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# THE REVEREND SECRETARY AUBREY

## PART II

### IV The Russell Square Scheme 1938

On the afternoon of Monday, 25 April 1938, the Baptist Union Assembly, meeting at the City Temple in London, had before it the following resolution:

That the members of the Assembly of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland give general authority to the Council to proceed with the scheme as outlined for a building to be occupied jointly by the Baptist Union and the Baptist Missionary Society subject to such modifications or alterations as the Council may think necessary, including power to proceed, if desirable, on another site.<sup>1</sup>

The scheme, as outlined, involved a corner site on the north side of Russell Square with a frontage of approximately 130 feet to Russell Square and a return frontage of approximately 160 feet to Upper Bedford Place (now Bedford Way). Although no contemporary documents say so, other evidence makes it highly probable that the precise location was the eastern side of Upper Bedford Place. The site was leasehold for a period of 200 years. It was proposed to erect a building some ten storeys high, providing for about 75,000 square feet of usable space. Of this the Baptist Union and Baptist Missionary Society would occupy 35,000 square feet.

The discussion and debate leading up to the proposal coming to the Assembly and the events at and following that Assembly, where the scheme was decisively rejected, faced Aubrey with probably the most difficult set of problems, both of policy and relationships, of his secretaryship. No-one who was closely involved in this matter is still alive today. The minutes of the meetings are, at certain points, intentionally silent on details. It is unlikely, therefore, that the full story will ever be known in every detail. But sufficient material is available to us to enable an account to be given of a saga which has been somewhat shrouded in mystery, mentioned in previous publications,<sup>2</sup> and referred to in vague generalisations. What follows is an attempt to set the record as straight as possible with the help of minutes and recently discovered correspondence.

Early in 1936 it seemed likely that the Government would seek to purchase the Mission House in Furnival Street to provide for the needs of the Ministry of Labour and subsequently for enlargement of the Patent Office.<sup>3</sup> This situation appeared to the BMS Home Secretary, B. Grey Griffith, and to other BMS leaders to provide an opportunity not to seek new premises for the Society alone but rather to seek a new denominational headquarters which could be shared with the Baptist Union. To this suggestion, the Union responded with cautious interest. Clearly it could be more economical for the Society and Union to share such accommodation as Council Chamber, committee rooms, library and book room. Included also was the suggestion that certain activities, such as Young People's work and publications, might be merged.

The inevitable committees were set up within the Society and Union, as well as jointly. At the Baptist Union Council meeting on 17 November 1936, the following resolution was agreed:

That the members of the Council of the Baptist Union consider it desirable that the work of the Baptist Missionary Society and of the Baptist Union should, if possible, be carried on in the same building.<sup>4</sup>

The initial question was whether the Union's headquarters at 4 Southampton Row could be developed to house the BMS. There was little enthusiasm from the BMS side to this suggestion and, while careful consideration was given to the possibility, it soon became evident that the scheme was not viable: apart from seemingly insufficient space and the cost of alterations, there would be problems over rights of light and other interests vested in owners of adjoining premises. This was eventually accepted very reluctantly by the Baptist Union leaders. Indeed, as late as the Union's General Purposes Committee of 6 December 1937, a resolution was passed which included the words, 'the desirability and possibility of joint accommodation whether at 4, Southampton Row, or elsewhere'.<sup>5</sup>

At a meeting of representatives from the General Purposes Committees of both Union and Society on 15 December 1937, exception was taken to the Southampton Row possibility being again mentioned. Certainly, the understanding of the BMS representatives was that the scheme for such joint occupation had been fully explored and found not to be viable. Eventually, at the same meeting, a resolution was passed *nem con*, which stated:

That in the opinion of this joint Committee, neither the site at 19 Furnival Street nor that at 4, Southampton Row, could offer the accommodation necessary.<sup>6</sup>

That this issue was still being raised from the Union's side - and, in spite of this resolution, continued to be so, reflects the undoubtedly strong reluctance, indeed opposition, to leaving Southampton Row. By the end of 1937, however, the Russell Square site was already before the Joint Committee. It was at this same meeting on 15 December that a special joint sub-committee was set up to consider the desirability of the Russell Square site. Even before this site sub-committee was set up, the BMS had at a meeting on 6 December agreed in principle to the Russell Square site and, indeed, to the unification of the Young People's departments and the Publication work of the two houses. The exception taken on 15 December to the continuing Union pressure for the Southampton Row site is thus scarcely surprising!

The joint sub-committee to examine the Russell Square site first met on 28 January 1938. The Union representatives were Arnold S. Clark (Treasurer), Gordon S. Fairbairn (Solicitor), R. Wilson Black and M. E. Aubrey. The BMS was represented by J. A. Attenborough (Solicitor), C. W. B. Simmonds, C. Peppiatt and B. Grey Griffith. H. L. Taylor, the Union President for 1937-38, who was also Treasurer of the Baptist Missionary Society, was in the chair.

Wilson Black was a member of the Twynholm Church which had been in membership with the Annual Conference of the Churches of Christ until 1931, when it joined the Baptist Union. He was its leading personality and is described by E. A. Payne as 'a man of great wealth and energy who came swiftly to a position of influence in the Baptist denomination'. He had provided the money for the appointment of the Revd J. N. Britton as Baptist Union Evangelist and in 1936 had initiated a Forward Movement which was a scheme both evangelistic and financial. Wilson Black was to be a crucial figure in the Russell Square story.<sup>7</sup>

From the outset the site committee<sup>8</sup> ran into difficulties. A. S. Clark took the view that the type of building should be agreed before a site was acquired. Wilson Black took the contrary view that it was advisable to secure the site first and then determine what building should be placed upon it. The Russell Square site, he argued, was the only one which could be recommended up to the present and scores of sites had already been

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offered and rejected. Two further objections to the site surfaced. The joint requirements of the Union and Society were in the region of 35,000 square feet, which meant that some 40,000 square feet would be available for commercial lettings. Indeed, the satisfactory financing of the scheme depended upon income from such lettings being available. H. L. Taylor stated that personally he was against the erection of a building which would involve the Union and Society in such large business transactions. Secondly, Messrs Taylor, Fairbairn and Clark also expressed serious objections to the purchase of a leasehold site. The sub-committee came to an inconclusive end and was adjourned when a resolution moved by H. L. Taylor and seconded by A. S. Clark, to the effect that any building to be erected should comprise only such accommodation as the denomination might need plus an adequate reserve for future requirements, which extra space could be let for the time being, was lost by three votes to four with one abstention.

The sub-committee reconvened on 3 February.<sup>9</sup> The first item, surprisingly, was a letter from Ronald Collier, a surveyor, who stated that he felt it was incumbent upon him, without any obligation on the part of the Union or Society, to consider accurately the possibility of joint accommodation on the existing Southampton Row site. He had prepared some plans and a proposal which could be worthy of consideration. Whether this letter had been prompted by someone in the Union or whether it was a letter on the impulse of Collier we shall probably never know. In view of previous decisions and as the BMS had not seen these new plans, the sub-committee scarcely found itself in any position to consider the letter. It was referred to the BMS and to a future meeting.

Gordon Fairbairn had drafted a long letter, dated 2 February, in which he argued the pros and cons of a leasehold site.<sup>10</sup> He acknowledged that it would be quite legal for the Union to erect a building on a leasehold site, but the letter contains the following penultimate paragraph:

Although, as you are aware, I am in favour of a building scheme, I have, after taking everything into consideration, definitely reached the view that I cannot advise the Union to proceed with a leasehold site at present.

Wilson Black argued that practically all the best sites in London were leasehold. The amenities of such a district as Russell Square would be maintained under such a ground landlord as the Duke of Bedford and, in his judgment, it might prove to be an immense advantage to have a leasehold property, which, with the aid of a Sinking Fund, would enable future generations to rebuild more adequate and modern premises if so desired.

After much discussion Gordon Fairbairn and Arnold Clark proposed: 'That we do not regard the Russell Square site as a desirable one for the joint occupation of the Baptist Union and the Baptist Missionary Society'. Eight people were present at the meeting and the result was a tie, four voting in favour and four against. Those who voted in favour of the resolution were, in addition to the proposer and seconder, Aubrey and, significantly, H. L. Taylor; those voting against were the three BMS members and Wilson Black. In the circumstances, H. L. Taylor, as chairman, refused to exercise his casting vote and the matter was referred to the full Joint Committee.

By this time it must have been self-evident that the debate about Russell Square was going to be divisive - not only between Union and Society but also within the Union itself. It was going to be difficult, if not impossible, to avoid personal relationships entering into the equation. Yet, having gone this far down the road, it seems the process had almost a life of its own, and to try to drop the scheme would be just as divisive.

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There was, in addition, a denominational tide running in favour of joint headquarters and closer relationships.

The full Joint Committee met on 16 February.<sup>11</sup> The tied resolution from 3 February was tabled for discussion. Wilson Black reported that it now seemed likely that a 200 year lease could be granted by the Duke of Bedford's estate, rather than the previously suggested 99 year term. An attempt to refer the matter straight back to the site sub-committee in the light of this new information was amended by Wilson Black and finally read:

That if the Bedford Estate will grant a lease of 200 years of the Russell Square site, the fact that such a site is not freehold shall not interfere with our proceeding with the consideration of the scheme for joint premises.

This amendment was carried by fourteen votes to four. Mr Ronald Collier's letter relating to the Southampton Row site was then discussed. It was left to M. E. Aubrey and B. Grey Griffith to obtain such further information as they deemed to be necessary so that the site sub-committee could look at the matter.

This sub-committee met again on 3 March.<sup>12</sup> It dealt first with the Collier letter. Aubrey reported that he had written to Mr Myers who had actually drawn the plans presented by Mr Collier, asking whether he had allowed therein for certain complications due to existing windows and air spaces. A lengthy letter had been received from Collier on that specific point, concluding:

Needless to say, I have dealt with quite a lot of cases of rights of light in central London - in fact it is rare that a building scheme is ever conceived without the necessity of dealing with rights of light, and it is, generally speaking, not a very difficult matter to negotiate as necessary . . . Certainly there is nothing in Mr Myer's proposals which is unusual having regard to central London building schemes.<sup>13</sup>

This reply was, of course, helpful to the cause of those who still clung tenaciously to the hope for a joint headquarters at Southampton Row. But experts all too rarely agree! So it was in this instance. Wilson Black had obtained a report from Mr Percy Waldram FSI, 'who was one of the greatest authorities on the subject in the country'. The concluding paragraph of Mr Waldram's report read:

Generally, for the reasons detailed above, I am undoubtedly of the opinion that the proposed alterations would incur a risk of successful applications of Injunctions in respect of at least four properties each probably held by different interests any of whom would be entitled to take action, and furthermore that such risk would amount to practical certainty.<sup>14</sup>

Aubrey added that the plans had now been inspected by Grey Griffith and himself and that it was for the BMS to say whether in their view there would be adequate accommodation for them in the altered Baptist Church House. Grey Griffith replied that, although the plans had been skilfully drawn, they were inadequate in several ways from the point of view of the BMS. There were insufficient rooms, insufficient floor space and there was no possibility of expansion. As a result, yet another resolution was tabled on the issue, this time by C. W. Simmonds and Gordon Fairbairn to the effect:

That no further consideration be given to the question of accommodating

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the Baptist Missionary Society on the site of the Baptist Church House in Southampton Row.

Five voted for the resolution and four (Aubrey, A. S. Clark, H. L. Taylor and B. Grey Griffith) abstained. That resolution disposed finally, in this particular saga, of the Southampton Row option.

So the sub-committee returned to a discussion of the Russell Square site. Further twists to the story emerged. First, Wilson Black read a letter saying that the site could not be held beyond the end of February. He indicated, however, that he had told the agents about the crucial meeting of the Baptist Union Council due on 8 March and had secured a slight extension of time. Secondly, he added that he had been approached by the Methodist Missionary Society, asking whether any portion, say one-third of the site if acquired by the Baptists, could be taken by them for the purpose of a new building as their old premises in Bishopsgate had recently been disposed of. This produced considerable discussion which resulted in a resolution to the Joint Committee:

That the leasehold site in Russell Square be acquired on a tenancy of 200 years; that the question as to whether any proportion of the site be transferred to the Methodist Church be held in abeyance, as well as the type of building to be erected.

This was carried by five votes to two with two abstentions. The two opposers were A. S. Clark and Gordon Fairbairn (both BU officers), while Aubrey and Grey Griffith abstained.

Time was now of the essence. There was a pressure for decision from the Duke of Bedford's agents, the Baptist Union Council was due to meet on 8 March, and BMS General Committee on the 10th. With this sense of urgency, the Joint Committee met on 7 March.<sup>15</sup> It was a difficult meeting. The final resolution of the site sub-committee from 3 March was tabled. Grey Griffith indicated that it would be acceptable to the BMS for the Methodist Missionary Society to acquire one-third of the site. Wilson Black added that if the Methodists did not require it, there would be no difficulty in disposing of it. A. S. Clark again spoke strongly against the acquisition of the Russell Square site. He argued that government pressure for the Furnival Street premises had gone, the BU had plenty on its plate, what with the Forward Movement and Polity Commission, the financial scheme for Russell Square was speculative and the international situation was unpredictable. He was against the disposal of two freehold premises for a leasehold site, albeit for a 200-year lease. Gordon Fairbairn, while accepting in entirety the BU Council decision of 16 November 1937, did not think that this particular scheme was the right one. He saw no merit in the BU moving from Southampton Row to fund it and, in any case, the detailed financing of the scheme had not been before the BU Finance Committee for its advice. He felt the whole thing was being rushed. Ernest Wood, a BU General Purposes Committee member, argued that any scheme would have to be dealt with expeditiously and that Russell Square was likely to be the best offer available. He reminded the committee that he was the only business man still alive who was on the committee in charge of building the Baptist Church House which he considered a project (coinciding as it did with the removal of very indifferent property in the making of Kingsway) having a much more speculative element in it than was the case in connection with the site in Russell Square. Eventually the Joint Committee voted on the original resolution from the site sub-committee, quoted above,

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to the effect that the Russell Square scheme should be proceeded with, leaving open the Methodist participation and the type of building. This resolution was carried by thirteen votes to ten. Eleven of the votes in favour were cast by BMS representatives and only two by BU representatives, Wilson Black and Ernest Wood. Two BMS representatives, Miss Bowser and Mrs Lefevre voted against. H. L. Taylor, President of the Union and Treasurer of the BMS, opposed it, as did Aubrey, Clark and Fairbairn.

It would be hard to construct a more difficult scenario than that with which Aubrey was faced as the Baptist Union Council met on the following day, 8 March.<sup>16</sup> The Joint Committee had voted in favour of a scheme which the officers of the Baptist Union opposed, yet the driving force behind the scheme was Wilson Black, one of the most gifted and respected laymen in the Union. Black had already initiated and carried through successfully the nearby Tavistock Square development on a leasehold from the Duke of Bedford which had given the National Free Church Council new headquarters and a financial interest in flats as part of the building complex. There can be little doubt that Aubrey, as an individual, was firmly opposed to the Russell Square scheme but he was, in the end, a servant of the Union.

The Council considered the 13-10 resolution forwarded from the Joint Committee. The familiar arguments were rehearsed at length. Many of the BMS representatives on the Joint Committee were, of course, members of the BU Council, including Grey Griffith and Ernest Payne. Gordon Fairbairn reported that he had sought Counsel's opinion upon whether the authority of the Assembly was necessary for any change of headquarters of the Baptist Union. Counsel opined that 'Clause V of the Constitution is, I think, decisive on this point. The Union shall act *by* the Assembly and *through* the Council'. He goes on to say, 'it [the scheme in principle] ought to be approved by the Assembly before any step is taken by the Council which would bind, or purport to bind, the Union.'<sup>17</sup>

A wrecking amendment to the resolution was then proposed by the Revd Hugh Martin and seconded by the Revd T. Hayward, declaring the Russell Square scheme premature. This was defeated, 40 votes for and 50 against. The original resolution was then amended on the proposal of Ernest Payne by the addition of some words so that in its final form it read:

That the leasehold site in Russell Square, Bloomsbury, WC1, be acquired on a tenancy of 200 years; that the question as to whether any proportion of the site be transferred to the Methodist Church be held in abeyance as well as the type of building to be erected subject to the preparation of a financial scheme acceptable to the Finance Committee of the Baptist Union and the Finance Committee of the Baptist Missionary Society and to the Joint Committee.

This resolution was put and carried by 64 votes to 28. A further resolution was agreed:

that the authority of the Assembly of the Baptist Union be sought for the preparation of the scheme and the Council given power to explore the situation.

What now was Aubrey to do? Indeed, what was Wilson Black to do? The BU Council had agreed to the scheme in principle - albeit by a majority vote. It was known that significant officers of the Union and the treasurer of the BMS were opposed to it.<sup>18</sup> The authority of the Assembly, which did not meet until 28 April, was required to

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confirm the decision. It was highly improbable that the agent for the Duke of Bedford would hold the site until the end of April. There is evidence that Wilson Black, having talked the matter over with those who supported the scheme, was now inclined to drop it. But Aubrey, faced with the Council vote in favour, wrote on 9 March a crucial letter which Wilson Black received the same evening. It reads as follows:

My dear Mr Black,

The verdict of the Council yesterday has given me several hours of anxious thought. You have probably had to make difficult decisions during your own life so you can sympathise.

I have now made up my mind and as you assure us the matter is urgent I am letting you know my decision at once, so that you may take whatever action you think appropriate. I shall not look back.

As so often happens I was faced by a choice of two evils. Still unconvinced of the wisdom of leaving Southampton Row and building in Russell Square. I can shelter behind the wish of the council and give up my protest. I do not care to do so, and frankly am not happy about it. The alternative is to resign from the BMS and carry the fight into the Assembly where the issue is uncertain. To do that might (I am told it certainly would) split the denomination, and create bad feeling between sections of our people and between the two organisations for a generation to come.

The unity of the Church must be always a great, if not the primary, consideration for those who love her. I will not take the responsibility of creating division, and I feel that this is a case in which I must let my personal views give place to the higher motive.

I have, therefore, decided that I will now withdraw all my opposition and co-operate fully in producing a satisfactory scheme and in securing a suitable and worthy joint building.

In view of this, I think you may assume that we can now carry the purpose through our Committees and the Assembly, and you may like to assure the agents of the Bedford Estate that in my view as well as in your own a lease for 199 years will be taken as soon as the necessary formalities can be carried through.

I shall hope and pray, as I am sure you will, that time may prove that we have rightly interpreted God's will.

It seems to me that the next step will be for us to meet Taylor, Clark and Fairbairn and to go into that scheme very carefully, so that we may come if possible as a united BU group to the next Committee which should meet quickly.

I am, for my own part, against giving up part of the site to the Methodists. We need spacious rooms for Chapel, library, Council Chamber and Committee rooms and I think the smaller ground space would cramp us. But that is a personal opinion which others may not share.

You know some of my apprehensions. They are not without grounds. I feel sure I can count on your help in meeting them as far as possible.

I am glad the dispute is over for all our sakes, not least for yours since



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you have given so much time and thought to the matter.

Kindest regards,

Very sincerely,

(signed) M. E. AUBREY<sup>19</sup>

Immediately he received the letter, Wilson Black telephoned Aubrey and it was agreed between them that the scheme should continue, and that Aubrey would lend all his influence in every way to bring the scheme to a satisfactory conclusion. On the strength of this, Wilson Black contacted the agents acting for the Duke of Bedford's estates with the assurance that the matter could now proceed. As a result the agents declined other acceptable applications.

As evidence of his determination to fulfil the assurances given, Aubrey gave over the whole of his 'From the Secretary's Chair' article in the *Baptist Times* of 17 March to the Russell Square scheme.<sup>20</sup> Under the heading, 'Our Council's Decision', he outlined the recommendation of the Council in three brief paragraphs and occupied the remainder of the article - some 80% of the whole - with a frank statement of his own dilemma. He makes clear his personal opposition to the scheme but indicates that the Council decided 'by a large majority' to recommend the move. He has sought advice about taking his opposition to the Assembly:

I am convinced that, if I were to take my opposition there, it would divide the denomination and injure the good feeling which at present exists, and which I think I may claim I have done my best to foster, between the two societies and their most enthusiastic supporters. I cannot accept such a responsibility. I am assured that if I resigned it would only make things worse. My own decision has been very difficult to reach, very difficult . . . But it is now quite clear. I must, and do, withdraw all my opposition, and I am already working loyally and whole-heartedly to produce the best scheme we can, so that the foundations may be laid as firmly as I can ensure them for good and happy work in the future . . . Never in my life before have I had to face an actual situation in which I was forced to make up my mind as to what sacrifice I must make for the unity and fellowship of the Church of Christ.

The article concludes with a plea:

to those who have sided with me on this issue (though I would not have them to be disloyal to their own sense of what is right) to consider whether it be not now the higher way of loyalty to Christ and Christian charity to oppose no longer . . .

To read the article is to discern how cruel was Aubrey's dilemma and how difficult the way ahead was likely to be for the denomination.

The Finance Committee of the Baptist Union met on the afternoon of 1 April.<sup>21</sup> It had before it the Council's resolution of 8 March and a resolution of the BMS Finance Committee of 31 March supporting the proposal, inviting consideration by the Joint Committee of letting parts of the new building not required by either Union or Society, and promising to find £20,000 or more as might be required.

Other correspondence before the Committee indicated a critical wind blowing in from East Anglia. A resolution of the meeting of Silver Road Baptist Church in Norwich,

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dated 30 March, unanimously expressed concern at the proposed vacation of Baptist Church House, built by the willing contributions of so many of our Baptist kith and kin and beloved by so many, some of whom have 'passed over'. One of those present at the Finance Committee, R. W. Jewson of Norwich, had written saying that it was 'a matter of almost desperate urgency that the whole facts of the proposals should be before the rank and file without further delay'. He pleaded that the columns of the *Baptist Times* should be open 'on a matter of such importance as this . . . at the very least a month before a decision has to be taken' (the editor of the *Baptist Times*, J. C. Carlile, had reported in the issue of 24 March that he had received letters of protest on the Council resolution but did not intend to publish them prior to the Assembly. The following week, in spite of more letters protesting at this decision, he had re-iterated his position. Clearly attempts were being made to defuse the situation as far as possible).

W. S. Mansfield of Cambridge, who apologized for absence, had written to Arnold Clark, protesting at the financial arrangements of the proposed scheme, particularly about the proposed rental to be charged to the Union and Society. On the other hand, A. R. Timson of Kettering, also absent from the meeting, had written to say that he would have no hesitation in voting for the financial scheme.

The financial scheme proposed by Wilson Black was relatively straightforward.

- 1) The Building Agreement would be negotiated on behalf of the Union and Society and the benefit of that agreement should be transferred to a company to be formed for the purpose. The directors of the company could be nominees of the Union and Society.
- 2) A building of approximately 75,000 square feet of letting office accommodation would be erected at an estimated cost of £120,000.
- 3) £80,000 of this would be raised upon first mortgage of the new premises.
- 4) £20,000 each would be found by the Union and Society.
- 5) So far as the Union was concerned, as the Russell Square property was leasehold, the freehold of Southampton Row would not be disposed of. The £20,000 should be raised upon mortgage of the Baptist Church House. This would be serviced by letting income from the Southampton Row property.
- 6) It was estimated that the Society would require 20,000 square feet and the Union 15,000 square feet of the proposed new building, leaving 40,000 square feet for the letting. This would ensure the profitability of the scheme.
- 7) Both the Union and Society would pay rent for the square footage occupied.
- 8) A ground rent proposed for the site was £3,141 per annum.
- 9) A sinking fund would be initiated to accumulate capital as against the situation after 200 years.

A number of members of the Finance Committee were unimpressed. It transpired that vacant possession of the Russell Square site could not be obtained until March 1939. Further, it was revealed that it was unlikely that the Bedford Estate would allow a shop for display of books on any frontage, and that it was also unlikely that consent would be given for the erection of a chapel with an entrance either in Upper Bedford Place or

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Russell Square. Doubts were expressed as to whether any Insurance Company would give a sinking fund policy for 200 years. P. T. Thomson, Cecil Rooke and J. Stanley Holmes pleaded for a postponement, especially in view of the delicate and difficult nature of the international situation. Richard Jewson claimed that the financial scheme as submitted was speculative in that no guarantee could be given that the office accommodation could be let, either in the Baptist Church House or in the new premises, as, in his opinion, the letting of offices in London had now reached 'saturation point'. So, supported by P. T. Thomson, he moved that, as all the details are not to hand, it is not possible to recommend the scheme to the Assembly and that postponement be requested. This resolution was lost, only three voting in favour. Finally, it was moved by Ernest Wood and seconded by C. W. Simmons: 'that the scheme, as already stated, be accepted'. This was carried by eight votes to two. So the die was finally cast.

Opposition became even more overt. When the Joint Accommodation-Executive Committee met on 11 April,<sup>22</sup> H. L. Taylor, who was not present, wrote to say that when the Russell Square scheme went before the BMS General Committee after Easter, he intended to make his position clear in regard to the building scheme.<sup>23</sup> That Committee would then have to decide whether it would prefer to appoint a new treasurer who would be in full agreement with the scheme. He added that, as he was not an out-and-out supporter of the scheme, then he ought not to continue in the chair of the Joint Committee. Richard Jewson had also written to say that he did not propose to attend the meeting as he was opposed to the scheme. He wrote appreciatively of Mr Black's efforts, but pointed out that, as the pressure on the Furnival Street premises had subsided, no urgency remained to move. Furthermore, he could not accept that the proposed scheme was a good one - certainly not by moving from freehold to leasehold premises - and that the denomination could lose heavily before the end of the lease. He hoped the Assembly would reject the scheme. Two further questions were raised. It appeared that no Insurance Company would insure for a Sinking Fund to mature in 200 years, but it would be possible for a policy for 100 years to be taken in which, if a sum of £1,075 were deposited today under such a policy it would produce in 100 years £12,900, which if re-insured would produce in a further period of 100 years approximately £150,000, always provided that the financial situation was as it existed today. Gordon Fairbairn raised also the question whether the estimated building cost of two shillings per square foot was sufficient. Finally, the Joint Committee accepted the scheme *nem con*.

The Baptist Union Assembly opened on Monday, 25 April, in the City Temple.<sup>24</sup> It began by welcoming its new President, the Revd F. J. H. Humphrey, and thanking the outgoing President, Mr H. L. Taylor. After dealing with the Annual Report, it was announced that the Revd P. T. Thomson had been elected Vice President. Thomson was, of course, the minister in Leicester in 1911, with whom Aubrey had served his ministerial apprenticeship and who had earlier in April sought to postpone the Russell Square scheme. The Assembly then turned to the issue of Joint Headquarters. The *Baptist Times*, on 14 April,<sup>25</sup> had published the proposed scheme, including the resolution which is quoted in the opening paragraphs of this present article. The following week, 21 April, the paper carried a notice of amendment in the name of Richard Jewson in these terms:

That the members of the Assembly of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland give general authority to the Council to provide a building on

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freehold property to be occupied jointly by the Baptist Union and the Baptist Missionary Society provided the Council are convinced that such a procedure is necessary and desirable, that they do not approve the scheme for building on the proposed leasehold property in Russell Square.<sup>26</sup>

The Council's resolution was moved by Wilson Black who had a hearty reception, as the *Baptist Times* records. His speech was clear, closely argued, persuasive and conciliatory to critics. He outlined the history and background to the scheme, showing how long it had been under discussion. 'I cannot recall any scheme that has been so fully discussed, hour after hour, and month after month'. He pointed out that 'many, especially those residing out of London, much prefer a freehold, particularly from towns where freehold is the usual custom, but those residing in London know that many of the finest buildings in London and many of the most desirable districts are on leasehold tenure and to insist on a freehold site would mean that it would be impossible to build in many of the most attractive positions'. He acknowledged that, if necessary, it would be possible to scale down the project to remove too much dependence upon commercial lettings. He regretted that a notice of amendment had been received, particularly as the closer co-operation between the Society and Union appeared to many to be so urgent and necessary. It was a pity that the Council was not unanimous but he had confidence that, if the resolution was carried, those who were not in complete agreement 'will do everything in their power to make the scheme the great success that we so earnestly desire and pray'. The President formally seconded the resolution.

Richard Jewson then moved the amendment. He opened with the words, 'I represent a large body of opinion who are opposed to the amazing scheme presented to the Assembly this afternoon'. He made clear that in criticizing the scheme the opponents were not forgetting their obligations to Mr Black, 'the champion of Baptist principles, the Goliath of the Baptist Union'. As the Government's intention of purchasing Furnival Street had been abandoned or postponed indefinitely and as there was no possibility of uniting the BMS and the BU, why go on with the scheme? He went on to comment adversely on the financing, pointing out that there would be a mortgage of £80,000 on Russell Square and mortgages on the presently held freehold properties. The ground rent required would involve the payment of £600,000 over 200 years for a building costing £120,000. At the end of the lease what would there be to show for the £720,000? 'They would not own a single foot of ground . . . not an inch of land; not a brick or a tile.' The profit anticipated 'was an estimate only, a speculation, a pious hope . . . In the new building they were told they could not have a chapel, they must not have public meetings on the premises and they must not publicly display notices of meetings.' He went on to bring personalities into the arena. 'Did Mr Arnold Clark advocate its acceptance by the Assembly? Their Secretary [Aubrey] had made it clear what he thought and they were thankful that he had not resigned. What would Dr Shakespeare have said if he knew that they were about to abandon the Church House, which he was so largely responsible for building?' It was an able and well argued, debating speech.

Dr Gilbert Laws, also of Norwich, seconded the amendment, indicating that the proposed building was too large, and expressing his dislike of the speculative element. W. T. Whitley spoke in favour of the resolution, arguing the value of the new building being so close to the University of London. Ernest Brown MP spoke clearly against the resolution, doubting the ability to let all the space and expressing concern about the

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speculative elements in the proposal. Ernest Wood supported Wilson Black, saying 'he was not prepared to accept Mr Jewson's opinion on a London matter, which was totally different from that of Norwich'.

At this point J. C. Carlile intervened and suggested that the Treasurers should be given the opportunity of stating their views. Whereupon Arnold S. Clark read a carefully prepared statement in which he indicated his reluctance to take part in the debate. He acknowledged that he was one of the minority which opposed the scheme and, as Treasurer of the Union, found himself in the dilemma between loyalty to the Council majority and loyalty to the Assembly. He had decided that loyalty to the Assembly now required him to voice his opposition, although he would abide loyally by any decision the Assembly might take. He spoke of his support for joint headquarters, but not by means of the Russell Square scheme. He made clear that the Union could find the money to finance the operation by means of a mortgage. In addition, the scheme seemed to suggest a profit. But he came back to the freehold/leasehold issue, to the removal of pressure on the BMS to move, and most particularly that nearly one-third of the Council was opposed to the scheme. 'I find it hard to believe that God intends us to go on with this scheme when so many people, whose judgment we very greatly value, are hesitant, anxious and nervous about it, if not diametrically opposed to it'.

By this time in the debate Mr H. L. Taylor was surely right when he said it was unnecessary for him to enter into any further argument. He thought it was evident that the Assembly had made up its mind.<sup>27</sup> And so it had. After a brief reply by Wilson Black, in which he contended that certain things not relevant to the issue had been brought out, that the Council had said it approved and that the scheme was a sound business one, the amendment was put and carried by an overwhelming majority. It was subsequently accepted as the substantial motion. Then the Assembly moved on to other business.

Whatever the merits of the Russell Square scheme, it is difficult not to sympathize with Wilson Black. Richard Jewson's amendment had really given him no chance to present the scheme as he would have wished. A wrecking amendment always puts the proposer of a resolution on the defensive. Rather than being free to argue the scheme from a positive perspective, Wilson Black, from the first, had to deal with criticisms of it. As the editor of the *Baptist Times* says in his comments on the debate, 'Mr Wilson Black had a difficult and thankless task. He moved the resolution by request<sup>28</sup> . . . Perhaps it would have been better if two resolutions had been moved, one affirming the desirability of joint headquarters, the other recommending the site'.<sup>29</sup> Certainly, Ernest Payne, a strong supporter of the scheme and a BMS member of the Joint Headquarters Committee, felt that the Assembly was being misled; that it had not really understood the scheme and the reason for it.<sup>30</sup> As for Aubrey, he remained silent throughout the debate. When the amendment carried the day his personal relief must have been considerable but he must surely have been worried about how seriously denominational unity had suffered. He would have had good reason for such a concern.

On 30 April J. C. Carlile wrote to his friend, T. R. Glover, describing the Assembly debate and its outcome. 'Monday afternoon was a revelation to the wiseacres but not to one or two of us. The motion was introduced with great assurance and real ability, and the figures made as alluring as possible . . . but when the amendment was moved Jewson told another story . . . He is a keen financier and he made great sport out of the profits and showed what we should own at the end of 200 years. He was followed by

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your lay friend, Ernest [Brown], as wooden as ever only more so and then the famous Baptist Historian who would have killed any motion. The good man's eyes may be in the past, though I have little faith in his accuracy, but so far as the present is concerned he is more blind than most historians are. Laws went beyond expectations and made some good points. For the rest, the voting was overwhelming. The lowest estimate I have heard was 20 to 1. From where I was sitting on the platform I judged that to be less than the actual fact . . . At the Council meeting the Chairman read letters from the mover of the resolution, resigning his position. I hope he will not insist upon that course. He has done good work and should continue.<sup>31</sup>

Wilson Black's letter, to which Carlile refers, was addressed to the new President, F. J. H. Humphrey, and dated 27 April. After noting his re-election to the Council, Wilson Black notes: 'since my nomination events have taken place which make it impossible for me to continue on the Council'.<sup>32</sup> He asked the President to bring the resignation before the Council meeting which was to be held on the following day, Thursday, 28 April. He includes also his resignation as Chief Commissioner of the Forward Movement. The letter makes clear that the decision to resign was not brought about by the rejection of the Russell Square scheme by the Assembly, for 'the Assembly is entitled to come to any decision it thinks fit'. Wilson Black's difficulty was that he felt let down by Aubrey, particularly in view of the letter which Aubrey had written on 9 March immediately after the BU Council. Wilson Black's letter continues:

You will remember that at the last meeting of the Council held on March 8th, when the decision was taken to recommend the scheme to the Assembly subject to certain conditions being fulfilled in the meantime, Mr Aubrey and certain others appeared to be unfavourable to the scheme and immediately following the Council Meeting I had come to the conclusion, after consulting with various of my friends who were favourable to the scheme, that in view of Mr Aubrey's opposition to it it would not be desirable for me personally to press the scheme further and I should have been quite prepared to drop the scheme after a further meeting of the Council being held to authorise that course if thought fit.

On the evening of March 9th however, I received from Mr Aubrey a letter which entirely influenced my decision and immediately on receipt of this letter I got into communication with Mr Aubrey on the telephone and it was agreed between us that the scheme should be proceeded with and that he would lend all his influence in every way to enable the scheme to be brought to a satisfactory conclusion, and in fact his assurances to this effect are fully set out in the letter, of which I enclose herewith a copy.

In view of the definite instructions and assurances contained in Mr Aubrey's letter I passed on to the Agents for the site the assurance that he gave to me that the matter could now proceed and as a result the Bedford Estate declined other acceptable applications for the site which at that time they had before them.

I am sorry to say that both prior to the Assembly Meeting and at the Assembly Meeting I do not consider that Mr Aubrey has honoured in any sense the assurances that he gave me, and instead of working for the scheme as he promised, in my opinion in a number of ways he has

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worked against the scheme and his failure to implement his assurances has in my opinion been the main factor in the rejection of the Scheme by the Assembly.

Under the circumstances, I find myself in the position of, firstly, having given my word to the Bedford Estate in connection with the site, which word, as an honourable business man, I am not prepared to call back, and secondly, I was in my opinion put in an entirely false and invidious position as far as the Assembly is concerned.

As far as the first point is concerned, I may say that I am making other arrangements in connection with a Company with which I am associated for the building agreement of the Russell Square site to be taken up on the terms previously authorised by the Council so that in the eyes of the Bedford Estate my personal position will be vindicated.

As far as the second point is concerned, the situation is now one in my opinion which is incapable of adequate remedy. It will be agreed by all that when confidence has been rudely disturbed as in this case, it is impossible for useful and fruitful association to continue and I am quite satisfied that it is in the interests of all concerned that I should resign.

I feel that my resignation will render much more easy Mr Aubrey's task and I am extremely anxious to do nothing that would in any way hamper him in his efforts to further the interests of the Union . . .

I need scarcely say that in regard to the Forward Movement I will render every assistance within my power to my successor in acquainting him with the various details of the work and in making just as easy as possible the assumption by him of the duties of the office. The promises of financial support to the Forward Movement scheme that I have given will be fully implemented.

You will of course understand that my interest and concern for the welfare of the Baptist movement is in no way abated and I shall be only too happy, as a private member, to serve the churches in any way which may be open and which is not likely to involve me in any very unhappy controversy with the Secretary.

The Council minutes of 28 April<sup>33</sup> record his letter as having been read to the members. Aubrey reported that he had received a copy and read a reply which he proposed to send to Mr Black the following day.<sup>34</sup> The Council then had considerable discussion in the course of which 'sincere regret was expressed', as a result of Mr Wilson Black's letter and the following resolution was passed:

That the resignation of Mr and Mrs Wilson Black from membership of this Council be not received but that the President, together with Dr Townley Lord and the Secretary, be requested to endeavour to confer with Mr Wilson Black on the matter and to report to the next meeting of the Council.

This suggestion did not prove acceptable to Wilson Black. In spite of personal contact between the President and Wilson Black, an impasse developed. On the one hand Wilson Black felt unable to withdraw his resignation, on the other the President was loathe to call another Council so soon after April. By this time news of the resignation

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had begun to filter out and on 13 May Wilson Black wrote to the President, saying that if the officers of the Union, who were meeting that day,<sup>35</sup> did not feel able to call a Council then he would feel bound to make public the reasons for his resignation. Part at least of Wilson Black's difficulty was that he was still receiving invitations to address Forward Movement meetings and was in difficulty in sending replies. The letter pointed out that the writer was not asking for a Council to be called - only that 'I am simply suggesting that in courtesy to the Council, which has declined to accept my resignation, I am prepared, if desired, to meet the Council and to explain quite freely and frankly the circumstances which have occasioned my resignation. I have no intention, if I am asked to appear before the Council, of doing anything beyond making a statement of facts as I know them to exist with a view to removing any possible misapprehension concerning the circumstances.'

The officers present decided that, in view of the previous decision of the Council, neither they nor the President would be justified in summoning the Council. They proposed that the General Purposes Committee should now be consulted, representing as it did all sections of the Council, and that Mr Black should be cordially invited to meet that committee. To this request, Wilson Black replied,<sup>36</sup> indicating that, in his opinion, no good purpose could be served by his meeting the General Purposes Committee and that he was writing to all Council members to explain the present position. This he did. In a covering letter to all Council members, dated 16 May,<sup>37</sup> he set out the events following the Assembly decision and the Council's refusal to accept his resignation. With this letter Wilson Black enclosed a copy of Aubrey's letter to him dated 9 March, his own letter of resignation dated 28 April, and the correspondence which he had had with the President relating to the calling of another Council meeting. In the covering letter Wilson Black wrote: 'I am now preparing a statement which I intend to publish in connection with my resignation and the reasons therefore, as I think it will be obvious to everyone that this cannot be delayed any longer.'

On 19 May, the *Baptist Times* carried a comment from Aubrey,<sup>38</sup> about the Assembly debate in which he remarks that 'no discourteous word was spoken . . . The decision was a surprise to me. While it brought relief to my own mind, I know that it caused acute disappointment to many of my best friends and for that I am truly sorry. No opportunity arose for expressing to Mr Wilson Black the thanks due to him from the Council and the Assembly, not only for the way he presented the resolution but also for the time and work that he gave . . . These were considerable and should not be allowed to pass without full and grateful recognition. The position now is that the Council is authorised to proceed with the preparation of another scheme if they deem one both necessary and desirable.'

Almost certainly Aubrey penned those words before Wilson Black's circulation of the correspondence to Council members. It was a question of too little and too late. Reading through the material, the impression is gained that there was no way through except the calling of a Council meeting and a face to face exchange of views in that context. The perspective was now being narrowed down to a disagreement between Wilson Black and Aubrey on the basis that Aubrey had failed to stand by the statements in his letter of 9 March and the subsequent telephone conversation. That is how J. C. Carlile interpreted the situation in a letter to T. R. Glover dated 20 May.<sup>39</sup>

I suppose you have received Wilson Black's communication . . . The whole business is very miserable. I think Aubrey's article in the BT



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following the Council Meeting was the fulfilment of his promise to Wilson Black and should be regarded as such. He is the paid Secretary of the organisation and has no right to interfere with the decision of the Assembly. Personally I am very glad that the Assembly asserted its right to turn down proposals even from the Council itself, for the scheme was not Wilson Black's but the Council's. What is to happen now is on the lap of the Gods. I do not see how the two men can work together. Black absolutely refuses to meet the Secretary personally.

In face of this situation the General Purposes Committee was called for a special meeting on 23 May.<sup>40</sup> It resolved to send Mr Black a letter, personally signed by every member of the committee, asking him to reconsider the publication of any statement and containing 'an urgent appeal to you in the higher interests of the Kingdom of God and the welfare of the Churches of our denomination to meet and consider with us whether it is not possible that a way may be indicated to us which will not involve anyone's honour and, at the same time, will bring us all into harmony with the Divine will. We would express the sincere hope that you will agree to this course so that it may not be necessary to call a meeting of the Council, although we are willing to take such action if it is necessary.' The outcome of this correspondence was that Wilson Black did not publish his statement and that a Council meeting was called for 10 June.<sup>41</sup>

Some 130 members attended. Standing Orders were suspended and, at the request of Wilson Black, permission was given for Mr Cyril Black, Wilson's son, to be present at the Council. Council further agreed that 'no report of the proceedings of the Council that day will be issued except as an agreed statement, and then only if it be considered necessary to publish one'.<sup>42</sup> The Minutes of the Council are brief. The President outlined the course of events since the resignations of Mr and Mrs Wilson Black were submitted to the Council on 28 April. Statements were then made by Wilson Black, Aubrey and A. S. Clark. The minutes continue:

Following discussion Dr Carlile moved: 'The Council of the Baptist Union, having heard with great regret Mr Wilson Black's letter of resignation from Council and from his office of Chief Commissioner of the Forward Movement with the report of the President on matters arising therefrom, expresses its profound sorrow over what they regard as the result of an unfortunate misunderstanding.

'The Council would welcome an assurance from our brethren that, after these personal explanations, the incident may be regarded as now closed, and that, for the sake of the peace of the denomination and the greater claims of the Kingdom of God, they will continue to work in the great cause in which they have been so richly blessed.'

The resolution was seconded by Dr Charles Brown and supported by Dr Dakin, Mr Thomas S. Penny and others. After further discussion, the resolution was passed in an amended form:

This Special Council Meeting called to consider Mr Wilson Black's resignation as Chief Commissioner of the Baptist Forward Movement and as a member of the Council, having heard statements, and mutual explanations having been exchanged, unanimously request Mr Black to withdraw his resignation which he gladly agrees to do. The Council

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record their deep satisfaction at this decision and express the sincere hope that Mrs Wilson Black will also withdraw her resignation.

The President said that he felt the matter could now be regarded as happily settled and closed the meeting with prayer.

We cannot say now for certain how and by whom the reconciliation was achieved. Ernest Payne, who was present at the Council, wrote in his personal record of the significant part played by Dr Arthur Dakin at the Council in bringing the matter to a satisfactory conclusion.<sup>43</sup> That the outcome was satisfactory is evidenced by a report on the Forward Movement by Aubrey in the *Baptist Times* of 23 June, to the effect that 'Mr Wilson Black and I are steadily ploughing our way through a long list of engagements'.<sup>44</sup> In April 1940 Wilson Black was elected unopposed to the Vice Presidency of the Union. The recollections of the Aubrey family, who lived close to the Blacks in South London, are of continuing friendship and kindness to them all by Wilson Black and his family.<sup>45</sup>

No-one who was present at the Council on 10 June is still alive; no copy of Wilson Black's statement is, so far as anyone knows, still extant.<sup>46</sup> Speculation as to its contents and to Aubrey's reply is therefore risky. Clearly Wilson Black felt let down at the Assembly in that not one of the Union officers spoke in favour of the proposals, particularly after the assurances of support given by Aubrey's letter of 9 March. After the Assembly debate there were rumours of a conspiracy of silence on the part of the Platform but of this I have found no substantiating evidence.<sup>47</sup> But Carlile, when he suggested that the Treasurers should speak at the Assembly, must have known that both were firmly opposed.

Aubrey himself, as a servant of the Union, was bound by the Council's decision of 8 March, but his Treasurer was against the proposal, the Solicitor hesitant, and the ex-President and Vice-President firmly opposed. Perhaps Henry Townsend gives some clue as to a further cause of concern which Wilson Black may have voiced when he writes of the crucial Council on 10 June: 'he [Wilson Black] explained in a written statement that he had attended numerous committees, given many hours to the professional details of the scheme without any cost to the Baptist Union; yet it was rumoured that he was financially interested in the site. These rumours so offended his high sense of honour as an attack on his business integrity that he was hurt. As a matter of fact, he had been encouraged to make a contract with the Bedford Estate on the assumption that the Assembly would accept the scheme: when it was defeated he said he would honour the contract in accordance with his business principles.'<sup>48</sup>

'Was the denomination saved from a project which could not have succeeded in the changed financial situation caused by the Second World War . . . or was a great opportunity lost . . .?' Even now, with the benefit of hindsight, it is difficult to be certain of the answer to that question which Ernest Payne asked and found 'too early to answer' in 1958.<sup>49</sup> Building costs were relatively low in 1938, but the site would not have been available until March 1939. The north side of Russell Square escaped largely unscathed in the London blitz. Yet the scheme depended financially upon the letting of 40,000 square feet of office space in the proposed Russell Square building, some of the financing of the project from the Union's side depended upon the raising of a mortgage on 4 Southampton Row, which would be serviced by the letting of a further considerable space as offices. Would all this have been possible in 1939-40? Were relationships between the Union and Society sufficiently close in 1938 to enable them to share

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accommodation with the method of unified control still to be fully defined and agreed? The truth of the matter is surely that the question can never be answered with certainty - not because it is too soon chronologically but because it is hypothetical. We may, however, hazard the guess that both Aubrey and Wilson Black, and indeed all parties to the 1938 debate, would have found satisfaction with the outcome fifty years later when the Union and Society at last moved into joint headquarters. But for Aubrey the events in 1938 were indeed yet another 'perplexing crossway'.<sup>50</sup>

### NOTES

- 1 Details of the scheme published in *Baptist Times*, 14 April 1938, p.288.
- 2 Henry Townsend, *Robert Wilson Black, 1954*, pp.86-94; Ernest A. Payne, *The Baptist Union: A Short History*, 1959, pp.208-11; W. M. S. West, *To Be A Pilgrim*, Guildford 1983, pp.50-3.
- 3 Minute Book No.1, BMS General Purposes Committee, 7 April 1938, pp.64-6.
- 4 BU Minute Book 1936-7, p.580.
- 5 BU Minute Book 1937-38, pp.537-42.
- 6 *ibid.*, pp.601-9.
- 7 Payne, *op.cit.*, p.203; see also Townsend, *op.cit.*
- 8 BU Minute Book 1937-8, pp.649-58.
- 9 *ibid.*, pp.663-70.
- 10 *ibid.*, pp.665-9.
- 11 *ibid.*, pp.783-6.
- 12 *ibid.*, pp.787-93.
- 13 *ibid.*, p.790.
- 14 *ibid.*
- 15 *ibid.*, pp.815-20.
- 16 *ibid.*, pp.839-42.
- 17 *ibid.*, p.84.
- 18 H. L. Taylor maintained his opposition not only in the Joint Committees but also in the BMS committees. This came to a climax at the BMS General Committee of 21 April 1938 (BMS General Committee Minute Book 1938, pp.48-9), when he refused to allow his name to go forward to the Annual Meeting for re-election as Treasurer. After the events at the Assembly on 25 April, at a special meeting of the BMS General Purposes Committee, held immediately after the Assembly Session (BMS General Purposes Minute Book no.1, pp.128-9) 'in the new circumstances' he agreed that his name could go forward for re-election.
- 19 Copy of letter in Aubrey Papers in Angus Library, Regent's Park College, Oxford.
- 20 *Baptist Times*, 17 March 1938, p.203.
- 21 BU Minute Book 1938-9, pp.1-11.
- 22 *ibid.*, pp.43-52.
- 23 See note 18.
- 24 I have been able to check my account of the Assembly with Dr L. G. Champion who was present for the debate. He was able to confirm, in general terms, the substantial accuracy of what I have written. I am grateful to him for his help.
- 25 See note 1.
- 26 *Baptist Times*, 21 April, p.305.
- 27 Ernest Payne's personal journal says that it was clear from the stamping and clapping in the gallery, where the younger members were sitting, that the scheme would be thrown out. Dr Champion confirms that the whole atmosphere of the Assembly was clearly against the proposition.
- 28 Ernest Payne also claims that Wilson Black did not want to be responsible for moving the actual resolution, believing it to be wiser for another leading Union figure to do so, but he was persuaded by Aubrey to accept the responsibility.
- 29 *Baptist Times*, 28 April, p.334.
- 30 Payne, *Baptist Union*, p.210. West, *op.cit.*, pp.52-3.
- 31 Original letter in Glover correspondence housed in library of St John's College, Cambridge. Copy in Aubrey Papers in Angus Library, Oxford.
- 32 Copy of letter in Aubrey Papers.
- 33 BU Minute Book 1938-9, p.77.
- 34 So far as I know, no copy of this letter is extant.
- 35 Copy of letter in Aubrey Papers.
- 36 Letter to the President of the Baptist Union, Revd F. J. Humphrey. Copy in Aubrey Papers.
- 37 Copy in Aubrey Papers.
- 38 *Baptist Times*, 19 May, p.383.
- 39 As note 31.
- 40 BU Minute Book 1938-9, pp.87-90.
- 41 BU Minute Book 1938-9, pp.117-23.
- 42 No statement at all appears ever to have been published.
- 43 This confirms a rumour which I was told was current at the time.
- 44 *Baptist Times* 23 June 1938, p.483.
- 45 I am grateful for the continuing assistance of Mr J. M. Aubrey in the preparation of Aubrey

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material for publication.

46 When Henry Townsend's book on Wilson Black was published in 1954, it triggered off sensitive correspondence in the *Baptist Times* initiated by A. S. Clark and responded to by Sir Cyril Black. The former refers to a transcript of the Council's discussion on 10 June and the latter to possessing the relevant documents which he was considering publishing. M. E. Aubrey was still alive at the time. That the publication did not happen was due in part to Ernest Payne's personal intervention. Sir Cyril told me a year or so ago that he no longer had any documents. I have not discovered any transcript at the

Baptist Union. See *Baptist Times* 23 September, 14 and 21 October 1954.

47 The fact that there were rumours I have recently substantiated but not that they were necessarily true!

48 Townsend, *op.cit.*, pp.92-3.

49 Payne, *Baptist Union*, p.210.

50 A comment by C. H. Dodd on Aubrey's life in a letter written as early as September 1912. There are nine letters from Dodd to Aubrey, all from the years 1911-12, now in the Aubrey Papers.

*(To be concluded)*

W. M. S. WEST *Vice President, Baptist Historical Society*

## FREE CHURCH FEDERAL COUNCIL ARCHIVES

These have recently been deposited at the Dr Williams's Library, 14 Gordon Square, London WC1H 0AG, where they will be more readily available for scholars. The archives consist of Minute Books of:

**Free Church Congress, Minutes, Members, 1892.**

**National Free Church Council:** General Committee 1896-1940; General Purposes Committee 1902-8, 1930-40; Organising Committee 1900-32; Finance Committee 1900-08, 1916-40; Social Questions 1909-39; Literature Committee 1900-17; Publication Committee 1921-30; Temperance Committee 1905-21, 1924; various Minutes 1911-13; Register of Members 1913-35; various committees 1913-35; Special Committee 1900-46; Education Committee 1903, 1905-29; AGM and Directors 1913-40; Legal 1905-17; Welsh Advisory Committee 1912-16; Protestant Defence Committee 1928-38; Federal and Free Church Council Joint Committee 1939-40.

**Federal Council of the Evangelical Free Churches of England:** Annual Meetings 1936-8; Federal Council Minutes 1919-1935; Minutes of Continuation Committee etc. 1936-40; Committee List 1932-39; Federal and Free Church Council Joint Committee 1939-40.

**Free Church Federal Council:** General Purposes Committee 1940-66; Executive Committee 1966-78; Council Minutes 1941-75; Administration and Finance 1941-73; Education Committee 1940-72; Youth Committee 1942-67; Youth Executive Committee 1947-65; Re-Service Units Chaplains 1951-55; Committee Lists 1942, 1948-61; Congress Programme Committee 1938-45; various minutes 1941, 1947-57; Working Committee & Research Committee 1943-46; Joint Research (Sunday Schools &c) Committee 1946-60; Minutes of Education Commission 1959-60; Free Church Council Inc. AGM and Directors 1941-67.

**Free Church Commission of Enquiry, 1912-14.**

**Mayflower Committee (Tercentenary of Sailing of Pilgrim Fathers) 1918-25.**

**British Churches Film Council Minutes 1948-53.**