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The Early Years of the Baptist Union.

II.

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Meeting at the Jamaica Coffee-house, May 18, 1813. Present Messrs. Thomas Thomas, Timothy Thomas, Newman, Button, Cox, Waters, Austin,

It was proposed that a meeting be summoned on this day fortnight, and that the Ministers be requested to invite some of their Deacons⁹ to meet with them for the purpose of consulting on the business of the proposed General Meeting on the 23rd of June.

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Meeting at the Jamaica Coffee house Tuesday June 1, 1813. Present Dr. Rippon in the Chair.

Brethren Griffin, Upton, Button, Thos. Thomas, Newman, Cox, Smith, Austin, Wm. Shenstone, J. B. Shenstone, Hutchings, Ivimey, Napier, Mitchell, Norton, Westlake, Beatson, Jackson, Medley, Tiffin, Woodroffe, Broad and King.¹⁰

It was proposed, and seconded, that two Papers relative to the Union, written by Mr. Wm. Shenstone, and Mr. T. Thomas be read. They were accordingly produced and referred to the further consideration of the Sub-Committee.

It was proposed, and seconded, that the Sub-Committee add to their number the following brethren, viz, Mr. Wm. Shenstone, Mr. Hutchings, and Mr. Cox. Messrs. Jackson,

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continued.

Medley, Norton, and Napier, and that any five with a Secretary be competent to transact business.

That the Sub-committee meet next Friday week at Mr. Medley's Threadneedle Street, and report on this day fortnight at this place.

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Meeting at Mr. Medley's Friday [June] 11. 1813

⁹ A somewhat tardy recognition of the importance of laymen!

¹⁰ Of the laymen, Edward Smith was from Devonshire Square; Thomas Mitchell from Wild Street; James Norton and Robert Westley (not Westlake) from Carter Lane; Anby Beatson from Dean Street; Samuel Jackson and John Woodroffe from Unicorn Yard; Henry Tippin (not Tiffin) from Bow.

Dr. Rippon in the Chair.

The following Resolutions were adopted—

1. That this Society of ministers and churches be designated, "The General Union of Baptist ministers and churches," maintaining the important doctrines of "three equal persons in the Godhead; eternal and personal election; original sin; particular redemption; free justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ; efficacious grace in regeneration; the final perseverance of real believers; the resurrection of the dead; the future judgment; the eternal happiness of the righteous, and the eternal misery of such as die in impenitence, with the congregational order of the churches inviolably."¹⁷

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2. That ministers and churches, who may hereafter be desirous of uniting with this Society, be admitted, with the consent of the whole body, at the annual meeting.

3. That the formation of this Union be for the purpose of affording to the ministers and churches of the denomination the means of becoming better acquainted with each other, with a view to excite brotherly love, and to furnish a stimulus for a zealous co-operation in promoting the cause of Christ in general,

¹⁷ This doctrinal wording is identical with that which had been in use among Particular Baptist Associations for many years. The annual Circular Letters of the Associations form a study in the development of doctrine and its verbal expression. In 1768, the Northants Letter was to the churches "maintaining the important Doctrines of Three equal Persons in the Godhead; eternal and personal Election; the original Guilt and Depravity of Mankind; particular Redemption; free Justification by the imputed Righteousness of Christ; efficacious Grace in Regeneration; the Perseverance of the Saints in Grace unto Glory; and professing the primitive Order and Discipline of Churches." In 1776, *original Guilt and Depravity of Mankind* was changed to "Original Sin"; *the Perseverance of the Saints, etc.* became "the final Perseverance of the Saints"; and *the primitive Order and Discipline* became "the Independency, or Congregational Order, of the Churches inviolably." In 1784, "original Guilt and Depravity" returned; the Divine Grace had "invincible Efficacy"; and the Perseverance of the Saints became "certain Perseverance." 1789 witnessed the insertion of "the Resurrection of the Dead; the future Judgment; and the Life everlasting" after *the final Perseverance of the Saints*. In 1790, *the final Perseverance* was not for Saints but for "real believers," and *the Life everlasting* became "the eternal Happiness of the Righteous and the everlasting Misery of the impenitent." The standard form was adopted about 1800, and remained in use for many years. The Oxon Association prefaced the doctrines with "Receiving the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as their only guide, in faith and practice; and thence deriving their belief in the important doctrines of . . ."

and particularly in our own denomination, and especially to encourage and support our Missions.¹⁸

4. That an annual meeting of the Society be held in London, or elsewhere, on the Wednesday nearest Midsummer-day, in every year; at which time two sermons shall be preached and collections made in aid of the Baptist Mission.

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5. That the members of the General Union meet on the following morning at six o'clock [!] to hear the report of the Committee, transact the business of the Society, and to chuse a Treasurer, Committee and Secretaries for the ensuing year.

6. That for the present year Mr. Burls be the Treasurer; that the associated ministers in London, who are members of the General Union, with one or two members from each of their churches who join the Union, be the Committee; and that Mr. Wm. Button, Mr. Joseph Ivimey, and Mr. Thomas Thomas¹⁹ be their Secretaries, and that their meetings be open to all the ministers and messengers from the country belonging to the Union.

7. That it be recommended to the churches to establish Auxiliary Societies in aid of the *Mission*, and that our *Academical Institutions*;²⁰ *the Particular Baptist*

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Fund; the Widows Fund; and the Baptist Society in London for the encouragement and support of itinerant and village preaching, are justly entitled to the approbation and support of the denomination, and that the churches be requested to obtain subscriptions and make collections in aid of these several objects.

8. That auditors of the Treasurer's Accounts be annually appointed by the Committee, a correct statement of which together with a report of the committee, and the minutes of business at the annual meeting, shall be printed, as soon as conveniently may be after the annual meeting and circulated among all the churches belonging to the Union.

¹⁸ It is interesting to compare this clause with the nine Objects of the Union set out in the revised Constitution (1926).

¹⁹ In the *Baptist Handbook*, Thomas Thomas is placed first in the list of former secretaries, 1811-19. Button and Ivimey, who were secretaries of the Baptist Board, acted alone in the preliminary organisation of the years 1811-13. The above is the initial appearance of Thomas, and he should, therefore, be placed third, 1813-19. He died, 11th October, 1819.

²⁰ The English Academies were Bristol, Horton and Stepney.

9. That the *Baptist Magazine*, furnishing a most desirable medium of communication, respecting the state of our churches, at home and providing a most

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seasonable aid to necessitous widows of deceased ministers to which purpose the whole profits are applied,²¹ is highly deserving the encouragement of the denomination; and that it be recommended to all our ministers and churches, to promote the circulation of it, to the utmost of their power.

10. That this Society disclaims all manner of superiority and superintendance over the churches; or any authority or power, to impose anything upon their faith and practice; their sole intention is to be helpers together one of another, in promoting the common cause of Christianity, and the interests of the several churches of the denomination to which they belong.

11. That the monthly prayer meeting for the spread of the gospel that has for

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many years been observed in most of the churches, be recommended to be generally regarded on the first Monday evening in every month.

N.B.—The Signatures of the Ministers who formed the Society upon the above mentioned rules may be found P. 37, 38, 39. omitted

12. That the Sermons for the Mission be preached next year by our brethren Hinton and Steadman, in case of failure Bro. Saffery.²²

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Meeting ["of the Committee" was written and erased] at the Jamaica Coffee house the 19th of April 1814.

Dr. Rippon in the Chair.

It was proposed that an Address to the Denomination stating the objects of the General Union, should be printed in the

²¹ In 1813, the proprietors of the *Baptist Magazine* divided £141 among twenty-nine widows.

²² Following its record of the above meeting, the *Baptist Magazine* reports that "in the evening, a large congregation assembled at Devonshire Square Meeting House to hear the Report of the Committee, and to implore a divine blessing on the Union. Brother Steadman delivered an interesting address on the Union from 2 Cor. v. 14, *The love of Christ constraineth us. . .*"

Baptist Magazine for June,²³ and that brethren Rippon, Newman, Thomas Thomas, and Upton prepare it for that purpose against this day fortnight when the Committee shall be summoned to meet at this place.

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Meeting of the General Union at Dr. Rippon's Vestry, Carter Lane June 23rd 1814.

Dr. Rippon in the Chair.

Present the following Ministers and Messengers.

Revd. John Saffery—Sarum	Rev. John Stanger	Bessels
„ Dr. John Rippon London		Green
„ James Knight Little	„ John Chin	Walworth
„ William Tomlin Chesham	„ Wm Grocer Jun.	Princes Risbro'
„ Thomas Powell London	„ Thomas Griffin	London
„ James Pilkington Raleigh	„ [G] Dobney	Wallingford
„ Wm. Culver Woolwich	„ John Dyer	Reading
„ John Garrington Burnham	„ John Palmer	Shrewsbury
„ George Eveliegh Waltham	„ John Rees	New Mill
„ James Smith Ilford	„ Abr. Austin	London
„ William Button London	„ John Row	Crayford
„ [Samuel] Bligh Potter's	„ William Newman	London
„ John Bain Potter Street	„ [Joseph] Dawson	London
„ George Pritchard London	„ James Hinton	Oxford
„ William Steadman	„ Wm Grocer	Watford
„ Joseph Ivimey London	„ Wm Gray	Chipping Norton
„ [William] Giles Lymington	„ [Thomas] Shirley	Seven Oaks
„ James Upton London	„ [James] Griffiths	Wootton-under-Edge
„ Thomas Thomas London	„ J[osiah] Wilkinson	Saffron Waldron
„ George Atkinson Margate	„ G. Keeley	Ridgmount
	„ [Joseph?] Tyso	Watchett

²³ This was done. It was signed by the three Secretaries and addressed "To the Churches of Jesus Christ, of the Baptist Denomination, in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland: maintaining the important doctrines, of three equal persons," etc, as in resolution one on page twenty-one. It reminds the churches of the objects of the Union and recommends a collection for one or other of them, calls attention to the formation of the Irish Society, refers to the "astonishing change" in the political affairs of England and Europe, and concludes with a call to "gird on the harness for the battle."

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Rev. W. Rogers	Eynsford	Rev. John Peacock	Rushden
„ J. Millard	Whitchurch	„ James Fairley	
„ T. Johnson	Wakenham	„ Wm. Buckley	Brittle Lane.

Messrs Smith	Northampton	Messrs Cook	London
„ [Chapman]	Barber	„ Kent	Abingdon
	London	„ John Shenstone	London
„ Newell	do.	„ Miskin	Woolwich
„ Powell Junr.	do.	„ [William] Angus	Newcastle
„ Chalright	Braintree		
„ [William] Napier		„ Douglas	London
	London	„ Perenia	London
„ [James] Norton	do.	„ Saml Gale	do. ²⁴
„ Horseley		„ Danl Olney	Tring.
„ Shipher			
„ [William] West	London		
„ [Joshua] Robins	Bow		

The following congratulatory address was read from the London Ministers composing the Committee of the General Union, to their brethren in the Country.

We have contemplated with sincere pleasure, another interview with our brethren who compose this Society of the General Union, and with many others, from the differant parts of the

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Kingdom, who are not yet connected with us, who may favour us with their presence and countenance at this annual meeting.

We cannot but congratulate you, on the formation of a Society, for a General Union of the Baptist Ministers and Churches, on the great doctrinal principles, and for the valuable and important purposes, that were specified in your Resolutions of last year, as promising much advantage to the cause of religion in general, and to the interest of our denomination in particular.

While you professedly disclaim all superiority over each other, and every thought of imposing anything on the faith and practice of the churches, and scrupulously maintain the independence and congregational order of the several churches to which you belong, inviolably; we cannot but consider this union as

²⁴ Samuel Gale was from Carter Lane. He was a Dissenting Deputy, Solicitor to the Building Fund and the Particular Baptist Fund, and on various committees.

a most desirable medium, by which a more intimate acquaintance and intercourse with each other may be promoted; with a view to

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excite brotherly affection, and stimulate to enlarged exertions for the accumulation of the funds of our Mission, and other important institutions, connected with the denomination.

We are truly happy to learn that a spirit of ardent zeal is already gone forth, and that its effects have been discerned in the establishment of Auxiliary societies in favour of our Mission in several of our churches, and by the encouragement of subscriptions and collections, in aid of our Academical Institutions: and we entertain the pleasing hope, that as these objects, with others, shall become more extensively known, and their importance be duly appreciated they will excite a general feeling, and attain a large and effectual patronage in their favour.

It is with great pleasure also that we are able to incorporate with this address, the recent establishment of a Baptist

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Society in London, for promoting the Gospel in Ireland. The objects of this Society are to employ Itinerants in that part of the United Kingdom, to establish schools and to circulate Bibles and Tracts. It is also proposed to send ministers occasionally from this country, with a view to encourage and strengthen the hands of our brethren, who are settled in Ireland, who appear cordially desirous of co-operating in the work. We earnestly recommend this Infant Society to the attention and support of their brethren and churches in this country.

We feel it to be incumbent on us, to notice the *Baptist Magazine*, as highly deserving the encouragement of the denomination, both on account of its furnishing a most desirable medium of communications, respecting the state of our churches and religion, at home, and abroad, and providing a most seasonable aid to necessitous widows of our deceased

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ministers, to which purpose the whole profits are applied. Its sale, since the last year has considerably increased, but we are persuaded it is in the power of the ministers and churches, to promote its object to a much greater extent, by obtaining for it a much wider circulation.

We conclude by expressing our warmest congratulations on the most astonishing and happy change which has taken place

in the political situation of Europe, and on the general tranquility which has so suddenly succeeded a long protracted and widely desolating war—an event in which they devoutly regard the providence of God, as most remarkably apparent; which while it wears a most friendly aspect on the liberties of mankind, promises to open a wide, and effectual door for the formation of the Gospel in the world—"Blessed be the Lord

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God, the God of Israel who only doth wondrous things, and blessed be his glorious name for ever, and let the whole earth be filled with his glory, Amen and Amen."

The following resolutions were unanimously passed.

1. That our Associations throughout the Kingdom be requested to depute one or more, of their members, as messengers; or send a letter signed by the Moderator, to the General Assembly, to report the state of the churches, and any other matter that may contribute to the general welfare of the denomination.

2. That a Circular letter addressed to the churches be sent, signed by the Secretaries, to some Minister connected with each Association, and to other churches, both in town and country, through the medium of their Pastors.

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or ministers, requesting them to promote the various important objects proposed by the Union.

[From the *Baptist Magazine* of July, 1814, we learn that the following further resolutions were passed. They are unrecorded in the minutes.]

3. That the thanks of this meeting be presented to brethren Steadman and Saffery for their appropriate sermons, at the Mission Meeting.

4. That brethren Hinton of Oxford, and Birt of Birmingham, be requested to preach the next Annual Sermons; in case of failure, brother Roberts of Bristol.

5. That the thanks of this meeting be presented to the Managers of the Jew's Chapel, Spitalfields, for their kindness in granting us the use of that place of worship.

[page 36 is blank]

[Pages 37, 38 and 39 contain the signatures referred to on page 26. All are autographs, except the last four, which were inserted by Ivimey. The list is particularly valuable as it furnishes

the names of the forty-five ministers who were present at the inaugural meeting of the Union. The names of the messengers are unrecorded; laymen then had not their present day influence. In cases where the minister's church has been previously mentioned in these articles, it is not repeated here. The names are in the order in which they appear in the minute book, and, as far as possible, full christian names are given.]

John Rippon; John Saffery; James Upton; William Winterbotham; William Newman; Thomas Thomas; Joseph Ivimey; William Shenston; John Row; John Sutclif, Olney; Thomas Hutchings, London (Unicorn Yard); Abraham Austin; George Atkinson; William Tomlin; Thomas Powell, London (Mitchel Street); John Stanger; Thomas Price, Yeovil; Francis Franklin, Coventry; Philip Davies, Wokingham, Berks; John Knott; John Rogers; Benjamin Coxhead, Truro; John Brittain Shenston, London; Thomas Shirley; Thomas Tilly; John King, Halstead; John Giles; Joseph Such, Steventon, Beds; Joseph Exall, Tenterden, Kent; Josiah Wilkinson; John Garrington, Burnham, Essex; Daniel Dossett; John Shoveller, Newport, Isle of Wight; James Pilkington; Edward Torlin; Thomas Bailey, Brenchley; William Downs, Sheffield; John J. Douglas, London; W. Culver, Woolwich; James Farley; James Smith, Ilford, Essex; Daniel Miall, Portsea; John Penny, Portsea; John Chin; Joseph Jenkins, London (Walworth).

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(To be concluded.)

SEYMOUR J. PRICE.