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A table of contents for *The Baptist Quarterly* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bq_01.php

EVANGELICAL ECUMENISM

The Amalgamation of General and Particular Baptists in 1891

PART I: A PROCESS OF COURTSHIP

Whereas elections split the nation, election for some three centuries split the common life of the Baptists. The growing together of the New Connexion and the Particular Baptists, after a courtship that lasted some sixty years, is one of the happier stories of denominational life in a century in which congregational splits appeared a major methodology for church planting. This growing together was the legacy of the Evangelical Revival, as strength in mission was the most often announced goal of such an amalgamation. It was the Evangelical Revival which both gave birth to the New Connexion and occasioned the need for theological revisionism amongst the Particulars.

Such developments offered a new potential to ancient hopes of unbroken accord within the Baptist family, for as long ago as 1678, Thomas Grantham had made his plea 'for the fellowship of all churches confessing one baptism for the remission of sins', arguing that that upon which the churches agreed was of greater significance than that on which they differed. 'What is there', he asked, 'worth a controversy much less a division between us?' Grantham's question was not forgotten and was from time to time quoted to challenge Baptists with their divisions.¹

A different approach came from those ministers who in 1714 formed a Baptist Ministers' Club, meeting at the Hanover Coffee House in the City of London, to improve relationships between the two branches of the family, or, as recorded in the language of the time, to secure 'a good affection and correspondence.' Interestingly the first meeting took place in the afternoon following the revival of the committee of the three denominations (Baptists, Independents and Presbyterians) which had lapsed, and began with the agenda of making the Baptist representatives on that committee representative of the whole Baptist cause, not just the Particular Baptists as previously. In that sense Baptist unity was set within the context of the ability of dissenters generally to act together. Mr Jenkins, a General Baptist Minister, was chosen secretary. Crosby, the Baptists' first historian, confessed, 'The whole Baptist interest united in such a manner must consequently tend very much to its reputation and increase', but had to admit that little practical came out of this promising initiative, blaming this on the confinement of membership to ministers, 'who are rarely found to be good politicians', a far too 'laconic' explanation in Ivimey's judgment.²

The amalgamation of the two branches of the family can conveniently be allocated three phases, focusing respectively in the 'thirties, 'sixties and 'eighties of the nineteenth century. Significantly the first and the last phases, which were both prompted by missionary concern, bore conspicuous fruit, firstly in restructuring the Baptist Union to be more inclusive as well as more functional, the movement in the 'eighties leading into amalgamation. By contrast, the debates of the 'sixties, which were more a function of General Baptist despondency and loss of nerve, produced no conspicuous fruit, unless it was the reaction of a youthful John Clifford to determine to restore to his denomination its self-respect so that any future amalgamation would be an amalgamation out of strength rather than weakness.

ORIGINS OF THE NEW CONNEXION

The story of how a small group of Christians in Leicestershire, born of the Evangelical Revival and focusing initially on the village of Barton, came to Baptist beliefs in 1755, and the similar story of the pilgrimage of Dan Taylor, a West Riding

THE BAPTIST QUARTERLY

Methodist dissident, to Baptist convictions in 1763, is the necessary starting point. Both groups, with immediate experience of the warm fires of revival, found themselves occupying an uncomfortable middle ground between high Calvinist Particular Baptists who refused fellowship with Arminians, and General Baptists who were open enough, but problematically also open to those whose Christology had become heterodox.

Whilst Dan Taylor initially sought to work with existing General Baptists, the conscience of the Leicester group did not allow that. Their resistance confirmed Dan Taylor's disquiet with the general tone of the churches of the General Assembly of General Baptists and on June 6th 1770 a separate New Connexion of General Baptists was formed.³ Its early strength, apart from the Yorkshire churches, was clearly located in the East Midlands. Indeed in the records of the General Assembly, it is usually referred to as the 'Leicestershire Association'. Initially its members called themselves Free-Grace General Baptists and soon claimed kinship with the Free-Will Baptists of the USA and Canada (founded in New Hampshire in 1780 and grown to a denomination some 60,000 strong by 1860), such kinship fortifying their sense of distinctiveness.⁴

Of their basic doctrinal standard, the six articles on Free Grace, the Reverend W. Groser, for many years editor of *The Baptist Magazine*, wrote, 'They were such as many *Calvinists* might conscientiously subscribe, as well as pious *Arminians*, since they include little more than an acknowledgment of those first principles of the gospel on which all who rely on Christ's atoning work are of one accord.'⁵

Key messengers amongst the existing General Baptists managed to win back to the Assembly those old General Baptists initially inclined to throw in their lot with the New Connexion, with the one exception of the church at Boston, but the new Yorkshire and Leicestershire churches proved adamant in their attachment to the new association. Later a considerable number of old General Baptist churches, some of great age, that had remained orthodox in theology, transferred their affections to the New Connexion.⁶ A number of these churches came from those inland counties where Dr Baines has suggested that a home-spun Lollard inheritance in emerging General Baptist congregations was more important than continental Mennonite influence, an explanation that he offers for their retention of an orthodox Christology.⁷

Elsewhere, both churches and ministers, in not inconsiderable numbers, took the more radical action of transferring their allegiance to the Particular Baptists. It is significant with next year's bicentenary in view, that at Moulton, William Carey in 1785 resurrected the recently closed General Baptist church, one of a group of vigorously orthodox Northamptonshire General Baptist congregations that the Stanger family had for so long devotedly nurtured.

FULLERISM AND THE PARTICULAR BAPTISTS

The impact of Fullerism represents the other side of the coin of Baptist theological accommodation to the experience of the Evangelical Revival. Older notions as to the universal dominance of the theology of Brine and Gill, with what Ivey called their 'non-application, non-invitation scheme' of High-Calvinist theology, may now need to be corrected, recognising a greater continuity of Evangelical Calvinism in provincial churches especially those influenced by the Bristol Academy.⁸ Nevertheless, a remarkable re-assessment of theology and mission took place amongst Particular Baptists in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Ivey even speaks of 'the commencement of a new era in the history of our denomination', referring first to Robert Hall Snr's address in 1779 to a Northamptonshire Association, already convinced of the desirability of evangelistic invitations, on removing stumbling blocks

EVANGELICAL ECUMENISM

to men and women coming to Christian commitment. This was published in 1781 as *Help to Zion's Travellers*.

In 1784 came that association's Call to Prayer for the revival of religion, and in the following year Fuller's *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation*, prepared four years earlier, with its affirmation 'that faith in Christ is the duty of all who hear or have the opportunity to hear the gospel'. On the one hand the goodness of God, properly presented, virtually entailed within itself a moral demand for a 'return of gratitude'. On the other hand, the censures in scripture on those who fail to respond to the invitation to receive Christ were so severe that they must be taken as a judgment upon those wilfully spurning the gospel opportunity: 'if the inability of sinners to believe in Christ were of the same nature as that of a dead body in a grave to rise up and walk, it were absurd to suppose that they would on this account fall under divine censure.' Fuller further argued that there was no contradiction between the 'peculiarity of design in the death of Christ, and a universal obligation on those who hear the gospel to believe in him, or a universal invitation being addressed to them.' Every preacher, therefore, ought to govern his preaching by the understanding that every sinner, whatever his character, was 'completely warranted to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of his soul'.⁹

Thus, in the last three decades of the eighteenth century, the main body of Baptist life, under the invigorating influence of the Evangelical Revival, was undergoing dramatic change. On the one hand, the New Connexion rehabilitated the tradition of evangelical orthodoxy amongst the non-Calvinist part of the family, whilst, on the other, Andrew Fuller and his friends, by calling Baptists back from the extremes of hyper-Calvinism, created the possibility of unifying a divided denomination. The same period witnessed the rise of that evangelical catholicism to whose existence Professor Ward has drawn attention. If such an emphasis was calling for a maximum of inter-denominational co-operation,¹⁰ by the same token there needed to be unity of purpose within denominations.

Mission overseas as much as evangelism at home drew Baptists together. How could those Baptists who boasted the universal availability of the gospel, lag behind the particularisers in the task of world mission? The problem was not will - no cautionary commands, real or mythical, to 'sit down' here - but capacity: what could a denomination of only 10,000 members do on its own? Moreover, when Anglicans and Wesleyans gave support to the new Baptist Missionary Society, it was hard to deny it from General Baptists, who in fact already supported the society.

After the Serampore Fire of 1812 and towards the ending of the French Wars, the General Baptists reactivated an earlier concern about participation in overseas missions. John Gregory Pike, the long-serving secretary of the General Baptist Missionary Society, and appropriately the first General Baptist to be elected to the chair of the Union in 1842, records in the manuscript 'Minutes of Transactions at the Meetings of the Committee of the General Baptist Missionary Society' a note on the society's origins:

About 1812, the present secretary of the society [Pike himself] applied to Mr Fuller, the venerable secretary of the Baptist Missionary Society to know if that society would employ as a missionary a person who might be a member of a church belonging to the General Baptists. His answer amounted to a negative. About 1814 or 1815 the Independents formed a society for the counties of Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire, auxiliary to the London Missionary Society. The same person again applied to Mr Fuller suggesting the formation of an auxiliary Baptist Missionary Society which should include both the bodies of Baptists,

THE BAPTIST QUARTERLY

denominated General and Particular. It was thought this might be supported by churches of the former description and yet it was observed to Mr Fuller as such a society would be a mere auxiliary it would not interfere with the management of the Baptist Mission. This would have continued on the same footing as before. His answer to this proposition was most decidedly unfavourable. It now remained for the friends of the heathen among the G. Baptists to see a little done among themselves for the support of a missionary cause as carried on by others or to make a fresh attempt at the foundation of a missionary society in their own connection.

That conclusion was unfortunate but perhaps understandable in the context of the times. Fuller was towards the end of his life and already well aware of the difficulties of managing the affairs of the mission, not to mention the difficulties his own restatement of Evangelical Calvinism had caused, and may well have judged it unwise to add further complications. Accordingly, the General Baptist Society was founded in June 1816 at the Association at Boston, though it was to be five years before the first missionaries arrived in Orissa. Although the committee initially considered Borneo and Malabar as possible fields, it was resolved in 1820 that 'Serampore be the destination of our missionaries leaving to them assisted by the advice of the brethren there to fix their ulterior destination'.

Thus, notwithstanding the initial brush-off, there was soon vital co-operation between the two bodies. William Ward was much involved with the preparation of the first General missionaries who were directed to Orissa by the Serampore leadership. Dyer also offered assistance to the new society, now safely independent.¹¹ The story is set out in detail here because Fuller's two refusals clearly entered into the folk memory of the General Baptists, to be rehearsed before Particular Baptist ears and eyes whenever talk of union was subsequently proposed.

THE 1830s AND FIRST STEPS TOWARDS BAPTIST UNITY

The first modern proposal for a union of the two branches of the Baptist family appeared in *The New Baptist Miscellany* for December 1830. Two months earlier a young correspondent - J.A. of Perth - drew attention 'to the undue estimation in which the denominational difference between us and the non-essentials of religion are held', arguing that Christians spent too much time perpetuating separation rather than giving their energies to unite in communion and fellowship, citing in particular 'the difference between congregational churches on the subject of baptism.'

He argued, in terms that John Clifford was later to adopt, that there was a difference between the two scriptural ordinances: churches 'are authorized as collective bodies to celebrate and take cognizance of one rite only, viz., the commemoration of Our Lord's death, and that the other, baptism, is simply a personal obligation, over which they ought to have no control, and as especially distinguished from the other by St Paul', for while no command was given concerning baptism to any church he was express with regard to the Lord's Supper. Similarly the apostles were commissioned not to baptize but to preach, and thus there was no necessity for the act of baptism to be undertaken by the minister. This was an important clarification for if the act of baptizing were separated from the ministerial office then it would make it easier for churches containing both Paedobaptist and Baptist Congregationalists to exist in the way that they had developed in Huntingdonshire. Thus the issue of baptism could be prevented from becoming a barrier to unity, and somebody convinced of the appropriateness of baptismal obedience did not need to change denominations, which, he argued, would, *de facto*, advance the Baptist position.¹²

EVANGELICAL ECUMENISM

The leading article in the December issue, entitled 'Scriptural Thoughts on the Doctrine of Election' also concerned itself with the issue of unity:

The divided condition of the church has greatly increased the obstacles which impede the diffusion of truth. There is something so artificial and sectarian in the lines by which the various sections of the church are separated from each other, that they cannot in the nature of things but exert an injurious influence. We look at the creed of our own sect, not through the pure light of evidence but through the prejudiced medium of our partiality . . . Our party zeal blinds our judgments to the perception of truth and frequently induces some of the excellent of the earth to pursue a course from which the principle of common honesty should be sufficient to preserve all men.

This he judged was especially the case with regard to the doctrine of election, the exposition of which had proved a stumbling block to many serious enquirers.¹³ Such an article could only add poignancy to a subsequent letter from 'A lover of Christian Unity' who questioned the need for separate General and Particular Baptist denominations. The New Connexion was calculated to embrace about 11,000 members in 109 churches with 82 full-time ministers, of whom Isaac Mann had said that no body of ministers were 'more distinguished for their holy zeal, self-denial and universal labours in the cause of Christ', a judgment which challenged the coldness of some Particular Baptist patterns of ministry.

The writer anticipated two major obstacles, which were to become perennial objections, to denominational fusion. The first was the traditional divergence of doctrine, against which were pleaded both the arguments of convergence and the fact that disunity had not in the past been so manipulated against the impact of Christian truth as in the nineteenth century. Dan Taylor's article on election was not expressed in the exact words a Particular Baptist would choose to use but ought separation to proceed from a thousand agreements in view of one disagreement? Thus the question:

What have our brethren done, that we must not hail them as partakers of the same grace, that we must refuse their counsel and their labours in carrying on the cause of our redeemer? . . . We refuse Christian fellowship and co-operation with these zealots of Immanuel while we actually tolerate differences of opinion among ourselves of very far greater importance.

If it was argued that the maintenance of fellowship with hyper-calvinistic brethren could be useful in moderating their opinions, why should the same argument not obtain with regard to General Baptists, who could thus be persuaded of the moderate Calvinist position, 'if it be correct, or if otherwise, obtain clearer views of truth from him.' The second, organizational, point was more difficult to counter:

Here, it must be acknowledged, the General Baptists have the advantage on us. Decidedly favourable as I am to the scriptural independence of our churches, I am yet assured that more union might exist in our body than does at present, and that an association of the churches, which should annually meet to promote the good of the whole in the week of our Missionary Meetings would be highly advantageous.

In this respect the Paedobaptist Congregationalists with their proposed union ought

to set Baptists an example.

Meanwhile more immediate action could be taken by inviting General Baptists to participate in Associations and in the work of those Institutions 'whose committees exert a powerful influence over the denomination at large'. Let Particular Baptist resources be made available to General Baptists, let there be exchanges of pulpits, let General Baptist activities be reported in Particular journals, and let consideration be given to the amalgamation of missionary societies and periodicals. Because the denomination in the past had proved slow to move on a wide front, it was better to start with specific initiatives. All this was crucial to the mission of the church:

When we indulge a spirit of party we are encouraging the sarcastic sneer of the infidel and allowing stumbling blocks to remain in the way of those who would walk to heaven . . . deferring to a distant period the fulfilment of the Redeemer's prayer that his servants ought to be all one, that the world might believe in the divine organization and heavenly character of his mission.¹⁴

This plea secured several sympathetic responses. 'A Calvinistic Baptist' from Leicester argued that in the midland counties practical co-operation was already well advanced, so that he entertained hopes that prejudice would soon be eradicated and suspicion abandoned 'until the intervening ground silently and imperceptibly gives way and the appellation General or Particular is merged and gone for ever.' Nevertheless he still wondered if the moment was ripe for formal union, though later it would be a very great good. A principal difficulty that he, like many others, identified was that of systems of church government, since the partial Presbyterianism of the New Connexion challenged the boasted Independency of the Particulars. This last comment was challenged by 'A General Baptist', also from Leicester, who believed 'partial presbyterianism' was an exaggeration: General Baptist churches defended their independency as fiercely as Particular Baptists, and the authority of their national association did not greatly differ from that of Particular Baptist county associations.¹⁵ Jason from London endorsed the plea made except for amalgamating the periodicals, which he believed should remain separate.¹⁶

Similar questions were raised on the General Baptist side: rather earlier a correspondent to the *General Baptist Repository* wrote that he had been asked by an Independent 'why the *Orthodox General Baptists*, as a late editor was accustomed to designate us, and the *Moderate Calvinistic Baptists* did not unite as one denomination, since their creeds appeared to be rapidly approximating', a development of mutual advantage to both bodies, especially since the doctrines on which they agreed greatly outnumbered those on which they differed. He had to confess he knew of no good reason, and accordingly reprinted Thomas Grantham's plea of 1678 which had yet to receive an adequate answer.¹⁷

But the specific plea in *The New Baptist Miscellany* called forth a refutation in *The General Baptist Repository* of the following year, which although initially cordial especially over local co-operation, concluded 'But such a oneness of the two denominations as would merge all distinction between them, is in the present state of things, both unattainable and by no means to be desired'. The writer questioned the general moderation of Particular Baptist views and also their lack of denominational identity and organization, arguing not only that their diversity occasioned a practical disunity, but that the differential size of the two bodies threatened total submergence of the distinctive witness of the New Connexion. In addition, a union with the Particular Baptists would mean joining a body in a state of confusion over the issue of mixed communion, the practice of which was doing anything but promote unity. The issue was especially acute because those nearest in faith to the General Baptists

EVANGELICAL ECUMENISM

were generally those most energetic in opening the communion table.

In 'an age of bustle, of innovation, of utopian schemes and visionary theories', such a proposal was not surprising; it was doubtless well-intended but General Baptists had to be wary of betraying their tradition: 'If we love our denomination, if we love what we believe important truth . . . we must not be hasty in contemplating any such plan.' The unnatural unions to be found within the Church of Rome and the Church of England should stand as an eternal warning. Having piled up the negatives, the writer concluded, 'at the same time, every well-wisher to christianity, every one influenced by the Spirit of Christ, will desire that increasing fellowship and union should prevail between the two denominations, as well as among Christians in general.' The promotion of friendly intercourse would achieve more than any attempt at formal union.¹⁸

All this provides the background to the reconstruction of the Baptist Union in 1832 whose revised constitution clearly opened the way for closer association between the New Connexion and Particular Baptists on a more formal basis. The doctrinal clauses of 1813 were dropped in favour of seeking union amongst Baptist ministers and churches 'who agree in the sentiments usually denominated evangelical.' Thus was the breach between free-will and pre-ordained election boldly spanned and a first step taken to enable Baptists to walk in harmony.

The churches in the reconstructed Union were now organized partly in geographical associations, partly, as far as the New Connexion was concerned, on a confessional basis: the General Baptist Association was, in fact, the second largest association in the Union after the London Baptist Association. As General Baptists were fully involved in the life of the Union, paying their subscriptions like other member churches, it was not unnatural that men from their ranks should occupy the presidential chair, thus J. G. Pike was president in 1842, Jabez Burns in 1850, and John Clifford in 1888.¹⁹

Evangelicalism, then, with its powerful missionary concern, was parent to the desire for greater unity. John Foster, in *Observations on Mr Hall's Character as a Preacher*, says of Robert Hall 'that he was exempt from all those restrictions, in respect of the mode of presenting and urging the overtures of redemption which have been imposed on some good men of the Calvinist faith . . . He took the utmost liberty in this strain of inculcation; exhorting, inviting, entreating, expostulating, remonstrating; in language of nearly the same tenor as that which might be deployed by an Arminian preacher.'²⁰ It was the same evangelistic impulse that made Hall the champion of open communion: partnership in mission necessarily demanded partnership at other levels of Christian experience.

More generally, engagement in home and overseas missions necessarily challenged the inherited theology of the Particular Baptists. But even Fullerism was, in Underwood's words, 'only a half-way house' in their development, and the further they moved, the closer they came to the New Connexion, whose very existence purged the General Baptist tradition of its Socinian associations.²¹

Some within the Particular Baptist tradition also questioned whether Fullerism was a satisfactory resolution of the relationship of Calvinist theology to gospel preaching. Hinton's writings raised the issue anew, and one Baptist deacon writing to *The Baptist Magazine* in June 1858, raised the question 'Where is the foundation of a sinner's hope unless he can be assured that Christ died for him personally and individually, and where is the attraction of the cross?' Particular Baptists had abandoned the hyper-Calvinism of earlier years and in that process got rid of many of the distinguishing marks that separated them from the New Connexion, but Andrew Fuller's theology still left them with the difficulty of 'the necessity of an almighty and invincible power to renew the heart' which clearly does not operate in

THE BAPTIST QUARTERLY

the lives of all men, leaving others incapable of responding to the gospel. Whilst the editor and other correspondents argued with him, this deacon persisted in making effective evangelism pose questions of received theology.²²

Much later, Spurgeon himself, whose invitation preaching was to come under the fire of the new Strict Baptists, took a different approach from his high Calvinist precursors:

My venerated predecessor, Dr Gill, has left a body of divinity, admirable and excellent in its way, but the body of divinity to which I would pin and bind myself for ever, God helping me, is not his system of divinity or any other human treatise, but Jesus Christ, Who is the sum and substance of the Gospel, Who is Himself all theology, the Incarnation of every precious truth, the all-glorious embodiment of the way, the truth and the life.²³

In a Baptist Union sermon preached in Leeds in a Methodist Chapel Spurgeon noted the 'whosoever' in Romans 10 as a 'Methodist word', especially significant as coming after Romans 9, where Paul speaks in Calvinistic tones: 'The fact is,' he argued, 'that the whole of truth is neither here nor there, neither in this system nor in that, neither with this man nor that. Be it ours to know what is Scriptural in all systems and to receive it.'²⁴

Some judged such theological latitude dangerous in the extreme. 'What is Spurgeonism but Fullerism?', posed the *Earthen Vessel*, 'What is Fullerism but moderate Arminianism, and what is Arminianism but free-will and free-grace mixed with the traditions of carnal men, dished up by a depraved, inventive genius, and instructed by the Devil to overthrow the grand old cardinal doctrines of the Bible, and rob Jesus Christ of his crown?' Spurgeon, himself, it was argued, was the source of his own Downgrade by offering hospitality at an open table.²⁵

THEOLOGICAL CONVERGENCE, POSED AND QUESTIONED

Dr Payne was of the opinion that the Union meetings in Nottingham in 1857 did much to assist closer relationships, leading on to the advocacy of a more complete fusion of the two strands in the 1860s.²⁶ Certainly the invitation to the Union was issued by the General Baptist Association, 'with the avowed desire of cultivating an enlarged fraternal fellowship'. In Nottingham the delegates acknowledged in resolution, 'the vital unity which prevails among them' and rejoiced 'in this opportunity of cultivating and expressing their sincere mutual love.'²⁷

The principal argument for integration contended that this would reflect a theological convergence which had already taken place. The *General Baptist Magazine* for February 1859, reflecting on the growing unity of those who in England advocate Evangelical Religion, welcomed the good work being undertaken by the Evangelical Alliance. Among the Wesleyans, 'from the Conference to the Primitive', contentions had subsided. Amongst the Baptists the situation was of the same order:

Is it not true that throughout this body there is broader catholicity of feeling, and a greater measure of free evangelical preaching than formerly? The two great sections, Particular and General, are so blended as scarcely to maintain the old line of demarcation . . . There may be less of denominational bigotry, but there is not, we opine, less of enlightened zeal in advocating the truth, or in vindicating the ordinances of Christ.²⁸

'A Business Man' in 1860 argued that a union of General and Particular Baptists would be 'a nearer approximation on our part to the model of the apostolic church,

EVANGELICAL ECUMENISM

the model and the only model which we as Baptists are bound to recognize' - denominationalism was unknown to the apostles who were swift to condemn sectarianism, as in I Corinthians 1. Tradition rather than principle lay behind present separation, especially when the breadth of opinion allowed within each section of the Baptist family was taken into account. Union would strengthen the influence of Baptist principles within the church, and such a catholicity of spirit, which knew 'less of dogmatism, more of truth', would contribute to allowing individuals full freedom of judgment which could only serve to commend such polity: 'let us become more catholic, and we shall be more influential.' For the two branches of Baptists to compete in any given locality only served to confuse and to weaken the witness: in unity lay the route to strong gospel witness.²⁹

Not improperly, Richard Hardy of Queenshead argued that the logic of this case could not rest with just the unification of Particular and General Baptists but ought to be pursued on a larger Congregational, Protestant, or even pan-Christian basis, for some might argue that 'one Lord, one faith, one baptism' would embrace them all. The contrary argument demanded more rigour in talking about oneness of faith, baptism, and of Christ's Lordship, namely that there should be real agreement in doctrine, and of that he remained to be persuaded. The foundation of the North Western Association, limited to churches practising strict communion, might, he argued, suggest the contrary: if the Particular Baptists 'are not united among themselves, by what power is a cordial union to be formed between them and us?' But such principled arguments were also tied up with the practicalities of a concern for property, as well as the demands of trust deeds.

'Any attempt to force the union before the churches are ripe for it, by a formal vote of the Association, would be most disastrous in its consequences . . . the best, in fact the only thing that can be done at present, is for the two bodies to act together when necessary on public questions, exchange kind sentiments and manifest a Christian spirit.'³⁰

So grudging was such a statement that the reader would be pardoned if he failed to understand that the New Connexion had for almost thirty years been formally accepted as an association of the Baptist Union, or perhaps its language indicates just how fragile the authority of that body still was as late as 1860, with only about one third of General Baptist congregations in membership with the larger body.

September 1859 had seen a special meeting convoked to consider the extension of the work of the New Connexion which described its present position as 'humiliating and affecting', citing the number of counties where the Connexion had no churches or only a nominal presence - some twenty-eight of the forty counties of England. Though the previous quarter of a century had seen some progress, almost a third of the churches had failed during the last year to report any increase through baptisms. It was determined to give greater support to Home Missions, to unite small local causes overcoming an unhealthy independence, and to foster the use of lay agency. In the months following this gathering, the magazine reported further on the modesty of progress and the various solutions suggested, which as yet fell short of a whole-hearted seeking of amalgamation with the Particulars.³¹

THE 1860s AND NEW INVITATIONS

As independent a witness as *The Times*, commenting in 1860 on the Norwich Chapel case, wrote

The denominations of 'General' and 'Particular' as applied to the communities of Baptists do not denote any diversity whatever on

THE BAPTIST QUARTERLY

the fundamental points of their creed . . . The distinction of title between the two communities of which we are speaking is based on differences entirely independent of their peculiar creed, and which are found in fact, in all Christian congregations, including the Church of Rome itself.³²

At the end of the previous month, Benjamin Evans, the historian, himself significantly a strict-communionist, had also taken up in *The Freeman* the cause of advocating amalgamation: 'on all the verities of the Gospel there is a oneness, and those points on which they differ are not vital.' Evans' letter evoked half a dozen in support and no opposition, but the matter had only the seriousness of a correspondence column debate in a denominational journal. One correspondent wrote: 'Could not the Baptist Union be made a most valuable agency for such a purpose? I am already aware that it already professes to seek some of these objects. Perhaps in a good measure it meets our politico-ecclesiastical needs but it does not adequately meet our religious ones.' The fault lay not with the officers of the Union but with its members who needed to inject more warmth into their commitment to its activities.

Samuel Green, reflecting that the subject was 'an old one, often mooted before', but none the less important for that reason, drew attention to J. G. Pike, later to be identified as the General Baptists' Andrew Fuller, as a reconciling theologian.³³ In letters to his student son at Stepney College, made available in his recently published *Recollections*, he discussed the issues of free-will and election in terms which Green found acceptable to moderate Calvinists. Another contributor put the issue more forcefully: 'General and Particular Baptists have to consider not whether they should unite; but whether they are at liberty to continue their long and disastrous compromise of a union which the Lord, into whom they have been baptized, has ordained.' Under the mandate of working out Biblical principles, 'The union is . . . made by the organization of learners sitting at the feet of Jesus; and not of legislators professing infallibility.'³⁴

The General Baptist Association responded cautiously, deferring the matter to the agenda for the following year.³⁵ It then secured rather bland support, with a resolution which simply rejoiced 'in the constant exhibition of the union that already exists, and also in extending this union as far as is practicable, for the honour of our one Lord and the greater efficiency of combined operations.'³⁶

John Baxter Pike, though a graduate of Stepney College, was decidedly luke-warm in his crucial Halifax Association Letter of 1862. Containing a mere three paragraphs, it was almost certainly the shortest such letter ever written. Nominally upholding the goal of closer co-operation, Pike veered away from any possible exploration of the creative potential of the resolution and immediately focused on the word 'difficulties', in language almost exactly repetitive of that used thirty years earlier: 'a full discussion . . . would be neither desirable nor expedient.' Partly this was a consequence of what he deemed the inadequate response of the Particulars: 'We have extended the right hand of fellowship but it has not been very cordially grasped.' Thus further consideration was deemed 'premature and unnecessary', for most seemed content with the measure of unity already attained without any apparent desire to deepen it.

A major difficulty was, in Pike's judgment, that the independence of Particular Baptists inhibited them from establishing a denominational mind on the subject: 'They are not as we are, *an organized denomination* . . . *To speak of them as a body is a misnomer. They are a multitude of independent churches - in many instances isolated churches.*' He claimed that the meetings of the Baptist Union did not possess ecclesiological authority, they were more a series of subscribers' meetings for the

EVANGELICAL ECUMENISM

different Particular Baptist institutions and agencies than 'a representative assembly of all the associated churches', his description of the Annual Association of the New Connexion churches.³⁷

John Clifford was of a similar mind: the Particular Baptists were 'not one "connexion" but a series of "connexions" under one denomination, not a "body" with a well-defined or easily discovered head, speaking with one voice, but three or four "bodies", separated by prodigious differences though agreeing on baptism'. Clifford argued that Particular Baptists came in three varieties: 'Strict', 'Spurgeonic' and 'Miscellaneous', the latter finding 'their visible centre in the Colleges of Regent's Park, Bristol and Rawdon, and the Baptist Missionary Society'.³⁸

But the Particular Baptists were not without instruments for expressing their common mind: it saddened Pike that scrutinizing the reports of association meetings, *'in no one instance, so far as the writer has been able to ascertain, has there been any reference to a "closer union" or any resolution adopted concerning it.'* For General Baptists to press the notion of a United Baptist Denomination, even when they saw no insurmountable difficulties to such a development and much good in terms of influence and effectiveness, would seem to be presumptuous, until more tangible response was forthcoming from Particular Baptists.³⁹

Undaunted, J. P. Mursell, an unashamed political dissenter, one of the more liberal minds amongst the Particulars, and significantly of Leicester where there were close relationships with the New Connexion, tried again. At the Baptist Union's experimental provincial assembly in Birmingham in October 1864, he addressed the concept of 'Union', a word almost synonymous with Birmingham's history. Moving from the political to the religious sphere, he identified 'the supercession on practicable, sound and safe principles of the distinction between General and Particular Baptists' as a worthy object for the Union, which he congratulated on 'its revival, its widening influence, and augmenting strength'. Formal follow-up to such a proposal, which was only one of a number of concerns listed, was scant though briefly noticed by the magazines. However, a further growing together had taken place which could be built on if the Union would take the initiative in increasing the number of places for General Baptists on the Union Committee, understanding that in the explorations of further union the representatives of the New Connexion had necessarily to occupy 'new and difficult positions'.⁴⁰

Thus, throughout the 'sixties the debate rumbled on. The *General Baptist Magazine* for April 1868 argued:

There is no need now that we should be distinct from the other section of the Baptist body. The extravagant Calvinism of years gone by in Particular Baptist churches has been discarded or moderated and rendered agreeable. Our existence has been necessary as a protest. Our existence now is necessary as a friend and an ally. Our views of the atonement are held in so-called Particular Baptist churches, and a moderate Calvinism exists even among our own. Now we are really one with the other body. General and Particular are words which might be disused. Our greater brother has become wiser; we need not now protest but may walk and prosper with him.⁴¹

THE PERSISTENCE OF THE DEBATE ABOUT ELECTION

Dr Underwood, disclaiming the title Arminian for the New Connexion, preferred to argue that the General Baptists were second to none as Evangelical Christians. He judged that 'some Particular Baptists diverge more widely from the doctrines of others than these others do from the doctrines of General Baptists.' Indeed, it was

his belief that a denomination could perfectly well defend its orthodoxy without subscribing to either Calvinism or Arminianism.⁴² Ironically, in 1870, J. C. Pike argued of the New Connexion position: 'We believe that it was ordered by Divine Providence that we should be General Baptists. We were predestinated to be such.'⁴³

That said, there remained a lingering suspicion of the Particular Baptist position from the New Connexion point-of-view. 'As a body we have a latent disaffection to Calvinism, even when it is modified and mitigated by some of its modern abettors,' confessed Underwood, 'but it is seldom that this dislike draws any of us into declared antagonism to it.' Though the agility of thought of the moderate Calvinist might be admired, his use of word and concept seemed too contrived. There remained at the end of the 'fifties a continuing fear that the doctrine of particular redemption cut away 'the foundation of a sinner's hope and faith', and that of itself was 'condemnation' enough.⁴⁴

The election issue still unfortunately bred a rancorous spirit, argued the Reverend James Salisbury of Hugglescote:

The spirit of fierce theological partisanship is not dead . . . There are still little popedoms in our midst, and from many *infallible* chairs proceed bulls, fulminating decrees, and excommunications which only give rise to counter denunciations . . . The aggressive agency of the church is injured in its exercise . . . and the church of Christ, instead of commending itself to men as the great instrumentality of God, established for their conversion and salvation . . . may be fitly compared to a poor invalid, whose system is tainted with poison . . . We hope, therefore, that the members of our denomination, though they may differ somewhat in their opinion respecting the inspired teaching upon the subjects of election and predestination, will never so far involve themselves in controversies respecting these deep things of God as to forget that a wide field of Christian labour lies before them, and that God commands us 'to enter in and possess the land'.⁴⁵

John Clifford, however, was bold in defence of what he called his 'scriptural, broad, and anti-Calvinist creed'. Matthew Arnold's reference to the impact of the Calvinistic system as 'the iron grasp of the heavy handed Protestant Philistine' appealed sufficiently to General Baptist minds to have been quoted on a number of occasions. John Clifford believed that by the 1880s the hand of Calvin had become an extinct force in living theology.⁴⁶ At the same time, General Baptists had to defend their belief in Universal Redemption. This did not, claimed Dawson Burns, imply any form of universalism, but rather that the redemption secured on the cross could be universally accepted - the important idea was that of 'potentiality' rather than 'actuality'. Fuller's writings did not help that much for in his moderate Calvinism, 'the barrier was not put at Christ's work but at the Spirit's operation'. Indeed he found the old Calvinism, much as he disagreed with it, consistent and logical, not so the new.⁴⁷

In the *General Baptist Year Book* for 1870, the editorial pen of Clifford offers this ambiguous explanation of a want of General Baptist success in growth, and the unwisdom of pursuing unity schemes:

The pervasion of the body of Particular Baptists with our distinguishing sentiments, and their adoption of the method of giving 'universal invitations' to sinners to accept the gospel even when they do not allow of a universal provision for the salvation of men, has probably tended to diminish our interest in

EVANGELICAL ECUMENISM

denominational work and institutions, and so hindered our progress. The necessity for our separate existence, it has been said, is gone by, and we have been talking of union and absorption, and neglecting our own immediate work of preaching the gospel of the grace of God to all men . . . But we may add that if we rightly understood what we have and hold as General Baptists; and knew the theological sentiment still avowed and taught in many quarters on the other side, we should not breathe another word about 'absorption' for the next twenty-five years at least.⁴⁸

Maybe Clifford still represented the enthusiasms of youth for in that same year, Underwood, ever consistent in his search for denominational harmony, argued:

The union of Baptists is especially to be sought. I mean a much closer one than now exists. For our present semi-separate state is neither satisfactory nor seemly . . . For all practical ends what might be called the Calvinism of one party is exactly the same as the Arminianism of the other. What doctrinal sentiments have been expressed from the chair of the Baptist Union Meetings (which has nearly always been filled by a Particular Baptist) which might not have been uttered with equal approval from the Chair of the General Baptist Association?

Indeed he argued that the two bodies were united in their religious aims and in the language and content of their pulpit utterances.⁴⁹

From the other side of the divide, there is the witness of Spurgeon himself, who was quite willing to give donations towards New Connexion church-planting and to commend their appeals for chapel building.⁵⁰ Though on occasions not slow to condemn what he took to be dangerous trends in New Connexion teaching, he marked its centenary by confessing: 'We belong to another school of thought, but our General Baptist brethren are so thoroughly evangelical that our differences are lost in our unities.'⁵¹ For future Union schemes, that was rather undermined by the report that he had said that 'towards his General Baptist friends he had friendly and loving feelings, but he recognized the District Union brethren [the London Strict Baptists] as being even closer kin.' John Clifford riposted for the New Connexion: 'we should recognize Mr Spurgeon as being in nine-tenths of his sermons and nearly all his works much closer akin.'⁵²

At the same time, the New Connexion membership became increasingly generalised. Jabez Burns in 1870 confessed that New Connexion congregations were largely composed of persons who had never heard of the General Baptists and, therefore, knew nothing of the differences of 'Old' and 'New', of 'General' and 'Particular'. This was especially true of new churches in London whose membership contained few convinced Baptists of any kind. Better then to concentrate on nurturing Baptist identity than fragmenting it with sectional titles.⁵³

WIDER ASSOCIATIONS

The issue of merging the two parts of the Baptist family must, however, always be set within the larger prospect of an amalgamation of the two parts of the Congregational family, Baptist and Paedobaptist. There was even a suggestion of a separate union of General Baptists and Independents, posed by W. G. Soper when Chairman of the Surrey Congregational Union: 'who in faith, purpose and life are so like ourselves as the General Baptists? Is an alliance utopian? . . . in our opinion a serious attempt at union should be made.' It was noted by the *General Baptist Magazine* on the authority of no less than R. W. Dale that 'Calvinism is almost an

THE BAPTIST QUARTERLY

obsolete theory amongst Independents', and 'the doctrine of "general redemption" which is one of our main distinguishing tenets, is generally accepted and preached' amongst them.⁵⁴

Thus two potential merger schemes - of General and Particular Baptists, and of Paedobaptist and Non-Paedobaptist Congregationalists - were intertwined in the discussions that spanned the century. J. P. Mursell's son, Arthur, in 1877 wrote to *The Christian World* proposing the larger merger of all congregational Christians: Baptists and Congregationalists holding parallel but separate 'union' meetings represented not unity but divergence which ought by the 1860s to have become an anachronism. 'From any but a purely technical point of view, these two denominations differ in scarcely anything. Socially, evangelically, and in their church polity they are at one.' To achieve unity he suggested the rather curious methodology of the Baptists conceding the mode as immaterial while the Congregationalists were 'to concede the question of the subjects and administer the initiatory rite only to responsible and voluntary applicants.'

A number of correspondents supported the intention but few the methodology. Charles Stovel, writing from Lincoln, suggested rather that each Union should continue with joint Spring Meetings in London and separate autumnal meetings in the provinces. At the same time, H. W. Earp, a leading General Baptist layman, argued 'The union of Baptists and Independents is rapidly becoming, in country districts especially, a pressing question'. Others looked to the day when the millennial dream of all Free Churches combining in witness and ceasing the mistaken multiplication of competitive chapels in rural areas would become a reality, though the boundary between chapel and church still needed to be fiercely guarded. Clifford, with his unecclisial view of baptism, and addressing Baptists and Paedobaptists alike, wrote: 'we anticipate a time when the Congregationalist churches of the land shall so completely understand baptism that it shall cease to be a divisive element.'⁵⁵

The proposal for Baptist union had always to be set within this larger context. The larger and the smaller proposals were often interwoven, as in Watson Dyson of Halifax's chairman's address to the General Baptists in 1886. Contemplating Methodist amalgamation, he witnessed that many Baptists and Congregationalists were asking why one controverted point was sufficient to divide brethren with similar interests and aims, noting at the same time that presidents of the Baptist Union saw no reasons for 'Generals' and 'Particulars' continuing apart. The disposition of the times was towards union, and that surely was a Christ-like end.⁵⁶ But the same issues of *The Christian World* that were reporting on Mursell also reported on the Leicester Conference on 'the Terms of Religious Communion', which was seen to challenge the theological orthodoxy of the Congregational body. The handling of this perhaps provides one marker, Downgrade notwithstanding, that the two parts of the Congregational family were developing in different directions in their relationship to historic evangelicalism, and thus why the much talked-of union of the two parts of the congregational family did not follow the union of the Baptists.⁵⁷

THE ROLE OF THE BAPTIST UNION

Notwithstanding the discussions concerning unity, an ambivalence of relationship between New Connexion churches and the Baptist Union can be clearly traced. Certain unfortunate actions by the Union did not help, such as the statement in the *Baptist Handbook* for 1873 that the General Baptists had seceded from the Particular Baptists a hundred years previously! To make matters worse, the judgment was repeated by the Union's lawyer-treasurer, S.R. Pattison, and reported in *The Freeman* in the middle of the final discussions on amalgamation.⁵⁸ New Connexion numbers

EVANGELICAL ECUMENISM

and organization did not entitle them to extensive representation on the Union Committee, where for many years Clifford, the Secretary of the General Baptist Missionary Society, and the Principal of the College served, with Dr Underwood an honorary member from 1874. In the 1880s the numbers of General Baptists serving on the council gradually increased, though never reaching double figures. Scrutiny of those who spoke at the annual meetings of the Union indicated the leadership afforded by a number of New Connexion ministers: Dr Underwood, Mr Stevenson, various members of the Goadby, Burns and Pike families, and, above all, John Clifford, whose ubiquitous presence greatly increased the General Baptist participation in Union affairs, and whose career necessarily has to form an important part of this analysis.

In the middle of 1878, Clifford wrote: 'The main reason for retaining the 'General' is that we have no intention of dropping our *organization*', for it was argued that no other pattern was as effective: not county associations because restricted in area, nor the Baptist Union which 'has hardly reached, as yet, the condition of a living organism.' This was a surprising argument since in 1873 General Baptists had argued that the Baptist Union was getting too big for deliberative purposes.⁵⁹

But five years later it was argued:

. . . we *General* Baptists are a portion of the Union. We were in at the beginning, and have been all along the whole course. Of late, as everybody knows, the Union has changed its front, and is rapidly becoming a Baptist Home Mission Organization. From that part of its work 'Generals' are shut out; but we feel we ought to do our utmost for the 'Annuity', 'Augmentation', and 'Education' Funds, and therefore we have, at our recent Assembly . . . created a Baptist Union Department, of which the Rev. W. Avery is Secretary . . . Since we have no reason for belonging to the Union except to aid in its work, we ought to do that as far as we possibly can.⁶⁰

It was uphill work winning hearts and minds in support of the Union. Indeed, W. J. Avery, one-time coadjutor of Clifford in Paddington, proved to be one of the unsung heroes of amalgamation, engaging in much patient lobbying and encouragement to secure greater General Baptist participation in the work of the Baptist Union, of which he became Assistant Secretary from 1884-99.

NOTES

This paper is the fuller version of the 1991 Annual Lecture of the Baptist Historical Society, given at Bournemouth on 22 May, and will be completed in the October issue.

1. W. Underwood, *The General Baptist Denomination: its past history, distinctive peculiarities and present condition* (GBD), 1864, p.24.
2. J. J. Goadby, *Bye-Paths in Baptist History*, 1871, p.351; Thomas Crosby, *The History of the English Baptists*, Vol.IV, 1740, pp.107-110; J. Ivimey, *The History of the English Baptists*, Vol.III, 1823, pp.111-3.
3. In this article, the description 'General Baptist' must be understood to apply to the members of the New Connexion unless the context clearly

4. indicates to the contrary, since in common usage they most generally referred to themselves thus. A. C. Underwood, *The History of the English Baptists*, 1947, pp.149-157. 'The Free Will Baptists correspond by letter and delegations with the General Baptists of England with whom they agree in doctrine.' *General Baptist Magazine* (GBM), March 1860, pp.89f, and November 1860, p.424. The Revd D. M. Graham of New York, reciprocating a visit of Jabez Burns and J. Goadby to the States in 1847 and an earlier visit by Dr Sutton, attended the 91st

THE BAPTIST QUARTERLY

- Annual Association Meetings in 1860 and carried out an extensive preaching tour of New Connexion churches, whilst the Connexion pledged itself to try and raise £200 p.a. for three years towards the support of the work in New York, on the argument that New York was the entry point to the USA for General Baptists migrating there; in fact, the first minister had been a General Baptist sent out from England.
5. W. Groser, cited in *GBD*, pp.4-5.
 6. Examples include Berkhamsted, Bourne, Chesham, Downton, Great Yarmouth, Leake and Wymswold, Leicester (Friars Lane), Lincoln, London (Commercial Road), March, Peterborough, Ramsgate, Sittingbourne, Southwark (Borough Road), Spalding, Tarporley, Wendover, West Retford, Wisbech.
 7. Introduction, by A. H. J. Baines, to *The General Baptist Church of Berkhamsted, Chesham and Tring, 1712-1781, Vol.1 of English Baptist Records*, transcribed by L. G. Champion, 1985, pp.vii-xii. Dr Payne notes that the Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire General Baptists divided from other members of the General Assembly, meeting on their own for some years prior to 1731, because they remained faithful to the trinitarian creeds of the seventeenth century. Even after the reunion, the Moulton congregation continued to press on the general body the need for explicit trinitarian confession of faith. E. A. Payne, 'The Venerable John Stanger of Bessels Green', *BQ* 28, pp.300-320.
 8. Joseph Ivimey, *op.cit.*, vol.3, 1823, p.272. See also the Revd Roger Hayden's forthcoming Ph.D. thesis on 'Evangelical Calvinism and English Baptists' for the University of Keele.
 9. E.F. Clipsham, 'Andrew Fuller and Fullerism: A Study in Evangelical Calvinism', *BQ* 20, pp.99-114, 146-154, 214-225, 268-276, esp. 215-218.
 10. W. R. Ward, *Religion and Society in England, 1790-1850*, 1972, pp.2-6.
 11. The Manuscript Minutes of the Society are lodged in the Angus Library at Regent's Park College. See also, John Clifford in *GBM*, March 1887, p.103, and the *Missionary Observer*, June 1891, pp.237-40.
 12. *The New Baptist Miscellany (NBM)*, October 1830, pp.415f. The location 'Perth' appears next to the same initials at the end of a letter in the next issue. 'J.A.', a new correspondent, also refers to an earlier letter on the same subject sent by 'A.B.' to the Editor of *The Baptist Magazine*. 'A Lover of Good Men', who feared that the editor would not print his letter as a few years ahead of opinion, made a similar plea in April 1831 for the union of Baptists and Independents, arguing not the methodology of the growth of mixed communion churches but a conference of ministers from each side to examine the baptism issue.
 13. *NBM* December 1830, pp.489ff.
 14. *NBM* December 1830, pp.500-502.
 15. *NBM* January 1831, p.12; and February 1831.
 16. *NBM* March 1831, p.96.
 17. *General Baptist Repository*, January 1830, pp.5f.
 18. W. Underwood, *Past History*, 1864, fn.1, pp.22f. Underwood identifies the writer with the Revd Joseph Jarrom of Wisbech but the initials at the foot of the letter are not J.J. but J.W., which would seem to indicate J. Wallis, minister at Commercial Road, London, as the author, but one hesitates to correct Underwood on such an issue.
 19. E. A. Payne, *The Baptist Union: A Short History*, 1959, pp.60f.
 20. J. Foster, 'Observations on Mr Hall's character as a preacher', *Works*, ed. O. Gregory, Vol.1, 1858, pp.201-55, esp. p.230-2.
 21. W. Underwood, *Centennial History*, p.202.
 22. *Baptist Magazine*, June 1858, pp.379f; see also *GBM*, January 1859, p.27.
 23. C. H. Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, Vol.3, 1899, p.1.
 24. W. Y. Fullerton, C. H. Spurgeon, 1920, p.121.
 25. Cited by *The Baptist Magazine*, March 1888, pp.129-131.
 26. E. A. Payne, *Baptist Union*, p.146.
 27. A. C. Underwood, *op.cit.*, p.214.
 28. *GBM*, February 1859, pp.47f.
 29. Letter from 'A Business Man' to the *GBM*, October 1860, pp.383f.
 30. *GBM*, November 1860, pp.421f.
 31. Appendix to *GBM* for 1859, pp.441-464.
 32. Cited by *The Freeman*, 6 June 1860, p.360.
 33. See the testimony of Dr Trearail in *The Baptist Magazine*, March 1889, pp.106f.
 34. *The Freeman*, 30 May 1860, p.345, 6 June, p.362; 13 June, p.378; 20 June, p.395; 27 June, p.411; 11 July, p.441; 18 July, pp.457f; 25 July, p.473. *GBM* July 1860, p.271. Evans' own church at Scarborough was split over the issue of open/closed communion: if such differences could be coped with amongst the particulars, why was union with the generals not a practical possibility?
 35. *Minutes of the Ninety-First Annual Association of the New Connexion of General Baptists*, p.37.
 36. *Minutes of the Ninety-Second Annual Association of the New Connexion of General Baptists*, 1861, p.32.
 37. John Baxter Pike, 'What practical measures can be proposed for effecting a closer union between the two evangelical sections of the Baptist body?' *Minutes of the Ninety-Third Annual Association of the New Connexion of General Baptists*, 1862, pp.44f.
 38. *GBM*, January 1877, p.2. The point about Particular Baptist lack of organizational coherence was persistently made from the time of the first overtures to the final amalgamation debate, when Dawson Burns opposed the proposal by arguing outside the General Baptists, 'There are High-Calvinistic Baptists, Spurgeonic Baptists, Scotch Baptists, and Plymouth Brethren Baptists who would not join in any common organization.' *GBM* January 1891, pp.1-4.
 39. *Minutes of the Ninety-Third Annual Association of the New Connexion of General Baptists*, 1862, pp.4f. T. W. Mathews of Boston in 1865 was more optimistic and spoke of unity coming about 'by a process as silent yet as sure as chemical

- affinity' which was 'gradually fulfilling itself', arguing that full participation in the work of the Baptist Union and its assemblies was a way to achieving that end. *Minutes of the Ninety-Sixth Annual Association of the New Connexion of General Baptists*, 1865, p.5.
40. J. P. Mursell, *Inaugural Address*, 1864, pp.3-11; W. Underwood, *Centennial History*, 1870, p.15; *The Freeman*, 19 October 1864, pp.668; A. C. Underwood, *op. cit.* p.214.
 41. *GBM* May 1868, p.101.
 42. W. Underwood, *Past History*, 1864, '... knowing little of Arminius beyond his name, and not liking the little which we know, we never call ourselves his followers.' pp.18f; p.15. *GBM* January 1877, p.3.
 43. J. C. Pike, *Our Future; The Association Letter for 1870*, p.6.
 44. W. Underwood, *Past History*, 1864, pp.15-17; *GBM* January 1859, p.27. The *GBM* review of Hinton's Lectures on Redemption is instructive in both rejecting Hinton's synthesis, and in indicating the resolute way in which the reviewer holds to his views on an atonement offered to all. February 1860, pp.55-62.
 45. See James Salisbury's Association Letter on 'Scriptural Election and Predestination', *Minutes of the Ninety-First Annual Association of the New Connexion of General Baptists*, 1860, pp.38-47.
 46. *GBM* January 1877, p.3; Thomas Goadby, *ibid.*, November 1880, p.407; January 1881, p.11; March 1881, p.107.
 47. *GBM*, August 1891, pp.299f.
 48. *General Baptist Year Book (GBYB)*, 1870, p.56. This was the second edition of the Year Book which replaced the published Minutes of earlier years. The title 'Year Book' was first used in 1869 but the subsidiary description of Minutes was perpetuated whilst the Chairman's address and the Association Letter were separately paginated. In the letter for 1870 on 'Our Future', J. C. Pike, whilst believing that times had
- changed from the situation existing a hundred years earlier which had dictated the need for the New Connexion's separate existence, and that there was now 'a much closer approximation of sentiment in reference to the leading truths of the gospel', still cautioned against too swift a move to union, hankering after the familiarity and friendship of the smaller association. pp.6f.
49. W. Underwood, *Centennial Survey*, 1870, pp.14f.
 50. Witness his support in word and donation for the new church at Hucknall, Notts. He also made a contribution to the building fund for John Clifford's Westbourne Park. *GBM* June 1875, p.229; November, p.430.
 51. *GBM* February 1871, p.46; cf December 1870, p.353.
 52. *GBM* January 1877, p.2.
 53. *GBM* June 1870, p.67.
 54. *GBM* February 1876, p.66.
 55. *The Christian World*, 26 October 1877, p.766; 2 November, p.784; 9 November, p.812; 30 November, p.863. *GBM* January 1877, p.2; *ibid.*, February 1878, pp.57-9. Chairman's Address, in *GBYB*, p.5. *GBYB* 1886, p.8.
 56. Revd Watson Dyson of Halifax, Chairman's Address in *GBYB* 1886, p.11; see also, *GBYB* 1889 p.5, 'Union was in the air, and the goal to which it pointed was not union amongst Baptists simply but a general amalgamation of all churches of the congregational order.'
 57. For the Leicester Conference see M. D. Johnson, *The Dissolution of Dissent, 1850-1918, 1987*, esp. chapter II, and on Baptist-Congregational divergence, J. H. Y. Briggs, 'Charles Haddon Spurgeon and the Baptist Denomination in Nineteenth-Century Britain', *BQ*, January 1986, pp.218-240.
 58. *GBM* March 1873, p.108; *The Freeman*, 15 February 1889.
 59. John Clifford in the *GBM* July 1878, p.265; *ibid.*, June 1873, p.230.
 60. *GBM* October 1883, p.387.

J. H. Y. BRIGGS

SOCIETY NEWS

VICE-PRESIDENT At the Annual Meeting on 22 April, Miss Rosemary Taylor, MPhil ALA, a long-serving committee member and former editor, was elected a Vice-President of the Baptist Historical Society.

AUDITOR We are grateful to Mrs Anne Emery who has audited the Society's accounts since 1980 but can no longer continue. The Treasurer would be glad to hear from anyone who might be able to give skills and time to serve the Society.

BOOKS The Treasurer now has further copies of Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage*, £20, and the accompanying *Source Book for Baptist Heritage*, £17-50.

There is still time to enter the PAYNE MEMORIAL ESSAY COMPETITION 1991. For full details see inside back cover.