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Fellowship in the Gospel: Scottish Baptists and their relationships with other Christian churches 1900–1945

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This study will examine one aspect of the collective life of this group of Baptist congregations in the period 1900 to 1945, namely its relationships with other Christian Churches.¹ First, there will be an examination of ties with other Scottish Christian Churches. Secondly, the development of relationships with other Christian bodies outside Scotland. Thirdly and more briefly, some consideration of ties with wider Christian bodies transcending denominational boundaries. Of necessity this study of the life of a denomination over five decades of the twentieth century can at best provide only an introduction to this subject.

Relations with other churches in Scotland

The key event that had a major impact on ecumenical relations between Protestant Churches in the early 20th Century was the World Missionary Conference held during 1910 in Edinburgh. It has been with hindsight that historians have recognised the pivotal importance of this gathering for the improvement of relationships not only for Scottish Churches, but also for many of the Protestant and Orthodox Churches in other countries.² Other scholars, however, have suggested that this gathering of Protestant Church leaders was more limited in its scope than is sometimes assumed.³ This Missionary Conference was restricted to del-

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- 1 An earlier study, B.R. Talbot, 'Fellowship in the Gospel: Scottish Baptists and their Relationships with other Baptist Churches, 1900–1945', in D.W. Bebbington & A.R. Cross (ed.), *Global Baptist History* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, forthcoming in 2006), covers similar ground with respect to relationships to other Baptist bodies.
 - 2 S.P. Mews, 'Kikuyu and Edinburgh: The Interaction of Attitudes to Two Conferences', in G.J. Cuming & D. Baker (eds), *Councils and Assemblies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 346. K.S. Latourette, 'Ecumenical Bearings of the Missionary Movement and the International Missionary Council', in R. Rouse & S.C. Neill (eds), *A History of the Ecumenical Movement, 1517–1948* (London: S.P.C.K., 1967), 2nd edition, 356–357. A.R. Vidler, *The Church in an Age of Revolution: 1789 to the Present Day* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961), 257.
 - 3 For example, B. Stanley, 'Edinburgh 1910 and the Oikoumene', in A.R. Cross (ed.), *Ecumenism and History: Studies in Honour of John H.Y. Briggs* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2002), 89–105.

legates from missionary societies operating among non-Christian peoples. This policy was carefully upheld to ensure that a greater variety of ecclesiastical and theological convictions would be represented than at any previous gathering of this kind.⁴ The Baptist Union of Scotland wholeheartedly welcomed this event taking place in Edinburgh.⁵ Baptists, however, were critical of the concessions made by the conference organisers to Anglo-Catholic bishops Charles Gore of Birmingham and Edward Talbot of Southwark who, together with H.H. Montgomery of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, had insisted that the conference could not consider Protestant missions in Roman Catholic or Orthodox areas, for example, in Europe and South America. The Wesleyan Missionary Society and the China Inland Mission also strongly criticised this decision.⁶ Two representatives of Scottish Baptists were included in the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) delegation.⁷ Thomas Martin was minister of Adelaide Place Baptist Church, Glasgow, a lecturer at the Baptist Theological College of Scotland and a former President of the Baptist Union of Scotland.⁸ William Nicholson was joint-pastor of Bristo Baptist Church, Edinburgh, with William Grant and was to become a future secretary of the Baptist Union of Scotland.⁹ It was Nicholson who wrote the Conference report for the *Scottish Baptist Magazine (SBM)*.¹⁰ As a result of the warm fellowship enjoyed at this event Scottish Protestant Churches, including Scottish Baptists, co-operated extensively in a series of missionary conferences and campaigns at home.¹¹ J.R. Chrystal, in his Baptist Union presidential address made this comment on the importance of this conference. 'The prevailing opinion is that before it there was none such; neither after it shall be the like. Our Baptist churches will be losers, indeed, if we are not resolved to lay

4 Latourette, 'Missionary Movement', 357-362.

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

6 Correspondence between Talbot, Gore and J.H. Oldham, the conference secretary, is in the Oldham papers (Box 1, Folder 2), New College, Edinburgh. See also Oldham to Mott, May 21 1909, Oldham Papers (Box 1, Folder 3). Both references cited by Stanley, 'Edinburgh 1910 and the Oikumene', 97-99. K. Clements, *Faith on the Frontier A Life of J.H. Oldham* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1999), 73-99 provides much helpful material on this conference.

7 World Missionary Conference, 1910, *Volume IX: The History and Records of the Conference* (Edinburgh and London, n.d.), 41. I am grateful to Dr Brian Stanley of Cambridge University for assistance on this point and for other information on this conference.

8 *Scottish Baptist Magazine (SBM)* 44.8 (August 1918), 116-124, gives details of his life and work.

9 *SBM* 46.6 (June 1920), 68-69, for details of his Christian service.

10 *SBM* 36.7 (July 1910), 115-117. See also *SBM*, 36.7 (July 1910, 107; 36.12 (December 1910), 199; and especially 37.1 (January 1911), 2, for additional items about this gathering.

11 *SBM* 48.3 (March 1922), 32-33; 48.8 (August 1922), 92; 48.10 (October 1922), 115-116; 48.11 (November 1922), 125-126, 138; 48.12 (December 1922), 147; 49.6 (June 1923), 75-76, for examples of this kind of co-operation.

to heart its manifold lessons... The providence of God, say these twelve hundred delegates from all the continents with one impressive voice, has led us all into a new world of opportunity [for mission], of danger, and of duty.¹² It was also no surprise that future international missionary conferences were promoted in the *SBM*, for example, the 1938 gathering at Tambaram, Madras.¹³ The benefits of co-operation in missionary endeavour that had begun with the Edinburgh Conference led to much closer fellowship between the Scottish Protestant Churches in the years that were to follow.

The Missionary Congress of Scottish Churches that took place in Glasgow in October 1922 was a development from the 1910 World Missionary Conference. Its aims were clear:

bringing the whole congregational life of the country face to face with the opportunity and urgency of world-wide service. The basis of the Congress is the conviction that Christ is the need of the world, and that the present condition of the nations makes the need for the Gospel of Christ more insistent than ever.¹⁴

John MacBeath,¹⁵ the conference secretary,¹⁶ who had resigned his pastorate at Cambuslang in order to prepare properly for this mission gathering,¹⁷ and had undertaken the task of promoting this conference through the *SBM* was convinced that this 'occasion would be a landmark in the history of the Scottish Churches and their missions overseas'. There were seventy-five Scottish Baptists registered as official delegates, a significant number of representatives from a small denomination. MacBeath was convinced that a people with vision who prayed hard for God to be at work in the world would see that 'the churches shall be full of increase and all lands shall see the glory of the Lord'.¹⁸ One of the follow-up events to this gathering was a major mission week in Aberdeen in which all the Protestant churches participated. 'The campaign from Monday, October 30, to Sunday November 12, succeeded in arousing interest in Aberdeen as no religious effort has done for the past decade... All the churches...co-operated in the enterprise, thus affording a superb demonstration of the unity that lies deeper than their differences.'¹⁹ MacBeath, in his summary of the two year missionary campaign in Scotland, sought to underline the uniqueness of its successes.

12 J.R. Crystal, 'Presidential Address', *Scottish Baptist Yearbook*, 1911, 35.

13 *SBM* 63.10 (October 1937), 2; 64.10 (October 1938), 10; 65.2 (February 1939), 4-5, 11.

14 *SBM* 48.3 (March 1922), 32-33.

15 John MacBeath, was both a prominent Scottish Baptist minister and a prolific author of evangelical devotional titles such as *A Wayfarer's Psalter*, *The Hills of God*, *The Face of Christ* and *In Time of Trouble*.

16 *SBM* 48.11 (November 1922), 125.

17 *SBM* 48.11 (November 1922), 138.

18 *SBM* 48.8 (August 1922), 92. MacBeath echoed similar sentiments in a final article before the conference in the same periodical, 48.10 (October 1922), 115-116.

19 *SBM* 48.12 (December 1922), 147.

It was the first effort in which all the Reformed Churches united together. There were no precarious negotiations concerning union – there was rather the impulse of a great task that could best be done together. The Campaign has created a new spirit of fraternity throughout the churches which will do much to facilitate common service in the future.²⁰

This event underlined the benefits of co-operation in mission and led to other forms of united action. Here the principle of unity for mission first of all, followed by other forms of united action, was a pathway travelled by a number of Scottish Christian bodies during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.²¹

One major development that came from this ecumenical progress was the creation of the Scottish Churches Council (SCC), formed in 1924, bringing together representatives of the Church of Scotland, the United Free Church, the Episcopal Church of Scotland, the Congregational Union of Scotland, the Baptist Union of Scotland and the Original Secession Churches. The purpose of this body was to enable these Scottish Christians to engage in concerted action on questions of national importance.²² Proposals for this new body were discussed at the May BUS Council meeting in 1923. The fact that the discussions centred on who the six Baptist members of the one hundred member SCC should be, gave a clear indication of the support of Scottish Baptists for this cause.²³ There was, however, one matter of concern to Scottish Baptists, raised in 1926, with reference to the SCC. It had been feared that Unitarians might be invited to join this new body, but assurances from the secretary of the SCC confirmed that such fears were unfounded.²⁴ The key issue for Scottish Baptists, with respect to ecumenical co-operation in their homeland was mission. It is not surprising that the following comments were received after the SCC report at the November BUS Council in 1929: 'it was agreed to express appreciation of the Council's [SCC] report, especially the section dealing with the Home Mission situation'.²⁵ There

20 J. MacBeath, 'The Close of the Missionary Campaign', *SBM* 49.6 (June 1923), 75-76.

21 One example here will suffice: Scottish Baptists established the Baptist Home Missionary Society for Scotland in 1827, following the merger of three separate mission agencies, but it took several attempts to form a union of churches prior to the establishment of a union of Baptist churches in Scotland. See B.R. Talbot, *Search for a Common Identity: The Origins of the Baptist Union of Scotland, 1800-1870* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2003), for further details. W.D. McNaughton, *Early Congregational Independency in the Highlands and Islands and North-East of Scotland* (Tiree: Trustees of Ruaig Congregational Church, 2003), provides similar information with respect to Scottish Congregationalists.

22 D.B. Forrester, 'Ecumenical Movement', in N.M. de S. Cameron (ed.), *Dictionary of Scottish Church History & Theology* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1993), 273-274.

23 BUS Council, May 8 1923, Baptist Union of Scotland Minute Book, 1915-1926, 573-574.

24 BUS Council, February 2 1926, Baptist Union of Scotland Minute Book, 1915-1926, 770.

25 BUS Council, November 26 1929, Baptist Union of Scotland Minute Book, 1926-1931, 387.

was general satisfaction with the work of this ecumenical body until a report at the BUS Council in May 1942. The annual SCC report had referred to discussions by some of its members with 'the Sword and the Spirit Movement which is a Roman Catholic organisation'. Disquiet with this development led the majority of members of the Baptist Union Council to agree to an amendment, added to the report, which declared that 'the report be received with the statement that the Council viewed with misgiving the contact made by the Commission of the Churches with the Sword and Spirit Movement'.²⁶ The moderate criticism of national and international ecumenical bodies by Scottish Baptists began at this meeting. Over the next two decades the members of this denomination increasingly believed that the ecumenical movement, so heartily supported in principle, had lost its original sense of purpose and direction.²⁷ In the 1940s, however, it is probable that most leading Scottish Baptists thought that the difficulties experienced were minor and could be overcome. Proof of this point comes from meetings of BUS leaders in March and May 1949, in which a letter was discussed regarding the future of the SCC. The proposal before them was for the formation of the Scottish Ecumenical Council, a new body that would incorporate not only SCC activities, but also other ecumenical organisations such as the World Alliance for International Friendship. At each stage, Office-bearers, Business and Finance Committee and finally BUS Council, the new proposals were accepted without any objections. In addition, at the BUS Council, appreciation was expressed for the work over twenty two years by the SCC, and in particular, by Baptist member and official the Rev. W. Holms Coats.²⁸

It is evident that relationships with other Scottish Protestant denominations were also harmonious on an individual basis, as well as in formal ecumenical bodies. The twentieth century has been described as 'the century of ecumenism'.²⁹ This statement appears to be an accurate description of ecclesiastical relationships in Scotland in this period. 1900 saw the merger of the United Presbyterian Church with the majority of the Free Church of Scotland to form the United Free Church. This new body was eventually to merge with the Church of Scotland in 1929 producing a denomination which contained the vast ma-

26 BUS Council May 2 1942, Baptist Union of Scotland Minute Book, 1939-1942, 782-783.

27 I.L.S. Balfour, 'The Twentieth Century since 1914', in D.W. Bebbington (ed.), *The Baptists in Scotland: A History* (Glasgow: Baptist Union of Scotland, 1988), 75-76.

28 BUS Office-bearers, March 1 1949, BUS Finance and Business Committee, May 10 1949, BUS Council May 24 1949, Baptist Union of Scotland Minute Book, 1945-1950, 608-609, 620-621, 637-639. Fuller treatment of this new ecumenical instrument can be noted in Forrester, 'Ecumenical Movement', 274.

29 T.W. Moyes, 'Scottish Baptist Relations with the Church of Scotland in the Twentieth Century', *Baptist Quarterly*, 33.4 (October 1989), 174. There are several examples of church unions in the United Kingdom and overseas given in J.R. Fleming, *The Story of Church Union in Scotland* (London: James Clarke & Co., 1929), 51-52.

jority of all the Presbyterians in Scotland.³⁰ Although Scottish Baptists were not involved in these unions there were regular updates in the *SBM* of plans for a merger between the Church of Scotland and United Free denominations. Editorial comments in June 1907 on a plan to unite all Protestant Churches into one National Church set out a critical appraisal of current merger proposals noting that union on the basis of the lowest common denominators would not produce a church that resembled New Testament principles.³¹ There was, however, encouragement to the Presbyterian bodies to unite as their differences were minor, in comparison to that which they held in common.³² This encouragement was notably absent when potential merger talks were opened between the Church of Scotland and the Episcopal Church.³³ Here points of principle were deemed to be at stake that could not be overlooked. Unity was the goal for relationships between Christian Churches, but not uniformity. This understanding of Christian union was the message proclaimed through this Baptist magazine.

The subject of Christian union was never far from the minds of Scottish Baptists in this period. Several presidents spoke on this subject in their annual addresses. Jervis Coats in 1900 spoke on 'Christian Union and the Denominational Spirit'. His vision of the 'spiritual union of all who love the Lord Jesus Christ' was described as the 'goal of all human strivings'.

'Unity not uniformity is the guiding principle, but where two denominations can become one without compromising their basic principles, as in the 1900 Presbyterian merger', Coats declared, 'one can heartily wish God-speed'.³⁴ J.R. Chrystal, the President in 1910, returned to this theme with the title 'Church Union in Scotland: The Truth in Love'. Chrystal had served until his recent retirement as minister of Hamilton Baptist Church, from 1886 to 1909, but had previously been a Church of Scotland minister. He had resigned from Coltness Memorial Church, New Mains, in 1886 over the issue of believer's baptism.³⁵ His chosen title indicates that a different emphasis would be made on this subject

30 J. Kirk, 'Presbyterianism', in Cameron (ed.), *Scottish Church History & Theology*, 675. Fissiparous tendencies had not been totally eradicated from Presbyterian ranks. In 1893 the Free Church of Scotland had split with a significant proportion of its Gaelic-speaking Highlanders forming the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. See J.L. MacLeod, *The Second Disruption* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 2000), for more details.

31 *SBM* 33.6 (June 1907), 101-102.

32 *SBM* 35.7 (July 1909), 129; 36.7 (July 1910), 105-106; 38.5 (May 1912), 77-78, are examples regarding Church of Scotland - United Free Church discussions. Issue 56.6 (June 1930), 83, is an example of Free Church of Scotland talks with the Original Secession, Reformed Presbyterian and Free Presbyterian Churches.

33 *SBM* 58.7 (July 1932), 103.

34 J. Coats, Presidential Address, *SBM* 26.11 (November 1900), 171-176.

35 'Hamilton Baptist Church', in G. Yuille (ed.), *History of the Baptists in Scotland* (Glasgow: Baptist Union of Scotland Publications Committee, 1926), 217-218. D.R. Watts, 'Lanarkshire', in D.W. Bebbington (ed.), *The Baptists in Scotland: A History* (Glasgow: Baptist Union of Scotland, 1988), 189.

from that of Jervis Coats. The context of his remarks came from a recently issued pamphlet entitled *The Scottish Churches: The Hope of Union*, by Dr William Mair of Earlston, an influential ex-Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. Mair, together with many prominent Presbyterian leaders in the first decade of the twentieth century, had argued strongly for the Established Church to unite with the other Presbyterian bodies.³⁶ Mair had apparently suggested that as a nation the people of Scotland shared 'the same doctrine, worship, discipline and government – Presbyterian at heart so it ought to be free to exert its world-wide spiritual influence unimpaired by "unhallowed divisions".' If Mair's assertions are true, declared Chrystal, is there still a place for the Baptist Union of Scotland, whose twenty thousand members have not been invited to join this union. After lengthy discussion of his subject, Chrystal concluded his remarks by affirming the judgement of William Carey, who had written in 1192 the following words:

But in the present divided state of Christendom it would be more likely for good to be done by each denomination engaging separately in the work, than if they were to embark on it conjointly. There is room enough for us all, without interfering with one another; and if no unfriendly interference took place, each denomination would bear good will to the other, and wish, and pray for its success, considering it as upon the whole friendly to the great cause of true religion.³⁷

Scottish Baptists were delighted to see the closer ties between their Presbyterian colleagues, but were still persuaded that there was a place for the distinctive witness of their own denomination.

There was an air of confidence in Scottish Baptist ranks in this era as they felt that their contribution to ecclesiastical affairs in Scotland counted at least to some degree. In the previous century the denominational periodical, the *SBM*, had focussed mainly on internal Baptist issues, but now in the twentieth century there was a discernable movement to participate in wider religious debates. James Mursell, minister of Dublin Street Baptist Church, Edinburgh, proposed that the Baptist Union Council should support the United Free Church in its legal battle in the House of Lords with the Free Church, over the property assets of the 1843-1900 Free Church.³⁸ The majority of his colleagues, however, wisely decided that it was best to refrain from making public statements on this matter even though there was some sympathy for the United Free case.³⁹ The growth of

36 Fleming, *Story of Church Union in Scotland*, 44-45, 54-55.

37 W. Carey, *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to use means for the Conversion of the Heathens* (Didcot: Baptist Missionary Society, 1991 [1792]), 109-110. Chrystal, 'Presidential Address', *Scottish Baptist Yearbook*, 1911, 34-36.

38 BUS Council, October 27 1904, Baptist Union of Scotland Minute Book, 1896-1906, n.p. For details on this matter see K.R. Ross, 'Free Church Case (1900-1904)', in Cameron (ed.), *Scottish Church History & Theology*, 336-337.

39 BUS Council, October 27 1904, Baptist Union of Scotland Minute Book, 1896-1906, n.p.

ecumenical involvement can be seen, for example, in the minutes of the Baptist Union Council in May 1920. At this meeting agreement was reached to join with Wesleyan Methodists to address the issue of gambling; co-operation with the United Free Church in efforts to promote the League of Nations and with the Congregationalists to oppose the church-state link in Scotland. In addition a 'watching' committee was set up to support and observe the moves towards a union between the Church of Scotland and the United Free Church!⁴⁰ Regular comments in the *SBM* ensured that Scottish Baptists were kept up to date on the progress towards union by these two Presbyterian bodies. However, it was made plain that 'our sympathies incline to the remnant in the United Free Church who represent the full-blooded Voluntarism of the old United Presbyterian section'.⁴¹ In working with and commenting on the affairs of sister churches in Scotland Scottish Baptists retained a clear grasp of their own fundamental principles.

In theological matters Baptists in Scotland held to more conservative views than many in some other denominations. The decision of the United Free Church in its General Assembly of 1901 to clear George Adam Smith of heresy over his 'advanced' theological views⁴² was described as an action of 'well-meaning but weak-kneed ecclesiastics'. A lengthy and blunt article in the *SBM* sought to expose the folly of such behaviour. It concluded with an appeal for repentance. 'The critics like the prodigal have gone into a far country, and let us hope they will speedily repent and return to their Father's house'.⁴³ By contrast, the September issue of the same periodical made reference to a model Christian scholar, in an 'In Memoriam' to Joseph Angus, former Principal of Regent's Park Baptist College, London. 'Dr Angus was too wise a man to be dazzled by the will-o'-the-wisps of criticism like those that have so abundantly been imported from Germany'.⁴⁴ A Scottish example of a fine Conservative Evangelical scholar, in contrast to Smith, according to the *SBM*, was Baptist minister John Urquhart, whose pamphlet the 'Case for the Higher Criticism: Is there anything in it?', a reply to the views of Smith, was warmly commended.⁴⁵ On issues where common ground had been found Scottish Baptists were keen to associate with other churches, but on issues such as Higher Criticism there was a clear rejection of

40 BUS Council, May 4 1920, Baptist Union of Scotland Minute Book, 1915-1926, 377-378.

41 For example, *SBM* 54.12 (December 1928), 145-146; 55.5 (May 1929), 53-54.

42 R.A. Riesen, 'Smith, George Adam (1856-1942)', in Cameron (ed.), *Scottish Church History & Theology*, 780.

43 'The "Higher Critics" and the Bible', *SBM* 28.8 (August 1902), 135-236.

44 'In Memoriam The Rev. Principal Angus D.D.', *SBM* 28.9 (September 1902), 152. A similar high respect for Angus was accorded amongst Baptists in England at this time. R.E. Cooper, *From Stepney to St Giles: The Story of Regent's Park College 1810-1960* (London: Carey Kingsgate Press, 1960), 65.

45 *SBM*, 29.3 (March 1903), 39. See also J. Urquhart, *The Inspiration and Accuracy of Holy Scripture* (Glasgow: Pickering and Inglis, n.d.), and J.M. Gordon, 'The Later Nineteenth Century', in Bebbington (ed.), *Baptists in Scotland*, 55-56.

these ideas, no matter how they were viewed in other denominational circles.

If ties with Presbyterians were generally warm, the same cannot be said for relations with Episcopalians and Roman Catholics (RC).⁴⁶ Alexander McLaren, the famous Scottish Baptist minister and pastor of Union Chapel, Manchester, delivered a stirring address at Grantown-on-Spey in August 1899. In his speech he attacked 'the pestilential sacerdotalism' emerging in the Anglican Church, but was convinced that 'the Christianity of England has as little to fear as the Christianity of Scotland has from this movement and that is next to nothing'. The printing of this sermon in the Scottish Baptist periodical indicated the approval of its leadership for McLaren's uncompromising position against the Tractarian movement.⁴⁷ In May 1935 it was reported that there had been an increase in the observance of 'Holy Week' services amongst ministers of the Church of Scotland. Readers of the *SBM* were solemnly informed that: 'Good Friday does not exist in Scotland, unless for Roman Catholics and Episcopalians. The Reformers would have given short shrift to any such pseudo-Romanist innovation as "holy week"'.⁴⁸ Scottish Baptists were very conscious of the influx of Irish Roman Catholics into Scotland, but in 1910 were not unduly concerned due to steady Baptist growth in numbers and self-confidence.⁴⁹ The concerns of other people, though, were duly noted for information, but usually without comment. An article entitled 'Is Romanism gaining ground?' discussed the concerns of the Anglican Bishop of London and the Archbishop of Canterbury about French RC immigration.⁵⁰ When the Church of Scotland and the United Free Churches drew up a motion on the subject of Roman Catholic immigration following the 1922 election with a view to presenting it to the Government, other churches were invited to associate with them in this initiative. The BUS Council debated this issue, but in the vote that followed the Presbyterian motion 'was negatived by a large majority [sic]'. The fears of the Presbyterians over the growth of the newly militant Labour Party and its links to the Irish RC community in the west of Scotland were not shared by the Baptists.⁵¹ One exception to this rule was Ignazio Rivera, a former RC priest in Italy who had become a Baptist. He had come to Glasgow to study at the Baptist Theological College and during his time in the country sought to

46 Scottish Baptists took an even firmer line with respect to Unitarians. Fellowship with that body or even preaching in their churches was not acceptable. Annual Meeting of BUS Officebearers, February 18 1936, Baptist Union of Scotland Minute Book, 1935-1939, 64.

47 A. McLaren, 'A Living Church the need of To-day', *SBM* 25.9 (September 1899), 142-145.

48 *SBM*, 61.5 (May 1935), 3.

49 *SBM* 46.1 (January 1910), 18. This situation began to change in the 1930s when Baptist growth slowed and due to both immigration and larger families RC numbers showed a continued significant increase. For example, *SBM* 63.3 (March 1937), 4.

50 *SBM* 48.4 (April 1912), 63.

51 BUS Council, November 27, 1923, BUS Minute Book 1915-1926, 605. See also S.J. Brown, *The Innes Review*, xlii, 1991, cited by M. Lynch, *Scotland: A New History* (London: Pimlico, 1992), 438.

assess the strength of Catholicism in Glasgow. Rivera concluded that Protestant churches had made significant recent progress in Italy, but 'the churches of the Reformation are apparently preparing the way for it [RC church] in your country with a lethargy that seems to me to be a crime'.⁵² The attitudes of Scottish Baptist leaders to the episcopal denominations tended to reflect the opinions of their own religious community. During the era of Baptist numerical growth prior to 1935 there was little concern about Roman Catholicism however as Baptist numbers began to decline ecumenical enthusiasm also began to wane. Although outward allegiance to ecumenical instruments was retained prior to 1945, the seeds of doubt had already been sown in the late 1930s which led to a hardening of opinions in the second half of the twentieth century.⁵³

The moves to improve relationships with other Christian denominations in the first half of the Twentieth Century were enhanced by the invitations to attend each other's annual assemblies. In September 1929 the Moderators of the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland and United Free Churches invited the BUS to send a representative to address the Assembly of the new united body with a message of congratulations. This step, however, was too great for the majority of the BUS Council who presumably felt that they should not give any kind of 'recognition' to a National Church. There was, though, no difficulty in sending a delegate to attend the annual meetings of the Continuing United Free Church.⁵⁴ One un-named Baptist minister even felt that letters of greeting to a Presbyterian Assembly constituted a step too far!⁵⁵ A renewed invitation by the Church of Scotland to exchange representatives in 1940 was warmly welcomed by the BUS Council, indicating a major shift of opinion on this issue. Discussions between these two denominations in the 1940s indicated much closer fellowship in that decade.⁵⁶ The success of the Scottish Churches Council discussed earlier, was the reason why Scottish Baptists were to reject a Continuing United Free Church proposal for the establishment of a Free Church Council in Scotland.⁵⁷ The closest affinity was felt towards the Congregational Union of Scotland with whom Assembly delegates were routinely exchanged. A similar offer was made to the Churches of Christ in Scotland, but in their reply they indicated that there was no separate annual meeting for their connexion

52 *SBM* 48.7 (July 1912), 117-118. A letter by J.R. Chrystal of Lanark, in the September 1912 issue of the *SBM* 48.9, 153, provided a thoughtful analysis of Rivera's arguments.

53 Balfour, 'Twentieth Century since 1914', 73-76.

54 BUS Council, September 24 1929, Baptist Union of Scotland Minute Book, 1926-1931, 358-359.

55 BUS Council, September 20 1933, Baptist Union of Scotland Minute Book, 1932-1935, 366.

56 BUS Council, May 29 1940, Baptist Union of Scotland Minute Book, 1939-1942, 215-216. See also on this subject BUS Finance and Business Committee, May 13 1947, Baptist Union of Scotland Minute Book, 1945-1950, 278; BUS Council May 27 1947, Baptist Union of Scotland Minute Book, 1945-1950, 288.

57 BUS Council, May 25 1943, Baptist Union of Scotland Minute Book, 1942-1945, 245.

in Scotland. There was, therefore, no need to exchange representatives with this small group of Scottish Christians.⁵⁸ The 1940s was a decade in which Scottish Baptists had felt sufficiently secure in their own identity to seek to build better relationships with most other Scottish Christians. The narrow insularity of some earlier years appeared to have been abandoned as out of step with the needs of the mid-twentieth Century. However, the fears that had diminished were still held by a significant proportion of the constituency and the potential for their reawakening would become clearer in the post-war era.

The special relationship with the Congregationalists was enhanced by some common grievances. One particular issue, which will serve as an example, was the lack of Baptist and Congregationalist chaplains in the Armed Forces during the First World War. Part of the reported difficulty was due to incorrect listing of a soldier's denominational allegiance by a recruiting sergeant when enlisted, as it was too often assumed that an individual was Anglican, if English, and Presbyterian, if Scottish. As a result very few soldiers were listed as associated with other denominations, thus weakening their case for appointed chaplains.⁵⁹ The first Scottish Baptist Army Chaplain was appointed in 1914.⁶⁰ Success in this matter was rightly attributed to the United Army and Navy Board. This body comprising Baptists, Congregationalists, Primitive and United Methodists enabled these denominations to join together to ensure a fair representation of their men were placed in post in the British Army and Navy.⁶¹ It was not a battle won overnight as problems persisted in the Navy into 1918.⁶² Great improvements in relationships between the churches by the 1940s ensured that by the Second World War there was a better allocation of chaplaincy posts. An article in the *SBM*, in December 1941, described how chaplains of different denominations were working harmoniously together.⁶³ Other joint ventures included an ordination training course in Jerusalem for United Board candidates for ministry in the Middle East.⁶⁴ A refresher course for Anglican and Free Church chaplains was held in Brussels in May 1945,⁶⁵ and a joint series of membership preparation classes was run by chaplains jointly for Baptist, Congregationalist and Methodist service personnel working in Germany in December 1945.⁶⁶ Scottish Baptist padre William

58 BUS Council, February 26 1946, Baptist Union of Scotland Minute Book, 1945-1950, 59.

59 *SBM* 40.10 (October 1914), 154; 43.2 (February 1917), 22.

60 *SBM* 40.10 (October 1914), 158.

61 *SBM* 41.8 (August 1915), 118-119. A standard history of this work is E.C. Spur, *Some Chaplains in Khaki* (London: Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland, 1916). A more recent study, as yet unpublished, on the most prominent Scottish Baptist army chaplain, is N. Allison, 'Shakespeare's Man at the Front The Rev. William Cramb Charteris OBE, MC, MIDx3 (= Mentioned in Despatches three times)'.

62 *SBM* 44.4 (April 1918), 58.

63 *SBM* 67.12 (December 1941), 5.

64 *SBM* 71.3 (March 1945), 2.

65 *SBM* 71.5 (May 1945), 2.

66 *SBM* 71.12 (December 1945), 2.

Speirs was also invited to supervise theological training for German chaplains, in Italy, in 1946.⁶⁷ Chaplaincy work in the Armed Forces was another sphere of Christian service in which Scottish Baptists recognised their need to work with other Christian Churches. Ecumenical relations in the middle of the twentieth Century between Scottish Churches appeared to be in a healthy state. Scottish Baptists had recognised that they could work not only with traditional friends such as the Congregationalists, but also other Protestant denominations in their native land. Barriers between churches that had once seemed insurmountable were removed to enable a more healthy ecumenism to take its place, but this ecumenism was a 'tender plant' whose continued growth was far from certain, at least amongst the Baptist constituency in Scotland.

Relations with other Churches outside Scotland

Interdenominational co-operation that had been so evident in the 1910 Edinburgh Missionary Conference took further steps forward in the following decades. Alexander Clark, minister of Viewfield Baptist Church, Dunfermline, informed the BUS Finance Committee that he had been invited to attend a preliminary meeting in connection with the 1937 World Conference on Faith and Order. He sought permission to attend 'on the understanding that the Baptist Union would take its share of the financial responsibility'. There appeared to be no problem with him attending on their behalf in principle, but the issue of monetary contributions needed further thought!⁶⁸ After debate during the year the Baptist Union Council received a motion from the BUS Social Services Committee stating that 'that the Union send two representatives to the conference as requested'. By a large majority this body agreed to send its two representatives, but curiously the delegates included Dr John MacBeath who in the meeting had seconded a counter motion to oppose representation at this conference!⁶⁹ This World Conference of sixty communions from fifty countries⁷⁰ that took place in Edinburgh in August 1937 saw the two delegates present 'the Baptist position',

67 *SBM* 72.8 (August 1946), 2.

68 BUS Finance Committee, November 12 1935, Baptist Union of Scotland Minute Book, 1935-1939, 6-7. The same perspective was noted with respect to the wider Evangelical world in the first quarter of the twentieth century by Clements, *J.H. Oldham*, 94. He noted that 'the dichotomy between "ecumenical" and "evangelical" still lay in the future.' Although there were some Scottish Baptists that would have been less than enthusiastic about these ecumenical developments, broadly speaking, this Scottish denomination would have been much more open to them than the Christian Brethren (see N.T.R. Dickson, *Brethren in Scotland 1838-2000* [Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2002], 219-259), but similar in sentiments to Scottish Congregationalists (See H. Escott, *A History of Scottish Congregationalism* [(Glasgow: The Congregational Union of Scotland, 1960], 200-201, 222-227, 244).

69 BUS Council, November 25 1936, Baptist Union of Scotland Minute Book, 1935-1939, 235.

70 Balfour, 'Twentieth Century since 1914', 75.

a paper authorised by the Council for publication in the next *Scottish Baptist Yearbook*.⁷¹ After further debate concerning the proposed World Council of Churches (WCC) within the Union in 1938 and 1939, a decision was taken by the Officebearers in April 1939. They decided that the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland ought to represent Scottish interests, on the grounds that as Scottish Baptists had 'little hope of sending a representative' to meetings there was little point in a formal affiliation.⁷² The growth in inter-church co-operation in helping the refugees and displaced people in Europe after World War II, including the formation of Christian Aid, led to renewed calls for the formation of a World Council of Churches. This body was duly set up in Amsterdam in 1948. Alexander Clark, then minister of Motherwell Baptist Church, represented the interests of this small Scottish denomination. On his return a favourable report to the BUS Council⁷³ led these church leaders to recommend affiliation with the WCC to the October annual assembly.⁷⁴ A favourable decision was attained in 1948 by the smallest of majorities, eighty one votes to eighty, that would lead to regular calls for re-consideration of 'the official Baptist position' in the years to come, especially following the 1951 assembly debate led by the delegates of Charlotte Baptist Chapel, Edinburgh, who had demanded an immediate withdrawal from the WCC.⁷⁵ Wider ecumenical affairs had become a source of tension for Baptists in Scotland unpersuaded of the case for this new body. Attitudes were to harden further in the ranks so that by the 1955 annual Baptist assembly a motion calling for a seven-year suspension of WCC membership was carried by a majority of 197 votes to 176.⁷⁶

In addition to involvement in the WCC, Scottish Baptists showed significant interest in other Christian bodies outside of Scotland. The work of Presbyterian missionaries in Korea and Manchuria was warmly commended in the pages of the *SBM* in 1908.⁷⁷ Likewise Scottish Baptists were delighted to celebrate the 'Calvin Quartercentenary' in 1909 and point out the contribution John Calvin

71 John MacBeath and R.J. McCracken, 'The Conference on Faith and Order', *Scottish Baptist Yearbook*, 1938, 196-197.

72 BUS Council, May 25 1938, Baptist Union of Scotland Minute Book, 1935-1939, 556; BUS Officebearers, April 20 1939, Baptist Union of Scotland Minute Book, 1935-1939, 773-774.

73 *Scottish Baptist Yearbook*, 1949, 124. The launch of the WCC was reported in the *SBM* in March 1948. The programme was commended in the *SBM* 74.8 (August 1948), 4. Some details of its work were given in the September 1948 issue of the *SBM* 4. The aims and objectives of the WCC were then commended to Scottish Baptists in the October issue of this periodical. *SBM* 74.10 (October 1948), Editorial, 1, and 7.

74 D.B. Murray, *The First Hundred Years* (Glasgow: Baptist Union of Scotland, 1969), 113-116.

75 Balfour, 'Twentieth Century since 1914', 75.

76 See 'Report of the Assembly Committee on the World Council of Churches', *Scottish Baptist Yearbook*, 1956, 193-211. *Scottish Baptist Yearbook*, 1957, 115. Balfour, 'Twentieth Century since 1914', 75.

77 *SBM* 44.5 (May 1908), 78.

made to Christian theology.⁷⁸ The fourth Calvinistic Congress held in Edinburgh in July 1938 was commended to the churches by the BUS Council, with the fifth due to be held in Emden in 1940 duly advertised, but World War II caused its cancellation.⁷⁹ The work of the National Council of the Evangelical Free Churches in England and Wales was noted favourably on a regular basis.⁸⁰ There were few references to the Salvation Army in the United Kingdom, but all were favourable, commending the valuable work it had accomplished.⁸¹ Methodists received even fewer references, but again all of them were favourable. The Wesleyan Church's use of and respect for its lay-preachers was commended to Scottish Baptists. A challenge was made at the end of that article: 'When will Baptist local preachers receive such an acknowledgement?' The Wesleyans were also honoured for 'testifying for the Gospel, and against the public house and the priest'.⁸² Congregationalists were praised for seeking to put in place a ministerial settlement and sustentation scheme that would guarantee a minimum wage for each minister, the sum of £120 per annum, in line with the 'English Baptist Union'. The fact that under this scheme Scottish Congregationalists could employ women ministers was not overlooked by the Baptists, but the nearest the editor of this Baptist periodical came to expressing a personal opinion on this subject was in his closing remarks: 'That opens a world of possibilities'.⁸³ The Lutherans of Germany did not fare well. A solitary article from February 1916 analysed some sermons by their clergy on the subject of World War One. If the extracts are accurate then the criticism of their militaristic tones was justified, but the purpose of the article was, by contrast, to commend the Synod of the Lutheran Church in Paris, for its fulsome condemnation of these German sermons that taught 'monstrous doctrines' and ethics that were the 'very negative of Christianity [sic]'.⁸⁴ The determination to find grounds for praising other denominations, despite some of the difficulties experienced along the way, was laudable, especially so when combined with judicious criticism of the failures of other Christian people.

There were, however, some strong words expressed about the actions of the Roman Catholic Church in the *SBM*. The comparative poverty of southern Ire-

78 *SBM* 45.8 (August 1909), 149-150.

79 BUS Council February 23 1938, 517, Baptist Union of Scotland Minute Book, 1935-1939, 517. *SBM* 66.4 (April 1940), 12.

80 For example, *SBM* 35.4 (April 1909), 69-70; 37.4 (April 1911), 54; 42.4 (April 1916), 49-50.

81 *SBM* 31.9 (September 1905), 153. See also 38.9 (September 1912), 149, for a tribute on General Booth's work following his recent death. Best wishes were expressed to his son Bramwell Booth who succeeded him. Other future generals of the Salvation Army also received the best wishes from Scottish Baptists upon their appointments, for example, *SBM* 60.10 (October 1934), 4, with respect to Commander Evangeline Booth, daughter of the movement's founder.

82 *SBM* 39.8 (August 1903), 131.

83 *SBM* 45.4 (April 1909), 71.

84 *SBM* 52.2 (February 1916), 18-19.

land compared with the more prosperous north was apparently due to 'the influence of the priests [that] prevents the inflow of capital and the increase of industries'.⁸⁵ In France a law separating the RC Church and the state had come into force by 1906. The Vatican's hostile reaction to the decisions of the French government, although predictable, was deemed unreasonable.⁸⁶ There were a number of attacks on the Jesuit Order, including one alleging bribery of children to induce them to leave the Baptist Industrial Mission of Scotland School at Gowa, in British Central Africa (now Malawi).⁸⁷ The probable origin of this dispute concerned the agreement between the Protestant churches to divide up the area between their missions and the fact that the RC Church and the Seventh Day Adventist Church who had probably not been invited to participate in this scheme, disregarded this plan.⁸⁸ A 1910 article on a dispute between the Spanish Government and the Vatican revealed the hostility of the RC church even to the existence of Protestant causes in Spain. A rather dubious law preventing Protestant churches from even placing a notice board or sign outside their premises was removed from the statute book. This hostility to freedom of worship for non-Catholics in Spain contrasted sharply with the RC demands for full liberty for church activities in Protestant countries. Here was a genuine grievance that deserved to be addressed.⁸⁹ It was of the same order as the burning of Bibles by the RC authorities in the northern Philippines. There was simply no excuse for such behaviour.⁹⁰ Scottish Baptists needed little convincing that all was not well within the RC establishment, and they were not afraid to make their opinions known, though they were prepared to commend those Catholics whose actions were deemed worthy of praise, such as Pope Leo XIII.⁹¹

Relations with some other Christian bodies

It is not practical to refer to all the outside agencies that had some interaction with Scottish Baptists in this era. As a result this part of the article will consider the three main organisations that received regular coverage in the *SBM*. The first was Christian Endeavour (CE). This practical organisation for training young people in Christian churches was enthusiastically supported by Scottish Baptists. At the 1901 CE Convention, for example, one of the vice-Presidents was W.B. Nicholson, Bristo Baptist Church, Edinburgh; the hospitality convener was T. Gregory of Marshall Street Baptist Church, Edinburgh; the Praise Committee was led by James McLeod of Bristo Baptist Church; three of the guest speakers

85 *SBM* 38.9 (September 1902), 155.

86 *SBM* 42.9 (September 1906), 157.

87 *SBM* 44.10 (October 1908), 150-151.

88 E. Gray, *A History of the Baptist Industrial Mission of Scotland in Nyasaland, 1895-1930* (Cambridge: Churches of Christ Historical Society, 1987), 6-7.

89 *SBM* 46.8 (August 1910), 124.

90 *SBM* 50.11 (November 1914), 187.

91 *SBM* 39.8 (August 1903), 130.

were Scottish Baptist ministers, and on top of that, the British CE representative was J.E. Roberts, associate minister of Union (Baptist) Chapel, Manchester.⁹² Details of the Scottish CE annual conference held in 1902 in Aberdeen were reported in the *SBM*. Scottish Baptist input to this international youth organisation also included the person appointed as President for the coming year, T. W. Lister, minister of Frederick Street Baptist Church, Glasgow.⁹³ There were also some occasional international references to the work of CE. The *SBM* editorial column in June 1903, for example, stated its delight that the CE movement was also growing rapidly in India.⁹⁴ There were, however, also references of a more parochial nature. During the 1909 CE Convention in Paisley the report of this gathering noted that there was a specifically 'Baptist rally', indicating that there was sufficient demand from CE supporters for such an event.⁹⁵ An article on CE in the April 1924 issue of the *SBM* reflected on the importance of this youth organisation to this denomination.

The Christian Endeavour movement has entrenched itself in the genial soil of our denomination, and most of our churches consider it a much valued auxiliary. Previously we did feel the need of some agency for the training of our young men and women... this society has surely supplied that need.⁹⁶

At the Jubilee celebrations for CE in Scotland there was further reflection by Scottish Baptists on the benefits of affiliation with this organisation. An article on these celebrations by P.N. Buchan, minister of Union Grove Baptist Church, Aberdeen, declared that a CE society was 'indispensable' to a church. He also took delight in the prominence of Scottish Baptists within the Scottish CE movement. He noted that in 1931 of the 321 societies and 9400 members, 150 societies and 3000 members were Baptists. The incoming CE President was Alexander Clark, minister of Viewfield Baptist Church, Dunfermline, and *The Scottish Endeavourer* had recently replaced one Baptist editor, D.E. Ferguson, with another, N. McLachlan.⁹⁷ It is probable that no Christian youth organisation within Scottish Baptist churches, since the introduction of Sunday Schools, had been as influential as CE had been in their ranks in the early twentieth century.

The second body to have prominent coverage in the *SBM* was the World Sunday School Union. Reports were given of its conventions, even when held overseas,⁹⁸ though naturally greater prominence was given to its gathering in Glasgow in 1924.⁹⁹ The Baptist Union of Scotland Sunday School Committee recommended that six delegates be sent on their behalf to the 1924 event, with their

92 *SBM* 37.4 (April 1901), 66.

93 *SBM* 38.5 (May 1902), 70-71.

94 *SBM* 39.6 (June 1903), 93-94.

95 *SBM* 45.5 (May 1909), 102.

96 *SBM* 50.4 (April 1924), 44.

97 P.N. Buchan, 'Christian Endeavour Jubilee', *SBM* 57.4 (April 1931), 40-41.

98 For example, the sixth convention in Los Angeles, May 1910, *SBM* 46.7 (July 1910), 107.

99 *SBM* 50.3 (March 1924), 29-30.

registration fees paid from union funds.¹⁰⁰ The report on this conference emphasised the ecumenical importance of this gathering of Christians from many different denominations and nationalities, and 'that oneness "in Him" is a more fundamental and potent fact than all differences whatsoever'.¹⁰¹ References were regularly made to other Conventions of this organisation, for example, Los Angeles in 1928¹⁰² and Oslo in 1936,¹⁰³ together with reports of its work in different parts of the world, for example in south-eastern Europe in 1929.¹⁰⁴ The international vision for its work and the sense of unity and purpose between its participating churches can be seen in this Protestant youth organisation. Scottish Baptists, although small in numbers compared to some other Christian denominations, willingly played a full part in its affairs and appreciated the common ties that they shared with the other Protestant churches.

The third and last major para-church organisation to feature prominently in the *SBM* was the Student Christian Movement (SCM).¹⁰⁵ There were, though, a variety of organisations that gained an occasional reference in this periodical or union committee minutes, including the Pocket Testament League,¹⁰⁶ Moral Rearmament,¹⁰⁷ Boys Brigade Scotland,¹⁰⁸ but the work of the SCM was given regular coverage due to the perceived importance of its work amongst students. In an article published in February 1923 Taylor Bowie, minister of Coats Baptist Church, Coatbridge, sought to outline the work of the SCM and urged his fellow Baptists to pray for this organisation, especially on 25 February 'a universal day of prayer for students', as designated by the World's Student Christian Federation (WSCF), the international body to which the SCM was affiliated.¹⁰⁹ A more sub-

100 BUS Sunday School Committee, February 5 1924, Baptist Union of Scotland Minute Book, 1915-1926, 621.

101 *SBM* 50.7 (July 1924), 83-85.

102 BUS Sunday School Committee, February 21 1928, Baptist Union of Scotland Minute Book, 1926-1931, 182.

103 *SBM* 62.7 (July 1936), 7; 62.8 (August 1936), 6. BUS Sunday School Committee, September 16 1936, Baptist Union of Scotland Minute Book, 1935-1939, 180.

104 *SBM* 55.6 (June 1929), 67-69.

105 T. Tatlow, *The Story of the Student Christian Movement of Great Britain and Ireland* (London: SCM, 1933), and J.D. McCaughey, *Christian Obedience in the University: Studies in the life of the Student Christian Movement of Great Britain and Ireland 1930-1950* (London: SCM, 1958), are good accounts of SCM history in this period.

106 *SBM* 38.3 (March 1912), 52-53.

107 *SBM* 64.5 (May 1938), 1-2; 64.6 (June 1938), 8; 65.3 (March 1939, 7-8. D.W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 235-240; and D.W. Bebbington, 'The Oxford Group Movement between the Wars', in W.J. Shiels and D. Wood (eds), *Voluntary Religion* (Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1986), 495-507, give further details on this movement.

108 BUS Council, September 30 1927, Baptist Union of Scotland Minute Book, 1926-1931, 111-112.

109 *SBM* 49.2 (February 1923), 17. The annual day of prayer for the work of the SCM and the WSCF was routinely, but also enthusiastically, drawn to the attention of Scottish Baptists. One other example is *SBM* 51.2 (February 1925), 18.

stantial report was printed in February 1925, following the Quadrennial Conference of the WSCF recently held in Manchester. Once again there was an enthusiastic welcome for its work amongst students worldwide, and in particular in the UK through the SCM.¹¹⁰ There was, however, a healthy awareness that the SCM had certain particular theological emphases which needed to be supplemented from other sources. R.J. McCracken, a theological student, compared his attendance at the SCM conference at Swanwick with his time at the Keswick Convention in 1925. McCracken noted that:

Keswick is very different from Swanwick...Broadly speaking, Keswick stresses the individual nature of the Christian faith, while Swanwick stresses the social. Keswick lays the emphasis on the inner life, while Swanwick places it on that inner life's outward manifestation...one cannot but regret that the two movements are not more closely identified... The individual nature of the faith, it is true, must needs be emphasised, but so also must the social. When that is recognised we shall see that both Swanwick and Keswick are striving after essentially one thing- the coming of the Kingdom in the hearts of men.¹¹¹

Although Scottish Baptists were theologically more conservative than some fellow supporters of the SCM, there was no indication in the pages of the *SBM* of the growing conflict in the ranks of Christian students that had resulted in many evangelicals forming Christian unions in the British universities as an alternative to the theologically liberal SCM.¹¹² Attendance at the Swanwick SCM conference was still described as an 'unforgettable privilege' for the students present from the Scottish Baptist Theological College in 1930 and Helen MacNicol, the Scottish secretary of the SCM, was able to attempt to recruit potential members from among the readership of the *SBM* in that same year.¹¹³ This practice continued throughout the 1930s. It is also noteworthy in an article 'Students and the Kingdom', by V.T. Coats, an extended review of Tislington Tatlow's *The Story of the Student Christian Movement*, that there is a mention of some other student

110 *SBM* 51.2 (February 1925), 19-20.

111 *SBM* 51.9 (September 1925), 117.

112 See BUS Evangelism Committee, February 28 1940, Baptist Union of Scotland Minute Book, 1939-1942, 172. D. Johnston, *Contending for the Faith A History of the Evangelical Movement in the Universities and Colleges* (Leicester: IVP, 1979), 131. In 1928 the Inter-Varsity Fellowship of Evangelical Unions was formed by the evangelical university groups present, among them Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Glasgow, where bodies independent of SCM had been formed in 1921, 1922 and 1923 respectively. O.R. Barclay, 'Inter-Varsity Fellowship / Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship', in Cameron (ed.), *Scottish Church History & Theology*, 432. See also D. Goodhew, 'The Rise of the Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union. 1910-1971', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 54.1 (January 2003), 62-88, and the older but still valuable F.D. Coggan (ed.), *Christ and the Colleges* (London: The Inter Varsity Fellowship, 1934).

113 *SBM* 56.9 (September 1930), 141.

Christian movements, but no mention of the IVF.¹¹⁴ The reasons for this omission are unclear. What is clear, though, is that at least those Scottish Baptists responsible for the *SBM* and the Baptist Theological College were happy to retain an enthusiastic affiliation to the SCM throughout the 1920s and 1930s. It is possible that those Scottish Baptists with more conservative theological views saw this fact as one of their legitimate concerns that led to the theological controversies in the 1930s in Scottish Baptist ranks.¹¹⁵

Conclusion

In 1900 the Baptist Union of Scotland was a young denomination that had seen healthy growth in the previous decade and was enthusiastic about its prospects in the new century. There had been significant progress made between 1900 and 1945 by Scottish Baptists in relationships with other Christian Churches. In the early part of the century there was a contentment on the part of many ministers and leaders to remain in fellowship with familiar friends such as the Congregationalists, but to draw back from extending formal friendship with all the other Protestant Churches. The 1910 Edinburgh Missionary Conference that focussed on a theme valued by this small denomination enabled many Baptists to realise the potential benefits of closer ties with other Scottish Christians. The next step forward was participation in the newly formed Scottish Churches Council in 1924. This body, and its successor the Scottish Ecumenical Council, received the full support of Scottish Baptists throughout this period though, they placed limits on their fellowship, making it plain that overtures to Unitarian and Roman Catholic Churches were a step too far for the SCC. Relationships too with other Scottish denominations on an individual basis had improved markedly by the 1940s. Ecumenical co-operation had proved its worth for example, in the matter of chaplaincy positions in the Armed Forces.

Scottish Baptists were also enthusiastic about engaging in Christian service with other churches outside their native land. They played a full part in the 1937 World Conference on Faith and Order in Edinburgh, but were undecided about full participation in the proposed World Council of Churches. An initial involvement in the mid-twentieth century was rescinded at the 1955 annual Baptist assembly due to a lack of confidence in the direction in which the WCC was moving. There were perceived difficulties in working with churches with an episcopally based ecclesiology, but there was mutually enriching fellowship with other Christian denominations, both in other parts of the United Kingdom and further afield. Para-church organisations were also contributing to the life

114 *SBM* 60.7 (July 1934), 3-4.

115 For details on those controversies see D.B. Murray, *Scottish Baptist College Centenary History 1894-1994* (Glasgow: Scottish Baptist College, 1994), 19-28. K.B.E. Roxburgh, 'The Fundamentalist Controversy Concerning the Baptist Theological College of Scotland', *Baptist History and Heritage*, 36.1 / 36.2 (Winter / Spring, 2001), 251-272.

of this Scottish denomination especially in working with young people with the World Sunday School Union, Christian Endeavour and the Student Christian Movement being the most prominent. In the first half of the twentieth century Baptists in Scotland increasingly felt a strengthening of ties with Christians from other traditions, and would have seen it as a growing sense of fellowship in the Gospel.

Abstract

This article provides an overview of the relationships between churches in the Baptist Union of Scotland and other Christian denominations, not only at home but also in an international context in the first half of the twentieth century. Consideration is also given to the impact of three para-church agencies on this Scottish denomination during this period of time. The article reveals a growing input to and confidence in the growth of ecumenical relations up to the 1940s, however, more critical questions were then raised concerning the direction of the inter-church movement, which would provide the stage for a more hesitant appraisal of ecumenism in the second half of the twentieth century.

The Search for a Common Identity The Origins of the Baptist Union of Scotland 1800–1870 (SBHT vol. 9)

Brian Talbot

In the period 1800 to 1827 there were three streams of Baptists in Scotland: Scotch, Haldaneite and 'English' Baptist. A strong commitment to home evangelization brought these three bodies closer together, leading to a merger of their home missionary societies in 1827. However, the first three attempts to form a union of churches failed, but by the 1860s a common understanding of their corporate identity was attained leading to the establishment of the Baptist Union of Scotland.

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