have to be faced. 'So the Christian Unity that is much to be desired must take up into itself all the rich diversity of the varying streams of Christian experience'. Price called for an end to the discussion of 'abstruse and hairsplitting points of Faith and Order' and instead suggested that such conferences should seek fuller spiritual co-operation.¹³⁷

An anonymous writer denied that John 17:21 spoke of unity in terms of one organisation and, taking his stand from the 1926 *Reply*, advocated the concept of federation. The gains of the kind of federation would be twofold: 'frank mutual recognition' and 'the wise utilisation of all Christian forces for evangelisation'. Of the former he wrote: 'Federation implies the full recognition of every member of every federating body as a member of the Universal Church of Christ, so that he is welcome at every act of worship in every section...' And then, significantly, he declared that it would not be 'for the Baptist to feel that a man merely christened in infancy has never even been baptised; in each case the man stands or falls to his Master, and the judgement of his own body upholds his own convictions. Full mutual recognition is a first condition, and a first gain'.¹³⁸

In the early 1930s Baptists increasingly began to discuss and debate more openly the pros and cons of the reunion/union issue, and this was nowhere more clearly reflected than in the pages of *The Baptist Times*. One such article was entitled 'Is Union of Baptists, Congregationalists and Presbyterians Desirable and Practicable?' to

¹³⁶ Price, 'Laymen and Reunion', 299.

¹³⁷ Price, 'Laymen and Reunion', 300.

¹³⁸ Anonymous, 'Church Union by Federation', *BQ* 5, (April, 1931), 246.

which the answer 'Yes!' was given by Rev. E. W. Burt of Worthing, 'No!' by Rev. H. C. Wagnell of Fallowfield BC, Manchester.¹³⁹

Burt claimed that it was union not uniformity which was under discussion, recognizing that no one of the three bodies could claim a monopoly of the truth. However, he did admit to two principal difficulties: differences in Church government and order, and differences over the subjects and mode of baptism. Concerning the latter, he believed that when several considerations were borne in mind union would become possible, because all three denominations rejected baptismal regeneration, affirmed that the baptism of the Spirit was of infinitely more importance than any outward ceremony, each required a confession of faith before admittance into full membership, and there was the fact that many Baptist churches held dedication services. In such a union, he said, 'we could well leave the choice of the particular mode of baptism to the individual candidate, provided that a confession of faith were required before admission to fellowship'. He proceeded, 'Indeed, we already have more union than is commonly supposed, for members of the three bodies freely partake of the Lord's Supper in one another's Churches, and membership is mixed and no incongruity is experienced'.

In response to the issue of the desirability of union, H. C. Wagnell answered "'Yes' most cordially, given that we could have union without compromising conscience or conviction'. But he did not believe that it was practicable, for 'it would fetter our special witness, and therefore the answer for us is in the negative'. The chief barrier to such a union was baptism and its implications, 'especially the latter'. Baptists believed that they held and administered baptism as divinely intended and certainly as taught and practised by the Church for the first two centuries, therefore, they could neither

¹³⁹ E. W. Burt and H. C. Wagnell, 'Is Union of Baptists, Congregationalists and Presbyterians Desirable and Practicable?', *BT* March 8, 1934, 165. E. W. Burt is not to be confused with G. W. Byrt, one of the biographers of John Clifford, but details about the former are unknown, as is whether he was a Baptist. His name does not appear in the *BH*. Cf. the earlier letters from Mr. Richard Jewson of Norwich for such a union, and Mr. John H. Stanley of Walthamstow and Mr. H. B. Stote of Tenby against, and Mr. F. Windsor Bond, a 'young Baptist' from Liverpool, who was cautiously in favour, all in 'Open Forum', *BT* October 20, 1932, 720.

relinquish nor modify their witness to it as a price of union. 'Nor, what is equally important, can we countenance its perversion by what is misnamed infant baptism. Loyalty to Christ forbids that'. Believing that baptism did not have to be a condition for membership, Wagnell, however, rejected the idea that infant baptism could be accepted as either an alternative or substitute for New Testament baptism. Baptism 'by its very genius and intention' was for none other than those possessing conscious faith in Christ. Responding to the question why Baptists made an ordinance a barrier to a union so ardently desired and in many respects mutually advantageous, he made a number of points. Accepting the authority of Christ and Scripture precluded any steps which would invalidate baptism or impair its significance. It was not the ordinance but the implications of the ordinance which justified Baptists' separate existence, the significance of baptism lying in its symbolism as the Gospel in a 'figure', thereby conserving and safeguarding the truth of the Gospel. Conversely, the introduction and practice of infant baptism neutralized the power of the Gospel ministry, and tacitly implied a difference between the sprinkled and unsprinkled child. The cause of division, he maintained, was not of the Baptists' making, for the introduction of a practice unknown in the Early Church had accomplished that. Baptists, he believed, had the proud distinction of being free from every shred of ritualism which derived its supposed efficacy from priestism or mere tradition.

In November 1932, C. T. Le Quesne, K. C., presented a memorandum to the BU Council from the committee which had been appointed to discuss the question of Baptist-Congregational co-operation.¹⁴⁰ The only point, he reported, over which any discussion of doctrine would need to take place would be baptism and this would need a more precise definition from both denominations on the meaning, mode and obligation of the sacrament. Then he added, somewhat prophetically: 'It is clear that considerable controversy may or will be aroused in the attempt to arrive at such a

¹⁴⁰ C. T. Le Quesne, 'Church Union', *BT* November 24, 1932, 816. It is interesting to note that the question of Baptist-Congregational union had been mooted as far back as November 4, 1887 see *BT* December 7, 1933, 842, and also in 1892, see *BM* ~~January~~ November 1892, 505, cited by Briggs, 'Evangelical Ecumenism. Part II', 177 and n.61.

definition'. The outcome of the ensuing discussion was that it was agreed that a Special Committee, under Le Quesne's chairmanship, should be set up to consider the broader matter of union between Baptists, Congregationalists and Presbyterians. A second factor leading to its formation was the publication of the pamphlet entitled *A Plea for Unity*, issued in April that year, which advocated an inquiry into the possibilities of such a union between the three denominations, and which had been signed by prominent members from each tradition.¹⁴¹ Under Le Quesne's chairmanship the Special Committee was to focus its attention almost exclusively on the issue of baptism, and even the most cursory survey of the letters and articles on the subject reveals that it was this baptismal question, above all else, which was the real matter of contention in a way that it had not been during the second decade of the century when, though discussed, it had not played such a central role.

By this time Dr. Hugh Martin had become the leading Baptist advocate of the ecumenical movement,¹⁴² and though there were those who joined with him, to the majority of Baptists his position was greeted with the same kind of scepticism as Shakespeare before him. Addressing the Federal Council on 'The Unity of the Free Churches', a message later issued in pamphlet form, Martin set out his position:

¹⁴¹ Nineteen Baptists signed the Plea: Rev. Dr. Charles Brown, Rev. F. C. Bryan of The Downs, Clapton, Rev. F. Buffard who moved from Hampstead to Yeovil in 1932, Rev. A. J. Burgoyne of Hutton and Shenfield Union church, Rev. H. J. Flowers who moved from Chorleywood to Pantygwydr, Swansea in 1932, Rev. E. W. Gibbons of Wealdstone, Rev. E. E. Hayward of Gouldhurst, Mr. Arthur Itter, Mr. Richard Jewson, Rev. Ruffell Laslett of Watford, Dr. F. Townley Lord of Bloomsbury, Mr. Herbert Marnham, Rev. A. J. Nixon of Clapham, Rev. T. Powell of Upton, Lambeth, Rev. F. C. Spurr of Handsworth, Birmingham, Rev. H. H. Sutton of West End, Hammersmith, Rev. F. J. Walkey, ~~of~~ General Superintendent of the Central Area, Mr. H. Ernest Wood and Rev. Hugh Martin. See H. Martin, 'Baptists, Congregationalists and Presbyterians', *BT* April 21, 1932, 268. Seven of these served on the Special Committee set up to discuss this issue in November, 1932: Brown, Bryan, Itter, Jewson, Lord, Martin and Spurr. A copy of this *Plea* has not been found.

¹⁴² On Martin's introduction to the ecumenical movement and his replacing Shakespeare as the foremost Baptist figure, see Cross, 'Hugh Martin: Ecumenist', 71-73. Martin took whatever opportunity he had to further its cause, writing many letters to the *BT*, eg, Martin, 'Christian Unity', *BT* November 10, 1932, 776, and his 'Baptists and Christian Unity', *BT* August 30, 1934, 612; preached on the matter whenever invited, eg, *BT* November 10, 1932, 776, carries an advert for Friar Lane Baptist Church, Leicester, for a meeting on November 13, when Dr. Martin would speak on 'Christian Unity'; and participating in many different committees discussing the matter, including the BU's Special Committee, and the FoR, see Jordan, *Free Church Unity*, 176-178.

'There are...serious difficulties...in relation to the ordinance of baptism. I speak as a Baptist. I believe in the Baptist doctrine and practice, which I hold to be the New Testament doctrine and practice. I believe that here Baptists have a valuable contribution to bring to a United Church. But our fundamental witness, as I understand it, is to a belief in the spiritual character of the Church which is now shared, whatever may have been the case in the past, by those divided from us as to the administration of the ordinance'.¹⁴³ Dr. E. K. H. Jordan referred to this as Martin's 'brilliant address', arguing that it injected a 'vigorous "shot in the arm"' into Dr. Charles Brown's¹⁴⁴ committee which was exploring the possibility of Free Church union, and this was followed up by the establishment of a theological commission which was to study the issues involved.¹⁴⁵

However, it was the printing of Martin's September address to the Federal Council which sparked off a considerable debate conducted through the pages of *The Baptist Times*. Careful to distinguish between unity and uniformity, he argued that unity of spirit and unity of organization went together and he believed that there were deeper reasons for unity other than those of economics or sharing resources: 'One Lord, one Faith, should mean one Body of Christ', but significantly, though citing Ephesians 4:5, he omitted 'one baptism'. He continued, 'Our denominationalism is outworn and could be ended to-morrow without any sacrifice of principle and with infinite gains for the spiritual enrichment of all of us and for the more effective service of the Kingdom of God'. For him, the onus lay with those who maintained the necessity of continued separation in circumstances vastly different from those in which they had

¹⁴³ 'The Unity of the Free Churches', *BT* December 22, 1932, 913, reports the contents of Martin's speech. It was published by the SCM Press under the title *The Unity of the Free Churches* (1932).

¹⁴⁴ Charles Brown was an ardent supporter of Shakespeare and the reunion movement, see H. Cook, *Charles Brown*, 83-85.

¹⁴⁵ Though the commission periodically reported back and still existed at the commencement of the War, little progress was made, and the matter was eclipsed by the proposals which eventually bore fruit in September 1940 when the Free Church Federal Council (FCFC) was born out of the amalgamation of the NCEFC (f.1892) and the FCEFC (f.1919). See Jordan, *Free Church Unity*, 216.

arisen. Some of the difficulties he termed 'evidences of old Adam still alive in us', but the real difficulties were not insurmountable given the will to unity and some hard thinking. With regard to Church government, Presbyterians, who had already begun to move away from extreme independency, had much they could teach both Baptists and Congregationalists, but he admitted that there were greater difficulties about baptism, and he then proceeded with what appears to be a reiteration of his apologetic for his reunion stance.¹⁴⁶ 'I speak as a Baptist. I believe the Baptist teaching and practice to be the teaching and practice of the New Testament. Baptists have a great contribution to bring here to a United Church. But our fundamental witness is to the spiritual character of the Church, a belief now shared by those divided from us by the form of the ordinance. In part, too, our denominations have been emphasising complementary truths. Our differences are not adequate grounds for separation. Let us beware of a new Ritualism. In Christ Jesus neither believer's immersion availeth anything nor infant sprinkling, but faith that worketh by love'. As Shakespeare believed before him, 'The real issues today are not denominational and are too big for denominationalism to meet', and Martin pleaded that the time had come to seriously investigate the case for a United Free Church, advocating the establishment of National Commissions set up by the denominations which would study the situation and face the difficulties.¹⁴⁷

Martin gained enthusiastic support the following week from Charles Brown who considered it a mistake to refuse to explore the ways and means of achieving closer unity and co-operation, specifically between Baptists, Congregationalists and Presbyterians,¹⁴⁸ and from Mr. Herbert Marnham, who agreed that, in general terms,

¹⁴⁶ Cf. his comments referred to above in his speech, 'The Unity of the Free Churches', reported in *BT* December 22, 1932, 913.

¹⁴⁷ H. Martin, 'Free Church Unity', *BT* September 22, 1932, 653. On Martin's Baptist convictions, which were frequently questioned, see Cross, 'Hugh Martin. Part 3', 139-43.

¹⁴⁸ C. Brown and E. E. Hayward, the Headmaster of Bethany House, Goudhurst, a Free Church school, added his support for a United Free Church, *BT* September 29, 1932, 664.

there were truths which Baptists held dear and which they had to maintain, but these should not prevent organic union with the other branches of Christ's Church. However, H. L. Taylor and Gilbert Laws voiced their opposition to the views of Martin, Brown and Hayward. Taylor 'queried' these writers' confident assertions that there was a widespread and earnest desire for Free Church unity amongst younger Baptists, and was concerned that the Baptist witness could well be lost in a United Free Church. He asked Martin, as a member of a Free Church,¹⁴⁹ how many had been baptized on confession of faith in that church during the past ten years. Laws asked the three unity advocates what they were prepared to do with essential Baptist principles in order to unite Baptists with other Christian bodies. These distinctive beliefs were a credible profession of conversion as the pre-requisite to Church membership; that baptism was for believers only; that a local assembly of believers was a complete church, with full authority to exercise discipline and appoint the ministry; and that every believer was a true priest unto God. On the second Baptists were at odds with Congregationalists; on the second and third with Presbyterians; and on all four with Anglicans. Laws therefore concluded: 'Brethren who ceaselessly urge the subject of union upon us must have some answer to these questions in their mind, and I would respectfully invite them to say what the answer is'.¹⁵⁰

The following week Charles Brown replied, expressing his grief at the attitude of Laws and Taylor, responding point by point to the issues raised. On Laws' second point, he declared his belief that many Congregationalists would, for the sake of unity, be prepared to substitute a dedication service for infant sprinkling and to provide the means for believer's baptism, then added, 'at any rate, it could be

¹⁴⁹ Martin was for many years in membership of the Hampstead Garden Suburb Free Church, see Cross, 'Hugh Martin, Part 1', 40.

¹⁵⁰ See H. Marnham, Treasurer of the BU, H. L. Taylor of Easton, Gordano near Bristol, and G. Laws of St. Mary's, Norwich, 'Christian Unity', *BT* October 6, 1932, 680. Laws' letter formed the basis of the address he delivered to the Baptist World Congress two years later, on which see below on his address at the 5th BWC. Laws became one of the leading opponents of the union movement, even though, like Martin, he sat on the Union's Special Committee and had many letters on the subject published in the *BT*.

discussed'. He then asked whether Laws and Taylor were really suggesting that baptism was the sole reason for the Baptists' separation from other Churches and whether, if they were to start *de novo*, they would form a separate denomination on that matter alone. 'I am a convinced Baptist', he declared, 'but the term very inadequately describes me, and, if I may say so, my denomination. I hope I am a great deal more than that. Christ sent me not to baptise but to preach the Gospel. I am persuaded that many people make far more of baptism than our Lord makes of it'.¹⁵¹

Ruffell Laslett replied a fortnight later, drawing attention to the Congregationalists' and Presbyterians' demand for a credible profession of faith as the pre-requisite for membership, a point, in actual fact, which Laws had acknowledged. 'And though they do not practise our form of baptism, yet the fact that many of our Churches do not make it essential for Church membership but freely admit both Congregationalists and Presbyterians to full membership of the Church, would seem to suggest that further union between us is not quite so difficult as Mr. Laws seems to suggest. Or would he have us return to the old complete Independency, and to close communion, and as it would appear, to the only logical conclusion to that - close membership? For surely those who have a right to the Lord's Table have also a right to His Church?'¹⁵²

In spite of the opposition, Martin continued his work and drew positively from his experiences of Union Churches—Martin had declared, 'I believe that we could now (in the light of experience) formulate principles for the conduct of a Union Church in respect of the teaching and practice of baptism, which would meet any just Baptist complaints'.¹⁵³ However, in keeping with his position as General Secretary, Aubrey

¹⁵¹ C. Brown, *BT* October 13, 1932, 700.

¹⁵² G. H. Ruffell Laslett of Watford, *BT* October 27, 1932, 740. F. J. H. Humphrey of Ealing, *BT* November 3, 1932, 756, expressed his agreement with Laws' statement on beliefs as being important and his questions pertinent, but remarked that their delivery seemed 'more like a pistol than an olive branch'.

¹⁵³ H. Martin, 'Christian Unity', *BT* November 10, 1932, 776. Under the same heading, A. J. Nixon drew attention to the Baptists 'of the dispersion', those already in membership with a Congregational or Presbyterian church, and used their existence in support of the cause of Christian union.

trod a more cautious and diplomatical path, writing, 'I do not see that at the present time our Churches need concern themselves with particular schemes, which may very well be left at this stage to the Baptist Union Council, on which every point of view is well represented'.¹⁵⁴

In 1934, Laws delivered a paper to the Berlin BWC on 'Baptists and Christian Unity: What is Possible', in which, after briefly sketching the developments of the previous two decades, focussed on the four distinctive Baptist principles: conversion, believer's baptism, the completeness of the local church and the priesthood of all believers. In the light of these, he discussed the relationship between Baptists and Congregationalists, then with Presbyterians and Methodists, and finally with Episcopalians in the light of these principles. In each case it was the baptismal issue which separated Baptists from the other denominations (in the case of Episcopalians it was all four principles). He concluded that there would be no way that union could take place without some recognition of infant baptism. As he had already stated that Baptists were Antipaedobaptist, such a union could not, therefore, be done without inconsistency. He argued that 'the Baptist contribution to Christian unity must, for the present, be a domestic effort'. Baptists needed to seek unity within their own tradition, for they had not yet, he believed, 'worked out fully the meaning of an Association, or a Union. Only when this has been done in all countries shall we pass on to work out the meaning of our world fellowship as it is represented in this Alliance'.¹⁵⁵ The

¹⁵⁴ M. E. Aubrey, 'Union', *BT* November 10, 1932, 775. Aubrey went on to clarify his own position: 'My official view, as Secretary, is simply this. Union might mean a disuniting of our denomination as it at present stands. Taking a long view of the welfare of the Church of Christ, even so it might be worth while, though disunion for the sake of union seems strange... I believe every good Baptist will welcome unity if it can be shown to be possible without sacrifice of any principle which we regard as essential to the presentation of the Gospel of Christ in its fulness'. Cf. Peter Aubrey's comment that his father's main preoccupation was all too often that of a gracious peacemaker, West, 'The Reverend Secretary Aubrey: Part I', *BQ* 34.5 (January 1992), 199.

¹⁵⁵ Laws, 'Baptists and Christian Unity: What is Possible?', in J. H. Rushbrooke (ed.), *Fifth Baptist World Congress. Berlin, August 4-10 (1934)*, 172-174, quotations from p.173. The call for Baptists to unite amongst themselves was not a new one. Laws had expressed it as early as 1921, see 'One People In All the World. A Plea For Baptist Unity', *BT* May 13, 1921, 294, and was followed by Anon., 'Baptist Unity', *BT* September 5, 1924, 584; J. H. Rushbrooke, 'Baptist Unity', *BT* October 3, 1924, 651; A. Graham-Barton, 'Shall the Baptist Churches Become One Organic Whole?', *BT* November 23, 1933, 796. See further the letters by W. N.

address was reproduced in the *Baptist Times* several weeks later¹⁵⁶ and elicited appreciative and whole-hearted support from R. W. Black, but a dismayed response from Hugh Martin, who once again claimed that union could be attained without the sacrifice of principle and that there were weightier matters facing the Church than views about baptism.¹⁵⁷ In turn, Martin's letter elicited a response from Mr. John H. Stanley, who recorded with surprise Martin's statement that there was 'a danger in some sections of our denomination of making too much of baptism', reiterating that it was 'the one fundamental principle for which we stand, and is quite scriptural...whereas infant *baptism*...is not scriptural, and the New Testament never sanctions it, therefore it becomes a barrier to any denomination not following out this command'.¹⁵⁸

Throughout this extended debate baptism was repeatedly identified as the principal barrier to any form of reunion or union. This fact was reiterated time and again¹⁵⁹ along with its concomitant that there should be absolutely no surrender of principle.¹⁶⁰ Throughout, the *Baptist Times* provided an excellent forum for much of the debate and this was in no small measure due to J. C. Carlile's editorship,

Town and H. C. Woolley, *BT* November 3, 1932, 756; Anon, 'Church Re-Union', *BT* September 14, 1933, 618; G. Cowling of Leyton, *BT* December 7, 1933, 842; and 'Re-Union At Home', probably by J. C. Carlile, *BT* July 26, 1934, 530, which raised the question, 'Do we really want to unite? If the desire is in our hearts, why not begin with those who are our kith and kin?'

¹⁵⁶ Laws, 'Baptists and Christian Unity', *BT* August 23, 1934, 601.

¹⁵⁷ R. W. Black, 'Baptists and Christian Unity', *BT* September 6, 1934, 628; H. Martin, 'Baptists and Christian Unity', *BT* August 30, 1934, 612.

¹⁵⁸ Mr. John H. Stanley of Walthamstow, 'Baptists and Christian Unity', *BT* September 27, 1934, 680. Stanley had already attacked Martin and any other Baptist, Congregational and Presbyterian union, in 'Christian Unity', *BT* October 20, 1932, 720.

¹⁵⁹ Eg. 'Re-Union and Baptism', the report of an address by Rev. Harry Abraham to the Monmouthshire English Association, *BT* November 17, 1927, 823; Benjamin I. Greenwood, 'Baptism', *BT* August 2, 1934, 548; H. Townsend, 'The Free Churches and Baptism', *BT* September 13, 1934, 649; 'Christian Union', *BT* August 7, 1937, 522.

¹⁶⁰ Eg. J. C. Carlile, 'Union of the Free Churches', *BT* September 24, 1931, 664; M. E. Aubrey, 'Union', *BT* November 10, 1932, 775; Mrs B. M. Carter, *BT* August 2, 1934, 548; J. Brooks, 'Baptism', *BT* September 6, 1934, 628; Melville Evans, 'Our Baptist Testimony', *BT* July 25, 1935, 552.

combined with his interest and involvement in the movement.¹⁶¹ The *Baptist Times* further aided the discussion by giving well-known Free Church Paedobaptists opportunity to express their views and the views of their own communions, thereby further stimulating thought and increasing awareness of the Paedobaptist positions.¹⁶²

In 1934 Martin edited *Towards Reunion*, published by SCM, in which members of the FoR sketched the positions of their respective denominations.¹⁶³ Martin's belief was that the first step on the road to reunion was for the Churches to understand what each other stood for. He introduced the whole collection of essays by opining that unity should be through mutual comprehension not compromise.¹⁶⁴ Realistic about the contentious issues which divided, he observed that within each tradition diversity already co-existed within denominational unity. He admitted that, 'Of course there are differences of belief and practice amongst us - some of them pretty fundamental. But if complete uniformity is required before we can have organizational unity, then our present denominations must be broken up.'¹⁶⁵ 'The Baptists' was written by Townley Lord, who began by drawing attention to the common religious heritage held by the Free Churches, Anglicans and Society of Friends. Only then did he identify the peculiar Baptist contribution, which he identified not in worship or church order, but in the Baptist conception of churchmanship, 'for it is from this that the Baptist

¹⁶¹ See J. C. Carlile, *My Life's Little Day*, chap XII, 'Attempts to Unite the Churches', 171-186.

¹⁶² Writing from the perspective of their own denominations, see W. Mander, 'Churches of Christ and Baptists: Is A Closer Co-operation Desirable?', *BT* July 25, 1929, 562 and *BT* August 1, 1929, 575; Dr. Sidney M. Berry, 'Union of Baptist and Congregational Churches', *BT* November 3, 1932, 760; Prof. P. Carnegie Simpson, 'Baptism in the Presbyterian Church', *BT* June 14, 1934, 435; Dr. J. D. Jones, 'A Congregationalist's Views About Baptism', *BT* July 19, 1934, 521; Dr. J. Scott Lidgett, 'Holy Baptism: The Doctrine of Methodism', *BT* August 2, 1934, 553. See also the Congregationalist Principal Alfred E. Garvie, 'The Nature of the Church', *BT* September 23, 1937, 713; Dr. H. G. Wood, the former Baptist, 'The Nature of the Church and the Problem of Re-Union. A Quaker View', *BT* November 11, 1937, 852. See also C. Ryder Smith, 'Methodism and Baptism', *BQ* 7.3, (July, 1934), 97-105.

¹⁶³ On the FoR, its origins in 1933, its purpose and threefold basis, see H. Martin, 'The Road to Unity', in Martin (ed.), *Towards Reunion: What the Churches Stand For* (1934), 22; and Cross, 'Hugh Martin, Part 2', 79-80. The second part of its basis of faith was 'Acceptance of the Sacraments of Baptism and of the Holy Communion as of divine appointment, and as expressing for all the corporate life of the whole Fellowship in and with Christ'.

¹⁶⁴ Martin, 'The Road to Unity', in Martin (ed.), *Towards Reunion*, 9.

¹⁶⁵ Martin, 'Road to Unity', 11.

conception of ministry and sacraments follows', and Baptists based this on the Bible. From Scripture, then, Baptists adopted certain definite principles: the essential requisite in Christian discipleship is faith in Christ; the Church is a fellowship of the regenerate; and, admission to the New Testament Church is by immersion administered to those capable of making full surrender to Christ.¹⁶⁶ He maintained that Baptists guarded against externalism by insisting on the change of heart, the reality of conversion and the reality of Christ in personal experience. To be effective, then, a sacrament had to fulfill certain spiritual conditions, therefore Baptists insisted that the proper subjects were believers rather than infants, focussing on the spiritual condition of the candidate. The mode of immersion was retained on account of its New Testament precedent and symbolism. Restricting baptism to those who could make full individual and personal surrender to Christ emphasized the individuality and reality of conversion. The weakness of this position, Lord admitted, was that it appeared to ignore the responsibility of the Church towards children. For this reason modern Baptists had developed dedication services, in which the responsibility of the church and parents for the welfare of the child was highlighted.¹⁶⁷ Moreover, it could be added that Baptists were second to none in their concern for the nurture of young people, primarily but not exclusively through the Sunday School movement. After discussing the issue of episcopacy and rejecting the idea of a State-Church, where the latter was subject to the former, and declaring the Baptist denial of baptismal regeneration, Lord explained that in so doing Baptists believed they were helping to preserve that quality of religious experience which is at the basis of true

¹⁶⁶ F. T. Lord, 'The Baptists', in Martin (ed.), *Towards Reunion*, 25-28.

¹⁶⁷ Lord, 'The Baptists', 29-31. Here he referred to the dedication service contained in M. E. Aubrey's *A Minister's Manual* (n.d., but 1927).

churchmanship'.¹⁶⁸ But he did not ignore the diversities which existed amongst Baptists, as reflected by closed and open membership churches.¹⁶⁹

From its inception to 1943, the FoR sought unsuccessfully to organize a second series of Church of England-Free Church conversations. During this time, Martin published the booklet *Are We Uniting?* for the FoR and published by SCM. In it he lamented the hardening attitude towards Christian unity in England and the tendency to beat the denominational drum.¹⁷⁰ He set about arguing that Reunion would come about based on a common faith, being a unity of comprehension not compromise, and one which would preserve the elements of value in the episcopal, presbyteral and congregational forms of government, noting how both the Baptists and Congregationalists had moved towards a more connexional system. This, he believed, would result in a Free Church¹⁷¹ - free, that is, from State control. However, there were considerable obstacles. As Baptists stood for loyal obedience to the New Testament conceptions of the Church and baptism, the recognition of infant baptism would be to encourage a dangerous superstition. In the resulting hesitation, both Baptists and Anglo-Catholics believed that to enter a Church in which other conceptions than their own were also permissible would be to jeopardize the truth.¹⁷² The Second F&O Conference in Edinburgh the following year, Martin believed, would aid the development of reunion, but he sought to reassure his readers that the Faith and Order movement existed to promote study and not to propagate plans for reunion.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁸ Lord, 'The Baptists', 31-33.

¹⁶⁹ Lord, 'The Baptists', 34. He concluded his article, p.36, by referring with implicit approval to a comment from the then Bishop of Gloucester, Dr. A. C. Headlam, to the effect that nothing was to be gained by either undue haste or the ignoring of real principles, as, for the general witness of the Church, every section of the Church had to make its own valid contribution.

¹⁷⁰ Martin, *Are We Uniting? Prospects of Reunion in England* (1936), 3.

¹⁷¹ Martin, *Are We Uniting?*, 8-11.

¹⁷² Martin, *Are We Uniting?* 12-15.

¹⁷³ Martin, *Are We Uniting?*, 15-16.

Arguably the most important Baptist document in this period was the *Report of the Special Committee* which had been appointed in 1932 under C. T. Le Quesne's chairmanship to consider the question of union between Baptists, Congregationalists and Presbyterians.¹⁷⁴ The first ten sections dealt with the preliminaries of the basic Baptist position on various issues.¹⁷⁵ Section XI attempted to forecast what would happen to the doctrine of baptism if such a union were to take place, concluding that membership would have to be by profession of faith, thus permitting the possibility of 're-baptism' if the applicant was persuaded that this was right, and that a great deal would depend on the minister. Two conditions under which the Baptist understanding of the rite would suffer were then identified: if the church did not remain alive to the issue, and if, in order to avoid controversy, a candidate was not required to decide for himself by weighing the arguments of both believer's and infant baptism. Further, the actual administration of the ordinance would raise problems. Could a convinced Baptist minister baptize infants? If he did, he would be administering a rite which he did not believe to be the true Christian one. Re-baptism would also become an issue, a practice rejected by all branches of the Church. The report could not agree to the possibility of the mutual recognition of baptism as advocated by P. T. Forsyth,¹⁷⁶ in

¹⁷⁴ Details of the Special Committee are set out in the *Report of the Special Committee appointed by the Council on the question of Union between Baptists, Congregationalists and Presbyterians* (n.d., but 1937), 3. Over the five years of the committee's deliberations thirty five people in all had been involved, see p.3, and the report's importance comes from the fact that the committee was truly representative of all the views on baptism, communion and membership within the denomination, as it was comprised of representatives from each of the three groups within the BU: those who favoured open membership and open communion, closed membership and open communion, and closed membership and closed communion. For the purpose of convenience, and because the *Report* is set out in 21 sections, headed by Roman numerals, all references to it here will be set out in the main text and will refer to the relevant section.

¹⁷⁵ This comprised over half the document. The first 5 sections discussed questions of introduction, specifically the New Testament foundation and practice of baptism, based on the authority of Christ Himself, and this practice was then supported by an argument from Christian experience (sections I and II). III dealt with the mode, its symbolism and obligation on every believer, and drew attention to the fact that immersion was continued in England until the sixteenth century. IV examined the subjects of baptism, demonstrating that it was on this matter more than on the mode which separated Baptists from other Paedobaptist communions, whilst V discussed why Baptists rejected infant baptism. Sections VI and VII introduced the three Baptist groups and surveyed the differences between them and their attitudes towards reunion and related issues. Then, sections VIII to X presented the views of the different groups themselves.

which infant and adult baptism existed side by side. However, they saw no difficulty in the co-existence in one and the same Church of two doctrines of believer's baptism, when the rite was understood as a symbol of confession and when it was recognized as an appointed vehicle of grace to the believer.

Section XII examined again the practice of infant baptism and then set over against the arguments propounded in its defence the doctrine of believer's baptism, emphasizing baptism and the Lord's Supper as not merely symbolic but vehicles of grace. The final paragraph of the section drew attention to the corresponding clash between two conceptions of the visible Church: one as the society of baptized persons, the other as a society of baptized believers.¹⁷⁷

XVIII began, 'We are all agreed that, if this question of union...were forced to an issue in England now, it would split our denomination'. Rushbrooke had reported on the exclusion of Chinese Baptists from the BWA because of their fusion with Paedobaptist churches to form the Church of Christ in China and drew from this the conclusion that any such union would endanger the world-wide unity of Baptists as expressed in the BWA.¹⁷⁸

176 P. T. Forsyth, *Lectures on the Church and the Sacraments* (1917), 206 and 211.

177 XIII-XVII dealt with questions of Church organization and Church unity, and the practical differences over the administration of communion, the question of overlapping or redundancy of churches, colleges, church distribution and union churches.

178 XIX acknowledged that any such union as was being considered would cause legal problems not just for the BU but for the other denominations as well. One of the most serious of which would be the actual method of effecting such a union. Whatever the case amongst the two other denominations, the BU Council could not bind the separate churches of its membership, as the assent of each of them would have to be secured before it entered such a scheme of union. XX discussed the difference between Baptist unity and, for example, that obtaining amongst Anglicans and Catholics, both of which were united under their conception of episcopacy. Though Baptists had some conception of unity extending beyond the local church which bound them together as Baptists, this, the report ventured to say, was not enough, and suggested that to this should be added 'the conception of the universal Church, of which they are members together with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth. If such a conception is missing, some part of the New Testament conception of the Church is missing... We must not omit this conception from our thinking if we are to arrive at an adequate and comprehensive answer to this question, whether we ought or ought not to maintain our separate existence as a Church'. It is significant to note the un-typical use of 'Church' at this point - more natural and consistent with Baptist beliefs would have been 'denomination' or 'fellowship of churches'.

Section XXI summed up the position of the committee by issuing a challenge to the Baptist constituency:

In conclusion, we wish to repeat that we as Baptists shall not be able to take our due and helpful share in the movement towards some visible realization of the essential unity of the Churches of Christ amongst mankind and, further, shall not be able to justify our Baptist tradition to thoughtful and inquiring minds, unless we give more attention in our Churches and in our homes to the question of baptism. It has been somewhat neglected amongst us in these later years. Until we have considered it more fully, we are not ready to come to a decision on the issue of union with any other Christian Church. Believer's Baptism, whether it be called an ordinance or a sacrament, is a matter of the most serious import, since it is based upon the authority of our Lord Himself and has contributed, as we are convinced, to the welfare of the Christian community and the maintenance of Christian doctrine.

Finally, the report reiterated that a right decision could not be reached unless Baptists sought and practised fellowship with other Christians, praying that the Holy Spirit would quicken, deepen and refine the apprehension of spiritual values and truths. 'Let us pray, therefore, that He will revive and illuminate us and inspire us with a right disposition to discern and to do the Will of God in this and in all other things'.

Once the last of the denominations' official commissions had reported, the Free Church Unity Group condensed the results of their own four years of work, which had continued behind the scenes, and produced *A Plan for Unity*,¹⁷⁹ to further the closer study of the difficulties and promote that process of mutual understanding and growing together which would have to precede any formal act of union.¹⁸⁰ The *Plan* outlined proposals for the formation of a United Free Church, which included a statement of faith, proposals of membership, discussion of the sacraments which

¹⁷⁹ These details are taken from *A Plan for Unity between Baptists, Congregationalists and Presbyterians in England* (n.d., but 1937), 3. Reference here to the reports of the three denominations' commissions having already been made gives us 1937 as the date for the *Plan*.

¹⁸⁰ Of the nineteen signatories to the *Plan* nine were Baptists: Martin, A. J. Burgoyne, George Evans, E. E. Hayward, Norman Hyde, Ruffell Laslett, R. S. McHardy, E. Murray Page and A. J. Nixon, and these were supported by a group of thirty four, including eleven Baptists, who wished to express their general approval of the proposals and their sympathy with their aims. This figure presumes that George Evans was one of the two Baptist ministers of that name at this time: one the minister of the Downs Chapel, Clapton, (which is perhaps the more likely), the other a Welsh Baptist minister in Monmouth (clearly the less likely of the two). The signatures implied general approval and not necessarily agreement with every clause. The Baptist 'sympathizers' were F. C. Bryan, F. Buffard, Herbert Chown, J. Ivory Cripps, F. J. H. Humphrey, J. B. Middlebrook and R. W. Thomson (if this is the same person who is 'misspelled in the *Plan* as R. W. Thompson). See *Plan for Unity*, 4-5.

permitted both believer's and infant baptism, the ministry, the ministry of the laity which recommended that the Church be organized locally in districts and Presbyteries (the equivalent of Associations as understood by Baptists) and should have a General Assembly as the supreme body of the Church.¹⁸¹

The 1937 Special Committee *Report* was reviewed and discussed over the ensuing months, and this included a discussion on Church Union between Dr. Percy Evans of Spurgeon's College and Hugh Martin sponsored by the Baptist Universities Society. After Evans had outlined the past and present issues and course of events, Martin explained that the *Plan for Unity* had been tentatively put forward by a group of Baptists, Congregationalists and Presbyterians and that whatever decision the churches came to, one of the burning issues of the day was unity. According to the *Plan*, the visible and orderly expression of membership in a United Free Church would be through baptism in the name of the Trinity, due instruction and training in the Christian faith and life, and the giving of the right hand of fellowship. 'We cannot rest until we have found a way to closer union of the Church of Christ. Divisions have outworn their usefulness and are hindrances to the cause of Christ in the world, and barriers in Christian and non-Christian lands.' He did not wish to dispense with Baptist fundamentals (the gathered Church, priesthood of all believers, freedom from State control and believer's baptism), but 'baptism is the only point upon which we feel a real difficulty, and many of us need a greater sense of proportion to prevent our erecting an ordinance, however sacred, into a prominence which is non-Christian'. Baptists, he believed, ought to hesitate in condemning an age-long custom such as infant baptism which had been and continued to be a means of grace to many

¹⁸¹ *Plan for Unity*, 5-16. The Group finally suggested that careful consideration should be given to five interim measures, p.16: that churches might be described as 'Evangelical Free Church of England: Baptist' or 'Congregational'; the churches might have a common hymn book; co-operate in ministerial training by the institution of united colleges with provision for denominational instruction; the setting up of united committees for church extension, ministerial training, evangelism, and moral and social problems; and an officially representative triennial Assembly.

Christians, 'and we need not give up our own idea of baptism so long as we agree about fundamental ideas. What is needed is a unity of comprehension.'¹⁸²

In November, the BU Council received the report and thanked all those who had contributed to it. Addressing the Council, R. W. Black¹⁸³ said that he believed that what was taking place was giving a wrong impression to Congregationalists and that instead of promoting union such discussions were in fact causing disunion and discord, that Baptist work was being handicapped and that to a great majority such union meant disloyalty to Christ. Along with a vote of thanks to the committee, he proposed that, at that time, organic union was not practicable, but that Baptists would gladly associate themselves with every attempt to co-operate with other Churches in every effort to extend the Kingdom of God.¹⁸⁴ The resolution was passed, and there can be little doubt that it represented fairly the position of the denomination as a whole. Though the possibility of union disappeared for the time being, the whole process which had begun with Shakespeare's advocacy of a United Church of England had brought the English Baptists well into the ecumenical arena and the whole matter to the attention of the denomination as a whole. But it is true to say that by 1937, in the words of R. L. Child, the minister of Broadmead, Bristol, writing in the previous year, 'the prospect of a re-united Christendom...[was] exceedingly remote'.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸² Edna F. Ball, 'Baptist Universities' Society. Discussion on Church Union', *BT* October 28, 1937, 817. See also the discussions in 'Baptists and Re-Union', *BT* April 8, 1937, 261-62; J. C. Carlile, 'Baptists and Church Union', *BT* April 15, 1937, 289.

¹⁸³ It is interesting to note the difference of position Black adopted in reunion schemes. He was later to be the chief, though unsuccessful, pioneer of union between Baptists and the Churches of Christ who were believer's baptists, whilst he opposed the possible union with the paedobaptist Congregationalists and Presbyterians. See Chapter 5 'Baptists and the Churches of Christ' below.

¹⁸⁴ See 'Church Union. Baptist Union Council Reports', *BT* November 25, 1937, 890 and 898, quote p.898.

¹⁸⁵ R. L. Child, 'The Baptist Contribution to the One Church', *BQ* 8.2 (April, 1936), 81. He continued: 'if and when a United Church comes into being, it will not be by the disappearance of everything distinctive in its separated members, but rather by the gathering-up and incorporation in a new form of what is truly vital and worthy in the various denominations'.

Faith and Order.

J. E. Roberts added his voice to the 'ecumenical' (still not a word in use at this time) discussion, when he called for Baptist involvement in the newly established Faith and Order Movement (F&O), though he did not deal with the issue of baptism. He had represented the BU in Geneva, 1920, and in his article he served notice of the second World Conference which was planned to meet in Washington DC in May 1925. Though he saw reunion as far off, he believed that it would be much nearer were people to really want it.¹⁸⁶

However, one result of the 1926 Assembly was the BU's decision not to send any official delegates to the F&O's inaugural conference held in Lausanne in August 1927. Two English Baptists, however, funded themselves to attend the Conference: the historian, Dr. W. T. Whitley and Dr. J. E. Roberts himself. A copy of the 1926 BU *Reply to the Lambeth Appeal* was sent, but as the Union was not officially represented it could not and was not accepted as a conference document.¹⁸⁷

Two months after the conference, Dr. Whitley reported back to the denomination in an article which also dealt with the third BWC in Stockholm, 1923. He outlined in particular what had come out of Lausanne. The Roman Catholics, like the English Baptists, had not attended, indicating that union on the grand scale was impossible. He quoted with approval the Orthodox conviction that in matters of faith and conscience there was no room for compromise, and then quoted the message which had come from the Stockholm Congress:

We rejoice that the spiritual unity of all believers is a blessed reality, not dependent upon organisation or ceremonies... Baptists cannot consent to any form of union which impairs the rights of the individual believer. We cannot unite with

¹⁸⁶ J. E. Roberts, 'World Conference on Faith and Order', *The Fraternal* no 14, (April, 1923), 4-6.

¹⁸⁷ For further details see W. M. S. West's 'Baptists in Faith and Order. A Study in Baptist Convergence', in K. W. Clements (ed), *Baptists in the Twentieth Century* (1983), 56-57. For Baptist interest and involvement in the international ecumenical movement, see the whole of West's 'Baptists in Faith and Order', and E. A. Payne's 'Baptists and the Ecumenical Movement', in E. A. Payne, *Free Churchmen, Unrepentant and Repentant and Other Papers* (1965), 123-129.

others in any centralized ecclesiastical organization wielding power over the individual conscience. We cannot accept the sacerdotal conception of the ministry which involves the priesthood of a class with special powers for transmitting grace. We cannot accept the conception of ordination made valid through a historic succession in the ministry... Christian unity, therefore, can only come through obedience to the will of Christ as revealed in the New Testament, which Baptists must ever take as their sole, sufficient, certain and authoritative guide... Primarily, their duty is to make known the will of Christ and secure the willing submission of men to Him, as set forth in the gospel of the grace of God.¹⁸⁸

As a result of his attendance, Whitley became closely involved in the joint studies which were initiated at Lausanne, whilst Roberts accepted membership on the Continuation Committee, a place which M. E. Aubrey filled on Roberts' death in 1929.¹⁸⁹

The reunion issue was by now well established and began to take a much more central place in the denomination's life. With the newly formed Life and Work and F&O movements (1920 and 1927 respectively), and with several inter-Church conversations already completed (Anglican-Free Church, and Anglican-Roman Catholic at Malines) the atmosphere was such that it was no longer possible to hide away from the challenge facing the various denominations. The late 1920s provided the seedbed for a vast volume of discussion amongst Baptists on the related issues of the ecumenical movement, with the baptismal question increasingly coming to the fore, for on no other doctrine were Baptists so clearly at odds with other communions.

Dr. Whitley reported back to the denomination on the proceedings at Lambeth in 1930 and, at the same time, on the meeting that same month of the Continuation Committee at Mürren. Concerning the former, Whitley reported that the BU had officially replied to official overtures, requesting that attention should be paid to the basis of church membership and the place of faith, and further asked that the method of federation be explored. 'Neither question', Whitley declared, 'has been touched'.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁸ Whitley, 'Lausanne and Stockholm', *BQ* 3, (October, 1927), 339.

¹⁸⁹ West, 'Baptists in Faith and Order', 58. For further details of Aubrey's growing involvement in the Faith and Order movement, see West, 'The Reverend Secretary Aubrey: Part III', *BQ* 34.7, (July, 1992), 327-334.

¹⁹⁰ W. T. Whitley, 'Lambeth and Mürren', *BQ* 5 (October, 1930), 146.

In contrast to the Lambeth Conference's generally discouraging tone, the Mürren conference, so Whitley reported, was prepared to consider the possibilities of federation,¹⁹¹ a fact that could not but endear the nascent F&O movement to Baptists.

As the domestic, internal debate gathered pace during the early 1930s,¹⁹² the international ecumenical movement was beginning to have a greater effect on Baptist thought. The F&O Continuation Committee produced six 'Reports' which were submitted to the various denominational organizations for consideration and response. The BU's response was made in 1930.¹⁹³ Responding to *Report I. The Call to Unity* the BU argued that the Baptists' sense of the spiritual unity of the Church was expressed amongst themselves by the BWA, but then stated, 'We are ready to explore ways to fellowship with other Christians who differ in matters of faith and order'.¹⁹⁴ To *Report VI. The Sacraments* the reply spoke of the Baptist preference for the word 'ordinance' but expressed the willingness to give careful thought to such a matter, and insisted on the faith of the recipient as a pre-condition for the effectiveness of the sacraments.¹⁹⁵ To the slightly later *Report VII. The Unity of Christendom and the relation thereto of Existing Churches*, it was agreed that each communion should seek to know and understand the faith and order of others and recommended as appropriate summaries of the Baptist position the BWA's 1923 message to *Other Christian Brethren*, the 1926 *Reply to the Lambeth Appeal* and, for more comprehensive studies, Wheeler Robinson's *Baptist Principles* (1925) and *The Life and the Faith of the Baptists* (1927). The report of the 'Malines Conversations', however, drew the

¹⁹¹ Whitley, 'Lambeth and Mürren', 149.

¹⁹² On this see the section above on the 'Baptist, Congregational and Presbyterian Reunion Discussions'.

¹⁹³ 'The Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland', in L. Hodgson (ed), a canon of Winchester Cathedral, *Convictions. A Selection from the Responses of the Churches to the Report of the World Conference on Faith and Order, held at Lausanne in 1927* (1934), 61-64.

¹⁹⁴ 'The Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland', in *Convictions*, 62.

¹⁹⁵ 'The Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland', in *Convictions*, 63.

frank response that so long as the Roman Church maintained its present government and claims Baptists could not contemplate any union. As to the nature of unity, the BU's reply closed expressing a 'desire for fuller co-operation along social, evangelistic and other lines' on mission fields and alongside other Churches and welcomed 'every effort toward common worship and the promotion of friendships which stretch across the lines of division as means by which knowledge and fellowship may be enlarged'.¹⁹⁶

In 1931, Whitley published a report on the Life and Work and F&O congresses held in the 1920s, and was specifically concerned with the Reports from the Continuation Committee. On the sacraments, he reported the conclusion that their benefits could only be appropriated by faith, in which case, he asked, what was the good of infant baptism? He then fired his broadside: 'There are questions about Order, to which we may return again, but there is one very practical issue that needs attention by Baptists. Whether at Lausanne, at Majola, at Mürren, at High Leigh, Baptists have hardly been represented. This is not fair to ourselves, to other Christians, to the special truths we uphold'.¹⁹⁷ Though Dr. J. E. Roberts had sat on the Continuation Committee till the time of his death, when he was replaced by Aubrey, Whitley doubted whether there had been three Baptists at any one meeting. The result of this, he claimed, had been greatly to mislead other communions as to the relative importance of the Baptists and inevitably meant that the Baptist testimony had hardly been heard and was not read. He ended observing that the purpose of the Lausanne Conference and its Continuation Committee's was to inform the other traditions of the Baptist beliefs and *vice versa*.¹⁹⁸

The Continuation Committee appointed three theological commissions to prepare three reports for the second World Conference to be held in Edinburgh in 1937.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁶ 'The Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland', in *Convictions*, 64.

¹⁹⁷ W. T. Whitley, 'Faith and Order', *BQ* 5.8 (October, 1932), 360, italics added.

¹⁹⁸ Whitley, 'Faith and Order', 360-61.

¹⁹⁹ T. Tatlow, 'The World Conference on Faith and Order', in R. Rouse and S. Neill (eds.), *A History of the Ecumenical Movement, 1517-1948* (1986³), 430-31.

The most important of the three reports appeared in May, 1937, included two Baptist contributions, the second of which was written by A. C. Underwood, who began his paper by acknowledging that many Baptists would regard the earlier one by Prof. Matthews as expounding the ^{American} view of the ministry and sacraments, but added that 'there is an increasing number of Baptists in both England and America who could not give their assent to Professor Matthews' virtual reduction of the Sacraments to *nuda signa*'. Underwood's intention, then, was to present this alternative point of view.²⁰⁰ This he did by drawing attention to the fact that historically Baptists had stood for two things: the proper subjects of baptism - believers, and the proper mode - immersion. Of these the proper subjects was the more important. Therefore, Baptists were not separated from the rest of Christendom simply in order to secure the administration of baptism in a certain manner, immersion as over sprinkling. 'They are not ritualists; they are not Baptists because they baptise by immersion'.²⁰¹ He adduced five reasons for the Baptist rejection of infant baptism: there was no trace of it in the New Testament; it perpetuated the theological dogma that infants dying unbaptized were in peril on account of the guilt involved in original sin; it fostered the notion that a sacrament could have meaning and effect apart from the faith of the recipient; it obscured the fact that salvation was by faith alone; and it distorted the doctrine of the Church as composed of a converted membership.²⁰² 'Baptists stand for a *via media*, rejecting, on the one hand, all *ex opere operato* theories of the Sacraments and, on the other hand, all theories which reduce them to *nuda signa*'. They thereby rejected baptismal regeneration and also the notion that baptism was nothing more than a dedication service. Baptism was a means of grace, 'a definite religious experience, a genuine Sacrament, but only to those who submit to it in penitence and faith. They

200 A. C. Underwood, 'Views of Modern Churches (g) Baptist (2)', in R. Dunkerley (ed.), the principal of Westhill College, Birmingham, *The Ministry and the Sacraments* (1937), 223. The first Baptist article was prepared by the American, Prof. I. G. Matthews of Crozer Seminary.

201 Underwood, 'Views of Modern Churches', 223-24.

202 Underwood, 'Views of Modern Churches', 224-25.

claim they are the only Christian body which has preserved the full sacramental value of Christian baptism... Baptists are sacramentalists though they reject sacerdotalism. They believe that the Sacraments are efficacious symbols which mediate the grace of God. They are confident that in the Sacraments God imparts Himself to the believing soul. But their sacramentalism is ethical through and through'. In contradistinction to Bishop Charles Gore, Underwood claimed that this ethical sacramentalism should be applied equally to baptism and not restricted to the Lord's Supper, and quoted Wheeler Robinson in support. 'This is the pith and core of their distinctive witness in regard to baptism. They maintain that it is only when baptism is confined to believers that it can be saved from degenerating into either a charm or a piece of mere symbolism'.²⁰³

On the mode, Underwood explained that Baptists retained immersion for four reasons: it was the New Testament mode; it had a psychological value for both the recipient and for the observer it was much more impressive [than sprinkling]; it had sacramental value, being a better symbol than sprinkling to the truth of complete surrender to Christ, death to sin, burial with Christ and resurrection to new life in him, it being important that symbolic acts should be appropriate; and it had confessional value as a dramatic and effective substitute for a verbal confession of faith. As such it was a pictorial creed.²⁰⁴

In contrast to Lausanne, the second F&O Conference held in Edinburgh, 1937,²⁰⁵ was well attended by an official delegation of British Baptists, Aubrey, Rushbrooke,

²⁰³ Underwood, 'Views of Modern Churches', 225-26, citing C. Gore, *The Holy Spirit and the Church* (1924), 298, 26, and H. W. Robinson, *The Life and Faith of the Baptists* (1927), 83.

²⁰⁴ Underwood, 'Views of Modern Churches', 228-29.

²⁰⁵ In preparation, Commissions had been appointed and reports published on the four subjects on which the Conference concerned itself: Grace, the Word of God, Ministry and the Sacraments, and the Church's Unity in Life and Worship. The aim was not to reach completely agreed statements, even though this meant that the only way to do this was to include side by side irreconcilable views. A single hostile vote was enough to secure the incorporation of a statement expressing the view held by the dissentient. See H. Martin, *Edinburgh, 1937. The Story of the Second World Conference on Faith and Order* (1937), 21 and 32-33. A brief review of this appeared in *BQ* 9.1 (January, 1938), 62-63, by W. Taylor Bowie.

Laws, Martin and LeQuesne.²⁰⁶ Aubrey was chairman of Section IV, 'The Church's Unity in Life and Worship', which produced a report strongly favouring the formation of the WCC.²⁰⁷ Both Martin's popular account and the official report were published by the SCM Press, which published many of the volumes for F&O at this time under Martin's able leadership.²⁰⁸

It was not until the following January ~~that~~ details began to filter into the denomination's consciousness when reports from Aubrey and Laws were published, both of them concluding that at the present time reunion discussions were at an impasse.²⁰⁹ Initially, both Martin and Aubrey represented the BU on the Continuation

206 Payne, *Baptist Union*, 200, omits Hugh Martin's presence in the Baptist Union's delegation, but this is corrected by G. Laws, 'The Edinburgh Conference. What Was the Good of It', *BQ* 9.1 (January, 1938), 21. Laws was correct, for the official report lists Martin as a 'Delegate. Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland', L. Hodgson (ed.), *The Second World Conference on Faith and Order held at Edinburgh, August 3-18, 1937* (London: SCM, 1938), 297. Martin was also one of those appointed by the Conference to be on the Continuation Committee, at which point he is again identified with the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland, and therefore was an official BU delegate, see Hodgson, *Second World Conference*, 371.

207 West, 'Aubrey, III', 331 and n.45 on p.335. West included the name of Dr. John MacBeath of Hillhead, Glasgow, amongst the BU delegates, but omitted Rushbrooke. Dr. McBeath, however, was a delegate for the BU of Scotland according to Hodgson (ed.), *Second World Conference*, 297. MacBeath served on Section 2 'The Church of Christ and the Word of God', Laws and Le Quesne on Section 3 'The Church of Christ: Ministry and Sacraments', whilst Martin served with Aubrey on Section 4, see Hodgson, *Second World Conference*, 307. West makes only one other reference to Martin (see below), so little further light is shed on the friendship he and Aubrey had as they worked together as colleagues denominationally and ecumenically.

208 Martin, *Edinburgh, 1937. Of the Conference Martin*, pp.17-18, wrote, 'Yet we were there not only to reaffirm the value of our own traditions. We were there also to reach forward to a full understanding of the Gospel which as yet none of us in our separation possessed... We hoped to gain some new insight which we might carry back to the Churches which had sent us.' The second, official volume was that by Hodgson (ed.), *Second World Conference*. The importance of the SCM within the early ecumenical movement, and particularly Martin's involvement, is a constant theme in Cross' studies of Martin, but see particularly 'Hugh Martin, Part 1', 34-38. Also on the role the SCM, see J. H. Y. Briggs, 'Baptists and Higher Education in England', in W. H. Brackney and R. J. Burke (edd.), *Faith, Life and Witness. The Papers of the Study and Research Division of the Baptist World Alliance - 1986-1990* (Samford University Press: Birmingham, Alabama, 1990), 110; Hastings, *History of English Christianity*, 86-91, and *loc cit*, and T. Tatlow, *The Story of the Student Christian Movement of Great Britain and Ireland* (1933), *loc cit*. Baptists involved in the SCM at this time included W. E. Blomfield, T. R. Glover, H. L. Hemmens, Hugh Martin, F. B. Meyer, T. H. Robinson, H. G. Wood, Martyn Trafford (details about whom are unknown) and H. W. Robinson, see Tatlow, *Story of the Student Christian Movement*, *loc cit*.

209 M. E. Aubrey, 'What Edinburgh Meant to Me', *BT* January 20, 1938, 42-44; G. Laws, 'The Edinburgh Conference: What Was the Good of it?', *BQ* 9.1 (January, 1938), 21-29. Payne, 'Baptism in Recent Discussion', in A. Gilmore (ed.), *Christian Baptism. A Fresh Attempt to Understand the Rite in terms of Scripture, History, and Theology* (London: Lutterworth,

Committee which was to meet for the first time after the War in 1947 in Clarens, but when neither felt able to continue active membership, Ernest Payne was sent as a proxy.²¹⁰

It had quickly become evident that the twin stumbling blocks for Baptist involvement in any United Church or Reunion/Union Scheme were the baptismal issue and episcopacy. Addressing the Northern Convocation at York, Aubrey admitted, with reference to the conversations which had begun in 1932, that Baptists could not see how they could enter into organic union with Congregationalists and Presbyterians, adding, 'though in real Christian unity we are constantly working together.'²¹¹ Laws' report provided a detailed account of the proceedings of the Conference, paying particular attention to Section III which dealt with 'The Ministry and the Sacraments'.²¹² Here the differences which divided Baptists from other traditions became very apparent, nevertheless, Laws felt that some progress had been made. He reported that on baptism it stated: 'The re-united Church will observe the rule that all members of the visible Church are admitted by baptism; which is a gift of God's redeeming love to the Church; and administered in the name of the [Trinity], is a sign and seal of Christian discipleship in obedience to the Lord's command.' To this the Baptist delegates, Martin amongst them, had secured a note stating that the just quoted statement could be accepted by them only if understood to apply to believer's baptism. In so doing they effectively conceded the important point that baptism marks entry into the Church. They also drew attention to a principle enunciated in one of the preliminary documents which recognized that the 'necessary condition of receiving

1959), 16, noted that at Edinburgh it proved possible to make more elaborate statements regarding the sacraments than had any previous Conference.

²¹⁰ W. M. S. West, *To Be A Pilgrim. a memoir of Ernest A. Payne* (Guildford, Lutterworth, 1983), 67. Possible reasons for Martin's dropping out of F&O are discussed by Cross, 'Hugh Martin, Part 2', 81.

²¹¹ Aubrey, 'What Edinburgh Meant to Me', *BT* January 20, 1938, 43. On Aubrey's address to the Convocation of York, see West, 'Aubrey Part III', 331-32.

²¹² See also Martin, *Edinburgh 1937*, 57-71.

the grace of a sacrament is the faith of the recipient.'²¹³ The note also expressed the Baptist belief that children belonged to God and that no rite was needed to assure for them His grace.²¹⁴ Discussing the report's section on admission to Holy Communion, Laws reported that some delegates had been unable to understand how Baptists were able to accept the non-baptized into membership, which had led to the gibe, 'Baptists are people who are so strong on baptism that they dispense with it!'²¹⁵ Laws' overall conclusion, however, was negative: 'The conceptions of church, ministry and sacrament are so different that it is hard to see how any union can ever be looked for while opinion remains as it is.' The difficulties, therefore, facing Baptists were enormous. *Laws wrote:*

'On the question of baptism our position is so distinct, and to the many so unacceptable, that I see no way of overcoming the difficulty short of equating believer's baptism with infant baptism. This would seem to me to make infant baptism the standard and believer's baptism a sort of tolerated exception. It is not likely that more than a very few Baptists would ever think of consenting to such an equation. It is a very painful thing to have to say to those who set store by infant baptism that we regard it as a perversion of an ordinance of Christ, a substitution of man's devising for a positive institution of the Lord. Yet nothing less than this is the true Baptist position, and as one holds it I see no way, except at the cost of truth, of organic union with other Churches.'²¹⁶

²¹³ *The Report of the Commission*, 27, cited by Laws, 'The Edinburgh Conference', 24.

²¹⁴ This was also reported by Martin, *Edinburgh 1937*, 58-62. It is important to note that this principle was claimed for children but not for others. This perhaps marks the beginning (or at least an early stage of) the growing awareness amongst Baptists which recognized that the 'Church' includes others than just believers, namely children of Christian parents, children brought to church and also adults attending church. This recognition became explicit in the 1966 report *The Child and the Church*, published by a special study group set up by the BU Council in 1963.

²¹⁵ Laws, 'The Edinburgh Conference', 25.

²¹⁶ Laws, 'The Edinburgh Conference', 29.

Union Churches.

The influence of the ecumenical movement can be seen clearly in Baptist life in the growth in the numbers of Union Churches.

The consolidation of the Free Church Movement from the mid-1890s onwards provided an atmosphere conducive to the formation of Union Churches. Usually this happened either between two struggling Free Church causes coming together²¹⁷ or in new Church planting enterprises.²¹⁸ Though the title of 'Union Church' appears to have come into being around the beginning of the twentieth century,²¹⁹ their pre-history can be traced at least to the end of the eighteenth century and possibly earlier.

In 1797 the Bedfordshire Union of Christians had been formed. It had grown out of the Evangelical Revival and the resultant deepening of spiritual life, and there can be little doubt that it drew on the legacy left in Bedfordshire and the surrounding counties by John Bunyan and the mixed-communion church which he had led.²²⁰ From such beginnings the conviction had grown that men could be one in spiritual sentiment whilst various in their ecclesiastical forms. Some of the same men who formed the London Missionary Society in 1795, emulating the Baptist Missionary Society, joined together and founded the Bedfordshire Union.²²¹ Even though it was a

²¹⁷ Eg, Wellington Union Free Church, formed in 1920, by the union of Wellington BC (f.1807) and Wellington Congregational church (f.c.1820s), both of which were in interregnums by 1916 with little prospect calling ministers. They had initially come together in 1919. The Union church moved into the Congregational building which was fitted with a baptistry in 1924, the Baptist building being sold in 1929. See Rev. Harry Foreman, *The Story of Union Free Church. Old Dissent in Wellington, Shropshire, 1700-1920* (Wellington, 1986), chapter 3, n.p..

²¹⁸ Eg, the Hampstead Garden Suburb Free Church, see Green, *Tomorrow's Man*, 47-49.

²¹⁹ As is reflected in a comment by Payne, *The Baptist Union*, 11, 'Early in the twentieth century a few "Union churches" were formed in new areas and these were affiliated to both Unions'.

²²⁰ On the mixed communion churches, see Payne, 'Baptist-Congregational Relationships', in Payne, *Free Churchmen, Unrepentant and Repentant*, 96-97.

²²¹ J. Brown and D. Prothero, *The History of the Bedfordshire Union of Christians* (1946), 13-15. See the earlier volume by J. Brown, *Centenary Celebration of the Bedfordshire Union of Christians. The Story of a Hundred Years* (1896). From 1904 it was known as the Bedfordshire Union of Baptist and Congregational Churches.

Union of churches from two different denominations and not a 'mixed church', the Bedfordshire Union can justifiably be seen as the precursor of those churches which have become formally known as 'Union Churches' by demonstrating that Baptists and Congregationalists could exist together in fellowship and mutual respect for each others' churchmanship, as well as in mission.

The exact date of the first 'Union church' is unclear. Two comments by Payne suggest they are a twentieth century phenomenon,²²² and he cited Letchworth (1905), Amersham-on-the-Hill (1908), Hampstead Garden Suburb (1910) and Hutton and Shenfield (1913) in support of this, but he then proceeded to include Colwyn Bay (1890) and Loughton (1817).²²³ Further, a comment from T. V. Tymms a year before the formation of the Letchworth church claimed, 'There are a few "Union Churches"',²²⁴ whilst the celebration of the jubilee of Union Church, Stretford, was reported in 1915, putting its foundation in 1865,²²⁵ and Union Church, Heathfield in Sussex had been formed in December 1899.²²⁶

²²² Payne, 'Baptist-Congregational Relationships', 98, also p.8, and see also his comment in Payne, *The Baptist Union*, 11, noted above.

²²³ Payne, 'Baptist-Congregational Relationships', 99. Payne's dating, however, of Loughton is only part of the story. The chapel was originally a Particular Baptist cause established in 1813, though it was not until 1817 that it was formally constituted a church. From the beginning it practised open communion, though from 1822 it was agreed to accept paedobaptists into membership, and it was at this point that the use of 'Union' church was adopted to distinguish it from the Methodists. However, it was not for another 50 years that the church endeavoured to affiliate to the CU as well as the BU, though this, and later attempts in the 1930s to affiliate with the CU, were precluded by the Trust Deeds. However, the church has been called and acted as a Union church since its beginning. See Rev. Vivian Lewis, *Loughton Union Church, 1813-1973* (Loughton, 1974), 5, 19-20, 26-27 and 44 which includes a copy of the statement placed in the vestibule in 1943 'Loughton Union Church' which states 'The founders who were Baptists, set no narrow denominational limits to its membership, welcoming other "Protestant Dissenters" into full membership. The Church was known for many years as the Loughton Baptist Chapel, and is still legally Baptist, but the name was later changed to the present one...!'

²²⁴ Dr. T. V. Tymms, 'Independents or Congregationalists', in C. S. Carter and G. E. A. Weeks (eds.), *The Protestant Dictionary* (1933), but the first edition of 1904 which was edited by C. H. H. Wright and C. Neil was the volume in which Tymms' article was first published, at which time he was President of Rawdon College. He served as BU President in 1896. Tymms died in May 1921.

²²⁵ See 'Union Church Stretford', *BT&F* June 13, 1919, 365.

²²⁶ Rev. John Weller, minister of the church from 1949 to 1977, *One Church, One Faith, One Lord. A Short History of Union Church, Heathfield* (Heathfield, 1979), 3-4.

Whatever the date of the first Union church, a contributory factor to their formation and increasing number was the movement amongst Baptists advocating and practising open communion and the growing number of open membership churches, a trend which had accelerated by the beginning of the twentieth century.²²⁷ All this reveals that Baptists were increasingly prepared to recognize the churchmanship of other traditions and acknowledge the reality and validity of their faith irrespective of the form of baptism they had received. In 1905, for instance, just outside Bristol, Pill Congregational church (f. 1787) and Pill Baptist church (f. 1815) came together to form Pill Union church. The Congregational church had been having financial difficulties and problems over the land their church was built on which was owned by the Great Western Railway. Added to this, it would appear that the church was in decline, as the decision to unite with the Baptists was passed unanimously by only nine members.²²⁸ The original intention was that the new Union Church would move to a new site, but until it did so worship would take place in the Baptist chapel. So long as this state of affairs continued it was agreed that the minister should be a Baptist,²²⁹ but as the move was never effected the ministers have always been Baptists. Due to this situation, subsequent practice has meant that whenever an infant baptism was required an outside minister was called in.²³⁰ It was common practice, however, in other Union churches to alternate the ministers between the two denominations.

In the summer of 1910, J. H. Rushbrooke was invited to the pastorate of the Free Church in the Hampstead Garden Suburb, a new development which had allocated space for two churches, one Anglican, the other Free Church. The establishing of the

²²⁷ White, 'Open and Closed Membership Among English and Welsh Baptists', *BQ* 24.7 (July, 1972), 334.

²²⁸ G. Hart, *The Story of Pill Union Church* (Bristol, 1987), 4-5.

²²⁹ Hart, *The Story of Pill*, 14.

²³⁰ Communicated to the writer by Mr. G. Hart, a former church secretary, in a letter dated September 8, 1990.

latter owed much to the joint backing of the BU and CU. Though the opening of the church did not take place until October 1911, Rushbrooke accepted the unanimous invitation extended to him in September, 1910.²³¹ Then, in 1911, a joint committee of Baptists and Congregationalists met in order to discuss how they could try to avoid or reduce 'overlapping' in their church planting practices, and it became clear that many had come to favour the idea of Union churches for new areas such as the Garden Suburbs like Hampstead and Letchworth.²³² This whole movement was aided by the 1919 Act of Parliament which permitted the sharing of church premises between different denominations and which placed such a union on a legal basis.²³³

Within the West Country at least three churches benefited directly from the 1919 Act: Pill, already mentioned, Totnes, and Wells. In the latter case, the Congregational (f.1750) and Baptist (f.1815) churches were enabled to unite. The Act allowed the Trustees of the chapels to permit the two buildings to be used 'as places for the public exercise of religious worship for and by a church consisting of Baptists and Congregationalists...and so that adult or infant baptism shall be administered as desired;'.²³⁴ On the question of membership the Constitution reads:

2. ..The Church will recognize and permit both believer's and infant baptism.
3. ..In the case of persons desiring to join the church by confession of faith in baptism, or by profession of faith without baptism, the Church meeting at which they are nominated shall appoint two members of the Church to visit them..²³⁵

²³¹ E. A. Payne, *James Henry Rushbrooke* (1954), 22-25; Green, *Tomorrow's Man*, 47-55. The Hampstead Free Church included both a baptistry and font as both forms of baptism were recognized and practised, practised infant dedication and open membership, and the Trust Deed, drawn up by the LBA, allowed the church to formulate its own constitution, see Green, *Tomorrow's Man*, 51-53.

²³² Payne, *The Baptist Union*, 185.

²³³ See the forward to Hart, *The Story of Pill*, by Roger Hayden, n.p..

²³⁴ [Ch lxxxiii] Wells Particular Baptists and [9&10 Geo.5.] Congregational Chapels Charities Scheme Confirmation Act, ACTS L&P 9 & 10, Geo.5, 51-100, 1919, 4.

²³⁵ Quoted in a letter from the minister of Wells United Church, Rev. Malcolm Smalley, BA, dated May 13, 1992.

In 1925, F. C. Spurr claimed that the growth of the Free Church unity movement had in many cases weakened the bonds of denominational loyalty, specifically, that the creation of Union churches had brought together in a common spiritual fellowship persons formerly separated from each other. 'The Baptists in these Churches have not always felt it wise or desirable to insist upon their distinctive doctrines. They have preferred to share a common life with their brethren in Christ rather than cause division by introducing controversy. And so the tendency has been to drop anything like specific Baptist testimony'. Later Spurr reiterated his point: 'Upon some undoubtedly the larger "reunion" movement has had a great effect. Many have openly said that if reunion is to come there must be mutual toleration regarding Baptism. This spirit of compromise does not help the specific Baptist witness'.²³⁶ But Spurr's position was refuted by Hugh Martin, who, seven years later, said that he believed it was then possible, in the light of experience, to formulate principles for the teaching and practice of baptism in a Union church which would meet any just Baptist complaints,²³⁷ though he did not state what such principles would be.

The 1937 Special Committee *Report* defined a 'Union Church' as 'one in which both forms of baptism (i.e., of believers and of infants) may be practised, in which the membership is open, i.e., is not confined to believers who have been baptized by immersion on profession of faith, and in which the ministry is not confined to believers who have been baptized by immersion on profession of faith', and then identified that there were, by that time, about 65 such Union churches in England, but none was known to exist in either Wales or Scotland.²³⁸ The difference between a Union church and an open membership church was that in the latter the minister had to be a Baptist and that the only form of baptism administered was by immersion on

²³⁶ F. C. Spurr, 'A Baptist Apologetic for To-day. The Present Situation', *BT* September 10, 1925, 639.

²³⁷ H. Martin, 'Christian Unity', *BT* November 10, 1932, 776.

²³⁸ *Report of the Special Committee*, 14.

profession of faith.²³⁹ The anomaly that this situation led to was that some Baptist churches admitted into membership those who had never been baptized at all and, the *Report* observed, this would lead to yet another difficulty as regards any unity of organization between open membership Baptists and other Christians, including Presbyterians and Congregationalists, neither of whom were prepared to admit non-baptized persons into membership.²⁴⁰ Needless to say, Union churches and open membership churches also provided difficulties to closer unity with closed membership and closed communion Baptist churches.

A later section from the *Report* also had a bearing upon Union churches (and much later on LEPs), though it explicitly dealt with what would happen to the doctrine of baptism in a United Free Church. The *Report* frankly admitted that the Committee had had difficulty in forecasting what would be likely to happen, but it set out what it perceived to be the likely difficulties. The Church would have to admit into membership any applicant who demonstrated that he had reached his decision after honest and mature deliberation, whether infant-baptized, believer-baptized or infant-baptized and seeking-to-be-baptized on profession of faith. Much would undoubtedly depend on the minister who, if a convinced Baptist, would find difficulty administering a rite which he did not believe to be the true rite of Christian baptism, thus presenting an administrative problem to the new church. It was further felt that the Baptist point of view would be liable to suffer were the question to cease to be a live issue or were it to be dropped from discussion for the sake of peace. Re-baptism would also become an issue simply because of the problem of maintaining side by side two forms of baptism which were mutually exclusive, and re-baptism as such was a practice rejected by all the Free Churches. The suggestion that it would be

²³⁹ *Report of the Special Committee*, 14-15.

²⁴⁰ *Report of the Special Committee*, 16. However, this last assertion is not strictly ^{true} though widely held. For example, in his book *Baptists, Congregationalists and Presbyterians* (1933), 24, the Principal of the Yorkshire United Independent College, E. J. Price, admitted 'Congregationalists do not, in general, insist upon Baptism as essential for Church-membership, though many do'.

plausible for there to be the mutual recognition of the two forms of baptism the Committee strongly repudiated.²⁴¹ The very idea of any compromise or abandonment of principle, as has already been shown, was anathema to the majority of the denomination at this time.

The Influence of Ecumenism.

As the ecumenical movement gained momentum and as Baptist involvement within it became both official and more pronounced, this new 'ecumenical' spirit began to slowly permeate more and more the life of the denomination. Various external factors undoubtedly aided this whole process. Advances in transport led to greater population mobility, aiding the dissemination of ideas by personal contact, and church leaders and the advocates of union, such as Shakespeare and Martin, used this skilfully. At the same time came the more rapid transmission of ideas through the denominational and inter-denominational papers, the most important of which for Baptists was the *Baptist Times*. These media were further enhanced through more widespread education, enabling more people to read, and, with the growing standards of living, Christian publishing was able to expand, resulting in more people being able to buy the literature available, whether tracts, sermons, pamphlets, books or journals.

Further, there can be little doubt that even at an unconscious level members of the different Christian traditions were more readily predisposed to the cross-fertilization of ideas. The co-operative and often philanthropic and missionary societies which had so marked the nineteenth century meant that members of different denominations had become used to working side by side, so a greater understanding of one another's views naturally resulted. The Free Church movement from the 1890s onwards brought Baptists and Paedobaptists closely together, leading to each regularly recognizing each other's Churchmanship. As such contacts became more frequent so too they became more widely accepted. Even though Shakespeare's proposals met

²⁴¹ *Report of the Special Committee, 23-25.*

with staunch opposition, nevertheless, he brought the whole ecumenical issue squarely into the fore of the denomination's life and thought and paved the way for all subsequent developments.

In all this, baptism simmered just below the surface until the mid-1920s when it burst to the surface of ecumenical debate. However, the theology of baptism was of growing concern throughout this period, clearly affected by, but not always consciously so, the ecumenical developments taking place. It is to the theology of baptism we now turn.

Chapter Four.

The Theology of Baptism.

To date only those themes of the doctrine of baptism which were not contentious in any way have been discussed. Often the absence of reference to them would not imply that the writer was antagonistic towards that view, simply that he had no recourse to discuss it. Attention, therefore, must now turn to the three areas over which there was no kind of consensus and considerable debate, disagreement and, perhaps even at the popular level which has not extended into the extant literature, dissension.

Baptism: Ordinance or Sacrament?

In discussions of Baptist theology one of several possible classifications draws the distinction between evangelicals and sacramentalists, the view on baptism being the determinative factor.¹ Though this has been a popular, tenacious and even widespread opinion, it will quickly become clear that it is far too simplistic a dividing line. At the popular level of grass-roots Baptist belief a division did exist between those who used the term 'ordinance' and those who adopted the word 'sacrament'. This was clearly reflected in Henry Cook's *What Baptists Stand For* (1947),² but in the period 1900-1937 this distinction cannot be as clearly discerned as many would suspect. In fact, it would be true to say that within this period there was no great controversy within the denomination over which word should be used. It will be shown that more often than not authors meant the same thing by either word.

¹ Eg. the American H. L. McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage: Four Centuries of Baptist Witness* (Nashville, 1987), 511.

² H. Cook, *What Baptists Stand For* (1947), 69-74.

'Ordinance' or 'Sacrament'.

It would be true to say that the preferred word used of baptism by Baptists in the nineteenth century was 'ordinance', but this must not be taken to imply that Baptists did not use the term 'sacrament'. Both J. R. C. Perkin's thesis on baptism³ and Michael Walker's on the Lord's Supper seek to demonstrate that 'sacrament' was a term used by Baptists in this period, and that this, though a minority movement, was in fact larger than is often portrayed.⁴ Examination of the literature of the early years of the present century reveals that those who advocated the use of 'sacrament' as a valid description of baptism steadily increased in number and did indeed form a considerable body within the denomination.

Within the extant literary sources for this period the exclusive use of one of these terms is found to be roughly equal,⁵ but it would still be true to say that 'ordinance'

³ Caution must be adopted when using Perkin's dissertation, for by the very nature of his doctorate as 'Baptism in Nonconformist Theology, 1820-1920, with special reference to the Baptists', (Oxford, DPhil, 1955), he was only able to use a narrow selection of Baptist writings. He is undoubtedly correct, though, in highlighting the central role played by Wheeler Robinson for the Baptists and P. T. Forsyth for the Congregationalists as the most important non-conformist writers involved in what he calls 'The Birth of the Modern Controversy', see p.427. He further noted that both men were of catholic views and meticulous scholarship, neither of whom, though, were unreservedly accepted by his denomination during his lifetime. Perkin also saw that Wheeler Robinson spent most of his time, not on the mode and subjects of baptism, which had preoccupied so much of 19th century Baptist theology, but on the meaning of baptism. And though many of his views had been expressed before, he added some new and startling points (Perkin, p.437) and it was the combination of old with new which made Robinson the most important Baptist writer on baptism for the first half of the 20th century.

⁴ Perkin, 'Baptism in Nonconformist Theology', 10; Michael J. Walker, *Baptists at the Table*, 8-17.

⁵ 'Ordinance' was used in the title to the baptism section in the *BCH*, nos.481-497; C. Williams, *The Principles and Practices of the Baptists* (1903²), 11, 13; A. Phillips, *What Baptists Stand For* (1903), 14; J. W. Ewing, *Talks on Free Church Principles* (1905), 69; F. B. Meyer, 'Baptised into Christ's Death', *BH* 1907, 262; N. H. Marshall, *Conversion or the New Birth* (1909), 58-59, and 'Baptists' in *The Encyclopaedia Britannica III*, 11th edition, (Cambridge, 1910), 370; J. R. Wood and Samuel Chick, *A Manual of the Order and Administration of a Baptist Church* (1910, second edition n.d.), 10, 24, (quotation from second edition); J. D. Freeman, 'The Lambeth Appeal', *The Fraternal* no 13 (March, 1922), 6-8; in J. H. Rushbrooke (ed.), *The Faith of the Baptists* (1926), see G. Laws, 'Vital Forces of the Baptist Movement', p.14, J. O. Hagger, 'Discipleship and Its Implications', p.57, and the *Reply of the Churches in Membership with the Baptist Union to the "Appeal to all Christian People" issued by the Lambeth Conference of 1920*, p.88.

'Sacrament' was used by J. Mountain, *My Baptism and What Led to It* ([1904]), 135; J. Clifford, 'The Baptist World Alliance: Its Origin and Character, Meaning and Work', in *The Baptist World Alliance, Second Congress* (Philadelphia, 1911), 62; I. Morris, *Thoughts on Church Membership* (1919), 23-24; T. R. Glover, *The Free Churches and Re-Union* (Cambridge, 1921), 31, 43-44; H. W. Robinson, *Baptist Principles* (1925, and 1938³ [all

was the more widely known and preferred word and, because of this, it was often assumed rather than stated. This is borne out by those authors who wished to reinstate and emphasize the 'sacramental' aspect of baptism, believing this correction to be much needed within the theology of the denomination. There were also a not inconsiderable number who were quite content to use the terms interchangeably.⁶

Definitions.

Only two explicit definitions of 'ordinance' were offered: one positive, the other negative. Henry Cook defined it as 'something commanded, something that has authority behind it, and Baptism and the Lord's Supper, we believe, have come down to us from the Christ Himself'.⁷ This definition, which is itself pretty meagre, was implicitly accepted by all Baptists. A. S. Langley, however, defined 'ordinance' by what it was not. They were not sacraments because they did not 'convey saving grace',

quotations are from this latter edition as it was reprinted in 1960]), 29n, and his *The Christian Experience of the Holy Spirit* (1928), 184-198; F. T. Lord, 'The Value of Baptist Witness To-Day', *BQ* 1.2 (April, 1922), 55; in Rushbrooke (ed.), *Faith of the Baptists*, A. C. Underwood, 'Conversion and Baptism', p.29, and W. W. B. Emery, 'Fellowship and the Table of the Lord', p.36; H. J. Flowers, 'The Holy Spirit', *BQ* 3.4 (October, 1926), 158, and his 'The Unity of the Church', *BQ* 3.8 (October, 1927), 350; W. T. Whitley, 'Lausanne and Stockholm', *BQ* 3.8 (October, 1927), 338, and his 'Faith and Order', *BQ* 5.8 (October, 1931), 360; S. J. Price, 'Laymen and Reunion', *BQ* 5.7 (July, 1931), 295-96; H. Cook, 'The Covenant', *BT* October 3, 1935, 716-17.

⁶ For the use of 'ordinance' and 'sacrament' respectively, see F. F. Whitby, *Baptist Principles from a Layman's point of view* ([1908]), 33 (Whitby was the organist at Bridgwater BC, see R. W. Bentley, 'Our Churches: Bridgwater, Somerset', *BT* March 4, 1954, 8); T. V. Tymms, *The Evolution of Infant Baptism and Related Ideas* ([1912]), 440 and 340; W. T. Whitley, *The Witness of History to Baptist Principles* (1914²), 19 and 88; H. Cook, *The Why of Our Faith* (1924), 81 and 61; A. J. D. Farrer, 'The Present Position of Church and Dissent', *BQ* 2.5 (January, 1925), 206 and 205; H. W. Robinson, *The Life and Faith of the Baptists* (1927), 116 and 177, where he used the word 'sacramentalism' instead of his usual 'sacrament'; W. V. Torrance, 'The Sacraments and Authority', *The Fraternal* 13 (January, 1934), 10; *Report of the Special Committee Appointed by the Council on the Question of Union between Baptists, Congregationalists and Presbyterians* ([1937]), 3; G. Laws, *What is Baptism?* (n.d.), 7 and 11. That this was so can be further illustrated by the addresses of A. C. Underwood and W. W. B. Emery which used 'sacrament' and J. O. Hagger who used 'ordinance' at the 1926 Leeds Assembly without any difference in meaning. The book, *The Faith of the Baptists*, was notable for its 'impressive...essential unity of outlook' which it presented. See Rushbrooke (ed.), *The Faith of the Baptists*, 'Introductory Note', 7, and the essays by Underwood and Emery, 29 and 36 respectively, and Hagger, 57.

⁷ H. Cook, *The Call of the Church* (n.d., [BLC 1930]), 57-58.

rather, they were 'symbols observed, and preserved by the churches' and of value 'to those who observe them only as their meaning is discerned'.⁸

As the ordinances were commandments of Christ they were thereby incumbent upon every believer. Obedience to the divine statute was important, but the majority of Baptist writers wished to safeguard against this being the only understanding of the rite. Ordinance, in this respect, thus stood for something ordained by Christ and to be obeyed by the disciple.⁹ But even the sacramentalists would have accepted this as far as it went, but their position was distinguished in that they sought to develop their understanding of baptism much further.

The definition of 'sacrament' was not quite so simple, as it meant different things to different writers. Part of their understanding of baptism Baptists derived from the latin *sacramentum* (though this was undoubtedly an unconscious thing for many, especially the large majority for whom anything approximating to Catholicism was anathema). This was evidenced in the belief of baptism as a pledge or act of allegiance,¹⁰ or simply an oath.¹¹ It was spoken of as an avowal of allegiance to the Saviour,¹² a pledge that one's heart was changed and publicly and formally

⁸ A. S. Langley, *The Faith and Heritage and Mission of the Baptists* (1931), 8. This was his presidential address to the annual meetings of the West Midland Baptist Association at the Church of the Redeemer in Birmingham on June 2, 1931.

⁹ It is surprising that the view that baptism was an act of commemoration was only used once, particularly considering its use in memorial services and its use in church services, most notably at communion. See W. T. Whitley, *Church, Ministry and Sacraments* (1903), 162, who, discussing Romans 6:1-11, observed that baptism commemorated Christ's death and resurrection, as the believer turned away in horror from sin and in love to Jesus.

¹⁰ R. C. Ford, *Twenty-Five Years of Baptist Life in Yorkshire, 1912-1937* (1937), 31.

¹¹ Morris, *Thoughts*, 23.

¹² Mountain, *My Baptism*, 97; Whitley, *Church, Ministry and Sacraments*, 71-72, commenting on Matthew 28:19-20, p.146 on Acts 18:24-19:7, p.235 on Titus 3:5, p.253 on 1 Peter 3:20-21; Whitby, *Baptist Principles*, 32, on Acts 2:41,47; Flowers, 'The Holy Spirit', 161 n.2.

consecrated to God's service¹³ and an expression of the loyalty of the soul to Christ.¹⁴ It was not without significance that this terminology was strongly ethical, once again demonstrating the interrelation between the rite itself, the subjects and the meaning/implications for the baptized. This language was also similar in meaning to that used when baptism was spoken of as an act of dedication on the part of the believer to his Lord.¹⁵ Whitley made this explicit, that *sacramentum* had seriously changed its meaning. For Livy it was an oath of fidelity taken by soldiers. Pliny used it of the oaths of Christians, a view developed by Tertullian to mean a legal action or formula. This usage dropped out and a new technical meaning developed. With Augustine the theory that sacraments conveyed grace became standard throughout the West.¹⁶

In the main it would be true to say that this definition of 'sacrament' found its way into the Baptist understanding of the rite often without it consciously being understood or used as its definition. When Baptists did define what they meant they usually used it in the sense of 'an outward and visible sign of an inward, spiritual grace', a definition which went ^{back} to the Catechism of the Prayer Book and beyond that to Calvin.¹⁷ Believing Titus 3:5 to be the latest and presumably most developed passage indicating Paul's doctrine of baptism and regeneration, Whitley described the rite as an institution to which, in its early stage of development, the Lord had yielded obedience, but into which he breathed fuller meaning. He enjoined his disciples to

¹³ Whitley, *Church, Ministry and Sacraments*, 182, on 1 Corinthians 6:11; Whitby, *Baptist Principles*, 48, p.63 on 1 Peter 2:21; Flowers, 'The Holy Spirit', 162; Robinson, 'The Faith of the Baptists', *The Expository Times* 28 (1927), 454.

¹⁴ C. T. Bateman, *John Clifford. Free Church Leader and Preacher* (1902), 133; Robinson, *Life and Faith*, 116.

¹⁵ Eg. Clifford in a diary entry dated June 16th, 1922, in J. Marchant, *Dr. John Clifford* (1924), 264. Rushbrooke, 'Protestant of the Protestants', in Rushbrooke (ed.), *Faith of the Baptists*, 81, who spoke of an act of self-dedication.

¹⁶ Whitley, *The Witness of History*, 68-70. See also Wood, "'BAPTISM" (Later Christian)', in J. Hastings (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics II* (Edinburgh, 1909), for the development of this view.

¹⁷ For its use by Calvin, see A. E. McGrath, *Reformation Thought. An Introduction* (Oxford, 1993²), 182. (The phrase is purported to have originated with Augustine.)

administer it to converts, mentioning it in their preaching and ordering it. 'It was the outward acknowledgement of the inward change of heart, the token of a breach with the past, and an enrolment into a new community, a symbol of regeneration by the Holy Spirit from the death-in-life of former existence'.¹⁸ That this was by no means a new way for Baptists to speak of baptism is reflected by Alfred Phillips who preferred the word ordinance,¹⁹ but nevertheless, when examining Romans 6:3, noted, 'We often say "Baptism is an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace". So it is'.²⁰ J. E. Roberts explained that 'The essence of the sacramental principle is that ideas are brought home to men's minds by outward forms. Therefore the valuable element in a sacrament is its meaning'.²¹

Baptists, then, had a clear understanding of both the terms 'ordinance' and 'sacrament'. The majority were content with maintaining simply the former, though some were openly antagonistic towards any 'sacramental' connotations. Opposition to the sacramental understanding of the rite revolved around their mistrust of the term's mechanical and semi-magical overtones and its use by Catholics. Without these Baptists would have been happy to accept and use the word, though the preference was undoubtedly for ordinance.²² Henry Cook made this clear in 1930²³ and then

¹⁸ Whitley, *Church, Ministry and Sacraments*, 234. On Romans 4:9-12, p.160, he remarked, 'The outward sign apart from the inward reality was valueless, and [Paul] plainly added that the inward reality apart from that outward sign was invaluable', cross-referencing with Romans 2:28-29. For his whole discussion of Romans 4:9-12 see pp.159-161. See also p.150 on Acts 22:16.

¹⁹ Phillips, *What Baptists Stand For*, 22, 38.

²⁰ Phillips, *What Baptists Stand For*, 40. Others who explicitly used this definition were Mountain, *My Baptism*, 31; Whitby, *Baptist Principles*, 61; Clifford, 'The Baptist World Alliance', 55; Tymms, *Evolution of Infant Baptism*, 340; Morris, *Thoughts*, 23; Underwood, *Conversion: Christian and Non-Christian. A Comparative and Psychological Study* (1925), 110.

²¹ J. E. Roberts, *Christian Baptism, Its Significance and its Subjects* (n.d., [1905]), 3-4.

²² 'Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland', in L. Hodgson (ed), *Convictions* (n.d., [1934]), 63. See also G. Laws, 'Denominational Self-consciousness. The Crying Need of the Baptists Today', *BT&F* July 20, 1923, 518.

²³ Cook, *Call of the Church*, 57-61.

again 1947, in what has often been taken to be the definitive expression of the Baptist position.²⁴

Baptism As A Means Of Grace.

In a note on the term 'Sacrament', Wheeler Robinson referred to the meaning of *sacramentum* as an oath of allegiance in the way Whitley and others had done before him, and then continued: 'The term "sacrament" is, indeed, often used to imply what Baptists would regard as a mechanical or material conveyance of grace; but this misuse of a useful term ought no more to discredit it than the misuse of the term "baptism" by non-Baptists make us give up that term'.²⁵ This led him to reject what he termed 'sacramentarianism', though he accepted and used the term 'sacramentalism'.²⁶ Other authors spoke of 'anti-sacerdotalism',²⁷ whilst Whitley and Freeman objected to both terms, 'sacerdotalism' and 'sacramentalism'.²⁸ Whatever word they used, it is true to say that the various authors were repudiating the same concept, though most avoided such terms precisely because of their connotations.

The dislike of what Charles Williams called this 'ecclesiastical' sense of 'sacrament', however, led him and a large number of Baptists to reject the notion that baptism was in any way a 'medium of grace'.²⁹ This widespread rejection was one of the reasons

²⁴ Cf. the comment by Rev. Ted Hale of Abbey Centre BC, Northampton, 'Declaration of Principle', *BT* August 29, 1996, 7, who referred to *What Baptists Stand For?* as 'a basic primer' on Baptist principles. However, the difficulty of maintaining a consistent position on this can be seen in a front page article in the *BT* in 1935, when Cook used 'sacrament' solely in the sense of the solemn pledge, H. Cook, 'The Covenant', *BT* October 3, 1935, 709-10.

²⁵ Robinson, *Baptist Principles*, 29n.

²⁶ Robinson, *Life and Faith*, 177. See also his 'The Faith of the Baptists', 455.

²⁷ Whitley, *Church, Ministry and Sacraments*, 271-281; Phillips, *What Baptists Stand For*, 40.

²⁸ Whitley, *Church, Ministry and Sacraments*, 244, on Hebrews 8:3. On p.271 he stated that sacerdotalists appended the Bible to tradition; Freeman, 'Lambeth Appeal', 6-8. T. R. Glover, *Paul of Tarsus* (1927), 163, rejected the idea that Paul was a 'sacramentalist'.

²⁹ Williams, *Principles and Practices*, 23. He later equated 'sacrament' with 'saving efficacy', that is, baptismal regeneration, pp.67-68.

which drove some of the most notable Baptist scholars to argue for the reintroduction of this aspect of the New Testament doctrine into Baptist theology.

Wheeler Robinson contended: 'The Bible itself is no more than a collection of ancient documents till it becomes...a sacrament, that is, something which is a means by which the divine Spirit becomes active in the heart of reader or hearer'.³⁰ This was most forcefully and eloquently argued by Robinson in all his writings on baptism, and recognition of this is essential to an understanding of his theology of baptism and the Spirit. With an implicit reference to Baptist antagonism towards the Oxford Movement, Robinson stated that the reaction to a false doctrine of divine grace in baptism had made Baptists suspicious of the genuine sacramentalism of the New Testament. The emphasis had been so much on saying '*believer's* baptism' that they have failed, or at least were then failing, to say with anything like equal emphasis '*believer's baptism*', meaning the entrance of believers into a life of supernatural powers.³¹ He argued for the connection of water-baptism with the Spirit in exactly the sense in which Baptists argued for its connection with personal faith. 'If the New Testament teaches the latter, it assuredly also teaches the former, and Baptists are really committed to both'. It was personal faith which was the realm of the Spirit's activity, so too the confession of that faith in *believer's* baptism brought a new opportunity for divine grace, because it was an act of personal faith.³²

In this understanding of baptism as a means of grace Robinson was not alone. Henry Cook affirmed that the two great ordinances, rightly administered, became 'true

³⁰ Robinson, *Christian Experience of the Holy Spirit*, 190. See also ch.7 'The Spirit and the Scriptures', 160-183. Robinson's theology of baptism cannot adequately be discussed without reference to the centrality of his 'sacramental' understanding of the rite. It is precisely for this reason that Duane A. Garrett's contribution on 'H. Wheeler Robinson' to the Southern Baptist published *Baptist Theologians*, Timothy George and David S. Dockery (eds.), (Nashville, 1990), 402, is to be criticized. Though Garrett's discussion of baptism is brief, the omission of even the word 'sacrament' reflects more Southern Baptist aversion to the term than the desire to fairly represent and assess Robinson's baptismal theology.

³¹ Robinson, *Life and Faith*, 177-78.

³² Robinson, *Life and Faith*, 178. Wheeler Robinson's understanding of baptism as a means of grace relied on his further development of the relationship of the Holy Spirit to baptism, on which see the section below.

means of grace to the believer who receives them, but only to the believer'. Their value lay in the believer's perception of the truths they were meant to suggest, and where these truths were either hidden or not perceived, the purpose of the ordinances was frustrated, losing their true significance thereby becoming something they were never meant to be.³³ H. J. Flowers stated that baptism was neither magical nor a mere rite, but a means of grace, having re-creative power, marking the moment when the Spirit is imparted to the believer, uniting him with the Church.³⁴ 'Ex opere operato', Rushbrooke insisted, 'nothing is effected; but we know in our own lives that to follow Christ in obedience and faith is to find in His ordinance a means of grace'.³⁵

What necessitated this re-emphasis of baptism was the trend within the denomination to degrade baptism into a mere sign and symbol. This resulted in those who sought to restore the sacramental element to the doctrine and practice of baptism being tarred with the label 'ritualists'. Recognizing this, Underwood declared, 'But the New Testament is not Zwinglian in its interpretation of the sacraments. In it baptism is every bit as much a means of grace as is the Lord's Supper. Indeed, it is more so... I do not see how anyone who puts off his theological spectacles and reads the New Testament with open eyes can doubt that the New Testament converts underwent at the time of their baptism a definite religious experience'. In baptism, converts made their surrender to Christ more complete, their consecration more absolute, receiving a further endowment of the Spirit and further power to walk in newness of life, and their experience of union with Christ was deepened and enhanced. Underwood, and

³³ Cook, *Why of Our Faith*, 86. He reiterated the same point in his *Call of the Church*, 65, where he explained that the ordinances, 'speak of the deepest things in our faith, and, because they so speak, they are a true means of grace; not that they give grace in the sacramental sense, but they speak of grace; they reveal the love of God, and so they stimulate and quicken the faith of every believer'. It would not be untrue to Cook to take this final statement as a reference also to the edification a witness to baptism would receive. See on this L. H. Marshall, 'Baptists and Church Membership', *BT* October 31, 1924, 712, who wrote that, apart from its rich symbolism, the great value of baptism lay in its ability to cause 'a youth' (and presumably any non-Christian witness) to think more seriously about church membership and Christian discipleship.

³⁴ Flowers, 'The Unity of the Church', 350.

³⁵ Rushbrooke, 'Protestant of the Protestants', 81.

those in agreement with him, could maintain this position without danger of any mechanical or superstitious overtones by their insistence that baptism was a means of grace *only* to those who believed.³⁶ Underwood, however, did not stop here, but proceeded to call on ministers to 'preach up' baptism as a means of grace to all who would receive it in faith.³⁷ Answering the enquiry as to why someone should submit to the rite, he stressed that Baptists had to show that baptism justified itself in Christian experience as a means of grace and that it had great spiritual value only when confined to believers and was by immersion.³⁸ Gilbert Laws stated that 'We may therefore expect to receive an increased measure of spiritual life and power from the Holy Ghost when we pass through the waters. According to our faith so will it be unto us'.³⁹

Wheeler Robinson's *Baptist Principles* has proved to be one of the most influential (perhaps the most!) books on Baptist principles this century, and it was groundbreaking in that it moved Baptist discussion of baptism away from detailed discussion

³⁶ Underwood, 'Baptism and Conversion', 29-30.

³⁷ Underwood, 'Baptism and Conversion', 33. Throughout the first four decades of the present century there was a widely held conviction that baptism was not taught, preached or practised as it should be. See Rev. C. W. Adams, 'The Need for Revival and How We May Get It', *BT&F* January 3, 1908, 3-4; J. E. Compton, *The Place of the Sacraments in the Baptist Church* (1910), 11-12; 'A Grateful Deacon', 'Open Baptistries', *BT* September 13, 1928, 663; Charles F. Perry, 'Christian Baptism and the Campaign' (reference to the Discipleship Campaign), *BT* August 31, 1933, 586; D. J. Sheppard of Wellingborough, 'Watery Undenominationalism', *BT* March 19, 1936, 218; A. J. Klaiber, 'The Monthly Grumble. "Watery Undenominationalism"', *BT* February 27, 1936, 163; A. W. Gummer Butt, "'Prove Me Now". Great Forward Movement. The Vision and the Method', I April 16, 1936, 293; R. C. Ford, *Twenty-Five Years of Baptist Life in Yorkshire, 1912-1937* (1937), 44; 'Baptists and Re-Union', *BT* April 8, 1937, 262, being a review of *The Special Report of the Committee* (1937); H. H. Briggs of Nelson, Lancashire, 'The Ordinances', *BT* September 23, 1937, 716.

³⁸ Underwood, 'Baptism and Conversion', 35.

³⁹ Laws, *What is Baptism?*, 12-14, quotation from pp.13-14. W. Y. Fullerton's tract, *Baptism*, (n.d.), 14, simply observed, 'We apprehend this baptism as a true means of grace'. From an almost certain reference to the 'mud' of the trenches in World War I on p12-13, this tract should be dated after 1918. See also W. Powell, *Christian Baptism, As Understood by the Baptists* (n.d.), 12, 'We Baptists do not say that we are better Christians than those belonging to other branches of the Church, but we do say that we have used a means of grace that they have not used'. In this connection, Powell noted that baptism symbolized 'the spiritual fact of belief in Christ'. As a symbol of this, then, 'it strengthens that fact', p.9.

of the mode and subjects of the rite.⁴⁰ Three points support this view of its influence: its reviews commended it highly,⁴¹ it had become the standard replacement to W. T. Whitley's *The Witness of History to Baptist Principles* for the Lay Preacher's examinations by 1930;⁴² and copies were still available through the Baptist Publications Department in the early 1980s.⁴³

Most significantly of all for dissemination of this 'sacramental' doctrine of baptism was its adoption in two important official Baptist declarations: the 1926 *Reply to the Lambeth Appeal* and the 1937 *Special Committee Report*. The *Reply* reported that 'Christian Baptism and the Communion of the Lord's Supper are duly received by us not only as rites instituted and hallowed by our Lord Himself, but as a means of grace to all who receive them in faith'.⁴⁴ The *Report* developed the understanding of baptism and the Lord's Supper as symbols, declaring that they were 'appointed instruments and vehicles of grace for those who come to them with a right disposition, and that they (in the words of Calvin) "hold forth and offer Christ to us and in Him the treasures of heavenly grace". Such a view emphasizes an essential element of a sacrament...that it is primarily the Word and Act of God, conveying the grace of God to men'. The Committee then disclaimed any suggestion that such a sacramental view should limit the bestowal of grace to the sacraments or that any priestly mediation was necessary for its proper celebration. Thus, baptism was more than a mere symbol and more than a confession of faith. 'This view treats baptism as a

⁴⁰ In all this it must not be forgotten that whilst *Baptist Principles* was first published separately in 1925, it was originally a contribution to C. E. Shpley (ed.), *The Baptists of Yorkshire* (1912), entitled 'Baptist Principles before the rise of Baptist Churches', 3-50.

⁴¹ See Anon., 'Baptist Teaching', *BT* December 10, 1925, 904. See also Ernest Payne's review of the German version, 'Baptische Grundsätze...Oncken Verlag, Kassel, 1931', *BQ* 6.2 (April, 1932), 95.

⁴² Alfred Ellis, JP (ed.), 'The Lay Preachers' Column: "Baptist Principles"', *BT* October 31, 1929, 815.

⁴³ The present writer bought his copy of the 1960 reprint of the 1938 3rd edition from Baptist Church House in 1984.

⁴⁴ *Reply*, 88, italics added.

vehicle for the conveyance of grace, but it does not involve the assertion that baptism is an essential condition of regeneration or of salvation and it implies the necessity of a moral response on the part of the baptized person'.⁴⁵ The necessity of faith for a true sacramentalism was underscored by A. C. Underwood, when he wrote, 'The baptism of believers is...a means of grace, a definite religious experience, a genuine Sacrament, but only to those who submit to it in penitence and faith. They claim to be the only Christian body which has preserved the full sacramental value of Christian baptism'.⁴⁶

Such expressions of Baptist sacramentalism did not go unchallenged. Clearly the tendency to stress the faith of the believer was a concern to many, especially those on the more Calvinist wing of the denomination. In an article on 'What Happens at Baptism?', R. Birch Hoyle stressed that 'It is important that we Baptists insist on the point that the baptiser is not so prominent at baptism as is the Divine work then wrought in creating faith and imparting grace'. Later he warned that while Baptists insisted upon conscious faith on the part of the recipient of baptism, 'we must be on guard against the over-emphasis of the human factor of belief at the expense of the Divine Worker'. It was, however, Hoyle's final sentence which incited Alexander Graham-Barton. Hoyle wrote, 'And as Baptists we should emphasise, not the amount of water and immersion therein, but "baptism into the Holy Ghost"'.⁴⁷ Hoyle had discussed the Methodist C. Ryder Smith, the Anglo-Catholic Dr. N. P. Williams, Karl Barth and Martin Luther. ^{all these} Of ^{that they} Graham-Barton boldly stated ^{that they} had 'not a vestige of

⁴⁵ *Report of the Special Committee*, 28-29. A footnote after the Calvin quote made reference back to the 1926 *Reply* just quoted. The importance of the *Report* is all the more evident once it is remembered that the Committee was composed of representatives from the different traditions existing within the BU.

⁴⁶ A. C. Underwood, 'Views of Modern Churches (g) Baptists (2)', in R. Dunkerley (ed.), *The Ministry of the Sacraments* (1937), 225.

⁴⁷ Rev. R. Birch Hoyle, who was no longer in the active pastorate and living in Kingston-on-Thames, 'What Happens in Baptism?', *BT* August 24, 1933, 572. This article built on an earlier one in which Hoyle had submitted that it was 'high time that more thinking was done on "what happens" at baptism, whether infant or adult', R. Birch Hoyle, 'Baptism: As Others See It', *BT* July 13, 1933, 476.

scriptural authority to justify their assertions that "baptism is a means of grace imparted in the rite" or that "it regenerates the soul" or that it has anything to do "with sacramental self-knowledge", or that "the end of baptism works for forgiveness of sins", or that "its purpose is to save men".⁴⁸

However, without this renewed emphasis on the sacramental nature of baptism future ecumenical discussions and developments could never have taken place. E. Roberts-Thomson noted that without Wheeler Robinson and Underwood discussions between Baptists and the Churches of Christ could not even have begun in 1942.⁴⁹ Further, without such developments the future of Baptist participation in the modern ecumenical movement could not have taken place, as their understanding of baptism and that held among Paedobaptist denominations would have been so far removed from each other that any convergence would have been impossible, and the BU would have perhaps retreated into an extreme anti-ecumenical position, as some wanted it to, rather than the cautious yet committed position they have had.

Baptism and the Holy Spirit.

The belief that baptism was a means of grace was inseparably linked to an identification of baptism with the working of the Holy Spirit. Perkin rightly observed that both Baptists and Paedobaptists during this period 'did not feel happy about the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, whether in connection with baptism or not' and that this constituted 'a serious lacuna in the theology of the period'.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Rev. A. Graham-Barton of Marylebone, 'What Happens at Baptism?', *BT* September 14, 1933, 616.

⁴⁹ E. Roberts-Thomson, *Baptists and Disciples of Christ* (n.d., [BLC 1951]), see 114-123, and especially p.122. On these discussions see chapter 5 'Baptists and the Churches of Christ' below. The importance of H. W. Robinson, A. C. Underwood and the 1926 *Reply* in the development of Baptist theology away from the merely symbolic was also recognized by the Presbyterian J. M. Ross, 'The Theology of Baptism in Baptist History', *BQ* 15.3 (July, 1953), 100-112; D. M. Thompson, 'The Older Free Churches', in R. Davies (ed.), *The Testing of the Free Churches, 1932-1982. A Symposium* (1982), 104-05, identified H. W. Robinson and A. C. Underwood as the scholars responsible for the recovery of a sacramental doctrine amongst Baptists.

⁵⁰ Perkin, 'Baptism in Nonconformist Theology', 13-14. Cf. the anonymous article in the *BT&F* January 16, 1914, 43, entitled 'A Neglected Doctrine'.

Perkin's research went up to 1920, but what he said equally applies up to the late 1920s, when this whole question of the relationship between the Spirit and baptism eventually began to be explored more seriously, principally by Wheeler Robinson. Other writers, of course, addressed this issue, but most of the references were scattered within the discussion of other themes and were thus all too often brief and underdeveloped. Such glimpses simply evidence that the issue was only just beginning to emerge into the Baptist theological consciousness.

Several authors acknowledged that there was a connection between the Holy Spirit and baptism, but they did not proceed to develop this any further.⁵¹ T. H. Robinson went beyond the bare statement of the existence of a connection, to state that baptism was ritual, whereas the baptism by the Holy Spirit was actual and permanent.⁵² Wheeler Robinson likewise linked the rite with the gift of the Holy Spirit,⁵³ but he developed this further. He stated that the Church was the creation of the Spirit of God, for it was the Spirit who was the agent of regeneration which was the Godward side of conversion. Thus, there was no need to be surprised that the New Testament so closely linked the gift of the Spirit with believer's baptism, indeed, it made the experience of that gift the test of the rite. This, however, was not to be committed to any theory of baptismal regeneration. To focus on the external act and material means as the prescribed channel of the Spirit's activity would indeed result in sacramentarianism. But to focus on the internal conditions, the personal faith and conversion which were emphasized in believer's baptism, seeing them as the true realm of the Spirit, both guarded against and prevented this. He continued, 'In fact, when we speak of Believer's Baptism, we mean that baptism in the Spirit of God, of

⁵¹ Eg. F. B. Meyer, *Peter, Fisherman, Disciple, Apostle* (n.d., [1919]), 142; Glover, *Paul*, 112.

⁵² T. H. Robinson, *St. Mark's Life of Jesus* (1922), 17. A biographical sketch on T. H. Robinson was written by M. Pierce Matheney Jr, Professor of Old Testament Interpretation and Hebrew at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, Missouri, 'Teaching Prophet. The Life and Continuing Influence of Theodore Henry Robinson', *BQ* 29.5 (January, 1982), 199-216.

⁵³ Robinson, *Baptist Principles*, 13-14.

which water baptism is the expression'.⁵⁴ E. C. Pike heartily concurred: immersion was the sign of the entire baptism into the Holy Spirit.⁵⁵ John Lewis sought to make it clear that it was not baptism 'into' or 'with' but 'in' the Holy Ghost.⁵⁶ The *Reply* declared that immersion was retained 'because this symbolic representation guards the thought of that inner baptism of the Holy Spirit which is central in Christian experience'.⁵⁷

Baptists have always been vigorous opponents of baptismal regeneration,⁵⁸ but on the new birth they were unanimous: it was by the Holy Spirit not baptism that a person was born again.⁵⁹ A distinction, therefore, was drawn by many between the baptism of the Spirit and water baptism,⁶⁰ which led Robinson to speak of the external act always being subordinate and secondary to the baptism of the Spirit.⁶¹

The belief that baptism was a means of grace led Underwood to conclude that in baptism the earliest Christians received a further endowment of the Spirit and further power to walk in newness of life. Their experience of union with Christ began at their conversion, but in the hour of their baptism it was deepened and enhanced to such a degree that the Apostle Paul could say that baptism united the believer to Christ and

⁵⁴ Robinson, *Baptist Principles*, 24-25. In his *Life and Faith*, 10-11, Robinson wrote, 'Baptism signifies the entrance into a life of fellowship with Christ, which means a baptism of the Holy Spirit'.

⁵⁵ E. C. Pike, *Some Unique Aspects of the Baptist Position* (n.d., [BLC 1901]), 7, citing Neander's *Church History*.

⁵⁶ J. Lewis, 'Baptised into Jesus Christ', *The Fraternal* no 19.3 (December, 1927), 23. Unfortunately he said nothing beyond this.

⁵⁷ *Reply*, 88. Similarly, Mountain, *My Baptism*, 17 and 182, on Acts 10:47-48, acknowledged that the gift of the Spirit was spoken of by Peter, not as a substitute for the ordinance of baptism, but as an urgent reason for its immediate observance.

⁵⁸ Eg. H. J. Wicks, 'Baptismal Regeneration', *BQ* 5.1 (January, 1930), 20-22.

⁵⁹ Eg. Phillips, *What Baptists Stand For* 14; Whitby, *Baptist Principles*, 15, 65-66; Clifford, 'The Baptist World Alliance', 59; Robinson, *Life and Faith*, 84.

⁶⁰ Whitley, *Church, Ministry and Sacraments*, 51, drawing on Acts 8:16, 10:47; Freeman, 'Lambeth Appeal', 6-7.

⁶¹ Robinson, 'The Place of Baptism', 212, and *Christian Experience of the Holy Spirit*, 198.

enabled him to put on Christ'. After quoting James Denney's comment that converts found that baptism 'in a high and solemn hour raised to its height the Christian's sense of what it is to be a Christian', Underwood continued: 'In a word, New Testament baptism was a definite means of grace, but never in a magical way, because it was administered only to believers, and what each got out of it depended upon the faith of his converted will'.⁶² Wheeler Robinson said that by baptism, as well as by faith, the Christian was saturated in the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13).⁶³ In his study of Ephesians 1:11-14, Harold J. Flowers' main assertion was that the Spirit was given at baptism.⁶⁴

At the 1926 Assembly, Rushbrooke called Baptists to self-dedication, 'a new baptism of the Spirit', if the denomination was to carry towards its completion the work of their fathers.⁶⁵ A comment which in no way contradicted the understanding of the baptism of the Spirit held by the majority of Baptists at this time, using the term in much the same way as people nowadays call for revival, in no way suggesting a second re-birth. But there were other Baptists whose understanding of the baptism of the Spirit was vague. According to Townley Lord baptism was the means whereby the believer could experience the power and blessing of the Holy Spirit. He elucidated his comment no further, nor based it on any passage of Scripture, but his comment does reflect many Baptists' unease and reluctance to say more than that the believer in some undefined way experienced some undefined blessing from the Spirit in baptism.⁶⁶ Even less satisfactory was the brief explanation given by Henry J. Wicks,

⁶² Underwood, 'Conversion and Baptism', 30. Eleven years later, Underwood reiterated his belief that 'in every baptism of a believer there is a bestowal of the Holy Spirit. Every water-baptism of a believer should be a Spirit-baptism too - and that in no magical fashion but in a manner thoroughly ethical, because the believer proceeds to baptism in virtue of his repentance and faith'. See Underwood, 'Views of Modern Churches', 227, and also his 'Baptism and Regeneration', *BT* March 1, 1928, 144.

⁶³ Robinson, *The Christian Doctrine of Man* (Edinburgh, 1911), 125.

⁶⁴ Flowers of Chorley Wood, 'The Holy Spirit', 159, 161. It is a shame that Flowers' study was exegetical and did not go on to apply his views to the contemporary situation.

⁶⁵ Rushbrooke, 'Protestant of the Protestants', 83.

⁶⁶ Lord, *The Great Decision. An Outline of Christian Discipleship* (1936), 17.

who contented himself to equate water as a symbol of the Spirit in his cleansing power.⁶⁷ W. Y. Fullerton merely observed that the baptism with the Spirit needed to precede baptism in water.⁶⁸

The only writer to draw the distinction which was found in Paul between the baptism of the Spirit and the fulness of the Spirit was Whitley. Discussing Acts 2:1-4, he observed the 'curious fact' that although the promise was to be baptized with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5) this metaphor was not retained by Luke in Acts 2:4 which recorded that they 'were filled with the Holy Spirit'. 'The one', he explained, 'implies their being surrounded with the Spirit as by an all-encompassing atmosphere in which they lived and moved; the other, their being taken full possession of and thoroughly imbued by Him. Both agree in the conception of the completeness of the influence exercised on them by the Spirit'. The 'slight' difference was that literal baptism could only be experienced once, and this unique Pentecostal experience was unique for each participant, whereas the same people could afterwards have a revival, being filled with the Spirit again, but not baptized again. 'So it is unscriptural to speak of a man or a church being baptised afresh in the Spirit: one baptism, many fillings; or, better still, one baptism, ever full'.⁶⁹

There was one notable dissension from the above. F. B. Meyer suggested that the term baptism as applied to the Holy Spirit 'had better be confined to those marvellous manifestations of spiritual power which are recorded in Acts ii, viii, x, xix; whilst the word *filling* should be used of those experiences of the indwelling and anointing of the Divine Spirit which are within the reach of us all'.⁷⁰ He neither used 'baptism of the Spirit' in reference to the act of conversion nor in Rushbrooke's way of referring to

⁶⁷ Wicks, 'Baptismal Regeneration', 22, basing this on John 3:5.

⁶⁸ W. Y. Fullerton, 'A Baptised Church', *BT&F* April 27, 1917, 259.

⁶⁹ Whitley, *Church, Ministry and Sacraments*, 118-19, cf. Acts 4:8,31, 6:3, 7:55.

⁷⁰ F. B. Meyer, *John the Baptist* (n.d., [1900]), 85.

revival. How widespread Meyer's views were is difficult to assess, but it is the only such comment to have been found in this period, and reflects a more Reformed position.

It was, however, Wheeler Robinson who developed this aspect of the doctrine most fully. It would be expected that his clearest thoughts on the relation between the Spirit and baptism would be found in the relevant chapter of his major work on the Christian's experience of the Spirit, but this is not the case. Here, the sacraments were described as the acts of believers, baptism supplying a visible parallel to the spiritual experience which Paul called the baptism of the Holy Spirit - the believer's death to sin and resurrection to newness of life.⁷¹ Since the action corresponded to the spoken word, as with the prophetic symbolism of Israel's prophets,⁷² therefore, there could be no question of 'mere symbolism' in baptism (or the Lord's Supper) 'for the act is the partial and fragmentary, but very real accomplishment of a divine work, the work of the Holy Spirit'.⁷³

His clearest thoughts on the Spirit, however, are to be found in his other works, particularly his *Baptist Principles*, in which he declared that baptism was linked to the gift of the Spirit,⁷⁴ and then, when discussing the nature of the Church as a spiritual society of the converted, he declared that the Church was the creation of the Spirit, for he was the agent in that regeneration which was the Godward side of conversion. As the Church in the New Testament was illustrated by the three metaphors of a spiritual house, God's family and a Spirit animated body, there was little surprise that the New Testament so closely linked the gift of the Spirit with believer's baptism, indeed making the experience of that gift the test of the rite.⁷⁵ Water baptism was thus the

⁷¹ Robinson, *Christian Experience of the Holy Spirit*, 194.

⁷² Robinson, *Christian Experience of the Holy Spirit*, 193.

⁷³ Robinson, *Christian Experience of the Holy Spirit*, 194.

⁷⁴ Robinson, *Baptist Principles*, 13-14.

⁷⁵ Robinson, *Baptist Principles*, 24.

expression of the baptism in the Spirit.⁷⁶ It was this aspect, he admitted elsewhere, which Baptists had failed to emphasize.⁷⁷

In the last chapter of this seminal Baptist work, Robinson proposed three conditions which would ensure for Baptist churches a great future, the second of which was the recovery of the New Testament emphasis on the Spirit of God.⁷⁸ It was this emphasis, more than any other single truth, which gave the New Testament its 'expansive and vital atmosphere, the sense of great things to be and do, and great powers with which to attain them'. The recovery of this would do much to meet the growingly insistent needs of the contemporary world - witnessing to 'a baptism of the Spirit which exhilarates, expands, purifies the whole personality, intellectual and emotional and volitional'.⁷⁹ In 1927, he called on Baptists to set themselves open-mindedly to the study of the New Testament references to baptism, for they might be surprised to find how closely baptism was related to the gift of the Spirit. A sharp distinction existed between John's baptism expressed as a moral decision, and Christ's baptism which was with or in the Spirit. This he supported with reference to John 3:5 and 1 Corinthians 12:13. For Paul, baptism was not solely descent into the waters of baptism meaning death and burial with Christ and that mystical union with him which carried with it death to sin, but also ascent into new life, defined by Paul as newness of 'Spirit' (Colossians 2:12). 'Thus, to be baptized into Christ is to put on Christ, i.e. to enter that realm of the Spirit over which Christ is Lord'. He dispelled any mechanical or quasi-magical connection between water and Spirit baptism, on the basis of Cornelius and his friends' Spirit-baptism preceding their water baptism (Acts 10), and

⁷⁶ Robinson, *Baptist Principles*, 25.

⁷⁷ Robinson, 'The Place of Baptism', 214.

⁷⁸ Robinson, *Baptist Principles*, 65-66. It is unclear as to what Robinson had in mind at this point, but it is unlikely that late twentieth century charismatic renewal would have met with his approval.

⁷⁹ Robinson, *Baptist Principles*, 67.

the Ephesian disciples in Acts 19 who received the Spirit after the laying on of hands subsequent to their baptism.⁸⁰ He concluded his *The Life and Faith of the Baptists*:

Most of all there is needed a new and clear teaching of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, as against the rationalism that rejects all mystery, and the externalism which materializes mystery into manageable forms. The true emphasis is that of the New Testament - on personal faith as the human condition of divine activity, which is the truth supremely expressed in believer's baptism.⁸¹

To this can be added an earlier comment which pinpointed the fact that Baptist hesitation over the place of the Spirit in baptism was due, not to exegesis of biblical texts, but fear, even seventy to eighty years after the Tractarian movement, of baptismal regeneration and magical interpretations of the rite's operation and efficacy.

But most of all, I want to urge that our peculiar denominational emphasis on believer's baptism should enable us to meet a great need of the religious life of to-day, I mean the recovery of the New Testament emphasis on the Holy Spirit. We have been unconsciously afraid of teaching the relation of the gift of the Spirit and water-baptism, because so much is made of it by those who believe in baptismal regeneration and appeal to the words, 'Ye must be born of water and the Spirit.' We have thrown our emphasis on baptism as a personal and human profession of repentance and faith. It is that, and that needed to be emphasised. But the uniquely ethical character of our baptism safeguards us from the risk of misunderstanding, and leaves full room for the more evangelical sacramentalism of the New Testament. The moral and religious experience of repentance and faith becomes the channel of the Spirit, and is psychologically reinforced by the definite expression of this experience in water-baptism. If we teach men that water-baptism is of real value on the human side - if it is not, we have no right to practice it - may we not teach that it is in the same way of value on the divine, possibly a real occasion, always a powerful declaration, of that baptism of the Spirit which is the true secret of Christian sanctification?

Baptism, thus understood, gave meaning to such passages as Ephesians 4:5, 1 Corinthians 6:11 and Galatians 3:27, and Robinson concluded that 'there could be no Christian baptism in the full sense before Pentecost'.⁸²

Robinson also warned of the dangers of the Baptist position in that it tended towards individualism. He asked, 'Does not baptism express much more than a personal act?', for he was trying to keep the individual and corporate aspects together.

⁸⁰ Robinson, *Life and Faith*, 175-76.

⁸¹ Robinson, *Life and Faith*, 179-80.

⁸² Robinson, 'The Place of Baptism', 216-17.

Accordingly, Baptists stood for the truth of a regenerated church membership expressed in believer's baptism, but he believed that their testimony of that would never be as effective as it ought to be until they had added to it 'a nobler Church-consciousness, and a profounder sense of the whole group, as well as the individual life, as the arena of the Spirit's activity'.⁸³

Robinson succeeded in putting this matter firmly on the Baptist agenda, but he did not do so unchallenged. His views were not solely aired through books but also in the pages of the *Baptist Times*.⁸⁴ In 1914 he outlined the accepted position that New Testament baptism was an ordinance for believers only, a personal confession of faith, an act of obedience clearly symbolizing loyal devotion to Christ. But, he asked, was this the whole truth and was there another truth complementary to it on which Baptist witness was not equally clear? Did not baptism express more than a personal act? Was it not, by virtue of being that, also the entrance into a life of supernatural energies, that is, the surrender to the 'Law of the Spirit'? The baptism of Christ was sharply contrasted with that of John as a baptism with or in the Holy Spirit. To be baptized into Christ was to put on Christ, that is, to enter that realm of the Spirit under Christ's Lordship. The connection between water baptism and Spirit baptism was of no mechanical kind, he rejected outright any notion of baptismal regeneration, as was illustrated by the exceptions recorded in the Book of Acts, where all who were baptized were already believers and insisted that the moral and spiritual conditions of personal faith became the real channel of the Spirit's highest energies. Indeed, he said,

⁸³ Robinson, *Life and Faith*, 172-74. W. U. Torrance of Liverpool, 'The Sacraments and Authority', *The Fraternal* 13 (January, 1934), 14, also recognized this when he admitted that, 'Our own Church emphasises Baptism, admittedly the Sacrament of the individual as the other [the Eucharist] is that of the group. Has not our emphasis been an under-valuation in another direction?' He criticized Baptists for having 'little or no "Church Consciousness"', then asked, 'But is this the price of our emphasis on Baptism... It is rather clear to me that our failure is related to what we have done with the Sacraments'. Whilst the 'Sacrament of the Table proclaims the necessity of the Church... Baptism...proclaims the reality of the individual in his decision to serve God. He is no longer a unit in a crowd but one in a fellowship'.

⁸⁴ Robinson, 'The Baptism of Power', *BT&F* January 16, 1920, 35-36, 'Baptism and the Gift of the Holy Spirit', *BT* March 29, 1928, 209-10, and 'Unto What Were Ye Baptised?', *BT* May 24, 1934, 384. In the first of these he asked, 'Do we make the ceremony of water-baptism symbolise the gift of the Spirit as clearly as we make it symbolise conversion?', p.35.

it was the very divorce of baptism from personal faith which made sacramentarianism possible, and it was this against which Baptists rightly protested. But the energy of their protest brought its own peril, as they tended to become suspicious of any pronounced sacramental emphasis, even the genuine sacramentalism of the New Testament. They had so stressed the subjects of baptism that they failed to say anything about baptism itself. In this respect, he admitted, 'we have much to learn from the sacramental Churches themselves'. Here, then, was an opportunity for Baptists to give a forceful testimony to the work of the Spirit on the believer. He continued:

If any reader is afraid that this may mean a sacramentalism of the lower kind, where the channel of the Spirit is thought to be the material element, rather than the evangelical truth in the hearts of believers, let it be said distinctly that we are pleading for the connection of water-baptism with the Holy Spirit exactly in the sense in which we plead for its connection with personal faith. If the New Testament teaches the latter, it assuredly teaches the former, and Baptists are really committed to both. Let us tell that the Church is the home of supernatural powers, and not merely a human society, that faith is not a mere opinion, but a personal surrender to Him through whose Spirit these powers are to be experienced, and that baptism is not simply an act of faith, but 'the sign and seal' that that faith is answered by the Holy Spirit of God. So, and only so, will He Himself have led us into all the truth concerning New Testament baptism.⁸⁵

Within a fortnight, Arnold Streuli voiced his appreciation of Robinson's article, but appealed for fuller teaching on the subject, particularly for the sake of younger people.⁸⁶ The following week George W. MacAlpine questioned whether the New Testament condition for the gift of the Spirit was baptism, or rather faith, 'of the operations of which baptism is only symbolical'. He felt that Robinson too strongly associated the gift of the Spirit with the act of baptism. Surely the Cornelius episode in Acts 10 established that the gift of the Holy Spirit was granted to faith? 'The Holy Spirit brings to the believer the new life, the life of the Spirit; and, precisely because baptism shows forth in symbol the rising believer to newness of life, it also symbolises the gift of the Holy Spirit. But we must ever keep clearly before us the

⁸⁵ H. W. Robinson, 'Are Baptists Loyal to the New Testament Baptism?', *BT&F* June 26, 1914, 518.

⁸⁶ Rev. A. Streuli of Peterborough, 'Are Baptists Loyal to the New Testament Baptism?', *BT&F* July 10, 1914, 576.

fact that the moral and spiritual conditions of *personal faith* become the *real* channel of the Spirit's highest energies'.⁸⁷ By faith the Christian had entered into possession of the energies of the Spirit - by that faith of which baptism was the symbol.

In his reply, Robinson agreed with MacAlpine that faith was the essential condition of entrance into the realm of the Spirit's energies as opposed to that work of the Spirit which preceded faith. However he reiterated that his argument was that water-baptism in the New Testament symbolized not only this faith but also the reception of supernatural power by the believer, as MacAlpine had fully recognized. But further, he had argued that the present Baptist emphasis fell too exclusively on the personal act of faith and not adequately on the spiritual energies which that act of faith mediated. To the assertion that the normal condition for reception of these energies came before baptism, that is, with faith, Robinson referred to Acts 2:38: 'The manifestation of the Spirit's power (which, of course, does not exclude the preparatory work of the Spirit prior to repentance) is regarded as the sequel or close accompaniment of baptism. As men were made disciples (according to "the great Commission") before they were baptised, so, ordinarily, they were baptised before the Holy Spirit gave visible proof of His indwelling activity and power'. This was supported by Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 12:13. Experience of the Spirit (like faith itself) was not simply an isolated event, but covered the whole Christian life. 'I am not afraid of the consequences of such loyalty to New Testament teaching, *so long as baptism is administered to believers only*. We may easily teach our candidates for baptism to expect too little; we can hardly lead them to expect too much from the Spirit of God. New Testament writers knew nothing of the distinction between the subjective (faith) and the objective (water) conditions of baptism which Baptists have felt compelled to urge, because the New Testament knows nothing of unbaptized

⁸⁷ G. W. MacAlpine, the Accrington coal-owner and ardent supporter of the BMS, 'Are Baptists Loyal to the New Testament Baptism?', *BT&F* July 17, 1914, 585. The italics were MacAlpine's, the words Wheeler Robinson's in his article. A few details about MacAlpine can be found in I Sellers (ed.), *Our Heritage. The Baptists of Yorkshire, Lancashire and Cheshire, 1647-1987* (Leeds, 1987), 54 and 72.

believers, or of a water-baptism divorced from faith. The later abuse of water-baptism by its application to infants ought not to rob Baptists of the full meaning of New Testament baptism, as the expressive symbol of new powers underlying new life, as well as of the personal act of faith by which that new life is consciously entered'.⁸⁸

MacAlpine replied immediately, but no new ground was covered.⁸⁹ His difficulty over Robinson's very carefully worded letters and writings can be taken as representative of Baptist dis-ease over the newly advocated Baptist sacramentalism. So entrenched were the anti-Catholic and anti-sacerdotalist feelings that anything that sounded like baptismal regeneration was greeted warily and, no doubt, many times with great hostility.

The final comment within this brief yet revealing correspondence was sounded from a new participant. James Halliday^{was} impressed that in New Testament times baptism was a portion of the process by which the individual received the Holy Ghost, for faith was not complete until it expressed itself in an outward act of avowal and confession - an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace. Without this addition to their doctrine of baptism, he claimed, other Christians interpreted Baptist baptism as a piece of unnecessary ritualism. The restoration of the true relation of the rite to the individual, in preaching and practice, would enable believers to know 'a deeper experience of the Spirit's power'.⁹⁰

The 1937 *Report* highlighted an otherwise neglected aspect of baptism, the eschatological dimension, when it emphasized, 'Baptism not only looks backwards but also forwards. It looks forward to the fulfilment of that baptism of the Holy Spirit

⁸⁸ Robinson, 'Are Baptists Loyal to the New Testament Baptism?', *BT&F* July 24, 1914, 601, italics his.

⁸⁹ G. W. MacAlpine, 'Are Baptists Loyal to the New Testament Baptism?', *BT&F* July 31, 1914, 616.

⁹⁰ J. A. Halliday of Newcastle-on-Tyne, 'Are Baptists Loyal to the New Testament Baptism?', *BT&F* August 7, 1914, 635.

through which the believer receives the gifts and bears the fruits of the Christian life and fellowship'.⁹¹

The Subjective and Objective in Baptism.

This question can be divided, for convenience only, into two antitheses. The first raises the question of the internal and external aspects of baptism, the second the subjective and objective elements, but it will quickly become clear that they are, in fact, intimately related, as they are to the discussion of the sacramental aspect of baptism as a means of grace by the work of the Spirit.

The Internal And External Aspects of Baptism.

There is clearly a link here with the definition of a 'sacrament' as 'an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace', but even those who would not wish to speak of baptism as a sacrament made a clear distinction between the internal and external aspects of the rite. Baptists have often been accused of being externalists or ritualists, a charge they have strongly repudiated, but of which they have often been guilty. Baptism, Mountain argued, was not to be understood as merely an external ceremony, but 'as an act of personal consecration to Christ; a divine service of the deepest spiritual significance and importance; and a perpetual ordinance expressly appointed by our Lord for the purpose of symbolising certain foundation facts and doctrines of the gospel'.⁹² J. W. Ewing warned the 'young people of Nonconformity' to remember 'that no outward ceremony can ever enable us to dispense with the spiritual renewal in which we become "new creatures" in Christ!'⁹³ Whitby stated that a person could no more be saved by proxy than by any outward rite⁹⁴ and Ford claimed that Baptists were not ritualists, because to ritualists the outward form was

⁹¹ *Report of the Special Committee*, 5.

⁹² Mountain, *My Baptism*, 3.

⁹³ Ewing, *Talks*, 75.

⁹⁴ Whitby, *Baptist Principles*, 93.

essential, but to Baptists the mere form was nothing apart from the faith and conviction which it expressed.⁹⁵

In response, Baptists often argued that the move towards externalism or ritualism was what had led to the rejection of believer's baptism and the adoption of the non-Scriptural infant baptism and its associated doctrines. Whitby spoke of the 'incurable weakness of human nature to turn from the spiritual to the external - to substitute outward observances for a change of heart'. This invariably led to errors such as the postponement of baptism until death was near or the doctrine of baptismal regeneration and the resulting practice of infant baptism.⁹⁶ T. V. Tymms also discussed this tendency of attaching undue importance to things outward, palpable, visible, audible, allowing these imperceptibly to replace the things inward and spiritual, unseen and silent. 'Symbols, emblems, forms of speech, rites and ceremonies are adopted and cherished at first for what they mean and are still clung to when their meaning has become vague or altogether changed, or lost. Was it not, then, antecedently probable, if not inevitable, that man's ritualistic tendency would operate to first exaggerate the value and ultimately alter the meaning, of baptism?'⁹⁷ H. G. Wood stated that it was the insistence on the intrinsic efficacy of the ritual act which had led to the tendency to regard conscious faith on the part of the recipient to be no longer essential.⁹⁸

Speaking of the manner of administration of the rite as subordinate to the principle because it was to be administered only to believers, Wheeler Robinson maintained that it was not baptism which was essential but the thing signified.⁹⁹ That the dying robber on the cross could only repent and not be baptized confirmed Whitley's

⁹⁵ Ford, *Twenty-Five Years*, 10.

⁹⁶ Whitby, *Baptist Principles*, 56-57.

⁹⁷ Tymms, *Evolution of Infant Baptism*, 18-19. See also Robinson, *Baptist Principles*, 31.

⁹⁸ Wood, 'BAPTISM', 392.

⁹⁹ Robinson, *Baptist Principles*, 27.

conclusion that 'what's essential is not baptism, the sign, but repentance, the thing signified'.¹⁰⁰ Cook submitted that the ordinances were concrete and visible symbols of the facts on which the faith of the Church fundamentally rested and, in partaking of them, believers accepted the truth they enshrined, once more by faith making it the basis of their lives.¹⁰¹ Commenting that the name 'Baptist' was originally a nickname, Rushbrooke remarked that though it emphasized an external fact it ignored the inward and spiritual principle which alone gave significance and value to the external.¹⁰² In one of his many studies on conversion, Underwood contended that 'Instead of working from the outside inward, we must work from within outward',¹⁰³ for, as J. E. Roberts had explained, baptism and faith are but the outside and inside of the same thing.¹⁰⁴ This was why Baptists had never regarded baptism as essential for salvation. The inward grace which alone saved someone was ratified or signified by the outward act.¹⁰⁵ What other outward act, Morris asked, could better express those experiences of the soul which were common to every believer than the act of immersion.¹⁰⁶ Baptism was, therefore, the outward confession on the part of the Christian.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁰ Whitley, *Church, Ministry and Sacraments*, 100. He later wrote, p.160, on Romans 4:9-12, 'The outward sign apart from the inward reality was valueless, and [Paul] plainly added that the inward reality apart from that outward sign was invaluable...' Flowers, 'The Holy Spirit', 161, observed that the act of baptism in the early Church was not a mere formality, but rather 'corresponded to something very real in the inner life of the believer'. According to R. L. Child, 'The Baptist Contribution to the One Church', *BQ* 8.2 (April, 1936), 85, water baptism expressed 'with incomparable fidelity' the inward surrender of the heart and will to God through Christ.

¹⁰¹ Cook, *Why of Our Faith*, 83.

¹⁰² Rushbrooke, 'Protestant of the Protestants', 62.

¹⁰³ A. C. Underwood, 'The Place of Conversion in Christian Experience', *BQ* 6.4 (October, 1932), 161.

¹⁰⁴ Roberts, *Christian Baptism*, 22.

¹⁰⁵ See Meyer, *Peter*, 169; Mountain, *My Baptism*, 31; Whitley, *Church, Ministry and Sacraments*, 253.

¹⁰⁶ Morris, *Thoughts*, 22-23.

¹⁰⁷ Whitby, *Baptist Principles*, 64.

Whitley's comment that the Holy Spirit was not limited by outward acts, as in Cornelius' conversion,¹⁰⁸ quite probably reflected a common view of many at this time that baptism and the reception of the Spirit are separate experiences, a view which has often led to baptism being administered sometimes many years after conversion, rather than being seen as a part of the conversion process. But other writers believed that the New Testament regarded the outward and the inward as inseparably linked. Robinson was convinced that baptism in the New Testament sense did justice to both the inner experience and the external expression of it, 'which', he added in parenthesis, 'is always, in some form, necessary'.¹⁰⁹ Laws remarked how grand it would be if all Baptists were really baptized and not merely immersed. For him, immersion was simply the external sign. To have been baptized was 'to have been down with Christ into death, to have put off the old man with his deeds, to have come out of the place of death to live in the power of an endless life, to have been pledged for ever against all sin, and to all holiness, to have ceased to be as a natural man, and to have become in actual truth a new creation in Christ. That is to have been baptized'.¹¹⁰

Wheeler Robinson sought to redress this Baptist aversion to ceremony. He contended that Jesus did not despise the outer ceremony, though his emphasis constantly fell on the inner meaning. There was, for him, a value in the outward and visible sign, 'for we simply cannot think of Him as participating in a perfunctory formalism'.¹¹¹ In support of this, Robinson and others, as has already been noted, brought the ethical aspect of the rite to the fore, speaking of moral holiness and consecrated character. 'This inward and ethical emphasis stands in contrast with the externalism of the older idolatry and the later legalism'.¹¹² For him, the external act of

¹⁰⁸ Whitley, *Church, Ministry and Sacraments*, 133.

¹⁰⁹ H. W. Robinson, 'Review "The Psychology of Religion"', *BQ* 2.6 (April, 1925), 284.

¹¹⁰ Laws, 'Vital Forces', 19.

¹¹¹ Robinson, 'The Baptism of Power', *BT&F* January 16, 1920, 35.

¹¹² Robinson, *Life and Faith*, 12.

baptism was always subordinate to the conversion of the individual, his baptism of the Spirit,¹¹³ which was, nevertheless, connected to water baptism. Elsewhere he wrote, 'Baptism in the New Testament is so identified with the new experience it initiates that it is difficult to summarize its meaning without describing that experience itself'.¹¹⁴ There was little wonder that the gift of the Spirit was linked with believer's baptism, in fact, the experience of that gift, according to Robinson, was the test of the rite.¹¹⁵

On 1 Peter 3:20-21, Whitley remarked that baptism itself did not save, but what it signified did. On the divine side it pictured death and resurrection (cf. Romans 6:4), whilst on the human side it attested the candidate's desire to receive God's peace. Baptism only saved by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.¹¹⁶ John MacBeath spoke of baptism as the grave at the entrance to the Kingdom of God, signifying how radical the experience was through which believers passed and how spiritual the society was into which Christians entered. It was an acted parable of the death and resurrection of Christ, but also of the believer. The old things had passed away and all things were made new. To surrender the outward act would run the risk of forfeiting the inward experience which it typified. To modify the outward would be to run the peril of tempering the inward. 'What God has joined together let no man put asunder'.¹¹⁷ The objective reality which these authors proclaimed was the givenness of grace in the death and resurrection of Jesus, which was grandly rehearsed in the baptismal act.

John Lewis gave as the reason for his address as 'to encourage that sense of dignity which responsibility recognised and accepted always brings, in this case a

¹¹³ Robinson, 'The Place of Baptism', 212.

¹¹⁴ Robinson, *Baptist Principles*, 13.

¹¹⁵ Robinson, *Baptist Principles*, 24.

¹¹⁶ Whitley, *Church, Ministry and Sacraments*, 253-54.

¹¹⁷ J. MacBeath, 'The Catholicity of Our Faith', in W. T. Whitley (ed.), *Fourth Baptist World Congress* (n.d., [1928]), 120.

responsibility not merely for the outward symbol, but far more, for all that it symbolises'.¹¹⁸ Later he observed that many who were very jealous for the outward form never seemed to see its implications, and those who did found it difficult to realize them.¹¹⁹ Laws sounded a similar warning:

...we shall not be able to keep baptism if we make it merely an external rite, imposed as some kind of test. *We must emphasize its spiritual content.* As a piece of mere literal compliance with the letter it will not constrain the modern mind. But if we stress the spiritual antecedents, and the gift of grace brought through obedience, we shall be on ground where we can appeal to every instinct of a spiritual man. Make it a formal thing, or a little thing, and we shall not retain it. Make it an act of the soul rather than of the body, make it an act Christward rather than a church test, and we shall keep it alive.¹²⁰

Subjective and Objective In Baptism.

From their discussion of the relationship between the internal and external aspects of baptism, several Baptists also discussed the subjective and objective elements of the doctrine.¹²¹ Though the objective clearly antecedes the subjective, as the grace of God precedes the response of the individual, yet for Baptists the focus of attention was on (and in many respects still is) the individual's act in baptism.

During this period there were few attempts to engage this issue directly. In the popular mind, baptism had always tended to concentrate on the subjective, emphasis often focussing on the public profession of the candidates' faith, what they were doing for God and what it meant to them personally, and the objective side often being little more than a rehearsal of what God had already done for ~~them~~ in the death and resurrection of Christ. There was seldom the notion that something actually took place in baptism, and this was the logical result of a Zwinglian memorialism, which writers like Robinson and Underwood sought to correct.

¹¹⁸ Lewis, 'Baptised into Jesus Christ', 15.

¹¹⁹ Lewis, 'Baptised into Jesus Christ', 21.

¹²⁰ Laws, 'Vital Forces', 15, italics added.

¹²¹ It is first of all necessary to clarify what is meant by these terms. The subjective concentrates upon the action of the candidate and their personal testimony made at baptism. By objective is meant the givenness of God's grace and the objective rehearsing of death and resurrection.

It will be quite clear that those for whom baptism was an ordinance, by which they stressed the element of obedience and little else, focus was directed upon the candidate. However, those who were seeking a return to the fuller New Testament doctrine began to redress the imbalance by emphasizing what took place in the rite and not simply what it meant to the baptized. Without doubt, the likes of Robinson and Underwood were greatly helped in this by the Psychology of Religion school of thought, and they tended to reflect a greater emphasis on the experience itself. And these two men were by no means alone. An influential group of writers sought to link together both the subjective and objective elements of baptism.

Perhaps the most clear, and certainly the most concise, statement of this was made by Underwood. In reply to the question as to what the outer act of baptism contributed to the inner experiences of forgiveness, regeneration, faith and fellowship with Christ, the only possible answer he could find was that Paul and the other New Testament writers never considered them apart in this detached manner. For Paul it was never a passive experience because it was no formal act, no mere symbol and never administered to any but believers. 'The outer act and the inner experience are always found together'.¹²²

Wheeler Robinson too shared the concern that the two be held together, and he dealt with this matter in more detail than any other. In response to the same question as addressed by Underwood, Robinson provided the same answer, so much so that it is quite possible that Underwood abridged Robinson at this point. After declaring that the New Testament never considered these issues apart, Robinson added that the baptism of which it spoke was no formal act, but a genuine experience, and, in any case, the New Testament did not know of unbaptized believers. It was only later generations which separated the outer act from the inner experience, and this development had made possible the rise of sacramentarianism on the one hand and

¹²² Underwood, *Conversion*, 111.

the entire rejection of the sacraments on the other. The later history of baptism was, he stated, in large measure, the history of this separation. He concluded, 'It became possible to administer baptism to unintelligent recipients only through the transference of emphasis from the moral and spiritual to the sacramental side of the rite'.¹²³ As has already been shown, according to Robinson the mode was not essential, only appropriate. To equate the practice with the principle would stultify the principle itself, which emphasized the inner essential of faith, declaring that without it all outward ceremonies were valueless.¹²⁴ Baptists, he claimed, only valued the external rite in so far as it emphasized the spiritual change wrought in human nature by the Spirit of God in Christ, implying both a profession of faith and a change of heart.¹²⁵ Thus baptism was the 'cardinal ceremony of union with Christ, the objective aspect of what is subjectively faith'.¹²⁶ Later, he outlined the triple aspect of baptism. It implied the historical events of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, of which submersion was the suggestive symbol. It consisted of a series of acts on the part of the baptized, who went down into the water, was submerged and rose out of it. It supplied a visible parallel to the spiritual experience of the believer which Paul called the baptism of the Holy Spirit - his death to sin and resurrection to newness of life. 'All these three aspects are implied in the single series of visible acts, and they become sacramental to the participant for whom they have this implication'. Such significance was warranted in the light of prophetic symbolism, which was more than mere 'representation'. The charge of 'sacramental' magic could be dismissed because the person was a conscious believer, the efficacy of the rite depending on his conscious and believing participation in it. Equally there was no question of 'mere

¹²³ Robinson, *Baptist Principles*, 14-15.

¹²⁴ Robinson, *Baptist Principles*, 15.

¹²⁵ Robinson, *Baptist Principles*, 7-8.

¹²⁶ Robinson, *Christian Doctrine of Man*, 124, supporting this from Romans 6:1-11.

symbolism', for the act was the 'partial and fragmentary, but very real accomplishment of a divine work, the work of the Holy Spirit'.¹²⁷

In his contribution to the ecumenical volume, *The Ministry and the Sacraments*, 1937, Underwood asserted that there were many Baptists who could no longer accept that the baptism of a believer was 'merely declaratory', and given the representative nature of his contribution, suggests that though he and Wheeler Robinson were the chief advocates of this view, they were speaking on behalf of a growing number within the denomination. They stressed what God did in baptism, as well as what believers did, thereby avoiding the subjectivism which stressed what the baptized person did as though it were the only vital thing in the sacrament. For them, believer's baptism was more than a mere symbolic representation of conversion, much more than a picturesque and dramatic method of marking conversion and entry into Church membership, but a definite means of grace.¹²⁸ He submitted that only when the two elements of the subjective and objective were held together that Baptists were truly able to reject the charge of being mere ritualists.¹²⁹

R. L. Child expressed it thus: baptism declared the truth that God and men came together through Jesus Christ in a relationship which was wholly personal. On the one hand, the rite demanded of the candidate an individual apprehension of and assent to God's gracious purpose. On the other, baptism was the candidate's way of testifying to the fact that, in his personal repentance and faith, he had actually met God as Father and experienced his saving power. 'From both points of view the relationship between God and the believer is seen to be entirely personal, and one in which Faith and Grace are spiritually complementary, the one to the other'.¹³⁰

¹²⁷ Robinson, *Christian Experience of the Holy Spirit*, 193-94, where he used Romans 6:1-4 as his starting point.

¹²⁸ Underwood, 'Views of Modern Churches', 227.

¹²⁹ Underwood, 'Conversion and Baptism', 27-35.

¹³⁰ Child, 'The Baptist Contribution', 85.

At the end of his brief treatment of the unity of baptism, Flowers observed that, 'in the main, we can say that the attitude of the Church to baptism was uniform in the Apostolic period. It was one of the objective realities in which all shared'.¹³¹ There was here a golden opportunity for Baptists to link the objectivity, the givenness, implied in baptism with its nature as an ordinance, that is, as a means of grace, instituted by Christ and to be observed by all believers, but it was not seized.

That Robinson, Underwood and the others were successful to a point, is clear from the remark in the 1937 *Special Committee Report* which acknowledged that as an acted creed and declaration of the Gospel, baptism expressed faith in the power and grace of God in Christ to forgive, cleanse and re-create, showing forth the way of redemption by Christ's death, burial and resurrection, with which 'spiritually and mystically the believer is identified. *It testifies to the doctrine of grace and to the necessity for the complete surrender of self to God.* It is an appointed and an approved means of grace to the believing soul'.¹³² They were also successful in that they paved the way for later scholars to develop a truly sacramental theology of baptism from a truly Baptist perspective.

Conclusions.

The first four decades of the twentieth century witnessed a tremendous change within not just the Baptist denomination, but within the world Church. The rise of the ecumenical movement meant that the principles held so dear for generations, or so it seemed, came under the theological microscope, and established practices were increasingly challenged from within and without. A great many of the denomination's theologians and ministers and, more gradually, laymen became exposed to ecumenical developments resulting in changes, sometimes marked ones, in emphasis and even conviction. The issue of baptism, perhaps more than any other doctrine

¹³¹ Flowers, 'The Unity of the Church', 350.

¹³² *Report of the Special Committee*, 6, italics added.

because of its sectarian nature, became a focus of Baptist thinking. Wheeler Robinson eloquently declared that if believer's baptism was really central and fundamental enough to justify the existence of a distinct denomination to urge its claims, then Baptists should be able to show the great and permanent principles which were implied in it: personal conversion, the authority of Christ revealed in the New Testament and the doctrine of the Church as the society of the converted.¹³³ Gilbert Laws similarly claimed that the Baptist witness within the ecumenical movement to both the 'Church-principle' and, no less, to the 'ordinance-principle' was a service for which the Baptists should be thanked.¹³⁴

¹³³ Robinson, *Baptist Principles*, 16-27.

¹³⁴ G. Laws, 'The Church-Principle of the Baptists'. *BT* October 14, 1937, 773.

PART FOUR

1938-1966

Chapter Five

Ecumenical Developments.

Introduction.

The whole complexion of the baptismal debate was set to change when the Swiss theologian, Emil Brunner, delivered the Olaus Petri series of lectures at Uppsala University in 1937, instigating the beginning of the modern baptismal debate.¹

Brunner's thinking was conditioned by his conviction that, in Scripture, truth was always presented as something dynamic and personal, consisting of a divine-human encounter, a meeting between God and man, being God's revelation and man's response. He announced his rejection of the subject-object antithesis, which, he argued, had originated with Greek philosophy and had burdened the Church ever since, denying that it represented the biblical understanding of truth with the consequence that 'much of our thinking and action in the Church must be different from what we have been accustomed to for centuries'.² On the sacrament of baptism,

¹ E. Brunner, *Wahrheit als Begegnung* (Zürich, 1938), E.T. *The Divine Human Encounter*, (1944). It was later enlarged and re-titled *Truth as Encounter* (E.T. 1954). The original lectures were delivered after Brunner had returned from participating in both the Oxford and Edinburgh Ecumenical Conferences, where he had played an important role. D. M. Thompson, 'The Older Free Churches', in R. Davies (ed.), *The Testing of the Churches, 1932-1982* (1982), 105, 'The debate about baptism took a new turn as a result of the challenge to infant baptism offered by Emil Brunner in 1938 and Karl Barth in a famous lecture given in 1943...'. Overviews of the early period of what is here described 'the modern baptismal debate' include E. A. Payne, 'Baptism in Recent Discussion', in A. Gilmore (ed.), *Christian Baptism. A Fresh Attempt to Understand the Rite in Terms of Scripture, History, and Theology* (1959), 15-24; K. Runia, 'Recent Developments in Baptist Theology', *The Reformed Theological Review* 20.1 (February, 1961), 12-23, and 20.2 (June, 1961), 47-49; D. Alten, 'Baptism in Recent German Theology', *Restoration Quarterly* 7.3 (1963), 124-131.

² Brunner, *Divine Human Encounter*, 6, being Brunner's 'Foreword' to the English translation.

he contended that the antitheses he had identified were a misunderstanding of the New Testament:

In baptism it is God, first and sovereign, who acts, who forgives sin, who cleanses man and regenerates him. But man too acts in baptism. He allows this cleansing of himself to take place, he lets himself be drawn into the death of Christ, he confesses his faith and his attachment to Christ. Baptism is not merely a gift to man, but also an active receiving and confession on the part of man. Indeed baptism, precisely as this free confession of man, is the stipulation for the individual's joining the Church. Baptism is not only an act of grace, but just as much an act of confession stemming from the act of grace.³

When baptism was enjoined in the New Testament it was regarded as a 'two-sided happening', involving what he termed 'personal correspondence'. Baptism was not merely a gift to man, but also an active receiving and confession on the part of man.⁴ From this base, Brunner, a Paedobaptist Calvinist,⁵ launched his devastating attack on the doctrine and practice of infant baptism on the grounds of the inseparable connection between sacrament and faith. 'To be sure, faith does not produce the sacrament; but the sacrament is not accomplished, it is no true sacrament, without the faith'.⁵ He proceeded by criticizing the covenantal arguments for infant baptism and attempts to meet objections to it by the introduction of the rite of confirmation. The sacrament, as the Reformation asserted, had no validity without faith, thus, by their retention of infant baptism, the Reformers had departed from their own principle.⁶ This had severely damaged the image of the Church, creating a discrepancy between two Churches: one of the baptized and the other of those assenting to confession, and this, in its turn, was one of the chief causes of the present difficulties of the Church in

³ Brunner, *Divine Human Encounter*, 128. Traditionally, Paedobaptists have emphasized the objective side of baptism, the grace of God, whilst Baptists have stressed the subjective, the response of the believer.

⁴ Brunner, *Divine Human Encounter*, 128.

⁵ Brunner, *Divine Human Encounter*, 129.

⁶ Brunner, *Divine Human Encounter*, 130-31.

all places.⁷ The irresistible conclusion was, therefore, that 'The contemporary practice of infant baptism can hardly be regarded as being anything short of scandalous'.⁸

However, despite his criticisms, Brunner remained a Paedobaptist. His views were first introduced to British Baptists by R. Birch Hoyle in an enthusiastic review of the book in 1938, which concluded with an invitation for Brunner to transfer his allegiance to the Baptists.⁹

The direct relevance and impact of Brunner's work on the British ecumenical scene was made explicit in Dr. Frederick Cawley's 1945 review of the English version of Brunner's book. Cawley declared that this was an apologetic against infant baptism that was second to none and believed that such a fresh investigation served to reveal to Baptists how impregnable their position was, anchored in the fundamental faith of the Church of Christ. 'That being so', he confidently asserted, 'we have every right, and it is also our responsibility, to stress that in any proposed union of the Churches, if and when such should take place, this principle of believers' baptism shall be openly acknowledged and endorsed by practice'. Further, 'We only ask that baptism shall be a real sacrament; that is, with the full consent of the believing heart'.¹⁰

What is surprising is that the impact of Brunner's work was at first completely missed, when it sparked off a correspondence on the mode of baptism. Several weeks after Cawley's review, Mr. L. Claydon Parry responded by arguing that the mode of baptism was a secondary matter, concluding that sprinkling should be the mode of baptism, especially for those who were afraid of water and older people. He

⁷ Brunner, *Divine Human Encounter*, 135.

⁸ Brunner, *Divine Human Encounter*, 132.

⁹ R. Birch Hoyle, formerly Professor at Western Theological Seminary in the United States and a graduate from Regent's Park College, 'Emil Brunner Vindicates the Baptist Position', *BT* June 30, 1938, 508.

¹⁰ F. Cawley, first tutor and later Principal of Spurgeon's College, 'Emil Brunner's Criticism of Infant Baptism', *BT* August 23, 1945, 7. Rev. W. H. Millard of School House, Benholm, Kincardineshire, recounted a woman's shock when she discovered that Brunner was still a Paedobaptist, 'Emil Brunner on Infant Baptism', *BT* September 6, 1945, 8.

advocated a United Free Church practising believers' baptism but leaving the mode to the candidate. He conceded to the obvious symbolism of immersion, but then dismissed the subject somewhat casually and quickly.¹¹

Responses were not slow in coming. Elsie M. Halden expressed her inability to understand Parry's reason for the dread of immersion, remonstrating that Christianity was not a convenience, believing that sprinkling itself had originated as a convenience.¹² Rev. William Hitchcock felt strongly about the suggestion that there should be other modes of baptism, but made the concession that 'if for any reason a candidate cannot be immersed, let there be a forthright confession of faith'. He argued that Parry suggested the form of a corrupted ordinance be applied to a proper subject for baptism, and then posed the question, 'What could be gained by Church union through such a general retreat on the part of the Baptists?' Submission to baptism in its true form, he believed, was the outcome of the believer's full submission to the risen Saviour. R. H. Gostage confessed his failure to see how baptism for believers and immersion could be divorced from each other.¹³ There is little to doubt that Mrs. K. Willes spoke for the majority of Baptists when she simply asserted that the only baptism for Baptists was immersion upon a change of heart.¹⁴

¹¹ L. C. Parry from Reading, 'Believers' Baptism and the Mode of Immersion', *BT* September 13, 1945, 6.

¹² E. M. Halden of Wandsworth, who described herself as 'a young Christian', 'Believers' Baptism and the Mode of Immersion', *BT* September 20, 1945, 6. 'A. C.' from Hereford, a fifty-nine year old, 'A Testimony to Immersion', *BT* October 4, 1945, 8, testified that he had been baptized by immersion in spite of a fear of water, and that on the occasion he had had no fear of the baptismal waters.

¹³ W. J. H. Hitchcock of Erith and R. H. Gostage from St. Helen's, 'Believers' Baptism and the Mode of Immersion', *BT* September 27, 1945, 8. Gostage, a layman, favoured co-operation not unity, a view he again expressed, 'The Mode of Immersion', *BT* November 15, 1945, 7.

¹⁴ Mrs. K. Willes from Littlehampton, 'Believers' Baptism and the Mode of Immersion', *BT* October 11, 1945, 6. See the other letters in the same edition by Rev. F. Goldsmith French of Lee, London; A. S. Clement of Hearsall, Coventry, who noted that the mode did not ensure belief in the principle; Marcus G. Scroggie from Bromley, Kent; Rev. Arthur Ives of Westminster Baptist Church. See also George E. Page of London, 'Baptism and the Mode of Immersion', *BT* October 25, 1945, 5; Miss M. Armstrong from St. Neots, who recounted the river baptisms at Isleham, where Spurgeon had been baptized, 'Another Testimony to Immersion', *BT* November 22, 1945, 7.

That Brunner's book was beginning to make an impact on Baptist theology was first evidenced in an article by Rev. B. C. Shildrick on Baptists and the ecumenical movement.¹⁵ Shildrick submitted that Baptists' first field of witness lay in the realm of theology, as it was here that so many issues were decided. Brunner's influence was reflected in Shildrick's statement that, 'Theology to-day is again in the melting-pot, and just as in the past theological thought has determined the main lines of Church development so it will be in the new ecumenical movement'. He continued, 'Our Baptist forefathers were theologians. It was their theology that made them Baptists. We need a Baptist theology now which is capable of presenting the issue of believers' baptism as something demanding the serious consideration of the world Church'.¹⁶

There is no doubt, that Brunner's book set the tone for the most productive and varied period of baptismal debate since the rise of the Oxford Movement, and, as far as Baptists were concerned, it ignited what was to be the most fruitful and productive period of reflection and debate on the baptismal issue.¹⁷

From 1938 onwards the whole baptismal debate was in a state of flux, with a whole stream of writings flowing from the pens of international scholars of the highest calibre,¹⁸ and also major reports from mainline denominations.¹⁹ In fact, English

¹⁵ B. C. Shildrick of Florence Road, Brighton, 'Baptist Witness and the Ecumenical Movement', *The Fraternal* 58 (September, 1945), 5-8. Six of his seventeen footnotes are from Brunner.

¹⁶ Shildrick, 'Baptist Witness and the Ecumenical Movement', 5.

¹⁷ That Brunner's book marked the beginning of this modern debate was acknowledged by Ernest Payne, 'Baptism in Recent Discussion', 16-17; and K. Runia, 'Recent Developments in Baptist Theology', 12, who stated 'It started with Emil Brunner's "Wahrheit als Begegnung" in 1938...'. His influence can also be seen in N. Clark's 'The Theology of Baptism', in Gilmore (ed.), *Christian Baptism*, 311-12; and most recently in C. Ellis, 'Baptism and the Sacramental Freedom of God', in P. S. Fiddes (ed.), *Reflections of the Water. Understanding God and the World through the Baptism of Believers* (1996), 38, 'Baptism may be seen as a focus of the divine-human encounter'.

¹⁸ Including Karl Barth, Markus Barth, F.-J. Leenhardt, Oscar Cullmann, Joachim Jeremias, H. G. Marsh, D. G. Dix, K. E. Kirk, W. F. Flemington, Pierre Marcel, G. W. H. Lampe and Kurt Aland.

¹⁹ These included the Church of England and the Church of Scotland, as well as reports on the union discussions concerning the Churches of South and North India. On these reports and the writers mentioned above, see Ernest Payne's overviews in 'Baptism in Recent Discussion', 15-24; 'Baptism in Present-Day Theology', in A. T. Ohm (ed.), *Eighth Baptist World Congress*,

Baptists kept a pace with all the wider discussions of baptism through frequent reviews and review articles,²⁰ and even through the translation of important texts, most notably those by Karl Barth,²¹ Kurt Aland and Rudolf Schnackenburg.²²

Baptists, then, were not unaware of the scholarly debate on baptism, in fact, from the mid-1950s to mid-1960s, several Baptist scholars were themselves to make important contributions, most notably H. H. Rowley, Neville Clark, R. E. O. White, George Beasley-Murray and Alec Gilmore.²³ The debate within the denomination continued predominantly in response to the ongoing ecumenical developments in which Baptists played an important if ambiguous role.

Cleveland, Ohio, U.S.A., July 22-27, 1950 (Philadelphia, 1950), 171-179; A. Gilmore, 'Some Recent Trends in the Theology of Baptism', *BQ* 15.7 (July, 1954), 311-318; *BQ* 15.8 (October, 1954), 338-345; *BQ* 16.1 (January, 1955), 2-9; G. R. Beasley-Murray's 'The Baptismal Controversy in the British Scene', in *Did the Early Church Baptize Infants*, by K. Aland, (London, 1963), 17-27.

²⁰ Only two examples need to be cited at the moment in order to illustrate this point, eg, E. A. Payne reviewed H. G. Marsh's *The Origin and Significance of New Testament Baptism* in 'Baptism in the New Testament', *BT* May 1, 1941, 215, as did H. W. Robinson, 'The Origin and Significance of the New Testament Baptism', by H. G. Marsh', *BQ* 10.6 (April, 1941), 349-351 and H. H. Rowley, 'The Origin and Significance of the New Testament Baptism', by H. G. Marsh', *Journal of Theological Studies* 44 (1943), 79-81. Seven years later W. F. Flemington, tutor in New Testament and Language and Literature at Wesley House, Cambridge, had his *The New Testament Doctrine of Baptism* published, and in his review of it, Ernest Payne stated that Flemington's main exposition will confirm Baptists in the position they have taken up, *BT* December 30, 1948, 7.

²¹ The importance of the publication of the English translation Barth's *The Teaching of the Church Regarding Baptism*, a lecture originally delivered in Gwatt am Thunersee, Switzerland, on May 7, 1943, is difficult to overestimate. The translation by Ernest Payne was based on the second German edition of *Die Kirchliche Lehre von der Taufe*, no.14 of the series of *Theologische Studien*, K. Barth (ed.), (Zürich, 1943). The book was critically acclaimed by R. L. Child in his review, who stated that, 'Baptists in particular will be interested to read Dr. Barth's exposition, which is at once a plea for the vital significance of the rite, and a frank statement against Infant Baptism'. See R. L. Child, 'The Teaching of the Church regarding Baptism', by Karl Barth', *BQ* 12.12 (October, 1948), 449. Its importance for the whole baptismal debate is emphasized by K. Runia, 'Recent Developments in Baptist Theology', 12; D. Alter, 'Baptism in Recent German Theology', 124-126.

²² Karl Barth, *The Teaching of the Church Regarding Baptism* (1948) E.T. by Dr. Ernest Payne, and Kurt Aland's *Did the Early Church Baptize Infants?* (1963), and Rudolf Schnackenburg's *Baptism in the Thought of St. Paul*, (1964), both translated by Dr. George Beasley-Murray.

²³ Eg. H. H. Rowley, *The Unity of the Bible* (1953), and several articles on the antecedents of Christian baptism, eg, 'Jewish Proselyte Baptism and the Baptism of John', *Hebrew Union College Annual* XV (1940), 313-334; N. Clark, *An Approach to the Theology of the Sacraments*, Studies in Biblical Theology n.17, (1956), and *Call to Worship* (1960); R. E. O. White, *The Biblical Doctrine of Initiation* (1960); G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (1962); A. Gilmore(ed.), *Christian Baptism* (1959).

'Official' Reunion Conversations.

By the 1930s ecumenism had become an established part of the Church throughout the Christian world. The F&O and Life and Work conferences had firmly established themselves, and the ecumenical dimension could no longer be ignored. The whole issue of baptism, then, was inextricably linked to this unstoppable movement. It was no longer possible for denominations to continue in their cherished beliefs and principles without re-examining and re-defining them in the light of the growing number of exegetical and theological studies which increasingly poured forth from individuals, groups and denominations. In Britain, as far as the Baptists were concerned, official reunion conversations took place on four fronts, each one running side by side and feeding one another and off each other. First, there was still the long-standing issue of Free Church union. That progress was being made on Free Church union was presupposed by the second series of conversations between the Free Churches and the Church of England. As these two were so inter-twined, they will be dealt with together. Thirdly, there was roughly a decade of exploratory discussions between the Baptists and the Churches of Christ. Fourthly, there was the developing international dimension, originating in F&O which led to the formation of the WCC.

Free Church Union and Free Church-Anglican Reunion Conversations.

The Joint Conferences between the Church of England and the FCEFC which had been suspended in 1925 recommenced in 1930, the fruit of which appeared in February 1938 with the publication of three discussion documents, the most important of which was the *Outline of a Reunion Scheme*,²⁴ which was based on an earlier draft

²⁴ For the text of the *Outline of a Reunion Scheme for the Church of England and the Free Churches in England*, see G. K. A. Bell, *Documents on Christian Unity: Third Series 1930-48* (1948), 71-101. A brief review of the *Outline* is to be found in *BQ* 9.1 (January, 1938), 66, which, noting who the Baptist representatives were, expressed the opinion that 'it is certain they would not unanimously agree that "Baptism may be administered in infancy or upon profession of faith"'. For one of the few comments made on the *Intercommunion* document, see 'Inter-Communion', *BT* February 3, 1938, 82. The other two documents were *The Practice of Intercommunion and the Doctrine of the Church* and *1662 and To-day*. Fuller details of this whole controversy can be found in A. R. Cross, 'Revd. Dr. Hugh Martin: Ecumenical Controversialist and Writer, Part 3', *BQ* 37.3 (July, 1997), 131-36.

document prepared by the FoR on behalf of the Churches represented by the Joint Conference, which the Canterbury Convocation commended to the attention of the churches. The *Outline*'s stated intention was to provide a basis for further work towards reunion by dispelling prejudices, pointing the way forward to fuller agreement and in time 'the union for which we pray'.²⁵ The official reply of the FCFC was submitted to the Joint Conference in September 1941,²⁶ but in the mean time the constituent denominations considered the reports.

Even before the *Outline* was officially released, J. C. Carlile gave notice of it in a front page editorial in the *Baptist Times* and argued that four major principles remained unsettled: the nature of the Church, whether it was to be composed of those professing faith or those admitted by virtue of something done to them in infancy; baptism, on which the *Outline* seemed less than clear as to both its meaning and mode; the appropriate exercise of episcopacy; and the relationship of the Church to the state.²⁷ In no time at all, the *Outline* became the chief topic of discussion. Hugh Martin stated that the understanding of the Church as the fellowship of believers was safeguarded in the *Outline*, admitting that both forms of baptism would have to be permitted in a United Church. At the same time he recognized that, 'Those Baptists who refuse to consider the possibility of being in the same Church with those who practise infant baptism will object to this Scheme and to every other'.²⁸ Martin had been one of the four Baptist signatories to the *Outline*, the others being M. E. Aubrey,

²⁵ *Outline*, 71-73.

²⁶ *Reply of the Free Church Federal Council to the Joint Conference of Representatives of the Church of England and the Free Churches regarding the three documents presented to it by the Conference in 1938*, in Bell, *Documents on Christian Unity: Third Series*, 102-119. It should be noted that the FCEFC and the NFCC had amalgamated in 1940 to form the Free Church Federal Council (FCFC).

²⁷ J. C. Carlile, 'Outline of the United Church', *BT* January 27, 1938, 71-72.

²⁸ H. Martin, 'Outline of the United Church', *BT* February 3, 1938, 84.

Charles Brown and Gilbert Laws. However, each of the remaining three dissociated themselves from the Scheme.²⁹

In his FoR booklet to accompany the *Outline*, Martin reasserted his support for the Scheme, but stressed that it was not being endorsed as a final basis of negotiations by anybody³⁰ and reiterated his previous arguments that such a reunion would be one of comprehension.³¹ On the membership of the Church the difficulty of baptism came to the fore, but he restated the Scheme's recognition of both infant and believer's baptism as permissible in the united Church, the former looking forward to and being completed by personal repentance and faith and instruction in the doctrines, privileges and duties of the Church.³²

It quickly appeared that Martin was alone in his ecumenical aspirations. Though this was not in fact the case, he became the focus of attention for the strong opposition within the BU to the unity schemes, chief amongst whom were the Baptist business man, benefactor and member of the BU Council, R. Wilson Black, and Dr. Henry Townsend, Principal of Manchester Baptist College. Black asked whether Martin had been the only Baptist on the Committee which prepared the Scheme, whilst Townsend suggested that Martin had been acting on his own initiative and not representing the BU who, the previous November, had decided that organic union

²⁹ Laws, 'Outline of the United Church', *BT* February 3, 1938, 84, announced that his name had been appended to the document only because he had been a member of the Joint Committee at the time; whilst Dr. Brown and Mr. Aubrey informed the BU Council meeting on March 8th that they had not been consulted about the inclusion of their names, see 'The Council in Session', *BT* March 17, 1938, 208.

³⁰ Martin, *Can We Unite? An Examination of the Outline of a Reunion Scheme issued by the Lambeth Joint Conference* (1938), 8. The booklet included 3 pages of 'Questions for Discussion' prepared by Rev. Trevor Kilborn, pp.30-32.

³¹ Martin, *Can We Unite?*, 9-13.

³² Martin, *Can We Unite?*, 15-17. As far as communion was concerned, he believed that the only contentious point was over its administration, which would have to be by those duly authorised - which, it must be said, was a rather open and ambiguous statement.

was not practicable, though they did desire the fullest co-operation with other Free Churches.³³

Rev. A. Tildsley's suggestion that no more time should be given to the subject of reunion³⁴ clearly reflected the feeling of some that the exchange had got out of hand. Martin, who was deeply hurt by Black and Townsend's onslaught, defended both himself and his involvement in the preparation of the *Outline*, noting that the BU had not had to appoint him knowing his views on the issue, and asserted, 'I am always scrupulously careful to distinguish, when necessary, between my personal views and those of the denomination as a whole. I fully realise that my views on re-union are those of a minority'. He underscored the fact that his actions had committed the BU to nothing, and expressed his belief that he had represented it in the 'Conversations'. 'I have put forward the Baptist view, and clear signs of that can be seen in all three documents'. Martin then went on the offensive, declining to apologise for his connection with the documents, of which he was proud, reiterating again his belief that it was along such lines that the United Church of the future would come. 'I shall deeply regret it if the Baptists stand out, but I have never said, in private or in public, that the Baptist Union was likely to agree with the Scheme'. Martin then stated his own convictions: 'I am a Baptist, and I glory in it, but I do not believe that our denomination has any monopoly of the truth... I do not believe in infant baptism, but I am certainly prepared to join a Church fellowship with those who do, on the basis of our common faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Bigger issues than baptism are at stake in the world to-day, however important baptism may be in its own sphere'.³⁵

³³ R. W. Black, 'Outline of the United Church', *BT* February 10, 1938, 104. Black disapproved of the fact that the *Outline* admitted infant baptism on the grounds that it and episcopacy depreciated the Scriptures. It should not be forgotten that the *Outline* had been prepared by the Friends of Reunion, within whose ranks Martin was proudly numbered, and in which he was a leading light. H. Townsend, 'Re-Union and Baptist Union Representation', *BT* February 10, 1938, 104.

³⁴ A. Tildsley of Poplar and Bromley Tabernacle, 'Re-Union', *BT* February 17, 1938, 124.

³⁵ H. Martin, 'Outline of a Re-Union Scheme', *BT* February 17, 1938, 124. It is worth noting that Martin was for a long time in membership with the Hampstead Garden Suburb Free Church of which Dr. Rushbrooke had been the first minister and which practised open membership.

The subsequent pages of the *Baptist Times* reveal the depth of feelings on the reunion issue, the majority being overwhelmingly against the pro-unity position whose figurehead was Hugh Martin,³⁶ though Martin was not without some support.³⁷ A paragraph from the *Outline*, noting the necessity of two forms of baptism in a United Church,³⁸ was submitted to a number of ministers in-pastorate, who were all but unanimous in their opposition to the proposals in the Scheme.³⁹

Townsend launched another stinging attack. He believed that instead of glorifying God, as Martin maintained, Baptist involvement in the Scheme would mean confusion. Townsend wanted to draw a sharp distinction between organic unity and close co-operation, and that the Scheme's ideal of the former was at odds with truth and history. In a tone reminiscent of T. R. Glover's opposition to Shakespeare in the

³⁶ See Rev. Richard A. J. Cusden of Putney, 'Outline of a Re-union Scheme', *BT* February 24, 1938, 144, who, following earlier statements by Laws, recognized that to enter into a United Church would lead to separation from other Baptists throughout the world.

³⁷ P. T. Thomson entered a plea for generosity and tolerance to be displayed within the controversy, and Rev. Maurice F. Hewett of Norwich, called for positive letters instead of negative ones in the debate and observed that all varying interpretations of Scripture were secondary to love for God which should be shown amongst Christian people, 'Re-Union', *BT* March 3, 1938, 164; Rev. R. S. McHardy of Chorley Wood and Rev. Thomas Edmunds of Leicester, 'Re-Union', *BT* March 10, 1938, 184. Edmunds agreed with Dr. Townsend, but felt it necessary to say 'one word of support' for Martin's appeal, whilst McHardy expressed his appreciation for an earlier article by F. C. Bryan, 'Unity, Uniformity and Union', *BT* February 24, 1938, 149, who had drawn attention to each denomination's responsibility to preserve the truth entrusted to it, but that equally all denominations had a responsibility to manifest their unity in Christ to the world.

³⁸ The paragraph runs, 'Baptism may be administered in infancy or upon profession of faith. Where baptism is administered in infancy, communicant status shall be attained only upon a profession of faith following upon due instruction and sealed in a public service of Confirmation or such other service of attaining communicant status as shall be agreed upon', from *Outline*, 75.

³⁹ Under the heading 'A United Church: The Question of Baptism', these included the open membership advocate, R. Guy Ramsey of Ferme Park, and R. W. Waddelow, at that time at Adelaide-place, Glasgow, and later at Broadmead, Bristol, *BT* February 10, 1938, 108; Frank Buffard from Yeovil and H. W. Janisch of College Street, Northampton, an open membership church, *BT* February 17, 1938, 133; Theodore M. Bamber of Rye Lane, Peckham and W. J. Grant of Watford, *BT* February 24, 1938, 153; Melville Evans of Muswell Hill, and H. H. Pewtress of Fillebrook, Leytonstone, *BT* March 10, 1938, 193. However, R. L. Child of Broadmead, Bristol, *BT* February 17, 1938, 133, gave the Scheme some benefit of the doubt by allowing two possible interpretations of the proposal: either the two baptisms would be regarded as alternative modes of the same rite, of which he disapproved believing that believers' baptism would be bound to disappear, or that Baptist and Paedobaptist Churches would take their place side by side within one new denomination, a proposal with which he would not feel the same initial objection, as this would appear to be what would happen in a federal union.

early 1920s, Townsend wrote, 'The ideal and the fact of unity in the New Testament were based on truth. Any departure from the truth of the Gospel which imperilled the local church or churches was quickly dealt with by Paul... Paul...did not begin with the ideal of unity and make all sorts of compromises to attain it or keep it'. Townsend was unprepared simply to accept Martin's statement that Baptists did not have a monopoly of the truth, a statement with which he would no doubt have agreed in general terms, but with reference to the *Outline* it was one he was committed to disputing. He underscored the fact that 'one of the biggest issues in this Scheme is baptism', observing that the Scheme insisted on every member of the church being baptised, that Anglo-Catholics and others believed infant baptism to be essential to salvation and that every person had to be baptised before he could partake of the Lord's Supper. 'In the Baptist Union', Townsend continued, 'we have open membership and open communion churches... This Scheme kills the open communion and the open membership church. There are bigger issues than baptism because Baptists do not believe that baptism is necessary to salvation'.⁴⁰

When the BU Council met in March, two resolutions brought before the meeting dealt directly with the *Outline*. The first, moved by Gilbert Laws and seconded by Wilson Black, stated:

That the members of the Council of the [BUGB&I], cannot, in consistency with the beliefs of Baptists as to the nature of the Church, the ministry of the Word, and the Ordinances of the Gospel, which beliefs they hold as a sacred trust, (1) recognise infant baptism as an alternative to believers' baptism, (2) admit the necessity of Episcopacy..., (3) accept a sacerdotal interpretation of the pastoral office. The Council are therefore compelled to state that organic unity on the basis of the 'Outline of a Reunion Scheme...', is not possible for Baptists...

Further progress, in the expression of Christian unity, it was believed, would only be made by 'unreserved mutual recognition'. Explorations into federation of equal and autonomous churches would, however, find the approval and support from the Council. As such, the resolution was in total harmony with previous declarations made by both the Council and the Baptist Assembly. 'Let it be made known

⁴⁰ H. Townsend, 'Bigger Issues Than Baptism', *BF* February 24, 1938, 148.

throughout all the Churches that Baptists are not in the market selling their principles, neither are they behind closed doors agreeing to compromises that would destroy their effectiveness'. The motion was carried with four dissentients.⁴¹

The second resolution, moved by Dr. Rushbrooke, was carried unanimously. It called for the documents on Christian unity under discussion to be referred to a Special Committee with instructions to draw up a statement incorporating the earlier resolution of the Council, setting forward the position of the BU as expressed in the *Reply to the Lambeth Appeal* of 1926 and dealing with any other matters the Committee deemed appropriate.⁴² A second report of the Council meeting recorded Black's opposition, when he said that, after re-reading the document, he was surprised that 'any Baptist could consider it, for it recognised infant baptism as an alternative to believers' baptism'. Martin had responded asserting that at the Lambeth conversations he had repeatedly stated the Baptist position with regard to baptism, the lay administration of the sacraments and other matters discussed. In fact, he agreed with most of what Gilbert Laws had said, but maintained that if he had felt that the Scheme of reunion involved all that had been read into it, he himself would not touch it.⁴³

But Laws fired another salvo against the reunionists. Making explicit reference to pamphlets from the FoR and Free Church Unity Group, he again denounced those who proposed following the pathway to organic union. 'They believe it as earnestly as I and others believe the contrary'. Five areas were highlighted by him as areas in which Baptists could not give ground: episcopacy, infant baptism, the ministry, the authority of the Scriptures and a national Church.⁴⁴

⁴¹ A detailed account of this Council meeting, including a lengthy quotation of Gilbert Laws' speech, is to be found in H. Townsend, *Robert Wilson Black*, 103-108.

⁴² J. C. Carlile, 'Baptists and Church Union. Declaration by the Council', *BT* March 17, 1938, 201-02. The Committee was chaired by Wheeler Robinson and included R. L. Child, P. W. Evans, C. T. Le Quesne and F. Townley Lord.

⁴³ 'The Council in Session', *BT* March 17, 1938, 208. See also H. Townsend, *Robert Wilson Black*, 108.

⁴⁴ G. Laws, 'Re-Union', *BT* March 17, 1938, 211.

It can be seen, then, that in the weeks leading up to and immediately after the Council meeting on March 8th, the re-union movement, and in particular Hugh Martin, were on the receiving end of an intense onslaught from the anti-reunionists. The effect on Martin was considerable. In a doleful letter, he announced his resignation from the Joint Conferences and expressed his hope that this correspondence was now concluded.⁴⁵ And, with the exception of the BU's official reply to the three documents in November 1938, cease it effectively did.⁴⁶

When it came, the official *BU Reply* acknowledged receipt of the documents, but, 'with profound regret', stated that Baptists did not regard the *Outline* 'as affording a basis for organic reunion', the reasons already being laid out in the 1926 *Reply to the Lambeth Appeal*.⁴⁷ Baptism in the New Testament, the 1938 *Reply* reiterated, was the immersion of believers, thus Baptists were unable to accept the subsequent extension of the rite to infants. This position was itself based upon the conviction that the essential meaning and value of baptism according to the New Testament was changed or obscured when administered to those who lacked the cardinal requirements of

⁴⁵ H. Martin, 'Re-union', *BT* March 17, 1938, 204. He wrote, 'Will you kindly allow me space enough to say that, in view of the resolution of the Baptist Union Council...I have resigned my position as a member of the Joint Conversations at Lambeth. The Outline Scheme was put forward, as it clearly states, not as a final document, but as a basis for discussion... I do not believe for a moment that it involves the positions attacked in the Council resolution... The sub-committee has only been appointed to formulate more fully the reasons for its total rejection. Many Baptists will share my profound regret at this attitude. With this letter, so far as I am concerned, this correspondence ceases'.

⁴⁶ The only remaining contribution to the reunion discussion that year was a paper read by R. L. Child to the Friends of Reunion conference at Haywards Heath on May 3rd. See 'The Ministry and the Sacraments. A Free Church Point of View', *BQ* 9.3 (July, 1938), 132-138. Here Child rehearsed the common ecclesiology of the Free Churches of the fellowship of believers, and on ministry, he observed the practice of lay administration of the sacraments. Discussing baptism, he sought to provide a consensus of the Baptist view on the mode, the subjects and meaning of believers' baptism: as a personal testimony, an expression of the moral and spiritual union of the believer with Christ, as also an experience of the baptism of the Spirit, ie, a means of grace, and its link with entrance into church membership. Child also discussed Baptist opposition to infant baptism as the latter 'is an unscriptural practice which veils the essentially personal nature of the issue between the soul and God', p.136.

⁴⁷ *Reply of the Council of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland to the letter of the Federal Council of the Evangelical Free Churches, conveying the three documents which had been issued for the consideration of the Churches by a Joint Committee of Anglicans and Free Churchmen*, in E. A. Payne, *The Fellowship of Believers. Baptist Thought and Practice Yesterday and Today* (enlarged edition, 1952), Appendix C 'Christian Reunion', 148-49.

repentance and faith. Because Baptists recognized the Church as a fellowship of believers they could not recognize infant baptism as an alternative form of admission into the united Church of England.⁴⁸ The *Reply* concluded acknowledging the value of intercourse and discussion amongst different traditions 'for the promotion of mutual understanding of firmly held beliefs which is the necessary condition of fruitful co-operation', believing 'that increased loyalty to such convictions on the part of all, coupled with the willingness to learn from each other..., will bring all the Churches nearer together and nearer to the will of their...Lord and Saviour...'⁴⁹

When the FCFC was formed in 1940⁵⁰ proposals were tabled for the mutual recognition of members and ministry, which would also allow mutual participation at each others' communion services and permit freedom of transfer between the churches. This, however, was opposed by R. W. Black, who claimed that such would infringe Baptist autonomy on baptism.⁵¹ In the following years the whole issue of the reunion movement and discussions moved out of the forefront of the denomination's consciousness as the looming threat and then terrible reality of the war occupied people's energies.

It reappeared in November 1946, when the new Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Geoffrey Fisher, preached his famous sermon at Cambridge University in which he suggested that the path of intercommunion could be explored with potentially greater benefit than organic union, but only if the Free Churches were prepared to take episcopacy into their systems, adapting it as needed. The sermon, naturally, aroused

⁴⁸ *Reply of the Council of the Baptist Union*, 149.

⁴⁹ *Reply of the Council of the Baptist Union*, 151.

⁵⁰ Dr. W. M. S. West suggested 4 reasons for the FCFC: first, the need for one person who could be seen to represent the Free Churches to government and country; secondly, the need to integrate local and national Free Church action; thirdly, to seek to develop a coherent expression of Free Church emphases; fourthly, to forward what many in 1940 hoped to see - Free Church Union. Reported in 'Future sees new role for Council', *BT* September 27, 1990), 13. The formation of the FCFC took place in Baptist Church House on September 16, 1940.

⁵¹ Reported by D. M. Thompson, 'The Older Free Churches', 111.

much interest and sparked off another round of conversations between the Anglican and Free Churches, though after two years Ernest Payne reported that no real advance had been made since the first discussions which had begun in 1920.⁵²

The complicated question of intercommunion was not an innovation from the Archbishop, as the F&O movement had been examining these matters since 1939.⁵³ When it eventually appeared in 1950, the *Report* explicitly refuted any idea that it was providing a pattern for intercommunion, rather it was seeking to work out and express the necessary implications of the Archbishop's sermon, the final draft of which was unanimously accepted by the delegates.⁵⁴ When the *Report* eventually appeared, it was variously received.

Dr. Percy Evans made it clear whenever he spoke about the *Report* that he felt that, though it deserved and required the most careful and sympathetic consideration, he did not believe that Baptists would or could go very far along the lines set out by it.⁵⁵

⁵² Ernest Payne's report to the denomination on the Lambeth Conference of 1948 is to be found in 'The Lambeth Conference Report', *BT* August 19, 1948, 3. See also Payne, *The Baptist Union*, 219. The text of the sermon, 'A Step Forward in Church Relations', can be found in *Church Relations in England. Being the report of Conversations between Representatives of the Archbishop of Canterbury and Representatives of the Evangelical Free Churches in England, together with the sermon preached by the Archbishop of Canterbury on November 3rd, 1946, entitled A Step Forward in Church Relations* (1950), 5-12.

⁵³ See 'The Report of the Commission' in D. Baillie and J. Marsh (eds.), *Inter-Communion. The Report of the Theological Commission Appointed by the Continuation Committee of the World Conference on Faith and Order Together with a Selection from the material presented to the Commission* (1952), 15-43, especially pp.15-17 for the background and origins of the Report. Of particular interest in this volume are the essays by Ernest Payne on 'Intercommunion from the Seventeenth to the Nineteenth Centuries', pp.84-104, and P. W. Evans, 'A Baptist View. (b) P. W. Evans (Great Britain)', pp.185-195. *Inter-Communion* was reviewed by R. L. Child, 'Intercommunion', *BT* September 4, 1952, 10.

⁵⁴ J. Derby and N. Micklem, 'Preface', *Church Relations in England*, 3. The BU was represented by Rev. Dr. P. W. Evans, Principal of Spurgeon's College, Ernest Payne, tutor at Regent's Park College, and H. Ingli James, General Superintendent of the South Wales Area. Evans and Payne had initially been appointed by the BU to attend an exploratory visit to Lambeth by FCFC representatives in January 1947, and, as a result of their report submitted to the BU Council, it was agreed that the BU should share in the renewed Anglican-Free Church conversations, at which point H. Ingli James was included to make up the Union's three representatives at the meetings which began in the following May, meeting intermittently up until September 1950.

⁵⁵ Reported by F. Cawley, 'Percy William Evans', *BQ* 14.4 (October, 1951), 150. The whole of this article, pp.148-52, provides background on Evans' life and ministry.

R. E. O. White surveyed its contents in order to draw out its practical implications. Though explicitly dealing with intercommunion, he noted that the uncompromising distinction drawn between episcopal and non-episcopal administration of the Supper raised grave doubt over believers' baptism administered by men not episcopally ordained.⁵⁶ Further, relegating problems of baptismal theology to discussion at a later stage, 'where necessary', could hardly satisfy Baptists who believed that believers' baptism was a witness of supreme importance to both the Gospel and the Church. Added to this, intercommunion would revive the open communion controversy, lay administration of communion would have to be discontinued and such would run the risk of widening the gulf between British Baptists and other world Baptists. This led White to conclude that, 'As it is, the substance of the Report's proposals will appear to many of us to be, not intercommunion with a view to fellowship, but assimilation with a view to absorption'.⁵⁷

H. Inqli James believed that White had misconceived certain points, amongst them the fact that the Report was not a draft of formal proposals for reunion, but rather a consideration and interpretation of suggestions aired in the Archbishop's sermon. The aim was not reunion but the achievement of intercommunion.⁵⁸ He further observed that Baptists differed amongst themselves on many issues, including their view of the sacraments and ministry, but such did not prevent their sitting down together at the Lord's Table.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ R. E. O. White, 'Church Relations in England', *The Fraternal* 80 (April, 1951), 7.

⁵⁷ White, 'Church Relations in England', 9. White, p.10, concluded his discussion thus: 'To pursue negotiations towards intercommunion, well-knowing that the declared conditions are unacceptable, and the implied goal of Reunion of doubtful value, seems slightly dishonest. Though it is pleasanter to "keep on speaking terms", further discussion might well cost us the loyalty of old friends without gaining us any new. Respectfully, and regretfully, we must, I think, reply that on these terms as submitted, further discussion is bound to be fruitless'.

⁵⁸ H. Inqli James, 'Church Relations in England', *The Fraternal* 82 (October, 1951), 29.

⁵⁹ James, 'Church Relations in England', 32. Note, however, the admission in the BU's report, 'Church Relations in England. Report approved by the Council of the Baptist Union, March 1953', in Payne, *The Baptist Union*, Appendix XI, 298, that there were strict Baptist churches within the BU which only admitted their own members to the Lord's Table.

On receiving the 1950 *Report* in March 1951, the BU Council appointed a special committee, under the chairmanship of Dr. Arthur Dakin of Bristol College, to consider it,⁶⁰ whose own *Report* expressed the belief that intercommunion between Christian churches should not be dependent upon episcopacy.⁶¹ On the sacraments it stated that 'Baptists would have difficulty in binding the sacraments as closely to the official ministry as the report seems to suggest would have to be the case'. Along with the preaching of the Word, the administration of the sacraments was committed to those called out by the local church for such service, but they were not committed exclusively to the ordained ministry. Provided the person, male or female, was duly authorized by the local church, any church member could take them. When there was a pastor, he would administer the sacraments, but many Baptist churches depended on the services of lay preachers, who frequently administered the sacraments as well as conducting public worship.⁶² The *Report* then acknowledged that complete intercommunion, 'or, better, "mutual communion"', did not as yet exist amongst Baptists, as was evidenced by the various types of Baptist churches: those which admitted only their own members to the Lord's Table; those which admitted only those baptized as believers; those which gave an open invitation to all Christians; and, those which gave both an open invitation and practised open membership. The greater majority of Baptist churches belonged to the latter two categories, with very few of the first.⁶³ This meant that the conclusion was that the report *Church Relations in*

⁶⁰ The Committee consisted of Dr. Dakin, Rt. Hon. Ernest Brown, F. C. Bryan, R. L. Child, P. Rowntree Clifford, K. C. Dykes, Graham W. Hughes, C. T. Le Quesne and Mrs. Angus McMillan, with H. Ingham and Ernest Payne serving as consultants. The text, 'Church Relations in England. *Report approved by the Council of the Baptist Union, March 1953*', is to be found in Payne, *The Baptist Union*, Appendix XI, 292-303. The text was also published independently under the same title. However, the text in Payne's Appendix is the one being used here. A. W. Argyle provided a summary of the committee's report in 'Church Relations in England', *The Fraternal* 89 (July, 1953), 6-8. See also the extracts from the BU Council's report for the year ended December 31, 1953, 'Church Relations in England', *BT* May 6, 1954, 6.

⁶¹ 'Church Relations in England, 1953', 296.

⁶² 'Church Relations in England, 1953', 297. The administration of baptism by duly authorized people, whether ordained or lay, though usually the minister, is a deep-seated principle amongst Baptists, being the practical demonstration of the emphasis Baptists place on the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, and as such was clearly a non-negotiable matter.

England did not, as it stood, offer a plan of development which Baptists could either consider right or practicable to try to implement.⁶⁴

For nearly a decade little happened between the Free Churches and Anglicans, and little resulted from ~~the~~ continuing the Free Church union discussions, most of which only barely mentioned baptism.⁶⁵

The exception to this was when, at the request ^{of} Prof. Torrance, *The Fraternal* reviewed the Church of Scotland's first interim report on baptism in 1955,⁶⁶ which set out to defend infant baptism on exegetical, theological and historical grounds. The very fact of this request reflects the change in attitudes brought about by the whole ecumenical movement. The reply was penned by Dr. George Beasley-Murray, who offered a 'personal and spontaneous reaction', stating that it was 'the most impressive concise statement of the case for infant baptism' that he had ever read.⁶⁷ However, he challenged all six of the report's main arguments, concluding, 'Our denomination has much to learn of the theology of Baptism from our Scottish brethren. It is our shame that they have so little to learn from us. Yet that little is crucial: *To die and rise with Christ, and therefore to be baptised, is the prerogative of him who confesses, 'Jesus is Lord' - of him and of no other; for the Baptism wherein God acts is the Baptism wherein man confesses.* This is the one Baptism of the Apostolic Church. The New Testament knows no other. The Gospel allows no other. Any theology claiming the

⁶³ 'Church Relations in England, 1953', 298.

⁶⁴ 'Church Relations in England, 1953', 299.

⁶⁵ See A. Gilmore, 'Supplementary Membership', *BT* April 26, 1956, 8; W. W. Bottoms, 'A United Church: Report on Debate', *BT* September 27, 1956, 16; 'United Free Church. Baptist Reply to Moderator's Commission Report', *BT* November 29, 1956, 9; and W. W. Bottoms, 'Free Church Union Proposals', *BT* April 4, 1957, 9. See also 'Free Church Unity', *BT* March 21, 1957, 3; 'Free Church of England. Willesden FCC Plan', *BT* April 17, 1958, 15; Rev. G. S. McKelvie of Blenheim Crescent, Luton, 'Free Church Union: Commission to be Appointed. Conversations with Anglicans One Step Further Away', *BT* October 9, 1958, 1, 8.

⁶⁶ The second and third reports were issued in 1956 and 1957 respectively.

⁶⁷ G. R. Beasley-Murray, 'The Church of Scotland and Baptism', *The Fraternal* 99 (January, 1956), 7.

sanction of the New Testament must come to terms with the significance of this primitive Baptismal utterance. It is our earnest hope that our friends north of the border will yet do so'.⁶⁸

At the meeting of the FCFC at the end of September 1959 statements on union from the four major denominations were discussed. It soon became evident that little real progress had been made in the nearly forty years since the *Lambeth Appeal*. The committee reported that it was clear that to attempt corporate union at the present time was not timely. Certain theological and ecclesiastical questions remained to be answered, specifically the nature of the Church, ministry and the sacrament of baptism.⁶⁹

Over the following two years matters did not progress. On October 5, 1961, the *Baptist Times* reported that the recent meeting of the FCFC had concluded that any attempt to initiate a comprehensive scheme of union between Free Churches would not succeed. Half the local councils were indifferent, a quarter were opposed to it, and so it was felt that conversations between denominations would be more likely to succeed than through the FCFC.⁷⁰ The Editorial lamented that after fifty years this made sorry reading. More disturbing still was the apathy and indifference on the part of many members, churches and councils towards a United Free Church. Differing views on church organization, the nature of the ministry and the sacraments, especially baptism, were noted but, it was felt, should not be sufficient to prevent a

⁶⁸ Beasley-Murray, 'The Church of Scotland and Baptism', 10, italics his. The Report was very critically reviewed by R. L. Child, 'The Church of Scotland on Baptism', *BQ* 16.6 (April, 1956), 244-251, who ended with the statement that infant baptism had endangered the very existence of the ordinance of baptism, p.251; and by A. Gilmore, 'The Scottish Report on Baptism', *The Fraternal* 102 (October, 1956), who supplied notes for a study outline and bibliography following the major divisions of the report. Part II was also reviewed by A. Gilmore, 'Church of Scotland Report on Baptism', *BT* May 30, 1957, 6.

⁶⁹ 'Denominations' Views on Free Church Union', *BT* October 1, 1959, 11.

⁷⁰ See *BT* October 5, 1961. 'Free Church Union: The Present Position', 1 and 6, 'Report on Free Church Union. Summary of Survey of Present Position', 10.

Federated Free Church of England.⁷¹ However, the writer of the editorial was in a minority. T. G. Green of Tring, applauded the editorial but did so recognizing that it represented only a minority view, whilst R. J. Snell of Wallingford could not share the editorial's views.⁷²

In his *Baptists and Unity*,⁷³ Dr. Leonard Champion maintained that Baptists had five things to contribute to ecumenical conversations: their historical stability, geographical expansion, numerical strength, their divisions over the WCC which prevented them compromising truth as they understood it, and their theological emphases. Illustrative of the latter was their distinctive contribution: believers baptism. Without due and sympathetic examination by those who did not accept believers baptism any conversations would be limited. Further, attention would be drawn to the widespread acknowledgement among Paedobaptists that the existing practice of infant baptism had given rise to pastoral problems, including failure of godparents to fulfill their responsibilities and of those so baptized to come forward for confirmation.⁷⁴ Four distinctive emphases of Baptists presented truths inherent in the gospel which were needed within the world Church: the theology and practice of believers baptism, the significance of the individual, the importance of the local congregation and the Lordship of Christ.⁷⁵

Whilst all Christians accepted the baptism of believers, only Baptists held that this alone was what the New Testament meant by baptism and was therefore the only

71 'Free Church Union', *BT* October 5, 1961, 5. The editor at this time was Walter Bottoms.

72 Mr. T. G. Green, 'Free Church Union', *BT* October 19, 1961, 6; Mr. R. J. Snell, 'Free Church Union', *BT* November 2, 1961, 6.

73 See W. W. Bottoms' review, 'Books on Unity', *BT* December 27, 1962, 6. It was a part of the Star Books on Reunion, edited by the Bishop of Bristol.

74 L. G. Champion, Principal of Bristol Baptist College, *Baptists and Unity* (1962), 39-44.

75 Champion, *Baptists and Unity*, chapters 5 to 8.

mode which should be practised.⁷⁶ Baptists made this exclusive claim on the basis of Scriptural authority and it was fundamentally based on doctrines central to Christian faith. Believers baptism preserved the fact that grace is neither imposed nor mechanical, and that personal faith must not be identified with the faith of the Church. These conceptions of grace and faith determined the conception of the church as the community, created by the Spirit, of those who trust God. Baptism is then to be understood as the outward and visible act proclaiming this personal experience of being in Christ which involves being in the church. For Baptists, then, the words grace, faith and fellowship are all personal words, being terms denoting reciprocity of personal response. The mode of immersion proclaimed the objective dying and rising with Christ and the subjective believer's death and resurrection to new life in Christ.⁷⁷

With Dr. Beasley-Murray, Champion believed that a greater endeavour to make baptism integral to the Gospel, to conversion and to church membership, would enable baptism in Baptist churches to become again 'what God has willed it to be'. Beasley-Murray's 'scholarly exposition of New Testament practice and theology is thus a call to all sections of the Church to consider afresh the meaning of baptism and to do this in obedience to the authority of Scripture and in response to the nature of the Gospel'. All Christians were concerned with questions about the nature of God's grace, the faith of the believer, and of the church. Baptists, however, understood these in personal terms and that was why they continued to maintain that Christian baptism was the baptism of believers. Champion then raised the issue of the existence of two forms of baptism in the Church. Could they co-exist and if not, which ought to be retained? If believers baptism was to be rejected, on what grounds, and if so, would that imply the rejection of the personal understanding of grace, faith and the church

⁷⁶ It should be noted that this statement is not entirely true, as the majority of the Brethren and Pentecostal churches practice the baptism of believers, though, Champion was probably thinking about the historic and mainline denominations at this point.

⁷⁷ Champion, *Baptists and Unity*, chapter 5, pp.46-53.

which it implied?⁷⁸ Yet in all this Baptists, Champion argued, should respect Paedobaptist convictions.⁷⁹

The first British Conference on F&O held in Nottingham in September 1964 reignited the whole issue of reunion between all the churches in Great Britain. Organized by the British F&O Committee, it has proved to be a defining moment in modern British Church history and has been described as 'the most important specifically British ecumenical conference ever to be held'.⁸⁰ Twenty eight Baptists connected with the BUGB&I attended, and only one subsection lacked a British Baptist participant. Its report, *Unity Begins at Home*, and resolutions were sent to all participants, all of which expended an enormous amount of time and energy in their detailed examination.⁸¹

The most important achievement of the conference was the call for the Churches to unite by Easter Day 1980, a proposal about which Baptist feelings were mixed.⁸² David Pawson, writing from a conservative evangelical position and as a member of the Baptist Revival Fellowship (BRF), expressed the opinion of many when he wrote of 'hesitation and even awkwardness in relation to the ecumenical movement', and in particular any notion of union by 1980.⁸³ However, John Matthews responded by asking whether Baptists shared the same faith in the same Christ with other Christians. Until such a dialogue as was being suggested took place 'we shall continue in our present spiritual dilemma of whether "the others" are Christian or not'. 'It is

⁷⁸ Champion, *Baptists and Unity*, 52-53. Champion was referring to G. R. Beasley-Murray's *Baptism in the New Testament* (1962).

⁷⁹ Champion, *Baptists and Unity*, 72-76.

⁸⁰ A. Hastings, *A History of English Christianity* (1986), 541.

⁸¹ See *Unity Begins at Home* (1964), and the resolutions which were printed in Appendix 1 of *Baptists and Unity* (1967), 52-56. On the Conference, see also chapter 8 below.

⁸² See the Editorial, 'Baptists and Unity', *BT* March 18, 1965, 5.

⁸³ J. D. Pawson of Gold Hill Baptist Church, '1980: Must They Include Us In?', *The Fraternal* 136 (April, 1965), 9.

time that the whole matter was made a serious subject for the denomination as a whole'. At the very least, Baptists were being called to say by 1980 on what conditions they could join the schemes for unity.⁸⁴

In contrast to Pawson's 'no compromise therefore no involvement' position was the position adopted by George Beasley-Murray. He too opposed any compromise of principle,⁸⁵ yet this did not preclude him from involvement within the British and international ecumenical movements.⁸⁶ Beasley-Murray openly admitted that the way of the ecumenical movement was a hard and long one, obstacles to its success being immense. Any attempts to minimise the obstacles did not serve the ecumenical cause, and for this reason he expressed his dismay over the proposed date of Easter Day 1980. He questioned the judgment that the time had been right for the reunion of churches forty five years ago,⁸⁷ and thus, by implication, that the situation had appreciably changed. W. Scott also believed that Baptists should continue their ecumenical involvement and that in so doing they should work to secure the

⁸⁴ J. F. Matthews, assistant minister at Botley in Oxfordshire, 'The Contemporary Ecumenical Situation: A Comment on Recent Articles', *The Fraternal* 138 (October, 1965), 30-31.

⁸⁵ G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Reflections on the Ecumenical Movement* (1965), 9, 13. So too was Ernest Payne in an interview on the subject of 'Church Unity' at New Malden Baptist Church, a report of which was carried in *The Baptist Times* a week later, 'No, We Are Not Being Asked to Compromise', *BT* November 11, 1965, 16. See also Payne's 'The Reverend Dr. E. A. Payne', in R. D. Whitehorn (ed.), *The Approach to Christian Unity* (Cambridge, 1951), 26-27, '[Baptists] are as unlikely as any other communion to accept schemes of unity if they seem to prevent Baptists maintaining the truths in which they believe'. Baptists have throughout insisted that there should be no compromise of principle. See, eg, C. W. Black, 'If I Were Dictator of the Baptist Denomination', *BT* March 28, 1940, 201; T. G. Dunning, Director of Education, Temperance and Social Service for the BU, 'Baptist Ecumenicity', *BQ* 10.2 (April, 1940), 86-87; H. W. Robinson, 'Expediency and Principle', *BT* December 11, 1941, 611 and 612; R. W. Black's presidential address to the Baptist Assembly, 'A Frank Talk to Fellow Baptists', and was reproduced in Townsend's *Robert Wilson Black*, 98-99.

⁸⁶ Beasley-Murray, *Reflections*, 8. For his involvement in Faith and Order, see W. M. S. West, 'Baptists and Faith and Order'.

⁸⁷ This was the opinion of Norman Goodall voiced at the Nottingham Conference reported by Beasley-Murray, *Reflections*, 12. He continued, 'the fact must be faced that it is Churches which have to be united, not simply enthusiasts for reunion, and it is by no means evident that the Churches are ready for reunion. This is not a question of unwillingness on the part of the uncomprehending to take obvious steps; there are genuine difficulties relating to the theology and practice of the Churches which remain to be solved, and Faith and Order and all the other related agencies of the Churches have an immense task ahead in sorting them out and finding satisfactory solutions', italics his.

reformation of the Christian doctrine of baptism, 'so that infant baptism may be seen to be not only scripturally unsound, but theologically untenable'. The most valuable contribution Baptists could make to the world Church was in the doctrine of baptism.⁸⁸

The chief obstacles continued to be the doctrines of the ministry and the sacraments. J. C. Askew reported with approval the comment made by John Weller to the effect that difficulties over believer's baptism were insufficient grounds for Baptists to stay out of the ecumenical movement, as different forms of baptism could exist together in a United Church.⁸⁹ Beasley-Murray, however, noted that if the negotiations between Anglicans and Methodists, as in those between Anglicans and Scottish Presbyterians before them, had made heavy weather on the doctrine of the ministry, then 'we Baptists are going to experience even more difficulties over the sacraments. Apart from the issues connected with the Lord's Supper, there has been no scheme of Church Union in any part of the world thus far that has satisfactorily solved the problems raised for Baptists by infant baptism, and the Churches have been talking about them for a long time'.⁹⁰ Contrary to Beasley-Murray, Alec Gilmore suggested that the plan of the Church of North India might provide a guide for Christian union in Britain.⁹¹ This was followed by an editorial which criticized Baptist ecumenists, arguing that infant baptism created confusion about the nature of the gospel and the whole meaning of man's relation to God, and that it was naive to suggest that were

⁸⁸ W. Scott, minister of Rowley and Blackhill, Durham, 'The Spiritual and the Sacramental in the Theology of Baptism', *The Fraternal* 135 (July, 1965), 27. 'One thing...is certain, Baptists must make their voice heard in the ecumenical debate so that a doctrine of baptism true to the spirit and practice of the New Testament church may be adopted in a new and vigorous united church', p.28.

⁸⁹ Rev. J. C. Askew of Campden Road, London, 'Baptism Reason Is Not Enough', *BT* March 11, 1965, 16. Rev. John Weller was a Congregational minister and secretary of the F&O department of the BCC,

⁹⁰ Beasley-Murray, *Reflections*, 12-13. See also his 'I Believe in this Movement - But...The Way Will Be Long and Hard', *BT* March 11, 1965, 8.

⁹¹ A. Gilmore, 'Baptism and Christian Unity. N. India Plan May Give A Guide', *BT* March 11, 1965, 8. See the later discussion of this by J. B. Middlebrook, 'Baptism and Unity', *BT* March 25, 1965, 4.

Paedobaptist churches to turn to the Baptist view of baptism there would be a revival of true religion.⁹²

Yet, throughout all this, the question was again raised as to whether it was co-operation or unity that was being discussed.⁹³ Such uncertainty and confusion over precisely what the issues were and what was being talked about reflects the limited progress the ecumenical movement had made in over half a century of debate and conversation. That this was in fact the position within the denomination is further reflected by the concern voiced by the Advisory Committee on Church Relations (ACCR) to the BU Council in March to the effect that the denomination's position needed further clarification.⁹⁴

Baptists and the Churches of Christ.

The relationship between Baptists and other believers' baptist traditions, specifically the Churches of Christ, was a concern shared by a number of Baptists, most notably R. Wilson Black. At the General Purposes Committee meeting in October 1941, Black suggested that informal conversations between representatives of the Baptists and his old denomination should be held. Without committing the General Purposes Committee or the BU, it was decided to authorize Wilson Black, Wheeler Robinson, P. W. Evans, C. T. Le Quesne and Gilbert Laws to 'confer in an informal way' with Churches of Christ representatives.⁹⁵

⁹² 'The Church and Baptism', *BT* May 27, 1965, 5.

⁹³ Mr. J. Hough, 'Is the Goal Co-operation or Unity?', *BT* June 17, 1965, 2, being a report on the Whitsuntide Conference of the BCC.

⁹⁴ 'Baptists and Church Unity. Need to make their position clearer', *BT* March 18, 1965, 8.

⁹⁵ *BH* 1944-45-46, 272. This concern for Baptist unity was to reappear in the Merseyside Baptist Declaration and correspondence linked to it. See below. The beginnings of this process can be seen in the inclusion of articles on baptism in both the *BQ* and *BT* by William Robinson, of Overdale College, Birmingham and a leading Churches of Christ scholar, 'The Nature and Character of Christian Sacramental Theory and Practice', *BQ* 10.8 (October, 1941), 411-420; 'Baptism and Faith', *BT* July 23, 1942, 366. William Robinson also submitted a letter on 'The Mode of Baptism' supporting a previous one from Ernest Price which advocated that the mode of immersion should be in the kneeling position and forwards. See E. Price of Church of the Redeemer, Birmingham, 'The Mode of Baptism', *BT* February 11, 1943, 6, and, W. Robinson, 'The Mode of Baptism', *BT* February 25, 1943, 4.

By 1944 a limited measure of progress had been achieved which enabled Laws to claim that, 'It is believed that a better knowledge of one another is a necessary preliminary towards further progress', and the Baptist representatives in the conversations, under Laws' chairmanship, were also re-appointed for a further term.⁹⁶

In his address delivered on the occasion of the reception of Bootle Baptist Church into the BU in 1944, Rev. Hubert L. Watson of Liverpool asserted that apart from faith baptism was meaningless. As a confession of faith it was personal and was retained as a personal expression of faith in Christ. As it spoke of an experience it was also declaratory, thereby providing opportunity to proclaim to others 'whose we are and whom we serve'. Following Romans 6, it was also symbolic of the believer's death to the old life of sin and self and resurrection to a new life of fellowship and service. Further, it was a means of grace, and this ~~was~~ not to imply that it was a magical power. 'But we do believe that God meets us in our obedience to His command, and so ministers to us of His grace and enriches our whole life'.⁹⁷ On this address, Mr. Harold Densham made the perceptive observation that, in view of the approaching interchange of views with the Church of Christ, 'let us not be surprised if we are faced with more emphatic interpretation of this sacrament than we have been presenting for some time'.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ G. Laws, 'Baptists and Churches of Christ', *BT* October 12, 1944, 4. Laws reported that the Annual Conference of the Churches of Christ had approved the recommendations which the BU Council had earlier accepted to the effect that a note would be inserted in the *BH* mentioning the conversations along with some particulars relating to the Churches of Christ. Second, that discussions concerning their common witness should be arranged where possible at district level. Third, that delegates from each tradition should take fraternal greetings to the other's Annual Assembly. Fourth, that *BT* and *The Christian Advocate* should exchange articles, and the reading of the journals should be encouraged on both sides. It was reported that Dr. William Robinson of Overdale College was to be the Churches of Christ delegate to the next Baptist Assembly and that the Baptist delegate would be appointed shortly. For the entry in the *Baptist Handbook*, see *BH* 1944-45-46, 272-73. In January, 1945, it was confirmed that Dr. William Robinson would attend the Spring Baptist Assembly, and announced that Laws would represent the BU at the Churches of Christ Assembly to be held in the autumn, G. Laws, 'Baptists and the Churches of Christ', *BT* January 25, 1945, 2.

⁹⁷ 'The New Birth and Baptist Belief', *BT* January 25, 1945, 6. His address was entitled 'The Faith of the Baptists'.

⁹⁸ H. Densham, a layman from Plymouth, 'The New Birth and Baptist Belief', *BT* February 8, 1945, 6. This shrewd observation was based on the fact that generally speaking the Churches of Christ held a 'higher' doctrine of baptism to the mainstream of the Baptists.

In the spring of 1946, Percy Evans represented the BU at the 100th Annual Conference of the Churches of Christ in Birmingham. During the course of offering greetings from the BU Council, Evans argued that the time had not yet arrived when concrete proposals could be put forward by either side for closer union. He believed that there was need for consideration of the position of children within the believing congregation and that the practice of dedication needed to be carefully thought through. He confessed that he would be glad to see the revival of the word 'ordinance' which had, by this time, been largely supplanted by the word 'sacrament', so that due emphasis could be given to the fact that baptism was something commanded. It was reported that the Conference clearly regarded Evans' words as an outstanding pronouncement.⁹⁹

In an article published in the *Baptist Times*, William Robinson observed that Baptists were very strongly evangelical and that it was perhaps for this reason that they had not yet developed a strong interest in the *doctrine* of baptism which characterized the Churches of Christ, as they feared making baptism an *effectual* sacrament. However, he welcomed the growing numbers of Baptist scholars and ministers who were showing a greater interest in such matters. He remarked that it would be difficult to distinguish Wheeler Robinson's and A. C. Underwood's doctrine of baptism from that of his own tradition. Likewise he reported a growing feeling towards making the Lord's Supper the centre of Christian worship, all of which would aid the ongoing discussions.¹⁰⁰

By the November meeting of the BU Council, it was clear that the existence of open membership Baptist churches was a major obstacle to further progress. Laws suggested several possible avenues which would perhaps lead to the solution of this difficulty, which included united meetings, discussion groups and weekend

⁹⁹ G. J. Hammond, 'Churches of Christ', *BT* August 15, 1946, 11.

¹⁰⁰ W. Robinson, 'The Baptist Churches', *BT* August 22, 1946, 7. These were extracts from an article by Principal William Robinson first published in *The Christian Advocate*.

conferences, united action by which Baptist witness concerning baptism might be made more effective, the interchange of speakers on suitable occasions, the reading of one another's literature and the issue of a joint manifesto.¹⁰¹

Eventually, however, the discussions did produce something visible. Evans and Townsend co-operated with William Robinson in writing the slim volume *Infant Baptism To-day*, a joint publication by the newly amalgamated Carey Kingsgate¹⁰² and the Berean Presses. In his forward, Laws claimed that an 'extensive area of common ground'¹⁰³ existed between the two traditions, but the booklet, as its title made plain, dealt directly with infant baptism, providing a joint refutation of the practice, there being no attempt to elucidate the claimed common ground beyond this. Though proposals for union were never discussed, either between the two denominations or with others, the three authors sought to express common attitudes towards infant baptism. William Robinson contributed the first two chapters which were comprised largely of quotations from Paedobaptist writers who recognized that believers' baptism was the New Testament baptism and their dis-ease with the practice of indiscriminate infant baptism. In the remaining two chapters, Evans examined the doctrinal issues involved in infant baptism's deviation from the New

¹⁰¹ Under the general heading of 'The Varied Work of the Baptist Union', being the proceedings of the November Council, see G. Laws, 'The Churches of Christ', *BT* November 28, 1946, 6-7. In 1947 the delegate to the Churches of Christ Annual Conference at Adelaide Place BC, Glasgow was Henry Townsend, and, in contrast to the high aspirations earlier expressed by Laws for increased interest and contact, the *BT* contented itself by simply reporting that fraternal greetings were sent. See *BT* July 31, 1947, 5.

¹⁰² The Carey and Kingsgate Presses were formerly merged into one publications department on Tuesday April 6, 1948. Of the fourteen directors, seven each were from the BU and BMS, along with the editor, H. L. Hemmens, the manager C. H. Parsons and the assistant manager A. J. Clark. The Press was based at 6 Southampton Row. See 'CAREY KINGSGATE PRESS', *BT* March 25, 1948, 6, and F. T. Lord, 'The Carey Kingsgate Press', *BT* April 15, 1948, 1.

¹⁰³ P. W. Evans, H. Townsend and W. Robinson, *Infant Baptism To-day* (1948), 5. The following year William Mander of Leicester contributed an article from the Churches of Christ perspective on 'Baptism To-day', *BT* December 15, 1949, 9, and this was followed the next year by Gilbert Laws' description of Baptist-Churches of Christ relationships in the United States, 'Baptists and Disciples of Christ in America', *BT* December 14, 1950, 8. For details of these American conversations see also E. Roberts-Thomson, *Baptists and Disciples of Christ* (n.d., [1951]), 147-153.

Testament rite, whilst Townsend investigated the difficulties that infant baptism had with the ethical dimension of the rite.

The flagging discussions gained a final fillip in 1951 with the publication of E. Roberts-Thomson's *Baptists and the Disciples of Christ*.¹⁰⁴ In his appreciative review, R. L. Child conceded that as far as Britain was concerned, 'greater accord between the two denominations is unlikely to be achieved until much more intercourse has taken place between them than has so far been the case, and until painstaking efforts at mutual interpretation have enabled the exact character of each other's views and practices to be thoroughly grasped'.¹⁰⁵ Laws concluded that 'Baptists would honour themselves if they could show the sincerity of their plea for Christian unity by taking all possible steps to a closer union with our nearest relatives'.¹⁰⁶

Roberts-Thomson provided a particular service in his historical and theological discussions, and this was nowhere more apparent than in his treatment of the understanding of baptism and attitudes to the reunion movement within the two traditions.¹⁰⁷ However, he identified a number of difficulties which faced any union between the two denominations. First, Baptists were generally suspicious that the Churches of Christ believed in baptismal regeneration, and this despite the bridging work done by Wheeler Robinson and A. C. Underwood. Secondly, Churches of Christ could not agree with the by now widespread practice amongst Baptists of open membership.¹⁰⁸ Though delegates were sent to each other's assemblies that year¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁴ E. Roberts-Thomson, *Baptists and Disciples of Christ*. This was a published version of his Bristol MA thesis.

¹⁰⁵ R. L. Child, 'Baptists and Disciples of Christ', *BQ* 14.4 (October, 1951), 189.

¹⁰⁶ G. Laws, 'Baptists and Disciples of Christ', *BT* February 22, 1951, 7.

¹⁰⁷ E. Roberts-Thomson, *Baptists and Disciples of Christ*, especially 114-123, 142-147, 157-160.

¹⁰⁸ Roberts-Thomson, *Baptists and Disciples of Christ*, 161-169. Other stumbling blocks included differences over the ministry, the Lord's Supper, the Name of a united church and the place of creeds and the Bible, pp.169-183.

¹⁰⁹ See 'Churches of Christ Conference', *BT* August 16, 1951, 7.

with the deaths within a few months of each other of the two brothers, J. W. Black and R. W. Black, who had been the chief architects and driving forces behind the conversations, the momentum was all but ~~been~~ lost, and by the following year the discussions had effectively drawn to a close and by mutual consent were concluded.¹¹⁰ Though there was a suggestion that conversations should be reopened and informal discussions did take place in April 1956, by the following April the BU Council rejected the project for closer cooperation without giving any reason.¹¹¹

Faith and Order and the World Council of Churches.

By January 1938 details of the Edinburgh F&O Conference were beginning to filter into the denomination's consciousness. Hugh Martin's popular account of the conference had been published in October, 1937,¹¹² and this was followed in January by reports from Aubrey and Laws, both of whom had attended the Conference, both *concluding* that at the present time reunion discussions were at an impasse.¹¹³

Addressing the Northern Convocation at York, Aubrey explained that many Baptists could not accept the validity of the baptism of infants who were incapable of personal faith, in the same way that many Anglicans had a problem with the validity of Baptist ministry and sacraments. 'We respect your hesitations. We are coming to see how they arise. We ask that you should sympathetically study ours'. He then admitted, with reference to the conversations which had begun in 1932, that Baptists could not see how they could enter into organic union with Congregationalists and

¹¹⁰ See D. M. Thompson, *Let Sects and Parties Fall* (Birmingham, 1980), 186, and Payne, *The Baptist Union*, 221.

¹¹¹ See Thompson, *Let Sects and Parties Fall*, 185. A report appeared in 1954 reporting the 108th Churches of Christ annual assembly, *BT* August 5, 1954, 6. The irony ~~of fact~~ is that in 1981 the Reformed Association of the Churches of Christ joined the paedobaptist United Reformed Church (URC), though it did mean that the URC had to practise both believer's baptism and infant baptism.

¹¹² H. Martin, *Edinburgh 1937. The Story of the Second World Conference on Faith and Order held in Edinburgh August 3rd-8th, 1937* (1937). A brief review of this appeared in *BQ* 9.1 (January, 1938), 62-63, by W. Taylor Bowie.

¹¹³ M. E. Aubrey, 'What Edinburgh Meant to Me', *BT* January 20, 1938, 42-44; G. Laws, 'The Edinburgh Conference: What Was the Good of it?', *BQ* 9.1 (January, 1938), 21-29.

Presbyterians, adding, 'though in real Christian unity we are constantly working together'.¹¹⁴

Laws' report provided a detailed account of the proceedings of the Conference, paying particular attention to Section III on the 'The Ministry and the Sacraments'.¹¹⁵ Here the differences which divided Baptists from other traditions became very apparent, nevertheless, Laws felt that progress had been made. He reported that on baptism it stated: 'The re-united Church will observe the rule that all members of the visible Church are admitted by baptism; which is a gift of God's redeeming love to the Church; and administered in the name of the [Trinity], is a sign and seal of Christian discipleship in obedience to the Lord's command'. To this the Baptist delegates had secured a note stating that the just quoted statement could be accepted by them only if understood to apply to believer's baptism and they drew attention to a principle enunciated in one of the preliminary documents¹¹⁶ which recognized that the 'necessary condition of receiving the grace of a sacrament is the faith of the recipient'. The note also expressed the Baptist belief that children belonged to God and that no rite was needed to assure for them his grace.¹¹⁷ Discussing the report's section on admission to Holy Communion, Laws reported that some delegates had been unable to understand how Baptists were able to accept the non-baptized into membership, which had led to the gibe, 'Baptists are people who are so strong on baptism that they dispense with it!'¹¹⁸

Laws' conclusion, however, was negative: 'The conceptions of church, ministry and sacrament are so different that it is hard to see how any union can ever be looked for while opinion remains as it is'. The difficulties, therefore, facing Baptists were

¹¹⁴ Aubrey, 'What Edinburgh Meant to Me', 43.

¹¹⁵ On which see also Martin, *Edinburgh 1937*, 57-71.

¹¹⁶ *The Report of the Commission*, 27, cited by Laws, 'The Edinburgh Conference', 24.

¹¹⁷ This was also reported by Martin, *Edinburgh 1937*, 58-62.

¹¹⁸ Laws, 'The Edinburgh Conference', 25.

enormous. 'On the question of baptism our position is so distinct, and to the many so unacceptable, that I see no way of overcoming the difficulty short of equating believer's baptism with infant baptism. This would seem to me to make infant baptism the standard and believer's baptism a sort of tolerated exception. It is not likely that more than a very few Baptists would ever think of consenting to such an equation. It is a very painful thing to have to say to those who set store by infant baptism that we regard it as a perversion of an ordinance of Christ, a substitution of man's devising for a positive institution of the Lord. Yet nothing less than this is the true Baptist position, and as one holds it I see no way, except at the cost of truth, of organic union with other Churches'.¹¹⁹

The incompatibility of the two forms of baptism, though repeatedly attacked by a not insignificant number of pro-unity advocates, most notably Hugh Martin and later Alec Gilmore, was reiterated forcefully time and time again, and it has been this expressed incompatibility which has dominated as is shown by the lack of real progress that has been actually made towards either a United Free Church or a United Church in England. Some argued for an infant service with water which was essentially a dedication service and therefore not incompatible with the Baptist service of infant dedication/presentation.¹²⁰ Suggestions of a federally organized United Free Church were occasionally made,¹²¹ but this idea was evidently losing its appeal as it was never again seriously considered.

¹¹⁹ Laws, 'The Edinburgh Conference', 29. Laws developed his opposition to the implications of any movement seeking the organic unity of the Churches in his article, 'Baptists and the Ecumenical Movement', *BT* February 3, 1938, 89, and he reiterated his belief that in a United Church believers' baptism would be a tolerated exception to the standard practice, and infant baptism and believers' baptism 'could no more permanently live together than the red and the grey squirrels'.

¹²⁰ Eg. Rev. Percy H. Jones of Bampton, Devon, in his prize essay on 'Upon What Basis Should Baptists, Congregationalists and Presbyterians Unite in One Denominational Organisation?', in 'Our Competitions', *BT* January 20, 1938, 53.

¹²¹ Eg. Rev. Oswald Henderson of Wimborne argued that in such a federated United Free Church a spirit of fellowship would be fostered between the denominations, whilst church extension would take place either in the form of Union Churches or by the establishment of open membership churches where believer's baptism was optional and infant dedication was observed for those wishing to associate their children with the church. See 'Upon What Basis

A further response to the 1937 F&O and Life and Work conferences was the setting up of two commissions in preparation for the sixth BWC in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1939, the second of which examined 'The Baptist Contribution to Christian Unity' and was prepared by Wheeler Robinson.¹²² Presenting the report to the Congress, Dr. W. H. Coats underlined baptism as an acted creed. Baptist loyalty to Scripture and to the scriptural form of baptism went hand in hand, but it was not the letter but the spirit of Scripture which preserved the Scriptural form, and the form itself helped in the conservation of the spirit. The second section of the report, he emphasized, called for a 'higher' doctrine of baptism and for Baptists to make more of baptism not less.¹²³

The report itself underscored the Baptist testimony to the necessity of personal faith as the prerequisite for baptism; that baptism was an acted creed; that Baptists were the only tradition which could maintain baptismal grace in the New Testament sense; that baptism should be made more of within Christian experience, and it criticized the inadequacy of much baptismal instruction. In the light of this, the report recognized that there were truths in the possession of other Churches which Baptists needed to learn and apply. In itself this was an argument for closer co-operation, but, 'We may be permitted to doubt...whether it is an argument for organic reunion of the kind which would subordinate truths to institutions'. The report made clear that there was

Should Baptists, Congregationalists and Presbyterians Unite in One Denominational Organisation?, in 'Our Competitions', *BT*, January 20, 1938, 53.

¹²² For the text of the report, see 'Report of Commission No.2. The Baptist Contribution to Christian Unity', in J. H. Rushbrooke (ed.), *Sixth Baptist World Congress: Atlanta, Georgia, USA, July 22-28, 1939* (Atlanta, 1939), 115-121, section II, pp.117-18. As well as compiling the second report, Wheeler Robinson also prepared the questionnaire on which it had been based. The nucleus of this commission comprised Robinson as chairman, Percy Evans and W. Holms Coats, Principal of The Baptist Theological College of Scotland. The first report dealt explicitly with 'The Reports and Findings of the Oxford and Edinburgh Conferences'. Robinson repeated his call for more to be made of baptism in his address to the 218th session of the London Baptist Board, see H. W. Robinson, 'Five Points of a Baptist's Faith', *BT* October, 9, 1941, 490. These were faith, baptism, fellowship, freedom and evangelism. Of baptism he said it was in (or into) the Name of Jesus, marking a transition into the authority and power of a new Lord. Both baptism and the Lord's Supper, regarded spiritually, were definite means of grace and he followed this with the challenge, 'if we do not make *more* of baptism than we are doing, it will go'. The full text of this address, delivered on October 1, 1941, was reproduced in the *BQ* 11.1&2 (January/April, 1942), 4-14.

¹²³ W. H. Coats, 'Introductory Remarks in Presenting the Report of Commission No. 2', in Rushbrooke (ed.), *Sixth Baptist World Congress*, 122. On Coats see Derek B. Murray, *Scottish Baptist College. Centenary History, 1894-1994* (Glasgow, 1994), 41, 44-45.

little inclination amongst world Baptists for closer incorporation with other branches of the Church.¹²⁴

One of the most significant dates for the Church in the twentieth century is August 1948, when the work of almost half a century came to fruition in the formation of the WCC in Amsterdam.¹²⁵ Wisely the WCC did not become immediately embroiled with the baptismal question.¹²⁶

Though many Baptists had strong reservations about the formation of the WCC, and many Baptist conventions, most notably the Southern Baptists, remained outside of it, Henry Cook, addressing the BWA the previous year, had called for active Baptist participation. 'I am, myself, a Baptist through and through, and I would not be speaking on this subject to-day if I thought for a moment that it was likely to jeopardise our Baptist testimony or weaken our influence among our own people'. Later, he expressed again his conviction that Baptists were in danger of risking their own position if such contacts involved the sacrifice of principle, however, he did not believe that such relationships would be jeopardized by entering into friendly association with other Christian bodies: 'on the contrary, I think that we lose a good deal by keeping apart; and I am quite persuaded in my own mind that we can do far more for Christ by showing a united front than we can by remaining aloof'.¹²⁷ Cook

¹²⁴ H. W. Robinson, 'The Baptist Contribution to Christian Unity', 115-121, quotation from p.120. See also E. A. Payne, *Baptists Speak to the World. A Description and Interpretation of the Sixth Baptists World Congress, Atlanta, 1939* (1939), 48-50.

¹²⁵ The opening service was held on August 22, 1948. Representatives from forty four different countries and 147 churches attended, amongst them M. E. Aubrey, P. W. Evans, C. T. Le Quesne and E. A. Payne on behalf of the BU, with Dr. T. G. Dunning, Ernest Brown and Hugh Martin as alternates, see Payne, *The Baptist Union*, 219.

¹²⁶ On the founding of the WCC see H. Martin, 'Amsterdam 1948', *BT* June 10, 1948, 2; E. A. Payne, 'Report from Amsterdam', *BT* September 2, 1948, 1-2; Payne, 'Second Report from Amsterdam', *BT* September 9, 1948, 9-10.

¹²⁷ H. Cook, 'Baptists and the World Council of Churches', an address delivered on Thursday July 31, 1947, in W. O. Lewis (ed.), *Seventh Baptist World Congress. Copenhagen, Denmark, July 29-August 3, 1947* (1948), 56 and 58. Ernest Payne addressed the Conference on Baptist History on the importance of the study of Baptist history and principles, on Wednesday July 30, 1947, but the Congress report does not include the text, see p.24. It is clear that some within the BWA, notably Southern Baptists, wanted to criticize the proposed formation of the WCC by referring the decision of any national BU to join the WCC to the Executive

then added that Baptists would have to ensure that in joining the WCC they did not weaken their devotion either to their own particular testimony, specifically believers' baptism and the doctrine of the Church of believers independent of state support and control, and their own particular fellowship, namely in the BWA with other Baptists.¹²⁸

It was against the backdrop of the renewed Anglican-Free Church conversations and the imminent establishment of the WCC that the report 'The Baptist Doctrine of the Church' was published. Adopted by the BU Council in March 1948, and, though based to a certain extent on the earlier 1926 *Reply to the Lambeth Appeal*, it was a new document prepared under Percy Evans' chairmanship and included the participation of Ernest Payne.¹²⁹ Surprisingly, there was little interest shown in the report in the pages of the *Baptist Times*, but there can be little to doubt the importance of the report, especially as it was later included in a volume of papers presented to the F&O Commission in preparation for the Lund Conference in 1952.¹³⁰

The report forcefully reiterated that the Baptist doctrine of the Church rested on the central fact of evangelical experience: that when God offered his forgiveness, love and power the gift had to be accepted in faith by each individual. From this conception^{of} ecclesiology came the Baptist teaching on believers' baptism. The report then concluded, announcing the Baptist contribution to the Church: 'Gratefully

Committee of the BWA. Dr. Payne successfully opposed this move, drawing attention to its unconstitutional nature, see W. M. S. West, *To Be A Pilgrim* (1983), 66-67.

¹²⁸ Cook, 'Baptists and the WCC', 57-58.

¹²⁹ See West, *To Be A Pilgrim*, 82.

¹³⁰ 'The Baptist Doctrine of the Church. A Statement approved by the Council of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland, March, 1948', *BQ* 12.12 (October, 1948), 440-448. All references will be taken from this edition of the report. The *Statement* was also printed in R. Newton Flew (ed.), *The Nature of the Church: Papers Presented to the Theological Commission Appointed by the Continuation Committee of the World Conference on Faith and Order* (1952), 160-168; in E. A. Payne, *The Fellowship of Believers* (enlarged edition, 1952), Appendix D, 152-162; and in R. Hayden, *Baptist Union Documents, 1948-1977, with an introduction* (1980), 4-11. It is also extracted in H. L. McBeth, *A Sourcebook for Baptist Heritage* (Nashville, 1990), 368-371. The importance of the *Statement* for F&O was brought out by Ernest Payne, 'Faith and Order Discussions', *BT* July 28, 1949, 7.

recognizing the gifts bestowed by God upon other communions, we offer these insights which He has entrusted to us for the service of His whole Church'.¹³¹

Whilst the WCC was becoming established, the work of F&O continued. The Report of the Third World F&O Conference meeting in Lund, Sweden, in 1952, was welcomed by the BU, whose response noted that the section on baptism (p.21 lines 3-5, p.35 para. (f) and p.43) suggested that a thorough-going examination of baptism by the Commission was necessary, a view which in time would be realized, as is evidenced by the many baptismal documents produced from the 1970s onwards.¹³²

During this time, the European Commission on F&O had met in August 1956. The subject of baptism was singled out for special consideration over the coming years, and Baptist participation was called for in such discussions.¹³³ This was followed up in 1958 by the Youth F&O Consultation on Baptism and Confirmation held at Hilversum, Holland, in which Alec Gilmore participated. The purpose of this meeting was to consider these doctrines with regard to the integration of young people into the Church's life. In a brief article, Gilmore outlined the four major questions which were considered: whether baptism was necessary; whether there was any difference between infant baptism followed by confirmation and infant dedication followed by believers' baptism; the place of children in the Church, and whether baptism was related to integration. He concluded with the by now oft repeated call that it was of

¹³¹ 'The Baptist Doctrine of the Church', 447.

¹³² *The Response of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland to the Report of the Third World Conference on Faith and Order* (November 1953), 6. The Lund conference is discussed by W. M. S. West, 'Baptists in Faith and Order', in K. W. Clements (ed.), *Baptists in the Twentieth Century* (1983), 60-61, where its importance for future developments becomes clear. West, along with Ernest Payne, C. T. Le Quesne, Kenneth Dykes and Ingli James (who represented the BU of New Zealand) were the 5 British representatives amongst 14 Baptists attending the Conference.

¹³³ 'Baptism Study by Church Leaders', *BT* October 18, 1956, 3. In September the following year, the North American F&O Study Conference at Oberlin, Ohio, examined 'The Nature of the Unity We Seek'. In reporting this, R. F. Aldwinckle sought to demonstrate that the fundamental difference between the churches was one of ecclesiology, and also criticized Baptists for having sundered baptism from faith, thereby throwing the true nature of the Church into obscurity and confusion, see 'Christians Discuss Baptism', *BT* November 21, 1957, 8.

'the utmost importance that we should be able to state a case for believers' baptism, and to ensure that Baptists speak on this subject with a common mind - a fact by no means certain at the moment'.¹³⁴

Reporting to the BU Council in March 1962 on the proceedings of the Third Assembly of the WCC at New Delhi the previous year, Dr. Leonard Champion strongly urged that Baptists should share within ecumenical developments,¹³⁵ a position supported by Hugh Martin, who denied that either the WCC or the BCC were trying to commit the Churches to some kind of reunion scheme.¹³⁶

Reviewing two F&O reports, 'The Divine Trinity and the Unity of the Church' and 'The Meaning of Baptism', Maurice F. Williams encouraged Baptists to continue participation in the ongoing ecumenical debate, as the publication of these reports were 'a testimony to the Spirit of truth who will guide us into all the truth by creating the conditions in which it can be heard and done, and a challenge to listen as the same Spirit declares unto us the things that are to come'.¹³⁷

The Reunion Debate Discussed.

Throughout all these developments there were a number of important figures who expressed their views in some of the most important Baptist books of the period. These works themselves, the effect they had and the discussion they stimulated, need to be examined.

¹³⁴ A. Gilmore, 'Some Baptismal Problems', *The Fraternal* 109 (July, 1958), 15. The need for further clarity on baptism for the sake of the 'Don't knows' within Baptist churches was also expressed by the army padre, Rev. E. Garfield Evans, 'Baptism? Never Heard of it!', *BT* October, 9, 1958, 3, 10.

¹³⁵ L. G. Champion, 'Baptists Should Share in Ecumenical Movement', *BT* March 22, 1962, 9.

¹³⁶ H. Martin, 'Gaining a Richer and Fuller Faith: "The Ecumenical Movement"', *BT* April 19, 1962, 9.

¹³⁷ M. F. Williams, minister of South Street, Exeter, '*One Lord, One Baptism* - Reports of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches, with a Preface by Oliver Tomkins', *BQ* 19.5 (January, 1962), 237-38.

Hugh Martin's *Christian Reunion*¹³⁸ undoubtedly returned the whole reunion issue to the forefront of the denomination's thought which had, for the first few years of the War been otherwise occupied, and it is the finest and fullest expression of Martin's views on reunion.¹³⁹ Expressly written for 'the general membership of the churches, ministerial and lay', he sought to present 'the great importance of Christian Reunion' before as many as he could, 'and to make clearer how matters stand to-day and the nature of the issues at stake'.¹⁴⁰ He conceded that differences of opinion existed among Christians on important matters of belief and practice, but believed that behind all Christian divergences there was a large measure of unity of faith and spirit which was denied by organizational divisions.¹⁴¹ He asserted that those working for Christian unity were not longing for uniformity: 'We abhor compromise. It is comprehension we seek'.¹⁴² The ministry and apostolic succession, he believed, were the chief stumbling-blocks to reunion, and that problems of the ministry and sacraments 'could be settled only by prior agreement on the nature and purpose of the Church'.¹⁴³ In his discussion of 'The Basis of Unity: Creed and Sacraments', he made a statement most Baptists would have refuted outright: 'A common plan of unity is

¹³⁸ H. Martin, *Christian Reunion: A Plea for Action* (1941). See *The Religious Book Club Bulletin* No.24 (September, 1941), 6. This included a page and a half of 'Questions for Discussion on *Christian Reunion: A Plea for Action*', 7-8. Martin was editor of the RBC, on which see Cross, 'Hugh Martin, Part 1', 37-38. The anonymous reviewer (the editor, Mr. Seymour J. Price, perhaps?) for the *BQ* concluded 'This *Plea* deserves careful study... We do not recall another which deals so competently and fairly with the various issues involved'. However, the review began with the admission, 'Mr. Martin is the flaming apostle of Christian Reunion, although when he thinks of the indifference of the average church member he may feel himself a voice crying in the wilderness', and later included the discouraging remark, 'He is an optimist, however, if he thinks that Baptists will accept that "the total action in infant baptism and confirmation is the same as in believer's baptism"', see '*Christian Reunion. A Plea for Action*, by Hugh Martin', *BQ* 10.8 (October, 1941), 460. It was also referred to in the brief note entitled 'Reunion', *BQ* 10.8 (October, 1941), 410.

¹³⁹ Martin's *Christian Reunion* is discussed at length in Cross, 'Hugh Martin, Part 3', 136-38.

¹⁴⁰ Martin, *Christian Reunion*, 7. The practical case for unity, according to Martin, pp.15-29, could be stated under three headings: the state of the world called for it; it was demanded by the need for efficient Christian service; and the mission field called for it.

¹⁴¹ Martin, *Christian Reunion*, 46-47.

¹⁴² Martin, *Christian Reunion*, 50.

¹⁴³ Martin, *Christian Reunion*, 65.

gradually emerging out of the prolonged and intimate discussions of recent years'.¹⁴⁴ Differences of opinion which were recognized as legitimate within the present denominations, Martin claimed, would not be made a barrier against union between them, and he suggested that, on the sacraments, though there were few areas over which misunderstanding was more rife, yet there was by no means such wide disagreements as appeared on the surface, and there was no necessary ground for continued disunity.¹⁴⁵ As far as Baptists at least were concerned, he could not have been more wrong, as Shakespeare had been before him.

On baptism, Martin acknowledged that it was a problem only for Baptists. 'Writing as a Baptist', he continued, 'I am anxious to advance a reconciling point of view in a realm where most Baptists feel no reconciliation is possible'. The consensus of scholarly work on baptism, he observed, was that New Testament baptism was the immersion of believers upon profession of faith. Yet some scholars held that though there was no explicit reference to infant baptism it could nevertheless be assumed that there were unmentioned ones, for example, in the household baptisms of Acts. Despite such arguments, Martin at least nailed his colours to the mast when he wrote that it could at least be maintained that the words of Paul on baptism were meaningless except as applied to believers. 'The New Testament theory of baptism and so far as the records go, the practice also, assume faith in the recipient'. The Baptist conception of baptism, he affirmed, involved three elements (though in fact he proceeded to list four). The first was the candidate's personal testimony to his faith in

¹⁴⁴ Martin, *Christian Reunion*, 104. This was followed by four assertions which he maintained could be made as to the nature of a United Church. Its unity would be based upon a common faith, acceptance of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, a form of church order comprehending episcopal, presbyteral and congregational elements, and freedom from State control in spiritual affairs, principles on which, he declared, substantial agreement had been achieved, see pp.105-06. He proposed to use as a text, what he called, 'the agreements' registered in the 1938 *Outline*, though he admitted that the 'substantial agreement' of which he so freely spoke existed only between representatives in the reunion discussions, and even this was not wholly the case, as was indicated by three out of the four Baptist representatives to the Lambeth Joint Conferences having distanced themselves from the *Outline Scheme* itself.

¹⁴⁵ Martin, *Christian Reunion*, 108, 116.

Christ, a sign of conversion and not a means to it. Secondly, it affirmed moral and spiritual union with Christ in dedication to his service and repudiation of sin. Immersion in water symbolized burial to sin and a rising again to newness of life. Third, baptism was seen as a means of grace and a baptism of the Spirit in response to the candidate's and Church's prayers. And fourthly, the sacrament spoke of entrance into Church membership. These ^{convictions} Baptists derived from the New Testament which they held as the ultimate authority and it was not in the competence of the Church to modify the rite in a way which obscured its essential New Testament meaning, as when it was administered to those lacking the cardinal requirements of repentance and faith.¹⁴⁶

What Paedobaptist churches had done was to divide the New Testament practice in two, as baptism, on any theory, was incomplete without the response of faith, before or after. Hence the rise of confirmation. Martin then asked, 'Can it not be said that the total action, if that phrase may be permitted, in infant baptism and confirmation is the same as in believer's baptism, as the *Scheme* suggests?'¹⁴⁷ Infant baptism emphasized the grace of God, believers' baptism expressed the response in repentance, faith and obedience.¹⁴⁸ Martin proceeded, 'I believe that the Baptists are right in holding to the New Testament practice, but I do not agree that this necessitates their refusal to enter into church unity with others who do not. I do not believe that this issue lies at the heart of the Gospel. The real nature of the Baptist witness concerns the doctrine of the Church and its composition; it is only incidentally concerned with the rite of baptism. We maintain that baptism should be the baptism of believers'. Immersion preserved the true Pauline symbolism, and a baptismal service was a moving proclamation of the Gospel, but the mode was a secondary matter. Baptist baptism was not *adult*

¹⁴⁶ Martin, *Christian Reunion*, 118-19. Martin's own personal convictions on baptism were further made clear in two later articles, both of which showed him to be in agreement with Baptists generally on the doctrine, 'Judson on Baptism', *BQ* 13.1 (January, 1949), 25-28, and 'Baptism in the Fourth Century', *BQ* 13.8 (October, 1950), 370-372.

¹⁴⁷ Martin, *Christian Reunion*, 120.

¹⁴⁸ Martin, *Christian Reunion*, 121

baptism, rather it was the faith of the recipient which mattered. 'Our fundamental contention is that the Church is composed of believers only'.¹⁴⁹ The place of faith in relation to baptism and church membership, he concluded, demanded much careful examination if reunion was to make progress. Baptists, however, needed to consider more sympathetically the real beliefs of Paedobaptists.¹⁵⁰

In his biography of Wilson Black, Townsend noted that Black seized every opportunity during his presidential year, 1941, to 'quicken loyalty to the convictions which he held so firmly'.¹⁵¹ On a visit to Liverpool, Black found a group of young ministers¹⁵² who were concerned that current tendencies towards union or reunion would weaken or betray Baptist principles, so he encouraged them to make public their convictions. In *A Baptist Declaration*, they welcomed the formation of the FCFC 'as a means of achieving the closest possible co-operation between the Free Churches'. However, 'At the same time, we are convinced that any attempt to achieve the organic union of the Free Churches is neither wise nor practicable'. As Baptists, they declared their firm resolution to hold fast and proclaim the fundamental doctrine of the Church of those only who personally believed in God through Christ as Lord and Saviour. By no means an extreme group,¹⁵³ the Mersey^eside ministers singled out baptism as the principle which they felt most threatened by the whole ecumenical

¹⁴⁹ Martin, *Christian Reunion*, 122.

¹⁵⁰ Martin, *Christian Reunion*, 124. At the same time as Hugh Martin's *Christian Reunion* appeared in 1941, *An Appeal for Free Church Union* was published, 16 Baptist ministers and one layman included amongst its signatories. In a critical notice in the *BQ*, the reviewer doubted whether a huge, uniform United Free Church was desirable, and he closed by asking the 17 Baptist signatories whether they had given any thought to the pressing problem of union amongst Baptists? See 'Reunion', *BQ* 10.8 (October, 1941), 410. A copy of this has not been located.

¹⁵¹ H. Townsend, *Robert Wilson Black*, 110.

¹⁵² They were Ernest Buckley of New Brighton, K. C. Dykes of Wavertree, G. W. Hughes of Princes Gate, W. E. Moore of Page Moss Lane and H. L. Watson of Richmond, Liverpool, see Townsend, *Robert Wilson Black*, 112.

¹⁵³ From 1949, Dykes was Principal of Manchester Baptist College, from 1956 Moore was a tutor at Rawdon, Watson became General Superintendent for the North Western Area in 1949, whilst Buckley moved into an educational appointment in 1962, as did Hughes in 1961, who also served as Secretary of the Baptist Historical Society from 1947.

movement. They affirmed that baptism apart from faith in Christ was unknown in the New Testament, therefore, to proclaim that baptism could precede faith was to invert the order of spiritual experience in the Apostolic Church. World circumstances, they believed, demanded definite Baptist testimony that the 'sacraments' apart from faith in Christ were not his ordinances. They therefore pledged themselves 'to preach the truly High Church doctrines of believers' baptism and of the living presence of Christ in the Communion service to all who participate in faith'. They expressed their conviction that a doctrine of the sacraments which ignored the New Testament demand for faith had weakened the authority and power of the Church by cutting at the root of the Christian ethic, as personal faith was the dynamic of all genuine Christian life. It was, then, evident that infant baptism not merely obscured but subverted the character of the Church as the fellowship of believers. The urgent task to which they called their fellow Baptists was to seek at once organic unity with all who accepted Baptist principles.¹⁵⁴ To try to go beyond this would deeply divide the denomination and make further progress impossible. They concluded, 'Our highest service to the larger Christian fellowship of which we feel ourselves a part, and to the extension of the Kingdom of God, is to hold fast the sacred trust committed to us'.¹⁵⁵

A copy of the *Declaration* was sent to all Baptist ministers with a letter from the Merseyside ministers inviting all who were willing to add their signature to the *Declaration* to do so with a view to publication in the *Baptist Times*.¹⁵⁶ On publication,¹⁵⁷ the five ministers claimed that a proportion of roughly 5:1 of those who replied were in support of their position.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁴ This last comment was directed to the Churches of Christ and sections of the Strict Baptists, according to the groups' letter to the editor, 'Baptists and Free Church Union', *BT* November 13, 1941, 555. It was during 1941 that discussions with the Churches of Christ began.

¹⁵⁵ The text of the *Declaration* is to be found in Townsend, *Robert Wilson Black*, 113-14, and 'Baptists and Free Church Union', *BT* November 13, 1941, 555.

¹⁵⁶ The letter is printed in Townsend, *Robert Wilson Black*, 111-12.

¹⁵⁷ 'Baptists and Free Church Union', *BT* November 13, 1941, 555. The text of the *Declaration* was printed on November 13, with a total of 125 ministers trained since 1918, 140 ministers trained before 1918, 4 College Principals, 5 College lecturers and 68 theological students, a

Needless to say the *Declaration* aroused great interest.¹⁵⁹ Though many clearly supported the *Declaration*,¹⁶⁰ it was not without its opponents, some of which were ^{due} to its choice of language.¹⁶¹ Sylvester Peat, accused the *Declaration* of seeking to erect artificial barriers which would hinder the real work of relating 'our message and witness to the urgent needs of our time'. Rev. Garwood S. Tydeman believed that a clause in any United Free Church constitution which maintained believers' baptism by immersion as the only baptism, but which allowed people into membership on profession of faith would be sufficient to satisfy Baptist convictions. G. D. Hooper, wondered whether some were over-emphasizing baptism, whilst Mr. Arthur Gabb requested that the sponsors of the *Declaration* answer four questions: by refusing to accept any other form of public declaration of faith in Christ, were they saying there was no salvation except through baptism?; would reunion with other baptist sects really be a forward move or would it allow theological and religious views into the denomination which Baptists did not accept?; were open membership churches to be

total of 342 in all, excluding the 5 original signatories. Many had said they would sign a slightly modified form of the *Declaration*, while several had hesitated over the phrase 'the purity of the Church', on the grounds that it was no more evident amongst Baptists than anywhere else.

- 158 Townsend, interpreted the *Declaration* as a means of countering the effects of the 1938 *Outline Scheme* and any FCFC attitudes or initiatives towards organic union. Black himself sent out over 800 copies of the *Declaration* and he received many letters back. The Merseyside Fraternal had provided him with yet another opportunity to win others to his convictions on Baptist principles. If ministers replied saying that they could not sign the *Declaration*, they received two or more letters from Black trying to persuade them to do so. Though disappointed with those who assented to nine of the ten points but refused to sign, he was well satisfied that so many had signed it. See Townsend, *Robert Wilson Black*, 114.
- 159 See the letters columns of the *BT* for the immediately following weeks.
- 160 Eg. the 342 signatories to the *Declaration*; P. H. Crunden of Slough, 'Unity With All Who Accept Baptist Principles', Harri Edwards of Newport, 'Obedience and Example', C. H. Stockdale, 'Fifty Years of Committees and Resolutions', *BT* December 25, 1941, 639.
- 161 Eg. the use of the word 'subverts' by the Merseyside ministers, 'An Old Baptist', a layman, 'A Baptist Declaration', *BT* November 20, 1941, 564. The original section of the *Declaration* read, 'It is evident to us that the practice of infant baptism not merely obscures, but subverts the character of the Church as the fellowship of believers', in Townsend, *Robert Wilson Black*, 113. In reply, 'From the Authors of "A Baptist Declaration"', *BT* December 25, 1941, 639. attention was drawn to the use of the very same word in the 1926 *Reply to the Lambeth Appeal*, which was itself quoted in the 1937 *Report of the Special Committee* of the BU, and that the word 'subversive' had been used by Wheeler Robinson in his *Baptist Principles*. 'We therefore make no apology', the five declared, 'for using a word which has been cited with approval by one of our leading Baptist scholars and has twice appeared in documents presented to the Baptist Union Assembly and confirmed thereby'.

treated as heretics?; and, were not real Christians to be found within all sects and was it not the grace of God that really mattered?¹⁶²

There were, however, a third group of Baptists, committed to Baptist principles and practice, but at the same time open and actively involved in the ecumenical forum. One such was Rev. Sydney G. Morris, who, in his presidential address to the 1943 Baptist Assembly, reasserted the need for conviction regarding those truths which Baptists, as Protestants and Free Churchmen, held distinctively. He rejoiced in the increasing friendship between the various denominations, 'Yet', he warned, 'the cause of union is hindered rather than helped by any attempt to deny that on certain matters we are divided. Our duty as Baptists is to teach the things that we hold dear, and to teach them clearly, and positively... There is an urgent need for explicit, charitable, positive teaching on our distinctive ordinance'. However, these views did not lead him, and an increasing number of Baptists, into a narrow denominationalism, and it is possible that, in what he proceeded to say, he had Hugh Martin particularly in mind. 'In all that I have said concerning our distinctive testimony, there is need for us to exercise charity. There are those among us who feel that the font and the baptistery may be housed under one ecclesiastical roof, and who earnestly desire to hasten the day. It is not for us to question their loyalty to Baptist principles, or to deny their claim to the name we are proud of'. He concluded his address with two suggestions: first, that Baptists should draw more closely together. Not that they should sacrifice their cherished and valuable independency but foster and deepen interdependency.

¹⁶² See S. Peat, a layman and President of the Leeds Baptist Council, 'The Need is Christians Not Denominationalists', G. S. Tydeman of the Union Church in Godmanchester, 'The Experience of a Union Church', G. D. Hooper, a layman and Secretary of the Essex Association, 'Is Baptism Over-Emphasised?', and A. Gabb, from Kingsteignton, 'Important Questions', all in *BT* December 25, 1941, 639. See also Stan Hardy, secretary of Seven Kings BC, Rev. E. W. Price Evans of Pontypool, Rev. S. B. John of Bonaventure Road, Salcombe and Allan H. Calder, a layman of St. Albans and Treasurer of the Baptist Historical Society, under the heading 'A Baptist Declaration', *BT* December 4, 1941, 588 and 603, who expressed disapproval of the *Declaration* and were for the unity movement.

Secondly, that Baptists should unite with every other branch of the Christian Church - and failing this, with every other family of Protestant believers.¹⁶³

In 1947, R. L. Child examined the subject of Baptist suspicions over Church Union from the point of view of their love of liberty, fear that union would lead to the sacrifice of principle and their lack of conviction that organic union was actually the mind of Christ.¹⁶⁴ But he did not leave matters there, for he went on to suggest how best Baptists could serve the cause of unity.¹⁶⁵ First, he proposed they continued involvement in the Anglican-Free Church conversations and joint worship and communion. Secondly, by attending to Baptist divisions. Thirdly, by holding true to the doctrine of the Church. 'Finally', he impressed, 'let us recognise that the real hindrance to Christian unity today lies, as always, not in the presence or absence of any outward organisation nor in the possession or otherwise of various types of ministry or sacraments. It lies in the absence of any genuine desire among the followers of Jesus to draw closer to one another in mutual commitment and service'.¹⁶⁶

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- ¹⁶³ S. G. Morris, the former Metropolitan Area General Superintendent and Secretary of the LBA (1934-39), 'The Church Faces the Future', *BT* May, 6, 1943, 9.
- ¹⁶⁴ It was later published as R. L. Child, *Baptists and Christian Unity* (1948), see 3-8. This was his presidential address to the Oxfordshire and East Gloucestershire Association meeting at Cirencester on May 15, 1947.
- ¹⁶⁵ He had already made the distinction between "union" and "unity", explaining that Baptists viewed the former with caution but whole-heartedly pursued the latter, Child, *Baptists and Christian Unity*, 7.
- ¹⁶⁶ Child, *Baptists and Christian Unity*, 8-14, quotation from p.14. Child's pro-ecumenical position had become clear earlier, see his paper read to the FoR conference at Haywards Heath on May 3rd, 1938, 'The Ministry and the Sacraments. A Free Church Point of View', *BQ* 9.3 (July, 1938), 132-138. Here Child rehearsed the ecclesiology common to the Free Churches of the fellowship of believers, and on ministry, he observed the practice of lay administration of the sacraments. Discussing baptism, he sought to provide a consensus of the Baptist view on the mode, the subjects and meaning of believers' baptism: as a personal testimony, an expression of the moral and spiritual union of the believer with Christ, also as an experience of the baptism of the Spirit, ie, a means of grace, and its link with entrance into church membership. Child also discussed Baptist opposition to infant baptism as the latter 'is an unscriptural practice which veils the essentially personal nature of the issue between the soul and God', p.136. In July 1941, Child again discussed the role of Baptists and the reunion movement, 'Baptists and the Reunion Movement', *BQ* 10.7 (July, 1941), 393. He noted that many Baptists had been involved in the developments which had taken place since the missionary conference in Edinburgh 1910 and isolated four reasons which, he believed, accounted for the signal failure of the reunion movement so far: the First World War, the

In spite of opposition and personal attacks, Hugh Martin continued in his advocacy of the reunion cause.¹⁶⁷ As Moderator of the FCFC, he preached at St. Paul's and again pleaded for a closer co-ordination of the churches. Many Free Churchmen, he maintained, were agreed that episcopacy would be a valuable element in any united Church, but they could not agree that any one form of church order was essential to the validity of the ministry and the sacraments. Mutual authorization for a wider ministry was quite another matter from the re-ordination of those who were already ministers of the Word and sacraments. 'At this point', he concluded, 'sincere Christian men seeking unity have not yet been able to find agreement, but however baffled for the moment we must not give up trying!'¹⁶⁸

Two years later in his presidential address to the Baptist Assembly, Principal Child observed that the focus of attention in recent years had been upon corporate reunion, whilst hardly any attention had been given to the path of federation. He suggested, therefore, that the Free Churches should seek to discover ways of translating the federal principle in the cause of Christian unity.¹⁶⁹ However, the occasional reference apart, the federal option has never again been seriously debated.

*defective character of the proposals, denominational caution and the lack of interest of the majority of Christians. Nevertheless, the widespread decay of denominationalism and the needs of the modern world, Child contended, ruled out of court any idea that the denominations could hope to operate successfully in isolation, p.395. So what was to be done? If the path to corporate union was blocked, what other ways were there for realizing Christian unity? He advocated three, the first of which was self-education. Baptists needed to understand and better appreciate their history and principles. In particular, Child felt the need to further examine the Baptist doctrine of the Church, something that was to be realized in 1948 and 'The Baptist Doctrine of the Church'. Both the sacrament of baptism and the place and authority of the church meeting were bound up with the fundamental idea of the Church, and a fresh re-think of these 'would do us all good'. Secondly, Baptists should play their part in the creation of a common mind among Christians. This would involve learning more about each others' traditions, worshipping, studying and serving together. Thirdly, there was the path of Free Church Federation, a prospect more real since the establishment of the FCFC, pp.396-9. This latter point claimed the support of Rev. Ernest R. Tribbeck, the secretary of the Ross and District Free Church Fraternal, 'Baptists and Reunion', *BT* September 25, 1941, 468.*

¹⁶⁷ H. Martin, 'Baptists and the Great Church: or Independency and Catholicity', *BQ* 14.7 (July, 1952), 310-319, being his address to the Baptist Historical Society's annual meeting on in April, 1952. Martin's paper is further discussed in Cross, 'Hugh Martin, Part 3', 141-43.

¹⁶⁸ H. Martin, 'Dr. Hugh Martin at St. Paul's', *BT* May 14, 1953, 5, address given as Moderator of the FCFC on the preceding Sunday evening.

¹⁶⁹ R. L. Child, 'The Church's Commission Today', *BT* May 6, 1954, 2.

More significantly, Alec Gilmore set out the difficulty which a United Church would face if the two forms of baptism were to co-exist. In 1917, P. T. Forsyth had made such a suggestion, claiming that neither form would hold the monopoly,¹⁷⁰ however, Gilmore noted, that a difficulty would arise when a child's parents decided to baptize him in infancy, thereby robbing him of the privilege of believer's baptism should he later desire it. 'In other words, believer's baptism would only be a possibility for those whose spiritual welfare had been left uncared for at birth'. Thus an impasse would be reached. The only solution, he proposed, was for a fervent call to the full and complete adoption of believer's baptism as the Church could produce. Recognizing the impossibility of this, he remarked that all the Church could do was to pray that God would lead them to a fresh doctrine of baptism so as to cover both forms. 'The only way open at present seems to be that infants where one or both parents are Church members would alone be baptized at birth; the rest would await personal decision. But if this practice were not to lead to more difficulties than it solved, then the interpretation of the rite would have to be so simple as to be almost meaningless'. Indeed, there were already those who maintained that infant baptism was a very different rite from believer's baptism, and such would be even more the case if one doctrine were to embrace both methods. 'Either it would not be a sacrament at all or it would be something quite different from what we have had in the past'.¹⁷¹

R. C. Walton recognized the present state of the Church as divided on the matter of initiation and therefore focussed his views upon the essence of believers' baptism as a

¹⁷⁰ P. T. Forsyth, *The Church and the Sacraments* (1917), 214-16.

¹⁷¹ A. Gilmore of Kingsthorpe Baptist Church, Northampton, 'Some Recent Trends in the Theology of Baptism', *BQ* 15.8 (October, 1954), 345. R. F. Aldwinkle, Assistant Professor at McMaster University in Canada, in an article entitled 'Believer's Baptism and Confirmation', *BQ* 16.3 (July, 1955), 123-24, raised the possibility of whether Baptists could recognize the service of confirmation as an alternative and legitimate way of securing a fellowship of believers. Even though the promises made at an infant's baptism were made by proxies, did this really matter, for if, in the service of confirmation, those vows were to become the expression of personal faith, what more could be expected? 'Baptists would not wish to question the reality of faith in such a candidate whose Confirmation obviously expressed his personal repentance and faith'.

profession of a real faith in Christ. Baptists, he contended, had no desire to unchurch anybody, so when approached by those from other traditions who wished to join in membership of a Baptist church, they should insist only that they should have fulfilled the conditions of membership in their own communion and that they should have made a profession of repentance towards God and faith in Christ. 'Thus, because Christendom is divided, we could accept as members those, who, baptised as infants, have, in Confirmation, expressed in another though less scriptural form, the essential requirement of personal acceptance and personal faith in Christ and His benefits which is sacramentally expressed in Believers' Baptism'.¹⁷² There is little doubt that for most Baptists such a position was untenable. Whether baptized as an infant or sprinkled as an adult, baptism according to the New Testament was the immersion of believers. Thus to be immersed as a believer could not be considered in any way as re-baptism.¹⁷³

After critically assessing the theology and practice of infant baptism, Neville Clark, was unable to endorse Baptist practice, as here too, confusion reigned. 'The Baptist communion bids fair to become the only major branch of the Christian church where baptism is not of universal observance - a somewhat curious basis from which to attempt to justify a separate denominational existence'.¹⁷⁴ This confusion, he illustrated by the separation of baptism and first communion and the re-baptism as believers of those baptized in infancy, a practice which, he judged, 'constitutes a blow

¹⁷² Walton, previously minister at Victoria Road BC, Leicester, but at the time General Secretary of the SCM in Schools, *The Gathered Community* (1946), 166-67.

¹⁷³ See, eg. W. G. Channon, *Much Water and Believers Only* (1950), 60-61. That this had been the traditional Baptist view was confirmed by a comment by Alec Gilmore, *Baptism and Christian Unity* (1966), 77, 'For years Baptists have cheerfully baptized those who previously had been baptized in the Church of England or in one of the other Free Churches'. He then added, 'To call a halt to such a practice would surely lead to an impoverishment of the Baptist understanding of the sacrament'.

¹⁷⁴ Clark does not make any reference to either the Society of Friends or the Salvation Army, neither of whom practice either of the sacraments. Before moving to Amersham, Clark had worked for the SCM since 1954, and later went on to be tutor then Principal at South Wales Baptist College. It is worth here noting again the role played by the SCM in the formation of the ecumenical convictions of the like of not just Hugh Martin, but also Clark and R. C. Walton.

at the heart of the Christian faith. As there is one Lord, and one faith, so there is but one baptism'. To the very end, baptism had to remain true to its christological pattern, standing under the *ephapax* of redemption: 'The whole meaning of the rite hinges on its once-for-allness, its unrepeatability'. The assertion of the partial nature of infant baptism and the serious theological distortion involved in it does not carry with it the 'unqualified dismissal of it as "no baptism"; rather does the eschatological nature of the rite forbid so negative a verdict'. No baptism, he argued, lacked the proleptic element, as every baptism pointed forward to its completion and fulfilment. Such an unqualified denial of infant baptism could only be theologically justified if Baptists were prepared to unchurch all Paedobaptist communities and to view themselves as the only true Church. 'Can we, in this day and age, follow our forefathers to so radical a conclusion'.¹⁷⁵

The matter came into starker relief in the discussions during 1964 on Church Union in North India and Pakistan, when the Baptists' demanded to 're-baptize', as it was claimed, those baptized in infancy.¹⁷⁶ Two years later, Child confirmed that infant baptism was regarded by the majority of Baptists as no baptism at all, so the re-baptism issue, as charged by Paedobaptists, was not an issue for most Baptists. But such a position was not likely to satisfy everybody. Baptists could not be content with this position, as in the eyes of others they *were* practising re-baptism. However, he continued, revealing the very real dilemma facing Baptists in the present ecumenical situation, should this position deter Baptists from doing what was in their eyes equally a matter of conscience, even if others regarded it as encouraging disloyalty to Church orders. Child, in the end, provided no answer to the vexed question, though he

¹⁷⁵ N. Clark, who in 1959 moved from Rochester BC to Amersham-on-the-Hill Free Church, 'The Theology of Baptism', in A. Gilmore (ed.), *Christian Baptism*, 325-26. A comment by Alec Gilmore in his 1966 *Baptism and Christian Unity*, 14, shows that Clark's views received a mixed reception, in some quarters being hailed 'as the dawn of a new age; by others it has been mourned as the end of an old era'.

¹⁷⁶ 'Is Re-Baptism Possible? Canon Questions Baptists' Demand', *BT* October 15, 1964, 9. A more open attitude was held by E. Leslie Wenger of Norwich, a former missionary, 'Is Re-Baptism Possible?', *BT* October 29, 1964, 4.

recognized that the contemporary situation made the matter very real. No general answer was applicable because the matter was not an abstract one. A man's infant baptism could mean little or nothing, but if the new respect between churches meant anything at all, then it lay on all Christians the obligation to evaluate issues in a new light.¹⁷⁷ Such a position, Dr. George Beasley-Murray sought to provide, as White had attempted twenty one years earlier.

Addressing the Commission Conference on Doctrine at the eleventh BWA Congress in June, 1965, George Beasley-Murray opened with the important statement that, 'Generally speaking, Baptists do not by their rejection of infant baptism call into question the standing of their fellow Christians who have not received baptism as believers, nor do they desire in any way to impugn the character of churches that practice infant baptism'. Further, most Baptists outside the USA had no hesitation recognizing other churches' baptism when applied to those who confessed their faith. He explained that the chief hesitancy for Baptists was over the administration of infant baptism by sprinkling or pouring instead of immersion.¹⁷⁸ Then, after discussing and criticizing, amongst others, the work of Karl Barth, F. J. Leenhardt and N. P. Williams, Beasley-Murray declared that the situation in the Church was that, 'We have two baptisms, one for infants and the other for confessors of faith'. He continued, 'If it be asked wherein the unity of the church does lie, if not in one baptism, the answer, surely, must be: *in the common confession of that to which biblical baptism points*, namely, the redemption of God in Christ and participation in it through the Holy Spirit by faith'. Later, he developed this further: 'Accordingly, *the crucial point is not the mode of entry into the church but the fact that the church*

¹⁷⁷ R. L. Child, 'Should Baptists Re-Baptise?', *BT* November 10, 1966, 8. In stark contrast, according to W. J. H. Hitchcock of Surbiton, 'Re-Baptism', *BT* November 17, 1966, 4, what mattered was to do the Lord's will. Thus, Baptists dare not refuse believer's baptism to anyone who asked for it, for they had to obey God not men. Rev. Donald Bridge of Enon, Sunderland, thanked Child for his timely article, but expressed surprise by the lack of subsequent comment, 'Re-Baptism', *BT* December 22, 1966, 4.

¹⁷⁸ G. R. Beasley-Murray, 'Baptists and the Baptism of Other Churches', in J. Nordenhaug (ed.), *The Truth That Makes Men Free. Official Report of the Eleventh Congress, Baptist World Alliance, Miami Beach, Florida, U.S.A., June 25-30, 1965* (Nashville, 1966), 261-62.

exists, and that people enter it and in Christ by the Holy Spirit participate in redemption, despite varying modes of initiation or none at all (vide the Quakers).¹⁷⁹

From this overview of the baptismal issue, Beasley-Murray offered his conclusion:

If the churches were to recognize the point I have labored to make, namely that two baptisms have developed in place of one, far-reaching reforms in baptismal thought and practice would almost certainly ensue, and the ecumenical situation would radically change. Indeed, I cannot think of any step that would more materially assist the renewal of the church than this one. It would change the Baptist relations with other churches, for the Baptist resistance to infant baptism lies precisely in the claim that infant baptism is the baptism of the Bible and that it possesses the significance of New Testament baptism. Naturally Baptists are aware that there are needs which infant baptism seeks to meet and which ought to be met by some means or other. Their own service of infant blessing or dedication has been instituted in recognition of this fact, and I have little doubt that other churches could improve on it.¹⁸⁰

What, then, he asked, should the Baptist attitude be to baptisms administered in other churches? First, where baptism had been administered to a believer on profession of faith, unreserved recognition should be given to it, whatever the church or mode. Secondly, where someone had received infant baptism and been duly admitted into membership on profession of faith, whatever the rite of admission may have been, they should be welcomed into membership of a Baptist church in the same way as if they came from another Baptist church, namely by transfer, this being grounded on the reality of their membership in the church of Christ. Third, where infant baptism had not been followed by a subsequent confession of faith or church membership, they should be baptized and join the church as any other convert would from without or within their own ranks.¹⁸¹ Beasley-Murray commenced his closing paragraph realistically enough, then issued the challenge: 'I appreciate that this exposition is unlikely to meet with the approval of all. It is clear, however, that an

¹⁷⁹ Beasley-Murray, 'Baptists and the Baptism of Other Churches', 268, italics his.

¹⁸⁰ Beasley-Murray, 'Baptists and the Baptism of Other Churches', 269. See also R. P. Martin, 'Baptismal Disgrace', *The Christian and Christianity Today*, July 22, 1966, 11, 'The facts are that, side by side in uneasy relation to each other, two forms and understandings of baptism exist in the Church today'.

¹⁸¹ Beasley-Murray, 'Baptists and the Baptism of Other Churches', 270-71, and these points are elaborated on pp.271-72.

immense adjustment in the thought and practice of baptism is required in the churches'.¹⁸²

Alec Gilmore's *Baptism and Christian Unity* appeared at the same time as Beasley-Murray's *Baptism Today and Tomorrow*. According to Gilmore, 'Baptism is clearly more than Baptists have traditionally understood by it', so the traditional Baptist tacit rejection of infant baptism did not merit serious discussion. In fact, both forms of baptism as presently practised 'are defective, and progress is possible only if we are prepared to acknowledge that we each have a rite called baptism and a responsibility to go forward in an attempt to understand it together'. This led to the inevitable conclusion, 'It is this recognition that requires us to refuse baptism to those who are baptized already on the grounds that baptism cannot take place twice'.¹⁸³ Though the problem of re-baptism was by no means a new one, 'the practical way in which it presents itself is quite modern'. The ecumenical movement had achieved drawing denominations closer together, and increased population mobility had made the matter particularly acute.¹⁸⁴ The problem came into sharper focus in four ways: on new housing estates, in older areas, in union churches and in church union schemes like those in Ceylon and North India.¹⁸⁵ Both Baptists and Paedobaptists believed that baptism was only possible once,¹⁸⁶ therefore, the issue was, in fact, whether the sprinkling of an infant constituted baptism.¹⁸⁷ This, Gilmore was prepared to

¹⁸² Beasley-Murray, 'Baptists and the Baptism of Other Churches', 272. A substantial section of the final chapter of Beasley-Murray's *Baptism Today and Tomorrow* (1966), 145-172, is the same as his 'Baptists and the Baptism of Other Churches'.

¹⁸³ Gilmore, *Baptism and Christian Unity*, 76-77.

¹⁸⁴ Gilmore, *Baptism and Christian Unity*, 77-78.

¹⁸⁵ Gilmore, *Baptism and Christian Unity*, 78-80.

¹⁸⁶ Gilmore, *Baptism and Christian Unity*, 80-81. The unrepeatability of baptism was asserted by Channon, *Much Water*, 37; N. Clark, 'The Fullness of the Church of God', in A. Gilmore (ed.), *The Pattern of the Church* (1963), 95.

¹⁸⁷ This most Baptists were still unwilling to accept. In his keynote address on 'One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism' to the 10th BWC Rev. W. D. Jackson, General Superintendent of the Metropolitan Area, stated what must be considered as the general Baptist position under the heading, 'There is one Baptism': 'That was true when Paul wrote, but it is not true now. Other

concede: 'It is better to acknowledge that infant baptism, though partial in its expression of the truth and though involving serious theological distortion, is nevertheless baptism, and cannot therefore be followed by believers' baptism being administered to the same person'.¹⁸⁸ Two points should be noted from such a position. First, this was in effect no different from Baptists expecting episcopalians to acknowledge their ministry, and, secondly, Gilmore recognized the inconclusiveness of the arguments both for and against the two forms of baptism.¹⁸⁹

Gilmore then drew attention to the fact that believers' baptism was not the only principle on which Baptists had taken their stand, for they stood also for religious freedom, arguing that it would be a pity if in their enthusiasm for one principle they lost sight of another. If Baptists were to recapture this spirit 'it means that so long as those who practise infant baptism are convinced that this is the will of God for them, Baptists ought not to question their conviction of its validity'. Mutual recognition, then, was the way forward, and though not entirely satisfactory it would be 'a common platform from which together we can discern the will of God'.¹⁹⁰ Implementation of such mutual recognition would require of Paedobaptists 'much careful thought' to the question of the candidate for baptism, and to Baptists the encouragement of those who came to question their infant baptism to re-affirm their

baptisms have been invented. Infants are baptized by sprinkling... To some, this sprinkling is only a pretty extra to infant dedication. Among Roman Catholics and Anglo-Catholics it is a magic ceremony in which (so it is alleged) a child is regenerated. But the baptism wherewith we were baptized is the baptism by immersion of believers in Christ'. His new paragraph continued: 'Which of these is the one baptism? Baptism belongs to the resurrection side of the gospel... The baptized are those who in Christ have passed from death to life. They declare that they themselves have committed their hearts to Christ as risen Saviour, and submitted their wills to Christ as exalted Lord. Their baptism is the baptism of believers by immersion in water, wherein they are buried with Christ and raised with Christ. It is the baptism of risen men, risen with Christ. This is the only baptism known in the New Testament. It is the one baptism. It alone is worthy to be set alongside one Lord and one faith'. Reproduced in A. T. Ohrn (ed.), *Baptist World Alliance Tenth Baptist World Congress, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, June 26-July 3, 1960* (Nashville, 1961), 62. A second account can be found in W. D. Jackson, 'One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism', *BT* June 30, 1960, 8.

¹⁸⁸ Gilmore, *Baptism and Christian Unity*, 81.

¹⁸⁹ Gilmore, *Baptism and Christian Unity*, 81-82.

¹⁹⁰ Gilmore, *Baptism and Christian Unity*, 83-84.

baptismal vows, but if this were not agreeable, then concessions would have to be made for freedom of individual conscience.¹⁹¹

In February 1966, K. C. Dykes wrote an article which looked forward to Easter Day 1980, the date proposed for Church Union by the Nottingham F&O Conference in August 1964.¹⁹² Dykes recognized that the baptismal issue was an obstacle to union, but then proposed, 'It goes without saying that infant baptism and believer's baptism will have to lie side by side in a united Free Church. This should not worry us for, to refer to Uzzah..., we need not tremble for the safety of the ark of believer's baptism'. He suggested that Baptists were presumably ready to consider infant baptism as practised by the Free Churches and when followed in the years of discretion by confession of faith as the equivalent of the Baptist's one rite of baptismal initiation. He recognized that such infant baptism could not carry such a rich symbolism as did believer's baptism, nor be as potent in conveying grace to the believer, but the two stages were essentially the same thing. He drew attention to the fact that in talking to Free Church brethren, Baptists were not up against sacramentarianism or any suggestion that infant baptism worked *ex opere operato*, rather, they were confronted by the declaratory view of baptism, the affirmation of God's prevenient grace which was ultimately little different from what was witnessed to in infant dedication. It was

191 Gilmore, *Baptism and Christian Unity*, 84-89. Gilmore had anticipated some of the arguments he put forward in his book in an address to the Baptist Board on 'Some Problems of Believers Baptism', see 'Baptist Board Discusses Baptism', *BT* December 31, 1959, 6. He also raised the issues of open membership, the relation of baptism to first communion, and made the point that for some Baptists baptism had degenerated into a subjective ordinance.

192 K. C. Dykes, ~~K. C. Dykes~~, Joint Principal of Northern Baptist College with Dr. David Russell, '1980 - The Next Step for Baptists? Should it be a United Free Church?', *BT* February 3, 1966, 9. This was followed in January 1965 by a Conference held at Swanwick on 'The Baptismal Life'. It had been conceived two years previously by the Council of 'Parish and People', and Baptists were represented on it by Alec Gilmore, Neville Clark and Stephen Winward. The results of this consultation was published by SCM, each of the Baptist representatives contributing short articles. See A. Gilmore, 'Baptism and Creation: Comment', 62-64; N. Clark, 'Baptism and Redemption', 71-75; S. F. Winward, 'Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist: A Comment', 123-127, all in B. S. Moss (ed.), *Crisis for Baptism* (1965).

when baptism and regeneration were viewed as identical that to baptize as a believer somebody who had been baptized as an infant was anathema to many.¹⁹³

Responses were not long in coming. Rev. Geoffrey Whitfield disagreed that infant baptism followed by a later profession of faith was equivalent to Baptist baptism, and called for Free Churchmen to admit that infant baptism was an antiquated, unscriptural and irrelevant doctrine which should be discarded forever.¹⁹⁴ Stanley Shackleton voiced the fear of many that believer's baptism would be lost in a United Free Church. Drawing attention to the first Baptist Principle he stated that the heart of the gospel could not be compromised. A unity which demanded the surrender of the very beliefs that were fundamental would never work. Unity not uniformity was what was wanted. John Bennett argued that there were more differences between Baptists and Paedobaptists than just baptism, including the doctrine of the Church. Even a diluted doctrine of infant baptism, he contended, when practised alongside believer's baptism would present a confusing contradiction. To do such would give tacit acceptance to the validity of tradition lying alongside Scripture and Church belief and practice, an implication that would be unacceptable to many Baptists.¹⁹⁵ Rev. George Stirrup was startled by Dykes' article, and asked why discussions were not being opened up with 'closer brethren', such as the Open Brethren, Pentecostals and F.I.E.C. churches.¹⁹⁶ Rev. Brian Wilson was less temperate. Infant baptism was an offence to the Gospel, and this was shown by the fact that he himself and other Baptist ministers baptized those who had been baptized in infancy, thereby showing

¹⁹³ It is worth noting that to Dykes, the recognition of episcopacy would be for Baptists a betrayal of the Gospel, so '1980 - The Next Step for Baptists? Should it be a United Free Church?', *BT* February 3, 1966, 9.

¹⁹⁴ G. Whitfield from Brighton, 'United Free Church', *BT* February 17, 1966, 4.

¹⁹⁵ 'United Free Church', letters by S. W. Shackleton of Hebden Bridge and J. W. Bennett from Leyton, *BT* February 24, 1966, 4.

¹⁹⁶ G. Stirrup of Wanstead Park, London, 'United Free Church', *BT* March 3, 1966, 4.

that infant baptism was no baptism at all.¹⁹⁷ Yet Dykes' plea for a United Free Church could be justified. Wilson asked, which was the greatest offence to the Gospel - infant baptism or disunity. The justification for a United Free Church lay in the Gospel being more effectively preached.¹⁹⁸

Alec Dunn agreed with much that Dykes had called for, but not that the two baptisms could live side by side, and that this was not just a practical matter but a matter of doctrine.¹⁹⁹ Others were more positive and supported Dykes' position. J. B. Taylor was in favour of Free Church union, but could not contemplate joining with the Church of England.²⁰⁰ He suggested that in a United Free Church a Baptist minister could get a Paedobaptist from outside to administer infant baptism.²⁰¹ The two forms could exist side by side until a more widespread acceptance of believer's baptism came about. Taylor drew attention to the fact that there were already a number of Midland Baptist churches which had covenants recognizing both forms of baptism. Sadly he did not mention which ones. Stan Hardy believed that Baptists ought to begin conversations with Congregationalists and Presbyterians

¹⁹⁷ That this was common Baptist practice is reflected in Channon's, *Much Water*, 48, who remarked that he was prepared to baptize those who came to him whilst still attending a Paedobaptist church, and that this did happen was confirmed by E. A. Payne, 'Baptism and Church Membership among Baptists', *Theology* 55 no.383 (May, 1952), 171. See also Rev. Vernon F. Moss of Wood Gate Baptist Church, Loughborough, 'Loaning the Baptistry', *BT* October 7, 1954, 7, who remarked that it was not unusual for Christians to apply to us for baptism without seeking membership within the Baptist fold, and within the exercise of this freedom Baptists were willing to consider any such candidates for baptism, this being a suggestion made to him by Rev. R. G. Fairbairn of King's Road, Reading. See also W. D. Jackson, 'One Lord, One faith, One Baptism', 63; 'Not Baptists But Baptised', *BT* June 23, 1960, 16. R. L. Child, *A Conversation About Baptism* (1963), 100, added that there were a growing number of ministers who disliked this expedient, Child, implicitly being one of them; Dr. D. S. Russell's address at the third session of the 1955 Baptist Assembly condemned the baptizing of those who had no intention of becoming church members, stating, 'There are no such things as private sacraments', 'The Ministry and the Sacraments', *BT* May 5, 1955, 2.

¹⁹⁸ B. E. Wilson of Church in Lancashire, 'United Free Church', *BT* March 17, 1966, 4.

¹⁹⁹ A. G. Dunn of Woodbridge, Suffolk, 'United Free Church', *BT* March 6, 1966, 4.

²⁰⁰ J. B. Taylor from West Bromwich, 'United Free Church', *BT* March 3, 1966, 4. Howard H. Bryant from Cotham, Bristol, also expressed pleasure with Dykes' article, *BT* March 3, 1966, 4.

²⁰¹ This was indeed to become the practice when Baptists became involved in Local Ecumenical Projects, as it was already the general practice within Union churches.

immediately.²⁰² However, the suggestion was not pursued, though it had been briefly discussed three years earlier, when Rev. Leslie A. Stringer drew attention to the similarities between Baptists and Congregationalists, asking why it was not possible to talk about closer relationships at home and abroad, supporting his case with his understanding that half the churches affiliated to the BU were open membership and therefore baptism was not really a barrier.²⁰³ J. F. V. Nicholson agreed, noting that the two denominations were one on all matters of faith and church order except baptism, and that the existence of many open membership Baptist churches and a few Union churches which already practised both infant and believers baptism showed that those differing on this issue could work and worship within one local church.²⁰⁴ E. K. Breakspear, a Congregationalist who had transferred to an open membership Baptist church in Coventry, endorsed Stringer's letter, though recognized that many Baptists would have trouble with the baptismal issue.²⁰⁵

Ernest Payne offered the important observation that those appointed to the BWA Commission on the Doctrine of Baptism set up in 1950 to prepare the address on 'Baptism in Present-Day Theology' had not been able to agree upon even a brief statement as to the theology of baptism.²⁰⁶ What was true of the BWA was equally true of churches and members within the BU.

All this had implications for the whole discussion of intercommunion. Dr. W. Donald Hudson raised the question of what significance infant baptism should have

²⁰² S. Hardy of Ilford, 'United Free Church', *BT* February 24, 1966, 4. It is worth noting that the previous year the Congregationalists and Presbyterians had published a joint document in which it was proposed that baptism would be administered either to adults on profession of faith or to the children of believing parents. When it was infant baptism, membership would be confirmed on public confession of faith, see 'Outline of a United Church', *BT* March 11, 1965, 1.

²⁰³ L. A. Stringer of Crouch Hill, 'Congregationalists and Baptists', *BT* February 28, 1963, 6.

²⁰⁴ J. F. V. Nicholson of Manchester, 'Congregationalists and Baptists', *BT* March 21, 1963, 6.

²⁰⁵ E. K. Breakspear, 'Congregationalists and Baptists', *BT* March 28, 1963, 6.

²⁰⁶ E. A. Payne, 'Believers' Baptism in Ecumenical Discussion', *Foundations* (January, 1960), 36.

for Baptists, noting the usual answer that it was invalid and no baptism at all. However, it was necessary to take account of the baptism, and not just the faith, of other Christians. Two alternatives were possible for Baptists. First, the strict view, that infant baptism was no baptism and therefore only those baptized as believers were entitled to commune. The merit of this was consistency. Secondly, was the broad view that infant baptism administered by other communions was undeniably Christian baptism and entitled those so baptized to come to the table. Most, he remarked, would probably wish to take up a position somewhere between the two. What puzzled Hudson, however, was how such a position could be theologically possible without denying that sacraments are essential to the Church, that they are related to each other, the denial of which being a denial of New Testament teaching. Was the broad view possible, then? Hudson argued that it was when infant baptism was seen to have some validity (but not complete validity) as a witness to the prevenience of grace, and with confirmation as recognizing the importance of the individual's faith. As administered by the Church it was undeniably a Christian sacrament, though Baptists could not accept it as in accord with the mind of Christ concerning his ordinance. If Baptists could take this line then the difficulty of intercommunion disappeared. If they could not, then how could they reconcile their advocacy of intercommunion with the denial of all validity to the baptism of those with whom they wished to communicate?²⁰⁷

Rev. Paul H. Ballard took up Hudson's point, agreeing with Neville Clark in his contribution to *Christian Baptism*,²⁰⁸ that Baptists could not lay exclusive claim to truth. Baptists, he noted, criticized infant baptism on its departure from the New Testament, its theological emphasis and seeming indiscriminate use. However, he sought to draw attention to the important fact that the Church had been broken and therefore every section had been disfigured and needed insights from others. Baptists

²⁰⁷ Rev. Dr. W. D. Hudson, lecturer in Philosophy at Exeter University, 'Inter-Communion and Infant Baptism. Can we have one without recognising the other?', *BT* January 1, 1960, 10.

²⁰⁸ N. Clark, 'The Theology of Baptism', 326.

had insights to press, but also much to learn from others. Baptist baptism was also partial, so 'in our divided state we must be gracious enough to accept all Christian baptism while still pressing our claims'.²⁰⁹

A week later, Rev. William Powell suggested that in a united Church anyone baptized in infancy but wishing to express belief by deliberate acceptance of baptism should have their desire granted, and in so doing dissented from the views expressed by Hudson and Ballard. Validity, he declared, hardly seemed a valid conception to use. How could infant baptism have some validity but not complete validity. Surely, it was either valid or invalid?²¹⁰

In March, 1963, Dr. Champion reported on the Anglican-Methodist report on reunion. He contended that this new situation would make the distinctive Baptist emphases even more significant and needed, asking when it would be that Baptists would submit themselves to the same searching experience of such conversations with other churches. The evangelical interpretation of the Christian faith and its truth implied believers baptism as the only genuine Christian baptism. How could this evangelical interpretation ever be reconciled with Catholic interpretation? 'We dare not compromise about truth! Not even for the sake of unity! Yet is there a unity, not yet discussed, which will properly comprehend what is true in both interpretations? Until it is found we must remain in this tension of loyalty to the truth and longing for the oneness of all Christians'.²¹¹ In August, reporting on the recent F&O Conference,

²⁰⁹ P. H. Ballard, at the time working for the SCM, 'Recognising Infant Baptism', *BT* January 21, 1960, 6.

²¹⁰ W. Powell of Weston Favell, Northampton, 'Baptism and Church Membership', *BT* January 28, 1960, 6.

²¹¹ L. G. Champion, 'Anglican-Methodist Report "Raises Unity Problems for Other Churches"', *BT* March 7, 1963, 9. Ernest Payne in his contribution to *The Churches and Christian Unity* noted that schemes of reunion often involved dangerous ambiguities and compromises and that Baptists found these unacceptable, see 'The Baptists', in R. J. W. Bevan (ed.), *The Churches and Christian Unity* (1963), 142. In November E. Roberts reported R. E. O. White's address to the autumnal conference of the Northern Association at Grange Road Baptist Church, Darlington, 'Baptism and the Responsibilities Involved'. There were four areas of responsibility that White, of Boreham Wood, analysed: responsibility to the truth itself, to the

Champion again reiterated his call that Baptists should be sharing more in the process than they were.²¹²

J. Edgar Ennals advocated the possibility of Baptist churches adopting different modes for baptism, dependent on the wishes of the candidate so as not to cause an unnecessary obstacle to their being baptized, and that this would also aid progress towards Christian unity, 'if we could be known to stand for the great evangelical principle of faith as the basis of all Christian experience, while leaving the actual method of expressing that faith in baptism to the conscience of the individual'. This, he believed, would involve no sacrifice of principle, but though no response was forthcoming, there can be little to doubt that this eccentric view would have received little to no support.²¹³ Ennals was yet another Baptist writer who failed to note that the divergence on the baptismal issue was not so much over the method or subject of baptism but over its meaning, and that though a change in mode might superficially appear to break down barriers, nevertheless it was the different theologies of believers' and infant baptism which kept Baptist and Paedobaptist communions poles apart.

Union Churches.

From 1938-1966 there appears to have been little or no increase in the number of Union Churches, and very little was written about them, though there were two periods of some debate about them carried on through the pages of the *Baptist Times*.

candidate, to the Church and to our fellow Churches, see E. Roberts, 'Baptism', *BT* November 28, 1963, 16.

²¹² L. G. Champion, 'Dr. Champion Sums Up the Faith and Order Conference', *BT* August 8, 1963, 7.

²¹³ J. E. Ennals, who had gone out to South Africa early on in his ministry and ministered there for over fifty years and had retired there, 'Our Baptist Witness: Baptism in Practice', *BQ* 20.4 (October, 1963), 183-186, quotation from p.184. Some information about Ennals can be found in H. J. Batts' *The Story of 100 Years, 1820-1920 being the History of the Baptist Church in South Africa* (Cape Town, n.d., but c.1920).

In 1946 an 'Enquirer' raised a number of issues concerning the running of Union Churches. Did a Baptist minister have to practise both infant dedication and christening? Further, what were the conditions of membership in such a church, was it necessary for Trust Deeds to be altered when such a union took place, were there any examples of ministers belonging to two separate churches, Baptist and Congregational, and, if so, how did they operate and were such ministers recognized by the BU?²¹⁴

A reply was published the following week from Rev. Keith M. Preston, the minister of Wells United Church. He explained the situation there was that the minister was alternately Baptist then Congregationalist. When under a Baptist minister all christenings were performed by a neighbouring Congregational minister who would exchange services with the Baptist. On membership, he explained that, 'The essential conditions of membership are confession of faith in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour: a resolution to live day by day in all the engagements of life according to His spirit and teaching; and a willingness to uphold the honour, discipline, work and worship of this Church by the consecration of individual gifts of time, talent and means'. In his opinion, involvement in Union Churches was 'possible for Baptists without the sacrifice of any essential principle of their faith'.²¹⁵

214 'Enquirer', 'The Baptist Minister in a Union Church', *BT* September 26, 1946, 8.

215 K. M. Preston, 'The Baptist Minister in a Union Church', *BT* October 3, 1946, 8. In reply to Enquirer's other question he explained that the church was in membership with the BU and CU, the Bristol Baptist Association and the Somerset Congregational Union, receiving a small grant from central funds by which both Unions supported the ministry irrespective of his denomination, and the church contributed equally to the BMS and London Missionary Society. In Wells the old Congregational chapel had been sold and they worshipped in the Baptist chapel, therefore there was a baptistry, a Congregational school room having been added to the premises. Regarding the buildings, the Bristol Association and the Somerset Union remained the trustees of the respective properties, and Preston added that the necessity for any alteration of the Trust Deed surely depended upon its wording when such a union took place. As for the minister himself, he had to be accredited by his own denomination. He added that the church was a happy one and that, without such an amalgamation, it was probable that both causes would have died or been too small to support their own ministers or contributed effectively to the religious life of the city. In his opinion, such amalgamation was undesirable in larger places, but in smaller centres of population it 'promotes the extension of the Kingdom of God...'

Rev. Edwin H. Newton wrote of his eight and a half years experience in Louth Union Church, Lincolnshire, which had been formed twenty seven years previously. There infants were dedicated and christened, in the latter instance another Free Church minister was brought in to conduct the service. The condition for membership was the same as an open membership Baptist church, receiving applicants on profession of faith, though the Baptist minister would ask him/her to consider baptism. Newton added that as a 'convinced Baptist' he had remained such and met 'no serious difficulty'.²¹⁶

Union Churches were again the focus of discussion in 1959, when Rev. G. S. McKelvie described his ministry in the Baptist and Congregational Loughton Union Church, which also included Presbyterians, Methodists and Anglicans, all of whom were represented on the diaconate. Whilst all monies were divided between Baptist and Congregational funds, the minister was always a Baptist who was only required to baptize believers, a local Congregational or Methodist minister being brought in for infant baptisms, and he noted that often infant dedication was preferred by non-Baptist parents. McKelvie's purpose in writing was to encourage work towards Free Church Union, in which he maintained the Baptist witness would not be swamped, as, he believed, his personal experience demonstrated. As there were a large number of Baptist ministers in training, something which was not the case in other denominations, there would be a great number of Baptist ministers in a United Church and it would be the duty of every sincere minister to put the claims of believer's baptism to every membership class.²¹⁷

²¹⁶ E. H. Newton, 'The Baptist Minister in a Union Church', *BT* October 17, 1946, 8. He further commented that a Union Church was a very happy arrangement both economically and spiritually for utilizing the resources of smaller communities.

²¹⁷ G. S. McKelvie, 'How Do Baptists Stand in the Matter of Free Church Union', *BT* January 22, 1959, 10. Amongst the reasons for such unity, McKelvie included the number of struggling causes and the scarcity of ministers. McKelvie left Loughton to go to Blenheim BC, Luton, in 1959, having served Loughton since 1950. On the church see Vivian Lewis' *Come With Us. Loughton Union Church, 1813-1973* (Loughton, 1974). See John Lawrence, *Churches Working Together in Loughton, 1944 to 1994* (Loughton, n.d., but 1994), on how the Loughton Union Church has related to the other churches in the town and particularly to the preparation of a local covenant for the Churches in Loughton (1985, see p.9 and Appendix

The experiences of others involved in Union Churches, however, were mixed. In early February, 'L' and his wife spoke of how a few months previously they had joined Hutton (and Shenfield) Union Church after many years in membership in a Baptist church. Such had been their experience that they called for the BU and County Associations to come forward with positive policies for the establishment of more Union Churches.²¹⁸

This called forth a response from 'Baptist Principles', who claimed on behalf of those like him/her to be deeply concerned about such Union Churches as Hutton (and Shenfield) lest Baptist principles and practices should be lost sight of.²¹⁹ Such sentiments were also shared by 'Experienced' who was involved in an undisclosed Union Church, who reported that believer's baptism outside of families of confirmed and ardent Baptists were very rare, and that there was no proselytizing for fear of giving offence. In thirteen years only two believers' baptisms had taken place.²²⁰ 'Inexperienced' replied arguing that 'Experienced' had no monopoly of experience regarding Union Churches. As the assistant minister and minister-in-charge of an associated daughter church, his experience of thirteen years was completely different. He had found no difficulties in asserting believer's baptism in that it was a dramatic portrayal, a preaching sacrament. As both modes of baptism existed alongside each other in the Church Universal, he argued, why could such not obtain in a local church?²²¹ Later, Rev. J. Aubrey Moore voiced his disapproval of Inexperienced's acceptance of two modes of baptism side by side.²²²

IV), the Loughton Council of Churches (1988, see Appendix V) and the formation of Churches Together in Loughton (1994).

218 'L', 'Church Union', *BT* February 5, 1959, 6. In the same column, 'E.M.' reported a Presbyterian church which had been served by a Baptist minister for 25 years and who had not been required to baptize infants.

219 'Baptist Principles', 'Union Churches', *BT* February 12, 1959, 6.

220 'Experienced', 'Union Churches', *BT* February 26, 1959, 6.

221 'Inexperienced', 'Union Churches', *BT* March 12, 1959, 6.

222 J. Aubrey Moore of Hindhead, Surrey, 'Union Churches', *BT* March 26, 1959, 6.

Others, however, continued to speak positively. Whilst at Pinner United Free Church from 1947-56, Rev. Douglas Stewart had baptized 66 people, over half of whom had been from non-Baptist families, and he claimed that in Union Churches many adopted the Baptist position.²²³ This was followed by Mr. B. Ince-Jones, then of Brentwood, but previously a member and ex-secretary of Hutton (and Shenfield) Union Church for over 30 years. Over the last eight years, he reported, there had been nine baptisms by immersion, including some from non-Baptist traditions. Though Baptists made up less than a quarter of the membership, Home Work Funds and missionary collections were divided equally. Under the last Baptist pastorate all applicants for membership had been given full opportunity to make their profession by baptism.²²⁴

'Experienced' rejoined the debate asking what happened when a Union Church had five years of a minister teaching believer's baptism only to be followed by a minister teaching infant baptism?²²⁵ No reply was forthcoming, and the whole issue closed with a brief letter from the Secretary of a Union Church with a Baptist minister, who had been a member for 60 years, who simply wrote that the Baptist minister was not fettered in his testimony to believer's baptism, and believed that such churches were needed especially in smaller centres.²²⁶

The period closed with a short discussion of Union Churches by Alec Gilmore. Here, he noted that provision was generally made for both forms of baptism and there would be a large baptistry for immersion and a font for christening, though the above correspondence shows that this was not always the case. Links with the headquarters of both denominations and both missionary societies were preserved and the ministry would be open to recognized ministers of either Union and these would frequently be

²²³ D. Stewart, 'Union Churches', *BT* March 5, 1959, 6.

²²⁴ B. Ince-Jones, 'Union Churches', *BT* March 19, 1959, 6.

²²⁵ 'Experienced', 'Union Churches', *BT* March 26, 1959, 6.

²²⁶ 'The Secretary', 'Union Churches', *BT* April 23, 1959, 6.

alternated,²²⁷ during which 'inevitably the emphasis tends to have swung to and fro according to the particular allegiance of either the minister or the leading officers. At some periods of the church's history believers' baptism has been preached and practised, at other periods the baptism of infants; and in some cases the result has been that no real attention has been given to baptism at all'.²²⁸

The main problem, according to Gilmore, arose for those who were born into one situation and grew up in another. For instance, a child might be christened under a Congregationalist's ministry, but when a teenager under a Baptist's ministry has become converted along with youths of formerly Baptist parents who were not present for infant baptism. 'Is the Baptist minister right to baptize them all in the same way? Should he encourage the one who has been baptized already to be baptized again? Or, even if such a person wants to be baptized like the others, should the minister endeavour to dissuade him on the grounds that it would be wrong to do so?'²²⁹ Gilmore's eventual answer acknowledged the complexity of such matters. For him, concessions had to be made to the freedom of individual conscience, and, from the Baptist side, some attempt needed to be made to overcome such situations and a possible way forward could be through a service of the re-affirmation of baptismal vows, which could also be used for the return of a lapsed baptized believer.²³⁰ This he proposed in the light of his belief that there was room 'in the providence of God for both forms of baptism to co-exist, and might not this inconclusiveness be one means by which God is seeking to lead His Church into something richer than our forefathers ever dreamed of?'²³¹

²²⁷ Again, the above discussion and that for the period 1900-1937, shows that this was also not always the case in practice, eg, at Pill Union church, where the minister has always been a Baptist, though this was not the intention.

²²⁸ Gilmore, *Baptism and Christian Unity*, 79-80.

²²⁹ Gilmore, *Baptism and Christian Unity*, 80.

²³⁰ Gilmore, *Baptism and Christian Unity*, 87-89.

²³¹ Gilmore, *Baptism and Christian Unity*, 83. Similarly, on p.82 he wrote, 'If, in the interests of the unity of the Church, it is felt that the episcopalian should accept the Baptist ministry,

even though he believes that it has not got all that the true ministry requires, then by the same argument the Baptist must be ready to accept infant baptism even though he believes it has not got all that true baptism requires'. This reflects development in Gilmore's thinking, for 13 years earlier, 'Some Recent Trends in the Theology of Baptism - II', *BQ* 15.8 (October, 1954), 338-345, he had been more cautious, pointing out the problems of practising two forms of baptism, and, as re-baptism was not possible, he had called for 'as full and complete adoption of believer's baptism as the Church can produce'. Prior to this, there seems to have been only one solitary voice calling for the acknowledgement of some validity to infant baptism, as opposed to a few others who called for the mutual recognition of the rite. J. H. Shakespeare, *The Churches at the Cross-Roads*, 55-56, outlined three beliefs common to the Free Churches. First, that the Church was composed of the born again and was not co-extensive with the State; second, that the internal life of the Church was a spiritual fellowship, totally different from any secular relation of parishioners; and thirdly, that the Church's authority was vested under Christ Himself as opposed to any clerical or sacerdotal hierarchy. These three positions represented the common ground, though each Free Church gave a different emphasis, was free to vary its form of government, and to 'witness to the common truth by a form of baptism'. Thus whilst the confining of the church to believers, the separation of church and state, and the spiritual relationship that bound member to member under the authority of Christ were essential marks of the church, forms of baptism could reflect legitimate diversity.

Chapter Six.

The Baptist Response.

With the rise of the modern debate on baptism it was not long before Baptists realized that their preoccupation with the mode and subjects of baptism and dated arguments were inadequate to face the new demands of the wealth of scholarly studies on baptism, supplemented by important reports from some of the major denominations, notably the Church of England, Church of Scotland and Methodists. In response, calls quickly began to be made that Baptists should again re-examine all aspects of their own theology and practice of baptism.

In his review of the H. G. Marsh's book *The Origin and Significance of the New Testament Baptism*, Ernest Payne lamented, 'It is surprising, and not to our credit, that Baptists have left to a Methodist the writing of a thoroughly competent modern study of the origins of the New Testament rite from which they get their name. In other generations we could boast exhaustive and scholarly examinations of the origin and significance of Christian baptism, but we have unfortunately produced little of recent years worthy to set beside this modest but most useful volume'.¹ In this, Payne was not alone. In 1938, Thomas Philpot had called for 'intensive and systematic instruction...on the principles and practices of the Baptists', and had highlighted the ordinance of baptism as a specific area in need of such treatment.²

Such wishes began to see fulfilment when, in September 1943, a modest collection of sermons from some of the leading Baptist preachers was published under the title *Concerning Believers' Baptism*. Though in certain places clear differences of opinion between the contributors were evident, nevertheless their agreements were 'deep and

¹ E. A. Payne, 'Baptism in the New Testament', *BT* May 1, 1941, 215. See H. G. Marsh, *The Origin and Significance of the New Testament Baptism* (Manchester, 1941).

² T. Philpot, a retired minister from South Woodford, London, 'Baptist Teaching', *BT* March 3, 1938, 171.

fundamental'.³ Intended primarily for ministers and others with special responsibilities for baptism, the book was the first of a considerable number of books in this period which dealt both directly and indirectly with baptism, and part of the *raison d'être* for the book no doubt lay behind the comment in the preface that 'There are wanting signs to-day, in some of our churches, that baptism is in danger of falling into desuetude. We have endeavoured, therefore, in these sermons to show how integrally it is related to those things that are characteristic of our witness, viz., the necessity for the response of personal faith to God's grace mediated in Christ, the character of the Church as a fellowship of believing people, the evangelical presentation of the Gospel as grounded in the Cross and Resurrection, the liberty and responsibility of the Christian man in respect of his religious acts and decisions, and so forth'. Though the authors held different views on reunion, all agreed that no incorporation in a larger body would be possible for Baptists which did not leave them free to maintain their witness to believers' baptism.⁴

The following month Mr. Luther Walker asked whether it was not time that Baptists 'spoke out plainly once again about the evil attending the prevailing notions of infant baptism?' as 'the superstition that surrounds the rite is appalling'.⁵ This was shortly followed by the observation from Percy Evans that more was needed from those advancing the cause of reunion than side-lining the issue of baptism, either in the hope that it would not greatly matter, or that it could be solved as discussion proceeded, or that opposed views could be ecclesiastically synthesized. 'Controversy', he noted, 'may have been declined less out of brotherly love than through timidity, as if Christian men could not be trusted to express their honest disagreement without

³ F. C. Bryan (ed.), *Concerning Believers' Baptism* (1943), 5.

⁴ F. C. Bryan, 'Preface', in *Concerning Believers' Baptism*, 6. The book was warmly reviewed by H. V. Larcombe, '*Concerning Believers' Baptism*', *BT* September 23, 1943, 2. J. B. Middlebrook, Home Secretary of the BMS, similarly declared that any scheme of reunion which did not permit the maintenance of believers' baptism would 'never win [Baptist] interest or attachment', see his 'Baptism as Entrance into the Church and its Relation to the Lord's Supper', in Bryan (ed.), *Concerning Believers' Baptism*, 56.

⁵ L. Walker of Flitwick, Bedfordshire, 'Infant Baptism', *BT* October 14, 1943, 6.

quarrelling. Thereby we neither serve truth, foster charity nor promote unity'. To this end, Evans set out to reconsider whether infant baptism could be justified, with the words of P. T. Forsyth in mind, 'It is strong Churches that make real union, Churches that believe in themselves and look also on the things of others'. Evans' intention was to preserve just such a spirit.⁶

In March 1944, a special meeting of the BU Council was set aside to consider the spiritual welfare of the denomination. A group of Council members were appointed whose brief was to examine the situation. In *Speak That They Go Forward*, Henry Cook declared that 'New Testament Baptism is a vital part of the Gospel, and we should make more of it'. This meant more than simply refusing to baptize infants, for Baptists needed to expound their doctrine of baptism in relation to the whole life and purpose of the Church.⁷

This need for more Baptist teaching on baptism was again expressed by D. Tait Patterson, the Baptist liturgist. After reading *Concerning Believers Baptism* 'with great pleasure', he remarked, 'surely this slender volume is not our last word on baptism to this generation'. Earlier in the war, Patterson explained, he had taught the doctrine of the Lord's Supper and baptism to a class of missionary students as an emergency locum. For this he had undertaken an examination of the literature on the subject and reported his astonishment 'at the poverty of the literature; much of it was neither good exposition nor good apologetic, and there was a real lack of understanding when it came to the historical background!' Baptism, he insisted, was entitled to have a prominent place in Baptist contributions to Christian doctrine. 'We need a thorough examination of the doctrine by one of our New Testament scholars'.

⁶ P. W. Evans, 'Can Infant Baptism Be Justified?', *Evangelical Quarterly* 15 (1943), 292. Quotation from P. T. Forsyth, *The Church and the Sacraments* (1917), 139. See the earlier companion article by D. M. Baillie, 'The Justification of Infant Baptism', *Evangelical Quarterly* 15 (1943), 21-31. Evans' article was reviewed in 'Principal Evans on Infant Baptism', *BT* November 25, 1943, 7.

⁷ H. Cook, *Speak -That They Go Forward. A Report on the Spiritual Welfare in Churches of the Baptist Denomination* (1946), 13. Extracts of this report are reprinted in H. L. McBeth, *A Sourcebook for Baptist Heritage* (Nashville, 1990), 390-394.

He offered his opinion that Wheeler Robinson's *Baptist Principles* was the best book of his own generation, but was limited in its historical outlook. 'It is strange that a Church that boasts, quite rightly, of its New Testament origins has failed in these latter days to produce an outstanding New Testament scholar'.⁸

At this time another contribution to the better understanding of Baptist principles appeared. Dr. Arthur Dakin's *The Baptist View of the Church and Ministry*⁹ had been intended to be published on behalf of the College Principals, though not necessarily endorsed by them, and the preface was supplied by M. E. Aubrey.¹⁰ However, a proof copy had fallen into the possession of Ernest Payne, Senior Tutor at Regents' Park College, who read it with growing dismay, believing it to be an incomplete presentation of the Baptist tradition on both the Church and the ministry. As far as he was concerned, Dakin failed adequately to recognize the fact that many contemporary Baptist practices and difficulties were the result of nineteenth-century individualism and reaction to the Oxford movement.¹¹ He felt that Dakin's account of things needed

⁸ D. T. Patterson, minister in Droitwich, 'Concerning Believers' Baptism', *BT* April 13, 1944, 6.

⁹ A. Dakin, *The Baptist View of the Church and Ministry* (1944). There were two reviews of this: A. C. Underwood, 'The Baptist View of the Church and the Ministry', *BT* May 4, 1944, 10; L. G. Champion, at the time minister in Rugby, 'The Baptist View of the Church and Ministry, by A. Dakin', *BQ* 11.8-9 (January-July, 1944), 241-245. Both reviews displayed an appreciation to Dr. Dakin, but also a dis-ease with it. On Dakin, see W. W. Bottoms, 'Herald of God. An appreciation of Dr. A. Dakin', in L. G. Champion (ed.), *The Communication of the Christian Faith* (Bristol Baptist College, 1964), vii-xiv; and L. G. Champion, 'Arthur Dakin (1884-1969)', *The Fraternal* 155 (January, 1970), 5-8.

¹⁰ See Aubrey's 'Note by the General Secretary of the Baptist Union', Dakin, *Church and Ministry*, 4.

¹¹ In this, Payne was not alone, for many others recognized that the Baptist doctrine of baptism was impoverished by modern individualism/subjectivism. See S. F. Winward, 'Towards A Doctrine of the Church. II', *The Fraternal* 55 (September, 1944), 3-4, who referred to 'three centuries of individualism' which had weakened Protestantism, people believing that religion was a matter between the individual and God, and that 'This distortion appears in much of our preaching and literature, and makes impossible a true doctrine of the Church'. Later he made this explicit in relation to baptism in which 'we are baptized into Christ Jesus and into the one Body'; R. C. Walton, *The Gathered Community* (1946), 127, and p.161 where he opposed the individualism which was characteristic of so many Baptists and exemplified in Dakin's *The Baptist View of the Church and the Ministry*, 34, who had written, 'It should be noticed...that while [baptism] takes place in the fellowship, the blessing is conceived as being to each member separately. That is to say, Christ is thought of in the ordinances as related not primarily to the Church as a body, but first to each believing individual, and so to the church'. See also T. G. Dunning, 'A Baptist Oxford Movement', *BQ* 11.14-15 (July-October, 1945), 413; R. L. Child, *Baptists and Christian Unity* (1948), 13.

to be challenged, and so, under considerable pressure of time and, it would appear, emotion, Payne wrote a reply. He showed a proof to both J. O. Barrett and Wheeler Robinson, the latter providing him with a cover letter to send to M. E. Aubrey. The suggestion was that Payne's work should be published as soon as possible and should have as much or as little backing from the BU as Dakin's book was to have. Only so could it be made clear that the Baptist tradition was more varied and complex than Dakin's work suggested. Though the manuscript never saw the light of day, it appears that Payne had, at least to some extent, the sympathy of Aubrey, but there was no way that such a controversial attack on Dakin, who was to be nominated as Vice-President of the BU in 1944, was going to be printed. However, the Kingsgate Press did agree to accept a book on a similar subject, provided there was no obvious attack on Dakin's views. With a title suggested by Percy Evans, Payne, that same year, published his *The Fellowship of Believers*, a far more detailed study of Baptist principles than Dakin's slimmer volume.¹² Here, Payne confirmed that the most distinctive feature of the Baptists was their doctrine of the Church, from which he proceeded to claim that precisely because of this, Baptists were likely to have an important contribution to make to the modern ecumenical debate.¹³

Still calls were being made for a book on baptism, or at least the Baptist position on the rite and related doctrines,¹⁴ and they were in part answered by the publication on

¹² E. A. Payne, *The Fellowship of Believers. Baptist Thought and Practice Yesterday and Today* (1944). This outline of the episode is taken from W. M. S. West, *To Be A Pilgrim* (1983), 60-61. As well as West's biography of Payne, see also the whole of the issue of *The Fraternal* 145 (July, 1967). It is interesting to note that Ernest Payne was nominated late in 1943 for vice-presidency of the BU, but declined when he heard that Dr. Dakin was also nominated. Of interest is A. C. Underwood's discussion of Dakin's *Church and Ministry* and Payne's *Fellowship of Believers*, 'Whither?', *BT* May 24, 1945, 7. He wrote, 'Some [Baptists] see in believers' baptism a mere symbol [Dakin]; others find in it a genuine means of grace'. *The Fellowship of Believers* was reviewed in *The Expository Times* 56 (June, 1945), 225-26.

¹³ Payne, *Fellowship of Believers*, 11.

¹⁴ G. Henton Davies, at the time tutor at Bristol Baptist College, 'His Baptism and Ours', *BT* June 6, 1946, 8, who called on the Kingsgate Press or the Carey Press or a united Baptist Press to commission men like S. I. Buse, whose earlier article Davies was commending (see S. I. Buse, 'His Baptism and Ours', *BT* May 23, 1946, 6), to state the doctrine of baptism and so 'lift His baptism and ours into the context of His Incarnation and our redemption where they rightly belong'. What influence Davies' article had in the eventual publication of the volume *Christian Baptism* edited by Alec Gilmore, can only be speculated upon, but it is

behalf of a group of Baptists of *The Gathered Community* (1946) by Robert C. Walton,¹⁵ the revised edition of Robinson's *Life and Faith of the Baptists* (1946)¹⁶, the third edition of Henry Cook's *The Why of Our Faith* (1947) and, the same year, the first edition of his *What Baptists Stand For* (1947). Though the latter two books did not deal with the ecumenical issues of the time, Walton's book, which focussed primarily upon the doctrine of the Church, recognized that the attempt to rediscover the true significance of the Church would inevitably lead each denomination to emphasize afresh its own insights. Baptists, then, would render no small service to the 'One Catholic Church' if it minimized the contribution which God had given them to make to Christianity as a whole. 'Indeed', he continued, 'our best contribution is to rethink our doctrine of the Church, the Ministry and the Sacraments'. To this end, therefore, it would be to the enrichment and not the impoverishment of the Universal Church for Baptists to share with other Christians in the Ecumenical Movement.¹⁷

In what was to prove to be his most influential and long-lasting contribution to Baptist thought, Henry Cook argued that the Baptist contribution to 'the New Day' (that is, the post War world) was their direct appeal to the New Testament and their

worthy of mention that S. I. Buse was among⁵ the contributors to that particular volume, published in 1959. Also Rev. Sidney A. Gray of Gloucester suggested that the Kingsgate Press produce a symposium under the title 'As Others See Us' see 'Helping Our Baptist Apologetic', *BT* February 6, 1947, 9. [On Henton Davies, see John I. Durham, 'Gwynne Henton Davies. A Biographical Appreciation', in J. I. Durham and J. R. Porter (eds.), *Proclamation and Presence. Old Testament Essays in Honour of Gwynne Henton Davies* (1970), xiii-xvii.]

¹⁵ The members of the group which initiated this book were Rev. W. W. Bottoms of New Road, Oxford, Rev. F. E. Hemmens of Melksham, Rev. Norman Moon of Small Heath, Birmingham, Robert Walton himself, General Secretary of the SCM in schools, Rev. Stephen Winward of Higham's Park, Walthamstow, Rev. Emlyn Davies, a tutor at South Wales Baptist College, Rev. Gwenyth Hubble, Principal of Carey Hall from 1946-60, Marjorie Reeves, later an historian and Oxford Don, Rev. W. H. Weston of Earl Shilton and Thurlaston, Leicester, Rev. Ernest Ford of Clarence Road, Southend-on-Sea, Rev. Leslie Moon of Elland, Yorkshire, Rev. Douglas Stewart from Heath Street, Hampstead, and Mr. Alex Wilson. See R. C. Walton, *The Gathered Community* (1946), 10.

¹⁶ Reviewed by A. C. Underwood, *BT* May 22, 1947, 7; Graham W. Hughes of Bunyan BC, Kingston-on-Thames, in his review, '*Life and Faith of the Baptists*, by H. Wheeler Robinson', *BQ* 12.6-7 (April-July, 1947), 228-29, who, p.228, welcomed the re-appearance of Robinson's book, which, he suggested, relieved in some measure 'the present famine of literature dealing with the principles and history of the Baptists in this country...!'

¹⁷ Walton, *Gathered Community*, 112. See the review by L. Champion, '*The Gathered Community*, by Robert C. Walton', *BQ* 12.6-7 (April-July, 1947), 223-225.

bold declaration of their conception of the Church.¹⁸ He defended the notion of unity as opposed to uniformity,¹⁹ and in his discussion of reunion insisted that not all differences were really unimportant, stating that 'Baptists would be false to their deepest convictions if they did not say so'. Then, after rehearsing the Baptist opposition to a state Church, their rejection of episcopacy and episcopal (re)ordination, Cook set down the Baptist conviction that the only baptism taught in the New Testament was that of believers, and that infant baptism was not only unscriptural but contrary to the essential character of the Church as Christ conceived it.²⁰ In line with the 1926 *Reply to the Lambeth Appeal*, Cook accepted the possibility of a federation of equal and autonomous churches and followed this with the statement that the likelihood of Baptists surrendering or compromising their distinctive witness with regard to baptism was extremely unlikely.²¹

A few months before the eighth BWA met in Cleveland, 1950, a Commission on the Doctrine of Baptism was set up under the chairmanship of Ernest Payne. A week before the Congress, the Commission met and prepared a preliminary report which was accompanied by a questionnaire and bibliography which were to be sent to the constituent unions of the BWA. In presenting the report to the Congress, Payne presented a celebrated address entitled 'Baptism in Present-Day Theology', in which he outlined the contemporary debate and stressed the necessity of Baptist existence as a separate denomination. Despite the conclusions reached by the scholars like Brunner, Barth and Dom Gregory Dix, Paedobaptist studies were still defending the rite, most notably Cullmann, Jeremias, Manson, Baillie and Flemington. 'Let us not think', Payne urged, '...that our case is universally conceded and that there is no longer need for our continued existence as a group of Christians who maintain and practise

¹⁸ H. Cook, the General Superintendent of the Metropolitan Area, *What Baptists Stand For* (1947), 8-9.

¹⁹ Cook, *What Baptists Stand For*, 48-52.

²⁰ Cook, *What Baptists Stand For*, 52-53.

²¹ Cook, *What Baptists Stand For*, 57.

believers' baptism. We have notable allies today in our contention that baptism should witness to the response of faith to the offer of God's forgiving love in Christ. But there are still many theologians who do *not* hold this position, and there is as yet little evidence that the mind of the church as a whole has so changed that there is likely to be any immediate abandonment of the practice of infant baptism'.²² Rather, he impressed, the modern baptismal debate showed that there was still much patient argument necessary and much steadfast witnessing required before Baptists could regard their theological and practical tasks as discharged. 'We have still to guard the insights and heritage received from our fathers'.²³ Payne then issued the same frank challenge to the gathered BWA that he was shortly to issue to British Baptists:²⁴

It is hardly to our credit as Baptists that so many of the best books on Baptism have come of recent years from non-Baptist scholars, so few from within our own ranks. And it must be confessed that there are many matters connected with baptism about which we ourselves are far from clear, and some on which we are divided. We may hope that the Commission on the Doctrine of Baptism...will be able to make some contribution to the modern discussion and also help us as Baptists to a clear understanding of the rite which gives us our name. We greatly need to share information and counsel. There are matters to be set in order in our own house, both as to practice and doctrine. We have things to learn as well as teach. There are questions posed by the evidence of the New Testament which are not very easy for any of us to answer.²⁵

22 E. A. Payne, 'Baptism in Present-Day Theology', in *The Doctrine of Baptism: An Address. A Report. A Questionnaire. A Bibliography* (1951), 7. The address is also reproduced in A. T. Ohrn (ed.), *Eighth Baptist World Congress, Cleveland, Ohio, U.S.A., July 22-27, 1950* (Philadelphia, 1950), 171-179. It does not appear that this work progressed any further, no follow up having been traced.

23 Payne, 'Baptism in Present-Day Theology', 8.

24 See Payne, 'Baptism in Modern Theology', *BT* August 24, 1950, 9-10, 'It must be confessed that there are many matters connected with baptism about which we ourselves are far from clear, and some on which we are divided. There are matters to be set in order in our own house, both as to practice and doctrine. We have things to learn as well as teach. There are questions posed by the evidence of the New Testament which are not easy for any of us to answer'. Two years later he wrote in similar fashion in the journal *Theology*, 'Baptism and Church Membership among the Baptists', *Theology* 55, no.383 (May, 1952), 173, 'Like other Christians, Baptists are growingly aware that their own practice has not been without inconsistencies. Both the doctrine and practice of baptism are under reconsideration by Baptists as by others. But Baptists have always held firmly that those only should be baptized and recognized as members of the church who make a credible profession of faith; that the repentance and conversion symbolized in water-baptism are the gift and work of the Holy Spirit; that the Christian life is a corporate one, involving privileges and mutual responsibilities within that fellowship of the Spirit, of which a gathered church is the local expression; and that the mediation of the grace of God does not depend either on outward rite or on priestly succession'.

25 Payne, 'Baptism in Present-Day Theology', 8-9.

By trying to answer the many questions which the doctrine and practice of baptism raised, Payne believed that Baptists would not only greatly increase the depth and effectiveness of their own witness, but also give to the Church universal a service which was surely laid upon Baptists by the very name they bore.²⁶ He concluded, 'As Baptists we must make no exaggerated claims for baptism. But these things we must continue unfalteringly to declare and faithfully to practise.'²⁷ And with all other Christians we must give ourselves to a renewed study of the New Testament.'²⁸

In 1950, William. G. Channon added his voice to the now almost overused cry that baptism was the Baptists' distinctive doctrine and therefore it 'should be proclaimed with no uncertain sound'. In relation to Church union, he ruled out any notion of sacrificing New Testament principle, even if the goal, Church union, was desirable. 'Truth must stand. As I have said so often, we are Baptists essentially, but not exclusively. 'We are all one in Christ Jesus.'²⁹ However, pronouncements like this, though popular and oft repeated, did not really serve to further the denomination's thinking on the relationship between Baptists (particularly so far as their views on baptism were concerned) and the ecumenical movement, for they tended to come within fairly traditional Baptist expositions of believer's baptism, of which Channon's *Much Water and Believers Only* is a representative example, for it does not interact in any serious way with the whole wave of recent studies from across the denominational and theological spectrum. However, 1950 also saw two important

²⁶ Payne, 'Baptism in Present-Day Theology', 9-10.

²⁷ By 'these things' Payne meant that the gospel sacraments required scriptural authority, indeed dominical authority, and that the very nature of the gospel itself demanded that it be conceived as a personal encounter between God and man, Payne, 'Baptism in Present-Day Theology', 10-11, quote from p.11.

²⁸ Payne, 'Baptism in Present-Day Theology', 11. In 1954 in a review of Ronald S. Wallace's *Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament*, Dr. Arthur Dakin also expressed the opinion that 'we Baptists need very much to clarify our minds on these very issues [Word and sacraments] as indeed the discussions on inter-communion have shown', '*Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament*, by Ronald S. Wallace', *BQ* 15.6 (April, 1954), 282.

²⁹ W. G. Channon of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Spurgeon's church, *Much Water and Believers Only* (1950), xv, 93-94. The book is made up of the substance of baptismal addresses preached at the Metropolitan Tabernacle.

contributions on the subject, one from Ernest Payne, who, by this time, was emerging as a leading scholar and ecumenist, and R. E. O. White, who was similarly beginning to establish himself within the academic elite of the denomination.³⁰

In 'Baptism in Modern Theology',³¹ Payne sketched the rise of the intense contemporary debate on baptism which, he declared, was 'one of the main theological interests of our time'. He noted that this was especially so amongst Reformed Churches (influenced by Brunner and Barth) and the Church of England, but also other communions. After briefly discussing these various contributions,³² he noted that none of them had become Baptists, despite the implications of their conclusions for the practice of infant baptism. He then reiterated the challenge he had made to the BWA, concluding that much patient argument from Baptists was necessary and much steadfast witnessing was required. The matters which required their attention included the relationships between Christian baptism and that of John, and John's baptism to Jewish proselyte baptism.³³ Further, had Baptists adequately stressed the truth that

³⁰ A brief account of White's work as first tutor then Principal of The Baptist Theological College of Scotland, see Derek B. Murray's *Scottish Baptist College* (Glasgow, 1994), 47 and 49.

³¹ E. A. Payne, 'Baptism in Modern Theology', *BT* August 24, 1950, 9-10. There are similarities here between this article and Payne's later forward 'Baptism in Recent Discussion', in A. Gilmore (ed.), *Christian Baptism* (1959), 15-24.

³² Principally the work of Brunner, Barth, Dom Gregory Dix, the Joint Commission of the Convocations of Canterbury and York (which had recently produced two interim reports).

³³ It is worth noting that at this time Baptists provided a number of valuable articles and chapters of books dealing with the antecedents of Christian baptism. H. H. Rowley wrote a number of the most important studies, see his, 'Jewish Proselyte Baptism and the Baptism of John', *Hebrew Union College Annual XV* (1940), 313-334, a revised version of which was included in his collection of essays *From Moses to Qumran. Studies in the Old Testament* (1963), as was 'The Qumran Sect and Christian Origins', pp.239-279; 'The Origin and Meaning of Baptism', *BQ* 11.12-13 (January-April, 1945), 308-320; 'The Christian Sacraments', in Rowley's *The Unity of the Bible* (1953), 149-187, being the W. T. Whitley lectures for 1951, delivered at Regent's Park College and Rawdon College in 1951 and 1952; 'The Baptism of John and the Qumran Sect', in A. J. B. Higgins (ed.), *New Testament Essays in Memory of Thomas Walter Manson, 1893-1953* (Manchester, 1959), 218-229. Other studies include S. I. Buse, 'His Baptism and Ours', *BT* May 23, 1946, 6; A. Dakin, 'Christian Baptism and John's Baptism Contrasted', a sermon on Mark 1:8, in Bryan (ed.), *Concerning Believers Baptism*, 39-44; H. Martin, 'Baptism and Circumcision', *Theology* 53 no.362 (August, 1950), 301-303, and no.365 (November, 1950), 423-24; H. Martin, 'Baptism and Circumcision', *BQ* 14.5 (January, 1952), 213-221; L. G. Champion, *The Church in the New Testament* (1951), 68-70; and the reviews of Johannes Schneider's *Baptism and Church in the New Testament*, (E. T. by E. A. Payne, 1957), by H. H. Rowley, 'New Testament Baptism', *BT* January 31, 1957, 7, and

Christian baptism was baptism into Christ's death and resurrection and that the benefits of this were unmerited gifts of God to the whole human race? Was baptism primarily an individual matter, a personal confession of faith, or was it primarily a means by which God contrived that there would always be a Church to witness to his name? Were all these aspects or elements to be expressed in the administration of the rite? Should the subjects and the mode be distinguished, making the latter subsidiary and less binding? What meaning and authority had the New Testament rite of the laying on of hands? Were Baptists clear on the relationship between the doctrines of baptism and the Church, and baptism and the Holy Spirit? What was the right relationship between baptism, church membership and the first sharing in the Lord's Supper? What should be the nature and extent of fellowship with those who did not agree with Baptists on baptism? 'None of these questions admits of a very easy answer. But they cannot honestly be evaded'. The attempt, he believed, would not only increase the depth and effectiveness of Baptist witness, but would also render to the Church universal a service which was surely laid upon Baptists by their very name. Most Baptist discussions paid little attention to Christ's baptism and baptism as a positive act by which the believer followed the example of the Lord. 'It would indeed be of value to us all and to our friends in other communions if some young Baptist scholar would collect from Baptist literature personal testimonies as to what

Anon. (presumably the Editor Rev. G. W. Hughes of Huddersfield), 'Baptism and Church in the New Testament', by Johannes Schneider', *BQ* 17.3 (July, 1957), 129-30. Amongst chapters in books see, A. Gilmore, 'Jewish Antecedents', in A. Gilmore (ed.), *Christian Baptism* (1959), 54-83; chapters 1 to 5 of R. E. O. White's *Biblical Doctrine of Initiation* (1960), 13-89, also see pp.188, 319-322, and chapter 2 of White's *Invitation to Baptism* (1962), 19-26; and chapter 1 'The Antecedents of Christian Baptism' of G. R. Beasley-Murray's *Baptism in the New Testament* (1962), 1-44, also pp.329-344. These studies were considerable improvements on previous treatments of the subject which amounted, very often, to little more than brief and unsatisfactory references to the antecedents of baptism. For passing references, mostly, but not altogether, to John's baptism, see F. B. Meyer, *John the Baptist* (n.d., [1900]), 64; H. G. Wood, 'BAPTISM', in J. Hastings (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics II* (Edinburgh, 1909), 397; T. R. Glover, *Paul of Tarsus* (1927), 156; A. Phillips, *What Baptists Stand For* (1903), 38; F. F. Whitby, *Baptist Principles* ([1908]), 46-47; T. H. Robinson, *St. Mark's Life of Jesus* (1922), 16; A. C. Underwood, *Conversion: Christian and Non-Christian* (1925), 109-10; H. J. Flowers, 'The Holy Spirit', *BQ* 3.4 (October, 1926), 160 and n.1 and also his, 'The Unity of the Church', *BQ* 3.8 (October, 1927), 350; H. W. Robinson, *Life and Faith*, 175. For slightly more substantial treatments see W. T. Whitley, *Church, Ministry and Sacraments* (1903), 47-48, 51-52, 72; J. Mountain, *My Baptism* ([1904]), 31, 70-94; H. W. Robinson, *Baptist Principles* (1938³), 12-13.

the rite has meant to men and women who have thus "put on Christ". Water baptism was a conscious act of obedience to the Lord, an acted parable of union with Christ in his death, burial and resurrection, and of the believer's dependence for salvation on these acts of Christ.³⁴

In his article on 'Advance and Reunion', R. E. O. White observed that after half a century of ecumenical developments Baptists were confronted by 'the painful dilemma of two apparently contradictory challenges'. On the one hand were the calls for Baptist advance, epitomized by the Forward Movement, launched in 1936.³⁵ On the other hand, was the much wider and bigger challenge of the ecumenical movement. Keen 'Advancists', as White called them, such as J. H. Rushbrooke, had asked whether advance for Baptists would mean retreat from their historic and distinctive positions? Was their ideal of the gathered Church outmoded? Would they have to revise their witness as to relations with the state? Was ecclesiastical fusion the necessary expression of Christian unity? 'Reunionists', White noted, would reply that the Baptist position was mainly negative, never having emerged from nineteenth century individualism, and so they were ill-prepared, ill-informed and ill-organized to face the age of collectivism.³⁶

Baptists were, therefore, constrained by the duty of defining their attitude and vindicating their place in the modern Church, and justifying their continued existence either as a clearly defined group within a reunited Church or as a separate denomination. For this purpose, White stressed, appeal to the authority of Scripture was insufficient, for it was this authority of Scripture over the Church in so changed a situation that was in dispute. The only way forward for Baptists to vindicate their retention of their identity, within or without a reunited Church, was dependent upon

³⁴ These are essentially the same questions as the ones Payne posed in his address to the Baptist World Congress. See Payne, 'Baptism in Present-Day Theology', 9.

³⁵ On the Forward Movement see Payne, *The Baptist Union*, 203. and Townsend, *Robert Wilson Black* (1954), 74-83.

³⁶ R. E. O. White, minister at Rutherglen, Glasgow, 'Advance and Reunion', *BQ* 13.8 (October, 1950), 341-42.

'the permanent spiritual value of their principles', which had to be shown to be expressions of essential gospel truths. This was especially so in the case of believers' baptism. For Baptists themselves, appeal to the scriptural basis for believers' baptism was sufficient, but in the contemporary baptismal debate and ecumenical climate, the question of origins was less important than the question of value. Therefore, it was the question of the value of believers' baptism which would justify its continuance in the Church. It was this issue, to which White addressed himself. Like the Lord's Supper, believers' baptism anchored the Church firmly to the fundamental historic facts upon which her message was based. The Church's authority and power lay in her faithful witness to the definite, historic, concrete and unalterable act of God, and the Pool and the Table repeatedly reminded the Church of this. They also testified that saving grace was mediated through the One who died, was buried and rose again, and that the Church's present fellowship and future life centred in that risen and living Saviour to whom the baptized were personally committed in conscious faith and obedience. At the Pool and Table, every incoming member was faced with the heart of the Christian gospel. Recalling the foundation of faith in the dying and rising Saviour, baptism yet left believers free in successive generations to interpret afresh the meaning of his redemptive work, thus preserving the Church from mere subjectivism, from vague 'religiousness', spiritual decay and bringing believers back again and again to the Scriptures. Believers' baptism thus nourished the love of the Bible and loyalty to evangelical faith.³⁷

Believers' baptism preserved the belief in the necessity of personal conversion. In this Baptists were not alone, but their practice of the rite kept the belief at the forefront and they did not obscure the doctrine by a rite of admission which denied its necessity.³⁸ More importantly, however, were the implications of all this for Christian ethics and the doctrine of grace. In fact, believers' baptism was the only form of

³⁷ White, 'Advance and Reunion', 342-43.

³⁸ White, 'Advance and Reunion', 343.

baptism which was primarily an ethical act on the part of the baptized. Thus, Baptists were alone in the Christian Church in being able to make the moral appeal to the implications of having been baptized which the New Testament repeatedly made, 'for no really moral appeal to the adult person can be based upon that which others did to him, by force, as an unconscious infant. Believers' Baptism consciously commits the candidate to the mastery and ownership of the Christ into whose Name and possession he is being baptised; the faith he is confessing is expressly a faith in a Master whose ethical demand and perfect example are before him, and Whose right to command is already being acknowledged in the act of Baptism itself'. This, obviously, had supreme importance for the whole meaning of Christian discipleship. The deliberate practice of a baptism that had neither moral conditions nor moral significance was both dangerous to the character of the Church and disloyal to the whole revelation of God's will.³⁹

Finally, believers' baptism preserved for the world Church an indispensable element of the true doctrine of grace. Any form of baptism which removed the conception of grace from the personal realm where God meets man in spiritual communion, replacing it instead by a magical or mechanical 'something' which is conveyed or imposed by ceremony or priest, inevitably corrupts the gospel. 'A true doctrine of the grace of God finds expression and defence only in a form of admission to the Church where voluntary faith and surrender are expressed in conscious obedience to the Master Himself'. Believers' baptism, thus justified itself by its fruits and intrinsic worth, for involved in it were some of the deepest and most urgent doctrinal and practical issues facing the Church and which would face any united Church of the future.⁴⁰

Underlying White's insistence on the baptism of believers, of course, lay the conception that everything in the Christian life depended upon the personal

³⁹ White, 'Advance and Reunion', 343-44.

⁴⁰ White, 'Advance and Reunion', 344-45.

experience in which the individual soul confronted the Lord. This was the doctrine of the Church as composed of regenerate believers. 'Whatever happens about reunion, we must go on insisting that you can never obscure the spiritual nature of the Church without in the end obscuring the truth of the Gospel, and the whole Church will need our witness to the truth of the Gathered Church set humbly but firmly over against the world'.⁴¹

White concluded, observing that reunion discussions often seemed to proceed upon the assumption that no significant differences of principle remained to separate the various Churches, and whatever the reason for such an assumption, he stressed, 'it is wrong'. Baptists, he stated, 'have much that is distinctive and important', and whilst they might desire unity, they could have little faith in a unity which overrode genuine differences, which would only give way, sooner or later, to a second Reformation. 'In one respect our position is peculiarly embarrassing; just because the things for which we stand seem to us to be matters of faith and theology, not accidents of history or preferences of method, compromise seems betrayal... All we know is that we have received a charge and a commission, and we must bear faithful witness and set faithful example'.⁴²

As the 1950s progressed and calls continued to be made that Baptists ought to be emphasizing and contributing to the ongoing baptismal debate,⁴³ scholars from

⁴¹ White, 'Advance and Reunion', 345.

⁴² White, 'Advance and Reunion', 349. Five years later at the Jubilee Congress of the BWA, F.T. Lord again noted the Baptist refusal to equate brotherly co-operation with the sacrifice of essential principle, 'The Baptist World Alliance in Retrospect and Prospect', in A. T. Ohrn (ed.), *Baptist World Alliance Golden Jubilee Congress (Ninth World Congress)*, London, England, 16th-22nd July, 1955 (1955), 67.

⁴³ So Arnold S. Clark in his presidential address to the Baptist Assembly, 'Worship the Lord', *BT* May 1, 1952, 2, 'We do not make enough of the sacrament of believers' baptism by immersion'; Rex A. Mason, an assistant at West Ham Central Mission, 'The Theology of Baptism', *The Fraternal* 90 (October, 1953), 6, 'Yet while little has been said by our own community, there has come a wealth of thought and writing in defence of the theology of infant baptism.'; B. Gordon Hastings of Adnott Road, Northampton, 'An Outline of the History of Baptism', *The Fraternal* 90 (October, 1953), 31-32, 'our own conception of what is entailed in baptism is often very confused. Now is the time, surely, to review the roots and implications of our own precious heritage, so that we may have a clear account to give of our convictions'. In 1957, H. W. Trent, minister of Great Shelford, Cambridge, based his study on

Paedobaptist traditions, particularly in Europe, continued to publish defences of infant baptism, which did not go without discussion by Baptist scholars.⁴⁴ Of note amongst these studies, was a proposal from the Swiss theologian, Franz J. Leenhardt, for the reformation of the practice of infant baptism. In his review of this work, Alec Gilmore stated that the question which arose for the Baptists in a day when Church Union was to the fore, was whether in a united Free Church 'we would be willing to accept some method of reformed infant baptism' along the lines suggested by Leenhardt.⁴⁵ Gilmore pointed out that such a view was a long way from any doctrine of infused grace, but equally far from believers' baptism. 'Nevertheless, is it possible for us to accept it as being a possible interpretation of baptism to be administered alongside the

'Ourselves and the Ordinances', *BQ* 17.1 (January, 1957), 10-11, 21, on the fact that Baptists had 'failed to make convincingly plain our convictions. Let us face it; we have been content to deal with our distinctive sacrament on pamphlet level. We have hidden our light under a bushel'. The 'dearth of works by competent Baptist scholars...is to a large degree responsible for the general ignorance of our theological position regarding the Sacraments, to say nothing of our practice. We have been content to rebut the arguments of those who have differed from us without making any positive contribution to the subject, and it is a sad reflection on us, that most of the matter, if not all that has been written in recent years on the Sacraments, has come from pens outside the Baptist denomination' This lack of interest in the ordinances not only had repercussions outside but also within the denomination as well. Trent concluded 'that we have no grounds to be complacent in our attitude towards the Sacraments and that there is room for closer thought and renewed interest in sacramental theology and practice within the denomination'.

⁴⁴ See the reviews of the Methodist H. G. Marsh's *The Origin and Significance of the New Testament Baptism* by E. A. Payne, 'Baptism in the New Testament', *BT* May 1, 1941, 215; H. W. Robinson, *BQ* 10.6 (April, 1941), 349-351; and H. H. Rowley, *Journal of Theological Studies* 44 (1943), 79-81. See also R. E. [O.] White, 'Theological Issues Involved in Baptism', *The Expository Times* 62.4 (January, 1951), 124, a reply to an earlier article by the Presbyterian J. K. S. Reid, 'Theological Issues Involved in Baptism', *The Expository Times* 61.7, (April, 1950), 201-204; E. A. Payne, 'Professor Oscar Cullmann on Baptism', *BQ* 14.2 (April, 1951), 56-60; D. R. Griffiths, 'An Approach to the Theology of Baptism. Some Comments on Mr. Flemington's Article', *The Expository Times* 63.5 (February, 1952), 157-159, being a response to W. F. Flemington's article 'Living Issues in Biblical Scholarship. An Approach to the Theology of Baptism', *The Expository Times* 62.12 (September, 1951), 356-359; A. Gilmore, 'Leenhardt on Baptism', *BQ* 15.1 (January, 1953), 35-40; H. H. Rowley, 'Marcel on Infant Baptism', *The Expository Times* 64.12 (September, 1953), 361-363, and also Rowley's 'Additional Note' in *The Unity of the Bible*, 189-90, on Marcel's *The Biblical Doctrine of Infant Baptism*; R. E. O. White, at the time minister of Grange Baptist Church, Birkenhead, 'Theology and Logic. A Logical Analysis of the Exegetical Method of the Church of Scotland's Interim Report on Baptism', *BQ* 16.8 (October, 1956), 356-364.

⁴⁵ This reformed practice involved those who administered the rite to the unconscious infant in accepting the responsibility of making the child aware of what God had done for him and how this had already been symbolized on his behalf. In short, a form of discriminate infant baptism. See A. Gilmore, minister of Kingsthorpe Baptist Church, Northampton, 'Leenhardt on Baptism', 39.

baptism of believers, or are we to stand firm and admit of no alternative whatever?'⁴⁶ In a similar fashion, one of D. R. Griffiths' suggestions for questions that Minister's Fraternal and other groups should consider was, 'In the event (a most unlikely one) of a scheme of Church union being devised, on the basis of the abandonment of both infant baptism and believers' baptism, in favour of reception into Church membership by public profession of faith alone - what would be the chief gains and losses to be considered?'⁴⁷

While Free Church Union proposals were once again being discussed through the mid-late 1950s, the Robert Hall Society in 1959 debated the issues and concluded that Baptists as a denomination were guilty of woolly thinking, the only thing they seemed sure about being baptism. Yet having stated that, of the six points discussed, the second was that amongst Baptists there appeared to be no clarity or concensus about the meaning of the sacraments and the nature of grace, either in the sacrament or outside it. Talk of reunion was not possible whilst amongst themselves there was so much woolly thinking. Baptists needed first of all to know what they believed and why, before any progress could be made.⁴⁸

Over the years the number of calls for more work to be done by Baptist scholars on baptism continued to increase, and they eventually bore fruit when, in early 1959, the volume *Christian Baptism* appeared.⁴⁹ Described as 'a landmark',⁵⁰ this book was

⁴⁶ Gilmore, 'Leenhardt on Baptism', 40.

⁴⁷ D. R. Griffiths, 'Baptism in the New Testament', *The Fraternal* 90 (October, 1953), 25.

⁴⁸ Roger Hayden of Fitzwilliam House, and David Swinfen of St. Catherine's College, reported in 'Free Church Union', *BT* February 19, 1959, 6. The Robert Hall Society is the Baptist society at Cambridge University.

⁴⁹ A. Gilmore (ed.), *Christian Baptism*. (1959). It was widely and generally enthusiastically reviewed: Dr. Norman H. Snaith, the Methodist scholar, 'Christian Baptism', *BT* April 30, 1959, 10; Rev. E. H. Robertson, Study Secretary for the United Bible Societies, 'Christian Baptism', *BT* May 14, 1959, 10; Dr. L. G. Champion, Principal of Bristol Baptist College, 'Christian Baptism', edited by A. Gilmore', *BQ* 18.3 (July, 1959), 135-140; D. S. Russell, Principal of Rawdon College, 'Christian Baptism I', *The Fraternal* 113 (July, 1959), 5-8; Rev. E. F. Kevan of London Bible College, 'Christian Baptism II', *The Fraternal* 113 (July, 1959), 8-12; Dr. H. H. Rowley, 'Christian Baptism', *The Expository Times* 70.10 (July, 1959), 301-

to prove to be one of the most important Baptist works on baptism, and without doubt the most controversial. Work on it had begun in 1955 by four ministers, but it had grown as had the number of contributors. Rev. Edwin Robertson noted that as no one person could speak for the Baptists, it was a joint project⁵¹ by many of the denomination's foremost up-and-coming ministers and scholars.⁵²

Christian Baptism was never intended to be a statement on Baptist principles, but rather a careful criticism as well as justification of the Baptist position. This, Dr. Norman Snaith, declared, the writers had achieved, it being an excellent book, almost wholly dispassionate.⁵³ Some months later, in his defence of the book, Dr. George Beasley-Murray stated that the concern of the authors had been 'to put before Baptists the picture of ideal baptism, as it is portrayed in the apostolic writings, in the hope that we may strive to recover it or get somewhere near it'.⁵⁴ In his preface, Gilmore observed: 'Whilst realizing that the subject of baptism was rapidly becoming of increasing importance in the ecumenical world, [the writers] were conscious also of

02; N. B. Jones of Waterbarn, 'Christian Baptism III', *The Fraternal* 115 (January, 1960), 18-23.

50 'Editorial', *The Fraternal* 113 (July, 1959), 4, which commented that 'apart from some useful translation work, a small book or pamphlet, a trenchant chapter or article here and there Baptists have taken an undistinguished part in the contemporary theological debate on baptism'. The editorial board at the time comprised J. O. Barrett, F. C. Bryan, W. Charles Johnson, W. M. S. West and Sydney G. Morris.

51 E. H. Robertson, 'Christian Baptism', 10.

52 Of the contributors two were already Baptist College Principals, Dr. George Beasley-Murray at Spurgeon's and D. Mervyn Himbury in the Baptist College of Victoria, Melbourne, whilst three were to become Principals, Dr. Morris West at Bristol, Rev. Neville Clark at Cardiff and Rev. R. E. O. White at Glasgow. Four were existing College lecturers, Rev. A. W. Argyle and Morris West at Regent's Park, Rev. S. I. Buse at the University College of North Wales, Rev. D. R. Griffiths at Cardiff. The remaining two were to become well-known ministers and authors within the denomination. After leaving the pastorate in West Worthing, Rev. Alec Gilmore was to serve as Editorial Secretary of the United Society for Christian Literature from 1975-76, then as its General Secretary from 1976-93, as well as being Director of Feed the Minds from 1984-93, whilst Rev. Stephen F. Winward became a lecturer at the Selly Oak Colleges, Birmingham, from 1966, whilst also serving two churches in Sutton Coldfield - Victoria Road BC from 1967-77, and then Four Oaks BC from 1980.

53 N. H. Snaith, 'Christian Baptism', 10.

54 G. R. Beasley-Murray, 'The Spirit Is There', *BT* December 10, 1959, 8. Beasley-Murray continued, 'To insist on keeping our impoverished version of baptism would be a tragedy among a people who pride themselves on being the people of the New Testament'.

the paucity of recent Baptist writing on the subject'.⁵⁵ The ecumenical importance of the work was highlighted in Dr. Leonard Champion's review: 'Since the Baptist position is presented in this careful, scholarly manner the book may be regarded also as a contribution to ecumenical discussion and it will no doubt be studied with much interest in those areas of the world where Baptists are considering schemes for church unity'. The book, however, did not simply provide a challenge to Paedobaptists, but also to Baptists, raising questions which arose from contemporary Baptist theology and practice.⁵⁶ The Baptist contribution to ecumenical discussion was ^{also} in mind when Dr. Morris West concluded his *Baptist Principles* with the challenge that 'being Baptists by conviction, we should seek every opportunity of ecumenical encounter, so that we may set before all Christians the things we so surely hold'.⁵⁷

R. E. O. White's *The Biblical Doctrine of Initiation* (1960) was the second major theological work published by Baptists within two years, showing that up and coming biblical scholars had risen to the challenge that had so often been aired for substantial contributions to both the Baptist and the ongoing international and ecumenical debate on baptism. R. L. Child heralded the book as 'a major contribution to [improving Church relations]'.⁵⁸ Quoting J. R. C. Perkin, White agreed that, 'There can be no

⁵⁵ A. Gilmore (ed.), 'Preface', *Christian Baptism*, 7. N. B. Jones, General Superintendent of the North Western Area, 'Christian Baptism III', 23, asked that 'a simple pamphlet, written in untheological language, which will make clear some of the riches uncovered in [*Christian Baptism*]', for the sake of those who had to interpret the doctrine of believers' baptism to lay people.

⁵⁶ L. G. Champion, '*Christian Baptism*', 135. It was these challenges which were the specific concern of Champion's review. That *Christian Baptism*'s potential in the wider baptismal debate was realized can be seen by the references made to it in subsequent writings, eg C. F. D. Moule, *Worship in the New Testament* (1961), *loc cit*; A. B. Crabtree, *The Restored Relationship. A Study in Justification and Reconciliation* (1963), being the Whitley lectures for 1961, eg, p.65; J. D. G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit. A Re-examination of the New Testament Teaching on the Gift of the Spirit in relation to Pentecostalism today* (1970), *loc cit*. The essays also figured prominently in G. R. Beasley-Murray's own important study *Baptism in the New Testament* (1962), *loc cit*. That it is one of the most important Baptist contributions this century to the theology of baptism cannot be doubted.

⁵⁷ W. M. S. West, at the time minister at Dagnall Street, St. Albans, *Baptist Principles* (1960), 44. The booklet was issued in the series of studies prepared as part of the Ter-Jubilee celebrations.

⁵⁸ R. L. Child, 'The Biblical Doctrine of Initiation', *The Fraternal* 118 (October, 1960), 18.

doubt that sooner or later the church will have to settle the question of baptism, which threatens to become one of the major stumblingblocks in the path of the ecumenical conversations'.⁵⁹ White, along with many others before him, expressed concern over the inadequacies of the Baptist position on baptism, commenting, 'one sometimes fears that current practice of believer's baptism is scriptural on the single point of reserving baptism for believers and on very little else'.⁶⁰

In his detailed and sensitive discussion of the value of infant baptism,⁶¹ White noted that infant baptism was a form of baptism prevalent in the modern church which was very much unlike that of the New Testament in form, content and theological significance, yet enshrining certain values and insights which in any final reappraisal of the rite would have to be preserved and prized. While infant baptism witnessed to these values and insights in a confused and ambiguous way, believer's baptism also sometimes obscured them altogether.⁶² If it were to be asked why both forms of baptism could not exist side by side in the modern church the answer would be that the study of New Testament baptism showed a richness of meaning which neither current practice commonly possessed 'and to maintain two impaired baptisms does nothing towards recovering biblical initiation'. Further, the price which would have to be paid for the measure of truth which paedobaptism preserved would be too high, as 'the criticisms which must be levelled against it are far more serious than anything that can be said in its favour'.⁶³

That October, White re-emphasized the fact that baptism was the most significant ecumenical stumblingblock. After criticizing Baptist confusion over baptism,

⁵⁹ R. E. O. White, *The Biblical Doctrine of Initiation* (1960), 279, the source of the quote from J. R. C. Perkin was not noted and has not been found.

⁶⁰ White, *Biblical Doctrine of Initiation*, 279-80.

⁶¹ White, *Biblical Doctrine of Initiation*, 281-296, he criticizes infant baptism on pp.296-305.

⁶² These would include the prevenience of grace, the biblical doctrine of covenant, the corporate and objective aspects of salvation, and God's action within the soul.

⁶³ White, *Biblical Doctrine of Initiation*, 295-96.

particularly some unbiblical Baptist practices⁶⁴ and especially the individualistic view of baptism,⁶⁵ he wrote,

If in fact we are standing out from our brethren in other denominations, refusing the path of unity, because we prize a real sacrament of Christian experience, a valid scriptural emphasis upon the baptism of the believer into Christ, into the Spirit, and into the church, then we may be justified in our stand. We can do no other, though we do it with humility, and even with regret.

But if in fact we are standing out from our brethren in other denominations because we want to retain a bit of traditional symbolism, a somewhat self-righteous and very theatrical way of telling the congregation that we have come to the opinion that the gospel is true, then we are abandoning most of the New Testament teaching about baptism, and other denominations have every right to protest; and we are inflicting a grievous wound on the unity of the church *for no good reason*. Believers' baptism as sometimes practised is not worth contending for, and the contention is damaging to the whole ecumenical movement, and so to the body of Christ. This is no appeal for compromise, or for the tolerance of two baptisms in a united church, but for honest recognition of the fact that when all the church seems out of step except ourselves it might conceivably be because we - ourselves - are dragging our feet.⁶⁶

White believed that the debate amongst Baptists had to continue until the meaning and spiritual value of believers' baptism were clarified afresh. It is clear, then, from White's writings and the various contributors to *Christian Baptism*, that a growing number of writers directly associated the need for Baptist re-appraisal of baptism with the broader ecumenical debate on baptism, and that this necessitated continuing Baptist participation within it.⁶⁷ He underlined the need to define Baptist baptismal

⁶⁴ He noted that some baptismal practices amongst Baptists were defended as traditional or evangelical but in actual fact little theological or scriptural justification: these he listed as baptism on the minister's (or evangelist's) sole say-so, baptism without preparation, baptism followed by reception into membership, and even by enquiry as to membership, as 'obvious examples', White, 'Baptism: The Domestic Debate', *The Fraternal* 118 (October, 1960), 14.

⁶⁵ White, 'Baptism: The Domestic Debate', 16.

⁶⁶ White, 'Baptism: The Domestic Debate', 16, italics his.

⁶⁷ R. E. O. White, 'New Baptismal Questions', *BT* April 13, 1961, 9. White also recognized the unavoidable fact that ecumenical relationships challenged Baptists and their views of baptism's importance and meaning. At this time Baptists continued to keep apace with the latest theological writings on baptism. See the following reviews, E. A. Payne, 'Baptism in the Early Church', [review Jeremias' *Die Kindertaufe in den ersten vier Jahrhunderten*], *BT* April 2, 1959, 7; G. R. Beasley-Murray, 'New Voice in the Debate on Infant Baptism', [J. Jeremias' *Infant Baptism in the First Four Centuries*], and K. Aland's *Die Sänglingstaufe im Neuen Testament und in der alten Kirchen*], *BT* April 27, 1961, 8; N. Clark, 'In the Study', *BQ* 19.2 (April, 1961), 86f [reviewing the English translation of Jeremias' *Infant Baptism in the First Four Centuries*]; A. W. Argyle, 'Joachim Jeremias: *Infant Baptism in the First Four Centuries*', *BQ* 19.4 (October, 1961), 190-91. See also the later English translation of K. Aland's *Did the Early Church Baptize Infants?* (1963, E.T. by G. R. Beasley-Murray, who also

doctrine when he contended that 'The time has come to move forward from the position held for 300 years, simply insisting that baptism is for believers only, to making it clear *why* this is so, and why it is important'. Ecumenical relationships challenged the Baptists' view of baptism's importance and its meaning, therefore, reunion 'conversations' also made necessary the redefinition of Baptists' attitude to infant baptism.⁶⁸

In his Whitley lectures, George Beasley-Murray stated his intention 'to offer a Baptist contribution to the discussions on baptism that are taking place throughout the Christian world'.⁶⁹ The first five chapters (305 pages) were devoted to the antecedents

included a lengthy 'Introduction. The Baptismal Controversy in the British Scene', pp.17-27, which is a most helpful and insightful survey of the recent debate in its own right. Aland's book was also reviewed by Neville Clark, 'In the Study', *BQ* 20.3 (July, 1963), 133-135, and G. W. Rusling, 'Baptism in the Early Church', *BT* August 1, 1963, 6. Dr. Beasley-Murray also translated the Roman Catholic Rudolf Schnackenburg's *Baptism in the Thought of St. Paul* (1964). L. G. Champion, 'Baptism Without Faith - "Unimaginable"', *BT* February 11, 1965, 7, agreed with Beasley-Murray's statement on Schnackenburg's work that 'no treatment known to me of Paul's teaching on Baptism is so profound as that contained in these pages'; see also N. Clark, 'In the Study', *BQ* 21.2 (April, 1965), 82-83, who expressed appreciation for the translation of Schnackenburg's 'significant study in the field of baptism'. Another useful overview and survey was supplied by E. Roberts-Thomson, at the time Principal of the Baptist Theological College of New South Wales, Australia, *With Hands Outstretched. Baptists and the Ecumenical Movement* (1962).

⁶⁸ R. E. O. White, 'New Baptismal Questions', *BT* April 13, 1961, 9, being his 1961 address to the Baptist Men's annual conference.

⁶⁹ G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (1962), v-vi. The lectures were delivered during the academic year 1959-60, in November 1959 in Regent's Park College, Oxford, February 1960 at the Bangor Baptist College, and in various international seminaries, see the 'Preface'. It was widely reviewed, though often none too enthusiastically, see 'Dr. G. R. Beasley-Murray on Baptism. Dr. H. H. Rowley reviews an important book on Baptism by the Principal of Spurgeon's College', *BT* August 30, 1962, 6, who recommended that ministers and laymen should give it wide attention, regarding it as more than a defence of the Baptist position, being irenic not polemical in purpose. G. Every (an Anglican clergyman and historian), 'G. R. Beasley-Murray: *Baptism in the New Testament*', *BQ* 20.1 (January, 1963), 42-43, commended its thoroughness, especially in 'his full and weighty discussion of every text' in the New Testament, but argued that Beasley-Murray had not fully understood some of the nuances in the practice of infant baptism within the early Church from the second century onwards. Clinton Morrison (a Reformed theologian), '*Baptism in the New Testament*, by G. R. Beasley-Murray', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 72.3 (September, 1963), 339-341, similarly criticized his knowledge of many problems regarding ancient life and thought, whilst overall regarding it as 'a highly informative and stimulating contribution to the current discussion'. A. Raymond George, 'Baptism', *The Expository Times* 74.4 (January, 1963), 106, criticized Beasley-Murray's discussion of children in Christian families for not considering such questions as the spiritual development of children, the nature of the Christian Church or the value of a *Volkkirche*. Finally, George believed that it would be unfortunate if Beasley-Murray's keen interest in ecumenical discussion overshadowed the earlier exegetical work. N. Clark, 'In the Study', *BQ* 20.2 (April, 1963), 82-84, who, p.83, bluntly wrote, 'My difficulty is that I cannot see where Dr. Beasley-Murray stands, and am not at all sure that he stands with consistency anywhere'.

of Christian baptism and a detailed exegesis of all the passages explicitly relating to baptism, culminating in a chapter on the doctrine of baptism, whilst the last chapter was given over to a discussion of the rise and significance of infant baptism, followed by a postscript on baptismal reform and inter-church relationships (a further 90 pages). Throughout, Beasley-Murray interacted with Paedobaptist and Baptist scholarship. Irenic in tone, Beasley-Murray recognized that there was some hope of a closer rapprochement between Paedobaptists and Baptists if the former would limit baptism to the families of those actively Christian, encouraging the Church of England to set out the wholeness of the rite by combining baptism, confirmation and communion for those who came to the church in maturer years, and that some of the Anglican baptistries built for immersion be used for such. Baptists, he exhorted, ought to refrain from baptizing those baptized in infancy except where asked for explicitly by the applicant.⁷⁰ To Baptists, Beasley-Murray laid down a challenge: 'A call for reform according to the Word of God has to be heeded first by those who issue it. In this connection there is room for improvement in our own administration of the rite of initiation'.⁷¹ There is no doubt that *Baptism in the New Testament* is the single most important and lasting⁷² contribution made by any Baptist this century to the baptismal debate, and more than adequately fulfilled the hopes of the many who had for so long called for a major Baptist work to be published.

A year later, *The Pattern of the Church*, edited by Alec Gilmore, with contributions from Dr. Morris West, Neville Clark and Stephen Winward, appeared. 'Our purpose', the Foreword explained, 'has been to clarify and elucidate our own denominational beliefs, especially with regard to church and ministry, and to seek the road of reformation for the churches of our faith and order from the ecumenical perspective,

⁷⁰ Beasley-Murray, 'Postscript', *Baptism in the New Testament*, 387-395.

⁷¹ Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, 393.

⁷² *Baptism in the New Testament* was re-issued by the Paternoster Press in their Biblical and Theological Classics Library, see 'Just In' (January, 1997), 6, being the catalogue of the Wesley Owen Books and Music chain of Christian bookshops.

and within the immediate ecumenical context'.⁷³ The writers looked forward to reunion, but noted that even intercommunion would be nothing more than a mockery until 'we have steadily, realistically, and finally purposed visible union through denominational crucifixion and resolved to give ourselves in love for each other and the one Church of God'.⁷⁴

The final chapter directly addressed the issue of Church Union, beginning with the statement, 'Preceding chapters have explicitly been concerned with problems of denominational life and denominational reformation; but implicitly the questions of church reunion have all the while been posed... For denominational reform and movement towards church union in England are but two sides of a single coin. They inescapably involve each other. They cannot be separated'. No effective move towards union, it declared, was possible apart from denominational reform 'precisely because many of the contemporary obstacles are bound up with distortions within our own life'. But equally, no ultimate denominational reform was possible apart from reunion 'because of the inevitably partial vision of the "separated"'.⁷⁵ Three obstacles stood in the way: inertia and complacency, confessionalism on a world scale, and fundamentalism.⁷⁶ Action was therefore demanded, including the need to re-initiate conversations in Great Britain, not just amongst the Free Churches but with the Anglican communion as well, though the authors recognized four burning problems

⁷³ A. Gilmore (ed.), *The Pattern of the Church. A Baptist View*, (1963), 10. See Maurice F. Williams, 'A. Gilmore (ed.): *The Pattern of the Church: A Baptist View*', *BQ* 20.4 (October, 1963), 188-190; 'Book About the Church by Baptist Authors', *BT* May 2, 1963, 7; L. G. Champion, 'A Baptist View of the Church', *BT* May 16, 1963, 6, who was unconvinced about the strongly sacramental emphasis of the book.

⁷⁴ N. Clark, 'The Fulness of the Church of God', in Gilmore (ed.), *Pattern of the Church*, 112.

⁷⁵ 'Towards Church Union', in Gilmore (ed.), *Pattern of the Church*, 157-58. The author of this final chapter is not named, but presumably the chapter speaks for all four contributors. The style would suggest Neville Clark as its author.

⁷⁶ 'Towards Church Union', 158-160.

hindering such progress - tradition, *episcopate*, initiation and the question of church and state.⁷⁷

A unity that was understood in terms of the sacramental rather than the liturgical could not evade the question of initiation, the question of the catechumenate and its relationship to incorporation into the body of Christ. Preoccupation with baptism as the flag of unity exalted secondary issues of the method of administration and the identity of the separated and the saved upon whom the rite could correctly be performed. Rather, 'It is the meaning of baptism that is the crucial problem. And this inexorably directs us towards a fuller apprehension of that into which we are baptized'. The reality is Christ in his Church, and baptism is incorporation into the body of Christ. The Church cannot neatly seal her boundaries nor define them. She must take seriously her visibility, decide on the terms of incorporation and ensure that it is Gospel reality that is sacramentally expressed. 'But this is surely where the ecumenical discussion must begin'.⁷⁸ The authors did not set out to try to meet this agenda, but stated, 'Even this brief assessment of the obstacles that confront us makes clear the magnitude of the endeavour for which we plead. Only clear vision, deep faith, and untiring hope are likely to prevail'.⁷⁹

R. L. Child in his dialogical *A Conversation about Baptism* also set his book firmly within the ecumenical context, expressing his own conviction that he did not believe that denominations were wrong nor that the merger of separate communions into one vast ecclesiastical system should take place. However, unity certainly did mean accepting the fact that Christ created the Church and meant it to be a society of persons united to him and to one another in faith and love, but he gave no further

⁷⁷ 'Towards Church Union', 163-64.

⁷⁸ 'Towards Church Union', 166-67.

⁷⁹ 'Towards Church Union', 168.

comment on how this could be worked out in practice.⁸⁰ All he would say was that he believed that what was really involved in the controversy between Baptists and Paedobaptists was a differing conception of the nature and constitution of the Church.⁸¹

Throughout the early 1960s Baptists continued to interact and assess the work of Paedobaptist scholars. Concluding his review of Kurt Aland's reply to Joachim Jeremias, Beasley-Murray wrote, 'The lesson I deduce from this latest contribution of one of the most learned instructors of the Church of our day is the dire necessity for the witness of our denomination to continue and abound throughout the whole Church of God'.⁸² Such a sentiment would have received the near unanimous support from within the denomination, as evidenced by Rev. L. J. Moon: 'We Baptists rightly claim that our distinctive contribution to the Universal Church is our teaching on Believers' Baptism, with the necessity for personal faith and personal committal to Him as Saviour and Lord that Believers' Baptism emphasises and helps to safeguard'.⁸³ However, Rev. W. H. Kennedy responded to Leslie Moon, even citing the sentence noted above, and cautioned that Baptists should not therefore regard the baptismal debate as closed. He stated, 'Without starry-eyed absorption in the possible wonders of a united church, we must go on testing our conception of Baptism and enquiring whether it is really and ultimately irreconcilable with that of paedobaptist

80 R. L. Child, Emeritus Principal of Regent's Park College, *A Conversation about Baptism* (1963), 87. It was reviewed by D. H. Sparkes, 'R. L. Child: *A Conversation about Baptism*', *BQ* 0.4 (October 1963), 190; W. W. Bottoms, 'Conversation about Baptism', *BT* August 1, 1963, 6. Extracts were printed in the *BT* under the title 'What is Baptism for?', see August 15, p.6; August 22, p.6; August 29, p.6; under the title 'The Future of Baptism', September 12, p.6; September 19, p.7; and elicited a letter from W. F. Webber of Kenton, 'Baptism', *BT* November 7, 1963, 4-5.

81 Child, *A Conversation*, 94.

82 G. R. Beasley-Murray, 'Debate on Infant Baptism', *BT* January 2, 1964, 7. Beasley-Murray also reviewed J. Ysebaert's *Greek Baptismal Terminology: Its Origins and Early Development* (Nijmegen, 1962), *Journal of Theological Studies* ns 15 (October, 1964), 381-384.

83 L. J. Moon of Perth Road, Ilford, 'Partnership', *The Fraternal* 132 (April, 1964), 20.

Christians'.⁸⁴ Whilst believers' baptism incorporated individuals into the partnership of the Body of Christ, it was also a divisive factor amongst Christians. Within the Baptist denomination itself sharply divergent views of baptism were held and 'between Baptists and other denominations the difference of understanding is so great as to make genuinely close co-operation hardly possible. This does not mean that we must thoughtlessly deny our history or foolishly relinquish the insights granted us; it means rather that under the tutelage of the one Lord we must seek greater light on the one Baptism'. When Baptists invited the unbaptized to the Table were they breaking the wholeness of the gospel, or when they received them at the Table were they implicitly recognizing their baptism as infants?⁸⁵

Others too recognized that Baptists were a body holding divergent views, not least upon baptism, and so there were those who drew attention to the need of greater denominational unity.⁸⁶ Yet this did not deter many from maintaining that Baptists should be actively involved within the ecumenical movement. Leonard Champion did just this in his presidential address to the Baptist Assembly,⁸⁷ as did Dr. Payne in his exploration of the contemporary situation and issues at the second denominational

⁸⁴ W. H. Kennedy of South Shields, 'Incorporate in Christ', *The Fraternal* 133 (July, 1964), 23.

⁸⁵ Kennedy, 'Incorporate in Christ', 25.

⁸⁶ See 'Baptists and Union', *BT* February 20, 1964, 7, where G. H. Williams of Bishop Stortford (apparently not Rev. Gwilym Henry Williams of Merthyr Tydfil and apparently not a minister), suggested that there was no longer justification for the continued separation of Baptists, Strict Baptists, Old Baptists, Churches of Christ, Brethren or Pentecostals, whereas R. J. Avery of Harpenden claimed that just because the Church of England and Methodists, Presbyterians and Congregationalists were involved in conversations, that did not mean that Baptists needed to look around for possible organic union with other groups. Later, W. M. S. West, 'Call for Denominational Unity', *BT* May 7, 1964, 1, 3, argued that party labels within the denomination should be dropped, and that to Baptists baptism was a symbol of personal identification with Christ. Rev. Harry Whyte of City Road, Bristol, 'Call to Denominational Unity', *BT* May 28, 1964, 4, focussed on Conservative Evangelicals, and this letter called forth a response from George W. Dixon, secretary at Calne, Wiltshire, [it is incorrectly spelt Colne in the *BT*, which is in Lancashire], 'Call to Denominational Unity', *BT* June 11, 1964, 4, who contended that all those who confessed Jesus Christ as Lord were Christian brothers and that as there would be no party labels in heaven, so there should be none on earth.

⁸⁷ 'Dr. Champion's Plea to the Assembly', *BT* April 30, 1964, 1, 9.

conference at the Hayes, Swanwick, in May.⁸⁸ Here, Payne acknowledged that on the matter of union with other Christian bodies Baptists had always been extremely cautious, 'primarily because of their determination to remain loyal to their understanding and practice of the rite of baptism'.⁸⁹ He noted that there were only four sets of union conversations in which Baptists were playing a part: in Ceylon, North India, between the American Baptist Convention and the Church of the Brethren, and finally in discussions between the Free Churches in Wales. 'Ought Baptists to be involved at more points than this? Perhaps neither we nor others are yet ready, and we must wait in general for more light from the theological discussions on baptism in which our own and other scholars are engaged'.⁹⁰

There was still, however, a considerable body within the denomination which viewed any such involvement as that advocated by Drs. Beasley-Murray and Payne with caution and even hostility. Mr. F. Jarman was outright against the union movement, and Mr. P. Cook believed that unity was an unlikely 'dismal sham'.⁹¹ White, on the other hand, in concert with Beasley-Murray and Payne, argued against the compromise of principle but nevertheless for the involvement of evangelicals in ecumenical conversations. 'Is it "interference" to suggest to paedobaptists that their rite is unscriptural? Are we, in fact, to bear witness to our convictions only to those who already agree with us?'⁹²

The Pattern of the Church had set itself firmly within the ecumenical context, believing that all examinations of the issues of Church, ministry or the sacraments by

⁸⁸ E. A. Payne, *Baptists and Church Relations* (1964), number 2 in the *Live Issues Booklets* published by the BU. See also 'Baptists and Church Relations', *BT* May 28, 1964, 8, and 'New Series of Booklets', *BT* October 1, 1964, 2.

⁸⁹ Payne, *Baptists and Church Relations*, 7.

⁹⁰ Payne, *Baptists and Church Relations*, 9.

⁹¹ Mr. F. Jarman of London, and Mr. P. Cook, 'Baptists and Unity', *BT* March 5, 1964, 4.

⁹² R. E. O. White, *An Open Letter to Evangelicals. A Devotional and Homiletic Commentary on The First Epistle of John* (1964), Part Two chapter 4, 182-194, but especially 185-189, quote from p.188.

whatever denomination would have to consider the ecumenical dimension. But this book did not go unchallenged. Its 'sacramental' and 'ecumenical' tone called forth a strong rebuttal from the Baptist Revival Fellowship (BRF), a conservative evangelical group within the BU.⁹³ The Study Group responsible for the production of the booklet *Liberty in the Lord* was signed by sixteen ministers⁹⁴ who insisted that the churches of the New Testament were already thought of as one church of Jesus Christ, 'with no suggestion that this will be more true if and when they are corporately organized. This is a fundamental fact often overlooked in the plea for organic union (even within a denomination) as the fulfilment of Christ's prayer for unity'.⁹⁵ Later, they again expressed considerable reservations about the contemporary ecumenical movement, noting under the heading 'General Trends Among Liberals', first, that theologically the doctrines of baptism and the Church had in particular been subjected to searching scrutiny and re-examination, and this had resulted in traditional Baptist principles being rejected or modified, opening the way, it would seem, for the kind of compromise which would allow for some element of paedobaptist practice. Secondly, the ecumenical movement with its objective of a united church adopted ambiguous statements, its basis of faith allowed freedom of interpretation and there was a lack of

⁹³ In 1956, Theodore Bamber of Rye Lane, Peckham, Geoffrey R. King of Croydon and T. Alexander Steen of Enfield, members of the BRF Committee, had discussed the Church Union proposals for India and Pakistan and called for revival not reunion. T. M. Bamber, G. R. King and T. A. Steen, 'Not Reunion but Revival', *BT* April 26, 1956, 7. A brief outline of the origins and theological stance of the BRF can be found in T. M. Bamber, 'The Baptist Revival Fellowship', *The Fraternal* 89 (July, 1953), 29-31.

⁹⁴ Theodore M. Bamber, Pastor Emeritus of Rye Lane, Peckham, B. Hugh Butt of Dudley, A. Morgan Derham editorial secretary of Scripture Union, John A. Eaton of the Good News Traylor Missionary Fellowship, R. Michael Frost of Godalming, Philip L. Jones of Woking, Geoffrey R. King who concluded his pastorate at West Croyden Tabernacle in 1964 to take up office as Commissioner for Evangelism of the LBA on a part-time basis, David P. Kingdon Principal of the Irish Baptist College in Belfast, Edward M. Kirk of Sidcup, S. E. Leslie Larwood of Welling, Ronald S. Luland of Wootton, Samuel G. H. Nash of Leigh on Sea, I. J. W. Oakley who moved from Aylesbury to a tutorship at the Irish Baptist College in Belfast in 1964, Harold G. Owen from Reading, T. A. Steen of Nottingham and Herbert E. Ward of Kingston upon Thames. The Study Group was made up of Derham, Kingdon, Luland, Nash, Oakley, Ward and, according to Samuel Nash in a personal conversation, David Pawson of Gold Hill, who declined to have his name printed in the Foreword. The papers which were submitted to the group and formed the basis for the sections which were finally published were written by David Kingdon and Ronald Luland.

⁹⁵ *Liberty in the Lord. Comment on Recent Trends in Baptist Thought* (1964), 13.

machinery for disciplining members. 'The broad impression given, rightly or wrongly, is that organic union is a way to doctrinal understanding and unity; an approach which is in direct contrast to that which evangelicals believe right'. The third point focussed on administrative matters, whilst fourthly, there was a liturgical trend which over-emphasized the sacraments, and which had led to the shift in Baptist thinking on baptism.⁹⁶ These trends called for evangelicals to deal with them theologically. *Liberty in the Lord*, then, provided a clarion call for further and fuller evangelical thinking on these and other trends within Baptist life, but in clear opposition to the studies being made by the likes of Gilmore, West, Winward and Clark. *Liberty in the Lord* itself called forth a mixed response, from the critical,⁹⁷ to the approving.⁹⁸ Neville Clark, however, noted that it was interesting that two groups of conservatives, (the BRF and he and his co-authors of *The Pattern of the Church*) working from the same dogmas about Scripture, christology and atonement, came up with quite different doctrinal conclusions about church order and baptism, concluding that 'Perhaps Scripture is not that simple after all'. Clark also noted *Liberty in the Lord's* criticism of baptismal incorporation into Christ with the comment, 'baptismal incorporation undermining *sola fide* and *sola gratia* (did St. Paul ever realise his inconsistency?)'.⁹⁹

The end of the second phase of the twentieth century baptismal debate was marked by the publication of two important books, both by active participants in the ecumenical movement: Gilmore's *Baptism and Christian Unity* and Beasley-Murray's *Baptism Today and Tomorrow*.¹⁰⁰ Gilmore's was a passionate plea that Baptists

⁹⁶ *Liberty in the Lord*, 34-36.

⁹⁷ W. W. Bottoms, 'Where Are Baptists Going? Plea for re-examination of trends of Baptist thought', *BT* May 7, 1964, 10.

⁹⁸ Mr. Paul Tucker of East London Tabernacle, 'Liberty in the Lord', *BT* May 21, 1964, 4.

⁹⁹ N. Clark, 'In the Study', *BQ* 20.7 (July, 1964), 327 and 328, reference to *Liberty in the Lord*, p.38.

¹⁰⁰ Both books were reviewed by W. E. Moore in *BQ* 21.8 (Oct, 1966), 382-83, and along with Basil Moss's *Crisis for Baptism*, by Ralph Martin, 'Baptismal Disgrace', *The Christian and*

should recognize the validity of infant baptism, drawing to attention the stress of recent exponents of infant baptism on the importance of faith for all modes of baptism.¹⁰¹ He argued that if Baptists were to recapture the spirit of toleration, then people should be able to believe and worship according to their own understanding of scripture and knowledge of God, 'it means that so long as those who practise infant baptism are convinced that this is the will of God for them, Baptists ought not to question their conviction of its validity'.¹⁰² Concessions had to be made to the freedom of individual conscience.¹⁰³ In his review, Beasley-Murray took Gilmore to task on arguing from this that Baptists should allow infant baptism, therefore making way in a united Church for both forms of baptism.¹⁰⁴ The question that needed to be addressed was, according to Beasley-Murray, 'how is faith operative in infant baptism?' He concluded,

Mr Gilmore's motives are impeccable. I wish I could be persuaded his arguments were equally impeccable. The way forward in Church relations is a painful one for everybody, and the pain is greatest where convictions are strongest. Somehow we *must* go forward, with truth and love always in company. It is possible that increased illumination given by the Holy Spirit will mean a heavier cross for the churches. I share the belief that part of that cross will be a reform in baptismal doctrine and practice difficult to be carried through; but it will mean one thing for Baptists and another for Paedobaptists. In this sphere it is imperative to distinguish the things that differ.¹⁰⁵

For his part, Beasley-Murray acknowledged that 'Baptists...are the most intransigent group in inter-Church discussions; they believe that in their adherence to the primitive pattern of baptism God has entrusted them with a treasure for the whole Church, and

Christianity Today, July 22, 1966, 11; Gilmore's book was reviewed by Beasley-Murray, 'The Validity of Infant Baptism'. *The Christian and Christianity Today*, July 15, 1966, 18; whilst John Norman reviewed Beasley-Murray's, 'A Jolt About Baptism', *BT* March 10, 1966, 6.

¹⁰¹ A. Gilmore, *Baptism and Christian Unity* (1966), chapter 2, 'Faith and Baptism', 17-39.

¹⁰² Gilmore, *Baptism and Christian Unity*, 83-84. Gilmore adduced the support of E. Leslie Wenger as expressed in his 'The Problem of So-called Re-Baptism', in *Church Union: News and Views*, May 1958, 23.

¹⁰³ Gilmore, *Baptism and Christian Unity*, 87-88.

¹⁰⁴ See Gilmore, *Baptism and Christian Unity*, 16.

¹⁰⁵ Beasley-Murray, 'The Validity of Infant Baptism', 18.

that it would be a betrayal of the Lord and of His Church to forsake it. Accordingly they find it difficult to enter into negotiations for the uniting of Churches in a given area'.¹⁰⁶ Later on, he reiterated the position he had outlined at the BWA the previous year, stating that for Baptists infant baptism was not the baptism of the New Testament, and the reality of the present day situation was that there were two baptisms.¹⁰⁷ He wrote, 'concurrence concerning the Biblically oriented theology of baptism is one thing, but concurrence about baptism as it exists in the Churches today is another'.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism Today and Tomorrow* (1966), 80.

¹⁰⁷ Beasley-Murray, *Baptism Today and Tomorrow*, 145-158. On the present day situation, p.158 he wrote, 'We do not have one baptism. We have two baptisms, one for infants and the other for confessors of faith'.

¹⁰⁸ Beasley-Murray, *Baptism Today and Tomorrow*, 160.

Chapter Seven.

The Consolidation of Baptist Sacramentalism.

In 1944 Ernest Payne described the Baptist position on baptism thus: 'We do not find here, any more than on other matters, complete unanimity of view. Divergences as to the nature and meaning of sacraments in general inevitably affect thought and practice in regard to baptism as well as the Lord's Supper'. He later added, 'The very considerable variety of practice in regard to baptism from the very beginnings of Baptist witness down to our day is naturally reflected in differences of interpretation. Moreover, Baptist apologetic has inevitably tended to concentrate far more on questions of the subject and mode of baptism than on questions of meaning'.¹

This situation, however, had to change when an increasing number of Paedobaptist scholars, from Brunner and Barth onwards, with the notable exceptions of Oscar Cullmann and Joachim Jeremias, accepted that New Testament baptism was the baptism of believers by immersion, but who nevertheless retained infant baptism on the basis of theology and tradition as opposed simply to Scripture.² For Baptists, such a position was wholly untenable because of their understanding of Scripture, its authority and their loyalty to it. This shift of viewpoint of some Paedobaptist authors forced Baptists to a reconsideration of their theology of baptism, so much so, that Dr. George Beasley-Murray, at the close of this period, wrote on 'Steps to a Revival of Apostolic Baptism' in his book *Baptism Today and Tomorrow*, which he addressed specifically to a Baptist readership.³ In 1960 Beasley-Murray had criticized existing

¹ E. A. Payne, *The Fellowship of Believers* (1944¹), 63 and 70.

² See, eg. the surveys of Paedobaptist apologetic provided by E. A. Payne, 'Baptism in Present-Day Theology', in A. T. Ohrn (ed.), *Eighth Baptist World Congress* (Philadelphia, 1950), 171-179; G. R. Beasley-Murray, 'The Baptismal Controversy in the British Scene', Introduction to K. Aland's *Did the Early Church Baptize Infants?* (1963), 17-27.

³ G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism Today and Tomorrow* (1966), 89-98. Beasley-Murray, p.89, stated that the 'first step required for Baptists to recover the fulness of apostolic baptism is *humility*', italics added.

Baptist practice of baptism, stating that it was not apostolic baptism. 'If the churches - including our own people - desire to have a baptism as rich as that of the Apostolic Church, much courageous thinking requires to be done'. He concluded:

But have not we Baptists a duty to set our own house in order? For too long we have regarded it as our vocation to demonstrate *who* are the proper recipients of baptism, but have been unable to supply a coherent account from the Scriptures of *what* that baptism is that must be administered to the right persons. Anyone acquainted with our churches knows that there exist in them traditions as stereotyped as can be found in any other churches, and we are as dangerously near to mistaking our own popular traditions for the Word of God as are the rest. We Baptists pride ourselves on being churches of the New Testament. It behooves us to take our own medicine - to cast aside our pride, search afresh the Scriptures, submit ourselves to their teaching, and be prepared for reform according to the Word.⁴

Baptists were beginning to realize and challenge other Baptists, questioning whether their own doctrine of baptism was an adequate expression of New Testament baptism and whether there was not much that they could and should learn from Paedobaptists.⁵

This fundamental shift can be seen by the move away from writings which were dominated by the discussion of the mode and subjects of baptism to the theology and practical outworking of that theology.

With but a few exceptions, Baptists were unanimous that the New Testament mode of baptism was immersion and that this was binding for the present day Church.⁶ Its

⁴ G. R. Beasley-Murray, 'Baptism in the New Testament', *Foundations* 3 (January, 1960), 29-30.

⁵ Most notably N. Clark, 'The Theology of Baptism', in A. Gilmore (ed.), *Christian Baptism* (1959), 316, 'if the Paedo-Baptist case is exposed to grave objections and harbours serious weaknesses, the Baptist position in many ways fits even more uneasily with Biblical theology. Its preoccupation with the recipient and the mode of baptism at the expense, so often, of the meaning and purpose of the rite, has constantly exposed its supporters to the charge of tithing mint and anise and cummin whilst neglecting the weightier matters of the law'; p.325, Clark spoke of confusion reigning in Baptist practice. R. E. O. White, *The Biblical Doctrine of Initiation* (1960), 279-80, listed Baptists' own difficulties with believer's baptism, concluding a long list of such difficulties, 'There is much in the Lukan, Petrine and Pauline expositions of baptism that finds little place in contemporary Baptist thinking; one sometimes fears that current practice of believer's baptism is scriptural on the single point of reserving baptism for believers and on very little else', see also pp. 295-96, 306.

⁶ So N. Clark, 'The Theology of Baptism', in A. Gilmore (ed.), *Christian Baptism* (1959), 325, 'We have no warrant for making any one mode obligatory; but to give to immersion a normative place is to recognize the importance for sacramental practice of the closest possible

value lay in its appropriateness by virtue of its symbolism, and this was reinforced by the emphasis on the death, burial and resurrection of Christ and the believer's participation in these events by faith. This was not, however, to say that baptism was merely symbolic. For a long time Baptists had been content with such statements as that made by Dr. Arthur Dakin, that even baptism by immersion was 'quite useless apart from faith in the recipient, and it is thought of, first, as a means of grace to the believer, and then as his witness to His Lord',⁷ but an increasing number of scholars and ministers had already recognized the inadequacy of such a position when compared with the teaching of the New Testament and other non-Baptist scholars.

R. E. O. White launched perhaps the most stinging attack on the merely symbolic understanding of believers baptism.

It must be repeated that some upholders of believer's baptism are as much at fault in minimising what baptism does as the paedobaptists are in applying their more adequate sacrament to the wrong subjects. The view that baptism merely symbolises, declares, a spiritual experience, prompts the same question as does infant baptism: to whom is the declaration made? If it is the pledge of a good conscience addressed to God, does God not answer it? The symbolic, declaratory view of baptism negates much that is undoubtedly present in the primitive rite: the sense that baptism is a real event within the dispensational scheme, a real entrance upon the messianic sign, a personal experience of the actual fulfilment of the promises of the gospel. When the rite is thus impoverished, the claim to dominical authority becomes inexplicable. Did Jesus really require of His followers a religious exercise merely symbolic, devoid of profit, efficacy or result? Moreover, if baptism is no more than a symbolic profession of faith, why should it not be performed at every crisis of religious experience - why is it once only?⁸

White accepted that baptism by immersion vividly recalled the death and burial of Jesus and as vividly suggested the death and burial of the Christian, though not in the same sense, but the notion that baptism was merely a mimed symbol, an acted parable expressing a spiritual attitude not necessarily connected with any outward act 'is unfortunately the view of believer's baptism most widely held. But it is not Paul's view'. Rather, according to Paul, baptism pointed to the moment when the Christian

correspondence between sign and signification'. In practice, and in exceptional circumstances, Baptists have been willing to baptize by affusion, on which see chapter 10 'The Practice of Baptism' and the section on 'The Baptismal Service' below.

⁷ Dakin, *The Baptist View of the Church and Ministry* (1944), 31-32.

⁸ White, *Biblical Doctrine of Initiation*, 306.

actually ethically died with Christ to sin. 'Paul's statement [in Colossians 2-3 and Romans 6] is that they *were* baptised into His death, they *did* die with Christ, they *were* buried with Him by baptism into death... Together with the other great Pauline affirmations concerning baptism, that thereby believers are washed, justified, cleansed, sanctified, receive the Spirit, enter the church and the New Age, such statements leave no doubt that in Paul's mind baptism *accomplishes* things. It does not merely represent them, express them figuratively, or impose the obligation that what is here illustrated ought to be accomplished at other times and places'.⁹ Baptism is effective and not theatrical or illustrative, because it is the act of responsible and comprehending believers in the kerygma and it is this fact which controls the meaning of Pauline sacramentalism. 'The notion of baptism's effectiveness apart from such response of faith and moral obedience is utterly foreign to Paul's thought'.¹⁰ Any idea that such a view is mechanical is both unnecessary and untrue as, according to Paul, baptism is dynamic, because the sacrament of which he writes is essentially an act of obedient faith accepting personally and responsibly all that Christ offers in the gospel.¹¹ To speak of Paul's sacramentalism is possible so long as it is remembered that the efficacy of baptism belongs not to the ceremony of baptism as such but to the action of God, by the Spirit, within the convert's soul who at that time and in this way is responding to the grace offered in the gospel. 'There is no dualism here between faith and baptism simply because for Paul baptism is always, and only, faith-baptism: given that Paul is emphatically a sacramentalist'.¹²

Writing over a decade earlier, H. H. Rowley had expressed matters similarly:

Baptism is a symbol, and it is the constant teaching of the whole Bible that the symbol has no meaning without that which it symbolizes. As a mere external act it

⁹ White, *Biblical Doctrine of Initiation*, 215-217.

¹⁰ White, *Biblical Doctrine of Initiation*, 218.

¹¹ White, *Biblical Doctrine of Initiation*, 220-21.

¹² White, *Biblical Doctrine of Initiation*, 226. See also White's, *Invitation to Baptism*, chapter 4 'Baptized into Christ Jesus', 37-43, where he argued that baptism was more than a symbol in that it was an experience of Christ.

is as dead as the sacrifices which the prophets condemned... The symbol is of less importance than that which it symbolizes. It is of importance that Baptists no less than others should remember this. What matters most is not that a man has been voluntarily immersed, any more than that he has been baptized in infancy, but that he has truly died with Christ and been raised again to newness of life in Him, so that his life is now hid with Christ in God. The symbol is worthless without that which it symbolizes. It must be the organ of the soul's approach in faith and surrender to God before it can become the organ of God's approach in power to him.¹³

It was this meaning of New Testament baptism that an increasing body of Baptist scholars and ministers were striving to rediscover.

Stephen Winward concurred. A sacrament, he submitted, was both symbol, an enacted symbol, and yet much more than a symbol, for while a symbol represented, a sacrament conveyed. 'A sacrament is a means of grace, an instrumental symbol, an act of God. In baptism and the eucharist, this act of God is related to the gospel... To separate either sacrament from the proclamation and acceptance of the gospel, is to pervert it'. Accordingly, significance and conveyance, that which man apprehended and that which God gave, were neither to be equated nor divorced, for the sacraments were for those who saw and accepted that which they signified, and yet also believed that 'God does "immeasurably more than all we can ask or conceive"'.¹⁴ In short, baptism was both a sacrament and a symbol.¹⁵

It was neither the quantity of water¹⁶ nor the actual performance of a rite, for Baptists denied the charge of being merely ritualists, some even arguing that the

¹³ H. H. Rowley, Professor of Hebrew Language and Literature at Manchester University, 'The Christian Sacraments', in Rowley, *The Unity of the Bible* (1953), 172-73. Later, pp.185-86, he reiterated the same point: 'It is meaningless without that which it symbolizes, but it may be a channel of blessing to those who know the experience which it symbolizes'. When a symbol became an end in itself the symbol was worthless, yet, the Bible, did not despise 'symbols when they are charged with meaning'. On Rowley see E. A. Payne, 'H. H. Rowley, 1890-1969', *The Fraternal* 155 (January, 1970), 9-12; F. F. Bruce, 'Obituary. Harold Henry Rowley', *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 101 (1969), 134.

¹⁴ Winward, *The Reformation of Our Worship* (1964), 69-71.

¹⁵ Beasley-Murray, *Baptism Today and Tomorrow*, 13-41.

¹⁶ R. L. Child, 'The Ministry and the Sacraments', *BQ* 9.3 (July, 1938), 136, 'it is a mistake to suppose that our distinctive convictions are concerned mainly with the amount of water which is used in the act of baptising'; M. E. Aubrey, 'In the Service of the Churches', extracts from

mode itself was a secondary matter.¹⁷ A. C. Underwood, for example, criticized those Baptists who stressed what man does in baptism rather than what God does, thereby reducing it to a mere sign or a bare symbol. When viewed only as a symbol of an inward experience of conversion or surrender to Christ, of the experience of dying to the old life and rising to newness of life in Christ, as an utterance of a new purpose to live for Him and join His people, as a public profession of faith and dedication to Christ and His service, it was true as far as it went, but it did not go far enough. It failed to do justice to the actual experience of those baptized as believers, making the baptism of a believer merely declaratory, reducing the sacrament to a mere sign and a bare symbol, turning all Baptists into ritualists. However, a return to the New Testament doctrine would remove any such misunderstandings, and this would be achieved by returning baptism to its New Testament place with conversion and the reception of the Holy Spirit.¹⁸

Thus, there was a growing number of writers who sought to bring together both the inner and outer aspects of baptism. Wheeler Robinson contended that the fullest and clearest of the Apostle Paul's associations of the outer sign and seal with the inner and invisible grace was made in Romans 6:3-5, where the act of water baptism was said to unite the believer with the dying, buried and risen Lord on the one hand, and on the other with the new obligations and new resources of a penitent and risen life in Christ.

Aubrey's speech in presenting the Council's Annual Report to the 1941 Assembly, *BT* April, 30, 1942, 212, 'It is not the quantity of water but the quality of belief that matters. If we immerse, it is because we think that mode safeguards a truth. The truth, to put it in modern terms, is that when a man gives himself to Christ, he is committed to total warfare. The submerging of the whole body is a symbol of the surrender of the whole life. That is our ideal for church membership. That is our conception of the Church. We say it every time we hold a baptismal service. That is what makes us Baptists, and we need not be ashamed of the nickname'.

¹⁷ H. W. Robinson, 'The Five Points of a Baptists Faith', *BQ* 11.1&2 (January/April, 1942), 11, though he believed that the New Testament mode provided a truer symbolism than any other, yet it was not essential to the spiritual reality. As has already been noted, a considerable number, predominantly ecumenists, went further than this, advocating the possibility of a variety of modes, eg, Alec Gilmore in his address to the Baptists Board, 'Some Problems of Believer's Baptism', *BT* December 31, 1959, 6, asked whether Baptists were justified in refusing baptism to those incapable of receiving immersion, eg, the invalided and crippled, or whether affusion was also permissible.

¹⁸ A. C. Underwood, 'What Mean Ye By This Service?', in F. C. Bryan (ed.), *Concerning Believers Baptism* (1943), 58-59 and 60-61.

In 1 Corinthians 12:13, the visible act of water baptism was into the name of Jesus and expressed and mediated the invisible baptism into the Holy Spirit. The context of this verse indicated that Paul was thinking of the common act of water baptism by which alone there is entrance into the visible Body of Christ, and with this he closely associated the invisible experience as the normal accompaniment. This was supported from the book of Acts (especially Acts 2:38) where water baptism and Spirit baptism are intimately linked.¹⁹ Winward wrote, 'The washing of the body with water is the outward and visible sign of the inner and invisible cleansing of the life from all sin. In conversion and baptism we receive through faith in the Saviour the forgiveness of all sin'.²⁰ This position was confirmed by George Beasley-Murray, 'For Paul the inner and outer acts of the decision of faith and its expression in baptism form one indissoluble event'.²¹

The next logical step was to address the objective and the subjective, the Godward and the manward aspects of the rite. Traditionally, Baptists had tended to focus on the subjective, what the believer did in baptism, omitting reference to the activity of God in and through the rite. Baptists were not slow to recognize this. In 1938, Dr. Arthur Dakin had recognized the lack of attention paid by Baptists to the activity of God in

¹⁹ Robinson, 'Five Points of a Baptist's Faith', 8.

²⁰ S. F. Winward, *The New Testament Teaching on Baptism* (1952), 26-27. See also his *Reformation of Worship*, 59, 'In baptism the *kerygma* was enacted and embodied. And not only the gospel, but the faith of the candidate, was declared and embodied in sign and symbol, in ritual act and sacrament. Here also the outer and the inner, the sacramental act and personal confession...are one'.

²¹ G. R. Beasley-Murray, 'Baptism in the Epistles of Paul', in Gilmore (ed.), *Christian Baptism*, 130. See also R. L. Child, 'The Practice of the Apostolic Church. Baptism on Profession of Faith' and 'The Significance of Baptism to St. Paul. Union with Christ in Baptism', and R. G. Ramsey, 'Baptism and the Gospel. The Perspective and Emphasis Proper to Baptism', all three in Bryan (ed.), *Concerning Believers Baptism*; Rev. W. Powell of West Haddon, 'Baptists and Baptism', *BT* September 29, 1949, 9, 'The inner belief necessary to salvation is made definite by its expression in baptism, so that it is even said baptism saves us'; P. R. Clifford, *The Christian Life* (1954), 21-22; Rev. Elwin Shackleton from Barrow-in-Furness, 'The First Epistle of Peter. On Baptism. 1 Peter 3:13 to 4:6', *BT* November 19, 1959, 9; White, *Biblical Doctrine of Initiation*, 125, 'Certainly Jesus criticised merely ritual religiousness - the observance of religious ceremonial without the corresponding religious character and spirit. But when it truly expressed the inward attitude of soul, the outward act of piety received His clear approval and even His command...', and also in 'New Baptismal Questions - II', *BT* August 24, 1961, 2, White, then of Borcham Wood Free Church, spoke of believer's baptism not only expressing but illustrating, objectifying and enshrining the faith which saves.

baptism,²² and it was no time at all before the first of an increasing number of writers addressed this deficiency. Just three months later, Guy Ramsey asked, 'Can we have a purely subjective experience of the Grace of God? Or must there be a continuous interplay of objective reality and subjective reaction in our apprehension of God?'²³ Wheeler Robinson continued to challenge fellow Baptists, arguing that if his interpretation of the New Testament was sound, 'then there is something yet to be done if Baptists are to substantiate their claim to be fully loyal to the New Testament. Baptism is there not only a necessary profession of repentance and faith; it is also a sacrament of grace...'²⁴ The number of those who took up this matter quickly increased.²⁵

George Beasley-Murray wrote: 'the idea that baptism is a purely symbolic rite must be pronounced not only unsatisfactory but out of harmony with the New Testament itself'. Apostolic writers made free use of baptism's symbolism, but they went beyond

22 A. Dakin, 'Calvin's Doctrine of Baptism', *BQ* 9.3 (July, 1938), 164. See also his contribution to Bryan (ed.), *Concerning Believers Baptism*, 'Christian Baptism and John's Baptism Contrasted', 39-44.

23 R. G. Ramsey of Horfield, Bristol, 'The Means of Grace. A Personal Confession', *BQ* 9.4 (October, 1938), 213.

24 H. W. Robinson, 'Believers' Baptism and the Holy Spirit', *BQ* 9.7 (July, 1939), 395.

25 See Rev. Emlyn Davies, who moved from North Finchley to the position of Welsh Secretary of the SCM and tutor at South Wales Baptist College in 1942, 'Our Baptist Genius. A Reply to Principal Whale', *BT* February 12, 1942, 75, (referring to J. S. Whale's *Christian Doctrine*), and Dr. Charles Brown of Chorley Wood, 'Dr. Whale and Infant Baptism', *BT* February 19, 1942, 88, both asserted that baptism was not only the act of Christ but also of the baptized; L. G. Champion, *The Church of the New Testament* (1951), 70-71; later Champion declared that Baptist baptism, like Jesus', centred on the divine initiative, 'Baptism of Jesus', *BT* March 2, 1961, 5, see also his *Baptists and Unity*, 11; H. Cook, *Why Baptize Believers Only?* (1952), 6; H. H. Rowley, 'The Christian Sacraments', 167-68, 'Surely it is hard to suppose that these passages [Acts 8:37, 16:31, 33, Matthew 28:19 and Romans 10:9] mean that the New Testament writers eliminated the act of God in salvation and made the decision of the believer do all that was necessary'. Later he continued, 'If, then, faith is held to be necessary to baptism, it does not for one moment imply that faith is all that is necessary, and that God can be dispensed with, or that baptism is merely the act of the person who is baptized, or even of the Church and that person. In the context of Biblical thought we may say that if baptism is to be charged with meaning and power it must be both a divine and human act', see also p.185; J. B. Skemp of Durham, 'A Scottish Letter. Report on Baptism', *BT* November 3, 1955, 7, endorsed William Whyte's, minister at Portobello, earlier call ('A Scottish Letter. Report on Baptism', *BT* October 27, 1955, 7) for a reasoned reply to the first interim Report of the Church of Scotland on baptism, saying, the fear of sacramentalism was so strong that Baptists had so stressed individual conversion that they failed to see that baptism re-stated the truth about God's mighty working which made it possible for conversion to occur; West, *Baptist Principles* (1960), 32.

this to view the act as a symbol with power, that is, a sacrament. The grace available to man in baptism included forgiveness of and cleansing for sins, union with Christ, particularly union in his death and resurrection, participation in Christ's sonship, consecration to God, membership in the Church, possession of the Spirit, that is, regeneration, grace to live according to the will of God, deliverance from the powers of evil, inheritance of the Kingdom of God, and the pledge of the resurrection of the body.²⁶ In this, there was no claim for the magical operation of the baptismal rite, rather the grace offered was nothing less than the gracious action of God himself,²⁷ and this was possible only because baptism is the divinely appointed rendezvous of grace for faith.²⁸ 'Faith is needful *before* baptism, that Christ and his Gospel may truly be confessed in it; *in* baptism, to receive what God bestows; and *after* baptism, in order to abide in the grace so freely given and to work out by that grace what God has wrought within'. And this theology of faith-baptism is founded on the presupposition that baptism is administered to converts.²⁹

²⁶ G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (1962), 263-64.

²⁷ Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, 264-266. In this he was in total agreement with R. C. Walton, whom he quoted in a footnote, pp.265-66 n.4, the full quotation of which is, 'As the Church is created by God, so Believers' Baptism is primarily God's act. It is not, first of all, our act of obedience - an ordinance - but God's redemptive activity - a sacrament. Here Christ gives Himself in all his fullness to those whom He has chosen and called. Yet in this matter, the spiritual liberty of the Christian man is involved', Walton, *The Gathered Community* (1946), 164.

²⁸ Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, 273, but see his whole discussion from pp.266-275.

²⁹ Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, 274, italics his. He added, 'In the New Testament faith *comes* to baptism; the idea of baptism creating faith is not on the horizon', p.274. He later wrote, 'That salvation is of God is an axiom of Biblical religion. The Gospel declares what God has done in Christ for the redemption of the world. The sacraments are embodiments of that Gospel, deriving significance from their relation to the acts of God in Christ', p.344. 'For the Apostle, and for his contemporaries, baptism was for *faith*. They never envisaged it being administered to any but believers', p.352. In his 'Baptism in the Epistles of Paul', in Gilmore (ed.), *Christian Baptism*, 136, he stated, 'We have therefore to recognize a tension in Paul's thought concerning the relation of Christ's redemptive acts and the believer's response thereto in baptism... It is that work of grace which gives baptism any significance'. On p.138 he said, 'the subjective aspect has [not] been made the starting point, nor has it been exalted above the objective redemption history: on the contrary, the personal experience has been grounded upon the objective redemption'. Then, p.148, he quoted with approval W. H. P. Hatch, *The Pauline Idea of Faith and its Relation to Jewish and Hellenistic Religions*, 43. 'Faith and baptism go together, as is clear from the following passage (Gal 3:27)... The two constitute a single act of which faith is the subjective and baptism the objective side'. See also

This was in agreement with the work of White two years earlier, who had argued that

The obvious objections to a sacramental interpretation of infant baptism are assumed to lie equally against believer's baptism - which is nonsense. The dynamic, or existential, sacramentalism of the New Testament seizes upon the fact that divine activity and human response meet in sacramental *actio*... efficacy belongs strictly neither to the element, nor to the rite, but to the action of God within the soul of the baptised who at that time, in that way, is making his response to the grace offered to him in the gospel. The sacrament consists not in the thing done, but in *the doing* of that which gives expression to faith in appointed ways. On the one side, the faith of the person doing the appointed thing invests the rite at that moment, for himself, with sacramental meaning; on the other side, God, accepting this response, in fulfilment of His promise in the gospel invests the rite at that moment, for that convert, with sacramental power.³⁰

Neville Clark was another explicitly to criticize much of Baptist teaching on baptism as being inadequate because it focussed on the subjective element of the rite, again asserting that 'the inseparability of divine action and human response must never be denied'.³¹ Correcting such excessive subjectivism, Clark impressed, 'Baptism is a sacrament of the Gospel, not of our experience of it; of God's faithfulness, not of our faithful response to Him; and any theological formulation which lends itself so readily to an interpretation of the rite primarily in terms of a public confession of faith must at once be suspect'.³² Several years earlier H. W.

'Baptism in the New Testament', *Foundations* 3 (January, 1960), 28, where he pressed, 'from the human side, faith is viewed as the operative power of baptism'. From the evidence of his exegetical study, he concluded that 'If God gives his gracious gifts to faith *and* baptism, he gives them in association, i.e. he gives them to faith in baptism, or (which amounts to the same) to baptism *in faith*', italics his, p.28. See the whole of his discussion of the relation of faith to grace in baptism, pp.27-29. In *Baptism Today and Tomorrow*, 66, writing of baptism, the Gospel and faith, he developed his earlier statements, maintaining that rightly understood baptism also avoided the perils of extremes. 'It harmonizes the objective and subjective elements in Christianity, the personal and the corporate, the relationship with the Lord of the cross and resurrection, and the relationship to members of His body'.

30 White, *Biblical Doctrine of Initiation*, 308, italics his. See his earlier contribution on this matter, his *Baptist Times* prize essay, 'The Baptist View of the Sacraments', *BT* March 29, 1945, 6, 'In these days of religious subjectivism it is no small gain for the Church to be thus repeatedly reminded that she sprang from a concrete, historic act of God, unalterable and definitive...'

31 N. Clark, 'The Theology of Baptism', 312. He developed this further, see pp.313-14.

32 Clark, 'The Theology of Baptism', 316. A similar criticism of the onesidedness of both Paedobaptist and Baptist baptismal theology was made by Gordon Hastings, 'An Outline of the History of Baptism'. *The Fraternal* 90 (October, 1953), 31, 'there is a great difficulty in expressing the doctrine so that one side of its truth does not outshine another side. Men have stressed the working of the power of God in baptism until the faith of the one being baptised was forgotten. And perhaps men have looked so much upon the faith of the candidate, and the

Trent had argued the same point, asking, 'do the Ordinances testify to what we do or to what God has done, or both? The present writer has the feeling that we have been inclined to make the Sacraments man-centred rather than God-centred and the contribution which man makes has overshadowed God's work in redemption. We must regain our perspective and regard the rites of Baptism and the Lord's Supper as essentially indicative of what God has done and continues to do in Christ for man in the first place and how men respond in the second... If we emphasise the Godward aspect to the exclusion of the other we must arrive ultimately at paedo-baptism and infant Communion. And vice versa if we glorify the manward we arrive at a position when Baptism becomes purely a sign of our faith and the Lord's Supper a memorial rite with little other meaning'.³³ This led to his first conclusion, that Baptists had no grounds to be complacent towards the sacraments and that there was room for closer thought and renewed interest in sacramental theology and practice. 'We ought to emphasise at all levels that the Ordinances are the Gospel in action, and the important thing is that they testify to what God in Christ has done and is doing for men rather than what we ourselves do. The part that faith plays is in receiving the benefits of which they speak and in making them effective for us. Faith does not condition the primary act of God though it is necessary for the reception of its benefits'.³⁴

Stephen Winward admitted, 'Speaking of our churches as a whole, it can hardly be denied that at present many of our baptismal services give a distorted picture of the meaning of baptism. The stress is usually laid upon that which is being done by the candidates. This itself is often over-simplified and represented only as an act of witness'. Other aspects of baptism needed to be stressed. First, in baptism God acts, through Christ in the Spirit. Secondly, baptism is an act of God by which believers are admitted into his Church. Thirdly, baptism is a confessional rite. 'In the Divine-human

witness that he is making, that they have forgotten that God works wonders and miracles of grace through the sacrament'.

³³ H. W. Trent of Great Shelford, 'Ourselves and the Ordinances', *BQ* 17.1 (January, 1957), 11-12.

³⁴ Trent, 'Ourselves and the Ordinances', 21.

encounter of baptism, confession is the human response to the Divine activity'.³⁵ A year later, Stephen Winward, again directly reflected the language of Emil Brunner, when he declared that 'Baptism is the encounter between the Lord and man, the place where the enacted word of God meets the enacted human response'.³⁶

With the bringing together of the outward and inward and subjective and objective aspects of baptism the way was open for both the further development and consolidation of sacramentalist teaching within Baptist doctrine. Accompanied by an increasing number of other writers, the leading sacramentalist of the second half of the century has been George Beasley-Murray. Though the old antagonism still existed between those who wished to play off the sacramentalist against the antisacramentalist position, it is clear from the sources that in this period the sacramentalist understanding became not just acceptable to most Baptists but an indisputable part of the theology of those who wrote most extensively on the subject.

That conflict continued to exist, however, is illustrated by an interchange in 1948 between L. A. Read of Stapleton and Stoke Gifford, Bristol, and George Beasley-Murray, at the time minister of Zion, Cambridge, which fairly represents the positions on either side. In January 1948, Louis Read wrote a short article on 'The Ordinances', in which he observed that for many members of Baptist congregations there was the feeling that the ordinances were needless or for select souls. 'This has caused such concern that we now often hear pronouncements which seek to awaken people to the place and meaning of these rites and in these they are most often termed sacraments and stated to be "means of grace". Here I am concerned to show why I feel these to be wrong emphases, unlikely to solve the problem of instructing our people in attendance at the more intimate meetings of the church fellowship'.³⁷

³⁵ S. F. Winward, 'The Administration of Baptism', *The Fraternal* 123 (January, 1962), 8-10.

³⁶ S. F. Winward, 'The Church in the New Testament', in A. Gilmore (ed.), *The Pattern of the Church* (1963), 69.

³⁷ L. A. Read, 'The Ordinances', *The Fraternal* 67 (January, 1948), 8.

First, Read examined the word 'sacrament'. Such a term, he contended, could be used if its meaning could be established which fitted the Baptist view of ceremonies and which was isolated from its history and use by other communions. 'As things are it generally conveys a meaning alien to our thought or is so nebulous as to mean nothing'. Not least did Read disapprove of the definition which allowed all of life to be considered sacramental in the sense of being able to mediate God to people.³⁸

After a tentative use of the word 'sacrament' in the early days, Baptists substituted for it the word 'ordinance', a word lacking ambiguity and being self-explanatory, implying quite naturally the institution of both ordinances by Christ, a fact which provided sufficient reason for their continued observance.³⁹ To claim that baptism and the Lord's Supper were means of grace was far from satisfactory, 'For it would seem that people come in the mood naturally engendered by this conception of the ceremonies and when they do not at once perceive some benefit, conclude they have been misled'. Justification for the claim of a means of grace was usually found in Augustine's phrase about being an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace, but this Read dismissed as redundant, as signs had to be outward and visible and grace in the religious sphere could only be inward and spiritual.⁴⁰

Read understood the two ordinances primarily as opportunities for the expression of dedication and gratitude to God. To interpret them as occasions chiefly for the bestowal of grace was selfish, untrue and unbiblical. Any benefit which might be claimed from observance of the ordinances was secondary to Christ's desire for the believer's remembrance and worship. 'We should gather, not primarily to gain some good, but to offer praise to Him Who is our Redeemer and has already gained for us in that the greatest good'. This was not to deny that grace was received by the worshipper, for the Spirit was always present when any met in sincerity and truth to

³⁸ Read, 'The Ordinances', 8.

³⁹ Read, 'The Ordinances', 9.

⁴⁰ Read, 'The Ordinances', 9-10.

worship their God as He had directed. 'But we must emphasise not our private desire for gain but our submission to our God Who first loved us and redeemed us for Himself'. The purpose and meaning of the ordinances, therefore, lay in the fact that through them believers dedicated themselves to the Master, initially by baptism and then by constant and frequent renewal at the Lord's Supper. 'It is our response to His goodness and a vivid portrayal of the means of our redemption, evoking in us praise and worship. We are blessed in that inevitably, and certainly receive more than we give; yet this must remain the prime meaning. We give ourselves because He asks it of us. So these have a distinctive character, marking them off from all other meetings of the church'.⁴¹

Beasley-Murray responded with 'The Sacraments'. His aim was not to defend the use of the term 'sacrament', though, he stated, its loose use by some was scarcely an adequate reason for its rejection. He did, however, 'deplore that a fellow-Baptist, in a discussion on the nature of the sacraments, should write with scarcely a reference to the Scriptures'. The general emphasis in discussion of baptism amongst Baptists, he reported, undoubtedly fell on its value as a means of confession and that other significations were subordinated to this main idea. Baptism was normally held to make no difference to the condition of the baptized, its value lying in the expression of spiritual realities already appropriated. This was the position presented by Read and the many non-sacramentalists who maintained that, 'Baptism is our act for God, our response to His appeal for obedience'. But, without denying baptism's confessional value, Beasley-Murray argued that this was secondary not primary, for 'In every explicit mention of Baptism it is regarded as the supreme moment of our union with Christ in His redemptive acts for us and our consequent reception of the life of the Spirit', as in Romans 6:4-8, Galatians 3:27 and 1 Peter 3:21, where each implied that outward expression and inward experience should coincide, and where

⁴¹ Read, 'The Ordinances', 10.

the act mediated the experience of receiving.⁴² He failed to see how exegesis of these passages, along with Titus 3:5 and 1 Corinthians 12:13, could lead to the assertion that the important thing in baptism was what we gave God. 'Without minimising the necessity of faith and confession of Christ, such a view is tantamount to esteeming our act of surrender to God as of greater value than His gift of Himself to us'. Objections to this position were usually made on other than exegetical grounds. Free Churchmen were disinclined to believe that a sacrament could have such significance, that baptism could be operative not symbolic, postponing the operation and gift of the Spirit from the submission of faith to the reception of an outward ordinance. Beasley-Murray identified the word 'postpone' as the key to the problem, for the New Testament knew nothing of postponing a baptism after conversion.

Every recorded baptism takes place immediately upon profession of faith, the instances are too well known to require statement. In the primitive Church conversion and baptism are so indissolubly linked together that they may be regarded as a unity. In such a context to speak of a Christian dying and rising with Christ and receiving the Spirit of Pentecost in baptism is no magical concept, for the submission to the rite was the occasion of surrender to Christ. This is no setting of a sacrament over against repentance and faith, as though Baptism made conversion unnecessary, but the intertwining of the two so that baptism is a part of conversion. It is only when the primitive relationship is separated that sacerdotalism creeps in and *opus operatum* becomes the watchword instead of the New Testament principle *nulla sacramentum sine fide*.⁴³

In breaking asunder the unity of conversion and baptism Baptists had become almost as culpable as others, and in so doing had become accustomed to introduce a probationary period between profession of faith and confession of faith in baptism and joining the Church, baptism thereby effectively becoming a kind of promotion in discipleship, instead of initiation into Christ and the Christian life. The reason offered in defence of this separation was the necessity of giving a new convert instruction so as to establish him in the faith. 'We grant that this is necessary, but who said it should precede baptism? Contrary to popular opinion and practice, the whole New Testament set-up of doctrine and organisation is based on the assumption that instruction in

⁴² G. R. Beasley-Murray, 'The Sacraments', *The Fraternal* 70 (October, 1948), 3.

⁴³ Beasley-Murray, 'The Sacraments', 4.

doctrine is for the baptised Christian, not for the enquirer'. If this seemed like putting the cart before the horse, he continued, this was only because Baptists had not become used to the fact that *kerugma* precedes *didache*, the gospel before doctrine.⁴⁴

If Baptists feared to baptize converts straightaway, Beasley-Murray continued, then they needed to recognize that in doing so they had changed the nature of baptism. The New Testament declared that it was the transition of the believer from one world to another, from life estranged from God to life in Christ, and whatever else baptism might bring a year after conversion, it could not bring that. To teach that would be to head for Romanism. But once baptism was once more regarded as part of conversion, the moment of supreme surrender rather than the expression of a believer's obedience, Baptists would again be free to teach the New Testament doctrine of baptism.⁴⁵ His discussion concluded noting the irony if the present generation witnessed New Testament baptism being championed by Paedobaptist theologians, whilst Baptists lapsed into a sub-theological view of the rite. 'If we are to take that opportunity, which Wheeler Robinson foresaw a generation ago would come, of leading the Body of Christ to the true view of Baptism, we shall do it only if we rise to a clearer apprehension of it than we appear to possess to-day'.⁴⁶

It was most important to Beasley-Murray that baptism was a part of the conversion experience. Addressing the fourth session of the Baptist Assembly in 1959, he elucidated his views that part of the conversion experience was turning to God in repentance and faith which came to definitive expression in baptism. The regular procedure of Baptists to separate conversion and baptism was not New Testament

⁴⁴ Beasley-Murray, 'The Sacraments', 4-5.

⁴⁵ Beasley-Murray, 'The Sacraments', 5, and see also his 'The Church of Scotland and Baptism', *The Fraternal* 99 (January, 1956), 9, where he accepted the report's claims that baptism was a dying with Christ, a union with Him, a recreation in Him, a subjection to His total Lordship over body and soul, only on the condition that 'baptism and conversion be viewed as an indivisible unity of experience'.

⁴⁶ Beasley-Murray, 'The Sacraments', 5.

practice. where faith found its goal in baptism.⁴⁷ He reiterated the point on numerous occasions,⁴⁸ and in this he played an invaluable part in a process which had begun before him,⁴⁹ but which grew largely as a result of his advocacy.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ G. R. Beasley-Murray, 'The Saving Experience', *BT* May 7, 1959, 8-9.

⁴⁸ Eg. G. R. Beasley-Murray, 'The Spirit is There', *BT* December 10, 1959, 8, 'For...the New Testament writers, baptism was nothing less than *'the climax of God's dealing with the penitent seeker and of the convert's return to God'*, italics his. Equally as axiomatic for a proper theology of baptism as baptism administered to converts is conversion and baptism being inseparable, if not indistinguishable, for in the primitive apostolic Church baptism was 'conversion-baptism', *Baptism Today and Tomorrow*, 37.

⁴⁹ H. V. Larcombe, 'Our Specific Contribution', *BT* January 13, 1944, 6; Walton, *Gathered Community*, 27; H. Cook, *The Theology of Evangelism* (1951), 111, who understood baptism to be an essential element of the Pentecostal testimony, being to Peter the completion of all that was involved in repentance, concluding, 'that all true evangelism must aim not only at conversion but at conversion that leads directly to baptism and church membership'; A. Gilmore, 'Some Recent Trends in the Theology of Baptism', *BQ* 15.7 (July, 1954), 311, 'baptism and conversion are very closely linked and that, in fact, baptism is the recognised declaration of an inner change in the heart of man', see his whole discussion of baptism and conversion, pp.311-318.

⁵⁰ Commenting on the at times heated correspondence sparked off by the publication of *Christian Baptism*, S. W. Ford of London, 'Christian Baptism', *BT* November 5, 1959, 6, observed that most of the correspondents seemed to have shut out the Holy Spirit from baptism, and this separation of baptism from conversion thereby rendered baptism unnecessary. West, *Baptist Principles*, 32, explained that 'it will help if we recognise that baptism is a part of a total conversion experience', but then added, '- an experience which may be short in terms of time, or long'. Though not mentioning baptism as a part of conversion, Payne and Winward, *Orders and Prayers for Church Worship. A Manual for Ministers* (1960), 131-32, ascribed to baptism the benefits of conversion. White, *Biblical Doctrine of Initiation*, 116, 'To claim His authority, the form of initiation must express the terms upon which Jesus offered men salvation. Christian baptism may be the concomitant of repentant faith: it may be its earliest symbolic expression: it cannot in any event with His authority be accepted as its substitute'. See also G. E. Shackleton, 'Conversion and Discipleship: 13 - The Place of Baptism', *BT* May 17, 1962, 11; W. Scott, 'The Spiritual and the Sacramental in the Theology of Baptism', *The Fraternal* 135 (July, 1965), 25, 'It is only when we lose sight of the New Testament pattern of personal commitment to Jesus Christ, expressed and confirmed in baptism that insuperable difficulties are created', and, 'The fact cannot be gainsaid that in Paul's estimation of it, baptism was an event closely woven into the texture of the conversion experience, intimately connected with repentance and faith, and identified with commitment to Christ as its concrete expression. Baptism was into the body of Christ'. C. J. Pike, *Under Christ's Control* (1950), 12, was vaguer when he said that in New Testament times baptism 'generally took place on the same day as conversion'. Channon, *Much Waters*, 52, remarked that the search for any long period between conversion and baptism in the New Testament would be in vain. The difficulty of trying to translate this belief of the place of baptism in conversion into actual Baptist practice was reflected in two separate works by Dr. J. R. C. Perkin of Hale Road, Altrincham. At one point he rued the fact that the old view which believed that baptism and church membership were two different things was gaining ground, one of the consequences being conversion and baptism were separated, 'The Principles and Practice of Believers' Baptism', *BT* June 4, 1959, 10, whereas in the introduction to his *Divine Encounter. An Outline for Discussion of Believer's Baptism* (1965), 3, material written for baptismal preparation, he wrote, 'It is some time since the candidates were brought to the point of decision: now they are to seal their allegiance to their Lord and his Church in baptism'. Frequently, however, the exact relationship between conversion and baptism went unspecified, eg. 'Baptist Doctrine of the Church', *BQ* 12.12 (October, 1948), 442, 'The basis of our membership in the church is a conscious and deliberate acceptance of Christ as Saviour

In his *An Approach to the Theology of the Sacraments*, Neville Clark set aside the question of the recipients of baptism, thereby enabling him to address directly the theology of baptism. 'There is little doubt', he wrote, 'that the New Testament view of baptism is of a rite that is effective rather than merely symbolic. It brings the disciple into a union with Christ too deep and realistic for words adequately to describe it; it has objective significance'.⁵¹ In the last resort baptism is not 'into the death of Christ but baptism into Christ, the incarnate, crucified, risen and ascended Redeemer. In baptism the disciple enters into the whole redemptive action of his Lord, so that what was once done representatively for him may now be done in actuality in him; he is incorporated in order that he may be crucified'.⁵² In his review, Beasley-Murray agreed, saying that this was well said and in the line of thought of an increasing number of Baptists (not least those who were to combine to produce *Christian Baptism*), 'Its provocativeness is an advantage, for it demands a constant questioning of presuppositions, and anyone who can disturb us from platitudinous thinking deserves our gratitude'.⁵³ Clark concluded: 'At the opening of the Christian way stands the sacrament of Christian initiation. In the baptismal rite we are offered forgiveness of sins, engrafted into the mystical body of the Christ, incorporated into the manhood of the Son. Receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit and made sons of God by adoption, we participate in the life of the blessed Trinity. Reborn of water and the Spirit, we are, henceforth, those who have died and risen with Christ'.⁵⁴

and Lord by each individual... It is this vital evangelical experience which underlies the Baptist conception of the Church and is both expressed and safeguarded by the sacrament of Believers' Baptism'; S. F. Winward, *New Testament Teaching on Baptism*, 13, 'God gives to us His Holy Spirit in conversion and baptism...'

⁵¹ N. Clark, *An Approach to the Theology of the Sacraments*, number 17 in the SCM's Studies in Biblical Theology series, (1956), 32.

⁵² Clark, *An Approach*, 31

⁵³ Beasley-Murray, 'Theology and the Sacraments', *BT* May 24, 1956, 10.

⁵⁴ Clark, *An Approach*, 84. Three years later, Clark, 'The Theology of Baptism', 306, continued his thoughts on baptism, linking it to the pattern and limits of salvation history (*Heilsgeschichte*): 'Its foreshadowings lie in the past, its consummation in the future; but its theology must be written round the two poles of the baptism of Jesus at the Jordan and its

It was not long before Clark was attacked for his views. G. Thompson Brake heralded Clark's book as 'excellent', but possessive of 'disturbing features'. He accused Clark of having been over-influenced by Catholic and Anglo-Catholic writers such as Dom Gregory Dix, A. G. Herbert and L. S. Thornton in his attempt to reconcile Catholic incarnational theology with evangelical views. When Clark wrote, 'In so far as the Church is the extension of the incarnation, the sacraments are the extension of the atonement',⁵⁵ Brake insisted that he could not have it both ways. The danger of seeing the Church as an extension of the incarnation was that it inevitably led to a Catholic conception of the Church and the sacraments. The implications of Clark's book was that the Lord added to the Church those who were being baptized, not those who were saved. Any reference to baptism being effective rather than symbolic came under Brake's strictures. Again and again, he claimed, while reading the book the reader had to substitute the word 'salvation' for 'baptism' and he accused Clark of advocating baptismal regeneration. 'We cannot share his enthusiasm for the catholic categories of thought. It is very much to be hoped that he does not remain as enthusiastic'.⁵⁶

J. R. C. Perkin, having just finished his DPhil at Oxford on baptism, was quick to Clark's defence, suggesting that Brake had misunderstood Clark's main purpose which had been to deal with fundamentals of sacramental theology and not denominational views or practices. Perkin claimed that Clark was one of the few writers who had turned first to the New Testament in order to draw out what baptism

*fulfilment in His death, resurrection and ascension'. He reiterated that there was a threefold emphasis of New Testament baptismal theology: it effects the forgiveness of sins, initiation into the Church and the gift of the Spirit, each stemming from John's baptism and Jesus' participation in it, each being transfigured by the fulfilment that the cross and resurrection provide, and each being marked by the eschatological tension between the 'now' and the 'not yet' which characterizes the Christian era, pp.308-09. Clark also touched on baptism in 'The Fulness of the Church of God', in Gilmore (ed.), *The Pattern of the Church*, 79-113, and in his *Call to Worship* (1960), in SCM's Studies in Ministry and Worship series, no15, pp.54-59.*

⁵⁵ Clark, *An Approach*, 74.

⁵⁶ G. T. Brake, minister at Halstead, 'The Theology of the Sacraments', June 28, 1956, 7. Brake was a temporary convert from Methodism, entering the Baptist ministry in 1955, in which he served two Essex Baptist churches, Halstead and Avenue, Southend-on-Sea, before re-entering the Methodist ministry in 1971.

and the eucharist really meant. 'Not since J. H. Shakespeare', Perkin concluded, 'has anyone called [Baptists] so loudly to examine their basic tenets'.⁵⁷

Clark's second defender was Harry Trent, who challenged Brake's contention that Clark was over-influenced by Catholic writers. Did it follow, he queried, that just because a book was written by a Catholic that its contents were necessarily suspect? Further, Clark did not always quote such authors with approval, and Trent also charged Brake with taking passages out of their contexts. Concerning baptism as an effective rite, Trent asked whether, in the light of Romans 6 and other passages, it was possible to conclude otherwise? Using twentieth century categories such a conclusion was possible, however, in New Testament terms it was not. The act of baptism had become so far removed from the 'salvation experience' which it had accompanied in the New Testament that it was inevitable that Baptists had lost something of its meaning. 'To assert that a rite is effective does not mean that it is so *apart from* active faithful participation'.⁵⁸ It was because spiritual experience and sacramental symbolism went hand in hand in the early Church that Clark was justified in assessing the New Testament rite as effective rather than merely symbolic. As to how baptism effectively accomplished the believer's union with Christ, a point frequently stressed by Baptists,⁵⁹ Clark had answered in terms of initiation into the Church. 'It is here', Trent declared, 'that I feel the author makes a valuable contribution for it is not an uncommon attitude or belief in our Denomination today that Church membership is something different and unconnected with Baptism', a position which had led to the anomalous position of coming across folk baptized but not received into the Church,

⁵⁷ J. R. C. Perkin of Altrincham, 'The Theology of the Sacraments', *BT* July 5, 1956, 6.

⁵⁸ H. W. Trent, from Great Shelford near Cambridge, 'The Theology of the Sacraments', *BT* July 12, 1956, 7, italics added.

⁵⁹ See R. L. Child, 'The Significance of Baptism to Paul. Union with Christ in Baptism', in Bryan (ed.), *Concerning Believers Baptism*, especially pp.23-25; S. F. Winward, *New Testament Teaching on Baptism*, 46, on Romans 6:1-4, 'we are *united* with him in his death and resurrection. This union is entered into through faith and baptism'; H. W. Trent, 'Ourselves and the Ordinances', 13; A. B. Crabtree, *The Restored Relationship. A Study in Justification and Reconciliation*, (1963), 65, what Paul means by being 'in him' is being 'united with the crucified and risen Christ through faith and baptism'.

or when the word of a minister was sufficient for baptism, for the church had to have its say before the candidate could enter church fellowship.⁶⁰

It was the inability of most Baptists to keep in biblical tension the various aspects of the New Testament rite that led the likes of Clark and White to write what they did, but especially Beasley-Murray, who wrote what are undoubtedly the most eloquent, theologically balanced and important contributions any Baptist has made to the baptismal debate, contributions that span six decades, but which focus down upon three major writings.⁶¹ Whilst clearly the foremost Baptist sacramentalist, Dr. Beasley-Murray was by no means alone. The most important book on this matter was the collaborative *Christian Baptism*, edited by Alec Gilmore. Together, the articles provided both a response to the many cries for a major Baptist contribution to the baptismal debate and a powerful argument for the sacramental nature of baptism. In this regard two articles in particular stood out. The first, and to a lesser extent, was the concluding article on 'The Theology of Baptism' by Neville Clark. In 1956, he had written, 'Any attempt to state and analyse the Pauline theology of baptism is confronted with immediate difficulties'.⁶² This task of developing an adequate

⁶⁰ Trent, 'The Theology of the Sacraments', *BT* July 12, 1956, 7.

⁶¹ G. R. Beasley-Murray, 'Baptism in the Epistles of Paul', *Baptism in the New Testament and Baptism Today and Tomorrow*. Michael Walker in his paper to the Baptist Historical Society Summer School in July 1982, published later as 'Baptist Worship', in K. W. Clements (ed.), *Baptists in the Twentieth Century* (1983), 24, claimed that Beasley-Murray's *Baptism in the New Testament* and R. E. O. White's *The Biblical Doctrine of Initiation* 'revolutionized the Baptist understanding of the initiating sacrament'. J. J. Brown in his appreciation of George Beasley-Murray reiterated this conviction, 'George Raymond Beasley-Murray. A Personal Appreciation', in P. Beasley-Murray (ed.), *Mission to the World. Essays to Celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Ordination of George Raymond Beasley-Murray to the Christian Ministry* (Supplement to the *Baptist Quarterly*, Baptist Historical Society, 1991), 15. Cf. also R. A. Culpepper, 'George R. Beasley-Murray', in T. George and D. S. Dockery (eds.), *Baptist Theologians* (Nashville, 1990), 576, referred to *Baptism in the New Testament* as 'the definitive work on the subject for years to come'. However, Walker's statement cannot be accepted just as it is, because, even though Beasley-Murray and White produced what are without doubt the most important, detailed and eloquent examinations of baptism in this period, their impact has been limited in both grass-roots baptismal theology and the actual practice of the rite, a fact borne out by the observation that much of what they said has either not been read by many Baptists, including ministers (not least because of their length), or have been read but not understood, or have been read but ignored.

⁶² Clark, *An Approach*, 22. At the time of writing 'The Theology of Baptism' in 1959 Clark moved from Rochester BC to Amersham-on-the-Hill Free Church.

exegesis of Paul's teaching on baptism was taken on by Beasley-Murray, and it was this article more than any other which caused a debate which was to last nearly a year and a half, and centred around the same kind of charges Clark had faced three years previously and was to a lesser extent to face again with his 'The Theology of Baptism'.⁶³

George Beasley-Murray had defended the biblical sacramentalist view of baptism in 1948, but in his essay 'Baptism in the Epistles of Paul' he expounded the position that for Paul baptism was a sacrament of the Gospel and that this fact was basic to all his utterances on the subject. This proved the most controversial work on baptism by any Baptist this century. He argued that behind and in baptism stood 'the Christ of the cross and resurrection, bestowing freedom from sin's guilt and power, and the Spirit who gives the life of the age to come in the present and is the pledge of the resurrection at the last day'. But Paul went further than any of his predecessors and contemporaries, seeing baptism as the sacrament of union with Christ. Because of this, baptism involved union with him in his redemptive acts, both in the rite and in subsequent life, and union with his body, the Church, making the believer a living member who partook in the life of the whole. 'Baptism was thus an effective sign; in it Christ and faith come together in the meeting of conversion'.⁶⁴ Whether baptism

⁶³ The editorial in the issue of *The Fraternal* which had two articles devoted to *Christian Baptism* anticipated that it would be Neville Clark's essay which would displease some, 'Editorial', *Fraternal* 111 (July, 1959), 4. Dr. David Russell in his review noted the complexity of Clark's language, 'Christian Baptism I', *The Fraternal* 111 (July, 1959), 7. The reason that Clark's work on the sacramental nature of baptism caused less of a stir than Beasley-Murray's can only be conjectured. However, it would not seem unreasonable, particularly in the light of Dr. Russell's remark noted above, to suppose that in large measure it is due to the complexity of both Clark's style and thought, which would put off everyone except the most determined and theologically adroit readers. E. F. Kevan was particularly critical of Clark's essay, 'Christian Baptism II', *The Fraternal* 111 (July, 1959), 10-11. Clark responded in 'Christian Baptism Under Fire', *The Fraternal* 114 (October, 1959), 16-18.

⁶⁴ Beasley-Murray, 'Baptism in the Epistles of Paul', in Gilmore, (ed.), *Christian Baptism*, 148. He was not alone in understanding baptism as an effective sign. See also A. Gilmore, 'Jewish Antecedents', also in *Christian Baptism*, 62; R. E. O. White, *Biblical Doctrine of Initiation*, 98, 'Never, with Jesus' baptismal experience before us, can we reverently say that "nothing happens" in baptism. In Jesus' experience water-baptism proved to be Spirit-baptism, not only coincident in time but causally related... Henceforth, true baptism is inseparable from the gift of the Spirit'; pp.263-64. 'Men are saved by faith: but faith too can degenerate into a transient mood of the soul unless it be given body, substance, objectivity, in the overt acts of believing men. Faith needs to be "objectified" in the sacramental experience of the believer, and this

was conceived of as a sacrament of the Gospel or of union with Christ, 'in either case faith is integral to it', and this was the decisive issue between Baptists and Paedobaptists. He continued: 'The Gospel exercises its radical influence in a man's life when he receives it in faith; he becomes one with Christ when he submits to Him in faith; for Paul the decisive expression of such faith is baptism'.⁶⁵ That faith and baptism went together was consistently maintained by Paul in his baptismal teaching, setting forth a unified baptismal theology where the presence of faith is *presumed*, operative as the 'instrument of surrender' of the convert.⁶⁶ Therefore, when Paul's teaching about baptism is applied to infants incapable of such faith violence is done to exegesis. 'Nor is there evidence that Paul possessed another baptismal theology which he applied to infants'.⁶⁷ The first reactions to his work, and to the volume as a whole, were very positive, Beasley-Murray's contribution being hailed as 'a most scholarly and convincing assessment of the evidence which stressed baptism as an act of personal faith thereby ruling out any magical notions being attached to the rite'.⁶⁸ What criticisms there were, were initially directed towards Clark's essay.

involves no inconsistency, because for John, [whose writings White had just examined] as for the whole New Testament, "sacrament" *means* "faith-sacrament". There is no tension, dualism, or contradiction in requiring faith and sacrament, because baptism *is* believer's baptism... Tension arises when baptism...[is] divorced from faith and then set over against it', italics his, and p.294, 'Where baptism is faith finding expression, there divine truth is made known and divine things happen in the soul'; see also pp.273 and 305. Also, White, *Open Letter*, 262, 'sacraments attest and confirm to believers the abiding effect of the life and death of Christ'; R. L. Child, 'What Happens in Baptism?', *BT* February 2, 1960, 8, 10; N. B. Jones, 'Christian Baptism III', *The Fraternal* 115 (January, 1960), 22, 'baptism will be the climax of [the] conversion experience, and that through his new faith he will die with Christ and rise with new power to newness of life. This can be real for him providing that the time from the initial conversion experience is not too long. Baptism will be an effective sign, the outer and the inner experience will be one'; Winward, *Reformation of Our Worship*, 71. Such a position, however, was vigorously opposed, for example, by E. F. Kevan, 'Christian Baptism II', *The Fraternal* 111 (July, 1959), 9-10.

⁶⁵ Beasley-Murray, 'Baptism in the Epistles of Paul', 148.

⁶⁶ Beasley-Murray, 'Baptism in the Epistles of Paul', 148-49, citing Romans 6:1-11; 10:9-10; Galatians 3:27; Colossians 2:11-12; 1 Corinthians 6:11, italics added.

⁶⁷ Beasley-Murray, 'Baptism in the Epistles of Paul', 149.

⁶⁸ So D. S. Russell in July, 1959, 'Christian Baptism I', *The Fraternal* 113 (July, 1959), 6. The book was described as excellent and almost wholly dispassionate by the Methodist scholar Dr. Norman Snaith, 'Christian Baptism', *BT* April 30, 1959, 10, whilst Rev. E. H. Robertson, 'Christian Baptism', *BT* May 14, 1959, 10-11, lauded Beasley-Murray's work, stating that it called Baptists back to the Pauline conception of baptism which conveyed the fullness of meaning ascribed to it.

The controversy began inconspicuously enough when Robert Clarke from Jordanstown, County Antrim, Ireland, a Presbyterian who had become a Baptist, expressed his concern about comments in *Christian Baptism* which he understood to support baptismal regeneration, notably Clark's statement that 'Baptism effects initiation into the life of the blessed Trinity and all the blessings of the new "age"'. He asked, 'Aren't those who trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour and who are born again of the Holy Spirit partakers of the divine nature, and in possession of the divine life, before they are baptised?' He had always believed Baptist teaching to be that believer's baptism symbolized union with Christ, making it more real and through it bringing spiritual blessing, but that it did not effect such union.⁶⁹

Clarke was quickly followed by Rev. L. J. Stones who expressed grave concerns about what he called the 'new sacramentalism' which was gaining rapid ground amongst ministers. For him baptism was a symbol, a witness to grace not for the reception of grace, and he believed that the recent baptismal service televised from Falmouth, the contributors to *Christian Baptism*, and R. C. Walton and those whose views were expressed in *The Gathered Community* were returning to the position of baptismal regeneration.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ R. Clarke, 'Christian Baptism', *BT* August 13, 1959, 6, quoting Clark from 'The Theology of Baptism', 309, but he did not mention Clark, p.313, where he had written, 'Baptism effects regeneration and new birth because and only because it sets us at Golgotha and the empty tomb'. It is clear here that the reason for R. Clarke's difficulty with the "effective rite" position was due to the fact that in Baptist tradition baptism had become separated from conversion where, in the New Testament, it was the climax and initial and initiating rite. Clarke's comments are consonant with Irish Baptist conservative evangelicalism, and also reflect the lingering Baptist revulsion of the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, so associated with Catholicism, on which see the ensuing debate and note especially the misunderstandings that arose from language such as 'effective sacrament'. But see also Rev. Frank James, who appears to have retired in Crawley, when he wrote, 'Christian Endeavour Topic for May 1. Church Ordinances', *BT* April 28, 1938, 332, 'no rite, ordinance or sacrament, by whatever name we call it, can convey to us the grace of regeneration', citing in support Dr. Henry Townsend. What Clarke and others feared was that the authors of *Christian Baptism* and those who defended them were sliding into this doctrine.

⁷⁰ Rev. L. J. Stones of Bristol, 'Sacramentalism Among Baptists', *BT* September 10, 1959, 6. A report of the Falmouth service was carried in 'Baptismal Service Televised', *BT* July 9, 1959, 1. The brief report concluded with Alan Gibson's (the son of a Baptist minister) summing up saying that it was a sacrament in which those baptized were confirmed into their new life in Christ.

Alec Gilmore replied to Robert Clarke's letter pointing out that A. C. Underwood had understood baptism to be more than a symbol,⁷¹ but this was not to Clarke's satisfaction, who was disappointed that Gilmore did not unequivocally repudiate baptismal regeneration, again implicitly accusing the contributors to *Christian Baptism* of upholding this doctrine.⁷² A fortnight later Rev. G. Elwin Shackleton entered the fray, quoting Wheeler Robinson to the effect that outer and inner experience were never considered apart in the New Testament, only later generations had separated them, which was what the opponents of *Christian Baptism* had done. When this happened it made it difficult to account for much New Testament teaching. In the New Testament, he reasserted, baptism was a part of the conversion experience, and *Christian Baptism* was a genuine attempt to understand what the New Testament said about believer's baptism and it was not a Baptist manifesto attempting to justify existing practice.⁷³ This was shortly followed by S. W. Ford who observed that most of the correspondence had shut out the Holy Spirit from baptism and criticized the separation of baptism from conversion, thereby making baptism unnecessary.⁷⁴

Dr. N. Beattie expressed amazement at what he described as some of the mischievous statements made in the book and denied Shackleton's contention that baptism was a part of the conversion experience. For him, baptism was merely the first step in obedience by the believer and the blessings of it were a new found joy, peace and satisfaction, asserting 'by grace we are saved through faith...'. When the writers of the book gave the impression that the outward symbolic act played even some part in conversion they were guilty of pandering to the popular superstition that

⁷¹ A. Gilmore, 'Christian Baptism', *BT* September 24, 1959, 6, referring to Underwood's *A History of English Baptists* (1947), 268-274.

⁷² R. Clarke, 'Christian Baptism', *BT* October 8, 1959, 6.

⁷³ G. E. Shackleton of Barrow-in-Furness, 'Christian Baptism', *BT* October 22, 1959, 6.

⁷⁴ S. W. Ford of London, 'Christian Baptism', *BT* November 5, 1959, 6.

something done to us, for us or by us, was essential or demanded, so that we might be saved.⁷⁵

In his series of studies on 1 Peter, Elwin Shackleton, the very next week, examined 1 Peter 3:13 to 4:6 and warned that in their anxiety to disclaim the doctrine that baptism was essential to salvation Baptists should not hesitate to accept all that New Testament teaching implied. Baptism was not just something that happened in the flesh, but a spiritual experience involving one's moral and spiritual life and relationship with God. The experience of baptism involved a moral transformation which enabled a man to repent, receive forgiveness and be restored to God's fellowship. Again following Wheeler Robinson, the outer act and the inner experience were never considered apart, so baptism took into its scope the whole of the gospel. Baptism was not *something* like dying and rising again, it *was* a real participation in Christ's resurrection. 'It is unfortunate that after centuries of division in the church over infant and believer's baptism, we tend to adapt our interpretation of the New Testament to the pattern of the practice we accept. There can be no doubt, that Peter is here referring to believer's baptism, and his words are not a defence but a description. It is as a helpful description that we should use them'.⁷⁶

In December, D. R. Griffiths denied that Robert Clarke's quotation from his contribution on 'The Fourth Gospel and 1 John'⁷⁷ implied baptismal regeneration, and did so by quoting another passage⁷⁸ which read, 'a feature of the sacramental teaching

⁷⁵ Dr. N. Beattie, details of whom are neither mentioned nor known, 'Christian Baptism', *BT* November 12, 1959, 6.

⁷⁶ G. E. Shackleton, 'The First Epistle of Peter. On Baptism. 1 Peter 3:13 to 4:6', *BT* November 19, 1959, 9.

⁷⁷ D. R. Griffiths, Lecturer in Biblical Studies at University College Cardiff, 'The Fourth Gospel and 1 John' in Gilmore (ed.), *Christian Baptism*, 158.

⁷⁸ Griffiths, 'The Fourth Gospel and 1 John', 170.

in general, which safeguards it from the materialistic, the magical' was the persistent stress on the Holy Spirit in Johannine teaching.⁷⁹

Feeling a sense of responsibility as one who had contributed to *Christian Baptism*, George Beasley-Murray sought to answer the alleged charge that the contributors believed in and advocated baptismal regeneration.⁸⁰ The answer suggested by some through the letters column of the *Baptist Times* was that this was precisely what they were doing, but he stated clearly that if this question was put to them, their answer would be the words of Paul's favourite expression, '*Me genoito!*' ("Not on your life!"). But were a different question put to them, namely, 'Do you believe that baptism is a means of grace?', the answer would be, 'Yes, and more than is generally meant by that expression. In the Church of the Apostles (please note the limitation) the whole height and depth of grace is bound up with the experience of baptism. For to the New Testament writers baptism was nothing less than "*the climax of God's dealing with the penitent seeker and of the convert's return to God*". This he supported from some of the pertinent New Testament statements about baptism.

First, baptism was of the Spirit. In Matthew 28:19 the significance of baptism was the handing over by a convert of himself to God and the appropriation of the convert by the Triune God. Symbolism and confession were subordinated to this all important aspect of dealing between God and man in baptism. Such was presupposed of baptism in the book of Acts. The plain import of Acts 2:37-38 was that repentance and baptism would be answered by God with the bestowal of forgiveness and the Spirit. An unprejudiced reader of Acts 22:16 would interpret the command as meaning that

⁷⁹ D. R. Griffiths, 'Christian Baptism', *BT* December 10, 1959, 6. See R. Clarke, 'Christian Baptism', *BT* October 8, 1959, 6.

⁸⁰ G. R. Beasley-Murray, 'Baptism Controversy. "The Spirit is There" - Declares Dr. G. R. Beasley-Murray', *BT* December 10, 1959, 8.

in baptism Paul would wash away his sins, not that the water accomplished this but that in baptism the Lord and Paul would have dealings with that result.⁸¹

Secondly, baptism was union with Christ. According to Galatians 3:26-27 the faith that received and the baptism that united were indissoluble, and no explanation of Romans 6:1-11 had validity if it failed to recognize three inseparable elements associated with the baptismal experience: the convert was united with the Lord in his dying on the cross and rising from the tomb, the convert was transferred from existence out of Christ to life in Christ, and the convert renounced his old life to begin a new one for the glory of God. That this was so was supported by the authentic commentary on Romans 6 provided in Colossians 2:12, the latter part of which stated that through baptism the convert is raised with Christ in baptism. In 1 Peter 3:21 baptism was basically an appeal for a clear conscience, that is, the occasion for asking for it from God.

Finally, modern baptism was a reduced baptism. 'The teaching of these scriptures seems to me to be unambiguous. It militates unreservedly against the reduced baptism championed of late by so many correspondents of this paper'. Beasley-Murray, then, was at pains to emphasise that 'this teaching relates to *baptism in the apostolic Church*, not to baptism in the average modern Baptist church. Where baptism is sundered from conversion on the one hand, and from entry into the Church on the other, this language cannot be applied to it; such a baptism is a reduced baptism'.⁸² Objectors to *Christian Baptism*, he continued, were guilty of transferring the theology applying to apostolic baptism to that which they had known and was still fostered in

⁸¹ For those who defended the non-sacramentalist interpretation of baptism, the Holy Spirit was in no way involved in baptism, see, eg, the BRF's, *Liberty in the Lord*, eg, pp.35-36, and R. Clarke, 'Christian Baptism', *BT* January 7, 1960, 6. This position, however, could not accord with the many New Testament statements which explicitly brought the Holy Spirit and baptism together, chiefly 1 Corinthians 12:13, Acts 2:38 and Titus 3:5. And so many, before and after, but never more eloquently or convincingly than Beasley-Murray, built on the growing emphasis throughout the period 1900 to 1937 that baptism and the Holy Spirit were related.

⁸² G. R. Beasley-Murray, 'Baptism Controversy: "The Spirit is There" - Declares Dr. G. R. Beasley-Murray', *BT* December 10, 1959, 8, italics his.

their churches. They had, therefore, misunderstood Beasley-Murray and his co-contributors. 'My concern, along with my colleagues, is to put before Baptists the picture of ideal baptism, as it is portrayed in the apostolic writings, in the hope that we may strive to recover it or get somewhere near it. To insist on keeping our impoverished version of baptism would be a tragedy among a people who pride themselves on being the people of the New Testament'.

Rev. J. G. G. Norman from Erdington was quick to express thanks to Dr. Beasley-Murray, but asked for a further article which would clarify questions which arose from it.⁸³ Others, however, were not so pleased. Robert Clarke wrote again, denying the Holy Spirit's presence in baptism either to effect or consummate regeneration, but rather to bless and empower the already regenerated and forgiven believer.⁸⁴ This third letter of Clarke's highlights the dialectic in which the two sides of the debate were involved. The contributors and defenders of *Christian Baptism* were deliberating on the theology of New Testament baptism, where baptism was part of conversion, and not on the contemporary situation as it prevailed amongst twentieth-century Baptists where baptism had been separated from conversion. This fact was noted by A. J. Matthews who described the problems which were arising as twofold: first, due to the way conversion and baptism had been separated by months, even years, and secondly, that the Spirit's movements, like the wind, refuse to be organized and tidied up to suit our convenience. Matthews' letter was published at the same time as S. B. Johns', which expressed dissatisfaction with Beasley-Murray's article, disapproval of Shackleton's letter and accused both of advocating baptismal regeneration.⁸⁵ There can also be little doubt that the clear statements made by Beasley-Murray and the

⁸³ J. G. G. Norman, 'Christian Baptism', *BT* December 31, 1959, 4, these questions were: What was meant by 'means of grace?'; Did Acts 2:37-38 mean repentance with baptism equalled conversion?; and, finally, What it meant to be 'united with Christ'? These, he believed, would help the understanding not only of baptism but New Testament thought generally.

⁸⁴ R. Clarke, 'Christian Baptism', *BT* January 1, 1960, 6.

⁸⁵ A. J. Matthews of Cheam, and S. B. John from Gloucester, 'Christian Baptism', *BT* January 14, 1960, 6.

other contributors, to use his phrase from 1966, concerned 'faith-baptism',⁸⁶ yet consistently those who accused them of presenting a form of baptismal regeneration misunderstood this or ignored it. This can again be illustrated by the objection of Rev. S. F. Carter who claimed that it was faith not baptism which was for conversion.⁸⁷ Dr. N. Beattie disclaimed baptism to be in any way 'initiation' which he understood as 'a non-scriptural word, associated with evil pagan superstitious ceremonies!'⁸⁸ However, Beattie did this in the face of the vast array of ministers and scholars from across the theological spectrum who did recognize baptism as the initiatory rite, the door of entrance into the church.⁸⁹

In the same issue of *The Baptist Times*, R. L. Child answered the question whether anything transcendent or supernatural happened in baptism by appeal to baptism as a

⁸⁶ Beasley-Murray, *Baptism Today and Tomorrow*, 46, where he wrote that union with Christ took place 'through faith-baptism'.

⁸⁷ S. F. Carter of Truro, 'Christian Baptism', *BT* January 28, 1960, 6.

⁸⁸ Dr. N. Beattie, 'Christian Baptism', *BT* February 4, 1960, 6. In this letter, Dr. Beattie was most critical of Alec Gilmore's 'Some Problems of Believer's Baptism', being his address to the Baptist Board, *BT* December 31, 1959, 6, and W. D. Hudson, 'Inter-Communion and Infant Baptism. Can we have one without recognising the other?', *BT* January 7, 1960, 10.

⁸⁹ Robinson, 'Five Points of a Baptist's Faith', 9; A. Dakin, 'Christian Baptism and John's Baptism Contrasted', 39, and A. C. Underwood, 'What Mean Ye By This Service?', 62, both in Bryan (ed.), *Concerning Believers Baptism*; Walton, *Gathered Community*, 31, 159; Channon, *Much Water*, 78; Cook, *Theology of Evangelism*, 109; Clark, *Theology of the Sacraments*, 24, 33, 84, also his, 'The Fulness of the Church of God', 89 and 94, and 'Christian Initiation. A Baptist Point of View', in *Studia Liturgica* 4.3 (Autumn, 1965), 156-165; Trent, 'Ourselves and the Ordinances', 13-14; West, *Baptist Principles*, 31; Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, 279-84; Winward, *Reformation of our Worship*, 59 and 69, and also in his 'Embodied Worship', in R. C. D. Jasper, *The Renewal of Worship* (1965), 54; Perkin, *Divine Encounter*, 6.

More cautious was White, *Biblical Doctrine of Initiation*, 155, where he noted that baptism might 'mark initiation without being precisely coincident in time with it', a caution which he continued later, pp.192-195. In this discussion of the Lukan development of initiation, he asked, p.192, 'What if, in the nature of things, the total event of Christian initiation *cannot* be systematised, nor its "rationale" consistently and universally defined? Luke's variety of representation faithfully reflects the variety of religious experience, the freedom of the Spirit which bloweth where it listeth. No order or pattern of actions or events can be devised which will infallibly bring about the desired spiritual result'. This, however, did not prevent him from recognizing that in the Pauline letters, the idea that baptism brought the believer into the church was assumed in Ephesians 5:25 and 1 Corinthians 1:13-14 and explicitly affirmed in 1 Corinthians 12:13. However, the fact that baptism is initiatory was implicit within White's title.

A number rejected altogether that baptism was in any way initiatory. Eg. Rev. H. H. Pewtress, 'A United Church. The Question of Baptism', *BT* March 10, 1938, 193, on the grounds that it was a sign of having already entered the Church; 'Another Northern Baptist', 'Baptism and Church Membership', *BT* March 24, 1949, 8; and *Liberty in the Lord*, 38.

means of grace.⁹⁰ If nothing happened, then what did Baptists make of Romans 6:3-4, Galatians 3:27 and Titus 3:5? The true response to a false sacramentalism '(better called "sacramentarianism")' was not to abandon the category of the sacramental but to use it with more discrimination. As baptism was in the name of the Trinity, it was, therefore, an act of the Church. Individuals did not make baptism, rather they came to it and received baptism at the hands of the Church. This removed baptism from the private and individual sphere and set it within the context of the believing Church.⁹¹ It was for this reason that baptism was a part of the public worship of the Church.⁹²

⁹⁰ This paragraph discusses the views of R. L. Child, 'What Happens in Baptism?', *BT* February 4, 1960, 8 (and p.10), and inserts the views of others. There were basically two ways in which Baptists used the phrase 'means of grace'. First, as no more than a blessing of the baptized. So, Channon, *Much Water*, 32-33, 'Let the newly-baptised offer the prayer of expectancy that they may receive *something* for others that shall make their life more fruitful - more fragrant - in the service of God', italics added, and on p.66 baptism was described as 'a quickening of interest in things spiritual'. [There was also a non-specific and, therefore, vague usage, eg by Rev. T. A. H. Getley of Gorleston-on-Sea, 'Baptism and Discipleship', *BT* February 22, 1945, 6; A. J. Barnard, 'The Use of Symbols in the Baptist Church', *The Fraternal* 64 (April, 1947), 13.]

Secondly, as a sacramental means, that is, an 'effective rite' which effected what it symbolized and this because it is an expression of faith. So, H. Townsend, '"Illico" and Baptist Theology', *BT* January 6, 1938, 13; R. L. Child, 'The Ministry and the Sacraments', 137; A. C. Underwood, 'Why Be Baptised? An Imaginary Conversation', *BT* September 1, 1938, 675, and also his 'What Mean Ye By This Service?', 62; the 1938 *Reply of the Council of the Baptist Union*, in E. A. Payne, *Fellowship of Believers*, (1952²), Appendix C 'Christian Reunion', 149; Melville Evans, 'My Faith in the Sacraments', *BT* February 6, 1942, 67; H. W. Robinson, 'The Five Points of a Baptist's Faith', 9; F. C. Bryan at the seventh session of the Spring Assembly, 1944, 'The Sacraments', in F. C. Bryan *et al*, *Things Most Surely Believed* (1944), 70-71; Walton, *Gathered Community*, 161; 'The Baptist Doctrine of the Church', 445-46; R. A. Mason, 'The Theology of Baptism', *The Fraternal* 90 (October, 1953), 8-10; P. R. Clifford, *Mission of the Local Church*, 49; Winward, *New Testament Teaching on Baptism*, 47, also his *Reformation of Our Worship*, 69, and 'Embodied Worship', 52-53; White, *Invitation to Baptism*, 75.

⁹¹ Though Baptists have tended to individualize baptism, eg, R. G. Ramsey, 'Baptism and the Gospel. The Perspective and Emphasis Proper to Baptism', p.32, 'the decision about our individual attitude to...baptism is between Christ and our own souls', and 'Baptism and the Great Commission', and p.37, 'The individual's responsibility for responding personally to the claims of Christ... Believers' Baptism emphasises that responsibility', both in Bryan (ed.), *Concerning Believers Baptism*. In marked contrast was the position advocated by R. L. Child, also in *Concerning Believers Baptism*, 18, 'the baptized believer is on the way to discover a right and true relationship to his fellows in the society of Christ's people. *Believers' Baptism exhibits the true spiritual constitution of the Church* as a company of the faithful, who are knit to their invisible Head by the ties of personal faith and obedience', italics his. See also, S. F. Winward, 'Towards a Doctrine of the Church', *The Fraternal* 55 (September, 1944), 3-5, p.4, 'Of course Christian life is a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, but it is a personal relationship corporately mediated.... In baptism we are baptized into Christ Jesus and into the one Body', and his *New Testament Teaching on Baptism*, 'The Sacrament of Unity', 44-45; Walton, *Gathered Community*, 167, 'Because Baptism is the means of entrance into the Church and of access to the Lord's Table, it is more than a private transaction... It is an act of God through His Church; it is a sacrament of the community'; 'The Baptist Doctrine of the Church', 442, 'The...sacramental observances...are congregational acts of the whole

What happened, then, in baptism was an enacted proclamation of the gospel, symbolizing not what man does but what God did once for all in Christ for salvation and also what He promised to do and would do in the present. No single compact phrase could describe it. It depended on two factors, one constant and unvarying, the other variable and uncertain, one divine the other human. It was, therefore, an efficacious sign (Calvin), moving towards the accomplishment of that to which it pointed. For this, the personal response of faith on the part of the candidate in baptism was not only desirable but indispensable.⁹³

The following week, Beasley-Murray wrote again expounding the sacramental view, defining 'sacrament' as the Word of God in action, further clarifying the interpretation of baptism for which he and others were contending.⁹⁴ In a sacrament two worlds were in contact in an effective fashion. In Acts and Paul baptism was entrance into the Christian life, and this baptism was immediately on profession of faith, thereby making it possible to speak of being baptized as the means of becoming a Christian, as 'becoming a Christian and getting baptised were inseparable experiences. Naturally, the Spirit's work began before baptism, but it led to baptism and was definitively experienced in it. In retrospect the process was seen as indivisible, as indeed it was'. In Romans 6 it was not baptism that was in view, 'but the work of the Spirit under the baptismal image'. The suggestion that such was 'magic' amazed Beasley-Murray. 'If baptism be the vehicle of confession of Christ,

church', and p.444, 'It is the church which...celebrates the sacraments...'; Mason, 'The Theology of Baptism', 10-11, 'Baptism has its New Testament significance only when it is set in the context of the believing fellowship of the Church and is connected directly with entry into that fellowship by Church Membership....Baptism which is not closely connected with entry into the Church is no more Scriptural than the Baptism of Infants'; P. R. Clifford, *Mission of the Local Church*, 50, 'If the sacraments are sacraments of the Church..., then the sacraments must...have a corporate significance'; White, *Invitation to Baptism*, chapter 6, 'Baptized into one Body', 51-58 and his 'New Baptismal Questions - II', *BT* August 24, 1961, 2; L. G. Champion, J. O. Barrett and W. M. S. West, *The Doctrine of the Ministry* (1961), 10; L. J. Moon, 'Partnership', *The Fraternal* 132 (April, 1964), 20; G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism Today and Tomorrow*, 63.

⁹² So Perkin, *Divine Encounter*, 3.

⁹³ R. L. Child, 'What Happens in Baptism?', *BT* February 4, 1960, 8.

⁹⁴ Beasley-Murray, 'Baptism and the Sacramental View', *BT* February 11, 1960, 9-10.

prayer to Christ and surrender to Christ, how can it be other than critically significant for the baptised?' This in no way clashed with the doctrine of justification by faith, where 'God gives his salvation to faith and faith alone - as he gives the sacraments to faith and faith alone. We are not contending that God justifies by faith but gives the Spirit and unites to Christ by baptism, as though baptism were a "work" alongside faith. That would be a perversion of the Gospel. Our plea has been that in the New Testament baptism is inseparable from the turning to God in faith, on the basis of which God justifies, gives the Spirit, and unites to Christ'. 1 Corinthians 6:11 and Titus 3:5-7 implied that in the baptismal experience God gave to faith his declarative and recreative work which justified. 'Union with Christ' was therefore to be interpreted 'in terms of *koinonia*'. Using the concept of corporate or inclusive personality, the believer, through baptism, was there with Christ on Golgotha's cross, participating in 'our Representative's acts'. Such an exposition of what God had willed baptism to be, said not a word as to what God did when baptism was misapplied or absent, as in State Churches, the Salvation Army or Quakers. 'That the Churches have lost immeasurably and suffered corruption through the loss of believer's baptism cannot be denied... Yet the Spirit is undeniably there...'. At this point, Beasley-Murray exited the debate, and, surprisingly, no comments were made concerning this final article.

Whilst R. J. Snell was to acknowledge that Child had granted all that the most extreme anti-sacramentalist could ask for - baptism as a confession of repentance, a testimony to God's grace and a challenge to bear fruit worthy of repentance,⁹⁵ S. B. John was less appreciative, thanking Beasley-Murray for his article but discounting it as an answer to his critics, again accusing *Christian Baptism* of maintaining an *ex opere operato* position on baptism. For him, D. R. Griffiths' comment that '*entrance*

⁹⁵ R. J. Snell, 'Christian Baptism', *BF* February 18, 1960, 4.

into the kingdom of God is impossible except by means of the rebirth in baptism which is both water-baptism and a bestowal of the Spirit' was heresy.⁹⁶

From this point, the controversy took on a new slant focussing on the nature of symbol in reference to baptism. Peter Cowling entered the fray, observing that no-one in the debate, so far as he could remember, had sought to define what a symbol was. He provided such a definition, asserting that a symbol involved the two worlds of the physical and the spiritual. On the earthly and physical level, baptism was our testimony to the justifying grace of God and what he had done in Christ, but on the spiritual level it was incorporation into Christ. In baptism, then, testimony was given to God's grace and a mystical union with Christ in death, burial and thereby incorporation into his Body.⁹⁷ Later, Cowling defended baptism as part of conversion as the New Testament norm,⁹⁸ but on both occasions S. B. John responded, first of all arguing that a symbol was simply an outward sign of an inner grace which already existed, if otherwise it would be a symbol no longer but an agent,⁹⁹ then simply disagreeing with Cowling,¹⁰⁰ and here the controversy ended.

What all this meant was that the Baptist understanding of baptism was taking on a deeper and fuller, and it must be said a more biblically theological, content. Whilst there were throughout this period those who continued to resist all notions of 'sacrament', insisting that it was nothing more than an ordinance,¹⁰¹ an ever increasing

⁹⁶ S. B. John, 'Christian Baptism', *BT* February 25, 1960, 6, referring to D. R. Griffiths, 'The Fourth Gospel and 1 John', in *Christian Baptism*, 158, italics Griffiths'.

⁹⁷ P. Cowling of Buckhurst Hill, 'Symbolism and Baptism', *BT* April 14, 1960, 6.

⁹⁸ P. Cowling of Leeds, 'Symbolism and Baptism', *BT* May 26, 1960, 6. The reason for his change of address is unknown.

⁹⁹ S. B. John, 'Symbolism and Baptism', *BT* April 28, 1960, 6.

¹⁰⁰ S. B. John, 'Symbolism and Baptism', *BT* June 16, 1960, 6.

¹⁰¹ Rev. H. D. Hilliard of Penge, 'The Beginning of the Forward Movement', *BT* 1938, 366; J. B. Middlebrook, 'Towards a Doctrine of the Church', *The Fraternal* 55 (September, 1944), 8; Dakin, *Baptist View of Church and Ministry*, 28; 'The Ordinances', *BT* January 24, 1946, 4, being excerpts from R. A. Laidlaw's 'Baptism and the Lord's Supper', the precise nature of which (tract, pamphlet, booklet?) is unknown, as is who Laidlaw was, but whether a Baptist or not, the inclusion in the *BT* of the excerpts reflects the belief of many that baptism signified

number were prepared to see the rite as both an ordinance and a sacrament.¹⁰² and in general it must be noted the ease and comfort with which Baptists could now refer to baptism simply as a sacrament.¹⁰³

nothing more than union with Christ and other believers; L. A. Read of Nailsworth, "Ordinance" Rather than "Sacrament", *BT* September 12, 1946, 10, who referred to Dr. P. W. Evans' preference for 'ordinance' in his visit to the 100th Annual Conference of the Churches of Christ in Birmingham in August, agreeing that 'ordinance' was proper to Baptist faith and order, whilst repeating the dislike of many for 'sacrament' and 'means of grace', see G. J. Hammond, 'Churches of Christ', *BT* August 15, 1946, 11; Pike, *Under Christ's Control*, 9; G. Henton Davies, 'What Baptists Stand For', *BQ* 15 (April, 1954), 278-79, a review of Henry Cook's book of the same title in which Davies contested Cook's claim that 'sacrament' better described baptism than 'ordinance' and Davies kept up his use of the latter in his review of 'An Order for Holy Baptism. The Church in South India', *BQ* 16.7, (July, 1956), 331; F. T. Lord, 'The Baptist World Alliance in Retrospect and Prospect', in A. T. Ohm (ed.), *Baptist World Alliance Golden Jubilee Congress (1955)*, 65; the Radlett Fellowship, *Faith and Life. Practical Lessons in Christian Living* (1966), section on 'Baptism' n.p.. The 1964 BRF's *Liberty in the Lord*, was written to counter in particular the authors of *The Pattern of the Church*, and against the sacramentalist position in general. The opposition of the Radlett Fellowship and BRF demonstrate that it was mainly conservative evangelicals who opposed the 'sacramental' views, though Dr. Henton Davies would perhaps be an exception which shows that such was not a hard and fast rule. This does *not* mean, however, that only or even mainly liberals maintained the sacramental position, as G. R. Beasley-Murray and R. E. O. White prove, each of them known evangelicals. Opposition to White's New Testament sacramentalism, as expressed in his 'New Baptismal Questions', *BT* April 13, 1961, 9, and its sequel, 'New Baptismal Questions - II', *BT* August 24, 1961, 2, came in the form of letters by S. B. John, 'New Baptismal Questions', *BT* April 27, 1961, 6; W. Beattie of Chigwell, 'New Baptismal Questions', *BT* May 18, 1961, 6, to which White defended himself, 'New Baptismal Questions', *BT* May 18, 1961, 6, which called forth S. B. John's self-defence, 'Baptismal Controversy', *BT* June 15, 1961, 6.

¹⁰² In his *Theology of Evangelism*, 109, and *Why Baptise Believers Only?*, 5, H. C. Cook had no difficulty referring to baptism as an ordinance, but this did not preclude the sacramental understanding of baptism, which, Cook argued, was to be preferred over 'ordinance', so *What Baptists Stand For* (1st edition, 1947), 69-74. A. J. Barnard, 'The Use of Symbols in the Baptist Church', *The Fraternal* 64 (April, 1947), 13, used 'ordinances' but spoke of them as 'means of grace'. That this was now widely the case can be illustrated by the following references to both 'ordinance' and 'sacrament' by the same author in the same work: Rev. Frank James, 'Christian Endeavour Topic for May 1. Church Ordinances', *BT* April 28, 1938, 332; Rev. Melville Evans, 'My Faith in the Sacraments', *BT* February 6, 1941, 67; F. C. Bryan, 'Preparation, Administration and Visitation', 70 and 75; Payne, *Fellowship of Believers*, (1st edition, 1944), 60; P. W. Evans, *Sacraments in the New Testament with Special Reference to Baptism* (1947), 8; Walton, *Gathered Community*, 158; 'The Doctrine of the Church', 441-42; Channon, *Much Water*, xv and 5; Winward, *New Testament Teaching on Baptism*, 42-43 and his *Reformation of Worship*, 27; Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, 113 n.3 and 122.

¹⁰³ So Child, 'The Ministry and the Sacraments', 132, and his *Conversation About Baptism*, chapter 1, 'Symbols and Sacraments', 10-15; H. Townsend, "'Ilico" and Baptist Theology', *BT* January 6, 1938, 9; R. G. Ramsey, 'Baptism and the Gospel', 31; Underwood, 'What Mean Ye By This Service?', 58-64; T. A. Bampton, 'The Sacramental Significance of Christian Baptism', *BQ* 11.10-11 (October-December, 1944), 273-74; R. E. O. White, 'The Baptist View of the Sacraments', *BT* March 29, 1945, 6, also his *Biblical Doctrine of Initiation*, 274-278; Walton, *Gathered Community*, 25; Underwood, *History of English Baptists*, 274; R. L. Child (ed.), *The Lord's Supper* (1951), 9; A. Gilmore, 'The Sacrament of Baptism', *BT* July 2, 1953, 2; Rowley, 'The Christian Sacraments', 149-190; Clifford, *Mission of the Local Church*, chapter 3, 'The Sacraments', 47-60; S. F. Winward, *Reformation of our Worship*, 69-72.

Two corollaries of biblical baptismal sacramentalism were the growing recognition of the role of the Spirit and the eschatological dimension. From relative obscurity within the first forty years of this century, the work of the Holy Spirit in baptism became increasingly recognized as central to a truly biblical theology, not least through the untiring advocacy of Wheeler Robinson and A. C. Underwood, who continued to contribute work on the subject.¹⁰⁴ Prior to the publication of *Christian Baptism*, a growing number of references to the Spirit in baptism are to be found, ranging from the cautious observation that, 'The New Testament clearly indicates a connection of the gift of the Holy Spirit with the experience of baptism which, without making the rite the necessary or inevitable channel of that gift, yet makes it the appropriate occasion of a new and deeper reception of it',¹⁰⁵ to the more definite views like those expressed by Rex Mason who emphasized that the New Testament spoke of baptism as the occasion when the gift of the Spirit was imparted and that ~~was~~ what made a sacrament a means of grace was the Holy Spirit working through it.¹⁰⁶ From his study of the book of Acts, S. I. Buse concluded that, 'Baptism is regarded as important, but not as absolutely essential. It is not necessarily bound up

¹⁰⁴ See H. W. Robinson's, 'Believers' Baptism and the Holy Spirit', *BQ* 9.7 (July, 1939), 387-397, 'The Five Points of a Baptists Faith', 8-9, and 'Report of Commission No. 2. The Baptist Contribution to Christian Unity', in J. H. Rushbrooke (ed.), *Sixth Baptist World Congress* (Atlanta, 1939), 117-18, whilst his importance in this matter was highlighted in the obituary contributed by the Very Rev. W. R. Matthews, Dean of St. Paul's, 'H. Wheeler Robinson', *BQ* 12.1-2 (January-April, 1946), 1946, 8, who commented that, 'The theology of Wheeler Robinson is, first of all, a theology of the Holy Spirit'; and A. C. Underwood, 'What Mean Ye By This Service?', 61.

¹⁰⁵ 'The Baptist Doctrine of the Church', 446. Such vagueries, no doubt, can be explained by the fact that 'The Baptist Doctrine of the Church' was a document intended to be representative rather than controversial. This equally applies to Morris West's 1960 *Baptist Principles*, 32, '[Baptism] is an occasion upon which the Holy Spirit is active towards the person baptized'.

¹⁰⁶ Mason, 'The Theology of Baptism', 8-9. See also the contributions made by Rev. Melville Evans 'My Faith in the Sacraments', *BT* February 6, 1941, 67; 'Symbols of the Holy Spirit', *BT* May 29, 1941, 261-62 (an anonymous front page article, possibly by J. C. Carlile the then editor); W. Holms Coats, 'Introductory Remarks in Presenting the Report of Commission No. 2', in Rushbrooke (ed.), *Sixth Baptist World Congress*, 122; R. L. Child, 'The Practice of the Apostolic Church. Baptism on Profession of Faith', 19, and A. Dakin, 'Christian Baptism and John's Baptism Contrasted. Baptism a Sign of the Endowment of Personality', 42, both in Bryan (ed.), *Concerning Believers Baptism*; H. H. Rowley, 'The Origin and Meaning of Baptism', *BQ* 11.11-12 (January-April, 1945), 314-15; Walton, *Gathered Community*, 29-31; Evans, *Sacraments in the New Testament*, 25-26, though by 1955 Evans appears to have become less certain of the coincidence of water and Spirit baptism, see his 'Sealing as a Term for Baptism', *BQ* 16.4 (October, 1955), 174-75; Channon, *Much Water*, 90-91; Rev. Howard

with the gift of the Holy Spirit' but was administered only to 'those capable of repentance and confession'. But in Paul's letters (chiefly 1 Corinthians 12:13 and Galatians 3:27-28) Beasley-Murray denied the interpretation that a Spirit baptism existed distinct from water baptism, and that 'through the activity of the Spirit in baptism the rite becomes an initiation into the One Body'. Clark wrote, 'Baptism, in this normative period [New Testament times], implies, embodies and effects forgiveness of sin, initiation into the church and the gift of the Holy Spirit.... The gift of the Holy Spirit, which descended upon Christ at His baptism, is poured out by the ascended and glorified Lord upon His people, and those who respond to the Gospel proclamation receive the power and presence as they, too, share in the baptismal experience'.¹⁰⁷ Such persuasive advocacy as this unquestionably provided the basis for further examinations and enunciations of this truth and for its widespread acceptance,¹⁰⁸ and criticized much evangelical, including Baptist, teaching which lacked any 'specific point at which the gift of the Spirit to the believer may be expected to take place'.¹⁰⁹ This rediscovery of the Spirit's operation in faith-baptism was expressed with such eloquence and power by the various writers of *Christian*

J. Charter (whose identity and whereabouts are unknown), 'Christ's Baptism and Ours', *BT* August 17, 1950, 2; Champion, *Church in the New Testament*, 74-75; H. Clarkson, 'The Holy Spirit and the Sacraments', *BQ* 14.6 (April, 1952), 265-270; H. F. Peacock, 'Baptism and the Holy Spirit. An Exegetical Study of Titus iii,5', *The Fraternal* 85, (July, 1952), 17-20; Winward, *New Testament Teaching on Baptism*, 54-55; A. Gilmore, 'Some Recent Trends in the Theology of Baptism (concluded)', *BQ* 16.1 (January, 1955), 2-9; N. Clark, *An Approach*, 23-24, 34.

¹⁰⁷ Buse, 'Baptism in the Acts of the Apostles', Beasley-Murray, 'Baptism in the Epostles of Paul', and Clark, 'The Theology of Baptism', in *Christian Baptism*, 128, 142 and 308-09 respectively.

¹⁰⁸ Eg. J. R. C. Perkin, 'The Principles and Practise of Believers' Baptism', *BT* June 4, 1959, 10; Payne and Winward, *Orders and Prayers* 131; White, *Biblical Doctrine of Initiation*, 203-205, 254, 315, see also his *Open Letter*, 73, and *Invitation to Baptism*, chapter 7, 'By one Spirit we were all baptized', 59-70; Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, 275-279, and *Baptism Today and Tomorrow*, 52-60; A. W. Argyle, *God in the New Testament* (1965), 33, 141, 166.

¹⁰⁹ R. E. O. White, 'Baptism: The Domestic Debate', *The Fraternal* 118 (October, 1960), 17.

Baptism and others that the few denials which remained lacked both cogency and theological foundation.¹¹⁰

Recognition of the role of the Spirit led necessarily to the recovery of the eschatological dimension of baptism. As John's baptism was essentially an eschatological rite, so Jesus' baptism took place within that context, and Christian baptism was thus an entry into the eschatological order of the new creation. The possession of the Spirit brought with it a forward look, this finding biblical support in the intense expectation of the early chapters of Acts, the eschatological context of baptism and the laying on of hands in Hebrews 6:1-2, 'the confession of our hope' in Hebrews 10:23, the eschatologically full doxology opening 1 Peter 1:3-5, and not least John 3:5's confidence that those baptized in water and the Spirit would receive the Kingdom of God. This eschatological connotation of baptism in the Spirit was deepened as baptism was understood as into Christ's death and resurrection (so Romans 6:8, Colossians 3:3-4). The believer's union with Christ was the assurance that he would rise with him on the last day. As the Spirit was the 'first instalment' of the Kingdom, bestowing its powers in the present age, so resurrection in Christ was the 'first instalment' of the resurrection unto the consummated kingdom. Beasley-Murray summed up this aspect of biblical teaching, so neglected by Baptists, stating that *'the beginning of God's dealing with us, which is the true beginning of Christian experience, bears within itself the assurance of our immortality. As the grace of God in the Gospel gives unfaltering promise to the believer, so the grace of God in baptism gives sure and certain hope to the believer concerning his final destiny. Dying with Christ the believer has been justified before the bar of God; rising with Christ he has entered the new creation; possessing the Spirit he has the first fruits of*

¹¹⁰ So, for example, the rejection of the Spirit by the BRF, *Liberty in the Lord*, 33, 35-36, appeared in the form of mere assertions which were both uncorroborated from Scripture and unconvincing. See also Robert Clarke's attacks on *Christian Baptism*, especially 'Christian Baptism', *BT* January 7 1960, 6.

the Kingdom of God; a member of Christ, he shares his sonship and his inheritance'.¹¹¹

It is clear, then, the central contribution *Christian Baptism* and especially George Beasley-Murray made in consolidating the sacramental interpretation of baptism within Baptist thought, providing for it a firm biblical basis and, at the same time, some of its leading advocates. *Christian Baptism*, was by no means the first in this area, but it was certainly the most important as well as controversial expression of this understanding of the rite, and is rightly understood as a watershed in twentieth-century Baptist thought. What it achieved was that it focussed all previous work in one major volume and set the tone and direction for future studies. The present widespread acceptance of the language of 'sacrament',¹¹² is due in no small measure to the contributors to *Christian Baptism* and particularly Dr. Beasley-Murray, who has continued to study and write on baptism as a sacrament.

¹¹¹ Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, 290-296, quotation from pp.295-96, italics his. He had earlier, but more briefly, noted this in his essay, 'Baptism and the Epistles of Paul', 142. Other contributors to *Christian Baptism* likewise noted this aspect of the rite, see S. I. Buse, 'Baptism in Other New Testament Writings', 181, and N. Clark, 'The Theology of Baptism', 308-09, 317-18. Clark also developed the understanding of baptism as a rite of inaugurated eschatology in his *An Approach*, 26, 80-85, and in his 'Christian Initiation. A Baptist Point of View', 160, 162. See also H. Townsend, "'Illico" and Baptist Theology', *BT* January 6, 1938, 13; H. W. Trent, 'Ourselves and the Ordinances', 14-15; White, *Biblical Doctrine of Initiation*, 185-86, 205-06, 272-73.

¹¹² On this see chapter 9 'Sacramental Interpretations' below.