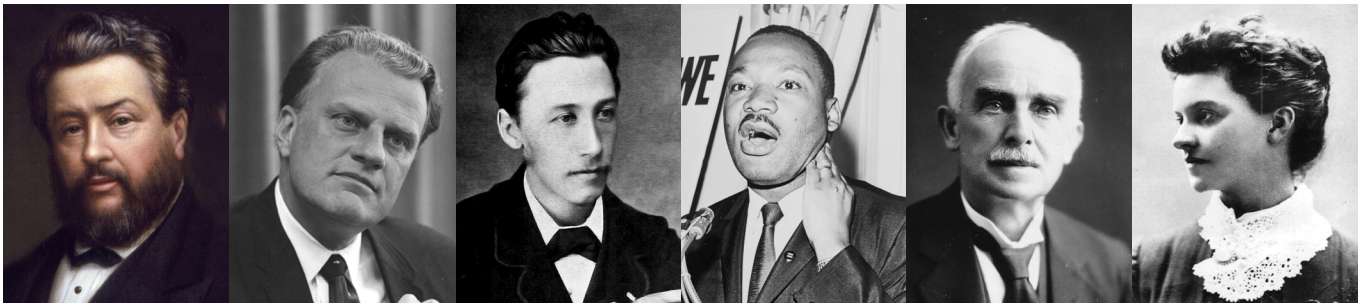

WHO ARE THE BAPTISTS?

Looking through a New Zealand lens

BY LAURIE GUY

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A nutshell introduction

The Baptist movement began amongst a small pocket of English exiles living in Amsterdam four centuries ago (1609). It has since has spread through the world, with an estimated 100 million members and adherents worldwide.

Its original heartland was England (the Amsterdam exiles moving back there in 1612). However, by the mid-nineteenth century the greatest strength of the Baptist movement was the United States of America where Baptists grew to become the largest Protestant denomination. In 1900 only 3% of the world's Baptists lived outside the United States, Canada and Britain. However, with the global spread of Baptists that figure is now 30%.

The New Zealand Baptist movement – an outgrowth of the English Baptists – began in 1851 with the start of a Baptist church in Nelson. Since then the movement has grown to more than 40,000 worshippers in 250 churches and fellowships.

Baptists worldwide may be classified broadly as 'orthodox' and 'evangelical.' Within that categorisation Baptists have traditionally held four distinctive emphases:

1. **A high view of Scripture.** The Bible is seen as inspired and authoritative and is the foundational guide for belief and behaviour.
2. **Congregational government** (rather than rule by elders, pastors or bishops). Membership of the church is for those who are committed to Jesus (a 'regenerate' membership). The members' meeting is the final decision-making authority, even though much may be delegated to leadership teams (elders, deacons, boards etc.) and ministry leaders (including pastors).
3. **Immersion baptism of believing adults who are committed to Jesus Christ** (not a baptism of infants).
4. **Liberty of conscience.** There is to be a separation of church and state and the state is not to coerce in matters of conscience.

To understand New Zealand Baptists, this booklet will:

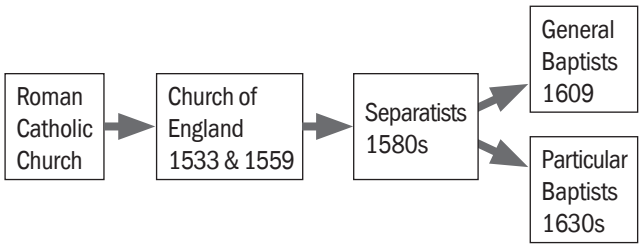
1. Explore the history of the English Baptists in order to understand their principles and practices, not only because they began the Baptist movement but also because of their influence on the New Zealand Baptist movement.
2. Survey Baptist history in the USA because of its influence on the worldwide Baptist movement and especially its influence on New Zealand Baptists from the twentieth century to the present.
3. Unpack the story of New Zealand Baptists: their history, their overseas mission work, and their stance on various public issues.
4. Consider the four main Baptist distinctives in the light of Scripture, history and the contemporary world.

Section One – A history of the English Baptists

BAPTIST BEGINNINGS

Till the 1530s England was firmly (Roman) Catholic. No other church was permitted. A very limited reformation occurred in the 1530s under Henry VIII leading to a break with Rome and the establishment of the Church of England (the Anglican Church). After Henry's death in 1547 the Protestant Reformation progressed further, eventually leading to a State church under Elizabeth I (1558 onwards).

A minority of Protestants remained unhappy, believing that the Reformation should have gone further in stripping away Roman Catholic practice and in returning to a New Testament church. This minority eventually became the Puritan wing of the Church of England. A small grouping of the 'Puritans' broke with the Church of England altogether, rejecting the system of bishops and believing that Christians should worship in independent congregations whose membership was made up of regenerate Christians (rather than everybody in society). These breakaways were known as Separatists or Independents, and later become the Congregational Church. The General Baptists emerged from the Separatists in 1609. A second Baptist grouping, the Particular Baptists, emerged also from the Separatists in the 1630s. These two Baptist groupings existed as separate identities in England until 1891 when the Baptist Union was formed. Diagrammatically the complex development looks like this:



Throughout the reign of Elizabeth I people were required to attend the state church (the Church of England). Non-compliance led to fines or worse for non-attendance. Thus when Separatist churches began to form in the 1580s they were doing something that was radical and dangerous. Several Separatists were executed for their beliefs and practices. The dangerous situation led to several Separatist congregations going into exile and taking refuge in the more tolerant Netherlands.

Among the leading Separatists were John Smyth (c.1570-1612) and Thomas Helwys (c.1575-c.1616). Smyth was an Anglican priest who adopted a Separatist stance in the early 1600s and led an illegal congregation at Gainsborough, Lincolnshire. Helwys was a wealthy layman who joined Smyth's congregation and became a leader there. The congregation moved to Amsterdam in 1607 to escape persecution. Smyth's group at first had fellowship with other Separatist bodies there but disagreements soon arose. One issue related to worship. Smyth believed that worship should come 'not out of the book but from the hart.' He would not even allow the Bible in the meetings because he regarded English translations as something less than the direct Word of God (the Bible in the original Hebrew and Greek). Prayer and singing of psalms had to be entirely spontaneous (this sounds similar to early Brethren and Pentecostal ideals).

Smyth's landlord and employer in Amsterdam was a Mennonite (Anabaptist) merchant. Probably that connection was a factor in the Smyth group embracing believers' baptism in 1609. Smyth had rejected baptism of infants as early as 1600. He went further in 1609, embracing the view that a regenerate church should be entered by believers' baptism. An additional justification for the 1609 (re)baptising was that the earlier (infant) baptism was administered by a 'false church', the Church of England being 'very an harlot', having come out of the 'loynes' of Rome.

Rather than seeking baptism from an existing group such as the Mennonites, Smyth started a new church, first baptising himself and then baptising about forty others. The baptism was done by pouring (affusion), not immersion. A few months later Smyth came to regret his self-baptism and approached the Mennonites to join them. Some of his group, led by Thomas Helwys, believed that what they had done was right and split off from the Smyth group. The Mennonites were cautious about allowing the Smyth group into their midst and absorbed that group only after Smyth's death in 1612. Smyth, who had earlier been divisive in his approach to truth, began to soften towards others who differed, maybe because of the ongoing illness he was now afflicted with. In 1610 he wrote a confession of faith of 100 articles entitled *Propositions and Conclusions Concerning True Christian Religion Conteyning a Confession of Faith of Certaine English People, Liuinge at Amsterdam*. Outstanding is Article 55:

> All penitent and faithfull Christians are brethre[n] in the communion of the outward church, whereso euer they liue, by what name soeuer they are knowen, which in truth and zeale, follow repentance and faith, though compassed with neuer so manie ignorances and infirmities: and we salute them all with a holie kisse, being hartilie grieved that wee which follow after one faith, and one spirit, one lord, and one God, one bodie, and one baptisme, should be rent into so manie sects, and schismes: and that only for matters of lesse moment.

Smyth was a courageous adventurer in his theology and practice of church. However, it did lead to divisiveness and instability for much of his life. Smyth was described by a contemporary as 'a learned man, and of good ability, but of an unsettled head.' Nevertheless, at the end we see a gracious Smyth recognising all penitent believing Christians as brothers and sisters, recognising that the points of difference were 'matters of lesse moment.' We salute a man who was harsh at times, who 'wobbled' at times, but ended in graciousness.

FOR REFLECTION

1. There seems to have been tension of thought in John Smyth between being based on Scripture and being based on the direct leading of the Holy Spirit. Does this suggest some commonalities with the modern Pentecostal movement today? What is your view on the relationship of Word and Spirit?

2. Does John Smyth's approach to worship have any relevance today?

EARLY BAPTIST ORIGINS BACK IN ENGLAND TO 1640

Helwys and eleven others broke with the Smyth group over the issue of joining the Mennonites, arguing that 'there is no succession or privilege in holy things.' In other words, it was OK to start a new church from scratch. Helwys issued a *Declaration of Faith of English People Remaining at Amsterdam* in 1611. Among other things this asserted believers' baptism, free will, the possibility of falling from grace, the right of each church to elect its own officers, including preaching elders, and both men and women deacons. It stressed the priesthood of all believers and prized small congregations where there could be genuine fellowship and potential participation by all in the worship gathering:

> That the members of everie Church or Congregacion ought to knowe one another, that so they may performe all the duties off love one towards another both to soule and bodie. Matt 18.15; 1 Thes 5.14; 1 Cor 12.25 . . . . And therefore a Church ought not to consist off such a multitude as cannot have particular knowledg off another.

Despite the dangers, Helwys and his small group felt constrained to return to England in 1611 because 'thousands of ignorant souls in our own country were perishing for lack of instruction.' The first Baptist Church in England established itself at Spitalfield outside London.

In 1612 Helwys wrote *A Short Declaration of the Mistery of Iniquity* arguing for religious liberty. All groups should have 'the blessed liberty to understand the Scriptures with their own spirits.' In no way should civil punishment be used for spiritual offences:

> Let them be heretikes, Turcks, Jewes, or whatsoever it apperteynes not to the earthly power to punish them in the least measure' in religious matters. While the king had full authority to 'commaund what ordinance of man he will and wee are to obey it', nevertheless he was to keep his hands off the church for 'with this Kingdom, our Lord the King hath nothinge to do.

Helwys sent an autographed copy to the king with a personal note in the flyleaf. Despite his plea for liberty of conscience Helwys was imprisoned for his views in 1612 and he died in prison somewhere between 1614 and 1616. Despite this setback several other small General Baptist churches emerged in England in the years to 1640.

The second stream of Baptists, the Particular Baptists emerged in the 1630s from a separatist church which began in the Southwark section of London in 1616. It was later known as the JLJ church, so named because of its first three pastors, Henry Jacob, John Lathrop, and Henry Jessey. Dissension about acknowledging the Church of England and its ceremonies as valid in any way, led to schism by a group led by Samuel Eaton in 1633. Church records state, 'Mr Eaton with Some others receiving a further Baptism.' In 1638 six more members of the JLJ church 'of ye same Judgment with Sam. Eaton' in relation to baptism, separated and joined with a 'Mr Spilsbury.' Spilsbury may have succeeded Eaton as pastor (Eaton being in prison) or he may have pastored another group. From this, historians conclude that by 1638, and possibly by 1633, there was a Particular Baptist church formed in London. There is evidence of a second church forming in 1639, and by 1644 seven Particular Baptist churches in and near London issued a joint confession of faith.

The main difference between the two Baptist streams was 'Arminianism' versus 'Calvinism.' The General Baptists believed that Christ had died for all and that anyone could respond to the gospel and belong to Christ (hence the term 'General'). The Particular Baptists had the Calvinist notion that Christ had died for the elect (not for all) and that only the elect (a particular group) would respond to Christ and be saved.

By the late 1630s another part of the original Separatist mother church under Henry Jessey had embraced believers' baptism. Vigorous debate then took place in this group as to whether baptism should be by full immersion. One of their number, Richard Blunt, who argued for full immersion on the basis of the language of burial and rising again in Col 2.12 and Rom 6.4, was sent to Amsterdam in 1640 to discuss the issue with the Mennonites and probably to get baptised by immersion. The upshot was that the Particular Baptist churches soon came to view immersion as the proper mode of baptism. Their 1644 First London Confession declared that 'the Scripture holds out [the mode of baptism] to be dipping or plunging the whole body under water: it being a signe, must answer the thing signified.' The General Baptists seem also to have adopted immersion as the proper mode of baptism in the 1640s or 1650s.

BAPTIST BOOM 1640 TO 1689

Major growth took place in this period. In 1640 overall Baptist numbers may have been as few as 1000. By 1660 this number had increased to 20,000, and by 1689 the number was 30,000. In 1644 there were 54 Baptist congregations. In 1660 there were 246. This was a period of turmoil, especially in the 1640s and 1650s with a civil war taking place (climaxing in the execution of Charles I in 1649), followed by a Commonwealth in which Oliver Cromwell became the primary ruler (Lord

Protector) until Charles II was restored to the throne in 1660. Baptists had freedom of worship during this time. Under Cromwell Baptists throve. Baptist prominence in Parliament's 'New Model Army' (the anti-monarchy army), and their support for Oliver Cromwell, gave them some favour in the climate of that time. One scholar has suggested that the intellectual atmosphere of the Parliamentary army on occasion seemed to resemble 'something like a mixture of a revivalist religious congress and an extreme left-wing debating society.'

After the monarchy was restored, there was a further period of persecution as the state sought to enforce religious conformity. The Act of Uniformity in 1662 required all ministers to have Episcopal ordination and to publicly affirm complete assent to the Book of Common Prayer. Then the first Conventicle Act 1664 made it illegal for more than five persons over the age of 16 to assemble together for worship except according to the rites of the Book of Common Prayer. By the end of 1662 there were 289 Baptists in prison and a further 18 imprisoned in the Tower.

Persecution was intermittent. When it occurred, massive pressure was put on Baptists. Their worship needed to be held semi-secretly, in non-public places, in smaller gatherings, under threat of arrest. The records of the Broadmead Baptist church in Bristol in February 1674 indicate that they had agreed:

> to appoint some youth, or two of them, to be out at ye door every meeting, to Watch when . . . informers or officers were coming, and soe to come in, one of them and give us notice thereof. Alsoe some of ye hearers, women and Sisters, would Sitt and Crowde in ye Staires, when we did begin ye Meeting with and Exercise, that soe ye Informers might not too Suddainely come in upon us; by reason of which they were prevented divers times.

The monarchy drifted towards Roman Catholicism, with James II (1685-1688) being an avowed Catholic. James was overthrown in 1688 and replaced by his daughter Mary and her husband William of Orange, both avowed Protestants. Thereafter Baptists had full religious freedom, though they lacked some of the rights and privileges of members of the Church of England.

How do we explain Baptist growth 1640-1689? Essentially this was a time of intense intellectual and spiritual ferment. There was openness to new ideas and the Baptist voice could

AN OUTSTANDING BAPTIST:

John Bunyan (1628-1688)

Bunyan was born in poor circumstances and began his working life as a tinker, mending pots and kettles etc. For several years in the 1640s he was in the Parliamentary Army during the time of the English civil war. On his discharge from the army Bunyan, through Puritan influence, became convicted of his sinfulness, concerned about things such as Sabbath breaking, dancing, swearing etc. However, Bunyan overheard 'three or four poor women talking about the new birth, the work of God in their hearts, and the way by which they were convinced of their miserable state by nature. They told how God had visited their souls with His love in Christ Jesus, and with what words and promises they had been refreshed, comforted, and supported against the temptations of the devil.' This gave Bunyan a spiritual hunger.

Subsequently, while while entering some fields, he had an encounter which he later recorded: 'This sentence fell upon my soul, "Thy righteousness is in heaven" ... for my righteousness was Jesus Christ Himself, the same yesterday, today, and forever.' Bunyan had a sense of elation and went home rejoicing.

However, he had a deep sense of God's sovereign election and for two years after this went through an unhealthy roller-coaster of emotions: was he elect/saved or was he not? Eventually he came to a state of peace and assurance.

Bunyan then joined the Baptist church at Bedford and became a preacher there. Pressure came on Dissenters like Bunyan after the monarchy was restored in 1659 and the Church of England resumed its privileged and monopoly position. Bunyan was subsequently imprisoned for most of 1661-1672 and again in 1677 for not attending the mandatory Anglican church services and for preaching at 'unlawful [private] meetings' in houses.

In 1661 he could have avoided prison if promised not to preach. His response was: 'If you release me today I will preach tomorrow.'

Bunyan became pastor at Bedford in 1672. He was an extremely popular preacher and this led to satellite chapels springing up in surrounding villages.

Bunyan wrote about 60 books and tracts. Most significant were his autobiography, Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners, and Pilgrim's Progress. The latter book, with its colourful characters and its insightful reflections on spiritual life, temptations, oppositions, and the journey to the Celestial City made it an enormous best-seller over the centuries. It is said that in many a home in earlier England it stood next to the Bible as the most widely possessed and read book in English.

easily be heard – in two ways in particular:

- **Public disputations:** Between 1641 and 1700 at least 109 public debates involving Baptists took place in England. 79 of these debates occurred 1641-1660. These gave Baptists public prominence and led to converts. In the period 1640 to 1660, 20 clergy left the Church of England and promoted Baptist ideas though not all joined Baptist churches.
- **Printing:** The ferment of 1640 to 1660 created a ready market for disputative religious literature, something the Baptists were quick to take advantage of. Opponents complained (with exaggeration) that every day the presses 'vomit forth new streams of filth' and 'sweat and groan' with new Baptist books and pamphlets.

THE INSTABILITY OF EARLY BAPTISTS

Some of the early Baptist growth was shaky:

- The widespread social ferment of the 1640s and 50s led to the emergence of 'theocratic millenarianism' among many of the English Baptists. This fostered the notion that Christians should seek to create a Christian society – a millennial kingdom of God on earth – and this could lead to a stance of intolerance to the 'ungodly.' Such a stance was, of course, contrary to the earlier expressed position of religious tolerance to all and to non-coercion of conscience.
- A specific example of this was the revolutionary Fifth Monarchy movement which drew significant support from Baptists, one scholar arguing that a majority of the Fifth Monarchists accepted believers' baptism. The leader of the Fifth Monarchy movement was General Thomas Harrison who had significant links with Baptists, though not a Baptist himself. The movement saw, in the turbulence of the times, the fulfilment of the four monarchies of Daniel 2. Christ would return shortly and establish the fifth monarchy, the kingdom of saints. The immediate duty of the saints was to prepare for this fifth kingdom by bringing the existing government into line with the rule of Christ, by allowing none but the godly to sit in the seats of the mighty. The Baptist preacher, Vavasor Powell shared radical Monarchist goals: 'Lord, wilt thou have Oliver Cromwell or Jesus Christ to reign over us?' When John Pendarves, Baptist pastor in Abingdon, died in 1656 of a 'plague in ye gutts', his funeral became the occasion of a massive rally of Fifth Monarchists and Baptists. Before the authorities broke up that rally, the people, with Baptist participation, declared, 'God's people must be a bloody people [in an active sense].' Such radicalism seemed to link with the Anabaptist radicalism that seized control of Münster back in 1534. In 1661 key Baptist leaders (General Baptist and Particular Baptist) were so embarrassed by any suggestion of association between Fifth Monarchists and Baptists that they issued *The Humble Apology of Some Commonly Called Anabaptists* to disclaim any connection with 'the late wicked and most horrid treasonable insurrection and rebellion.'
- Baptist identity formed only gradually. The self-description 'Baptist' was not there at the beginning and slowly emerged later. The earliest churches were quite fluid in many ways and only gradually made their way into emerging Baptist structures (and some never did).
- There was much fluidity between the independent churches. It was not uncommon for individuals to successively attach themselves to diverse churches/movements. Quite a number of Baptists moved over into Quakerism, e.g. the Broadmead Baptist Church at Bristol lost about a quarter of its membership to Quakerism in one year.
- Fluidity of identity can be seen in John Bunyan's church. Though personally persuaded in relation to believers' baptism, Bunyan approved open membership. Despite his disapproval of infant baptism, Bunyan had his infants baptised for the sake of a 'pious and grieving wife' who was obviously not a Baptist by conviction. Was Bunyan's church Baptist or Congregationalist? There is a good case for arguing that Bunyan was Baptist, though at the open/tolerant end of the movement.

By the time of long-term religious freedom in 1689 Baptists had much greater stability, a stronger sense of identity, and a track-record of growth. The future looked good – but disaster lay ahead.

ASPECTS OF BAPTIST LIFE IN THE 17TH CENTURY

The centrality of Scripture

John Smyth seemed to waver a bit as to whether Scripture or Spirit was the final authority. In his last confession of faith, *Propositions and Conclusions*, 1612, Smyth stated in Article 61:

> The new creature which is begotten of God, needeth not the outward scriptures . . . seeing that he hath three witnesses in himself, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: which are better than all scriptures.' . . .However, he went on to state in Article 63: 'The new creature although he be above the law and scriptures, yet he can do nothing against the law or scriptures.

Smyth's document was peppered with scriptural references confirming his propositions and doctrines. Despite initial uncertainty over Spirit or Scripture, ongoing Baptist life was deeply grounded on Scripture, with a pattern of doctrinal and propositional assertions, backed up with lots of texts. This avoided the risk of Baptist understanding dissolving into the vague sands of mysticism (as Quakerism largely did). However, Baptist biblical

emphasis could often degenerate into legalism and pettiness. One example is the long-standing General Baptist insistence that young people must marry in the faith, i.e. to another Baptist (any other marriage being sinful), on the basis of 2 Cor 6.14-18.

Another example is deep division in the General Baptists from the 1640s onwards as to whether the laying on of hands (Hebrews 6.2) was for believers at their baptism or for ordaining elders or for some third alternative. Strictness meant that excommunication or other church discipline could also occur for 'Sabbath-breaking', dancing and playing cards.

Although early Baptists were deeply grounded on Scripture as inspired, this should not be seen as identical to 20th century debates about inerrancy or infallibility. Thomas Collier, pastor-evangelist, who gave the most extensive 17th century Baptist discussion of the nature of biblical authority, wrote in 1654: 'Concerning Scripture, I shall not question the truth of it.' But he also stated that he found little value in the various theories of the day about how the Scripture was inspired, the relative merits of translations and 'Originalls', and whether the authority of Scripture required textual perfection. He called Scripture:

> A Declaration of God who is Truth: Not that I minde every letter or circumstance in it, but for the substance of it, as it declares purely the God of Truth, so its without question to me a word of Truth.

The use of confessions

Both branches of the Baptists used these extensively. They were statements of faith expressing what Baptists believed at a certain place and time. They were, however, not creeds, telling Baptists what they must believe now and ever after.

Baptist ministry

Both wings of the Baptists acknowledged two ministries: elders and deacons. The former were for the 'care of the flock' (particularly through preaching), and the latter were for the care of the poor (and other practical necessities). The pastor was an (or the) elder of the congregation. From the 1650s the General Baptists came also to acknowledge 'messengers' (2 Cor 8.23), who acted as regional superintendents, arbitrating in disputes and seeking to correct faulty theology. However, their primary role was one of church extension: planting new churches and strengthening weak ones. Their role declined in the 18th century as the General Baptists declined.

The priesthood of all believers

In its beginnings, especially with the General Baptists, there was a stress on the competence of all to minister. Helwys, for example, said that any member could lead the breaking of the bread and undertake any other ordinances where necessary. Increasingly, however, administering the two ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper were seen as the prerogative of the appointed ministry alone. The Broadmead Baptist Church records: 'In this year 1670, our Pastor being deceased, ye Church did not break bread (until we had another Pastor,) yett kept our monthly day of Prayer, as we used to doe before breaking of bread.' The 1693 Particular Baptist Assembly (Bristol) declared that only elders could administer baptism and communion. Much later again Andrew Fuller was to declare in 1815:

> It appears to me very wrong to administer the Lord's Supper without ordination, as it goes to render void that ordinance. Ordination of elders in every church was a practice of the first churches, Acts xiv, 23, and we should not make light of it. It is calculated to keep out unworthy characters from the churches . . . I have, therefore been much concerned to see the practice of administering the Lord's Supper obtain prior to it, which tends to set it aside and will, I am persuaded, be a source of many mischiefs in the churches.

Baptist pastors

Most pastors after the first generation had limited or no formal theological training. However, the seeds of Bristol Baptist College were planted with a trust set up by Edward Terrill for the purpose of theological education in 1679. The trust was to support a pastor who was 'well skilled in the tongues' of Greek and Hebrew, and who would spend part of his time teaching others.

Apart from having limited education, most pastors were bi-vocational (thus William Carey was also a cobbler and school-teacher in the 1780s), and were largely self-supporting. Bi-vocationalism was practised partly because Baptist churches in the 17th and 18th centuries were typically small, 40 or 50 members being common. The nature of Baptist ministry meant a risk of churches stagnating, especially as long ministries in one church were normal (even as long as 55 or 60 years). There was a common understanding that for a pastor to move there should be the approval of his old congregation as well as his new one. So pastoral movement was not always easy or expected.

Once congregations became settled with pastors, a common pattern for emerging as a pastor was for a person to begin ministry in his own church. If he showed ability in prayer and speaking he would be invited to preach at a church meeting. Having passed that hurdle, and after further preaching at subsequent church meetings, he would be called to a preaching ministry. He would remain in such ministry until he was called to be a pastor of a particular congregation. In most cases no formal structured training was involved.

Wider Baptist interconnections

With primary stress on the gathered congregation, regional and national organisation was often weak

and slow in developing. Baptist 'associations' emerged at regional level by the mid-17th century. An example of this mutuality can be seen in the coming together of seven Particular Baptist congregations in 1644 to issue a *Confession.* A General Baptist national assembly took place in 1654. The first Particular Baptist national assembly occurred in 1689. Because of travel problems, there were two annual assemblies from 1692 onwards, one at London at Whitsuntide (Pentecost), and one at Bristol at Easter. The London gathering soon died and the one at Bristol in effect became the Western Association. Particular Baptist national gathering/ identity remained weak up into the 19th century.

Open versus closed communion

This is not an issue today but it was hotly debated earlier on. The General Baptist 'Orthodox Creed' of 1678 baldly stated in relation to communion that 'No Unbaptized, Unbelieving, or open Prophane, or wicked Heretical Persons, ought to be admitted to this Ordinance to prophane it.' The question of open communion (all Christians irrespective of baptismal status) found Particular Baptists William Kiffin and John Bunyan in a hot literary debate, 1672-1681. Bunyan argued that the two ordinances are important but not fundamental. They are 'servants.' Baptism is not essential to salvation. To reject unbaptised Christians would be to reject what God has accepted. Kiffin argued that in the New Testament communion does not precede, but follows baptism. On this point, the trend increasingly favoured open communion churches.

Open versus closed membership

This was a similar issue to the communion one. Does a person need to be baptised as a believer (and if so, by immersion) to be a member of a Baptist church? It's an argument relating to whether baptism is the doorway into the church and to issues of Baptist identity – would accepting people into membership who are not regarded by Baptists as baptised weaken Baptist identity in the long run? Or should there be Christian charity and recognition that the applicant is a sincere Christian who genuinely holds an alternative perspective on this point? The strong view of earlier centuries was to insist on closed membership. Thus the first Particular Baptist Assembly 1689 agreed to accept churches practising open communion with closed membership, but not churches like the one that had been led by John Bunyan which had open membership.

Baptist worship

A major aspect of early Baptist life was the centrality of biblical preaching, often followed by congregational comment thereon, within lengthy services – often several hours long. Communion was most commonly celebrated weekly. The community dimension of the church was not only enhanced by the smallish size of most congregations in the first century and a half, but also in the common practice of associating the Lord's Supper with a love feast. For a time there was a group popularly called the Leg of Mutton Baptists: 'so named, because at the celebration of the Lord's Supper… they sit down at table and feast themselves with legs of mutton and other meats at the time of breaking the bread, and distributing the wine.'

No denomination had hymn singing in the first half of the 17th century, although Puritan worship allowed the singing of the psalms (because they were Scripture). General Baptist beginnings included a significant emphasis on pure spiritual (spontaneous) worship. This meant that there was no corporate singing in General Baptist churches for more than a century.

Thomas Grantham, a prominent General Baptist leader in the second half of the century gave the rationale for not singing hymns: a singing congregation might include some non-Christians, and their participation would pollute the pure worship. Moreover, if all sang the same words and notes together, this would deny spontaneity and the leading of the Spirit. What if one person should be led by the Spirit to sing another word or another note at that time? Moreover, few people had 'tunable voices' and women were not to participate at all.

Such views were reflected in the 1689 General Baptist Assembly, which pronounced singing 'foreign to evangelical worship.' The Particular Baptist Benjamin Keach was an important pioneer with regard to hymn singing, but it took him about fifty years to gradually introduce this into his church little by little – and even then his church split over the issue in the 1690s, with 22 members withdrawing to a non-singing church which declared that congregational singing was 'a gross error equall with common nationall Sett forme Prayer.' Thereafter Particular Baptist churches soon made hymn singing a regular part of their worship.

General Baptist laying on of hands

This was common at baptism. Here is an account of this at a General Baptist baptismal service in 1645:

> When the company was met together they began with prayer; after prayer, everyone of the company kneeled down apart; and Barber, with another of their way went to each of them one after another, and laid both their hands upon every particular head, women as well as men, and either in a way of prayer, prayed that they might receive the Holy Ghost; or else barely to every one of them used these words, Receive the Holy Ghost.

BAPTIST DECLINE IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE 18TH CENTURY

For different reasons, Baptist decline in both Particular and General Baptist churches in this period was so bad that H. Wheeler Robinson described the first half of the 18th century as 'the

most stagnant and lethargic period of Baptist history.' The following chart points to this decline:

	1715	1750
Number of Particular Baptist churches	220	146
Number of General Baptist churches	146	65

A number of factors likely contributed to the decline: lack of a full-time ministry, lack of an educated and trained ministry, lack of church buildings (they often met in a church officer's home), narrow legalism, and loss of evangelistic focus. However, each of the two Baptist movements also faced a particular factor in their decline.

General Baptist decline

The early-eighteenth-century intellectual and theological climate of England favoured rationalism (emphasis on reason) and latitudinarianism (broad thinking which attached little importance to dogma).

One manifestation of this was the emergence of Unitarianism which stressed the oneness of God such that while Jesus was seen as divine, in some sense he was less than God (Arianism) or even simply a man specially favoured or adopted by God (Socinianism). Matthew Caffyn, a General Baptist 'messenger' in South England, seemed to be preaching a form of Arianism (contrary to Trinitarian theology and an 'orthodox' view of Christ's deity) from the 1670s and this led to marked polarisation of the wider General Baptist movement. When the matter was debated in its 1696 Assembly there was a ruling that any ongoing debate must use biblical language 'and in no other terms.' Because the doctrine of the Trinity is implicit rather than explicit in Scripture, this ruling fostered Unitarianism.

Subsequently a General Baptist drift in the direction of Arianism became evident and those churches which stood for a theologically orthodox Christology became a gradually shrinking minority.

This was particularly evident in a Salters' Hall Meeting (a gathering of London dissenting ministers – Presbyterian, Congregational, Particular Baptist and General Baptist) that debated the Trinity in 1719. The crux was whether the matters could be resolved by appeal to Scripture alone, or by appeal also to the creeds which confirmed Trinitarian understanding as an inference from the Scriptures. By 57 to 53 the vote was that 'no human compositions or interpretations of the doctrine of the Trinity' could be required.

This was a clear victory for the Arian and Socinian factions who argued that the deity of Christ was a 'human addition' to the gospel. The defeated minority signed a statement affirming the deity of Christ and a Trinitarian doctrine of God. Fourteen of the General Baptist ministers sided with the majority and only one with the minority (the 'orthodox' viewpoint). Eventually the slide was such that the 1815 General Assembly Committee could report on the 'success of Unitarianism which, with the exception of baptism, may surely be called the cause of the General Baptists.' Eventually the General Baptist form of Baptist life disappeared. Some of the churches went over to the New Connection (a renewal movement within the General Baptists). Some went over to the Particular Baptists. The shrinking remnant increasingly disappeared in the quicksands of Unitarianism.

Particular Baptist decline

The earliest Particular Baptist leaders balanced their Calvinism with a warm and fervent evangelism. However, by the start of the 18th century they were sliding to a hyper-Calvinist position (an extreme emphasis on the electing sovereignty of God). One aspect of this was supralapsarianism. Baptist historian Underwood gave this explanation:

> Supralapsarians placed the divine decree of election and reprobation before the fall of man and the creation of the world. For them the fall of man was decreed as a consequence of the double decree of election and reprobation. This scheme made God the author of evil and maintained that men were virtually called into existence by the will of God in order to be saved or in order to be damned.

Such a position led to hyper-Calvinist preaching increasingly becoming dry, rationalistic and sterile. Their theologians began issuing learned treatises explaining why they should not address the gospel to the unsaved. They adopted what Baptist historian Ivimey called the 'non-invitation, non-application scheme.' Issues of election thus tended to smother issues of evangelism. For example, John Skepp, minister of Curriers' Hall Church (1710-1721), made no attempt to awaken the consciences of the unconverted, lest he should rob God of the sole glory of their conversion. Such an approach was markedly opposed to evangelism and missionary endeavour. Hence the much later retort of John Rylands Senior to William Carey in 1787: 'Sit down, young man. You are an enthusiast! When God pleases to convert the heathen, he will do it without consulting you or me.' Skepp's hyper-Calvinist successor, John Brine (1703-1765), 'contented himself with what he considered clear statements of doctrinal truth, without making any application of his subject' (Ivimey). Significantly, Curriers' Hall, which was already in decline under Skepp, diminished to fewer than 30 members under Brine. A major theological influence among mid-eighteenth century Particular Baptists was Dr John Gill (1696-1771). His strong Calvinism fostered an atmosphere where preachers were afraid to preach persuasively to win people for Christ – conversion must be the act of God alone. Andrew Fuller, a key figure in pulling the Particular Baptists back from hyper-Calvinism in the 1780s, claimed that 'had matters gone on but a few years longer, the Baptists would have become a perfect dunghill in society.' Fortunately the 'dunghill' instead became evangelistic fertiliser for an impoverished world.

FOR REFLECTION:

3. Does 17th & 18th century Baptist history suggest that one can be too 'biblical'? What is a proper view and use of Scripture in Christian life today?

4. Early Baptist pastors (in England and also in small-town America) were commonly bi-vocational (partly or totally self-supporting). Is that feasible in today's world? If you are a pastor, under what circumstances would you consider bi-vocational ministry?

BAPTIST BOOM c.1770 – c.1900

The New Connexion of the General Baptists

It was the Wesleyan Revival that partially saved the General Baptists, or at least caused their rebuilding. The key figure in this turn-around was Dan Taylor (1738-1816). Taylor, a Methodist preacher, withdrew from the Methodist movement in 1762, objecting to the strict discipline and almost dictatorial leadership of John Wesley. He also became persuaded about believers' baptism and sought baptism from several Particular Baptist ministers. They declined to baptise him because of his Arminian theology, but one referred him to the General Baptists who baptised him in 1763. Taylor founded a church that same year and affiliated with the Lincolnshire Association of General Baptists. However, he found a lot of deadness and dubious theology in the Baptist Association (in sharp contrast with his warmly evangelical background).

In 1770 Taylor and a few other pastors to some extent withdrew from the GBs to form a new denominational body, the New Connection (of General Baptists). Their stated aim was 'to revive Experimental Religion or Experimental Christianity in Faith and Practice.' At their initial meeting the New Connection adopted a confessional statement of six articles, the signing of which became a prerequisite for ministers in its membership. In addition, each clergyman was required to give an account of his religious experience at the next assembly meeting so that all might be satisfied as to the reality of his conversion. In 1775 the credal test for membership was removed, but the statement of experience was still required.

From its beginnings the New Connection was a markedly evangelistic, warmly evangelical, growing movement:

1770	7 churches	c.1000 members
1786	31 churches	2357 members

The break between the old General Baptists and the new General Baptists was not total, and some ambiguous connection continued to exist between the two groups for some decades. Thus Taylor continued to attend the General Assembly of [Old Connexion] General Baptists and was frequently called on to preside as chairperson. When, however, the Old Connection, after much debate, admitted the avowedly universalist, William Vidler, into their fellowship in 1803, Taylor advised that he would no longer attend their meetings. The break was now complete.

The New Connexion was strongly evangelistic and grew rapidly. Its services included hearty hymn singing (a carry-over from Methodism). The lively New Connection services made them much more attractive to the younger generation. Taylor defended the right of women also to speak in church. He noted that women in the New Testament church served as deaconesses and prophetesses and concluded, 'I am persuaded there are many things which some of the women understand better than some of the men.' Ultimately it was the New Connection churches, with tinges of their Methodist roots (including hearty singing), which became the bearers of the General Baptist (Arminian) tradition.

Dan Taylor had what might now be called apostolic standing in the New Connection. McBeth stated (165):

> Such was Taylor's status that his word was almost an oracle; nothing could be done without him or against him. When an occasional New Connection minister strayed too close to Arian or Socinian views, Taylor could and did reprimand and, if necessary, depose him. Though he never had the title, he functioned largely as a bishop among the churches.

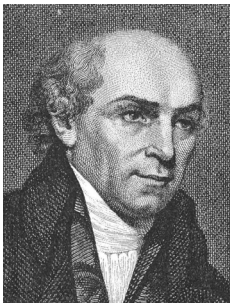
Renewal among the Particular Baptists

In the 1780s a few key Particular Baptists began to lead their denomination back to a more moderate Calvinism and renewed evangelism. Most significant was Andrew Fuller, who in 1785 published a work entitled, *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation.* According to Fuller, faith in Christ is commanded of unconverted sinners in the Bible. Every sinner then who heard the gospel had a duty to repent and believe in Christ. Fuller argued that every preacher ought to preach on the basis that every sinner, whatever their character, was 'completely warranted to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of his soul.' It was the influential arguments of Fuller and his friends that did much to pull the PBs away from hyper-Calvinism and towards evangelistic mission overseas and at home.

William Carey and the modern missionary movement

Originally from an Anglican background, Carey (1761 - 1834) was baptised as a believer in 1783. He preached for the entire summer of 1785 at the Particular Baptist church at Olney and was regarded as having done so poorly that the church at first refused to recommend him for ordination. He got their recommendation to be

ordained to preach the following year. Subsequently he became pastor of the Moulton Baptist church (also cobbling shoes and teaching at a school he opened). Self-taught, he followed a rigid pattern of study, working on the classics on Mondays, science, history and composition on Tuesdays, and Hebrew Bible and Greek New Testament on Wednesdays. In 1787 Carey, attending the ministers fraternal of the Northampton Association, proposed the following topic for discussion: 'Whether the command given the apostles to teach all nations was not binding on all succeeding ministers to the end of the world.' He was then called an 'enthusiast' and told to sit down. Carey's growing missionary concern led him to publish, also in 1787, *The Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathen.* Carey noted that more than 20% of the world's population of 731million were Moslem, and more than 50% were of other pagan religions. Thus 70% were without any profession of Christianity. He pleaded for Christians to pray, plan, pray.


William Carey

Carey went on to preach the 'Deathless Sermon' at the Association Meeting at Nottingham 30 May 1792. The text was Isaiah 54.2-3; the theme was 'expect great things from God; attempt great things for God.' Though this sermon made a profound impression, the meeting still cautioned delay when a plan of action was discussed. Carey then gripped Fuller's arm, 'Is there nothing again going to be done, sir?' Fuller was moved by the urgency to speak for the cause, and Fuller persuaded some who would not have been persuaded by 'the hair-brained enthusiast.' Fuller's resolution was adopted: 'Resolved, that a plan be prepared against the next Ministers' Meeting at Kettering, for forming a Baptist Society for propagating the Gospel among the Heathens.' Fourteen ministers subsequently met at Kettering on 2 October 1792. The following resolution was passed:

> Humbly desirous of making an effort for the propagation of the Gospel among the Heathen, according to the recommendations of Carey's Enquiry, we unanimously resolve to act in Society together for this purpose; and as in the divided state of Christendom each denomination, by exerting itself separately, seems likeliest to accomplish the great end, we name this Particular Baptist Society for the Propagation of the Gospel amongst the Heathen.

The ministers then pledged from their own pockets thirteen pounds, two shillings and sixpence. Subsequently, Fuller was elected secretary of the new society, and for the next twenty-two years he gave it masterful leadership in promotion, fund raising, and planning. The Carey family and Dr John Thomas sailed for missionary service in India in 1793. Carey went on to heroic missionary work in India, especially in Bible translation.

The formation of the Baptist Missionary Society in 1792 marked not only the beginnings of major missionary endeavour by the Particular Baptists (and also other denominations) but also influenced the subsequent establishment of 'The Baptist Society for the Encouragement and Support of Itinerant Preaching' (later known as the 'Home Mission Society') in 1797. Thus we need to see the formation of the missionary society (BMS) in the context of a great upwelling of evangelism, at home as well as abroad. Baptists were on the verge of major growth as the 19th century dawned.

Baptist strength in the nineteenth century

Growth: We can note the increasing strength of the Particular Baptists after about 1770:

1771	251 churches
1790	379 churches
1811	537 churches
1820	672 churches

A decisive factor in this growth was the influence of the evangelical revival generally.

- It encouraged the shift of the PBs to a warm evangelicalism and to evangelism.
- It fostered a focus on world mission, which in turn encouraged home mission.
- It encouraged the use of itinerant ministry. Hayden (109) goes so far to claim that it was 'the adoption of itinerancy [that] marked the transition from their relative obscurity in the eighteenth century to their prominence in the next.'

A crucial move in regard to itinerancy was the establishment of what became the Baptist Home Missionary Society (BHMS) in 1797 to co-ordinate and foster itinerant evangelism. By 1825 BHMS supported 25 full-time home evangelists and by 1835 it was employing 100 full-time evangelists. A feature of such mission was village preaching in rural areas. This was very important as England did not become 50% urban until 1851.

A general religious census in 1851 indicated a total of 366,000 Baptist morning attendees in 2222 churches (Particular Baptist chapels = 1947, New Connection chapels = 182, Old Connection General Baptist chapels = 93). The rate of growth tailed off from the 1880s. The Baptist Union numerical pinnacle was 1921 with 410,766 members and 3068 churches.


William Knibb

Social and political action: Initially Baptist action was small, partly because the Baptist movement was small. Baptist expressions of concern about slavery go back to the late 18th-century. The most significant Baptist figure in the anti-slavery struggle was William Knibb, who went to Jamaica as a missionary in 1824. Moved by the plight of the slaves and the obstructions of some owners even to the provision of Christian teaching to slaves, Knibb became actively involved in the anti-slave movement.

When he returned to Britain in 1832 he was unsure how the Missionary Society would treat him, as their stance to this point was that as slavery was a political question, they would take no stand on the issue. Knibb won the support of the Society Committee. His public speeches, together with the evidence he gave before a parliamentary committee, contributed much to the passage of the Emancipation Act of 1833.

Even after the emancipation of slaves in the British Empire in the 1830s, Baptists remained concerned for the well-being of the former slaves. In 1865 E.B. Underhill, a secretary of the Baptist Missionary Society wrote a letter to Edward Cardwell, Secretary of State for the Colonies, drawing attention to great distress, even starvation, then persisting on Jamaica, and partly blaming it on 'the unwisdom . . . that has ruled Jamaica since emancipation.' The letter was sent on to Governor Eyre who circulated it widely in Jamaica. The press gave it prominence and blacks began to hold public grievance meetings. In one area unrest erupted, with looting and the killing of eighteen white people. Governor Eyre declared martial law, executing 439 people, flogging 600 more and destroying 1,000 homes. He also summarily executed a radical black MP who had been nowhere near the trouble-spot when lawlessness erupted. Eyre blamed Underhill's letter (which Eyre had made public) for the insurrection. English Baptists were prominent in getting a Royal Commission set up with a view to having Eyre prosecuted for murder. Even Spurgeon spoke out on the matter. Controversy persisted for many months, virtually another Establishment versus Nonconformity struggle (Baptists exercising a prominent role within Nonconformity, and the Church of England largely backing Eyre). The Royal Commission partly censured and partly praised Eyre for his actions. The incident highlights 19th-century Baptist involvement in public issues of the day.

The 19th century protectionist Corn Laws provided protection for British farmers at the cost of dear food for the British urban poor. Hayden (118) notes that the list of the Baptist members of the Anti-Corn Law League (founded 1838) was almost a Victorian *Who's Who* of the denomination. At a meeting in Manchester in 1841 urging that the Corn Laws were opposed to God's law, the Scriptures and Christ, 650 ministers were present. Of these, 182 were Baptists.

AN OUTSTANDING BAPTIST:

Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892)

By Alexander Melville

Spurgeon had an evangelical conversion at age 15 through a stumbling Primitive Methodist preacher who kept repeating Isaiah 45.22: 'Look unto me and be ye saved…' He quickly shifted from Congregationalism to the Baptists. By 18 he was beginning to pastor and at 19 he began a 38-year ministry at what became the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London. By age 22 he was the most popular preacher of his day and had congregations of several thousand for the rest of his life.

Spurgeon was an outstanding preacher: simple, popular, expositional in style. He had a huge worldwide readership of his printed sermons. These sermons were major shapers of many a Baptist (and Baptist congregation) in early New Zealand. Despite his giant ministry Spurgeon had a 'thorn in the flesh' – depression – that dogged him at various times throughout his life.

Spurgeon had a deeply evangelistic heart but never gave 'altar calls.' However, each week he invited any who felt moved to seek an interest in Christ to meet him in the church vestry on Monday – and this happened week by week.

Beyond his preaching legacy Spurgeon left a theological training legacy – despite the fact that he had had no formal theological training (and also no high school education) himself. He founded the Pastors' College in 1857 to train Christian workers (including pastors) who might not have the educational background to train in other institutions. The college is now called 'Spurgeon's College' and is one of the most significant of the Baptist colleges in England today.

Spurgeon had less focus on social and public issues than his famous Baptist contemporary, John Clifford, but he did found orphanages for boys and girls, and he did take an active stance on some of the social issues of the day. He also was outspoken in the 1880s out of concern that liberal tendencies in relation to biblical inspiration and authority were starting to emerge in his English Baptist denomination. This led to the 'Downgrade Controversy' in 1887. Spurgeon may have handled the issue clumsily and was censured by his denomination. This led to Spurgeon and his congregation withdrawing from the Baptist Union.

Spurgeon died at age 57 while still at the peak of his preaching influence and was soon succeeded by his son Thomas who had pastored the Auckland Baptist Tabernacle and was an itinerant evangelist for the Baptist Union of New Zealand at the time of his father's death.

The main speaker after Cobden was J.E. Giles, Baptist leader in Leeds. The Anti-Corn Law League was successful in getting the Corn Laws repealed in 1846. Involvement in issues such as this is a pointer to the breadth of Baptists in their understanding of the significance of the gospel at this time.

Total abstinence was not a position of English evangelicalism (including English Baptists) until the 1830s at least. Thereafter concern about the impact of alcohol in society led to Evangelicals in general (including English Baptists) increasingly, though only gradually, adopting a total abstinence stance. Though temperance agitation was in evidence in Baptist churches by the 1830s, progress was slow. Even into the 1870s the *Freeman* (predecessor of the *Baptist Times*) carried an advertisement for Irish whiskey. Spurgeon (1834-1892) would drink a sherry before preaching (and also announced that he smoked cigars to the glory of God). In 1859 only one-seventh of Baptist ministers were total abstainers. Turn-around on the temperance issue was sudden and almost total. By 1907, 211 out of 214 Baptist theological students were total abstainers.

Though all churches had religious freedom after 1789, the established Church of England was still favoured in a number of ways (e.g. compulsory church rates levied on all, access to universities). The Anti-State Church Association was formed in 1844, seeking disestablishment of the Church of England. This organisation became the Society for the Liberation of the Church from State Patronage and Control (the Liberation Society) in 1853. Many prominent Baptists (e.g. Spurgeon, McLaren, Clifford) were key supporters of the Society. Such agitation led in the 1870s to the abolition of compulsory church rates and of the application of religious tests at Oxford and Cambridge Universities (which largely kept non-Church of England people out of those key universities).

Poverty and social justice issues: Baptists were quite ready to become involved in such issues. One example of this is Robert Hall's *An Appeal on the Subject of the Framework Knitters' Fund* in 1819. The pamphlet urged people to support a central fund to support stocking makers who were unemployed. Another example of social involvement is Spurgeon's establishing the Stockwell Orphanage (now Spurgeon's Child Care). However, Baptists were not overall in the forefront of efforts to legislate against the ills of industrial society. Their focus into the 20th century tended to be alcohol, sex and gambling. A similar pattern can be seen in New Zealand.

The Baptist Union

The Baptist Union of England and Wales began in 1813. Effectively it was a Particular Baptist Union. Its creation sprang from the needs of overseas missionary support. The constitution of the B.U. stated that its first task was the support of 'our missions.' Effectively it was a voluntary fund-raising arm of the Missionary Society. By no means all churches joined the Union – even in the 1830s perhaps less than half of English Baptist churches were affiliated with any denomination. The BMS greatly overshadowed the BU for many decades, e.g. in 1863 contributions to BMS were 31,000 pounds; contributions to BU were 90 pounds.

Moves to widen the Union began in 1832. To open the door to New Connection Baptists, the old Calvinistic doctrinal statement based on the 1689 *Confession of Faith* was dropped. Instead, the Union described itself as a union of Baptist ministers and churches *'who agree in the sentiments usually denominated evangelical.'* Some of the more rigidly Calvinistic churches, aggrieved by such looseness, then formed Strict and Particular Baptist Associations. Though the Union drew in some GB churches, many remained outside, and the organisation remained weak.

Moves for full union of PBs and GBs (New Connection) in the 1880s came to fruition in 1891. The GBs as a body came into the Baptist Union. The GB Association dissolved itself and its member churches were redistributed among existing PB Associations. Why did union come to these two bodies?

- In many ways the union was a legacy of the Evangelical Revival which gave birth to the New Connection and to a theological revision of Calvinism among the PBs. This made mission much more a central focus of the Baptist churches. This encouraged the merger, as strength in mission was the most often announced goal of such an amalgamation.
- Calvinism had declined in its higher and more exclusive form. Increasingly election and predestination was not seen as incompatible with the role of human response, even free will.
- Increasing interchange between PBs and GBs. Some GB churches were already members of the Union before 1891. Both groupings increasingly had open communion and open membership churches within their ranks. It seemed unnatural and illogical for them to remain apart when both were receiving unbaptised members into their churches. Moreover, ministers and members were now freely passing from one body to the other. An example of such interchange is that in 1870 one-sixth of the New Connection pastors had come directly from Particular Baptist Colleges or from Particular Baptist churches.

FOR REFLECTION:

1. Reflect on the theology of Gill and Fuller and consider the extent to which good (or bad) theology can influence a whole denomination.

2. Consider the inter-relationship of home and overseas mission in the light of PB developments at the end of the 18th century.

3. Were 19th-century Baptists on-track with their wider social engagement or was this an unwise deviation from a narrower focus on evangelism?

The significance for New Zealand of English Baptists of the latter part of the 19th century

English immigrants flooded into New Zealand after 1860, lifting the Pakeha population here from 60,000 to 500,000 by 1880. It was in this period that the Baptist movement largely took root here. They brought with them the concerns of the English Baptists of that period: evangelism, a national union and (for some) public activism. For the next generation or two they kept looking to the English Baptists who were a profound shaper of New Zealand Baptists in this foundational period.

TWENTIETH-CENTURY BRITISH BAPTIST DECLINE:

The Baptists experienced marked numerical decline in the twentieth-century:

- 1921: 410, 766 members, 3068 churches (Baptist Union).
- 1981: 170,000 members, 2058 churches.
- 2003: 150,000 members in 2150 churches belonging to the Baptist Union of Great Britain

This decline among the English Baptists must be seen in the context of marked decline of Christianity among nearly all Christian groupings in the West, especially in Europe. Decline stemmed from the intellectual challenge of science, critical studies in relation to Scripture, shifts to a more individualistic, materialistic and even hedonistic life-style, disillusionment springing from the World Wars etc. While Baptist membership peaked in the early 20th century, Briggs (407) noted that even before the end of the 19th century there was relative decline, with Baptist growth not keeping pace with population growth. There has been ongoing actual numerical decline from early in the 20th century, though more recently some Baptist leaders have been hopeful that the decline has now bottomed out and the tide may now be turning.

FOR REFLECTION:

1. If you could influence the Baptist Union in England today, what would you stress to help pull them from their slump for much of the last one hundred years?

For further reading:

Bebbington, David, *Baptists through the Centuries: A History of a Global People*, Waco, Tex., Baylor University Press, 2010

Cross, Anthony & Nicholas Wood (eds), *Exploring Baptist Origins*, Oxford: Regent's Park College, 2010

Section Two – A history of the United States Baptists

There are scores of Baptist denominations in the United States. This material will focus on the two very large predominantly white Baptist denominations (the American Baptists and the Southern Baptists) because of their influence on New Zealand Baptists. However, we should note that the two main black Baptist groupings, the National Baptist Convention of the U.S.A. and the National Baptist Convention of America (not studied because of their minimal influence on New Zealand Baptists), have a combined membership of around 10 million.

SMALL BEGINNINGS, 1639 - c.1750

Roger Williams was in the Separatist (Congregationalist) colony of Massachusetts until his expulsion from that colony in 1635. He then founded a colony at Providence in Rhode Island. In 1639 Williams formed a Baptist church. He sought baptism from Ezekiel Holliman and then baptised Holliman and ten others. Williams stayed with his Baptist church for only four months. He decided his baptism was not right because it was not administered by an apostle. All existing churches were lacking in proper foundation, and a new valid church was not now possible. Williams remained baptistic, but existed as a 'Seeker', outside of church membership, thereafter.

Despite the withdrawal of Williams, Baptist churches continued, with a second one coming into existence by 1644, or earlier, at Newport, Rhode Island, under John Clarke's leadership. Throughout the 17th century such Baptist congregations remained a tiny percentage of the population. There were only 24 churches with 839 members across the whole of the American colonies in 1700.

Early Baptist life was marked by much fragmentation. This was accentuated both by narrow and rigid approaches to Scripture and by Baptist stress on the individual congregation being the locus of the church and fully competent on its own. Thus the American-colonies Baptists were commonly dividing into subgroups.

One division that was a carry-over from England was the division into General Baptists (often called 'Six-Principle Baptists') and Particular Baptists (often called 'Five-Principle Baptists'). Two issues were involved: one was the significance of the laying on of hands (Heb. 6.2); the other, the doctrine of predestination.

Overall, the tendency in Colonial America was for Calvinistic Baptists to moderate their Calvinism to allow

some degree of human responsibility, and to encourage human 'effort' such as preaching, missions, and evangelism. A third area of controversy was the issue of hymn singing. A fourth area of controversy was the day for public worship. Seventh Day Baptists had their first church in Rhode Island in 1671. However, by 1750 the dominant form of the Baptist persuasion was Five Principle, first day, closed communion, and Calvinistic.

The First Great Awakening in the 1740s gave further scope for fragmentation. Those supporting the revival (especially congregations that came across from the Congregational Church), were known as 'Separate' or 'New Light' Baptists. Those opposed were the 'Regular' Baptists. The Separate Baptists in the South were extremely significant in helping form the style of Southern Baptists to this day. Perhaps the most distinctive feature of the Separates was their emotional style of preaching and worship. Shouting, weeping, and falling down in a faint were not uncommon. The Separates helped to popularise the 'evangelistic invitation', even before the time of Finney. An account of an early example of this practice is recorded thus:

> At the close of the sermon, the minister would come down from the pulpit and while singing a suitable hymn would go around among the brethren shaking hands. The hymn being sung, he would then extend an invitation to such persons who felt themselves poor guilty sinners, and were anxiously inquiring the way of salvation, to come forward and kneel near the stand.

AN OUTSTANDING BAPTIST:

Roger Williams (1603-1683)

The statue of Roger Williams at Roger Williams University; photo by Bill Price III.

Roger Williams became a Church of England clergyman in England but took a Separatist stance by the time of his emigration to Massachusetts in 1630. Almost immediately he got involved in a series of controversies that led to his expulsion from Massachusetts in 1635. The issues included:

- His insistence that the Massachusetts churches break fully with the Church of England (some Massachusetts churches were only semi-separatist) on the basis that the Church of England was a false church. Williams taught that it was wrong to hear any Church of England ministers if one returned to visit England. He insisted that Christians should not only withdraw from the Church of England but also from anyone who failed to withdraw from that church, even if that person was a member of one's own family.

- His view that land received by king's patent really belonged to the natives (this denied the authority of the crown to give title to indigenously owned land and endangered colonial land ownership).

- His argument that it was wrong to call wicked people to swear oaths and to pray. In Massachusetts all settlers were required to take the Freeman's Oath as a pledge of allegiance. To Williams requiring an oath was a coercing of prayer.

- His teaching that the civil magistrates' power extended only to the bodies and goods and outward states of people. (Williams divided the 10 commandments into two tables. The magistrates could enforce the second table (relationships with others) but not the first (relationships with God)). Essentially Williams was insisting on religious freedom and separation of church and state – something which became a fundamental aspect of American political theory.

As Williams' expulsion occurred in mid-winter, he could have died in facing the elements in travelling overland from the colony to Rhode Island. After starting and then withdrawing from the first Baptist Church in the American colonies, Williams remained hugely influential in his new colony, returning from the colony to England to secure a royal charter for Rhode Island in 1643. While still in England in 1644 Williams published his most famous and most controversial book, The Bloody Tenent of Persecution for Cause of Conscience, pleading for the largely still unaccepted idea of liberty of conscience.

Williams' views on liberty of conscience and separation of church and state make him a hero in American culture and memory.

Difference between Regulars and Separates was basically 'order' versus 'ardour.' The Regulars tended to be urban, and emphasised (1) an educated clergy, (2) dignified and orderly worship, and (3) they did not encourage women to pray or prophesy in public, whereas the more rural Separates took opposite positions on all these things. Most Separate churches allowed 'ruling elders, eldresses, and deaconesses', and some allowed women to preach. The Separate Churches in the South tended not to favour an educated or salaried ministry (utilising the text 'stay in the calling to which you are called' to support this). The two groupings need to be seen as two streams rather than two denominations, and by the 1780s the sense of difference and division on such matters had significantly dissipated.

This essential Baptist unity was intensified by the marked amount of persecution and discrimination Baptists faced in their first century and a half. At the beginning, especially 1642-1649, Baptists were hauled before the Salem Court for refusing to baptise their infants. Thomas Painter was whipped in 1644. Henry Dunster, first president of Harvard College, was forced to resign his office in 1654 for holding baptistic views. He then faced two court trials in 1657 for refusing to present his new daughter for baptism. Such persecution gradually subsided, and then ceased with the (English) Toleration Act of 1689.

Even with toleration, Dissenters still had to register their meeting-houses. Most Presbyterians and Regular Baptists did so. However, most Separate Baptists ignored this requirement of 'Caesar', choosing rather to base their preaching on obedience to a higher law. Moreover, there were many practical problems, and much official obstruction, to their holding separate services:

- The Separatists quite commonly did not have public meeting-houses.
- Often the authorities allowed only one dissenting meeting per county.
- Baptists in Massachusetts applying for registration had to ride to Williamsburg where the court sat. There they might wait in vain for several days, only to be told that the court had recessed and would not reconvene for half a year.

Dissenters (including Baptists) were still liable for church taxes under toleration. From 1727 several New England States passed 'Exemption Laws' whereby Dissenters could apply to have these taxes refunded under certain conditions. One of these conditions was payment of a fee to obtain an exemption certificate. At first the Baptists in the Puritan and Anglican colonies only sought toleration of the right to worship as they pleased. However, from the 1740s they began to make a concerted effort for complete religious liberty, and full separation of church and state. In 1769 the Warren Association formed a 'Grievance Committee' to direct the struggle for religious liberty in New England. They threatened to appeal to the authorities in London. In 1773 the Baptists decided to stop paying church taxes, and to stop applying for exemption certificates. Their agitation was soon very successful, partly as they were now much more numerous, and partly because their support was needed in the looming independence struggle with Britain.

Intolerance persisted late in the South where the Anglican Church had an established status. Persecution was particularly fierce in Virginia, where aggressive Baptist evangelism started emptying Anglican churches. Beginning in the 1760s, Baptists in Virginia were whipped, fined, beaten by mobs, jailed, or exiled in an attempt to repress them. Between 1768 and 1777, at least thirty Baptist preachers in Virginia were whipped, stoned, or imprisoned.

BAPTIST SURGE 1750 ONWARDS

The first American 'Great Awakening', a revival movement in the 1740s, led to major Baptist church growth. In 1740 there were still only 60 churches with 3142 members. By 1790 the Baptists had 979 churches with 67,490 members, grouped in 42 associations, discussing plans to form a national organisation. They were well on the way to becoming the largest denomination in America.

Part of the growth came from church transfer. The first awakening largely originated in the Congregational Church, which eventually split over the revival. Maybe half the 'New Light' Congregational churches came over into the Baptist fold (about 100 of them).

The influence of the Awakening also caused a major shift in focus. Baptist churches were now far less interested in sectarian inwardness and petty squabbles. Increasingly there was a focus on national and even world mission. There was a major shift in flavour. Evangelism and emotionalism became very much part of the flavour of Baptist churches, especially in the South.

The second great awakening in the first part of the nineteenth century contributed even more to Baptist growth than the first one. By 1830 it made the Baptists the largest Protestant denomination in America. Baptists, with their loose organisation and strong emphasis on individual and congregational initiative, together with their evangelistic zeal, and their largely positive view of emotionally expressed Christianity, were, with the early Methodists, very well placed to be at the forefront of frontier faith and camp meetings. Organised revivalism became very much part of the life of Baptist churches, especially in the South. Professional revivalists were increasingly used in the churches. A huge amount of church growth took place. In 1844 there were 9385 churches with 720,046 members (= 360% increase in 30 years, in a period when the population grew 140%). This growth kept up throughout the nineteenth century. In 1900 there were 4,181,686 Baptist members (1 in 18 or 19 of the population compared with 1 in 32 in 1750).

Baptists used their numbers, and their support

of the colonists' struggle against Britain, to great advantage in the American War of Independence. In 1775 the General Association of Baptists in Virginia passed a resolution supporting resistance against Britain for its 'unjust invasion', but also petitioning the state legislature for 'free Liberty to preach to the Troops at convenient Times without molestation or abuse.' With the need to have a united front against Britain such petitions were speedily granted.

After the War of Independence Baptists were in the forefront of efforts to get legislation providing for full religious liberty. A 'Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom' was passed in Virginia in 1785. Baptists were prominent in expressing concern in relation to the proposed new federal constitution because it lacked a guarantee of religious liberty. As a consequence the Bill of Rights was soon passed in 1791 embodying ten amendments to the new constitution. The First Amendment states:

> Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

This basically sorted out Baptist concerns at a national level. However, such constitutional guarantees did not apply to state legislation, and for over forty years some New England states continued to maintain their established churches. Since 1868 the Fourteenth Amendment has prohibited such state action: 'No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States.'

Religious freedom and separation of church and state have been very important issues in Baptist thinking in America. But is the political activism of the Religious Right in the few decades eroding that position?

Growing strength after the War of Independence gradually led Baptists to levels of co-operation and organisation at national level. Congregationalist missionaries Adoniram Judson and Luther Rice adopted believers' baptism en route to India in 1812. Judson subsequently began Baptist missionary endeavour in Burma while Luther Rice returned to the U.S. to gain Baptist support. One outcome was the formation of the widely supported General Missionary Convention of the Baptist Denomination in the United States for Foreign Missions, 1814. This soon became known as the Triennial Convention because its meetings were held every three years. The basis for representation was determined by voluntary support of the missionary enterprise by groups and individuals, rather than by ecclesiastical connection between the churches and the Convention. Luther Rice was employed as the promotional agent of the Board of the Convention in the U.S.

Leaders like Luther Rice were keen to transform the Triennial Convention from a mission society into a convention that guided all denominational activities. Should Baptists have an inclusive body for all denominational enterprises, or form a separate society for each cause? The centralisation model was strongly opposed by the New England Baptists.

In 1817 the Triennial Convention constitution was amended to allow home as well as foreign mission work. John Peck and James Welch were sent as missionaries to the Western Territory of the United States. In 1820 the Triennial Convention voted to close the Western Mission in order to concentrate on foreign work. Peck was ordered to Fort Wayne to assist in Indian work. He resigned instead, and continued on with his ministry. A diary entry in 1825 indicates the sort of work he was doing:

> I have been absent from home fifty-three days; have travelled through eighteen counties in Illinois and nine in Indiana, rode nine hundred and twenty-six miles, preached regular sermons thirty-one times, besides delivering several speeches addresses, and lectures. I have been enabled to revive three Bible societies . . . to establish seven new societies, and in opening several schools where no societies exist.

Luther Rice felt the need for a trained ministry for ultimate success in foreign missions. His dream led to the formation of Columbian College in Washington D.C. in 1821. This ambitious national training scheme was soon dogged by financial troubles, and was abandoned by the Convention in 1826. The troubles of this institution, together with other financial troubles of the convention, enabled the northern anti-centralists to strike back. They engineered the shifting of the 1826 convention from Washington to New York and engineered majority attendance from the North (of 63 delegates, 23 were from Massachusetts and 17 from New York). Stacking of the meeting meant anti-convention ascendancy. The headquarters of the Convention (known again as the American Baptist Missionary Union - ABMU) were moved from Philadelphia to Boston. Luther Rice was dismissed as agent of the Convention. The constitution of the convention was amended to limit its operations to foreign missions.

This highlights a significant North-South cleavage apart from the looming slavery crisis. Should one central body control all aspects of the denomination (the 'Convention' model – favoured by the South)? Or should there be a number of voluntary societies loosely connected together (the 'Society' model – favoured by the North)?

The Baptist General Tract Society was formed in 1824 'to disseminate evangelical truth and to inculcate sound morals, by the distribution of tracts.' Eventually this society became one of the major religious publishing houses in America. By 1830 the society had published almost 100 titles, with total circulation of 1,394,000 tracts, of 11 pages average length. Circulating such literature significantly helped unify American Baptists. With the growth in demand for Sunday School literature, the society changed its name in 1840 to the American Baptist Publication and Sunday School Society (ABPS).

The American Baptist Home Mission Society was formed in 1832 after the Triennial Convention withdrew from home mission. It was particularly active in the expanding Midwest of the United States. By 1844 the Society had organised 551 new churches and baptised 14,426 converts and was employing 97 missionaries.

There was marked Baptist growth in the South. The South was still strongly rural into the twentieth century and this gave Southern Baptists certain distinct qualities. In 1892 of the 948 churches affiliated with the Mississippi State Baptist convention 23 held a weekly service, 38 met fortnightly, and 887 convened once a month (often with two days of services at each gathering time).

Most early preachers in the South prided themselves that they were 'mostly educated between the handles of a plough.' 'Plough-handle' preachers were suspicious of human learning for, they said, 'There ain't no Holy Ghost in it.' It was not uncommon for Southern Baptist preachers to lay aside their prepared sermon because 'the Holy Spirit has just revealed the message for today.'

In the 19th century there was very little systematic fund-raising at local church or denominational level. Many pastors received no stated salary, but were commonly paid in kind or through cash subscription. Few churches included an offering in their worship; indeed many Baptists felt that fund-raising should remain separate from worship to protect the spirituality of the church. In such a context many pastors were bi-vocational.

Throughout its history the Southern Baptists have been deeply committed to evangelism and church growth. Growth of both the Southern Baptist Convention and the Northern (American) Baptist Convention was remarkable in the second half of the nineteenth century

1850: 700,000 Baptists in U.S.A. = 1 in 32 of the population

1900: 4,181,686 Baptists in U.S.A. = 1 in 18 or 19 of the population.

Since that period the Northern (American)

AN OUTSTANDING BAPTIST:

Billy Graham (1918-20xx)

Billy Graham was raised in a fundamentalist Presbyterian home. After his conversion as a teenager he became a Southern Baptist. He attended a very fundamentalist college (Bob Jones College) but eventually graduated from Wheaton College with a major in anthropology (not theology) in 1943. A year or two later he began as a Youth for Christ evangelist. He came to national prominence through a crusade in Los Angeles in 1949. The results of the crusade were not outstanding until a radio celebrity was converted. Then the media took an interest. One of Hearst's reporters told Graham that Hearst (a newspaper magnate) had given instructions, 'Puff Graham', to his chain of newspapers. The campaign became hugely successful (one-third of a million attendees over eight weeks) and massively attended crusades occurred in the United States and overseas thereafter. This included two strongly supported crusades in New Zealand in 1959 and 1969. The development of 'Billy Graham Films' also gave him a high profile.

A feature of Graham's approach was a strong emphasis on follow-up for new converts. Graham preached consistently from the Bible ('the Bible says'), but toned down harsh fundamentalist edges. As a result he was able increasingly to draw from mainline church support. This was helped by the strength of neo-orthodoxy in mainline Christianity at this point in history (a shift away from a more liberal stance). As a result the Protestant Council of Churches in New York (regarded as a modernist organisation) endorsed Graham's 1957 crusade there. Graham was willing to work with the Catholic Church and whatever churches would work with him. Extreme fundamentalists strongly criticised Graham for co-operating with liberals.

Graham's approach was to focus on an individual conversion message, rather than on broader societal issues (such as civil rights, Vietnam War, the rise of youth protest movements etc.). He had minor involvement in race issues, eventually taking a stand that he would not preach to racially segregated audiences, and once had Martin Luther King on the platform with him at his 1957 New York crusade.

Graham preached to live audiences of more than 200 million in his more-than-half-century as an international evangelist, with 2.5 million responding to his appeal to come forward and receive Christ as Saviour and Lord.

Graham had huge profile in America as a deeply respected figure and developed significant relationships with a succession of US presidents.

Baptist Convention growth has not been marked. However, the Southern Baptist Convention growth has led to a denomination that claims a membership of something like 15 million members.

SBC consistently gave a high profile to evangelism, with its ongoing stated goal being to 'reach the world for Christ.' In 1866 SBC instructed its Home Missions board 'to direct its future labors chiefly upon the basis of evangelisation' and to promote a comprehensive system of evangelisation including the appointment of evangelists. A year later, the Board reported that 20% of its staff were evangelists. In 1923 SBC had 46 evangelists and singers in the field. In 1945 SBC held its first-ever Convention-wide crusade. Six further such campaigns occurred 1950-1964, and generally such years reported a higher than average number of SBC baptisms.

The emphasis on evangelism meant that it was no accident that when New Zealand Baptists brought over 165 evangelists in 1965 for crusades in nearly every Baptist church in New Zealand (the Trans-Pacific Crusade), the evangelists were drawn from SBC.

There was sweeping success for SBC in the South. By 1910 40% of white churchgoers (and 60% of black churchgoers) in what was a high churchgoing region were Baptist. Edwin Gaustad has made the claim:

By 1950 Baptists in the South had become a culture religion: that is, the one denominational family so dominated an area (roughly the old Confederacy) that the lines between church and culture grew faint.

Culture religion may be a likely reason why ex-President Bill Clinton, hailing from Arkansas, continued to identify as a Baptist. Culture religion may also be seen in SBC's earlier reluctance to take a stand against tobacco (a major crop in the south). When SBC finally passed a motion against tobacco in 1984, the SB leaders in North Carolina, where 42% of the nation's crop is grown, promptly took pains to re-emphasise that this resolution did not bind the membership because of local church autonomy.

The tremendous SBC emphasis on evangelism helps explain its fundamentalist purging the denominational apparatus of all 'liberals' (those who were not biblical inerrantists) in the last three decades. According to inerrantist Paige Patterson (1985): 'Denominations . . . which have begun to shed aspects of their conservative theology appear to forfeit their zeal for the conversion of the lost also.'

BAPTIST CONTROVERSIES / CLEAVAGES IN THE USA IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The Campbell controversy

Alexander Campbell (1788-1866) was originally a Presbyterian minister before founding a non-denominational church. Having embraced believers' baptism, Campbell then joined the Baptist denomination and stayed in it for 17 years (1813-1830). He proved to be a Trojan horse, offering great promise, but eventually causing major damage to the Baptist cause.

Though agreeing with Baptists on believers' baptism Campbell otherwise had major differences on other matters. His approach was strongly rationalistic. Faith meant believing in Christ in a rationalistic sense (that Jesus was the Messiah). Opponents would term this 'mental assent' or 'head belief.' It made him strongly opposed to experimental religion as commonly practised. Campbell once snapped his fingers and said, 'I would not give that much for the conversion of a person who weeps.'

Campbell seemed to teach that baptism was essential to salvation (baptismal regeneration). He also taught that the Old Testament was no longer authoritative. It was of the old dispensation and was superseded by the New Testament.

Campbell insisted on a stark literalism under the motto, 'Where the Bible speaks we speak; where the Bible is silent we are silent.' He focused on the word in such a manner that the New Testament really became a law book. All church practices must have precedent or precept in Scripture. By that hermeneutic, he rejected missionary societies, instrumental music in worship, the use of written confessions, regular salaries for ministers, the use of ministerial titles, and many other practices (McBeth 379).

Campbell had an 'anti-mission' organisation position. This was part of a wider movement on that issue, which bedevilled Baptist mission endeavour. Campbell was not opposed to mission, but missionary societies etc. had no biblical authority. Mission must be done through local church agency. Similarly Baptist associations were wrong. They lacked biblical endorsement, and they coerced individuals and churches.

Denominations should cease. All Christians should be in one church which should be based simply on the terms of salvation (namely faith and immersion).

Campbell's powerful preaching brought deep division within the Baptist churches. Baptist emphasis on the authority of Scripture provided fertile soil for Campbell's views, which claimed to be totally founded on that authority. When Campbell seceded to form the Disciples of Christ (or Church of Christ) in 1830, he took hundreds of Baptist churches with him. For example, half the Baptist churches of Kentucky switched to the new Disciples movement.

In New Zealand this denomination has been known as 'the Associated Churches of Christ' (more recently 'the Christian Churches New Zealand').

Schism in the 1840s leading to the formation of the Southern Baptist Convention

The schism was not simply over slavery. Other underlying issues included:

- Geography: The three main Baptist societies (foreign missions, home missions and the tract society) were located in distant Northern cities, and were therefore not easily accessible to the South.
- Organisational disagreement: The South favoured a 'convention' approach where all denominational matters could be dealt with in one meeting. Vast distances in the South and Southwest compared with New England, made this approach much more attractive than the 'society' approach that predominated.
- Problems in home mission. The South felt that it was being neglected. Most of the mission volunteers came from the North and few were willing to work in the South. Most volunteers were sent to the upper Midwest. In the decade 1832-1841 the Home Mission Society sent 506 missionaries to the four North-western states, but only 127 to the six South-western states (which had a combined population similar to that of the North-western states).

However, the biggest issue and the immediate cause of schism was the slavery issue. Originally this issue was not a peculiarly southern issue. Before 1800 there were more anti-slavery societies in the South than in the North. In 1785 the Baptist General Convention in (the southern state of) Virginia pronounced slavery 'contrary to the word of God.' Until about 1830, significant anti-slavery sentiment existed in the South. However, the South increasingly hardened into a pro-slavery position, linked in some way with the increasing importance of the cotton crop. An influential defender of slavery was the influential South Carolina Baptist preacher, Richard Furman, who wrote on the matter in 1822, asserting that 'the right of holding slaves is clearly established in the Holy Scripture, both by precept and example.' In 1835 the Charleston Association (South Carolina) adopted a militant defence of slavery, sternly chastising abolitionists as 'mistaken philanthropists, and deluded and mischievous fanatics.' Anti-slavery efforts, the association said, would be 'perfectly futile so long as they [the Baptists favouring slavery] have the Bible in their hands.'

Anti-slavery feeling gradually increased in the North. 1840 saw the formation of the American Baptist Anti-Slavery Convention in New York. In passionate language it appealed to Baptists in the North for support, urging that the mission agencies be purged of any taint of slavery. Addressing the South, it condemned slavery in strong language. If Baptists in the South ignored these urgings and persisted in the practice of slavery 'we cannot and we dare not recognize you as consistent brethren in Christ.'

Both mission societies (home and foreign) sought to keep the issue out of their organisations. In 1841 and 1844, each voted policies of official neutrality on slavery. The resolution of HMS in 1841 was that 'our co-operation in this body does not imply any sympathy either with slavery or anti-slavery.' However, in the 'Georgia Test Case', Georgia Baptists tested the neutrality of HMS in 1844 by nominating a slave-owner as a home missionary and raising money for his support. This was 'to stop the mouths of gainsayers' and answer clearly whether the society would appoint a slave owner. Affirming its neutrality, the Board argued that to rule on a test case would violate its neutrality, and declined to rule either way on the application.

The Baptist State Convention of Alabama sent a bluntly worded enquiry in 1844 to the Board of the Triennial Convention asking if slave-holders could be appointed as foreign missionaries. In 'Alabama Resolutions' the board repeated affirmations of neutrality but added: 'one thing is certain; we can never be a party to any arrangement that would imply approbation of slavery.' This last statement seemed to violate the principle of neutrality. It was included to pacify members who threatened to withdraw if a stern reply was not sent.

The Georgia and Alabama cases were the final straws. Southern Baptists were up in arms. The outcome was a Southern consultative meeting on 8 May 1845. The assembly established a Convention for both home and foreign mission. It was a split in the denomination.

The Landmark movement

The term itself is based on Deut 18.14 (not removing ancient boundary marks or land marks). The movement arose particularly from the influence of J.R. Graves (1820-1893). Graves, a spellbinding orator, was editor of the *Tennessee Baptist* from 1848. This was the platform for his remarkable influence among the Southern Baptists. Graves' aim was to restore the old 'landmarks' of the faith. The outcome was a rigid, exclusive, Baptist ecclesiology. People like Graves believed that Christ not only founded the church but also gave specific biblical commandment as to the structure and government of the church. The characteristics of a true church (according to Graves) were divine origin, perpetual existence, visible institution, local organisation, biblical practices, and a Baptist body. Jesus Christ founded a Baptist church. The apostles were Baptists.

In Graves' view, the Baptist church has persisted through all ages even though it may have had other names. According to Graves Baptists are the sole inheritors of New Testament Christianity and the Baptist church is the one true church even though Christians might well exist outside it. Pedobaptist societies were not churches. Thus their ministries were not valid. Participation in joint meetings must cease, since such activity only sanctions erroneous practices and recognises other denominations as genuine churches of Christ rather than religious societies.

Moreover, there must be closed communion, and no pulpit exchanges with other denominations. 'Alien immersion' by a non-Baptist Church (e.g. the Disciples of Christ) was not valid for church membership. Thus the prominent and respected Leigh Street Baptist Church in Virginia adopted a resolution in 1866 that:

> Strictly required . . . all persons joining this church except from churches of the same faith and order to receive baptism at the hands of a regularly ordained Baptist minister.

Landmarkism essentially saw the true church as existing *only* in the local assembly. Because the primary dimension of church was the local church, several Baptist churches should not celebrate communion together (the ordinance is for members of one church). Some Landmarkers, including Graves, adhered to 'double closed communion' (i.e. communion should be restricted to members of the local Baptist church, with visiting Baptists excluded).

Because Graves rejected Baptist preaching except as authorised by a church, he opposed the work of the mission boards. The only valid Christian church was the visible local church. Boards should not supervise missionary work – that was the prerogative of the local church.

The SBC faced a full day of debate and a near split in 1859 when dismantling of its Foreign Missions Board was proposed. Further controversy on the same issue re-emerged in the 1890s. The Landmarkers were not opposed to mission, but rather to the method of working through boards which in their view was a capitulation to episcopacy.

BAPTIST CONTROVERSIES AND CLEAVAGES IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

The 'Social Gospel'

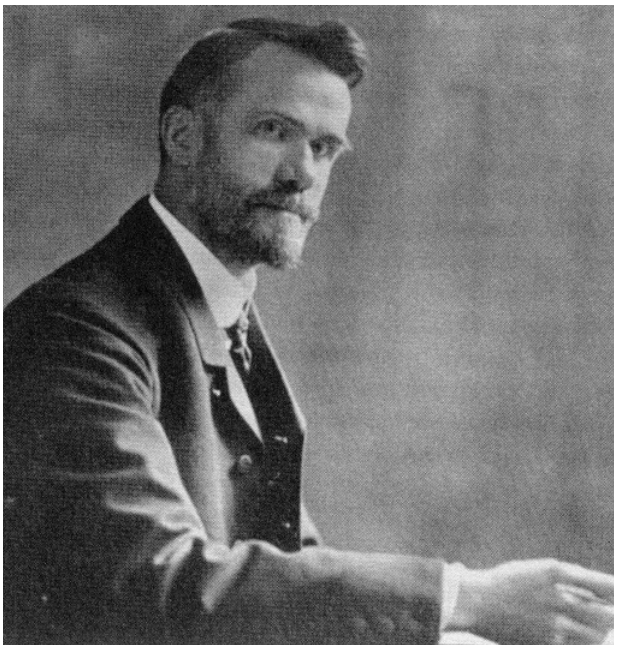
The late-nineteenth century was a time of major material progress in the U.S. It was a time of increasing urbanisation and industrialisation, and also a time which saw a very large influx of immigrants. While most prospered, it was a time of misery for many of the poorest. That was the context for the new emphasis on the 'social gospel.' Linkage between 'the social gospel' and perceived liberalism eventually led to strong Fundamentalist antipathy to 'the social gospel.'

Fundamentalism versus Modernism in the Northern Baptist Convention

A lot of churches in the Western world were grappling with issues of modernity by the early-twentieth century, and particularly wrestled with issues of Darwinism and 'higher criticism' of Scripture (issues of scripture as true and authoritative). This eventually led to bitter cleavage, especially in American Christianity, and especially in the North, with the emergence of two camps, one being the self-labelled 'Fundamentalists', who labelled their opposition as 'Modernists.' At the more liberal end of the American Baptists was the figure of

AN OUTSTANDING BAPTIST:

Walter Rauschenbusch (1861-1918)



Rauschenbusch was a second-generation German immigrant to America. He became pastor for twelve years of a slum area of New York known as 'Hell's Kitchen.' This made him deeply engage with the social issues of his day and strengthened his awareness of social sins as well as personal sins. He developed a vision for the kingdom of God (the ruling centre of his theology), that life on earth might be as it is in heaven. All the main areas of society (education, politics, industry etc.) needed to be Christianised and reshaped according to this vision of the kingdom of God. He wrote several very influential books and is viewed as the key advocate of the 'social gospel.' Although his theology was liberal in some respects, he retained a pietistic and evangelical faith, his favourite hymn being *What a Friend We Have in Jesus*.

There is an excellent biography on him that is well worth reading: Christopher H. Evans, *The Kingdom Is Always but Coming: A Life of Walter Rauschenbusch*, (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 2004).

Harry Emerson Fosdick (1878-1969), a powerful preacher and populariser of modern thought.

This influence came particularly when he was pastor of the Riverside Church in New York (1925-1946). His sermon *'Shall the Fundamentalists Win?'* in 1922 sparked bitter controversy and made him a major target of fundamentalists in that decade. The sermon was intended to be a plea for tolerance and understanding between fundamentalists and liberals. Within the sermon he urged fundamentalists to be more tolerant in three areas: (a) belief in the virgin birth was unessential (b) belief in the inerrancy of the Bible was incredible to the modern mind (c) the second coming of Jesus was outmoded and needed rethinking.

Dixon's *The Fundamentals* stressed in contrast:

1. The inerrancy of the Scriptures.
2. The deity of Christ.
3. The virgin birth of Christ.
4. His substitutionary atoning death.
5. His bodily resurrection.
6. His imminent and personal return to establish his kingdom on earth.

The image of fundamentalism became badly tarnished after the Scopes 'monkey trial' in 1925. Arkansas State had passed a law prohibiting the teaching of evolution in schools. Scopes was prosecuted and convicted for defying that law. However, the process of the trial brought fundamentalist Christianity into much ridicule. The term 'fundamentalist' increasingly became a byword for ignorance and prejudice. Fundamentalists were swept into the backwaters of American intellectual life.

The Northern (later American) Baptist Convention was deeply affected by the modernist-fundamentalist splits of the 1920s. The failure of fundamentalism within the American Baptist Convention (ABC) meant that more liberal views gradually came to have more influence in the denomination. This led to a number of splits and the formation of new Baptist denominations.

Not all conservatives left the ABC denomination, Carl Henry and J.C. Massee being two notable examples who remained. Massee believed that the latest withdrawal from the Convention was more over millennialism and credalism than over the belief in the authenticity and authority of the Bible. For his part, Henry argued that at that time (mid-twentieth-century) 85% of the NBC constituency was evangelical, thus making it likely that most of the delegates who voted anti-fundamentalist remained sympathetic to various shades of conservative theology. They resented the pugnacious features of fundamentalism; and they feared the consequences of Convention control by a power bloc. Henry observed: 'while denominational executives were often culpable of a questionable political shrewdness, the fundamentalist revolt was infected with an equally serious characteristic, that of a vitriolic spirit.'

NBC/ABC growth was steady till c.1920 but then largely ceased:

1928: 1.4 million members: 8,292 churches
1982: 1.6 million members: 5,703 churches

One could explain the stagnation in terms of the more liberal direction of parts of the American Baptist convention. However, another factor was the divisions that stemmed from the Fundamentalist-Modernist 'wars.' People hate the unpleasantness of division and melt away.

More recently the ABC has been torn over the issue of homosexuality. The official stance is that homosexual expression is 'not compatible with Scripture.' However, most of the ABC seminaries ignore the issue or welcome such students. And a number of the ABC churches both 'welcome and affirm' gays and lesbians. This has led to some congregations being put out of their associations and it has led to further secessions from the ABC.

TWENTIETH-CENTURY THEOLOGICAL CONTROVERSIES IN THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

Fundamentalism versus modernism in the 1920s

While such issues did not split SBC in the way they did NBC/ABC, nevertheless there were several years of major controversy. J. Frank Norris, fundamentalist leader from Fort Worth, was so divisive in leading the fundamentalist charge that SBC was adopting modernistic teachings of Scripture and the church, that he was actually put out of the Baptist General Assembly in 1923 and 1924. Subsequently Norris was acquitted on a charge of murder after he shot an unarmed man three times during an argument in Norris's office (Norris claimed the argument had turned violent and he had shot the man in self-defence). Yet around 1932-1933 both the *NZ Baptist* and the *Reaper* (magazine of NZ Bible Training Institute, which is now Laidlaw College) were praising Norris for the massive number of converts coming from his ministry. It highlights how a focus on evangelistic 'results' in both SBC and among NZ Baptists may sometimes lead to a turning of a blind eye to other aspects of the gospel.

The agitation of some of the more extreme fundamentalists led to the SBC adopting a confession in 1925. This step was an innovation: at its beginnings in 1845, SBC founders declared, 'We have constructed for our basis no new creed; acting in this matter upon a Baptist aversion for all creeds.' The innovation has led to further subsequent 'confessions' which have taken SBC further and further in a creedal direction. In keeping with this trend, W.A. Criswell, when president of SBC in 1969, urged those who did not accept the 1925 and 1963 statements to leave the denomination.

On creation, the 1925 confession stated that 'man was created by special act of God as recorded in the Scriptures.' Attempts to add words to the effect that it was not by evolution failed. There are two noteworthy features of the 1925 confession:

- One of the introductory statements stresses the non-creedal nature of the confession: 'the sole authority for faith and practice among Baptists

is the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. Confessions are only guides in interpretation, having no authority over the conscience.'

- Its first article was a statement on the doctrine of Scripture: 'We believe that the Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired, and is a perfect treasure of heavenly instruction; that is, it has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without mixture of error, for its matter; that it reveals the principles by which God will judge us; and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds and religious opinions should be tried.'

The Ralph Elliott controversy, 1961-1962

Elliott, professor of Old Testament at Midwestern Seminary, had *The Message of Genesis* published in 1961. He argued moderate scholarly positions, such as possible multiple authorship of Genesis, the flood being regional rather than universal, and some of the stories being parabolic rather than descriptive of actual events. These ideas proved to be very controversial. To avoid the stigma of a direct book-banning, the trustees of the seminary requested instead that Elliott not republish a second edition of the work. Actually, this was a test, for all copies had already been sold, and Broadman Press had no plans for reprinting. Elliott was prepared to put in writing a statement, 'Since the board of trustees feels that the Convention would be better served by not republishing the book, I acquiesce in the request of the trustees that *The Message of Genesis* not be republished.' This was unacceptable to the trustees, as it would put them in the role of book censors. Elliott refused the request to 'volunteer' not to have the book reprinted: to do so 'would have the overtones of repudiating my work and suggesting that I did not now share the same perspective.' Elliott felt he could not compromise over integrity in relation to truth as he saw it, noting the words of Samuel Coleridge in support of such position: 'He who begins loving Christianity better than Truth, will proceed by loving his own sect or church better than Christianity, and end in loving himself better than all.'

The outcome of the controversy was Elliott's dismissal for insubordination in 1962. The 1962 convention adopted two significant statements:

- 'That the messengers to this convention, by

AN OUTSTANDING BAPTIST:

Martin Luther King Jr (1929-1968)

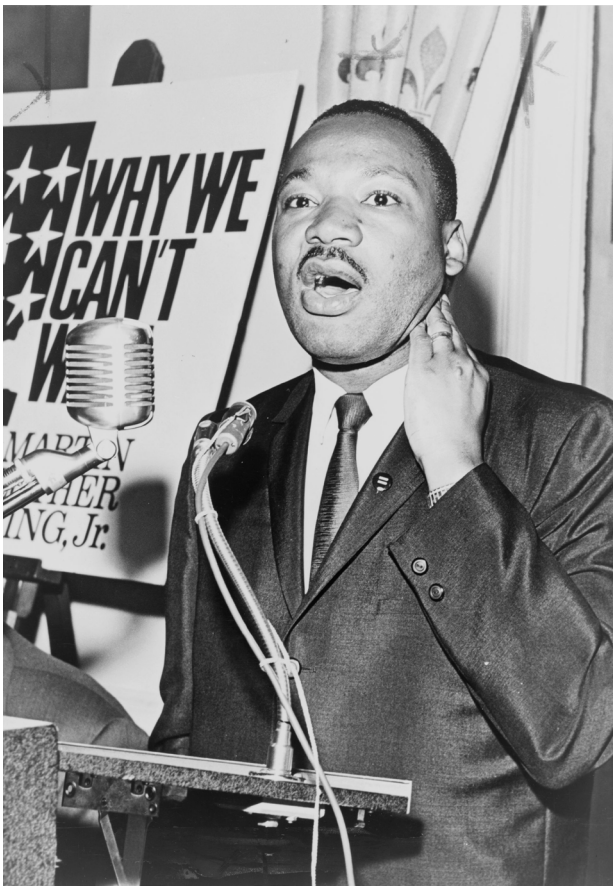
King was from a black Baptist family and became pastor of the Dexter Ave Baptist Church in Montgomery Alabama in 1954. He was deeply shaped by the example of Mahatma Gandhi's struggle for justice using non-violence. In 1955 he organised the Montgomery bus boycott for 385 days, a boycott triggered by the refusal of a black woman, Rosa Parks, to give up her bus seat to a white man under the Alabama State 'Jim Crow' laws. The boycott ended with a court ruling ending the discriminatory laws. King went on to organise the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and to head a raft of initiatives and protests to bring full civil rights to Afro-Americans.

One initiative was a march on Washington D.C. in 1963 to highlight racial injustice. There King delivered his famous 'I have a dream' speech, articulating a dream of a colour-blind society where little black and white children played together.

King received the Nobel Peace prize for his efforts in 1964. King widened his efforts to focus also on ending poverty and stopping the Vietnam War prior to his assassination in 1968.

In the aftermath of that grief the United States eventually made Martin Luther Day a U.S. federal holiday.

King did have feet of clay, apparently involved in adulterous relationships. At the same time he achieved a great deal through his powerful oratory and his deep commitment to justice and to peace.



By *New York World-Telegram* and the *Sun* staff photographer Walter Albertin, via Wikimedia Commons.

standing vote reaffirm their faith in the entire Bible as the authoritative infallible Word of God.'

- That we express our abiding and unchanging objection to the dissemination of theological views in our seminaries which would undermine such faith in the historical accuracy and doctrinal integrity of the Bible, and that we courteously request the trustees and administrative officers of our institutions and other agencies to take such steps as shall be necessary to remedy those situations where such views now threaten our historic position.'

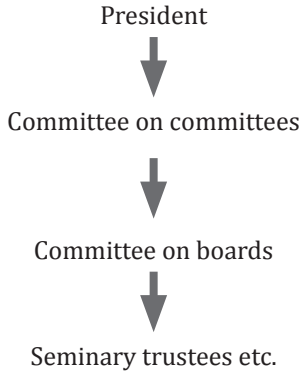
Broadman Press controversy 1969-1970

A *Broadman Bible Commentary* series was begun. Volume I – *Genesis-Exodus* by G. Henton Davies – was published in 1969. There was immediate controversy over this Baptist press publication because Henton Davies accepted the documentary JEDP hypothesis (multiple sources for Genesis), and because he argued that God did not ask Abraham to offer Isaac. In 1970 SBC passed a motion requesting the Sunday School Board to withdraw Volume I from further distribution and have it re-written with due consideration to the conservative viewpoint, because it was 'out of harmony with the beliefs of the vast majority of Southern Baptist pastors and people.' This was carried by a vote of 5,394 to 2,170. The volume was withdrawn and re-written by another scholar.

Fundamentalist take-over of SBC, 1979 onwards

Earlier-twentieth-century debate showed how sensitive the issue of inerrancy was among the SBC constituency, and how important their view that all parts of Scripture which had the appearance of history must be treated as having full historical accuracy. Such a position often clashes with scholarly research and reflection. Truth-seeking seminaries would press onto dangerous ground from an ultra-conservative point of view unless they were tightly circumscribed.

Discontent led Judge Paul Pressler, an appeals court judge from Texas, and Paige Patterson, president of the Criswell Centre for Biblical Studies, to strategise to have fundamentalists take control of SBC. They viewed the entire SBC system – seminaries, publication agencies, national boards and agencies – as invaded with liberalism. Their litmus test for orthodoxy was the upholding of inerrant views of Scripture. Whereas the word 'infallible' may be understood to relate to the doctrinal content of Scripture, 'inerrancy' relates to the factual character of Scripture (without error in relation to apparent contradictions; in relation to alleged inaccuracies of history, geography or science; in relation to acts supposedly antithetical to the revealed nature of God). The take-over strategy of Pressler and Patterson was based on the fact that the SBC president appoints the SBC Committee on Committees. That committee nominates the Committee on Boards. The latter committee nominates the personnel of all the SBC agency boards (including the seminary trustees). Diagrammatically the structure looks like this:



A president of a certain persuasion had the power to stack all appointments with trustees of the same persuasion. The goal of Pressler and Patterson was to ensure the appointment each year of a president who held to inerrantist views of Scripture and who would use his powers to ensure that all key positions were held by inerrantists. The election of Adrian Rogers as president in 1979 marked the beginning of the transformation of SBC, already a very conservative denomination, to an even more fundamentalist position. Every president thereafter was a fundamentalist committed to ensuring the boards etc. were stacked with fundamentalists.

The ensuing controversy was vitriolic. In 1981 Pressler acknowledged that 'conservatives' were 'going for the jugular' in their campaign to get control of SBC institutions. At the 1988 Pastors' Conference, W.A. Criswell grouped 'liberals' and 'moderates' together, with the words: 'A skunk by any other name still stinks.'

The moderates organized a group to resist fundamentalist take-over in 1980. Each presidential election was now a struggle between a moderate and a fundamentalist. In 1984 a relative unknown on the margins of SBC life, Charles Stanley, defeated the high-profile moderate, Grady Cothen. Thereafter it was patent that the fundamentalists would win every election. After failure in 1990 the moderates quit the politics of SBC.

In the 1990s all the seminary presidents were replaced after resignations or firings. In 1997 the six SBC seminaries issued a 'covenant' between the seminaries and the churches that the seminaries would be servants of the churches in the equipping task, and that they pledged to teach 'the authority, inspiration, inerrancy, and infallibility of the Bible.' This marked the substantial completion of the original goal of the fundamentalist wing of SBC.

In the 1990s a new, more moderate denomination, the Co-operative Baptist Fellowship split off from SBC.

Inerrancy issues lay at the heart of the dispute. Morris Chapman, SBC president in 1990, stated: 'For us not to believe in inerrancy is not to believe in God.' Fundamentalists saw moderates as liberal on Scripture as well as on other matters, while moderates saw fundamentalists as imposing a narrow creedalism on the denomination. By defining the issue as the Bible, fundamentalists gained the initiative in defining the rest of the agenda for the conflict. As Paul Pressler said: 'The

real issue is, What is Scripture? Is it absolutely true? Is it completely reliable? Is it God's book or is it man's machinations?'

Inerrancy does have its own problems of definition. The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy, 1987, issuing from a conference on the topic, lists ten items that do not negate inerrancy, including round numbers, free citations and hyperbole.

The inerrancy issue was the central aspect of wider issues. For example, in June 1986 Paige Patterson announced that his group expected to tie the hiring of denominational employees to their position on abortion, euthanasia, school prayer, and federal budget reduction. Among the specific issues on which SBC took a stand, are the following:

Women: Traditionally, ordination (including that of women) was a matter for the local congregation. However, in 1984 SBC declared against the work of women 'in pastoral functions and leadership roles involving ordination' by a vote of 4,793 to 3,466. SBC argued that the Bible excludes women from pastoral leadership positions to preserve submission of women and because 'man was first in creation and the woman first in the Edenic fall (1 Tim 2.13ff).' In 1986 Church Pastoral Aid was ruled unavailable to churches with women pastors. In 2000 SBC embraced a new confessional statement, the Baptist Faith & Message, which states: 'While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture.'

Leadership: The fundamentalists tended to give much more authority to the local pastor. The hugely influential W.A. Criswell, for example, once asserted: 'The pastor is the ruler of the church. There is no other thing than that in the Bible.' In 1988 SBC adopted a resolution on the priesthood of the believer which ended with the statements:

> Be it further resolved, That the doctrine of the Priesthood of the Believer in no way contradicts the biblical understanding of the role, responsibility, and authority of the pastor which is seen in the command to the local church in Hebrews 13:17, 'Obey your leaders, and submit to them; for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account,' and
>
> Be it finally resolved, That we affirm the truth that elders, or pastors, are called of God to lead the local church (Acts 20:28).

The SBC context clearly partly explains why the clashes arose and why the fundamentalists won. The early Southern Baptists were a markedly rural grouping. In the mid-1920s less than 10% of SBC churches were located in places with a population greater than 2500. While this changed later, rural churches were still 50.1% of the total in 1981. The SBC ethos was strongly shaped by its rural roots. This fostered a significant distrust of seminaries and higher education, and a greater preference for the emotional over against the rational. The SBC heartland being in the Deep South was also significant. The white south had been very mono-cultural well into the 20th century, with very little migration into the region from other parts of USA. While this changed after WWII, it meant that SBC culture was less open to diversity than if it had been predominantly located in other parts of USA.

The overall outcome of the SBC struggles has not been a major schism (though the breakaway Cooperative Baptist Fellowship has 1800 aligned churches). While the battles have largely subsided at SBC Convention level, they persist to some extent at state level (state conventions and state colleges), as the fundamentalists have sought to achieve there what they have achieved at national level. A few of the state conventions are opposed to the current direction of SBC. Thus the Texas State Convention of SBC voted in 2000 to cut more than $5 million in funding to the six SBC seminaries and to redirect the moneys to three theological schools in Texas. In 2003 an international battle brewed over the Co-operative Baptist Fellowship seeking membership of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA). After a delay membership was granted and SBC then withdrew from BWA. Will the struggle ever end?

A more fundamentalist SBC has not led to greater evangelistic success. SBC membership has plateaued in the early twenty-first century at 16m. members, despite renewed calls to focus on 'Great Commission' preaching (*Christian Century*, 12 July 2011, p.14).

FOR REFLECTION:

1. Should the northerners have taken a confrontational attitude to the south on the issue of slavery (involving issues of culture and economic livelihood) – or were there other ways of dealing with the issue? Are there issues today, where sub-biblical attitudes are rooted in people's lives, which may be dealt with other than by direct challenge (materialism? individualism? sexual issues?)

2. What were the main factors contributing to enormous SBC growth in its first 120 or more years of existence?

3. Has SBC been wise to make belief in the inerrancy of Scripture a litmus test of orthodoxy with 'holy wars' and denominational schism being one outcome?

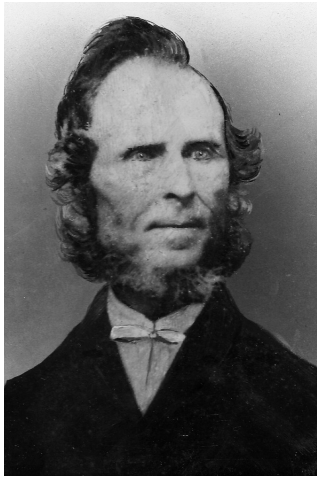
Section Three – A history of the New Zealand Baptists

THE BEGINNINGS OF BAPTIST LIFE IN NEW ZEALAND

English Baptists had early awareness of New Zealand. Keen BMS supporter, Rev. Samuel Pearce (1766-99) wanted to come as a missionary to New Zealand in 1786. William Carey highlighted N.Z. as a mission possibility in his 1792 *Enquiry*. The Baptist Magazine in England gave regular reports about NZ, and published a 'NZ Colonization' number in July 1842. The first known person in New Zealand to declare himself Baptist was William Wade in 1839. He was an Anglican Church Missionary Society member who left the Mission to take up a Baptist pastorate in Tasmania.

Individual Baptists came to New Zealand in the 1840s, usually attending a nearby Protestant church (Methodist, Anglican, Presbyterian etc.). Gradually, some of these Baptists began to have meetings in homes or hired halls, or to start Sunday Schools for children. These small groups shared a lot in common, but they came from diverse and often insular Baptist congregations in England. Their background meant there was not a total uniformity of belief and practice, e.g. Calvinism vs Arminianism, open vs closed communion. Their deep commitment to Scripture and their strong sense that doctrine and practice must be 'right' were a factor in the internal wrangles which commonly occurred in the new fledgling churches.

The first formation of a Baptist church occurred at Nelson where Henry Daniell settled in 1851 and gathered together a Baptist group. Earlier, James Horne had settled in Appleby, south of Nelson in 1842, and was baptised a little later. Horne formed a 'religious society' 14km from Nelson in 1849. Because of differences in doctrine and discipline, the Nelson Baptists declined to associate with the Horne group. The Horne group called Rev. Decimus Dolamore (1819-1912) as minister from Yorkshire. On his arrival, he found that Horne's group could not support a minister and was on the point of breaking up. Dolamore teamed up with Daniell to form the Nelson Baptist Church with 14 members on 18 May 1851, 15 days after Dolamore's arrival.



Decimus Dolamore

EARLY BAPTIST CHURCHES

The Nelson Baptist Church

By the end of 1851 Dolamore had baptised 35 people. He resigned from the Nelson church in 1857 to devote all his energies to the more rural work that had opened up. The Nelson church then had 80 members.

Edward Thomas, who had had a doubtful ministry at the new Auckland church, became pastor. Subsequent controversy in the Nelson church reached a point where the Thomas faction took control of the building in 1860, and locked out the other members. Twenty-eight of the excluded members then successfully applied to the trustees of the Nelson Baptist churches for possession of the chapel.

In July 1860 William Biss was voted in as new pastor by 16 votes to 2. Though Thomas started a new work nearby in 1861, this work had ceased to function as a Baptist church by 1876. The development by Biss of Brethren-type views led to difficulties with regard to the communion service. As a consequence, the communion service was suspended for some time during 1863-1864. Some members resigned because of these difficulties (22 in October 1864). The church resolved that it could no longer pay Biss a full salary. Biss resigned and started a new work, taking many members with him.

In 1865 John Davis became pastor. The membership of 63 increased to 81 in 1866. However, financial difficulties (Davis's pay being 3 months in arrears) led to Davis's resignation, with regret on both sides, in December 1868.

Dolamore then returned as pastor in 1871. When he resigned in 1877 the membership was 70. He reported that, *'but for strife and division we would have been five-fold what we are.'*

Alexander Hamilton became pastor in 1877. In 1881 the church asked him to resign. His response was that the church would have *'either to lock him out or starve him out.'* The church was closed the following Sunday, and the matter was resolved by a solicitor's notice that Hamilton vacate the house. Thomas Cato became pastor in 1881. There was much growth with 37 people (mainly teens) baptised in March 1882. Cato resigned in 1886, and then became an Anglican priest.

The roller-coaster, boom-and-bust Nelson pattern occurred in a number of early Baptist churches. Evangelistic fervour and able preaching might lead to marked growth, later to be undone by church division. Did Baptist high, but commonly legalistic, views of Scripture, coupled with a low view of designated ministry (that all may lead and all may interpret Scripture) contribute to this pattern?

The Richmond Baptist Church

This began in 1851, with Dolamore spending one Sunday a month in the country. Here the first Baptist chapel was erected in NZ in September 1854.

Dolamore continued as minister there till 1863. The Nelson, Richmond and Spring Grove churches had John Davis as common pastor 1865-1869.

After Davis left, members resolved their need for preachers by the public reading of Spurgeon's sermons. The obituary of William Hart recorded that 'Sunday by Sunday he would mount the pulpit armed with one of his greatly admired Spurgeon's Sermons over which he spent hours of prayerful thought and selection.' Churches like this could become very insular and narrow in outlook. One issue troubling the Richmond church was the use of fermented wine at communion. Attempts to persuade the church to use unfermented wine failed, even though some teetotal members would not take communion with fermented wine. The Richmond church had 12 members in 1882. Over the next 30 years its membership never rose above 30.

The Auckland Baptist Church (now the Auckland Baptist Tabernacle)

This church started from a mixed group of Baptists and Church of Christ people in 1852. A separate Baptist meeting commenced in 1853 or 1854. In 1855 a Baptist church on open communion lines was formed with 15 members, with Edward Thomas as pastor. Thomas proved unsatisfactory and was asked to resign about 10 months later.

James Thornton became minister in April 1857. Thornton said that he began with 13 who had 'as many different creeds, each contending for the adoption of his own.' The following year, a chapel seating 300 was erected. In 1861 there were 130 members. Thornton had earlier offered to resign six times. He was finally asked to terminate in 1861. The reason for the request, according to Dolamore was 'his credentials and character not being satisfactory.'

Philip Cornford was minister, 1862-1876. In this time the membership more than doubled. In addition, the Auckland church planted churches at Mt Eden, Thames, Ponsonby and Cambridge. His successor minister, Allan Webb (1877-1881), instituted open-air meetings at the foot of Victoria Street. When he left the membership was 360.

Thomas Spurgeon, son of Charles, served in a very vigorous evangelistic ministry 1881-1889, leaving to become national Baptist evangelist. In 1882 the membership was 508. In 1885 the Tabernacle building was erected, and opened debt-free. Spurgeon's preaching saw it comfortably full each week. In his eight years of ministry Spurgeon baptised 330 people, and welcomed 547 new members. His church became the largest congregation in Australasia.

The next pastor was Rev. William Birch. The Auckland Tabernacle leaders had asked Charles Spurgeon and Alexander McLaren to select their next pastor. Their nominee, Birch, came from a strong pulpit ministry in Manchester where he had regularly preached to 5000 and more. Birch quickly fell out with a number of local church leaders. He stirred up controversy over his 'holiness' emphasis, which his opponents said was sinless perfectionism. In addition he gave public support to striking miners. His outspoken and turbulent way of speaking was felt to be bringing the church into public disrepute. According to Birch, the fault lay with the church officers. In a letter to Charles Spurgeon, Birch wrote, 'I do not wonder that your son resigned. One or two of the officers are cantankerous, as men are whose bowels move only once a week.'

Pressure from the officers, with the matter going to at least two members meetings, led to Birch's resignation after only 16 months ministry. The fact that Birch's subsequent ministry at Oxford Terrace, Christchurch, led to similar turbulence and another forced resignation, suggests significant fault on Birch's part.

The church held its strength to the end of our period, having a membership of more than 600 in 1914.

The Dunedin Baptist Church

This started in 1863 with 20 members. By 1868 there were 200 members. A decade later there were 250 members, and 300 in the Sunday school. As with many Baptist churches, there was a strong note of evangelism.

Dunedin Baptist church records 1880-1900 indicate that besides services and Sunday School, there were Pastor's week-night Bible classes for young people and adults (well-attended), a Young Christians' Band of 70, a women's prayer meeting, young men's and young women's prayer meetings, a Dorcas Society, a young men's Mutual Improvement Society, and a District Visiting and Tract Distributing Society. Up to 60 cottage meeting workers were committed to visiting homes on Sunday evenings. In 1891 60 homes were visited and on average about 10 meetings were held in each home. On any evening there could be meetings in close to 20 homes with workers talking of Christ to the gathered groups.

A free reading room (established 1888) was used in a day by as many as 100 unemployed and young men in lodgings. In 1889 the Pastor started an Adult Temperance Society. When Chinese settled in Dunedin after the gold rush had ended, Sunday afternoon classes were arranged for them. Attendances grew to 23, and 14 Chinese were baptised into the church.

Prior to the formation of the Baptist Union, Hanover Street had directly planted four churches, and these had planted three further churches. Membership of the Hanover Street Baptist Church peaked at 525 in 1896.

The Christchurch Baptist Church

Baptist house meetings began in the early 1850s. Later a hired hall was used. Dolamore led a group of 12 in communion in 1859. A public meeting was called in 1863 and Dolamore was called as pastor to the group which then constituted with 19 members. Dolamore resigned a year later over communion issues, and the extent to which Calvinism was to appear in the church trust deed, and on a matter of church discipline where the church refused to take action.

James Thornton then became pastor (1865). Membership that year rose from 44 to 68. Differences arose over open communion and over the use of fermented wine. A split developed, and Thornton was dismissed in 1867. He then led a separate church which had a membership of 96 in 1869, the year he departed. The two churches soon held joint prayer meetings leading to full reunion in 1871.

A very significant pastorate was that of Rev. Charles Dallaston (1877-92). It had 95 members, but soon had baptisms every month. In 1880 it had 180 members, but had 400 at its evening services. In 1882 it had 320 members.

The Wellington Baptist Church

This was a late starter, apparently because earlier attempts to start a Baptist work had come unstuck because of the presence of Brethren and Disciples of Christ in the earlier gatherings. Baptist meetings commenced in 1876, and a church of 23 members was constituted in 1878. By the end of 1882 it had a membership of 126.

An outstanding feature of N.Z. Baptist churches in the later 1800s was the influence of Charles Spurgeon: direct appeal to Charles for guidance or help, the influence of his printed sermons, the presence of his son Thomas, and the regular influx of ministers trained at Spurgeon's Pastors College.

SUPPLY AND TRAINING OF BAPTIST PASTORS

Prior to the end of the 19th century most trained Baptist ministers came out from England. Many of these had short pastorates. Of the Baptist ministers who came from England 1851-1882, only 21 of the 37 served pastorates longer than three years. These short-term pastorates were often not long enough to produce steady growth. Only about 1/3 of those émigré ministers continued in ministry till retirement in NZ, and some others went on to minister in other countries. The Baptist Union, at its first conference in 1882, recognised 15 ministers in service and three in retirement. Within 12 years 10 of those foundation ministers had left the country, and two had joined other denominations.

Throughout the early decades, trained ministers were in short supply. In 1886 a Students' Committee was established to address the issue. Provision was made for a grant of up to $150 p.a. for three years for each student to train in a university town under an experienced minister. The first candidate was J. Farquharson Jones who trained under his minister at Hanover Street. In his first year his minister tutored him in Row's *Manual of Christian Evidences*, Angus's *Bible Handbook*, and in preaching. At University he studied Greek, English, Logic, Psychology, and Ethics. He attended theology classes at the Presbyterian Theological Hall.

Between 1903 and 1914, 70 new men took up pastorates in NZ. 45 of these men were New Zealanders (25 from overseas). Most of the NZers had not had formal theological training when they commenced ministry. Such men were given the status of 'Home Missionaries.' To qualify for the accredited ministers' list, the Home Missionary had to spend two years (later three years) in pastoral charge and to follow a course of study.

THE EMERGENCE OF THE CANTERBURY BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

In the early decades New Zealand Baptist links were of an informal nature. The first formal inter-linking organisation of Baptist churches was the Canterbury Baptist Association, established on 31 December 1873. Its aim was:

> to advance the cause of the Lord Jesus Christ by promoting the formation of Christian Churches, by the sustenance of Evangelists, by the assistance of Pastors, by giving counsel if requested, touching matters connected with any of its associated churches, or by such other means as its Executive may deem fit.

Significant Association efforts began in April 1876 with the appointment of an evangelist and the publication of a magazine. The first evangelist, George Johnston, ministered at most of the country churches over an eight-month period. A second evangelist took over in April 1878, but after two years he left for a pastorate in Australia. The Association had no further funds at that point to continue this ministry.

The quarterly publication, *Canterbury Evangelist*, started in August 1876. From May 1877 this became the *Canterbury Baptist*. In January 1880 it became *The Baptist*, and in July 1880, the *New Zealand Baptist*. Certain features stand out when one compares the early magazine then with the magazine now. It had a far greater focus on intellectual and theological reflection. It would include series on topics in Early Church History etc. It showed why and how all readers could study New Testament Greek! The early *Baptist* magazine was markedly evangelistic in focus. It was also strongly denominational, commonly including, 'Why I am a Baptist' type material.

The Association provided lay preachers for the smaller churches and various preaching stations, providing the small and often struggling causes with a sense that they belonged to a larger whole.

STEPS TOWARDS THE FORMATION OF A NATIONAL BAPTIST UNION

Initiative for a union came through *The Baptist* newspaper. In January 1880 the new editor, Thomas Smyth, indicated that the magazine was *'intended to promote the union of Baptist churches throughout the colony.'* Clearly, Smyth felt that this would lead to a stronger sense of Baptist identity and to numerical increase. Drawing attention to the fact that although the previous census indicated 9,159 Baptists, only 2,314 were worshipping in Baptist churches, Smyth argued in April 1880 that a national Baptist Union would result in more Baptist churches, and in more Baptists worshipping in Baptist churches.

Charles Dallaston of Christchurch then organised a one-day conference in September 1880. Four of the five Canterbury ministers, and four of the seven other NZ Baptist ministers, plus a number of local Baptists, attended. The conference resolved:

> that it is desirable to form some practical Union among the Baptist churches in New Zealand. That the purpose of this be to obtain occasional meetings of ministers and delegates; to promote the formation of ministers and delegates; to promote the formation of new and the help of weak churches.

The final catalyst for union was Alfred North. Only three months after North's arrival to pastor in Dunedin, a conference took place at his urging in Wellington in October 1882 with a view to forming the Baptist Union of New Zealand. There were 15 delegates representing 10 of the 25 Baptist churches in New Zealand. Eight of the 15 Baptist ministers of NZ were present as delegates. On 9 October a constitution and rules were adopted. In contrast to the six doctrinal statements set down later by the Baptist Union, the original constitution had only one:

> The Union fully recognises that every separate church has liberty to interpret and administer the laws of Christ and that the immersion of believers is the only Christian baptism.

WIDER BAPTIST OUTREACH IN NEW ZEALAND

Maori ministry

Thomas Spurgeon developed a strong interest in Maori work when he was minister at Auckland. A visiting American, Mr W.P. Snow, seeking health at the Rotorua hot springs, came up with an offer of half a full-time worker's salary. The Auckland Tabernacle took initiative with Union support. Charles Spurgeon sent Rev. Alfred Fairbrother from his college in London. In 1883 Fairbrother commenced Maori ministry at Ohinemutu (Rotorua). The ministry began well.

Liquor was recognised to be a major social and spiritual problem. Fairbrother declared war on alcohol and organised Maori into the Blue Ribbon Army of temperance, 50 signing up at one settlement despite liquor-interest opposition. Snow died a few months after the work began. Maori interest increased for a time, with up to 100 in the services. However, in 1885 discontent surfaced in relation to Fairbrother's work. A report into the situation noted:

> Native drunk at meeting, so Mr Fairbrother would not preach there. Did not visit sick. Pulled pipes out of mouths of men and women and rebuked them in bad temper. Threw sticks at women who disturbed public worship. Put lights out before meeting finished because he wanted to go to another meeting. Did not impress the men favourably, and attendances fell.

Fairbrother was probably experiencing 'culture shock' and not able to adjust to the realities of his ministry situation. As a result of the complaints the Tabernacle deacons set up an investigation which led to Fairbrother's forced resignation. The work then collapsed. No further large-scale Baptist Maori work took place for another seventy years.

Nationally-sponsored evangelism

The 1884 Conference urged the appointment of a missionary or missionaries to work in districts 'destitute of Gospel teaching.' George Johnston was appointed to work in the West Coast, with the hope that after two years the work would be self-supporting. Johnston invited his hearers not only to respond to the gospel but also to sign the temperance (no alcohol) pledge. In two years more than 300 signed, and a number of conversions to Christ were recorded. However, the work among a widely scattered people was clearly not going to be self-funding. While acknowledging the great work done, the Executive Committee resolved to end the work, despite Johnston's pleas.

The 1889 Conference appointed Thomas Spurgeon as a full-time evangelist for the Union. His first mission was in Invercargill (a town of 7,000 people) where the Baptist membership was 26. The local theatre was comfortably filled with 1,000 people on the first Sunday evening, and packed out on the second. Responses came at every service. Spurgeon had a very significant two years of evangelism until the death of his father saw his recall to England.


Thomas Spurgeon

Church planting, 1903-1914

World War I brought to an end what Clifford (115) called 'the most progressive Baptist decade.' The 1901 Conference had resolved to plant at least one new church each year. Between 1903 and 1914 twenty-two new churches were added. With four closing in that period, the 35 churches had become 53 (a 50%

increase). Church membership increased 59% (from 3721 to 5904). This was the outcome not only of church planting, but also of vigorous evangelism through locally-led missions and visiting overseas evangelists.

Ministry to children and young people around 1900

The Sunday School was in its heyday with a high percentage of the children of New Zealand attending Sunday Schools. At that time Baptists had about 155 Sunday School scholars for every 100 church members. The Sunday School Superintendent then had pride of place in the church, second only to the minister.

Youth ministries flourished early in the twentieth century

- **Young Christian Bands:** These meetings focused on enhancing personal faith, helping one another, and relating to non-Christians. The Bands often operated like a church with a youth accent.
- **Christian Endeavour:** This interdenominational movement began in New Zealand in 1891, and soon outstripped other youth movements. It was a highly-committed and highly structured program. At its centre was the pledge: 'I will strive to do whatever God would like to have me do.' Its weekly meetings fostered every-member participation, e.g. a talk, a prayer, testimony etc. Its committee system of small activity groups gave workshop experience in a wide range of practical Christian activities – missionary, prayer, sick-visitation etc.
- **Bible Class:** This was the most significant movement of all for Baptist youth. It centred on a Sunday youth Bible study. Syllabus material and other helps were provided. A national Baptist Young Men's Bible Class Union was established in 1904. The Bible Class movement branched out into a variety of other activities, especially Easter Camps, which had a strongly evangelistic dimension.

THEOLOGICAL ISSUES AMONG THE EARLY BAPTISTS

The early Baptists prided themselves on being thoroughly biblical. They articulated a lot of anti-Roman-Catholic rhetoric. However, they also struggled with other baptistic groupings that potentially eroded the Baptist movement. The closeness of such groups to the Baptists meant that it was relatively easy for some Baptists to be attracted to them. A significant attraction/threat was 'Plymouthism' (the Open Brethren), which pulled a number of Baptists into its ranks. The *NZ Baptist* devoted two full pages to a critique of the 'Plymouth Brethren' in October 1927.

A greater issue for Baptists in the 1880s was the doctrine of conditional immortality – the notion that there is no immortal soul, that only those in Christ are raised, and that the rest are annihilated, either at death or at the final judgment (after an unconscious post-death period awaiting the return of Christ – the position of the Church of Christ (Life & Advent)). One Baptist minister, Rev. George Brown, was repudiated by the Auckland Tabernacle, and started the Church of Christ in West Street. Another, Rev. Charles Crisp Brown, while Baptist minister at Timaru, was put out of the Union for his conditional immortality views in 1888. He was re-instated in 1892, the Owaka church resigning in protest at the re-instatement. It is interesting to note that several Church of Christ (Life & Advent) churches, while retaining their distinctive emphases, became member churches in the Baptist Union in the 1990s. So some Baptists today hold a conditional immortality theology.

Controversy over varying millennial theories was to the fore at the turn of the century, especially pre-millennialism versus post-millennialism. Tied up with this was the issue of the extent to which millennial biblical material was to be understood literally, e.g. was Christ to establish a literal reign on earth at his return?

Open membership was a hot issue early in the twentieth century. Almost all churches were closed membership churches (membership only for those who had been baptised as believers). However, when Rev. A.S. Wilson came to Wanganui in 1907, he was an ardent advocate of open membership. It was unscriptural 'to waft away from the Church of Jesus Christ anyone whom He recognises as His beloved follower.' Wilson's views were widely disseminated, leading to a great deal of controversy. A large part of one day at the 1911 Baptist Conference was devoted to the issue, which then subsided, with the two sides apparently agreeing to disagree. Today a majority of Baptist churches have open membership, though quite a number retain closed membership.

FOR REFLECTION:

1. Reflect on the amount of division the early Nelson Baptist church experienced and then reflect on theological or structural matters that might make Baptists more at risk of division. What can be done to foster greater congregational harmony?

2. Note how conditional immortality doctrines caused splits in early Baptist life, but that view exists within some Baptists today without splits. What sorts of issues need theological clarity, debate, even division, and what sorts of issues should remain open in Christian love?

PUBLIC ISSUES AND BAPTISTS IN THE EARLY-TWENTIETH CENTURY

There was a tendency for early Baptist preaching to steer away from such issues. In 1892, Arthur Dewdney, in an editorial in the *New Zealand Baptist* charged Baptists with being too other-worldly, and contenting themselves with simply preaching regeneration of the soul. On the basis of Luke 4.18-19, he called the church also to have a new mission for the regeneration of society.

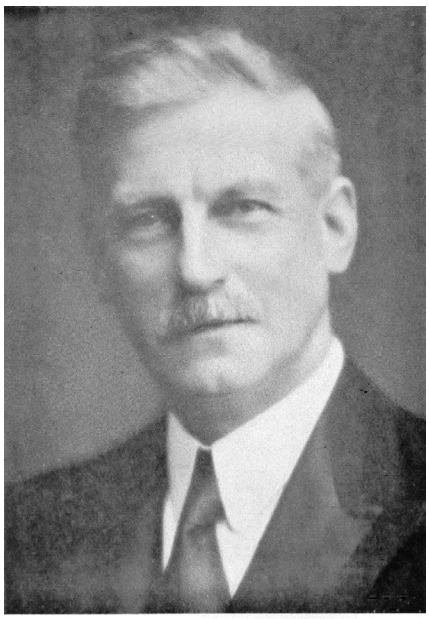
From time to time further voices were heard on this matter and the Annual Conference began giving more time to moral and social issues. In 1900 a whole afternoon and evening were devoted to the discussion of papers on municipal government, the press, commerce, sex, gambling, and temperance. This 'open Parliament' became an established item on the Conference program.

J.J. North's presidential address in 1905 was on 'The Socialism of Jesus: being an argument drawn from the Social Activities of the Christian Faith.' He contended that 'you can no more separate social activity from Christian faith than you can untwist light and heat plaited in a sunbeam.'

The Baptists held mixed views on the Boer War. The subsequent arms race between Germany and Britain became the concern of some. J.K. Archer clashed strongly with his deacons at Napier in 1909 after he

AN OUTSTANDING BAPTIST:

Joseph Kemp (1872-1933)



It is significant that Kemp's biography by his wife has the subtitle, 'A Story of Evangelism and Revival.' In her eyes at least that was what Kemp's life was about. Scottish-born Kemp's first ministry was in Edinburgh. After visiting the Welsh revival in 1905, Kemp returned with something of that dynamic to Edinburgh. The outcome was a revival movement in his church with a deep sense of the presence of the Holy Spirit and with hundreds converted.

After a short ministry in New York, Kemp came on to NZ (to the Auckland Tabernacle) with a revivalist approach to ministry, a powerful focus on evangelism, and a strong promotion of fundamentalism. Kemp saw hundreds converted under his ministry in Auckland. Especially with the evening services, it was soon a case of come early or there would be no seats left.

According to historian Jane Simpson, Kemp represented the first turning of the tide of evangelical cultural allegiance in NZ towards America. With this came an even more vigorous emphasis on personal holiness. When Kemp came to the Tabernacle he found to his horror, that the Tab young people had Tab sporting and recreational clubs. These must go as being 'unspiritual', especially so when a Tab football club promoted 'immorality' in holding a dance. The sports' teams shut down.

Kemp's wider influence was profound. He was the founding father of the Bible Training Institute (now Laidlaw College), with its linked Reaper magazine, which was the main disseminator of fundamentalist theology nationally. Kemp shared the fundamentalist concern about the general direction of the churches to the extent that he devoted a whole year to preaching a series on 'The War in the Churches – Modernism v. Fundamentalism.'

Kemp was influential in promoting a fairly narrow focus on evangelism and personal holiness, with a corresponding swing away from engagement with wider societal concerns. However, his influence did not provoke a major fundamentalist-modernist split in the denomination as had occurred in America. One reason for this is that Kemp was not an absolute backer of American fundamentalism. Kemp expressed dismay in 1926 after a recent overseas trip that took in America: 'Fundamentalists and Modernists have fought with unbelievable bitterness, and a degree of suspicion and disquiet is hampering work dreadfully. . . . The whole American situation distressed me' (NZB, Dec 1926).

Kemp's ministry at the Tab (1920-1933) was such that the membership increased over that period from 585 to 1,030. His strong missionary emphasis saw over 100 men and women from that church volunteer for missionary service during that period. Kemp died at the height of his ministry in 1933.

preached against the war-scare which compelled England to 'portentous expenditure on the navy.' When the deacons objected, the matter was referred to the church, whose decision favoured the minister.

The Baptist voice was strongest and most united on issues of personal morality, especially sexual morality, gambling, and alcohol (the 'trinity' of evil). The Baptist denomination was very solidly behind the temperance movement and its goal of having national prohibition of the sale of alcohol. Many Baptist churches formed Temperance Committees and Societies. Bands of Hope, particularly focusing towards children, were common. A significant part of the wider temperance movement came from zealous Baptists. The *New Zealand Baptist* had a temperance column each month. Signing the 'pledge' was strongly encouraged for adults and children alike: 'I promise, with God's help to abstain from all alcoholic liquors as beverages.'

ASPECTS OF THE LIFE OF THE CHURCHES IN THE MID-TWENTIETH CENTURY

Evening services

Churches (small and large) typically had Sunday morning and evening services, and a mid-week prayer and Bible study meeting. The flavour of the evening service was commonly evangelistic in nature. An appeal for response was normal.

Sunday schools

These continued to boom in the middle of the century, and were a common way of extending the work of the church into the community. Especially was this the case in new housing areas, particularly in state housing developments. In 1948 Orakei (130 members) had 380 Sunday School scholars, while Point Chevalier (55 members) had 277 scholars. Around this time Sunday Schools began to move from being held on Sunday afternoons to Sunday mornings (a result of increase in leisure activities). Later (1970s) they were to move from a pre-service time to being held at the same time as the service (for the convenience of parents). In the earlier years Sunday School anniversaries were a high point of the church year for the whole church. The Sunday School anniversary was a major performance with a lot of musical and other items. It was the service of the year which most drew outsiders (especially Sunday School parents). Grange Road Baptist Church (now part of Balmoral Baptist Church) once took the Empire theatre for its anniversary services, and had 900 in its evening meeting. Increasing secularisation of NZ, and the counter-attraction of other activities, has led to a major decline in Sunday Schools in the last quarter-century. In 1982, there were about 20,000 members in the Baptist Union but only 12,000 primary age SS students. In 2010, with 22,000 members and 28,000 attending adults, Baptist churches had 7200 children at church.

Church staff

A huge amount of work done by paid church staff today was previously done by volunteers, many of whom devoted large amounts of time, year after year, to the task. Up until the 1960s (or even later) it was rare for a church to have more than one paid staff member (even the large churches). In contrast, the last quarter of a century has seen a marked growth in the number of churches with multiple staff, especially associate pastors, youth pastors, administrators, office secretaries. A downside of this is that the church tends to utilise much more of the church offerings for its own work, and has less lay ministry and a lower sense of ownership of 'our church.'

Evangelistic crusades

Periodic 'crusades' were common in churches. Joseph Kemp once held meetings every night of the week for 13 weeks as an extension of his own evangelistic ministry at the Tab. One hundred and sixty responded for conversion during this period. One key evangelist was the blind Andrew Johnston. From 1932 to 1936 Rev. Joseph Carlisle served as a denominational evangelist to much effect. Stan Edgar (30) noted that in the 1940s 'it was of the essence of Baptist churchmanship to be both evangelical and evangelistic.' In the 1950s and early 1960s there was much nationally planned Baptist evangelism. Ivor Powell from Wales took meetings around the country, 1955-1956. There were 2729 decisions (excluding children) recorded in 27 church missions and one Easter camp. Fred Carter was appointed national evangelist in 1958. In his first eight missions, 248 conversions were reported. Reports were sent to all the other Baptist churches, one report referring to 'drunkards, ex-gaol inmates, drug addicts, seven Roman Catholics, and two others taking lessons prior to joining the Roman Catholic church, two notorious blasphemers and ordinary people who needed the Saviour.' Rev. Cliff Reay served very effectively as national Baptist evangelist 1961-1963, and likewise Roland Hart 1961-1964. In 1965 103 Southern Baptist ministers ministered in 104 Baptist churches in the 'Trans-Pacific Crusade.' The Tom Skinner crusade was sponsored in 1974. In addition Baptists were heavily involved in the 1959 and 1969 Billy Graham crusades. Evangelism was clearly a major emphasis for Baptists. However, the older-style 'crusades' were soon to become less effective as a vehicle for evangelism. The heyday of crusades was probably in the 1950s. Baptist membership growth in the last years of the 1950s rose sharply:

1957	5.3% increase
1958	3.35% increase
1959	5.9% increase
1960	6.6% increase

Church planting

In 1934 the Union established an Evangelism and Church Extension Committee. Its first major project was the planting of a church at Greymouth. By 1945 this committee had been involved in the founding or developing of twelve church extension causes. In its beginnings a number of key ministers were willing to step down from large pastorates to serve as church extension organisers. These were not old hacks ready for retirement. Six of the seven pastors from large churches who took such roles were under 40 years of age. The church extension organisers included Fred Parry moving from Hamilton (membership 254) to Greymouth (membership 33), Cecil Boggis from Hastings (186) to Point Chevalier (17), and Ewen Simpson from Hanover Street (339) to Hawera (48). In the post-World-War-Two period considerable church planting has taken place. Prior to that, the central church tended to dominate in the large cities. In 1945 there was only one Baptist church north of Milford, only two in the Bay of Plenty, and none between Wellington and Palmerston North. The Auckland Association began to receive a percentage of church income from its churches from 1958 onwards. This enabled it to have major amounts available for church planting. Between 1945 and 1982, 78 Baptist churches were planted in NZ, nearly doubling the number of Baptist churches.

THEOLOGICAL TRAINING

Till the 1920s most Baptist ministers got their training through Knox College (Presbyterian) and/or through tutelage from leading city ministers. In 1923 the Baptist Assembly set up a committee to look at the question of the denomination starting a residential theological college. This led to classes commencing with nine students under J.J. North as principal at the Auckland Baptist Tabernacle on 3 March 1926.

Much of J.J. North's teaching was detailed study of the books of the Bible, worked through in sequence, often with only one or two books covered each year. The New Testament was taught from the Greek text. North's formal schooling had ended at primary school, apart from theological studies done at Knox (his D.D. was an honorary one from McMaster in 1928). However, he had a strong academic interest. For example, when the College community had holidays on Waiheke Island, North would have the group discussing readings from Browning and Shakespeare in the evenings. His custom, when greeting former students at Assembly, was to ask: 'Well, what have you been reading?' North, a prodigious reader, would arrive at each lecture with a mountain of books, each with its paper marker at the relevant passage.

The College also placed marked emphasis on practical ministry. Students were heavily involved in church ministry. Students were involved in the annual Easter Bible Class camps. Evangelistic open air meetings were conducted on the steps of the Auckland Tabernacle each Friday night through until the mid-1960s.

A very strong communal dimension developed with the training. This was especially so when the College was located on Mount Hobson. The building could house a maximum of 12 students, and the Norths lived on the floor under that of the students. Students were not permitted to marry during their training until the mid-1960s. Bonds forged in those training years (part of the mainly male bonding was done in typical male fashion – horseplay of various types), were a crucial part of the glue which held the denomination together.

The College expanded in moving to Victoria Ave (Remuera) in 1954. In that year there were 13 ministerial students. By 1960 there were 31. Throughout the period the primary purpose of the College was to train ministers. Almost no women were included. The first deaconess to be trained was Patricia Preest (1954). She returned in 1972 to be the first woman to gain full ministerial status.

Students gained no formal academic qualification until the 1950s. At that point the College curriculum was tied to that of the Melbourne College of Divinity (MCD). Almost all students were expected to sit the external MCD exams, LTh or BD (depending on whether they had a prior degree or not). In the 1980s all students could access the MCD BTheol when the Auckland Consortium for Theological Education became a teaching institution of MCD. This was soon followed by opportunity for a BTheol from the University of Auckland from 1990.

In the process the College, while retaining its core business of training Baptist pastors, greatly expanded through independent degree students, and beginning a Diploma of Mission program in 1995. In 2002 Carey began its own Bachelor of Applied Theology. Expansion led to another move, this time to Penrose in 1994. By 2004 the college probably had four times the number of full-time-equivalent students compared with 1990. Of these students, only about 15% were formally training for the Baptist ministry as Pastoral Leadership students (compared with about 80% in 1990).

Since then Carey has undergone further changes, with a Chinese language stream, a 'gap year' stream, a youth pastor training stream and the commencement of a postgraduate stream in 2012.

FOR REFLECTION:

1. Should training for ministry be academically focused or practically focused? What is the best training for ministry in the twenty-first century?

2. In today's world do we have too much or too little focus on doctrinal understanding? Justify your answer.

3. Do we need more theological education for people in our congregations? What sort of training might that look like?

BAPTISTS AND ECUMENICAL ISSUES

Anti-Catholicism

From early days there was a strong anti-Catholicism within the Baptist Church. The attitude of J.J. North was typical. North was very anti Roman Catholic, preaching a twelve-week series on its evils in 1919. Through the pages of the *NZ Baptist*, of which he was editor, North maintained a steadfast opposition to 'Romanism', particularly for what he felt were its authoritarian control of its adherents' beliefs. In his book *Protestant and Why*, North expressed Protestant Reformation-type sentiment. Romanism was a religion of works not faith. It set the church in the place of Christ. It was falsely authoritarian, and its claims to infallibility were spurious. The mass falsely denied the finality of Christ's sacrifice, and verged on idolatry. In a preface to the book, Luke Jenkins, successor as principal to North, asserted:

> Romanism is a bad religion, a travesty of Christianity, a caricature which demands the corrective of a lively testimony of the truth as it is in Jesus.

Extremes of anti-Catholicism were expressed by Rev. Howard Elliott (narrowly defeated by J.K. Archer in the election for the presidency of the Baptist Union in 1915). Elliott was chief spokesperson for the Protestant Political Association (formed in 1917 as an offshoot of the Orange Lodge). Elliott accused the Pope of having started the First World War, and made allegations about a Catholic nun being pregnant at her drowning. This earned him a horse-whipping from her brother, a returned soldier. After charges were made against Elliott in Parliament, the Union executive dissociated the Baptist Union from the PPA and from Elliott's charges and insinuations regarding the Roman Catholic Church. However, Elliott retained his Baptist links, sending greetings to the Conference in 1919, and being congratulated by the 1920 Conference for his efforts in opposition to the Roman Catholic *Ne Temere* decree in relation to the legality of mixed marriages.

Gradually anti-Catholic feeling has subsided to the point where it is close to non-existent, at least in mainstream Baptist life. Lesser focus on doctrine, the charismatic renewal, Vatican II, greater openness and pluralism, the need for common bonds in the face of relentless secularism, have all contributed to this positive situation today.

Membership of WCC and NCC

The NZ Baptists joined the National Council of Churches (NCC) in 1941. NZ Baptists have been in membership of the World Council of Churches (WCC) since its inception in 1948. A strong minority have opposed such linkage. Aspects of concern have been association with more liberal churches and with ecumenical focus on justice issues. Each time the issue of withdrawal has come to Assembly the matter has been defeated by a significant majority. The ambivalence of Baptists in relation to membership of wider ecumenical bodies showed when the 1986 Assembly voted not to join the Council of Christian Churches of Aotearoa-New Zealand (CCANZ), which was the successor body to the NCC. This reflected increasing conservatism. NCC/CCANZ was also viewed with more suspicion. The issue was not anti-Catholicism, though the Catholic Church was likely to join the new body. That was an issue of by-gone days.

MAORI AND OTHER ETHNIC MINISTRIES

Nineteenth-century Maori mission initiatives failed. Lack of natural links to Maori people and the traditional allegiance of Maori to other denominations, were also barriers to the starting of Baptist Maori work. For example, Rev. A.J. Seamer of the Methodist Maori Mission told Baptist minister Ralph Page in 1949:

> The historical position is that there are three "Gospel Canoes", Anglican, Methodist, Roman Catholic. The whole land was portioned out. Maoris are strong on tradition and would ask, "The Baptists, who are they? They are not one of the three canoes."

Des Jones

In 1947 the Baptist Assembly set up a committee 'to investigate the best possible methods of discharging our obligations to the Maoris.' The 1953 Assembly decided to move ahead. The first workers for the new endeavour were Des Jones (then a student at the Baptist College) and Joan Milner. The pastor of Pukekohe Baptist Church, Ian Christensen, had already had sufficient contact with Maori in the area for a Sunday School ministry to begin. Jones began Maori Sunday School ministry in several pa in 1954. He was joined later in the year by Joan Milner as deaconess.

The work began well. In 1955 there were 170 Sunday School pupils, Bible-in-schools to a further 225 Maori children, 25 adults in cottage meetings, 52 homes having regular visitation, and two baptisms. The work was very scattered with services at Pukekohe, and monthly services at Port Waikato, Tauranganui, Tahuna, and Aka Aka. The gathering of people into one cohesive community was difficult (much transport needing to be provided). Lack of strong Maori leadership was also a handicap. The Pukekohe Baptist Church provided a measure of support, but the racial gulf in the area meant less inter-racial closeness and strength. The work did not grow to become a strong stand-alone congregation.

In addition, major urban drift was taking place in

Maoridom in the 1960s. This change was reflected in shifting the location of the primary missioner among the Maori from Te Kohanga to Pukekohe in the 1960s, and then to the national Baptist office in Papatoetoe in the 1970s (with his work becoming one of national supervision rather than being tied to one area). Clearly too, indigenisation needed to occur quickly. As a result primary leadership of Maori-related work has been with Maori personnel since 1979.

In more recent years one aspect of Maori ministry has been to sensitise the largely Pakeha Baptist Churches to bi-cultural issues. Maori ministry in Pukekohe has intentionally been integrated into the main church on a bi-cultural basis, as an expression of Christ's breaking down of ethnic barriers. Maori have emerged as ethnic groupings within a number of Baptist churches, and a few are predominantly Maori in make-up.

Ministry amongst Chinese immigrants began back in the 1890s. A Chinese Baptist church began in the 1920s. At least two Chinese churches emerged in Auckland in the period after World War II. In recent years a number of other Chinese congregations have emerged.

Other ethnically-based churches emerged in the 1990s-2000s, especially Samoan and Korean. With New Zealand's patterns of immigration, further developments in this sort of direction are likely to occur. A challenge for NZ Baptists today is to shift from an almost exclusively European-origin denomination to a genuinely bi-cultural and multi-ethnic denomination, where all ethnic groups can feel welcome and affirmed at individual, congregational and national level.

FOR REFLECTION:

1. Is there a genuine partnership and welcome for Maori in predominantly Pakeha churches? If not, what change would need to occur to make a significant difference?

2. 'All one in Christ' (Gal 3.28). Yet we have lots of ethnically-based churches. What do you think of this?

CHARISMATIC RENEWAL

Pentecostalism was introduced into NZ in 1922 through Pentecostal evangelist Smith Wigglesworth. Baptists soon moved from some openness to the new movement to negativity. In a letter to the *Christchurch Sun*, 19/6/1922, J.J. North expressed his concern about the Wigglesworth mission:

> [A]nything more unlike the temper of the New Testament I find it hard to imagine. Very cruel wrong has been done to numbers of innocent sufferers, suffering some of them through prenatal causes, and some through their gallantry in facing the common foe in France. Such have been categorically told that they are suffering through their sins, and some have been told that they are possessed with devils. Several are in an indescribably wretched state of body and mind in consequence of this outrage.

Subsequently, A.H. Dallimore and his 'Holy Rollers' (the Revival Fire Mission) had large meetings at the Auckland Town Hall for a time in 1932.There was a strong focus on 'going under the power' (a follower estimating in December 1932 that between 20,000 and 40,000 had experienced this under Dallimore). There was major use of 'blessed handkerchiefs', which might be used for healing at a distance and for the healing of animals. A joint committee of enquiry, made up of medical, clerical and university representatives, was set up to investigate the claimed cures. It subsequently reported that there were no genuine cures. Among the committee personnel were Joseph Kemp and J.J. North. Pressure from this sort of quarter led the City Council to revoke the hire of the hall to Dallimore (though the decision was subsequently reversed). Internationally, the Pentecostals were put into quarantine (or quarantined themselves) from the 1920s for several decades.

The charismatic renewal (at first known as neo-Pentecostalism) resurfaced in the mid-1960s. Tensions and divisions began to surface among Baptists over the issue. The outcome was a twenty-page report accepted by Assembly in 1969 which was largely anti-Pentecostal in its conclusions. The report acknowledged good effects of 'Neo-Pentecostalism':

- Renewed interest in the person of the Holy Spirit
- A challenge to individual and congregational warmth and vitality
- A call to more fervent prayer and more zealous witnessing

On the whole, however, the report was damning of 'Neo-Pentecostalism':

- Misleading teaching, especially in relation to baptism in the Spirit as being a second experience distinct from conversion, a too-narrow understanding of spiritual gifts, over-emphasis on speaking in tongues, overstress on faith in relation to healing, excessive focus on evil spirits, unwise use of exorcism, and misleading prophecy which could sometimes also embody teaching contrary to Scripture
- Manipulation and use of techniques to induce tongues speaking
- Creation of divisions
- Disillusionment and even abandonment of faith by some previously caught up in 'Neo-Pentecostalism'
- Psychological damage caused by pre-occupation with evil spirits

The report ended with a call to love and unity, while affirming the ongoing need that 'all our Churches must be, and be seen to be, alive with the Holy Spirit.' Overall, the report seemed to indicate a slamming of the Baptist door to 'Neo-Pentecostalism', while allowing individual members the right to speak in tongues in their individual devotional lives.

However, the tide at this time was starting to flow strongly in favour of Pentecostal/charismatic renewal, and a significant minority of Baptist ministers and congregations became 'charismatic' in the 1970s. Charismatic groups emerged in most Baptist churches. The charismatic renewal reflected a cultural shift, with a younger generation reshaping the life of the church in ways that were felt to be more appropriate to that time, especially with regard to worship. By the 1980s most Baptist churches reflected something of a 'charismatic' approach, even if this amounted to not much more than a freer approach to worship (the use of Scripture choruses etc). The charismatic emphasis probably became more diluted as it became more mainstream, and as many of its adherents and sympathisers saw the need for a balanced approach. The charismatic renewal has now significantly subsided. It remains as leaven to some extent, but in most cases it is not the whole loaf. Often its influence is little more than influencing a style of worship (more singing, more emotion, a band and singers at the front etc). In a few situations, however, a few Baptist congregations have imbibed Pentecostal perspectives to the extent that they may have little to distinguish them from modern Pentecostalism.

FOR REFLECTION:

1. What attitudes should we hold in relation to charismatic/Pentecostal teachings and practices today?

2. How do we come to an appropriate understanding and balance on some controversial Pentecostal issues, e.g. healing?

WIDER ECUMENISM AND POST-DENOMINATIONALISM IN THE LATER 20TH CENTURY AND BEYOND

NZ Baptists have significantly pulled back from ecumenical contact at an official level. This is exemplified in the already-alluded-to 1986 Assembly decision not to join the Council of Christian Churches of Aotearoa-New Zealand. Lessened official ecumenism also resulted from a greater gulf from denominations that had become more liberal and also because of a greater conservatism in the Baptist denomination in the 1970s and 1980s. Instead there has been a 'narrower' evangelical ecumenism, through bodies such as the New Zealand Christian Network organisation. Another factor in reduced wider involvement is a lessened interest in national and institutional ecumenism. It is the local and the relational that are felt to be more important. Because direct relationships operate more at a local level, close inter-church co-operation may still occur locally.

Western church life is commonly labelled 'post-denominational.' There is now a plethora of evangelical-charismatic-Pentecostal churches (including NZ Baptists), and identity is often fuzzy. Several factors contribute to this:

- lesser interest in doctrine
- globalisation, especially in relation to worship styles
- diminished interest in organisational structures

A small but increasing number of these churches are one-off independent churches, or belong to a loose network, rather than to a more organised denomination. Churches within an evangelical-charismatic-Pentecostal denomination will not necessarily use their denomination's name as an identifier and do not always promote a consciousness of the wider denomination within their congregation. People are readier to move from one church 'brand' to another and will shop around churches of several denominations to find the congregation of their choice when they move location. Some (especially some young people) may simultaneously belong to several 'brands.' At ministerial level, pastors are readier to shift from one evangelical-charismatic-Pentecostal denomination to another (notwithstanding subtle differences of ethos and practice). Examples of this phenomenon include:

- A Presbyterian or Pentecostal pastor moving immediately into a Baptist pastorate without any Baptist 'acclimatisation' first
- Pastoral Leadership students training for Baptist pastorates sometimes having little time belonging to a Baptist church prior to commencing their training
- The occasional Baptist pastor (or graduating Baptist pastoral leadership student) undertaking a pastorate in an independent congregation or a congregation of another denomination but with the possibility or likelihood of another Baptist pastorate later.

Current patterns and trends, both in society and in the church, suggest that such developments are likely to increase rather than decrease. Typically, more than 50% of Baptist members/attendees now come from non-Baptist backgrounds.

Are we witnessing the end of denominations, including the NZ Baptist denomination? 'No.' We are witnessing a profound shift: more diversity within the denomination, less 'loyalty' to the denomination. 'Loyalty' or commitment is now more commonly more to a cause or purpose than to a church or denomination or 'brand' – hence Christians will be more inclined to stay with a congregation or denomination because they see it as 'adding value' to their cause (or to their self). These factors suggest greater 'fuzziness' between denominations in the future though denominations will remain in some form. But they will be evolving continually; they will be less standardised; and adherence to them will be on a much more selective and voluntary basis than in the past.

FOR REFLECTION:

1. Have Baptists become too focused on the congregation at the expense of a concern for the nation-wide denomination?

2. Do Baptists have an adequate attitude towards ecumenical cooperation? How should that best be expressed?

BAPTISTS THEN AND NOW

Looking at Baptist churches in the middle of the 20th century and at the start of the 21st, one can note a number of contrasts:

- Baptist life was then more all-embracing, for those involved. A good Baptist was in boots-and-all, supporting the program of the local church, e.g. being a twice-a-Sunday service attender, supporting the mid-week meeting, taking a turn at Sunday School teaching etc.
- The Baptist churches had much more of a family-network feeling. It was common for Baptists to know the names of all the NZBMS missionaries (and most of the ministers). Reports-back from national and regional Baptist annual meetings were a regular high-point of the church year. There was strong co-ordination of Baptist youth in Auckland through a Bible Class committee, which had representation of most of the churches. Most youth groups supported the annual Bible Class camps, attended a post-camp rally, and participated in an annual sports day. All this gave Baptist life a much stronger sense of identity and denominationalism than is the case today.
- There was greater standardisation of Baptist life and thought. Worship followed a fairly standardised and defined approach. There was a stronger focus on personal ethical issues. All good Baptists strongly opposed smoking, drinking, and gambling.
- Evangelism was much more to the fore, both in terms of church program and in terms of personal responsibility.
- There was much more focus on personal piety – a Keswick-type approach. Thus 'deeper-life' missions were not uncommon in local churches. At the same time there was little focus on national and social issues of the day. The life of 'trusting-and-obeying' was basically an individual matter. For somewhat different reasons, the situation is not altogether different today. Maybe through the impact of charismatic renewal, there has been a focus on 'me-and-God.' Such other-worldliness has often been to the neglect of this-worldly relational, national, and global dimensions of Christianity.

THE FUTURE

Baptist churches do not exist in a vacuum. Changes in society and in other churches inevitably have a bearing on Baptist life also. Mainstream New Zealand Christianity declined significantly in the 20th century – in adherence, membership, attendance and influence. In that overall pattern Baptist numbers bore up fairly well. Right through the century, census Baptists were about 1.6 or 1.7% of the total population. Baptist membership in proportion to the population actually increased in the 20th century by about 33% until 1990 (from c. 0.45% to c. 0.6%). A dip in membership followed. This may reflect a society that to much less extent formally joins organisations and signs on the dotted line, rather than reflecting an ebbing denomination. Baptist worship attendance figures have held strong. Nevertheless, weakening of youth strength in the denomination may be a warning sign for the future.

If Baptist churches have the ongoing spread of the gospel as a core value, then even if the denomination holds its own or grows slightly, there must be deep concern at the waning of Christianity in our society as a whole. This raises questions: Should we relate more to society in order to more effectively win it to Christ, or should we stand over against society (lest we lose our Christian distinctiveness and purity) and call society to repentance? Should we engage more with social, political and justice issues at regional and national level as an expression of the gospel, or are these a distraction from the spread of the gospel?

There is also the question of Baptist identity. In England Baptists found their identity partly as Dissenters opposing the unjust monopoly of the Church of England. This situation did not apply when settlers came to New Zealand, as there has never been an established state church here. Baptists may have become more anti-Catholic in their earlier days as an expression of their own identity. That day is long past. In mid-twentieth century New Zealand, Baptists more strongly entered into broad mainstream church existence (e.g. in their participation in the National Council of Churches). It was also a time of strong Baptist identity. Committees were in their heyday, the annual Assembly appointing 23 in 1945. That era has also passed. The radical late-1960s saw a gradual but major shift in Western worldview. It also saw the charismatic renewal beginning to influence Baptist life. Now, continuing charismatic influence, combined with a more pervasive post-denominational climate, forces the question: Who are we? What is our identity? What is our purpose? Many church organisations are born with a sense of mission, and identity comes later. Does our future lie in our regaining a sense of being a missionary movement within New Zealand, and the identity question will take care of itself?

FOR REFLECTION:

1. For much of their time in New Zealand Baptists have been very evangelistic. What are the primary barriers to evangelism today?

2. How may evangelism be best expressed in the circumstances of today's world?

THE NEW ZEALAND BAPTIST MISSIONARY SOCIETY

Its founding

NZBMS was founded in 1885, a time when New Zealand was in the midst of a ten-year economic depression. The Baptists were a small, new denomination (26 churches with 2,588 members in 1885). Starting missionary work was a bold undertaking at such a time.

How did the vision arise?
The influence of Rev. Silas Mead from South Australia was crucial. As early as 1864, Mead's urgings had led to the formation of a Baptist missionary society in South Australia. In 1882 two SABMS workers went to East Bengal. Mead subsequently formulated a plan for Australian and NZ Baptists to cover East Bengal. To support his plan, Mead made a hurried trip to New Zealand early in 1885 to place his vision before NZ Baptist leaders. About the same time Ellen Arnold, one of the two original SABMS missionaries, spent three months from February 1885 visiting almost all the Baptist churches of New Zealand.

A high percentage of key New Zealand Baptist leaders were missionary enthusiasts. These included Alfred North (called by Ayson Clifford 'Mr Baptist Union'), Thomas Dick (ex-Superintendent Otago Province and ex-Cabinet minister), Thomas Spurgeon (son of the great preacher, Charles Spurgeon), and Charles Carter (ex-missionary, Ceylon). Several descendants of William Carey were also active in NZ Baptist life.

Alfred North was particularly influential in his role as editor of the *New Zealand Baptist* for the two years prior to the crucial 1885 Conference, devoting much of the space of the magazine to missionary matters.

At the 1885 Baptist Conference it was moved Alfred North, seconded Charles Carter, 'that a New Zealand Baptist Missionary Society be now formed, to take up at the outset Missionary work in India.' The motion was carried 'with the utmost unanimity.'

The earliest years of NZBMS

The initial focus was on sending out 'zenana missionaries', following the pattern of SABMS. Zenana missionaries visited zenanas (the women's section of middle and upper class houses). Only a female missionary could gain access to these semi-cloistered

Rosalie MacGeorge

women. The first three missionaries were Rosalie MacGeorge (1886-1891), Annie Newcombe (1887-1889), and Hopestill Pillow (1889-1895). However, female missionaries could not touch society as a whole, because of the strongly patriarchal perspective of that society. Consequently, NZBMS soon sought male missionaries as personnel, and as team leaders for the field. The first team leader was Emeric de St Dalmas (1890-1894) who, with his wife, had had a number of years' experience already as missionaries in India.

The first NZBMS missionary, Rosalie MacGeorge, was on her own as a missionary within a few months of arriving in India (was this wise?). Thirty homes opened up to her. She gave Bible lessons to over 100 people per week, and ran a Sunday School. About 1889 she informed NZBMS that she could no longer accept the monthly allowances sent to her, for she feared Indians would think she was an agent being maintained by government money. She also thought she should set an example to Indian Christians who were prone to expect support from missions. She planned to maintain herself by living with a Hindu family, receiving food and shelter as payment for instruction she would give them. Several Australian missionaries were supporting themselves that way. MacGeorge's toughness and zeal are commendable. But was she too much on her own? Was there too much risk for a person already under stress? MacGeorge set up base at Comilla in 1890. A year later a routine medical examination discovered 'a serious organic weakness.' MacGeorge left for home, via Colombo. She died there (probably of typhoid) April 1891.

E.P.Y. Simpson, noting the enthusiastic initial vision of NZBMS, was critical of the lack of care, caution, and planning in the outworking of that vision. He felt (67) that NZBMS had too much 'light-hearted optimism' in its approach, failing to heed repeated warnings of key BMS figures to be cautious. Noting the death of the first missionary, and the withdrawal of the second after two years because of ill-health, he called the death of the third missionary (Hopestill Pillow), a 'sobering blow' (68). (This second death took place after Miss Pillow had gained permission from the New Zealand Council to stay for a further year beyond her scheduled furlough date – was it wise that she got this permission?)

A big mission crisis occurred 1898-1902 after a rapid increase in missionary numbers to ten. Eight missionaries were lodged in quarters designed for four, and personality clashes soon arose. Particular crisis with the head of mission, George Hughes, led to several of the missionaries resigning and the NZBMS holding a formal inquiry led by two BMS missionaries. The outcome was several other resignations. Most of these

missionaries continued on in other missions (Australian or British). Only three of the NZBMS team remained in that team to rebuild the work (Emma Beckingsale 1895-1935, John Takle 1896-1925, and Charles North 1898-1910).

B.N. and Lois Eade

NZBMS in East Bengal 1900 -1950

The first open converts to Christianity through the NZBMS ministry were two Hindus, who publicly professed their faith in 1895. The first Muslim conversion came in 1901. The small Christian communities that gradually emerged were formed into two constituted churches in 1901: Brahmanbaria with 10 members and Chandpur with 8. Simpson (87-8) explained factors influencing the low numbers of conversions:

> At one time the relatives of a Bengali would not hesitate to endanger life and limb to prevent any possible conversion to Christianity. For many years it was not possible to leave any convert, Hindu or Muslim, in his own community; it being essential, for his own safety, to move him to some other area.

Social and institutional work was important from early days. The missionaries were very conscious of the love of Christ for the whole person. Development of institutional work (hospitals, schools etc.) was an expression of compassion and a desire to uplift humanity. B.N. (Bun) Eade threw himself into famine relief work in Chandpur when there was a desperate famine in 1943. He worked day and night organising food supplies, exposing racketeers, pleading with officials, feeding the starving, nursing the sick, and comforting the dying. Though at times desperately ill himself, he toiled ceaselessly until the crisis was over. Many thousands owed their lives to his selfless service. In 1945 he was awarded India's highest civil honour, the Kaiser-I-Hind Gold Medal, with this citation: 'In this time of gravity you reached the heights of a long career of self-sacrifice and devotion to the poor.'

Regular evangelistic work commenced early on – preaching at bazaars, and selling tracts and gospel portions etc. However, in a tough mission situation there needed to be the softening of people's hearts as well as direct evangelism. The mission needed to develop the confidence of society. It needed to earn goodwill. It needed to establish points of contact with the wider community. Institutional work was a great help on such matters.

A major institutional development was the building of a hospital at Chandpur by Charles North in 1901. While this building was later demolished, the hospital ministry later started at Brahmanbaria continued. A 'Home of Hope' for widows and orphans was commenced at Brahmanbaria in 1920. A school was commenced near Brahmanbaria as early as 1893, while that at Chandpur opened five years later.

The work in East Bengal was hard and evangelistic results low. Disquiet over this led New Zealand Baptists several times to look seriously at whether that mission ought to continue. Two New Zealand commissions investigated the situation – in 1923 and in 1948. The second commission, noting the responsiveness of the new area of Tripura and the lack of new converts in what was now East Pakistan effectively recommended more of a holding operation in East Pakistan in favour of the more responsive field.

NZBMS in Tripura

When NZBMS first entered India, it soon became apparent that working amongst the tribal peoples of Tripura was likely to be a more responsive field than working amongst the Bengalis. Tripura was then an independent princely state under British protection and its maharajah did not give NZBMS permission to reside in that state until 1938.

The NZBMS work in Tripura did not start from scratch because from about 1911 some Mizo Christians from Assam had migrated into Tripura. The North East India General Mission (NEIGM) then sent in national workers to work with them. Tripura came to have about 1500 Mizo Christians. However, NEIGM was overstretched, and withdrew from Tripura altogether in 1934. Christians in Tripura then requested NZBMS to help by sending teachers. NZBMS began to send in nationals and also to have NZ missionaries go in by day (leaving before nightfall because of lack of permission to stay there).

Brian and Shirley Smith

The 1938 permission to have a missionary presence in Tripura required them not to preach to the Deb Barmas (= the Tripuris, = the 'royal' tribe) or to a small associated tribe. The Maharajah wanted no Christian infiltration of 'his' people. In December 1938 the Christians formed the Tripura Baptist Christian Union. This comprised 14 groups of Christians with four fully organised churches. The combined church membership was 106, with a recognised Christian community of 241, led by four evangelists and 15 teachers. By 1947 the NZBMS Tripura Christian community was 3,864 in 71 churches and outstations (in contrast to the NZBMS East Bengal Christian community of 301 in two churches and four outstations).

Evangelism was confined to the small immigrant

The hospital in Argartala

tribal groups (about 25% of total population of Tripura) until the preaching restriction was formally lifted about 1949. The first baptisms from the Tripuri tribe occurred in 1961. From that handful came a flood of converts in the 1980s, a flood which continues into the present.

Training and strengthening of leaders was a key aspect of the NZBMS contribution. One who had a significant role in training in the 1960s was Carey's former principal, Brian Smith, who was involved in both residential training and mobile Bible school training. (Brian was subsequently one of a team of three who translated the New Testament into the Kok Borok language of the royal Tripuri tribe, a key factor in the later mass conversions).

As with East Bengal, a significant aspect of the early missionary work was social and institutional ministry. Medical work began under Dr Daintree in 1940. A brick hospital was erected in Agartala in 1951. The medical work no longer exists – it is very difficult to indigenise missionary medical work (because of financial factors). St Paul's school at Agartala was established in 1943, and continues as a Grade 1-10 school of 1500 students to this day.

NZBMS had to totally evacuate Tripura in 1973. This was the result of political unrest in the region, leading the government to require all missionaries to leave the sensitive area. At that time there were 6,801 TBCU church members in Tripura. Now there are maybe 80,000 TBCU Christians in 500 churches.

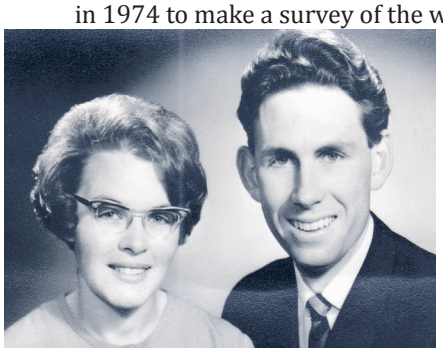
NZBMS history in Bangladesh since 1945

The sub-continent gained independence from Britain in 1947. There was a bloody sundering of Muslim (East and West) Pakistan from India. This was to have enormous consequences for the Bangladesh (then East Pakistan) work:

- It made the two works (Tripura and East Pakistan) much more separate (with stringent border restrictions between two largely hostile countries).
- It caused ongoing haemorrhaging of Christians (including leadership people) from East Pakistan to a relatively safer India in the years 1947-1955. (In that period thousands of Hindus and many Christians were slaughtered in East Pakistan.) Further similar migration occurred in 1971 during the Pakistan civil war and the Indo-Pakistan war.
- It hindered East Pakistan access to Indian-produced Christian literature. Consequently Bob Alcorn set up a literature department at Chandpur (East Pakistan) in 1955. The 1957 report indicated that 42,000 tracts (7 titles) were published. The magazine, Nabajug (started by Bun Eade about 1935), now came under the umbrella of this department as a monthly magazine. Major literature production (original publications and translated materials) continues to this day.

The bloody birth of Bangladesh in 1972 (through revolt against Pakistan) was a watershed time for mission. Peter McNee launched major new initiatives around this time:

- In 1972 McNee established a Cottage Industries program, giving up to 1,500 impoverished women employment and income. The crafts made of local products were marketed through Trade-Aid shops etc. in the West.
- In 1971 and 1972 McNee undertook the supervision of a lot of house relief rebuilding, first in consequence of a massive flood, and second in response to the civil war.
- A national Church Growth Committee asked McNee in 1974 to make a survey of the whole of Bangladesh to define the nature of the church, its ethnic makeup and background, and, on the basis of this knowledge, to make recommendations to guide the evangelistic thrust of churches and missions in Bangladesh. McNee authored a church growth book in 1976: *Crucial Issues in Bangladesh*. McNee highlighted the fact that there were not monolithic Moslem and Hindu communities in Bangladesh. There were many groups, each needing a unique and targeted gospel approach. In a largely unresponsive society there were responsive communities.



Peter and Elizabeth McNee

In the late 1970s there was tremendous focus on church planting because of:

- McNee's book
- A greater emphasis on having a contextually appropriate and truly indigenous church
- Greater zeal amongst nationals, linked partly

with several leaders having trained overseas

- A small revival-type movement occurring in the 1970s

It should be noted that McNee was simply one catalyst for the subsequent growth. Many others contributed. Growth came. The Bangladesh Baptist Fellowship (the church arising out of the work of the Southern Baptist, Australian, and NZ Baptist Missionary Societies) had 16 churches with 986 members and a total Christian community of 2,591 in 1975. In 1980 the Bangladesh Baptist Fellowship, now a union of 20 churches, set a goal of 200 churches by 1990. By 1990 the church was a fellowship of 226 churches – a spit in the bucket with many of the churches small and fragile, yet also a phenomenal turn-around. Now there are 500 or more of these churches, including at least 35 comprising Muslim-background believers. NZBMS had to wait a long time (around one hundred years) for a major harvest, but it has come. Several NZBMS/*tranzsend* missionaries continue in Bangladesh to the present. Other overseas missions have made major contributions to the present outcome. Bangladesh Baptist Christian Fellowship owes a huge debt to the Southern Baptists and Australian Baptists for the growth among people of the majority religious community (Muslims).

Other NZBMS fields

Around 1968 as signs of the closing of Tripura to missionary endeavour began to loom, and with the apparently lesser responsiveness of the Bangladesh work, NZBMS began to searching in various ways for further avenues of missionary work. At times this has led to the sponsoring of individuals in scattered parts of the world seconded to other agencies (for a time in the 1970s NZBMS indicated that it would sponsor missionaries to any situation that seemed appropriate, anywhere in the world – 'NZBMS offers you the world').

While significant work was achieved by many of such missionaries working outside the traditional fields of Tripura and Bangladesh, from an NZBMS perspective this approach seemed too atomised, spread-out and unfocused. Gradually NZBMS focus shifted to

- A reaffirmation of its primary calling to the Pacific-Asia region
- A focus on urban ministry
- The importance of missionaries working in teams

In the 1990s NZBMS concentrated on putting teams into significant cities. These included Lae, Hongkong, Macau and a 'South Asian' city (so identified to protect the work from local factors that could shut it down). A couple of these cities (Lae and Hongkong) have since ceased to be areas of NZBMS focus but others, especially the 'South Asian' city, show promise of long-term ministry in that location.

Some of the new locations are off-limits to missionaries undertaking work as missionaries directly and overtly. This has encouraged access via business, i.e. undertaking 'secular' work, e.g. doing directly Christian work out of a business base. Many of the NZBMS missionaries are now 'Business as Mission' missionaries, though they still need supporting funds from N.Z.

Increasingly, however, 'Business as Mission' has become valued by NZBMS/tranzsend for reasons apart from access and finance. It reflects a shift in philosophy (or theology) and in methodology. It makes kingdom contacts and kingdom ministry a natural outcome of everyday work. And it fosters holistic ministry in the host country such that there is much more focus on simply 'doing good', with verbal ministry (evangelism, teaching) emerging as a natural part of this overall ministry.

FOR REFLECTION:

1. Why should Baptists have their own overseas mission work today?

2. What sorts of overseas mission work should be undertaken today?

3. Are there any principles and practices of overseas mission work that we should be applying in our domestic New Zealand situation?

NEW ZEALAND BAPTISTS AND PUBLIC ISSUES

NZ Baptists focus on a 'trinity of evil' (alcohol, gambling and immoral sex) in the late 19th and earlier 20th century. Later, other public issues also came to the fore.

Alcohol

Baptist churches began forming in New Zealand at the very time the temperance movement was coming to the fore in the English-speaking world. The Baptist denomination was not originally teetotal but it quickly became a completely anti-alcohol denomination in New Zealand. A number of examples show this stance:

- The 1889 annual Baptist Assembly passed remits recording the denomination's 'hearty sympathy' with the temperance movement and that it 'rejoices in the records of the spread of Total Abstinence principles.' The Assembly also requested all Baptist ministers to preach an annual temperance sermon on the last Sunday in November (NZB Jan 1890).
- The 1901 Assembly resolved that 'in view of the dire results of the liquor traffic . . . the total abolition of the liquor traffic is the only effective remedy.'
- In 1907 an editorial in NZB expressed the hope that the forthcoming Baptist Conference/Assembly would 'awaken all our slumbering energies to aggressive activity' out of 'zeal for God and his kingdom of righteousness', indicating 'our unabated hostility to intemperance, to gambling and to all forms of civic and political wrong' (NZB Sept 1907).

- In the 1920s candidates for training for Baptist ministry were asked a standard set of questions. One related to how the candidate had sought to minister to others, e.g. in Sunday School and Bible Class work, visiting the sick or preaching, and it also included 'Temperance Propaganda.' 'Temperance' (i.e. total abstinence) was clearly the accepted Baptist position.

After the waning of the prohibition cause in the 1930s, N.Z. Baptists remained resolutely committed to the cause of total abstinence. Change, however, began to show in the 1960s and 1970s. From around 1990, alcohol has ceased to have prominence as a burning Baptist concern at annual assemblies or in the pages of *NZB*. The denomination as a whole is no longer teetotal.

Gambling

This second member of the 'trinity of evils' was a total taboo for early Baptists, though not attracting the same level of concern as alcohol. This view persisted for much of the twentieth century. In July 1958 Dr Bob Thompson stated in *NZB* that Christians should never indulge in this sinful practice:

- Gambling is a sin against God. We are stewards of what God gives us and we must use things rightly.
- Gambling is a sin against our own souls, deadening the moral and spiritual life, weakening character and fostering greed.
- Gambling is a sin against our fellows individually: 'The happiness of the winner always implies the misery of the loser.'
- Gambling is a sin against the community: 'It is a leading source of crime, bankruptcy and suicide.'

As with the alcohol issue, the anti-gambling crusade passion gradually faded, such that from around the 1970s some Baptists probably began to have a little 'flutter.' Why this shift?

- Early Baptist concern was absolutist and black-and-white. Later views tended to moderation, reasonableness and accommodation to societal patterns where possible.
- Baptist social concerns later widened to broader issues of justice. This included greater focus on issues of race, feminism etc.
- The distinction between gambling and non-gambling was becoming more blurred, as prizes were increasingly being offered in society without any specific buying of a ticket to be in a draw. An early example of this was the Government launching Bonus Bonds through the Post Office Savings Bank to encourage New Zealanders to save, offering a Government-guaranteed savings scheme with the added attraction of monthly tax-paid prizes. Many schemes of this nature (e.g. loyalty schemes with customers going in to a draw) have followed. From a customer point of view, what is wrong with winning something like this? But is this sort of thing that different from a 'little flutter'?

Sex

This was the third of the traditional 'big three' ethical concerns. Up until the 1960s the concern of Baptists in relation to sex was the concern of society as a whole. The New Zealand censor, Gordon Miram, reflected society's viewpoint in 1956 in cutting the words of one jiving teenage girl to another from the film, *Rock Around the Clock*: 'Have fun, you'd be amazed at the number of men around the country who don't want to get married.' Similarly, Department of Health material (*Sex and the Adolescent Boy*) asserted in 1955: 'Sex can be a very beautiful thing, but it is very easily spoilt. It is only in the sanctity of marriage that it can be enjoyed freely, unashamedly, and with the sanction of society.'

From the 1960s Baptists have been against society on issues of sexual morality. There were several strands to society's change in relation to sex. First there was an ideological change, a revolution in the way people thought, a revolution that was 'more in the head than in the bed.' The result was that by 1970 consenting sexual behaviour largely ceased to be a moral issue and came to be regarded as 'just another body activity like wearing clothes or eating.' A second (often much later) change was behavioural. In 1962 the percentage of babies born out of wedlock in New Zealand was 8%. By 2003 that percentage had increased to 44%. An allied statistic is that by 2001 about three in ten men and women aged 15 to 44 were living in a de facto partnership.

A third change related to what could be presented in the public arena (the issue of censorship). Increasing pressure came on the government in the late 1960s and early 1970s to relax the film censorship laws. Polls subsequent to liberal change in 1976 showed that the change was what a majority of New Zealanders wanted.

A big issue for New Zealand Baptist in the twenty-first century is what to do about issues of sexuality and what to say, both in our churches and in the public arena.

Economic justice

A crucial issue in an evangelistic and conservative denomination is the extent to which it should be involved in socio-economic issues of suffering and injustice. Are these matters gospel/kingdom-of-God matters or is the gospel to be understood more narrowly? Are they matters of priority or are they secondary matters? Should Baptists be involved in agitation for change at a political level (building a fence at the top of the cliff) or should they confine themselves to providing practical help (providing an ambulance at the bottom of the cliff)? And how should Baptists respond to 'the labour question' (worker conditions, trade unions, capitalism, socialism etc)?

Around the 1880s when English Baptists came in great numbers to New Zealand there

were two particularly influential men within the breadth of Baptist life: Charles Spurgeon and John Clifford. The latter encouraged significant political involvement. Some of the pastors coming to New Zealand reflected the influence of John Clifford's approach. Quite a number then were ready to address 'political' issues and have political involvement.

Early editors of *NZ Baptist* were typically sympathetic to working people and their social improvement and aspirations. In 1890 the NZB editor identified the 'labour question' as the question of the hour. The church must address the issue of relations between capital and labour. This call was however, accompanied by some nervousness. The editor evidently felt that he needed to justify raising the issue in a religious newspaper, arguing that the gospel was relevant for this life as well as for the next. Rev. H.H. Driver (editor 1906-1915) and Rev. J.J. North (editor 1915-1948) both showed major concern about rampant capitalism and the needs of working people and the poor.

This came out strongly in the 'great depression' 1929-1935 which was triggered off by the Wall Street stock exchange crash in October 1928. New Zealand, heavily dependent on prices for its primary exports, was very badly affected. By 1932 farmers' export earnings were on average 42% lower than in 1926-1930. In September 1932 there were 73,560 registered unemployed men. At the peak of the depression in 1932-1933, roughly two able-bodied men out of five were without permanent employment and on relief work. North wrote an NZB editorial in August 1930:

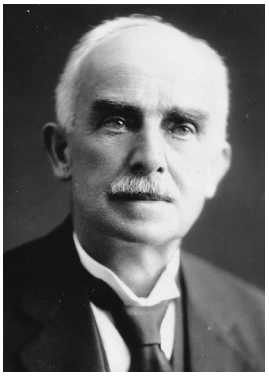
> Hundreds of men in these southern seas are up against it. Men who thought their positions were secure have had notice to quit. On the doorstep of every job twenty men sit. Nineteen go empty away. There is a great amount of decent poverty all about us. The churches of Australasia must sit up and take notice. A Church which ignores the poor has forfeited the Christian name. 'Ye did it not to Me,' He says…. We want to say this - that every church, so far as it can, should equip itself for direct service to the poor at its gates. Ministers and deacons ought to get to know how it fares with their members, their adherents, and the parents of scholars, and with the unattached also, who too are men. People lose heart very easily. Degeneration sets in. We must cheer each other up, and go long lengths in brotherly kindness. People have bodies as well as souls. We shall do well to remember it.

How did the Baptist churches respond to the depression? Many, maybe most, local churches gave help to the needy. The Brooklyn Church, for example, was providing 225 meals each Sunday to the hungry in 1932. The Auckland Auxiliary (Association) began a regional enterprise, namely the Auckland Baptist Social Service Association (ABSSA), with J.J. North as its first president. The view of those setting up ABSSA was that there must be 'both a spiritual element to our social service and a social implication to our spiritual creed.' In its first year of operation ABSSA gave 7,680 garments, 489 parcels of groceries and 320 pairs of boots, and also gave firewood, coal and other items to 478 families (W.H. Edgar, *Auckland Baptist Association*, 31).

Such response, like the response of other churches, was a response of being a 'comforter.' Would Baptists also become a prophetic 'challenger' of the current system (as happened with churches such as the Methodists and Catholics)? Rev. W.S. Rollings

AN OUTSTANDING BAPTIST:

J.K. Archer



A few early pastors were outspoken in their support for the Labour Party. A particularly outstanding individual was Rev. J.K. Archer who was a disciple of John Clifford. Archer had three pastorates in England before arriving in New Zealand in 1908. He was soon in trouble with his conservative church officers in Napier for preaching a sermon against the arms race. Archer's theology saw the Christian gospel as touching all issues of life. This led him to give strong support to the Labour Party and issues of social justice. In 1918 Archer gave a fiery Baptist Assembly address on 'covetousness.' He denounced both the rapacity of rural sharks and the excessive profiteering of industrialists. Society must become concerned with the well-being of all, with the replacing of competition with co-operation. How was this to be done? Not by spiritual means but by political action:

> Prayer will not produce the change. Some devils cannot be cast out by prayer. . . . Politicians laugh at prayers; but they tremble at votes. Parliaments are made by votes, and economic conditions are made by Parliaments. It is up to Christians in general, and Baptists in particular, to lead a movement for the consecration of the ballot box to Christ and humanity.

Within the period 1919-1931, Archer stood unsuccessfully four times as a Labour candidate for parliament, and was mayor of Christchurch (for six years) and acted as both vice-president (for seven years) and president (for two years) of the New Zealand Labour Party – all while still pastor of the Sydenham Baptist Church. From age 72 Archer was a member of the Legislative Council (the old NZ upper house).

prepared a report for the National Reconstruction Committee of the Baptist Union at its request and this was printed in NZB October 1934. In it Rollings denounced the current economic system, rampant capitalism, land speculation, banks etc. He also criticised the church for failing to be prophetic. By this he meant 'applying the principles of eternal justice to existing personalities, institutions, and social situations.' In other words, the church should speak with specificity in relation to the current economic crisis.

New Zealand Baptists as a whole did not get as close to the Labour Party in the depression era as Methodists did. Just prior to the 1935 election, however, when Labour for the first time swept into power, J.J. North as editor of *NZ Baptist* urged Baptists not to vote for any candidate 'who cannot be trusted to lift the condition of our poor neighbours.' Around the same time, a Baptist assembly resolution essentially advised Baptists not to vote for any candidate who would not give an undertaking to uplift the well-being of the unemployed. Baptists continued to grapple with issues of the day into 1936, with a divided Assembly adopting a motion moved by North 'that Study Groups should be formed in our various centres to discuss the Christian attitude toward such matters as currency, land and industry.'

Soon thereafter socio-economic issues largely disappeared from the NZ Baptist radar screen. Perhaps it was rising national affluence such that the issue ceased to be so pressing. Perhaps it was the strengthening of middle class perspectives in Baptist circles. Perhaps it was a return to a more individualistic and pietistic version of the Christian faith. At any rate Baptists were largely silent in the 1990s when other churches were much more active in protesting benefit cuts that stemmed from the reforms of successive Labour and National governments during the 1980s and 1990s.

FOR REFLECTION:

1. Are Baptists adequately concerned about public issues and engagement with society today?

2. What sorts of public/social concerns ought Baptists to be concerned about today?

3. How best might Baptist concern about public/social concerns be expressed today?

Section Four – Baptist principles

INTRODUCTION

Where do we find our basic Baptist principles?

Baptist principles find their source in three locations:

- Scripture (because the basis of being Baptist is Scripture)
- History (emphases of our Baptist forebears)
- Contemporary life (principles and practice continually need re-evaluation in relation to the world in which Baptists live)

We make central Scripture because we believe it is an inspired record and that it is final authority. Without some definite authority we will likely disappear into the sands of subjectivism. We also focus on Scripture because our Christianity is Christ-centred, and the surest way of knowing Christ, his will and his teaching, is through Scripture, which in this sense is bearer of Christ, bearer of the Word of God.

We reflect on Baptist history because we are Baptists. Why tackle each issue as if it has never been discussed before (a re-inventing of the wheel) when our forebears may have also wrestled with the issue and may have wisdom to pass on to us – even when we come to different or modified conclusions from them? Baptist history becomes a point of reference, a point for reflection, even though it does not necessarily become a point of restriction.

We look at our contemporary world, noting that Christianity does not exist on earth in a pure form. While it has a fixed core (e.g. 1 Cor 15.3ff), it always come to people in a cultural form and takes on particular forms as it both adapts to and remains in tension with a particular culture. Currently, Western culture is mutating at an extremely rapid rate so that there is far greater divergence of outlook between one generation and the next compared with earlier times. Because of the need to have cultural resonance with the times, we cannot fossilise with a rigid and unchanging viewpoint across the board (see 1 Cor 9.19-23 on this). This does not mean we become wishy-washy and market-driven. Nor does it mean that contemporary culture is the sole guide of what we do. It simply means that it is one factor to consider when we determine our stance on matters that are not 'fixed core' matters.

How do we establish who we are, what we believe and what we do?

Baptists have generally seen four distinctive emphases, combined together, as setting Baptists

off as a distinctive denomination or movement:

- The centrality of Scripture
- The baptism of believers
- Congregational government
- Freedom of conscience

Note that Baptists do not say that these are the most important things. They might say the most important things are Trinitarian belief, the death of Christ for our sins, Christ's resurrection, and salvation by grace through faith. However, these views are held in common with many other Christian groups who adhere to an orthodox Christianity. The four bulleted emphases mentioned above are much more distinctive views. Other groups may hold each of them, but no other large grouping of churches holds all of them.

What about identity?

An outstanding feature of Baptist churches through the centuries has been their autonomy at grass-roots level. This feature makes their identity more problematic when compared with most other denominations. We cannot go to a book (e.g. the Anglican Prayer Book), we cannot go to a creedal statement of belief (e.g. the Westminster Confession), we cannot go to a structure (e.g. submission to a bishop, subordination to a presbytery), we cannot go to a fixed pattern of worship (as in Greek Orthodoxy). We cannot do any of these things and say, 'That's us; that's where we fit in; that's what it means to be a Baptist.' Baptist identity is much less defined, much harder to pin down, much more diffuse.

Part of Baptist identity is relational: those Christians who identify with Baptists, who want to be in relationship with Baptists, are Baptists. Conversely, there may be Christians who hold all core Baptist beliefs and practices, but who do not want to be labelled as Baptist, who do not want to acknowledge a special relationship with Baptists. The latter should probably not be called 'Baptist', even though they may be 'baptist' (that is they have a lot in common with big 'B' Baptists but don't have a shared sense of identity). The problem of identity is even more pronounced in an age which is much more 'post-denominational', where denominational distinctives don't matter nearly as much to most Christians as they once did. Should we abandon Baptist identity altogether? Perhaps the answer can be found in other questions:

- Is it healthy for congregations to be stand-alone units, having no relation to a larger body?
- Is there safety and enrichment in having larger wholes than just the local congregation?
- Are there (mission) tasks which are best done by a denomination rather than a local congregation, and are there congregational tasks which need the support of something like a denomination?

If we walk away from the denomination, don't we have to re-create it in another form because of our need to belong to a larger whole than the local congregation? (If you say belonging to a larger whole does not mean that one should belong to a denomination, consider how many movements, which began non-denominationally, eventually end up with all the hallmarks of a denomination: Methodists, Brethren, Salvation Army, most Pentecostal groupings etc). And then again, aren't there important aspects of Baptist history which have abiding importance? Shouldn't we witness to our special truths, not because we have the whole truth, but because the body of Christ needs the enrichment of our distinctive truths?

BAPTISTS AND THE BIBLE

Being rooted in Scripture is very central to being Baptist. The original Baptist vision was to recover biblical truth, to be again the church of the New Testament. The early Baptist writings typically appealed very markedly to Scripture, proving their points by textual appeal.

The very first section in the well-known 1689 (Baptist) Confession declares: 'The Holy Scripture is the all-sufficient, certain and infallible rule and standard of the knowledge, faith and obedience that constitute salvation.' The final article of that section declares: 'All religious controversies are to be settled by Scripture, and by Scripture alone.'

Some Baptist churches globally are fundamentalist; most are not. Part of the original spirit of the earliest Baptists was that 'the Lord hath yet more light and truth to break forth from his word.' Baptists were loath to freeze truth. There was a strong sense that scriptural interpretation needed re-examination, to see 'whether these things really are so.' Baptists have commonly been reluctant to nail down truth in creeds. Baptists have produced confessions, not creeds. The historic Baptist Confessions were not statements of what Baptists must believe, but rather statements of what a particular grouping of Baptists believed at that time.

However, through the centuries there have typically been high levels of stress on the centrality and authority of Scripture. The doctrinal basis of the Baptist Union of New Zealand (expressed in its constitution and in the Baptist Union Incorporation Act 1923) expresses this. Its first point is on Scripture, and it affirms: 'the inspiration of the Bible and its authority in all matters of faith and practice.'

FOR REFLECTION:

1. How do you respond to the question, Should we abandon Baptist identity? What aspects of Baptist identity is it important to preserve?

2. Why is it important for Baptists to remain rooted in Scripture?

3. How can we focus on Scripture without lapsing into Pharisaism or narrow fundamentalism?

BAPTISTS AND BAPTISM

An understanding that baptism is for believers (and therefore not for babies) has always been central to Baptist understanding. To move to the baptism of babies is to cease to be Baptist.

The importance of baptism

Baptist views are grounded in the New Testament. Commonly Baptists have seen baptism as a response subsequent to conversion and simply as an act of obedience. However, some Baptists have taken a more 'sacramental' view and have suggested baptism is more closely linked with salvation. Consider the following:

- The close relationship between baptism and salvation in John 3.5; Tit 3.5. Note how Acts 2.38 seems to present baptism as part of a salvation 'package.' Note also the declaration in 1 Peter 3.21 that baptism 'saves you' (but note also language in 1 Cor 10.1-5 where 'baptism' did not save).
- The question whether baptism is simply a sign of grace already received or whether baptism itself is a bearer of grace. Note Romans 6 which suggests that union with Christ comes through baptism (also Gal 3.27; Col 2.12).
- The question whether baptism is necessary/ essential for Christians: Matt 3.15; Luke 23.13; 1 Cor 1.17; 1 Cor 15.29.
- The relation between Spirit baptism and water baptism: Matt 3.11; Acts 2.38; Acts 8.12-17; Acts 9.17-18; Acts 10.44-48; Acts 19.1-7; 1 Cor 12.13.
- The question whether baptism ought to be immediate on conversion; or should be delayed and be the culmination of a discipling and testing process; or does it depend on different contexts? On the one hand are examples of immediacy: Matt 3.5-6; Acts 2.41; Acts 8.12; Acts 9.18; Acts 10.44-48; Acts 16.33. On the other hand there are suggestions that baptism follows a discipling process: Matt 28.19-20 and the immediately post-New-Testament writing, Didache 7.1.
- The question whether baptism can occur more than once (after, say, a time of backsliding): Acts 19.5; Ephesians 4.5.
- The question whether in all cases there must be full immersion: John 3.23; Didache 7.1-3; or whether immersion is simply a preferred form of baptism.
- The question whether baptism should be given in the three-fold name (Matt 28.19-20); or in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ only (Acts 2.38; 8.16; 11.48; 19.5); or it does not matter.

A minimum age for baptism?

Should there be a minimum age for baptism? Consider this extract of a letter in *NZ Baptist*, October 1964, from Anne Bowes from the United States (note that baptism of children as young as four may occur in some Baptist churches in that country):

> I am a mother with three young ones of my own and have taught in Sunday School for the last ten years. My eldest child at three told me she had asked Jesus into her heart. At four she wanted to know why she couldn't be baptised. I explained to her that baptism was only for those who loved the Lord Jesus, and straight away she replied, "Well, I do." I know this to be true and am very concerned about belonging to a church which neglects the baptism of believing children.

In response to that letter, consider the following:

- Baptism is a once-in-a-lifetime act. It expresses repentance and belonging to Jesus. There is 'one baptism' (Eph 4.5). Experience suggests that as many as 50% to 80% subsequently fall away from Christian commitment when they are baptised at 13, but for those baptised at age 30 the subsequent fall-away rate is much much lower. Percentages may be disputed but the fact that falling-away rates are much higher among pre-adults is clear. Should this not give us pause to ponder the sort of age below which baptism is not advisable?
- We need to consider the nature of conversion. Conversion is often a crisis, point-in-time response. For many, however, there is not a point-in-time that they can point to, conversion for them being a gradual process, but no less real. For both groups, conversion will also be an ongoing life-long process. Recognising that Christianity is not simply reducible to someone affirming that they have 'made a decision' or 'asked Jesus into their heart', it becomes appropriate for church leaders to want good evidence of long-term conversion prior to baptism. Asking baptismal applicants (especially young applicants) to wait a while longer is not to deny the genuineness of their commitment to Jesus, but simply to recognise that it may need proving or strengthening.
- We need to consider developmental factors. Young children are enormously shaped by their parents on all sorts of issues, faith and otherwise. Part of becoming an adolescent involves struggle as children come to work through what really is their own position. Many major decisions are typically made today in the period from about 16 to 22. These include relationships with the opposite sex, work, deciding what is to be the central driver or drivers in life etc. It is almost as if a fresh decision for Christ and his lordship needs to be made in relation to each major life decision as it arises. Should baptism wait until the post-high-school period, to a time when some or many of these major decisions will have been worked

through? One can note that the early church father, Tertullian, took this sort of stance in urging that baptism should be delayed until after marriage.

Should there be catechetical instruction (baptismal classes)?

Sometimes baptism occurs today with minimal or no preparation. Arguably there is biblical justification for this – immediate baptism took place in at least some instances in Acts and maybe even as a regular practice. Whatever the early situation, early church history shows that this pattern was soon replaced with a period of instruction and testing for baptismal candidates (catechumens) prior to baptism. The period of instruction varied in length from time to time and place to place, but at the end of the second century, the period of being a catechumen at Rome prior to baptism was three years. Even after going through the catechetical period, baptism was not automatic. There was close examination of the applicant's life to see whether there was indeed the fruit of repentance. Church leaders asked questions concerning the candidate as to whether they had lived piously, honoured the widows, visited the sick and whether they had 'fulfilled every good work.' Baptism was an enormously serious business and the catechumenate process underscored this, with its thorough teaching and thorough preparation. Should we move in this sort of direction? Several years ago, one of my daughters was baptised at Lifepoint AOG (Wellington) after a very intentional several-months process, deliberately modelled on the early catechumenate. At the least should we not take candidates through a number of structured classes over several weeks? And does this suggest that appealing for anybody else to be baptised and doing it on the spot at the end of a baptismal service, may, in today's world, often be unwise?

Should people who have been baptised as believers and then backslidden be re-baptised at their restoration?

Our theology of baptism indicates that baptism should follow (and/or be accompanied by) repentance and faith. For this reason Baptists do not accept infant 'baptism' as baptism, because it occurs outside the context of personal repentance and faith. But what should one do where there is major backsliding subsequent to baptism? Should the person be baptised (again)? Apparently some churches (not Baptist, but churches of certain other denominations practising believers' baptism) baptise individuals as many as four or five times when there is apparently total backsliding after the previous baptism. Do we want to see that sort of practice and response in our Baptist churches? We would start with the presumption that there were elements of faith and repentance (and God's grace) at the initial baptism, and therefore not (re)baptise. Suppose, however, a person comes to you aged 40 who wants to be baptised. On investigation you find that he or she was baptised at 13 years of age in a Baptist church. When you raise this matter with the person they say, 'I chucked Christianity away six months later. I was then right away from God for 25 years. I really became a Christian only two years ago. Looking back on it now, I really had no Christian commitment when I was 13, but got it done to go along with my mates in the youth group.' How will you respond to this situation?

Who should administer baptism?

Sometimes baptism has been done in very individualistic fashion, without connection to the larger church. In one situation a person baptised a flatmate in the flat's bath late one evening when the flatmate indicated that he wanted to be baptised. Other situations may not be as informal as that, but sometimes people may want to get baptised in a home group rather than as an act of the wider church of which the home group is a part. Alternatively, members of a family may want other members of a family to baptise them (often as a private family thing). Baptists in the past (e.g. Andrew Fuller) have sometimes restricted administration of baptism (and the Lord's Supper) to a recognised pastor. Many Baptists would query such a restriction, as going contrary to Baptist beliefs about the priesthood of all believers. What we can note is that New Testament baptism was not only baptism into Christ but also baptism *into the Christian church* (1 Cor 12.13). It seems right, therefore, for churches to develop an environment where members view baptism as a church act, to be administered by the church. This does not mean that the pastor is the only one who may administer baptism, but it may well mean that the one who administers the baptism has church sanction to do this.

How should baptism be administered?

A further issue is the proper *mode* of baptism. From early days in Baptist history it has been recognised that the most appropriate form of baptism is immersion (based on New Testament practice and on the death-and-burial symbolism of Romans 6). But is immersion the only valid form of baptism or simply the *normal* form of baptism? The issue arises where people seek Baptist membership, having been baptised as believers in another Christian tradition, but by sprinkling or affusion (pouring). The Baptist Union constitution seems to hold to a narrow view on this issue, acknowledging 'the immersion of believers as the *only Scriptural form* of baptism.' In addition to apparently rejecting non-immersion believers' baptism, this statement seems to preclude invalids, paraplegics, the extremely elderly etc. from baptism (because they are not able to undergo immersion). Should it do so? Is the form of baptism crucial? We can note that when the Baptist churches first began, pouring was the normal mode of baptism, with conviction about

immersion coming only later. Were those first Baptist baptisms invalid? The crucial thing may be the inner meaning rather than the outward form. Thus while we may employ immersion as the normal mode, we will have a spacious enough theology to recognise a valid baptism where baptismal water is applied to a believer, though without total immersion.

The significance of baptism

Baptists have commonly treated baptism as symbolic only. This viewpoint sees baptism as pointing to something that has already occurred (past conversion, past salvation); but not doing anything of itself (baptism not being a bestower of grace). Is this an adequate view of baptism? Think of texts such as Rom 6.3; Gal 3.27; Col 2.12; 1 Peter 3.21. A mid-twentieth-century biblical scholar and theologian, George Beasley-Murray, protested the 'low' (though popular) view of baptism that baptism is symbolic only and not a bearer of grace: 'The extent and nature of the grace which the New Testament writers declare to be present in baptism is astonishing for any who come to the study freshly with an open mind' (*Baptism in the New Testament*, London: Macmillan, 1962, p.263). Does Baptist theology of baptism need revisiting with a view to recognising that something happens at baptism, that baptism is a bearer of grace? Certainly we should assert valid baptism does require accompanying faith/repentance/conversion. And certainly we can recognise that eternal salvation will occur at conversion to Christ even where baptism does not follow (as with the penitent thief on the cross). However, should not a biblical view of baptism also include the following?

- Baptism is part of Christian initiation and completes that process (as a marriage ceremony is for the union of two people who get married).
- An unbaptised Christian is in an irregular state (like a 'de facto' marriage).
- Baptism is the locus of conversion. It is there that conversion is focused and expressed.
- Baptism is a vehicle of grace. Something of a God-given nature happens in baptism.

FOR REFLECTION:

1. In general what is a good age to baptise younger Christian people in our churches?

2. How much preparation for baptism should occur and what should be its nature?

BAPTISTS AND CHURCH GOVERNMENT

The early roots of Baptist churches

As we look at Baptist ecclesiology (theology of the church) we need to recall the climate in which Baptist churches first emerged in England. The climate involved a state church that all had to belong to. That state church ruled from top down, with the king/queen and bishops at the top. Baptist ecclesiology in the first part of the 17th century was not only a rediscovery of NT principles of church but also a reaction against then-current understandings of church. Hence John Smyth's intemperate earlier view of the Church of England as a false church. Reaction against the current situation was a factor in the strong anti-episcopacy, pro-congregational-government, early Baptist emphasis. But the older state/established church English context is not the context of NZ Baptist churches today.

The times are a-changing

Another factor to reflect on is the changing nature of society. Huge shifts have occurred in the last half century. Technological changes impacting society have included the pervasiveness of the motor vehicle, the influence of television, and the electronic globalisation of communication. Sociological changes have included a huge increase in urbanisation and an increasing focus on leisure and pleasure.

These things impact on church life. Sunday was once a 'quiet day' which the church could 'own' and fill with meetings. In most Christians' minds, the church today 'owns' no more than a slice of Sunday. In the emerging Christian generation, even that is not necessarily accepted (young people often finding their collective spirituality outside the standard Sunday service, e.g. in a home group). Church is much more of a commuter thing, people driving longer distances to the church of their choice. Church is much more of a consumer thing (paralleling the rise in shopping as a leisure activity). A big question for parents when they are searching for a new church is, 'What does it offer for my children/teenagers'? A 'spectator' lifestyle (watching movies, TV, sport etc.) means that a 'spectator' mentality is much more likely in relation to church.

A cluster of factors (busyness, much greater choice, supporting only what is colourful/ interesting/ positive etc.) means that generally people don't turn out for public meetings in the way they used to. This has implications both for church services and also for members' meetings. Much old stability is gone (lifetime jobs, loyalty to a 'family doctor' etc.). This affects church attachments, with increasing numbers belonging only while the going is good. This may also affect whether Christians formally join a church and the extent to which they want to decide the future of the church via members' meetings etc. Some of these changes are not ideal and we may want to educate our people/preach

etc. on such issues. But this is the incoming tide we face today and this inevitably impacts on church life and church structures. Overall, we have moved from 'solid church' to a more 'liquid church' (the latter term is the title of a futuristic look at church by Pete Ward).

Looking at Baptist issues in relation to the church

There have been three main strands to distinctive Baptist views of the church:

- Membership for the regenerate only (a gathered church)
- Congregational government
- Autonomy of each congregation

In relation to these issues we should note that the earliest Baptist churches were almost always small, commonly fifty members or so, and this smaller size meshed well with congregational government. Moreover, people lived much more in a smaller and more cohesive society (fostering awareness of whether a person was regenerate – a key matter both for membership and for discipline).

Membership for the regenerate only

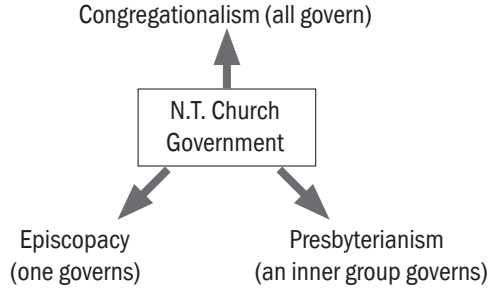
The early Baptist vision was for a holy church made up of genuine Christians. Thus membership should be for the regenerate only, not for the entirety of society irrespective of spiritual condition. Members had to 'opt in' to membership (to choose it) and the church needed to be satisfied that each one was a 'born again' Christian. In the early Baptist centuries, Baptist churches went one step further than this, requiring believer's baptism as well as regeneration as a condition for membership. The view was that while baptism did not save, it completed that salvation, one aspect of which was the church acknowledging the saving grace of God in that person's life. Hence only baptised Christians could become members of the church (closed membership). An added argument was that having 'closed' membership (membership for *baptised* believers) buttressed Baptist convictions regarding baptism and strengthened Baptist identity. But a minority, e.g. John Bunyan, while preserving that understanding of baptism, had a much more ecumenical spirit, in part through addressing the issue, 'What do you do with people who appear to be genuinely Christian and want to be part of your body but genuinely hold to a different view about the validity of their earlier infant "baptism"? Should such clearly acknowledged Christians be excluded?' This led to support for 'open' membership (membership for all Christians even if they had not been baptised as believers). Today's environment is very fluid denominationally. In most churches, only a minority have been raised Baptist, and often only a minority are deeply committed Baptists in terms of identity. Many will have come from infant-baptism churches. They may still see their infant 'baptism' as valid and are therefore reluctant to undergo what to them seems a 'second baptism' (believers baptism). This booklet suggests that in today's world, the trend of our Baptist churches should be to move towards open membership while (a) continuing our stance and our teaching on believers' baptism (b) preserving major leadership roles for baptised believers.

Church discipline

Linked with regenerate membership is the issue of church discipline. If the church is for the clearly regenerate, not only does entry to membership need to be screened; continuance of membership also needs to be monitored. This monitoring was fostered by the church commonly viewing membership in terms of 'covenant' – members covenanting together under God to live as godly Christians. Thus in undertaking membership, one was not only joining the church (an institution) but also becoming part of a mutually accountable group. Membership was monitored through church discipline, especially in the first century or two. This aided church purity. But it also at times had the downside of hypocrisy and excessive narrowness. In today's more confused and scrambled world should we step back from rigorous faith-and-life tests for church membership, welcoming all believers who wish to attach themselves to this particular fellowship, with the exception of notorious and publicly-brazen sinners? Should the purity issue be one particularly for the *leadership* of the church rather than for the rank-and-file?

Congregational government

This is another distinctive Baptist aspect of church theology and practice. In the past, Baptists have commonly claimed this to be *the* form of church government laid down in the New Testament. Certainly there are texts to support that position. The whole body of believers was involved in decision making in: Matt 18.17; Acts 6.3; Acts 15.2-3; Acts 15.22; 1 Cor 5.4-5. However, it was the leaders who took the lead in decision making in Acts 14.23; 1 Cor 5.3ff; Titus 1.5; 2 Thess 3.6; 1 Tim 5.17. We need to recognise that two other models of church government can claim support from the New Testament: episcopacy (= government by one person, a bishop or apostle) and presbyterianism (= government by an inner group of leaders, an eldership). Most scholars would recognise all three strands in the NT:



The presence of all three strands with some New Testament warrant suggests that there was no one model of church government in the New Testament. It may well have varied from time to time (between earlier and later stages of church development) and from place to place (the Jerusalem church likely followed the earlier Jewish pattern of government by elders – by an inner group; government at Corinth may well have been different).

This raises another question. Is the nature of church government an essential matter, prescriptively laid down for all time in the New Testament? Or is there flexibility? If there is no flexibility, then church government ought to be the same in all time periods and across all cultures. Is this the case? The matter is important with the increasing emergence of varied ethnic Baptist congregations in New Zealand. Irrespective of cultural background, is there one standard template to which all must conform? Or do cultural factors have relevance in determining what form of church government is best? Amazingly Baptists in Georgia even have bishops! This can be understood in the light of the huge dominance of the Orthodox faith in that country. Do Baptist principles rule this out? Or is it permissible, or even desirable, to have an adjustment to the particular cultural/ social circumstances of each congregation?

At its best, congregational government is theocracy (government by God), the members together finding the mind of Christ. At its worst, congregational government leads to divisiveness and chaos. Part of the problem has been that members meetings have often been run along 'Westminster' (parliamentary) lines, with winners and losers. The crucial thing has been winning 51% of the vote. But this sort of attitude cuts across relationships and fellowship, producing disharmony rather than the mind or peace of Christ. Whatever our government may be, it ought to be Christ-honouring and congregation-upbuilding.

Furthermore, congregationalism cannot stand alone. Along with congregationalism, there needs to be leadership from a group of people, and to some extent from one person (as also with political democracy). The problem with this, though, is that it can lead to the congregation becoming a rubber-stamp, so that real decisions are made elsewhere and the democratic dimension is a sham, with congregationalism subordinated to the impact of a powerful and/ or highly successful pastor (and/or elders).

Is a pure congregational form of government always required in Baptist churches? Consider the following:

- The existence of very large churches (say, 500-plus members). Can they effectively debate issues in members' meetings? Aren't such gatherings significantly dominated by the few? Is there really theocracy through the genuine expression of democratic decision-making at such gatherings? Isn't the congregational principle better expressed in that context by the congregation delegating its powers – electing a smaller group to take decisions on behalf of all the members (as with democratic legislatures)?
- Baptist churches exist in cultural contexts unused to democracy. Should they be required to become more 'Baptist' by utilising a pure form of congregational government/leadership when they are more used to responding to recognised leaders? Should Koreans, Fijians, Africans, Americans and Kiwis all have the same form of church government if they are to be 'true Baptists'?
- The heart of Baptist strength still lies in the West. Today's Westerners (especially in the large urban centres) are often busy people. Thus many contemporary Christians don't want to get involved in too much church decision-making. Time is at a premium. They are often happy to elect others to make the decisions. Should we accommodate ourselves to this change in perspective on congregational meetings, or should we reject this as a betrayal of Baptist principles? The cultural context of the 21st century may suggest (a) more delegation to elected leaders (b) fewer congregational meetings (c) more ways of congregational input outside of a standard congregational meeting. However, the wisdom, safety and sense of ownership that comes from good congregationalism (apart from issues of Scripture and history) suggest the value of preserving congregationalism in some form.

Former NZ Baptist General Superintendent, Gerard Marks, advised well in getting the leadership/ congregational-decision-making mix right: 'Leaders lead – leaders listen.' We must lead – but with the support/ blessing/ participation of the congregation. And that calls for listening.

While acknowledging the importance of leadership (by the one (the 'senior pastor') and by the few (the 'eldership')), we should preserve congregationalism as the final decision-making entity on crucial matters. Congregational government should remain in tension and balance with leadership by the one and by the few. Scripture and our Baptist heritage both raise issues in relation to unchecked control by the one (the pastor) or by the few (the elders/deacons/board). Consider also safety in a 'multitude of counsellors.' While good sense is not always located in the one or the few, it is much more likely to be found in the many. Here are a few suggestions that may make for participation and progress in terms of both good leadership and good congregational participation:

- Involve members at an early stage in decision-making processes. That is when input can be most helpful. People get frustrated when they are involved only at the end of the process, because then it is too late to have any meaningful contribution beyond being a rubber-stamp. Spreydon Baptist Church has in the past sent the preliminary thinking of its eldership to its cell meetings in order to gain grass-roots feedback.
- Have a future-focusing 'forum' dimension to members' meetings. If members are given big issues to chew on (with careful planning, prepared papers etc. prior to the meeting) they are less likely to become reactive and bogged down on little issues.

- At times, people may best have their say and feel heard when the members' meeting breaks into small groups which provide feed-back to the plenary session.
- See decision-making as an evolving process, rather than everything hanging on one meeting at one point of time. Then a final consensus vote ratifies an extended participatory process.

To be Baptist means genuine congregational participation in the decision-making process. Moreover, if a crunch-point comes, final authority rests with the congregation. This does not mean they make all decisions. Much may be delegated to the leadership. However, at a minimum:

- All major leadership appointments and dismissals should be approved by the congregation.
- All really major decisions need the approval of the members (especially those involving major matters of finance – noting that they give the funds).
- 25% of members should have the right to call a special members' meeting, with decisions at that meeting on the indicated topic being binding on the church.

Congregational participation should consider the reality of group dynamics. Greatest congregational decision-making participation works best in smaller congregations. A large church will inevitably delegate much more leadership to its officers, and operate differently from a small church.

Currently the national leaders of the Baptist Churches of New Zealand promote a 'ministry-led' model of church leadership. It has been felt that excessive congregationalism has often been too restrictive of vision and leadership. Under the newer model, those involved in ministry (full-time staff and volunteers alike) are encouraged to get on with their ministries without scrutiny over every little matter. The pastor and the other ministry leaders of the church are therefore released to provide leadership. They are not totally free agents, however. They are subject to a congregationally-elected board (called a variety of names including 'eldership'). The board is not to micro-manage, but is to establish broad vision and policy, with ministry leaders working within those parameters, accountable to the board. Where does the congregational meeting fit into this? Under this model, the congregation's role is diminished. Governance is largely shifted from the congregation to the pastor and board. However, the congregation will still receive an annual report (at an AGM); it will elect those who will govern (and also some or all of key full or part-time ministry leaders); and it will approve the annual budget. Is this a good idea?

- It makes sense in large churches, say, those with more than 200 members
- It may not work well in smaller churches (less than 70 members)
- This suggests that in churches of 70-200 members one needs to be wise as to the extent that one adopts this model
- The model may bring clarity to what is often muddled leadership
- The model has intellectual, middle class and managerial overtones. It may work less well in some environments, e.g. low-decile areas.
- As with all systems, this system is open to abuse, particularly if pastors/elders become obsessed with their powers. This can lead to deafness to the voice of the Spirit speaking through the rank-and-file of the church
- Communication is crucial under this model. The pastor(s) must work hard at informing the congregation and keeping them on board. Communication must work the other way too. Pastors/elders/leaders must also be good at listening. They must provide space for the voice of the congregation and they must hear the voice of the congregation. The congregation needs to feel empowered rather than marginalised.

The 'ministry-led' model fosters vision and avoids micro-management. But we need to continue to hear the voice of the Spirit through the gathered congregation. The 'ministry-led' model must be introduced and applied with recognition:

- That it rests on love, service, humility and unity, not on power and authority
- That while the Senior Pastor will articulate vision (utilising board processes in doing so), final authority remains with the congregation, even though that authority has largely been delegated on a month-to-month basis to pastor and board
- That the overall ministry of the church must have congregational support to ultimately succeed. Congregational support will come only as the congregation feels empowered, listened to, and able to participate in the whole process

The issue of ordination

What about the status of pastors and the issue of ordination? Baptists hesitate to use the language of ordination for their ministers. This stems from a deep-seated belief in the priesthood of all believers and distrust of a two-class membership (which makes the pastor's role elitist). The hesitation also relates to Baptists viewing ministry in functional terms: that God and the church have appointed person X to undertake ministry Y at this time. One of the earliest Baptist Confessions, the 1611 Declaration of Faith, affirms that members of a church:

> may and ought, when they come together, to pray, prophesy, break bread, and administer in all the holy ordinances, although as yet they have no officers or that their officers should be in prison, sick, or by any other means hindered from the church.

Later, however, Baptist churches tended to vest the administering of the Lord's Supper in the hands of the church pastor and even not to celebrate the Supper when they lacked a pastor (e.g. the Broadmead Church in 1670). The language of ordination also began to be used. This did not become universal, and the tendency today is largely to avoid the language of ordination and not to limit preaching and/or the administration of baptism and the Lord's Supper to the pastor only. Pastors need to avoid the appearance of elitism. And they need fundamentally to be *servants* in their teaching and leading role.

The issue of the autonomy of the local congregation

This has typically been a marked feature of Baptist life throughout Baptist history. It means that congregations cannot be dictated to by an outside body (e.g. the national Baptist Assembly). Its strength has been local 'ownership' of the church. Its weakness has been too much indifference to the wider church, insufficient collective endeavour, and (sometimes) inability to permit outside intervention for a local church unable to resolve internal conflict. These factors have influenced Baptists commonly to encourage association between churches of the same region (the associational principle) and sometimes to develop patterns of regional oversight, though without regional authority (unlike the Presbyterians). Henry Cook (1953, p.6) argued that 'whatever the Church polity of the New Testament may have been – and it was probably not the same in every area – it was certainly not Independency [congregations operating in totally stand-alone fashion], for the local churches in New Testament times felt that they belonged very definitely to each other.' Cook (82) then asserted that Baptists at the beginning 'were Congregationalists but not Independents', not isolationists. Thus the 16th century General Baptists developed 'messengers' and the 1990s New Zealand Baptists adopted a pattern of Regional Superintendents (replaced subsequently by a system of consultants). However, local churches need to recognise their need for such oversight, though without surrendering their autonomy. They could helpfully put clauses in their constitutions that:

- when calling a (senior) pastor their selection committee will first consult with a Baptist leader (or leaders) operating at regional or national level.
- when matters of serious division arise, the leadership may, and will when required by say 25% of the membership, seek mediating help from regional or national Baptist leadership. One version of the Baptist Union model constitution suggests one further clause:
- 'The National Leader of the Baptist Union of New Zealand may call a special church members meeting by making announcements, or arranging announcements to be made on at least two Sundays prior to the meeting. The National Leader or nominee will chair such a meeting.'

At first glance such a clause seems subversive of congregational autonomy. It is designed, however, to help churches that are paralysed and unable to find a way forward. Noting that if such a meeting was foisted on a reluctant congregation, the first motion moved could be that the meeting be closed, this clause seems to be a good backstop for a rare but destructive situation.

FOR REFLECTION:

1. To what extent should Baptist members be involved in church decision-making today?
2. How can that participation be best expressed?
3. In today's more fluid world, should we continue with members remaining members for life, or should there be annually renewable membership, perhaps with renewable promises (or covenant) associated with this?

BAPTISTS AND FREEDOM

We must first remember the context of this issue as it arose both in England and in the American colonies. The context involved State attempts to standardise worship (only one church) and to require that worship be expressed through that one church (coercion). Against that was the deep Baptist conviction that worship was valid only when it arose freely from the heart, and that the conscience ought not to be subject to pressure (the voluntary principle). The focus, then, was on freedom to worship or not, according to the individual conscience. Baptists are therefore opposed to state religious coercion even when those in control are Baptist-type people. Hence, there must be freedom for all Christians, but also for 'heretikes, Turcks, Jewes, or whatsoever' (Helwys in 1612). And to preserve liberty of conscience, Baptists have insisted that there be separation of church and state.

Baptist belief in freedom has been used to argue full liberty of belief within the Baptist church. However, this seems to be a distortion of history. Baptists were arguing for liberty of worship and belief over against external coercion on such matters. Moreover, Baptists have largely had a conservative position on Scripture, theology, and morality, and have not historically been noted for liberty on such matters – in fact often the contrary has applied. There has been less liberty on such matters than in most of the mainstream churches. Baptist restraint against 'liberalism' can, in fact, be seen as an expression of the Baptist congregational principle – that one is coming into a particular congregation and is subject to the discipline of that congregation. Thus covenants of behaviour have been a common feature of church membership: specifying certain behaviours which are required from members of this Baptist church.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Baptists and evangelism

Traditionally, Baptist distinctives have been viewed in terms of four 'pillars': Bible, congregational government, baptism, and liberty (the church-state issue). Is there a fifth pillar? What about evangelism?

The other issues are more issues of principle. They were commonly developed in an environment of controversy. On those principles Baptists stood over against other groups of Christians. The significance of evangelism for Baptists may more easily be overlooked because it has been more a matter of practice (what Baptists have done), rather than a controversial principle. However, direct evangelism has been so central to such an extent in Baptist life that one must ask, 'Is evangelistic concern part of being Baptist?' On this point we can note Baptist practice and growth in England in the middle section of the 17th century, again in the late-18th century and right through the 19th century; also of Baptist life in America (especially SBC life) for so much of its existence; also of so much of New Zealand Baptist focus up to the near present. Thus while we may condemn some 'unBaptist' aspects of the fundamentalist takeover in the Southern Baptist Convention, we need to acknowledge that some of their changes have been prompted by a concern to preserve the evangelistic heart-beat of the denomination. In asking whether evangelism is a core aspect of being Baptist, we must recognise that evangelism has not always been prominent in Baptist life. But has that been the exception rather than the rule. Is evangelistic concern part of being Baptist?

Baptists and flexibility

This section of the booklet has indicated the main distinctive drivers of Baptist life. However, these are not inflexible 'laws of the Medes and the Persians.' They are not to cripple us as we constantly reread Scripture and reflect on the fast-changing society in which we find ourselves. In fact one of the greatest strengths of the Baptist movement has been its ability to mutate, to re-invent itself. This has served not only to maintain Baptist identity but also to be a vehicle for the purposes of Christ over a number of centuries. We can be proud of the flexibility that is given to us today as Baptists. Equally we need to preserve our high views of Scripture. And we need also to be deeply aware of our Baptist past and our Baptist principles, not to be captive to them, but to use them, rightly and flexibly, as a guiding light as we look into the future.