

REVD DR HUGH MARTIN ECUMENIST Part 2¹

For the first quarter of the twentieth century Baptist life was dominated by the towering figure and influence of the General Secretary of the Baptist Union, John Howard Shakespeare (1857-1928).² Variousy described as 'a great secretary, a born leader and commander of men',³ 'the apostle of Church unity' who was sometimes misrepresented and generally misunderstood by his brethren,⁴ and 'a hard taskmaster and an autocrat',⁵ he was the driving force behind the Twentieth Century Fund, the building of Baptist Church House in Southampton Row, the setting up of the Sustentation Scheme, the Accredited List of Ministers, and the General Superintendency. He was also a leading light in the founding of the Baptist World Alliance in 1905, a Baptist by conviction, but, much to the puzzlement of the majority within the denomination, also a leading Free Churchman who advocated first a United Free Church of England, but later settled for a Free Church organized along federal lines. However, his ecumenical vision did not end there, for Shakespeare's thoughts soon developed into a passionate plea and advocacy of a United Church of England.⁶ Shakespeare's *The Churches at the Cross-Roads* (1918) was the seminal ecumenical Free Church call in the early decades of this century, and the man himself was arguably the leading figure within the nascent ecumenical movement. Unfortunately, it has to be said, the importance of Shakespeare both within Free Church union discussions and Free Church-Anglican conversations has seldom been adequately acknowledged.⁷ Adrian Hastings has described *The Churches at the Cross-Roads* as 'in principle one of the most important books of twentieth-century English Christianity because it sets out so clearly the logic of the forthcoming ecumenical movement'.⁸ All in all, Shakespeare was a man ahead of his time, occupying as he did a pivotal position both within the denomination and in the reunion movement, to the establishing of both of which he gave his life, energies and considerable administrative skills.

Shakespeare was a sensitive man, and the many attacks levelled against him, particularly for his ecumenical vision, took their toll. Nearly every step of the way he was dogged by opposition, most notably from the irenic Dr John Clifford and the fiery Dr T.R. Glover. Both Clifford and Glover also longed and worked in their own ways for Christian unity to be realized, but rejected all notions of uniformity and the attendant compromise of principle which they believed would necessarily be involved.⁹ This eventually led to Shakespeare's collapse in 1924, a breakdown which finally took him away from the cause to which he had given his life and which, within four years, led to his death. For a few years, then, there was no prominent Baptist advocate of Church unity, but by the early 1930s Hugh Martin emerged as such a man. Though in all probability Martin must have known of and heard Shakespeare, and quite possibly knew him, there are no extant records which

would indicate the nature of any such relationship, which therefore must remain open only to speculation.

Like a significant number of Baptists who followed him, Martin's introduction into the ecumenical movement, as has already been shown, was through his involvement in the Student Christian Movement and, given his central role in SCM, he both directly and indirectly influenced a great many ecumenical leaders and visionaries amongst Baptists and other denominations.¹⁰

Geoffrey Rusling described Martin as 'an outstanding servant of the ecumenical movement, "one of the chief architects of the British Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches" and, of course, in our own denomination one of the pioneers in this field'.¹¹ Rusling has overstated Martin's influence and role in the formation of the World Council of Churches,¹² but there is no question that Martin was a major figure in the formation and early life of the British Council of Churches. Kenneth Slack paid him no small compliment when he wrote that, 'In the field of ecumenical thought and action Hugh Martin is second only to the veteran J. H. Oldham in the length of his experience and depth of his knowledge'.¹³

Martin's contribution to the emerging ecumenical movement was threefold: through his physical presence and involvement in some of the most important ecumenical bodies, including the Free Church Federal Council, the Friends of Reunion and the BCC; through his own writing and preaching; and through his role as General Manager of the SCM Press, the publisher of many books which fuelled and furthered the ecumenical debate and in no small way aided the growing understanding between the denominations. The importance of the SCM in the development of the ecumenical movement is hard to underestimate, and it was primarily as an 'SCM man' who was by profession a Baptist that Martin was known and not as an 'ecumenical Baptist'. These three areas of Martin's involvement are so intertwined that no attempt has been made to separate them artificially.

FREE CHURCH UNION CONTROVERSY AND FAITH AND ORDER

The issue of unity was discussed as never before during the 1920s, the greatest landmarks of this being the 1920 Lambeth *Appeal to All Christian People* and the First World Conference on Faith and Order held in Lausanne in 1927, a process in which the Baptist Union of Great Britain was cautiously involved.¹⁴ When Martin began his official ecumenical involvement on behalf of the Baptist Union in 1931, M.E. Aubrey had already been involved in Faith and Order since 1929.¹⁵ With Aubrey and Gilbert Laws, minister of St Mary's Baptist Church, Norwich, and fifteen other representatives of the Federal Council, Martin met with the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Cosmo Gordon Lang, for further conversations on reunion. Though the Declarations from the Lambeth Conference of 1930 proved a disappointment to the Free Churches, conversations were to ramble on until 1938.¹⁶

Martin quickly became very much involved in the Free Church movement, which was recognized when he was made a Companion of Honour, and by the movement

itself when he was elected Moderator of the Free Church Federal Council in 1952-53. By the early 1930s it was becoming clear that he was going to be a key figure within the developing ecumenical movement. At the beginning of 1932, when Convocation suggested that, subject to the discretion of the bishops, Free Churchmen could be admitted to Holy Communion if they were unable to reach their own church or if they were present at a united meeting, some Free Churchmen regarded such a move as insulting. Martin restrained them and convinced them that it was inappropriate and unfitting to attack bishops for concessions which a few years previously would have been inconceivable.¹⁷

Through any channel open to him, Martin seized every opportunity to advocate the cause of unity. On top of his many literary contributions mentioned elsewhere, Martin made the maximum use of correspondence to the press: the *Baptist Times* carried many letters from his pen.¹⁸ He also responded to many invitations to speak on ecumenical developments.¹⁹ Though there were those who endorsed his views, the majority of Baptists greeted his position with scepticism.

Addressing the Federal Council on 'The Unity of the Free Churches' in September 1932, a message later issued in pamphlet form, Martin declared his position: 'There are . . . serious difficulties . . . in relation to the ordinance of baptism. I speak as a Baptist. I believe in the Baptist doctrine and practice, which I hold to be the New Testament doctrine and practice. I believe that here Baptists have a valuable contribution to bring to a United Church. But our fundamental witness, as I understand it, is to a belief in the spiritual character of the Church which is now shared, whatever may have been the case in the past, by those divided from us as to the administration of the ordinance.'²⁰ Dr E.K.H. Jordan referred to this as Martin's 'brilliant address', arguing that it injected a 'vigorous "shot in the arm"' into Dr Charles Brown's committee which was exploring the possibility of Free Church union. This was followed up by the establishment of a theological commission which was to study the issues involved.²¹ Though the commission periodically reported back and still existed at the commencement of the War, little progress was made, and the matter was eclipsed by the proposals which eventually bore fruit in September 1940 when the Free Church Federal Council was born out of the amalgamation of the National Free Church Council (f.1892) and the Federal Council of the Evangelical Free Churches (f.1919).²²

Martin's views and those of a short leaflet, *A Plea for Unity* (1932), published and circulated by a group of like-minded pro-unity Free Churchmen, including Martin, seems to have been the catalyst for a considerable debate carried on through the pages of the *Baptist Times*. Careful to distinguish between unity and uniformity, Martin argued that unity of spirit and unity of organization went together. He believed that there were deeper reasons for unity than those of economics or sharing resources: 'One Lord, one Faith, should mean one Body of Christ', but significantly, though citing Ephesians 4.5, he omitted 'one baptism'. He continued, 'Our denominationalism is outworn and could be ended to-morrow without any

sacrifice of principle and with infinite gains for the spiritual enrichment of all of us and for the more effective service of the Kingdom of God'. For him, the onus lay with those who maintained the necessity of continued separation in circumstances vastly different from those in which the denominations had arisen. 'Some of the difficulties in the way of unity which we dignify by the name of principles are really, I suspect, evidences of old Adam still alive in us. There are real difficulties, but they are not insurmountable, given the will to unity and some hard thinking.' With regard to church government, both Baptists and Congregationalists had much to learn from the Presbyterians, and, in any case, they had already been moving away from extreme independency. 'There are graver difficulties about Baptism', he admitted, but then proceeded with what appears to be a reiteration of his apologetic for his reunion stance. 'I speak as a Baptist. I believe the Baptist teaching and practice to be the teaching and practice of the New Testament. Baptists have a great contribution to bring here to a United Church. But our fundamental witness is to the spiritual character of the Church, a belief now shared by those divided from us by the form of the ordinance. In part, too, our denominations have been emphasising complementary truths. Our differences are not adequate grounds for separation. Let us beware of a new Ritualism. In Christ Jesus neither believer's immersion availeth anything nor infant sprinkling, but faith that worketh by love'. Like Shakespeare before him, he believed that 'The real issues today are not denominational and are too big for denominationalism to meet'; the time had come seriously to investigate the case for a United Free Church, to which end National Commissions should be set up by the various denominations to study the situation and face the difficulties.²³

Martin received enthusiastic support in the following week's *Baptist Times* from Dr Charles Brown, who considered it a mistake to refuse to explore the ways and means of achieving closer unity and co-operation, specifically between Baptists, Congregationalists and Presbyterians, whilst E.E. Hayward, Headmaster of Bethany House, Goudhurst, a Free Church school, added his support for a United Free Church.²⁴

In early October, Herbert Marnham, Treasurer of the Baptist Union, joined the fray, declaring, in general terms, that there were truths which Baptists held dear and which they had to maintain, but expressing his belief that these should not prevent organic union with the other branches of Christ's Church. However, in the same issue, Mr H.L. Taylor²⁵ and Gilbert Laws expressed their opposition to the views of Martin, Brown and Hayward. Taylor, of Easton in Gordano, near Bristol, queried their confident assertions that there was a widespread and earnest desire for Free Church unity amongst younger Baptists, and expressed his concern that the Baptist witness could well be lost in a United Free Church. He then asked Martin, as a member of a Free Church, how many had been baptized on confession of faith in that church during the past ten years. Laws asked the three unity advocates what they were prepared to do with essential Baptist principles in order to unite Baptists

with other Christian bodies. These distinctive beliefs were: a credible profession of conversion as the pre-requisite to church membership; that baptism was for believers only; that a local assembly of believers was a complete church, with full authority to exercise discipline and appoint the ministry; and that every believer was a true priest unto God. On the second, Baptists were at odds with Congregationalists; on the second and third with Presbyterians; and on all four with Anglicans. Laws concluded: 'Brethren who ceaselessly urge the subject of union upon us must have some answer to these questions in their mind, and I would respectfully invite them to say what the answer is.'²⁶ The contents of Laws' letter formed the basis of the address he was to deliver to the Baptist World Congress two years later,²⁷ and Laws, though a frequent representative of the Baptist Union on ecumenical affairs, himself emerged as one of the leading opponents of the union movement as proposed at this time. Like Martin, he too sat on the Union's Special Committee examining possible Free Church Union and had many letters on the subject published in the *Baptist Times*.

The following week Charles Brown replied, expressing his grief at the attitude of Laws and Taylor, responding point by point to the issues raised. On Laws' second point, Dr Brown declared his belief that many Congregationalists would, for the sake of unity, be prepared to substitute a dedication service for infant sprinkling and to provide the means for believer's baptism, adding 'at any rate, it could be discussed'. Brown then asked whether Laws and Taylor were really suggesting that baptism was the sole reason for the Baptists' separation from other churches and whether, if they were to start *de novo*, they would form a separate denomination on that matter alone. 'I am a convinced Baptist', he continued, 'but the term very inadequately describes me, and, if I may say so, my denomination. I hope I am a great deal more than that. Christ sent me not to baptize but to preach the Gospel. I am persuaded that many people make far more of baptism than our Lord makes of it.'²⁸

Ruffell Laslett of Watford entered the debate a fortnight later. He drew attention to the Congregationalists' and Presbyterians' demand for a credible profession of faith as the pre-requisite for membership, a point, in actual fact, which Laws had acknowledged: 'And though they do not practise our form of baptism, yet the fact that many of our Churches do not make it essential for Church membership but freely admit both Congregationalists and Presbyterians to full membership of the Church, would seem to suggest that further union between us is not quite so difficult as Mr Laws seems to suggest. Or would he have us return to the old complete Independency, and to close communion, and as it would appear, to the only logical conclusion to that - close membership? For surely those who have a right to the Lord's Table have also a right to His Church?'²⁹

In spite of the opposition, Martin continued his work and drew positively from his personal experience of Union Churches, when he announced his belief 'that we could now (in the light of experience) formulate principles for the conduct of a

Union Church in respect of the teaching and practice of baptism, which would meet any just Baptist complaints'.³⁰ However, in keeping with his position as General Secretary, Aubrey trod a more cautious and diplomatic path, writing, 'I do not see that at the present time our Churches need concern themselves with particular schemes, which may very well be left at this stage to the Baptist Union Council, on which every point of view is well represented.'³¹

Two years later, at the Berlin Baptist World Congress, Laws delivered his paper on 'Baptists and Christian Unity: What is possible?' After briefly sketching the developments over the previous two decades, Laws focused on the four distinctive Baptist principles: conversion, believer's baptism, the completeness of the local church, and the priesthood of all believers. In the light of these, he discussed the relationship between Baptists and Congregationalists, then with Presbyterians and Methodists, and finally with Episcopalians. In each case he identified the baptismal issue as separating Baptists from other denominations (in the case of Episcopalians it was all four). He concluded that there would be no way that union could take place without some recognition of infant baptism. As he had already stated that Baptists were antipaedobaptist, such a union could not be done without inconsistency. He argued that 'the Baptist contribution to Christian unity must, for the present, be a domestic effort'. Baptists needed to seek unity within their own traditions, for they had not yet, he believed, 'worked out fully the meaning of an Association, or a Union. Only when this has been done in all countries shall we pass on to work out the meaning of our world fellowship as it is represented in this Alliance.'³² The address was reproduced in the *Baptist Times* several weeks later³³ and elicited appreciative and whole-hearted support from R.W. Black,³⁴ but a dismayed response from Hugh Martin, who once again claimed that union could be attained without the sacrifice of principle and that there were weightier matters facing the Church than views about baptism.³⁵ In turn, Martin's letter elicited a response from Mr John H. Stanley of Walthamstow, who recorded with surprise Martin's statement that there was 'a danger in some sections of our denomination of making too much of baptism'. Stanley asserted that it was 'the one fundamental principle for which we stand, and is quite scriptural . . . whereas infant baptism . . . is not scriptural, and the New Testament never sanctions it, therefore it becomes a barrier to any denomination not following out this command.'³⁶

Throughout this extended debate baptism was repeatedly identified as the principal barrier to any form of reunion or union. This and the concomitant demand for no surrender of principle was reiterated time and again.³⁷ The *Baptist Times* provided an excellent forum for much of the debate and this was in no small measure due to J.C. Carlile's editorship, combined with his interest and involvement in the movement.³⁸

For Baptists, the 1930s saw the most vigorous debate on Christian Unity since the turn of the century. Arguably the most important Baptist document in this decade was the *Report of the Special Committee* appointed by the Baptist Union

Council in November 1932, under the chairmanship of C.T. Le Quesne, a leading layman and Council member, to consider the question of union between Baptists, Congregationalists and Presbyterians, and specifically to investigate the issue of baptism.³⁹ The *Report*, published in February 1937, was the culmination of a five-year process, begun in April 1932 when the Free Church Unity Group, formed from the three denominations some time previously, published *A Plea for Unity*.⁴⁰ Nineteen of the signatories were Baptists.⁴¹ Martin outlined the contents of the *Plea*: 'The manifesto urges that loyalty to Christ and the urgent needs of the present situation make an imperative demand for closer unity among His followers. We must reconsider the existing denominational distinctions which have survived from circumstances very different from those of to-day. The former reasons for separation either no longer exist or have lost much of their force. Without losing anything that is vital to the Baptist witness, we maintain that we could join with Congregationalists and Presbyterians in a more vital and efficient United Free Church. We plead at least for the fullest possible investigation of the whole question without delay.'⁴² The *Plea* called 'for a unity of comprehension, not of compromise, in which all would be free to witness in the united church for the truths hitherto cherished in isolation . . . Already within each of the existing denominations today there is an accepted diversity of thought and practice which does not express itself in separate organization. As each denomination is none the less bound together by a common loyalty to the great foundation truths of the Christian Gospel which transcends these differences, so could it be in the larger church of which we dream.'⁴³

The various denominations set up official commissions to look at these matters. From 1932 to 1937 the Baptist Union Special Committee's deliberations included the participation of thirty-five people, Martin amongst them. Significantly each of the three groups within the Baptist Union were represented, that is, those who favoured: open membership and open communion; closed membership and open communion; and closed membership and closed communion. The *Report* was divided into twenty-one sections and reached the conclusion that

we wish to repeat that we as Baptists shall not be able to take our due and helpful share in the movement towards some visible realization of the essential unity of the Churches of Christ amongst mankind and, further, shall not be able to justify our Baptist tradition to thoughtful and inquiring minds, unless we give more attention in our Churches and in our homes to the question of baptism. It has been somewhat neglected amongst us in these later years. Until we have considered it more fully, we are not ready to come to a decision on the issue of union with any other Christian Church. Believer's Baptism, whether it be called an ordinance or a sacrament, is a matter of the most serious import, since it is based upon the authority of our Lord Himself and has contributed, as we are convinced, to the welfare of the Christian community and the maintenance of Christian doctrine.

Finally, the *Report* reiterated that a right decision could not be reached unless

Baptists sought and practised fellowship with other Christians, praying that the Holy Spirit would quicken, deepen and refine the apprehension of spiritual values and truths. 'Let us pray, therefore, that He will revive and illuminate us and inspire us with a right disposition to discern and to do the Will of God in this and in all other things.'⁴⁴

Once the last of the official commissions had reported, the Free Church Unity Group condensed the results of their own four years of work, which had continued behind the scenes, and produced *A Plan for Unity*,⁴⁵ to further the closer study of the difficulties and promote that process of mutual understanding and growing together which would have to precede any formal act of union. Of the nineteen signatories to the *Plan*, nine were Baptists: Hugh Martin, A.J. Burgoyne, George Evans, E.E. Hayward, Norman Hyde, Ruffell Laslett, R.S. McHardy, E. Murray Page and A.J. Nixon. These were supported by a further group of thirty-four, including eleven Baptists, who wished to express general approval of the proposals and sympathy with their aims.⁴⁶ The *Plan* outlined proposals for the formation of a United Free Church, including a statement of faith, proposals for membership, discussion of the sacraments which permitted both believer's and infant baptism, the ministry, and the ministry of the laity, recommending that the Church be organized locally in districts and Presbyteries (the equivalent of Associations as understood by Baptists) and should have a General Assembly as the supreme body of the Church.⁴⁷ The Group finally suggested that careful consideration should be given to five interim measures: that churches might be described as 'Evangelical Free Church of England: Baptist' (or Congregational); the churches might have a common hymn book; they might co-operate in ministerial training by the institution of united colleges with provision for denominational instruction; there should be united committees for church extension, ministerial training, evangelism, and moral and social problems; and an officially representative triennial Assembly.⁴⁸

The 1937 Special Committee's *Report* was reviewed and discussed over the ensuing months, including a discussion on Church Union, sponsored by the Baptist Universities Society, between Dr Percy Evans of Spurgeon's College and Hugh Martin. After Dr Evans had outlined the past and present issues and course of events, Martin explained that the *Plan for Unity* had been tentatively put forward by a group of Baptists, Congregationalists and Presbyterians and that, whatever decision the churches came to, unity was one of the burning issues of the day. According to the *Plan*, the visible and orderly expression of membership in a United Free Church would be through baptism in the name of the Trinity, due instruction and training in the Christian faith and life, and the giving of the right hand of fellowship. 'We cannot rest until we have found a way to closer union of the Church of Christ. Divisions have outworn their usefulness and are hindrances to the cause of Christ in the world, and barriers in Christian and non-Christian lands.' He did not wish to dispense with Baptist fundamentals (the gathered church, priesthood of all believers, freedom from State control, and believer's baptism), but 'baptism is the

only point upon which we feel a real difficulty, and many of us need a greater sense of proportion to prevent our erecting an ordinance, however sacred, into a prominence which is non-Christian'. Baptists, he believed, ought to hesitate in condemning an age-long custom such as infant baptism, which had been and continued to be a means of grace to many Christians, 'and we need not give up our own idea of baptism so long as we agree about fundamental ideas. What is needed is a unity of comprehension.'⁴⁹

In November the Baptist Union Council received the report and thanked all who had contributed to it. Addressing the Council, Robert Wilson Black, clearly antagonistic to the *Plan for Unity* and all that it stood for, said that he believed that what was taking place was giving a wrong impression to Congregationalists and that, instead of promoting union, such discussions were in fact causing disunion and discord, that Baptist work was being handicapped and that to a great majority such union meant disloyalty to Christ. Along with a vote of thanks to the committee, he proposed that 'we now express definitely the view that, at the present, organic union is not practicable, but that we will gladly associate ourselves with every attempt to co-operate with other Churches and to join most heartily with them in every effort to extend the Kingdom of God'.⁵⁰ The resolution was passed, and there can be little doubt that it represented the position of the majority within the denomination concerning the specific proposals being tabled at the time. Though the possibility of union disappeared for the time being, the whole process which had begun with Shakespeare's advocacy of a United Church of England had brought the English Baptists well into the ecumenical arena and the whole matter to the attention of the denomination as a whole. But it is true to say that by 1937, in the words of R.L. Child, the minister of Broadmead, Bristol, writing in the previous year, 'the prospect of a re-united Christendom . . . [was] exceedingly remote'.⁵¹

Another fruit of the burgeoning ecumenical interest was the founding of the Friends of Reunion (FoR), a group set up in 1933, taking its name from a local group which had been working in the Birmingham area since 1931. They were an unofficial yet influential body whose aim was to provide a popular movement to aid and develop the spirit and practice of unity amongst the Churches. Local groups were formed around the country to support united action and to make the wider public more aware of the significance and importance of the Lambeth Anglican-Free Church Conversations.⁵² Martin outlined the basis of FoR: 'It is some form of organic union at which this movement aims, not merely the promotion of harmony and co-operation while leaving unsolved such problems as the adequate expression in ministry and sacraments of the true spiritual unity . . . ' All members were in general sympathy with its threefold basis:

- a) Agreement as to the Church's common Christian Faith and Message as those proclaimed in the Holy Scriptures and witnessed to and safeguarded in the Apostles' and Nicene Creed.
- b) Acceptance of the Sacraments of Baptism and of the Holy Communion as

of divine appointment, and as expressing for all the corporate life of the whole Fellowship in and with Christ.

c) A Ministry acknowledged by every part of the Church . . . ⁵³

In 1934 Martin edited *Towards Reunion*, published by SCM, in which members of the FoR sketched the positions of their respective denominations. Martin's belief was that the first steps on the road to reunion was for the Churches to understand what each other stood for. Martin introduced the whole collection of essays by opining that unity should be through mutual comprehension not compromise.⁵⁴ Realistic about the contentious issues which divided, he observed that within each tradition diversity already co-existed within denominational unity. He admitted that, 'Of course there are differences of belief and practice amongst us - some of them pretty fundamental. But if complete uniformity is required before we can have organizational unity, then our present denominations must be broken up.'⁵⁵ 'The Baptists' was written by the Revd Dr Townley Lord, minister of Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church, London, who began by setting down the common religious heritage Baptists shared with Anglicans, Quakers, and the other Free Churches, and only then proceeding to the Baptist distinctives which he identified as their appeal to the Bible, the necessity of faith in Christ for Christian discipleship, and the Church as a fellowship of the regenerate, admission to which was by the immersion of believers. These, however, did not lead Lord to believe that reunion was impossible, though episcopacy, State control and baptismal regeneration continued to be obstacles.⁵⁶

From its inception to 1943, the FoR sought unsuccessfully to organize a second series of Church of England-Free Church conversations. During this time, Martin published the booklet *Are we uniting? Prospects of Reunion in England* (SCM, 1936) for the FoR. In it he lamented the hardening attitude towards Christian unity in England and the tendency to beat the denominational drum.⁵⁷ He set about arguing that reunion would come about based on a common faith, being a unity of comprehension not compromise, and one which would preserve the elements of value in the episcopal, presbyterial and congregational forms of government, noting how both the Baptists and Congregationalists had moved towards a more connexional system. This, he believed, would result in a Free Church⁵⁸ - free, that is, from State control. However, there were considerable obstacles. As Baptists stood for loyal obedience to the New Testament conceptions of the Church and baptism, the recognition of infant baptism would be to encourage a dangerous superstition. In the resulting hesitation, both Baptists and Anglo-Catholics believed that to enter a Church in which other conceptions than their own were also permissible would be to jeopardize the truth.⁵⁹ The Second World Faith and Order Conference in Edinburgh the following year, Martin believed, would aid the development of reunion, but he sought to reassure his readers that the Faith and Order movement existed to promote study and not to propagate plans for reunion.⁶⁰

The Baptist Union's representatives at the Faith and Order Conference in August

1937 were Dr M.E. Aubrey, Dr J.H. Rushbrooke, Officer of the Baptist World Alliance, Revd Gilbert Laws, Hugh Martin and C.T. Le Quesne.⁶¹ Dr Aubrey was chairman of Section IV, 'The Church's Unity in Life and Worship', which produced a report strongly favouring the formation of the World Council of Churches.⁶² Martin's popular account of the conference was published in October 1937, and the official report appeared the following year, also published by the SCM Press.⁶³ Of the Conference he wrote, 'Yet we were there not only to reaffirm the value of our own traditions. We were there also to reach forward to a full understanding of the Gospel which as yet none of us in our separation possessed . . . We hoped to gain some new insight which we might carry back to the Churches which had sent us.'⁶⁴ In preparation, Commissions had been appointed and reports published on the four subjects with which the Conference concerned itself: Grace, the Word of God, Ministry and the Sacraments, and the Church's Unity in Life and Worship. The aim was not to reach completely agreed statements, even though this meant including side by side irreconcilable views. A single hostile vote was enough to secure the incorporation of a statement expressing the view held by the dissentient.⁶⁵

Not until the following January did details begin to filter into the denomination's consciousness, when reports from Aubrey and Laws were published, both concluding that at that time reunion discussions were at an impasse.⁶⁶ Initially, both Martin and Aubrey represented the Baptist Union on the Continuation Committee which was to meet for the first time after the War in 1947 in Clarens, but when neither felt able to continue active membership Ernest Payne was sent as a proxy.⁶⁷ A number of reasons suggest themselves to explain why Martin did not continue active membership within Faith and Order. First, he was in his late fifties and the increased travelling would have involved a great deal of time and effort. Secondly, over the years Martin concentrated his energies more and more on the British Council of Churches and the Free Church Federal Council. Thirdly, he was not a Baptist delegate to Amsterdam, where the WCC was established the following year. Fourthly, the evidence is strongly suggestive that Martin grew increasingly weary of the post-War Baptist scene and decided to concentrate his strengths on British ecumenism in a non-denominational capacity, i.e. as a representative of the SCM and as an individual.⁶⁸ This did not mean, however, that he severed his Baptist ties, for he remained an elected member of the Baptist Union Council, and continued his involvement with Carey Kingsgate Press, the Baptist Missionary Society and Baptist Union Scholarships. It is also possible that Martin recognized in Ernest Payne the qualities and convictions of one who would be able to carry through such a commitment as would be involved and so stepped aside for the younger man. Such, however, is speculation.

It had quickly become evident that the twin stumbling blocks for Baptist involvement in any United Church or Reunion/Union Scheme were the baptismal issue and episcopacy.⁶⁹ In an address delivered to the Northern Convocation at

York, Aubrey admitted, with reference to the conversations which had begun in 1932, that Baptists could not see how they could enter into organic union with Congregationalists and Presbyterians, adding, 'though in real Christian unity we are constantly working together'.⁷⁰ Laws' report provided a detailed account of the Conference proceedings, paying particular attention to Section III, 'The Ministry and the Sacraments'.⁷¹ Here the differences which divided Baptists from other traditions became very apparent, nevertheless, Laws felt that some progress had been made. He reported that on baptism it stated: 'The re-united Church will observe the rule that all members of the visible Church are admitted by baptism; which is a gift of God's redeeming love to the Church; and administered in the name of the [Trinity], is a sign and seal of Christian discipleship in obedience to the Lord's command'. To this the Baptist delegates, Martin amongst them, had secured a note stating that the just quoted statement could be accepted by them only if understood to apply to believer's baptism. In so doing they effectively conceded the important point that baptism marks entry into the Church - a position which differed from actual, grass-roots Baptist practice. They also drew attention to a principle enunciated in one of the preliminary documents which recognized that the 'necessary condition of receiving the grace of a sacrament is the faith of the recipient'.⁷² The note also expressed the Baptist belief that children belonged to God and that no rite was needed to assure for them his grace.⁷³ Discussing the report's section on admission to Holy Communion, Laws reported that some delegates had been unable to understand how Baptists were able to accept the non-baptized into membership, which had led to the gibe, 'Baptists are people who are so strong on baptism that they dispense with it!'⁷⁴ Laws' overall conclusion, however, was negative: 'The conceptions of church, ministry and sacrament are so different that it is hard to see how any union can ever be looked for while opinion remains as it is'. The difficulties, therefore, facing Baptists were enormous. 'On the question of baptism our position is so distinct, and to the many so unacceptable, that I see no way of overcoming the difficulty short of equating believer's baptism with infant baptism. This would seem to me to make infant baptism the standard and believer's baptism a sort of tolerated exception. It is not likely that more than a very few Baptists would ever think of consenting to such an equation. It is a very painful thing to have to say to those who set store by infant baptism that we regard it as a perversion of an ordinance of Christ, a substitution of man's devising for a positive institution of the Lord. Yet nothing less than this is the true Baptist position, and as one holds it I see no way, except at the cost of truth, of organic union with other Churches.'⁷⁵

NOTES

1 Subsequent to the publication of Part 1. *BQ* 37. 1, January 1997, pp.33-49, several errors have been pointed out. Mr F. Graham Little is

Secretary of Hillhead Baptist Church, not Adelaide Place, see p.45, n.11. On p.40 and 47 n.58, 'the Hampstead Garden Free Church'

- should read 'the Hampstead Garden Suburb Free Church'; this church is not in Hampstead but the other side of the Heath: I am grateful to Dr Geoffrey Nuttall for this information.
- 2 Shakespeare requested that no biography be written, but good sketches include: 'John Howard Shakespeare: The Story of His Life', *Supplement of The Baptist Times* [hereafter *BT*], 15 March 1928, i-iv; G. Shakespeare, *Let Candles Be Brought In: The Memoirs of the Rt Hon. Sir Geoffrey Shakespeare Bt*, 1949, pp.335-47; M.E. Aubrey, 'John Howard Shakespeare, 1857-1928', *BQ* 17, 3, July 1957, pp.99-108. The most comprehensive study of his ecumenicity is Roger Hayden's 'Still at the Crossroads? Revd J.H. Shakespeare and Ecumenism', in ed. K.W. Clements, *Baptists in the Twentieth Century*, 1983, pp.31-54. Revd Peter Shepherd of Middlesborough is presently undertaking a doctoral study on Shakespeare at Durham University.
 - 3 Charles Brown, 'Dr J.H. Shakespeare', *BT* 15 March 1928, p.180.
 - 4 'Memorial to Dr J.H. Shakespeare. Unveiling of Tablet in the Church House', *BT* 9 July 1931, p.480.
 - 5 E.A. Payne, 'John Howard Shakespeare (1857-1928)' in ed. A.S. Clement, *Baptists who made history*, 1955, p.132.
 - 6 They find clearest expression in his address to the Free Church Council at Bradford: 'The Free Churches at the Cross-Roads', *BT* 10 March 1916, pp.150-2; *The Churches at the Cross-Roads: A Study in Church Unity*, 1918; 'The Great Need' in ed. J. Marchant, *The Coming Renaissance*, 1923, pp.79-92.
 - 7 For example, G.K.A. Bell, *Randall Davidson: Archbishop of Canterbury, I and II*, Oxford 1935, contains no reference to Shakespeare with regard to the reunion discussions or the Lambeth Appeal, although Shakespeare met Davidson on numerous occasions. Also silent is N. Goodall, *The Ecumenical Movement*, Oxford 1961, and Barry Till, *The Churches Search for Unity*, 1972, whilst R. Tudur Jones, *Congregationalism in England 1662-1962*, 1962, pp.363-64, devotes only half a page to him. Greater justice is done by J.W. Grant, *Free Churchmanship in England, 1870-1940*. With special reference to *Congregationalism*, n.d., *passim*; H. Townsend, *The Claims of the Free Churches*, 1949, pp.312-3; E.K.H. Jordan, *Free Church Unity: History of the Free Church Council Movement 1896-1941*, 1956, *passim*; Paul Sangster, *A History of the Free Churches*, 1983, *passim*.
 - 8 A. Hastings, *A History of English Christianity 1920-1985*, 1986, p.98, italics added.
 - 9 e.g. J. Clifford, letter to Revd Dr W.E. Blomfield, Principal of Rawdon, 10 June 1922, in James Marchant, *Dr John Clifford CH*, 1924, pp.260-2; T.R. Glover, *The Free Churches and Re-Union*, Cambridge 1921, carried a preface by John Clifford; see also H.G. Wood, *T.R. Glover: A biography*, Cambridge 1953, pp.152-4; W.M.S. West, 'The Reverend Secretary Aubrey: Part III', *BQ* 34, 7, July 1992, pp.320-7; also A.R. Cross, Keele PhD, 'The theology and practice of baptism amongst British Baptists, 1900-1996', section III, in progress.
 - 10 See W.M.S. West, *To Be A Pilgrim: a memoir of Ernest A. Payne*, 1983, pp.27-9: 'It is probably no exaggeration to say that the foundations of the modern ecumenical movement were in part laid by the experiences that many students had between the wars in the context of the World Student Christian Federation and the Student Christian Movement'. West notes that contact with George Cockin, later Bishop of Bristol, Robert Mackie, a WCC leader, Eric Fenn of the Bible Society, and Hugh Martin 'moved Ernest Payne into circles far beyond Baptist denominational boundaries'. See also Paul Rowntree Clifford, *An Ecumenical Pilgrimage*, 1994, p.59; John Matthews, *The Unity Scene*, nd but 1986, p.4, remarks that in the SCM he met for the first time 'catholic Christianity and the ecumenical movement . . . the SCM in those days was a power in the land and acted as a kind of nursery for the ecumenical leadership of the next generation'. Neville Clark, who served SCM 1954-6, was involved with the Joint Liturgical Group from its inception in 1965, and wrote for SCM: *An Approach to the Theology of the Sacraments*, *Studies in Biblical Theology* 17, 1956, *Call to Worship*, *Studies in Ministry and Worship* 15, 1960, and *Interpreting the Resurrection*, 1967.
 - 11 G.W. Rusling, 'Dr Hugh Martin, CH', *BQ* 20, 8, October 1964, p.338. Rusling does not here identify the source of his quotation.
 - 12 Little evidence exists for Martin's involvement in Faith and Order, and next to none about his involvement in the WCC, e.g. W.M.S. West, 'Baptists in Faith and Order' in ed. Clements, *Baptists in the Twentieth Century*, p.58., mentions only Martin's presence as one of five representatives at Edinburgh 1937.
 - 13 In *Religious Book Club Bulletin* 157, November

- 1963, p.4. Oldham and J.R. Mott were the two leading lights in the emerging ecumenical movement, see eds. N. Lossky *et al.*, *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, Geneva 1991, pp.746-7, 703-5.
- 14 Payne, *Baptist Union*, pp.184-98.
- 15 See West, 'Aubrey, III', pp.330-1. Aubrey's participation was brought about by the untimely death of Dr J.E. Roberts in January 1929.
- 16 Jordan, *op.cit.*, pp.175-9; Payne, *Baptist Union*, pp.198-9.
- 17 Jordan, *op.cit.*, p.176.
- 18 e.g. 'Christian Unity', *BT* 10 November 1932, p.776; 'Baptists and Christian Unity', *BT* 30 August 1934, p.612.
- 19 e.g. *BT* 10 November 1932, p.776, carried an advertisement for a meeting at Friar Lane Baptist Church, Leicester, 13 November, when Dr Martin would speak on 'Christian Unity'.
- 20 Reported in 'The Unity of the Free Churches', *BT* 22 December 1932, p.913. It was published separately as *The Unity of the Free Churches*, 1932.
- 21 Brown was an ardent supporter of Shakespeare and the reunion movement, see H. Cook, *Charles Brown*, 1939, pp.83-5.
- 22 Jordan, *op.cit.*, p.216.
- 23 Martin, 'Free Church Unity', *BT* 22 September 1932, p.653.
- 24 Brown, Hayward, 'Free Church Unity', *BT* 29 September 1932, p.664.
- 25 Taylor was BU President in 1937, Treasurer of the BMS from 1930 to 1946, and later clashed with R.W. Black over the proposed joint BU/BMS headquarters, on which see B. Stanley, *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society, 1792-1992*, Edinburgh 1992, pp.386-8.
- 26 H. Marnham, H.L. Taylor and G. Laws, 'Christian Unity', *BT* 6 October 1932, p.680.
- 27 G. Laws, 'Baptists and Christian Unity: What is possible?', in ed., J.H. Rushbrooke, *Fifth Baptist World Congress, Berlin, August 4-10, 1934*, pp.172-6.
- 28 Brown, 'Christian Unity', *BT* 13 October 1932, p.700.
- 29 G.H. Ruffell Laslett, 'Christian Unity', *BT* 27 October 1932, p.740.
- 30 Martin, 'Christian Unity', *BT* 10 November 1932, p.776. Under the same heading, Revd Dr A.J. Nixon of Wandsworth Road, Clapham, drew attention to the Baptists of 'the dispersion', those already in membership with a Congregational or Presbyterian church, and used their existence to support the cause of Christian union.
- 31 Aubrey, 'Union', *BT* 10 November 1932, p.775. In Aubrey's opinion, union at this time would mean disuniting the denomination, but in the long run it might be worth while, 'though disunion for the sake of union seems strange', and he believed 'every good Baptist' would welcome union if it could be shown that it was possible without the sacrifice of essential principles. This confirms Peter Aubrey's comment that his father's main preoccupation was all too often that of a gracious peacemaker; see West, 'Aubrey, I', *BQ* 34, 5, January 1992, p.199. It is important to note that Martin served on the BU Council 1924-62, see *Baptist Handbook* (hereafter *BH*) 1925, p.19, and 1962, p.8. He became a personal member of the Baptist Union in 1916, *BH* 1917, p.28.
- 32 Laws, 'What is possible?', p.173.
- 33 Laws, 'Baptists and Christian Unity', *BT* 23 August 1934, p.601.
- 34 R. W. Black, 'Baptists and Christian Unity', *BT* 6 September 1934, p.628.
- 35 Martin, 'Baptists and Christian Unity', *BT* 30 August 1934, p.612. It should be noted that Martin never did say how such compromise could be avoided. Perhaps the closest we can get to it, however, would be in the proposals in 'A Plea for Unity', which could well have owed much in its production and wording to Martin. This advocated the mutual recognition of both forms of baptism in a United Free Church, on which see below.
- 36 J.H. Stanley, 'Baptists and Christian Unity', *BT* 27 September 1934, p.680. Stanley had already attacked Martin and any Baptist, Congregational and Presbyterian union, in 'Christian Unity', *BT* 20 October 1932, p.720.
- 37 e.g. Mr Benjamin I. Greenwood of Shoreham, Kent, 'Baptism', *BT* 2 August 1934, p.548, and H. Townsend, 'The Free Churches and Baptism', *BT* 13 September 1934, p.649; J.C. Carlile, 'Union of the Free Churches', *BT* 24 September 1931, p.664; M.E. Aubrey, 'Union', *BT* 10 November 1932, p.775; Revd Melville Evans of Muswell Hill, 'Our Baptist Testimony', *BT* 25 July 1935, p.552.
- 38 See J.C. Carlile, *My Life's Little Day*, 1935, ch.12, 'Attempts to unite the Churches', pp.171-86.
- 39 *Report of the Special Committee Appointed by the Council on the Question of Union Between Baptists, Congregationalists and Presbyterians*, 1937, p.3.

- 40 Unfortunately no copy of *A Plea for Unity* has been found, though its contents were outlined in a letter by Martin, 'Baptists, Congregationalists and Presbyterians', *BT* 21 April 1932, p.268, and also in *A Plan for Unity between Baptists, Congregationalists and Presbyterians in England*, n.d. but 1937, pp.2-3.
- 41 The Baptist signatories were Charles Brown, F.C. Bryan, Frank Buffard, A.J. Burgoyne, H.J. Flowers, E.W. Gibbons, E.E. Hayward, Arthur Iiter, Richard Jewson, Ruffell Laslett, F. Townley Lord, Herbert Marnham, Hugh Martin, A.J. Nixon, T. Powell, F.C. Spurr, H.H. Sutton, F.J. Walkey and H. Ernest Wood. See Martin, 'Baptists, Congregationalists and Presbyterians', *BT* 21 April 1932, p.268. Martin expressed regret that the *Baptist Times* had not printed the *Plea* in the previous issue: it was evidently small enough to be enclosed in a stamped addressed envelope and to have been printed in the paper.
- 42 Martin, *BT* 21 April 1932. If Martin's outline here correctly reflected the tone and content of the *Plea* then, by comparison with his views as expressed elsewhere, it would seem reasonable to conclude that Martin played a considerable role in its preparation. This seems confirmed by the later *A Plan for Unity* issued by the Free Church Unity Group from Annandale, the home of the SCM.
- 43 Cited in *Plan for Unity*, p.2.
- 44 *Report of Special Committee*, pp.38-9.
- 45 Details from *Plan for Unity*, p.3. Reference to the reports of the three denominations' commissions implies 1937 as the *Plan*'s date.
- 46 This figure presumes George Evans was one of the two Baptist ministers of that name at this time: one was minister of the Downs Chapel. Clapton (the more likely), the other a Welsh Baptist in Monmouth. Signatures implied general approval, not necessarily agreement with every clause. Baptist 'sympathizers' were F.C. Bryan, F. Buffard, Herbert Chown, J. Ivory Cripps, F.J.H. Humphrey, J.B. Middleton and R.W. Thomson (misspelled in the *Plan* as R.W. Thomson). *Plan for Unity* pp.4-5.
- 47 *ibid.*, pp.5-16.
- 48 *ibid.*, p.16.
- 49 Edna F. Ball, 'Baptist Universities' Society: Discussion on Church Union', *BT* 28 October 1937, p.817.
- 50 See 'Church Union: Baptist Union Council Reports', *BT* 25 November 1937, pp.890, 898. The quotation (p.898) is important as it highlights the differences between Martin and Black and Townsend. Martin and others were working at this time for organic union, a reunited Church, while Black and Townsend favoured only co-operation amongst the denominations. Black had become a Baptist after the Twynholm church, to which he belonged, and its branch church in Boston Road, left the Churches of Christ to join the Baptist Union in 1931. R.W. Black and his brother, J.W. Black who remained a member of the Churches of Christ, were the chief movers in the discussions on closer co-operation between the two denominations, 1941-57. Both brothers died in 1951, effectively ending the union discussions. See David M. Thompson, *Let Sects and Parties Fall: A short history of the Association of Churches of Christ in Great Britain and Ireland*, Birmingham 1980, pp.184-6, and E. Roberts-Thomson, *Baptists and the Disciples of Christ*, n.d. but 1941. Townsend was also active in the Free Church movement, for which he wrote *The Claims of the Free Churches*, 1949.
- 51 R.L. Child, 'The Baptist Contribution to the One Church', *BQ* 8, 2, April 1936, p.81.
- 52 Jordan, *op.cit.*, p.178. It appears that the FoR was largely made up of, or at least largely influenced by, SCM people, of whom Martin was the best known.
- 53 ed. Martin, *Towards Reunion: What the Churches Stand For*, 1934, second edn 1937 (2); quotations are from the second edition, pp.21-2. These aims, though much briefer, closely resemble the proposals in the *Plan for Unity*, pp.5-16. This strongly suggests that the composition of the FoR and Free Church Unity Group were at least similar. E.A. Payne, *Thirty Years of the British Council of Churches 1942-1972*, 1972, p.3, described FoR's aim as furthering the reunion movement mainly by seeking to address 'questions of faith and order and the preparation of a blueprint for the uniting of the separate Churches'. Prominent among the leaders, with Martin, were the Congregationalists. Nathaniel Micklem and John Huxtable, see P.R. Clifford, *op.cit.*, p.140.
- 54 Martin, 'The Road to Unity', in *Towards Reunion*, p.9.
- 55 *ibid.*, p.11.
- 56 F.T. Lord, 'The Baptists', in *Towards Reunion*, pp.24-36.
- 57 Martin, *Are We Uniting? Prospects of Reunion in England*, 1936, p.3.

- 58 *ibid.*, pp.8-11.
- 59 *ibid.*, pp.12-15.
- 60 *ibid.*, pp.15-16.
- 61 Payne, *Baptist Union*, p.200, omits Martin's presence in the BU delegation, but Laws corrects this, 'The Edinburgh Conference: What was the good of it?', *BQ* 9, 1, January 1938, p.21. Laws was evidently right, for the official report lists Martin as 'Delegate. Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland', ed. L. Hodgson, *The Second World Conference on Faith and Order held at Edinburgh, August 3-18 1937*, 1938, p.297. Martin was one of those appointed by the Conference to the Continuation Committee, again identified with BUGBI, and therefore was an official BUGBI delegate, see Hodgson, *op.cit.*, p.371.
- 62 West, 'Aubrey, III', p.331, and 335 n.45. West includes Dr John MacBeath of Hillhead, Glasgow, among the BUGBI delegates, but omits J.H. Rushbrooke. Dr McBeath, however, was a delegate for the Baptist Union of Scotland according to Hodgson, *op.cit.*, p.297. McBeath served on Section 2 'The Church of Christ and the Word of God', Laws and Le Quesne on Section 3 'The Church of Christ: Ministry and Sacraments', Martin and Aubrey on Section 4, Hodgson, *op.cit.*, p.307. West makes only one other reference to Martin, so little further light is shed on his friendship with Aubrey as they worked as colleagues denominationally and ecumenically.
- 63 Martin, *Edinburgh 1937: The Story of the Second World Conference on Faith and Order held in Edinburgh August 3rd-8th, 1937*. 1937. A brief review by W. Taylor Bowie appeared in *BQ* 9, 1, January 1938, pp.62-3.
- 64 Martin, *Edinburgh 1937*, pp.17-18.
- 65 *ibid.*, pp.21, 32-3.
- 66 M.E. Aubrey, 'What Edinburgh meant to me', *BT* 20 January 1938, pp.42-4; G. Laws, 'The Edinburgh Conference', *BQ* 9, 1, January 1938, pp.21-9. E.A. Payne, 'Baptism in Recent Discussion', in ed. A. Gilmore, *Christian Baptism: A fresh attempt to understand the rite in terms of scripture, history and theology*, 1959, p.16, noted that at Edinburgh it proved possible to make more elaborate statements regarding the sacraments than previously.
- 67 West, *To Be A Pilgrim*, p.67.
- 68 I am grateful to Dr Morris West for these suggestions in a discussion on 10 February 1997 and for his help with this article.
- 69 See the relevant chapters in the present writer's Keele PhD thesis, chiefly sections III and IV.
- 70 Aubrey, 'What Edinburgh meant to me', p.43. On Aubrey's address to the Convocation of York, see West, 'Aubrey, III', pp.331-2.
- 71 See also Martin, *Edinburgh 1937*, pp.57-71.
- 72 *Report of the Commission*, p.27, cited by Laws, 'The Edinburgh Conference', p.24.
- 73 Reported by Martin, *Edinburgh 1937*, pp.58-62. It is important to note that this principle was claimed for children but not for others. This perhaps marks the beginning (or at least an early stage) of the growing awareness amongst Baptists which recognized that the 'Church' includes others than just believers - children of Christian parents, children brought to church and also adults attending church. This recognition became explicit in the 1966 report, *The Child and the Church*, published by a special study group set up by the Baptist Union Council in 1963.
- 74 Laws, 'The Edinburgh Conference', p.25.
- 75 *ibid.*, p.29.

[to be continued]

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