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1992

Five hundred years of European encounter with and penetration of the Americas and two hundred years of Baptist missionaries in Asia are commemorated this year. Both events were concerned with evangelization, but of very different orders. The first involved conversion at the point of the sword, with Christian ritual layered syncretically as a thin veneer on top of the traditional indigenous religions of the Indians. Analysing this earlier pattern of mission, Carey was constrained to speak of the need to convert the converters: 'blind zeal, gross superstition and infamous cruelties so marked the appearance of religion all this time that the professors of Christianity needed conversion as much as the heathen world' (*Enquiry*, p.34). His own mission involved the patience of working for seven years before witnessing his first conversion, and fundamental to his mission was an understanding that the judgment that the Christian gospel made upon unjust practices and relationships could not be compromised.

The Baptist World Alliance General Council meeting in Montego Bay in July passed resolutions on both these anniversaries which we are pleased to cite in this issue of the

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Baptist Quarterly which reflects on what these anniversaries signify for Baptist Christians in 1992.

RESOLUTION ON THE BMS BICENTENARY

GIVES THANKS TO GOD for the formation of the Baptist Missionary Society on 2 October 1782 at Kettering, England;

NOTES that (1) The founding of the society to promote overseas missions marked the point at which the missionary awakening stimulated by the evangelical revival of the eighteenth century first attained effective institutional expression alerting not only Baptist but the whole of evangelical Christendom to a world-wide vision,

(2) Over the two centuries since 1792, the Christian faith has spread to every continent and taken root to such an extent that the younger churches of the non-western world are now equal and sometimes more lively partners in the ongoing mission of the church;

BELIEVES that all Baptists can look back with gratitude to God for the crucial part which William Carey, Andrew Fuller and other colleagues played in the inception of this remarkable movement of the Spirit of God; and

CALLS upon all Baptists, in the spirit of William Carey who so clearly saw the need to work with others, to continue to be faithful to their missionary calling.

RESOLUTION ON THE FIFTH CENTENNIAL OF THE COMING OF COLUMBUS AND THE EUROPEANS TO THE AMERICAS

REGRETS that the poly-cultural environment created, though rich in diversity, has sadly contributed to a history of continual confrontation and conflict within the region;

ACKNOWLEDGES that our family includes those who share the legacy of both conquerors and conquered:

as conquerors, we often perpetuate the violence of the situation, seen in the abuse, the genocide, the cultural aggression, the rape, the plunder and the corruption of aboriginal peoples;

as conquered, we have shed our blood at the hands of foreign conquerors, we have suffered the dispossession of what was authentically ours, and still suffer economic exploitation which continues to put our lives at risk in the world today;

REPENTS of our failure to uphold the Biblical imperatives of justice and reconciliation in our lives and in our relationships, on which basis, we both, as those who have been sinned against, **FORGIVE** those who have hurt us and impeded our proper development, and as those who are sinners, **SEEK AND RECEIVE** the forgiveness that the gospel offers;

COMMITTS ourselves to a new obedience to scripture in respecting one another as those made in the image of God, so that his reign may become a reality among us; and

RESOLVES to commemorate the Quincentennial with prayerful reflection and with actions of healing; and in its programs of education, study and mission to cast aside every trace of ethnocentrism, declaring that only in Jesus Christ is to be found genuine liberation, true peace and authentic justice.