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Part 3¹

THE *OUTLINE OF A REUNION SCHEME* CONTROVERSY

The Joint Conferences between the Church of England and the Federal Council of the Evangelical Free Churches, which had begun in 1921 only to be suspended in 1925, recommenced in 1930 after the Lambeth Conference of that year. The fruit of these conversations was the appearance in February 1938 of three discussion documents, *Outline of a Reunion Scheme*, *The Practice of Intercommunion and the Doctrine of the Church and 1662 and To-day*.² The most important of the three was the *Outline*, which was based on an earlier draft document, *A Sketch of a United Church* (1935),³ prepared by the FoR on behalf of the Churches represented by the Joint Conference, which the Canterbury Convocation commended to the attention of the churches. The *Outline*'s stated intention was to provide a basis for further work towards reunion by dispelling prejudices, pointing the way forward to fuller agreement and in time 'the union for which we pray'.⁴ The official reply of the Free Church Federal Council was submitted to the Joint Conference in September 1941,⁵ but in the meantime the constituent denominations considered the reports. The Baptists were no exception to this.

Even before the *Outline* was officially released, J.C. Carlile gave notice of it in a front page editorial in the *Baptist Times*. According to him, four major principles remained unsettled: the nature of the Church, whether it was to be composed of those professing faith or those admitted by virtue of something done to them in infancy; baptism, on which the *Outline* remained unclear as to its meaning and method; the appropriate exercise of episcopacy; and the relationship of the Church to the state.⁶ In no time at all, the *Outline* became the chief topic of discussion in the *Baptist Times* for the next two months. Within a week, an anonymous article appeared presenting positively the contents of the document.⁷ This was supported in that week's correspondence by a letter from Hugh Martin who stated that the understanding of the church as the fellowship of believers was safeguarded in the *Outline*. He admitted that both forms of baptism would have to be permitted in a United Church, but at the same time recognized that, 'Those Baptists who refuse to consider the possibility of being in the same Church with those who practise infant baptism will object to this Scheme and to every other.'⁸

Hugh Martin had been one of the four Baptist representatives to the Joint Conference, the others being M.E. Aubrey, Dr Charles Brown, the retired elder Baptist statesman and Pastor Emeritus of Ferme Park, and Gilbert Laws. However, each of the remaining three dissociated themselves from the Scheme, despite their names having been appended to the *Outline*. Laws announced that his name had been added to the document only 'because I was a member of the Joint Committee

at the time',⁹ whilst Dr Brown and Mr Aubrey informed the Baptist Union Council meeting on 8 March that they had not been consulted about the inclusion of their names on the *Outline*.¹⁰

To accompany the *Outline* Martin published on behalf of the FoR the booklet *Can We Unite?*, where he reasserted his support for the Scheme, but stressed that it was not being endorsed as a final basis of negotiations by anybody,¹¹ and reiterated his previous arguments that such a reunion would be one of comprehension.¹² On the membership of the Church the difficulty of baptism came to the fore, but Martin restated the Scheme's recognition of both infant and believer's baptism as permissible in the united Church, the former looking forward to and being completed by personal repentance and faith and instruction in the doctrines, privileges and duties of the Church. As far as communion was concerned, he believed that the only contentious point was over its administration, which would have to be by those duly authorized - which, it must be said, was a rather open and ambiguous statement.¹³

It soon appeared that Martin was alone in his ecumenical aspirations. Though this was not, in fact, the case, he became the focus of attention for the strong opposition within the Baptist Union to the unity schemes, chief amongst whom were the Baptist businessman, benefactor and member of the Baptist Union Council, Robert Wilson Black JP, and Dr Henry Townsend, Principal of Manchester Baptist College. Black quickly declared, 'Mr Martin appears to be the only one among the four members of the Baptist Union Council whose names are printed in the list of the Committee who believes in the Scheme of Re-union that has been published. Perhaps I may ask whether he was the only 'Baptist' on the small Committee which prepared the Scheme. The answer might throw light on many points.'¹⁴ Black's opposition was to surface again at the March meeting of the Council.

Henry Townsend, in the same letters column, also launched a stinging attack on Martin. He publicly announced that the Baptist Union Council in the previous November had resolved that, while desiring the fullest co-operation with the other Free Churches, did not think that organic union was practicable, and he proceeded to ask why Martin, as the Union's representative, had not presented their position to the Committee. 'Mr Martin is entitled to hold and propagate these views, but his letter and his responsibility for these documents cannot be divorced from his representative standing'.¹⁵

A week later, whilst the Revd A. Tildsley of Poplar and Bromley Tabernacle suggested that no more time should be given to the subject of reunion,¹⁶ Hugh Martin defended both himself and his involvement in the preparation of the *Outline*. It is clear from the tone of his self-defence just how hurt he had been by the attacks of Black and Townsend. 'I did not elect myself . . . nor did I ever seek election. I am glad to serve the denomination when I can, but if the Council does not wish me to represent it there is an easy remedy - it can omit to elect me. My views have always been known, and I was not appointed under false premises . . . I am always

scrupulously careful to distinguish, when necessary between my personal views and those of the denomination as a whole. I fully realize that my views on re-union are those of a minority.' He lamented Wilson Black's reference to him as a Baptist only in quotation marks and defended his position: 'I could easily give the names of many honoured Baptists of past generations, to say nothing of the present, who would side with me rather than with him on the present issue.' He proceeded to underscore the fact that his actions had committed the Baptist Union to nothing, and his belief that he had represented its interests in the 'Conversations' to which he had been sent. 'I have put forward the Baptist view, and clear signs of that can be seen in all three documents'. Martin then went on the offensive, declining to apologise for his connection with the documents, of which he was proud, reiterating again his belief that it was along such lines that the United Church of the future would come. 'I shall deeply regret it if the Baptists stand out, but I have never said, in private or in public, that the Baptist Union was likely to agree with the Scheme'. Martin sought to answer his critics by affirming his personal convictions: 'I am a Baptist, and I glory in it, but I do not believe that our denomination has any monopoly of the truth . . . I do not believe in infant baptism, but I am certainly prepared to join a Church fellowship with those who do, on the basis of our common faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Bigger issues than baptism are at stake in the world to-day, however important baptism may be in its own sphere.'¹⁷

The subsequent pages of the *Baptist Times* reveal the depth of feelings within the denomination on the reunion issue, the majority falling in behind Laws, Townsend and Black, in opposing the reunion position whose figurehead was Hugh Martin,¹⁸ though Martin was not without some support.¹⁹ A paragraph from the *Outline*, noting the necessity of two forms of baptism in a United Church,²⁰ was submitted to a number of in-pastorate ministers, who were all but unanimous in their opposition to the proposals in the Scheme.²¹

The week after Martin's defence of his position, Henry Townsend launched yet another attack. He believed that instead of glorifying God, as Martin maintained, Baptist involvement in the Scheme would lead to confusion. Townsend wanted to draw a sharp distinction between organic unity and close co-operation, and believed that the Scheme's ideal of the former was at odds with both truth and history. In a tone reminiscent of T.R. Glover's opposition to Shakespeare in the early 1920s,²² Townsend wrote, 'The ideal and the fact of unity in the New Testament were based on truth. Any departure from the truth of the Gospel which imperilled the local church or churches was quickly dealt with by Paul . . . [He] did not begin with the ideal of unity and make all sorts of compromises to attain it or keep it; he began with loyalty to Christ, and his conception of the unity of the Church was motivated by, and grew out of such, loyalty'. Townsend was not prepared simply to accept Martin's statement that Baptists did not have a monopoly of the truth, a statement with which he would no doubt have agreed in general terms, but with reference to the *Outline* it was one he was committed to disputing. Townsend underscored the

fact that 'one of the biggest issues in this Scheme is baptism', observing that the Scheme insisted on every member of the church being baptized, that Anglo-Catholics and others believed infant baptism to be essential to salvation and that every person had to be baptized before being allowed to partake of the Lord's Supper. 'In the Baptist Union', Townsend continued, 'we have open membership and open communion churches . . . This Scheme kills the open communion and the open membership church. There are bigger issues than baptism because Baptists do not believe that baptism is necessary to salvation.'²³

When the Baptist Union Council met on 8 March, two resolutions brought before the meeting dealt directly with the *Outline*. The first, moved by Gilbert Laws and seconded by Wilson Black, stated:

That the members of the Council of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland, cannot, in consistency with the beliefs of Baptists as to the nature of the Church, the ministry of the Word, and the Ordinances of the Gospel, which beliefs they hold as a sacred trust,(1) recognize infant baptism as an alternative to believers' baptism,(2) admit the necessity of Episcopacy . . . (3) accept a sacerdotal interpretation of the pastoral office. The Council are therefore compelled to state that organic unity on the basis of the 'Outline of a Reunion Scheme for the Church of England and the Evangelical Free Churches of England', is not possible for Baptists . . .²⁴

Further progress in the expression of Christian unity, it was believed, would only be made by 'unreserved mutual recognition'. Explorations into federation of equal and autonomous churches would, however, find approval and support from the Council. As such, the resolution was in total harmony with previous declarations made by both the Council and the Baptist Assembly. 'Let it be made known throughout all the Churches that Baptists are not in the market selling their principles, neither are they behind closed doors agreeing to compromises that would destroy their effectiveness.' The motion was carried with four dissentients.²⁵

The second resolution, moved by Dr Rushbrooke, was carried unanimously. It called for the documents on Christian unity under discussion to be referred to a Special Committee with instructions to draw up a statement incorporating the earlier resolution of the Council, setting forward the position of the Baptist Union as expressed in the *Reply to the Lambeth Appeal of 1926* and dealing with any other matters the Committee deemed appropriate.²⁶ The Committee appointed was chaired by Wheeler Robinson, Principal of Regent's Park College, and included R.L. Child, P.W. Evans, Principal of Spurgeon's College, C.T. Le Quesne and F. Townley Lord. The second of the two *Baptist Times* reports of the Council proceedings revealed even more clearly Wilson Black's opposition, when it quoted him saying that, after re-reading the document, he was surprised that 'any Baptist could consider it, for it recognized infant baptism as an alternative to believers' baptism'. But the report also recorded Hugh Martin's assertions that at the Lambeth conversations he had repeatedly stated the Baptist position with regard to baptism,

the lay administration of the sacraments, and others matters discussed. It even recorded that Martin agreed with most of what Gilbert Laws had said, and maintained that if he had felt that the Scheme of reunion involved all that had been read into it, he himself would not touch it.²⁷

In the same issue of the *Baptist Times*, Gilbert Laws fired another salvo against the unity movement. Making explicit reference to pamphlets from the FoR and Free Church Unity Group, he again denounced those who proposed following the pathway to organic union. 'They believe it as earnestly as I and others believe the contrary'. He highlighted five areas as those on which Baptists could not give ground: episcopacy, infant baptism, the ministry, the authority of the Scriptures, and a national Church.²⁸

At the same time that this debate was going on, another debate was in full swing. At the meeting of the Baptist Union Council on 8 March 1938, the purchase of a site in Russell Square, London, was also under consideration which would have led to the Baptist Union and Baptist Missionary Society moving together into one building. At this meeting Martin tabled an amendment which declared that the Russell Square scheme was premature. It was seconded by Revd T. Hayward from Salisbury and would have wrecked the scheme. The amendment was defeated, but in the end the scheme itself came to nothing. It had been the vision of R. Wilson Black and it can only be conjectured whether Martin's views of the premature nature of the project contributed to Black's hostility towards him on the reunion discussions which were taking place at the same time.²⁹

It can be seen, then, that in the weeks leading up to and immediately after the Council meeting on 8 March, the reunion movement, and in particular Hugh Martin, were on the receiving end of an intense onslaught from those opposing the reunion schemes. The effect on Martin was considerable. In a doleful letter, he announced his resignation. 'Will you kindly allow me space enough to say that, in view of the resolution of the Baptist Union Council . . . I have resigned my position as a member of the Joint Conversations at Lambeth. The Outline Scheme was put forward, as it clearly states, not as a final document, but as a basis for discussion . . . I do not believe for a moment that it involves the positions attacked in the Council resolution . . . The sub-committee has only been appointed to formulate more fully the reasons for its total rejection. Many Baptists will share my profound regret at this attitude. With this letter, so far as I am concerned, this correspondence ceases.'³⁰ And, with the exception of the Baptist Union's official reply to the three documents in November 1938, cease it effectively did. The *Reply* acknowledged receipt of the documents, but, 'with profound regret', stated that Baptists did not regard the *Outline Scheme* 'as affording a basis for organic reunion', the reasons already being laid out in the 1926 *Reply to the Lambeth Appeal*.³¹ Baptism in the New Testament, the 1938 *Reply* reiterated, was the immersion of believers, thus Baptists were unable to accept the subsequent extension of the rite to infants. This position was itself based upon the conviction that the essential

meaning and value of baptism according to the New Testament was changed or obscured when administered to those who lacked the cardinal requirements of repentance and faith. Because Baptists recognized the church as a fellowship of believers they could not recognize infant baptism as an alternative form of admission into the united Church of England (p.149). Though prepared to consider any change of order in Baptist church polity which would increase the efficiency of the church, they were unable to take on episcopacy purely on the basis of its prominent place in church history and similarly they rejected episcopal ordination and reasserted the priesthood of all believers (pp.149-50). The *Reply* concluded with an acknowledgement of the value of intercourse and discussion amongst different traditions 'for the promotion of mutual understanding of firmly held beliefs which is the necessary condition for fruitful co-operation', believing 'that increased loyalty to such convictions on the part of all, coupled with the willingness to learn from each other and to be ready at all times to test convictions by the authority of revelation, will bring all the Churches nearer together and nearer to the will of their common Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ' (p.151).

HUGH MARTIN: ECUMENICAL WRITER

The finest and fullest expression of Martin's views on reunion appeared in September 1941 as the Religious Book Club's book of the month.³² *Christian Reunion: A Plea for Action* undoubtedly returned the whole reunion issue to the forefront of the denomination's thought which had, for the first few years of the War, been otherwise occupied. Written expressly for 'the general membership of the churches, ministerial and lay', he sought to present 'the great importance of Christian Reunion' before as many as he could, 'and to make clearer how matters stand to-day and the nature of the issues at stake'.³³ The reviewer for the *Baptist Quarterly* concluded, 'This *Plea* deserves careful study . . . We do not recall another which deals so competently and fairly with the various issues involved'. However, the review began with the admission, 'Mr Martin is the flaming apostle of Christian Reunion, although when he thinks of the indifference of the average church member he may feel himself a voice crying in the wilderness', and later included the discouraging remark, 'He is an optimist, however, if he thinks that Baptists will accept that "the total action in infant baptism and confirmation is the same as in believer's baptism"'.³⁴

The practical case for unity, according to Martin, could be stated under three headings: the state of the world called for it; it was demanded by the need for efficient Christian service; and the mission field also called for it (pp.15-29). On the practicalities, Martin admitted, 'Of course there are differences of opinion, and strong ones, among Christians about important matters of belief and practice'. However, 'Behind all our Christian divergences there is a large measure of unity of faith and spirit which is denied true expression by our organizational divisions' (pp.46-7). Later he announced, 'Those of us who long passionately for Christian

unity are not longing for uniformity. We abhor compromise. It is comprehension we seek' (p.50).

In a chapter on 'The Church of the New Testament' and under the heading of 'Organization', he confessed that it was the ministry and apostolic succession which were 'the centre of present-day difficulty about reunion. Problems of the ministry and sacraments which now divide us can be settled only by coming to a prior agreement as to the nature and purpose of the Church' (p.65). Then, after a chapter outlining the development of the ecumenical movement, Martin came to his chapter, 'The Basis of Unity: Creed and Sacraments'.³⁵ Here, Martin opened with a statement most Baptists would have refuted outright, but which reflects at once the depth of his involvement and the unreality of his expectation: 'A common plan of unity is gradually emerging out of the prolonged and intimate discussions of recent years' (p.104). This was followed by four assertions which he believed could be made as to the nature of a United Church. Its unity would be based upon a common faith, acceptance of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, a form of church order comprehending episcopal, presbyterial and congregational elements, and freedom from State control in spiritual affairs. 'On these principles substantial agreement has been achieved', he declared, 'in many discussions between representatives of the churches. If they were accepted by the churches in general, they would provide sufficient basis for immediate steps towards reunion'. Martin proposed to use as a text, what he called 'the agreements' registered in the 1938 *Outline*, though it has already been shown that, as far as Baptists were concerned, these agreements were more imagined than real (pp.105-6). Martin effectively admitted this in his saying that the 'substantial agreement' of which he so freely spoke existed only between 'representatives' in the reunion discussions, and even this was not wholly the case, as was indicated by three out of the four Baptist representatives to the Lambeth Joint Conferences having distanced themselves from the *Outline Scheme* itself.

Differences of opinion which were recognized as legitimate within the present denominations, Martin claimed, would not be made a barrier against union between them, and later he suggested that, on the sacraments, though there were few areas over which misunderstanding was more rife, yet there were by no means such wide disagreements as appeared on the surface, and there was no necessary ground for continued disunity (pp.108, 116). As far as Baptists at least were concerned, Martin could not have been more wrong, as Shakespeare had been before him.

Martin claimed that baptism was a problem only for Baptists. 'Writing as a Baptist', he continued, 'I am anxious to advance a reconciling point of view in a realm where most Baptists feel no reconciliation is possible'. The consensus of scholarly work on baptism, he observed, was that New Testament baptism was the immersion of believers upon profession of faith. Yet some scholars held that, though there was no explicit reference to infant baptism, it could nevertheless be assumed that there were unmentioned ones, for example, in the household baptisms

of Acts. Despite such arguments, Martin nailed his colours to the mast when he wrote that it could at least be maintained that the words of Paul on baptism were meaningless except as applied to believers. 'The New Testament theory of baptism and so far as the records go, the practice also, assume faith in the recipient.' The Baptist conception of baptism involved the following elements: first, the candidate's personal testimony to his faith in Christ, a sign of conversion and not a means to it; second, moral and spiritual union with Christ in dedication to his service and repudiation of sin. Immersion in water symbolized burial to sin and a rising again to newness of life; third, a means of grace and a baptism of the Spirit in response to the candidate's and church's prayers; and fourthly, entrance into church membership. These emphases Baptists derived from the New Testament which they held as the ultimate authority and it was not in the competence of the church to modify the rite in a way which obscured its essential New Testament meaning, as when it was administered to those lacking the cardinal requirements of repentance and faith (pp.118-9).

What paedobaptist churches had done was to divide the New Testament practice into two, as baptism, on any theory, was incomplete without the response of faith, before or after: hence the rite of confirmation. Martin then asked, 'Can it not be said that the total action, if that phrase may be permitted, in infant baptism and confirmation is the same as in believer's baptism, as the *Scheme* suggests?' (p.120). Infant baptism emphasized the grace of God; believer's baptism expressed the response in repentance, faith and obedience (p.121). From here, Martin proceeded, 'I believe that the Baptists are right in holding to the New Testament practice, but I do not agree that this necessitates their refusal to enter into church unity with others who do not. I do not believe that this issue lies at the heart of the Gospel. The real nature of the Baptist witness concerns the doctrine of the Church and its composition; it is only incidentally concerned with the rite of baptism. We maintain that baptism should be the baptism of believers.' Immersion preserved the true Pauline symbolism, and a baptismal service was a moving proclamation of the Gospel. But immersion, as opposed to sprinkling, was a secondary matter.³⁶ Baptist baptism was not *adult* baptism, rather it was the faith of the recipient which mattered. 'Our fundamental contention is that the Church is composed of believers only' (p.122). The place of faith in relation to baptism and church membership, he concluded, demanded much careful examination if reunion was to make progress. Baptists, however, needed to consider more sympathetically the real beliefs of paedobaptists (p.124).³⁷

After the onslaught against him which elicited his resignation from official Baptist involvement in the ecumenical scene, Martin by no means ceased his active participation in and commitment to Christian unity through other channels. From its birth in 1942, Martin was a major figure in the emerging British Council of Churches. He served as Chairman of the Administrative Committee (formerly the Finance and Administration Committee) from 1943 to 1956, was Vice-President of

the Council with William Manson from 1950 to 1952, and it is worth noting that many of the BCC's reports and publications were published by the SCM Press.³⁸ When Martin retired from the chairmanship of the Executive Committee of the BCC in 1962, Ernest Payne was elected to succeed him, somewhat surprisingly as both men were from the same tradition.³⁹ Martin also wrote on behalf of the BCC, publishing in 1962 an eight-page document for use in ecumenical discussion groups, which had originally been prepared at the request of the Sussex Council of Churches in which he was involved at the time.⁴⁰

As will have become clear, Martin's views were substantially consistent throughout his life. Themes already noted a number of times at various stages of his work appeared again when, in early 1957, the Revd Angus McMillan of Streatham claimed that the final form of the proposals put before the Baptist churches of Ceylon would lead to the disappearance of a distinctive Baptist witness in Ceylon within twenty years. He urged Ceylon Baptists to 'think most carefully before taking that irrevocable step' which would sever them from other world Baptists, making them an insignificant section of a predominantly Anglican United Church. McMillan insisted that it was nonsense to believe that Baptists who joined a United Church which recognized infant baptism as valid could remain in real fellowship with Baptist churches which regarded it as completely unscriptural, and in so joining they would cease to be Baptists. By entering such a Union, Baptists would be obliged to admit that infant baptism was a valid form of baptism and that to suggest that by entering such a Union they would make a greater witness to Baptist principles than if they remained outside was ludicrous. Further, freedom of conscience would be denied and episcopacy would be regarded as fundamental. Therefore, the Ceylon Church Union Scheme was to be resisted as it would set the pattern for Union schemes elsewhere.⁴¹

Martin responded by agreeing with McMillan that vigilance was required to ensure that vital principles were not betrayed and that he had identified a very real difficulty in the Scheme, but dissented from the opinion that Baptist principles would disappear because of it. 'The difference between Christian and non-Christian is infinitely more important than the difference between Baptist and Paedo-Baptist'. He continued, 'Baptists are *not* being asked to accept infant baptism as the true form of baptism, nor are they being asked to deny any of their fundamental beliefs'. The notion of baptismal regeneration was completely absent from the Scheme, and full membership was to be attained only through the public confession of a personal faith. 'What the Baptists of Ceylon are being invited to do is to join a Christian Church in which there are Paedo-Baptists, and to acknowledge our common faith and witness'. On baptism, Martin conceded that this was the most serious difficulty for Baptists, but he did so recognizing that the administration of believer's baptism to someone who in later life felt conscientiously troubled as to the earlier validity of their infant baptism was itself a great difficulty for paedobaptists. 'But if we recognize their rights of conscience, and the fact that they are sincerely seeking to

follow the will of Christ in practising infant baptism, though we cannot agree with their judgment, then they ought to allow a similar liberty to those with Baptist convictions, though they do not share them.⁴²

Martin's baptismal beliefs gained further explication in a number of articles he wrote,⁴³ yet few of his opponents seemed either able to comprehend or willing to contemplate that he was both a committed Baptist and ardent defender and advocate of Baptist principles and interests, whilst at the same time being equally committed to the cause of Christian unity and the establishment of a Reunited Church. This was so of Shakespeare before him,⁴⁴ and others subsequently.

A further example of the firmness of Martin's 'Protestant' convictions can be clearly seen in an actual letter he sent to a friend who was thinking of becoming a Roman Catholic.⁴⁵ In it, Martin cautioned against the young man's eager readiness to accept Catholic Truth Society's books without reading 'the other side' before making up his mind, and offered a Protestant book on the issues he had mentioned in his previous letter if it would be read. Candidly, Martin expressed his strong belief that 'on some important matters the RC Church is seriously and dangerously wrong, and I should be very sorry if you decide to join it.' He then proceeded to examine the matters of infallibility, arguing that there is no evidence of this in the New Testament or in history (noting that not all the popes were morally infallible as was evident by a number of gross papal sins) and that, in any case, it rested on a logical fallacy and presented an insoluble dilemma:

A man who accepts the infallibility of the Roman Church is really saying that his own judgment is infallible! He is pitting his judgment that the Church is infallible against the judgment of all those who say it is not. He must admit that his own judgment is *not* infallible and so may be misleading him. I do not believe in either an infallible Church or an infallible Bible. So long as a man remains a human personality he cannot divest himself of responsibility. And he ought not to want to.

Further, the Immaculate Conception and Bodily Assumption of the Virgin Mary, as well as the infallibility of the Pope, were denied and opposed by many Catholic teachers, including Aquinas, Bernard and Bonaventura. The Immaculate Conception was not proclaimed until 1854, papal infallibility in 1870, and the Bodily Assumption in 1950. 'If these are really fundamental parts of the Christian Faith one would have expected that an infallible Church would have discovered the fact long before that!' (p.13). As for the Roman claims about Peter, they went far beyond the legitimate interpretation of Matthew 16.17-19. As for Pope Pius IV's claim that all bishops should only interpret the Bible 'according to the unanimous consent of the holy fathers', meaning the early Church's theologians, then since they (including Hilary, Gregory of Nyssa, Chrysostom and Cyril of Alexandria who said the rock was Peter's confession of faith, whilst Augustine said the Rock is Christ himself) were far from unanimous, the matter is 'Very perplexing . . . for the poor bishops!' (pp.13-4). Concerning Peter's successors, even if the exaggerated claims

for Peter were allowed, it would not follow that he could pass his position on to anyone else, as 'You cannot have a succession of foundation stones!' (p.15) Neither the New Testament nor the early Church knew anything about a special authority having been given to the bishops of Rome (p.15).

Martin agreed that Roman Catholic worship was impressive in its reverence, which was often lacking in Protestant churches, 'But much depends on the particular church and priest'. The atmosphere of worship varied in both Catholic and Protestant churches. He closed thus:

There are many fine RCs and there is much in the RC Church which I admire. And I agree that there is much to criticise in Protestant churches too. No Church is perfect. By my trouble is that some of the fundamental principles of the RC Church seem to me to be clearly false and unfounded. I cannot for a moment accept their exclusive claims and their attempt to shut other Christians out of the Church. And I have many other difficulties beyond what is said above, as I hinted in my last letter. I could easily write a book about all this, expanding and giving evidence for what I have said above. But this letter is nearly a book already and I have probably exhausted your patience. (p.15)

There can be little doubt that Martin's deep Baptist convictions and equally deep catholicity proved enigmatic at best and incomprehensible to the majority of grass-roots Baptists whose position, for the greater part of the twentieth century, Martin described as independent. Perhaps this tension in Martin's thought, as outsiders understood it, is nowhere better held together than in an address to the Baptist Historical Society in April 1952, with the subtitle, '*Independency and Catholicity*'.⁴⁶ Here Martin sought to walk the tightrope between the local and the universal Church, between the denomination which he loved and the wider, catholic Church which he equally loved. His was a wrestling with elements which can only truly exist within a creative tension, seeking neither to fall one way or the other.

In this paper Martin sought to refute the oft levelled charge that Baptists held an 'atomistic, isolationist doctrine of the Church'. He argued that in the New Testament the Great Church was 'fundamental and prior to the local church', and its picture of the Church revealed 'varieties of forms of organization, diversities of gifts and of doctrinal emphasis', but its central concern was to 'assert and maintain the unity of the Church'. The universal Church to which all believers belonged preceded the company of believers in a particular place. 'One thing is certain: the Church in the New Testament is *not* a federation of local congregations. There are not many churches, but one Church in many places. The local church is the local expression of the one great universal community in heaven and earth.' 'Unity of spirit', Martin pressed, meant more than 'good fellowship and absence of competition', for it implied an outward unity, which Paul, in Ephesians 4.3-4, said is an already existing unity. The New Testament ascribed a threefold unity to the Church: unity of origin, a social unity and a unity of temper and belief due to a

common loyalty and pursuit of a common task. A unity that is compared in 1 Corinthians 12.12-30 to the unity of a human body, no part being autonomous, though diversity exists.⁴⁷ This led to the conclusion that 'no New Testament local church thought of itself as self-contained and self-sufficient . . . It was one Church in many places: not many congregations uniting to make a church. The Great Church came first.'⁴⁸

From this, Martin argued that, as a matter of principle, Baptists were not held to any one form of church government and that independency was not isolationism, as the existence of Baptist Associations demonstrated, and Martin proceeded to support this from other historical Baptist sources.⁴⁹ 'The local church is a true church only if it lives in fellowship with others.'⁵⁰ He then answered the question, 'What constitutes a church?', saying that it was more than a group of believers, 'but a disciplined and ordered company with a pastor and sacraments, solemnly associated by a covenant'. To the question, 'What constitutes a "minister"?', Martin claimed that 'since the ministry is the gift of God to the church and the call to exercise the functions of a minister comes from Him, a man who is so called is not only the minister of a local Baptist church, but also a minister of the whole church of Jesus Christ', and this is maintained by the sharing in the act of calling, training and ordination by the local church and Association, College and General Superintendent (p.318). Whilst not advocating any rigid ecclesiastical system, Martin, for both religious and practical reasons, accepted that certain responsibilities should rest in the local congregation, yet he nevertheless did not regard independency as divinely ordained. 'We ought to be interdependents, not independents, and certainly never isolationists. If independency means that a local congregation is self-creating, self-propagating, self-supporting, self-contained, self-governed, self-sufficient - no church is or could be or ought to be. Such a system is - or would be, because we do not have it in practice - unscriptural in basis, unworkable in practice, and un-Christian in spirit' (p.318).

A church should be 'a Christocracy' but, allowing the description of a democracy to the local church when understood aright, Martin still believed 'that there are many matters where we should delegate authority to associations and the national Union' (pp.318-9). Citing the Baptist Union's Polity Commission's Report of 1942, he asked, 'is the Spirit's guidance only made known to the local church? . . . In our concern to guard the autonomy of the local church we have not always remembered that the Spirit of God speaks in guidance not only to the individual church, but also to a fellowship of churches who have bound themselves together in the service of our Lord, whether in a district group, or an association or a Union' (p.319).⁵¹ Martin closed with perhaps as succinct a summary of his own convictions as can be found:

Our togetherness is as vital to us as our independency, and as much a part of our history. Let us preserve our freedom to be led by the Spirit to the most efficient polity in His service. We have much to learn about an ordered

liberty from our own history; to say nothing of the experience of other denominations. Should we not be in a better position to plan and to use our resources, in evangelism, in church extension and church closing (quite as vital an issue in some places) and in a host of ways, in meeting the needs of the contemporary situation, if we had a properly delegated system of authority, over the denomination as a whole, and not only over the aided churches? We need a flexible polity to meet a new situation. We have not yet learned how to harmonize the local and the catholic; the necessary local autonomy and initiative, with the equally necessary co-operation and fellowship and common action in matters where more than one local church is concerned. (p.319)

To the very end of his life, Martin continued undeterred in his support of Christian unity, trying to dispel widespread Baptist distrust and fear of national and international ecumenical developments. In his March 1962 report to the Baptist Union Council on the proceedings of the Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches at New Delhi the previous year, Dr Leonard Champion strongly urged that Baptists should share within ecumenical developments.⁵² This position gained the ardent support of Dr Martin, who strongly denied that either the WCC or the BCC were trying to commit the Churches to some kind of reunion scheme.⁵³

In no way can the present study claim to have covered the fullness and importance of the life and work of Hugh Martin, or, for that matter, of the man himself. The Revd Dr Hugh Martin is, however, one of the most important Baptist figures this century. It is sad but not surprising that he was never nominated for the Presidency of the Baptist Union, but, as John Hough remarks,⁵⁴ he would probably have declined it and would not have been sufficiently popular to win the poll, not least because of his ecumenical convictions and involvement, but also because, according to Hough, he was not an impressive platform personality. In some circles there was a prejudice against him because his ministry, though distinguished, lay outside the local church pastorate. Martin is also notable, though not unique, for having been ordained into the Baptist ministry and accepted on to the accredited list of Baptist ministers despite never having been called into the pastorate and, apparently, never intending to enter pastoral ministry. His ministry, however different from others of his own tradition, proved highly significant to the developing face of British Christianity, and for that he should rightly be given credit and honour. Ernest Payne acknowledged this: 'The cause of Christian unity was one to which he gave untiringly of his strength, both by speech and pen', and there is no doubt that he 'played an essential part in the steady improvement in church relations in this country'.⁵⁵

It is a much overlooked fact that many leading British ecumenists have been and are Baptists.⁵⁶ Morris West writes, 'It is one of the continued ironies of British church life that Baptists, who on the whole are judged by most of the media to be extremely slow and backward ecumenically, have supplied a number of the leading officers within the organized ecumenical movement, particularly in the British

Council of Churches and the Free Church Federal Council'.⁵⁷ Yet it is a sad reflection on the Baptist denomination, that many of these have never been fully recognized for the role and leadership that they have provided and continue to provide. Instead of pride from their fellow Baptists, many have been overlooked and even derided, nevertheless they, with Hugh Martin, have served their Lord and his Church with integrity and distinction.

NOTES

- 1 Part 1 was published in January 1997, and Part 2 in April 1997. In Part 2 n.46 'J. B. Middleton should read 'J. B. Middlebrook'. There is a further error on p.72, which should read 'The importance of the SCM in the development of the ecumenical movement is hard to overestimate', not 'underestimate'.
- 2 For a brief introduction and text of the *Outline of a Reunion Scheme for the Church of England and the Free Churches in England*, see G.K.A. Bell, ed., *Documents on Christian Unity: Third Series 1930-48*, 1948, pp.71-101. A brief review appears in *BQ* 9, 1, January 1938, p.66, which, noting who the Baptist representatives were, expressed the opinion that 'they would not unanimously agree that "Baptism may be administered in infancy or upon profession of faith"'.
 - 3 The *Sketch* itself was a draft document prepared by the research group for the FoR and drawn up by Hugh Martin. Although never published, the *Sketch* was submitted to the Joint Conference and closely followed in the official *Outline*. Information from Hugh Martin in a letter to Jordan, *Free Church Unity*, pp.176-8. Bell, *Documents 1930-48*, p.71, incorrectly dates the *Sketch* as 1936.
 - 4 *Outline*, pp.71-3.
 - 5 *Reply of the Free Church Federal Council to the Joint Conference of Representatives of the Church of England and the Free Churches regarding the three documents presented to it by the Conference in 1938* in Bell, *op.cit.*, pp.102-19. The Federal Council and the National Free Church Council had amalgamated in 1940 to form the Free Church Federal Council.
 - 6 J.C. Carlile, 'Outline of the United Church', *Baptist Times* (hereafter *BT*) 27 January 1938, pp.71-2.
 - 7 'Another Outline of Re-Union', *BT* 3 February 1938, p.86.
 - 8 H. Martin, 'Outline of the United Church', *BT* 3 February 1938, p.84.
- 9 G. Laws, 'Outline of the United Church', *BT* 3 February 1938, p.84.
- 10 See 'The Council in Session', *BT* 17 March 1938, p.208.
- 11 Martin, *Can We Unite? An Examination of the Outline of a Reunion Scheme issued by the Lambeth Joint Conference*, SCM 1938, p.8. The booklet included three pages of 'Questions for Discussion' prepared by Revd Trevor Kilborn, pp.30-2.
- 12 Martin, *Can We Unite?*, pp.9-13.
- 13 *ibid.*, pp.15-7.
- 14 R. W. Black, 'Outline of the United Church', *BT* 10 February 1938, p.104. Black disapproved of the *Outline* admitting infant baptism on the grounds that this and episcopacy depreciated the scriptures. It should be remembered that the *Outline* had been prepared by the FoR, in which Martin was a leading light.
- 15 H. Townsend, 'Re-Union and Baptist Union Representation', *BT* 10 February 1938, p.104.
- 16 A. Tildsley, 'Re-Union', *BT* 17 February 1938, p.124.
- 17 H. Martin, 'Outline of a Re-Union Scheme', *BT* 17 February 1938, p.124. Martin was long in membership with the Hampstead Garden Suburb Free Church of which Dr Rushbrooke had been the first minister. See E.A. Payne, *James Henry Rushbrooke: A Baptist Greatheart*, 1954, pp.22-5; Bernard Green, *Tomorrow's Man: A Biography of J. H. Rushbrooke*, 1997, pp.49-60.
- 18 Revd Richard A.J. Cusden of Putney, 'Outline of a Re-union Scheme', *BT* 24 February 1938, p.144, argued that to enter into a United Church would lead to separation from other Baptists throughout the world.
- 19 P.T. Thomson, Baptist delegate with Aubrey to the Oxford Conference on Church, Community and State in July 1937, pleaded for generosity and tolerance in the controversy. Maurice F. Hewett of Norwich called for positive letters in

- the debate, observing that all interpretations of scripture were secondary to love for God. Thomas Edmunds agreed with Dr Townsend but added 'one word of support' for Martin's appeal: despite 'the compromises he may be ready to make', Baptists ought to be desirous of seeing 'the Church of Christ on earth a unity'. R.S. McHardy expressed appreciation of F.C. Bryan's article ('Unity, Uniformity and Union'), drawing attention to each denomination's responsibility to preserve the truth entrusted to it, but equally to manifest their unity in Christ to the world. See *BT* 1938: 24 February (p.149), 3 March (p.164) and 10 March (p.184).
- 20 'Baptism may be administered in infancy or upon profession of faith. Where baptism is administered in infancy, communicant status shall be attained only upon a profession of faith following upon due instruction and sealed in a public service of Confirmation or such other service of attaining communicant status as shall be agreed upon', see Bell, *op.cit.*, p.75.
- 21 Under the heading 'A United Church: The Question of Baptism', these included R. Guy Ramsey of Horfield, Bristol, R.W. Waddelow, then of Adelaide Place, Glasgow, and later Broadmead, Bristol, Frank Buffard from Yeovil, H.W. Janisch of College Street, Northampton, Theodore M. Bamber of Rye Lane, Peckham, W. J. Grant of Watford, Melville Evans and H.H. Pewtress of Fillebrook, Leytonstone (*BT* 1938: 10 February (p.108), 17 (p.133), 24 (p.153) and 10 March (p.193). However, R.L. Child of Broadmead, Bristol, (*BT* 17 February 1938, p.133) gave the Scheme some benefit of the doubt by allowing two possible interpretations: either the two baptisms would be regarded as alternative modes of the same rite, of which he disapproved believing that believer's baptism would be bound to disappear, or that Baptist and Paedobaptist churches would take their place side by side in one new denomination, a federal union, to which he would not feel the same initial objection.
- 22 See T.R. Glover, *Free Churches and Re-Union*, Cambridge 1921, pp.49-51. Glover was not opposed to reunion proposals *per se*, but against the compromise of truth.
- 23 H. Townsend, 'Bigger Issues Than Baptism', *BT* 24 February 1938, p.148.
- 24 No-one seems to have referred to the practice of both forms of baptism in already existing Union Churches.
- 25 There is a detailed account of this Council meeting, including a lengthy quotation from Laws, in H. Townsend, *Robert Wilson Black*, 1954, pp.103-8.
- 26 J.C. Carille, 'Baptists and Church Union: Declaration by the Council', *BT* 17 March 1938, pp.201-2. For text of 'Reply of the Churches in Membership with the Baptist Union to the "Appeal to all Christian People" issued by the Lambeth Conference of 1920', see J. H. Rushbrooke *et al.*, *The Faith of the Baptists*, papers from the Leeds Baptist Assembly, May 1926, n.d. but 1926, pp.85-91, and discussion in Payne, *Baptist Union*, esp. pp.186-7, 196-7.
- 27 'The Council in Session', *BT* 17 March 1938, p.208. See also Townsend, *Black*, p.108.
- 28 G. Laws, 'Re-Union', *BT* 17 March 1938, p.211.
- 29 On Martin's amendment, see West, 'The Reverend Secretary Aubrey, Part II', *BQ* 34, 7, July 1992, p.268. On the Scheme as a whole, see also Townsend, *Black*, pp.83-94; Payne, *Baptist Union*, pp.208-11; Brian Stanley, *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society, 1792-1992*, Edinburgh 1992, pp.386-8.
- 30 Martin, 'Re-union', *BT* 17 March 1938, p.204.
- 31 *Reply of the Council of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland to the letter of the Federal Council of the Evangelical Free Churches, conveying the three documents which had been issued for the consideration of the Churches by a Joint Committee of Anglicans and Free Churchmen*, reprinted in E. A. Payne, *The Fellowship of Believers*, 1952 edition, Appendix C 'Christian Reunion', pp.148-9.
- 32 See *Religious Book Club Bulletin* 24, September 1941, p.6. This included a page and a half of 'Questions for Discussion on Christian Reunion: A Plea for Action', pp.7-8.
- 33 Martin, *Christian Reunion: A Plea for Action*, 1941, p.7.
- 34 'Christian Reunion. A Plea for Action, by Hugh Martin', *BQ* 10, 8, October 1941, p.460. See also the brief note on p.410 of the same issue.
- 35 Followed by chapters on 'The Basis of Unity: Church Order', and 'The Basis of Unity: Church and State'.
- 36 Martin was not alone in asserting the secondary nature of the mode. Chief amongst such was H. Wheeler Robinson, *Baptist Principles*, 1925, pp.14-16.
- 37 At the same time as Martin's *Christian Reunion* appeared in 1941, *An Appeal for Free Church Union* was published, with sixteen Baptist ministers and one layman among the signatories.

- In a critical notice, the reviewer doubted whether a huge, uniform United Free Church was desirable and asked the signatories whether they had given any thought to the pressing problem of union among Baptists. 'Reunion', *BQ* 10, 8, October 1941, p.410. No copy of the *Appeal* has been located. This source does not list the signatories.
- 38 Sec E.A. Payne, *Thirty Years of the British Council of Churches 1942-1972*, 1972, pp.46-7, and Appendix IV for the publications, pp.50-1.
- 39 W.M.S. West, *To Be A Pilgrim: a memoir of Ernest A. Payne*, 1983, p.128.
- 40 Martin, *Towards Unity: Notes for Discussion Groups on Christian Unity*, BCC n.d. but 1962.
- 41 A. McMillan, 'Church Union in Ceylon A Betrayal of Baptist Principles', *The Fraternal* 103, January 1957, pp.23-7, quotation p.24.
- 42 Martin, 'Church Union in Ceylon: Who is Betraying who?' *Fraternal* 104, April 1957, pp.10-12, quotations pp.10-11. He also dismissed the claim that the United Church would be essentially Anglican and sacerdotalist, and concluded, 'There are features of the Scheme which I do not like. But that it "betrays Baptist principles" I entirely dispute', p.12.
- 43 Martin, 'Judson on Baptism', *BQ* 13, 1, January 1949, pp.25-8, a study of the views of the American missionary, Adoniram Judson; 'Baptism in the Fourth Century', *BQ* 13, 8, October 1950, pp.370-2, a study of the baptismal theology of Theodore of Mopsuestia; 'Baptism and Circumcision', *BQ* 14, 5, January 1952, pp.213-21, in which he examined the close relationship between the two covenants and rejected the argument that infant baptism had to exist in the New Covenant because circumcision existed in the Old; 'Baptism as Cleansing', *BQ* 16, 8, October 1956, pp.378-81, examining this aspect of theology, while carefully precluding a magical effect by inseparably linking its efficacy to the faith of the recipient. See also the exchange of letters in 'Baptism and Circumcision', *Theology* 53, 1950, between Martin and the Paedobaptist New Testament scholar, J.C. Fenton: Martin, August, pp.301-3; Fenton, October, pp.385-6; Martin, November, pp.423-4.
- 44 Shakespeare's baptismal beliefs, for example, are set out in his pamphlet, *Christian Baptism*, BU n.d.
- 45 Martin, 'An Antidote to Rome', *Fraternal* 133, July 1964, pp.12-15. This was the second of two letters. The first, unpublished, discussed transubstantiation, the Catholic attitude to the Bible and to other churches, and other matters. The second appeared, with a number of personal details omitted and the recipient named 'John'. Conjecture suggests that this may have been Denis Lant, mentioned by P. R. Clifford, *An Ecumenical Pilgrimage*, 1994, pp.138-9.
- 46 Martin, 'Baptists and the Great Church: Or Independency and Catholicity', *BQ* 14, 7, July 1952, p.310, italics added.
- 47 *ibid.*, pp.310-11.
- 48 *ibid.*, p.312.
- 49 Martin's expansive knowledge of and adherence to Scripture and Baptist principles was also reflected in his article, 'Ministerial Ordination. II', *Fraternal* 107, January 1958, pp.10-13, in which he commented on the Baptist Union's report, *The Meaning and Practice of Ordination Among Baptists*, 1957, welcoming it as displaying 'in a most healthy fashion' New Testament doctrine and the practice of Baptist churches, p.13.
- 50 Martin, 'Baptists and the Great Church', pp.312-6, quotation p.316. This address shows Martin's considerable grasp of and ability to use Baptist history and principles to support his arguments, underscoring the strength of his Baptist convictions - a fact sadly overlooked by his opponents.
- 51 Quoting the Report of the BU Polity Commission, November 1942, p.6.
- 52 L.G. Champion, 'Baptists Should Share in Ecumenical Movement', *BT* 22 March 1962, p.9.
- 53 Martin, 'Gaining a Richer and Fuller Faith: The Ecumenical Movement', *BT* 19 April 1962, p.9.
- 54 In a letter dated 4 October 1995.
- 55 Payne, 'Hugh Martin', *Baptist Handbook* 1965, p.361.
- 56 Further details will be given in A. R. Cross, 'Service to the Ecumenical Movement: The Contribution of British Baptists', to be published in a later edition of *BQ*.
- 57 West, *To be a Pilgrim*, p.128.