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FAITH, HERITAGE AND WITNESS

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The Baptist Historical Society was pleased to accede to the request from Bristol Baptist College to produce this volume in honour of a Vice-President and former Editor of the Society, Dr W. M. S. West, and acknowledges financial assistance from the College.



Lambeth Palace London SE1 7JU

11th March 1987

PREFACE

I am grateful for this opportunity of joining those who write to pay tribute to the distinguished service given by Dr Morris West to the whole Christian Church through the life of the Baptist denomination. I regard him with special affection, gratitude and admiration. When I became a Bishop he was my neighbour in St Albans. There began a friendship which, always to my profit, I have tried to keep in regular repair. This volume of essays embraces a happy sequence of couplets as his fellow Baptists, both lay and ordained, are joined by members of the wider Church in celebrating the life-long service of this eminent Baptist Christian. I use these words advisedly because Dr West is somebody of whom his fellow Baptists may be justly proud, yet I also think of him as a wise and judicious Christian statesman who belongs to all of us. His own commitment articulates the best of the Free Church tradition whilst ever being willing to explore the ecumenical future.

The focus of this tribute is found in the three words of the title, *Faith, Heritage and Witness* each of which embraces a double aspect. Faith at once indicates the evangelical commitment of the individual - that saving faith that Baptist preachers delight to secure - but it also describes the doctrine of the church, probed and explored by the scholarly mind in the search for unity in Faith and Order. Heritage designates the historical inheritance that all Christian families rightly cherish as they remember and treasure their roots: yet it also spells out a continuing obedience which, conscious of the leading of the Spirit in times past, is open to the future in a process of change and development. So the pilgrim church opens itself to that 'more of light and truth' which the Spirit ever and again brings forth from the once-given Word. Witness embraces both proclamation and demonstration: it is the sharing of faith in evangelism, and also the covenant-commitment to search for 'justice, peace and the integrity of creation' to which the World Council of Churches is currently calling all the churches.

Faith, Heritage and Witness represents a very proper summary of these priorities in the ministry that Dr West has exercised in both church and society.

Rosemary Cantuar:

Archbishop of Canterbury

MORRIS WEST - AN APPRECIATION

The academic year of 1945-46 was very unusual and probably unique in the life of Bristol Baptist College. At the end of the previous year all the students except one had left to take up pastorates or to proceed to further study at Regent's Park College in Oxford. In October 1945 he was joined by a few other new students and, in what must have been a nightmare session for the staff, further students came at intervals throughout the year. The Second World War had ended, gradually people were being discharged from the forces, conscientious objectors were being released from the work they had been doing and those in reserved occupations were becoming free from restriction. Many who had been waiting for some considerable time to begin their ministerial preparation were now able to do so. I was the last to arrive during this session, entering College in May, 1946. More joined us in the following session as the trickle of students continued for several more months. We were, therefore, a very mixed community and, although not all that old in terms of years by today's standards, had reached maturity early as a result of the experience of one kind or another during the war years. When I arrived I quickly recognised that there was one person there who had great gifts, not only academic gifts but qualities of leadership, application and commitment to ministry. Morris West was one of those who had entered College at the start of the session and was, therefore, well-established when I entered. There began then an acquaintance which, over our student years and since, has deepened into a rich friendship and the respect I had for him at that time has grown as I have known him as a person, a scholar, a statesman, a theologian and a friend.

He brought into College with him a life enriched by the experience not only of working in wartime Britain but of being born and brought up in a Baptist manse. His father, W. E. West, was a highly respected minister who had been educated at Bristol. One of his pastorates was at the Old King Street Church in Bristol which was situated close to the Broadmead Church near the site now occupied by the British Home Stores. It was during that time that Morris was born, the third of three children. His elder brother studied medicine in Bristol and was a member of the College before going into general practice, while his sister entered the teaching profession and became a Head Teacher. Like his brother before him, Morris went to Taunton School where independence of mind was encouraged and developed along with a strong sense of what it meant to live in community, and so he was well-equipped for leadership in the College. At the beginning of the 1945 session all the students except one were in their first year and since the House Rules did not permit first year students to hold office it was not possible to appoint any officers other than the Senior Student. The office of Sub-Senior (later to become known as House Secretary) had to remain vacant. This technical difficulty was overcome by appointing Morris as 'Minute Secretary'! Later when he reached his penultimate year and so became eligible for office he was duly elected Sub-Senior.

If the Bristol tradition was to be carried forward into the post-war era, it was necessary for someone to receive it from Ken King, the remaining student, and hand it on to future generations. This was to be the task of the 1945-46 year and of Morris West in particular. Family connections with the College and a knowledge of many previous Bristol students fitted him for this task. How far he was conscious of it at the time only he can say, but as I look back on those years in Bristol it seems to me that the College owes a considerable debt to him in this respect. This concern for the tradition remained with him throughout his student days and continued during the years of his Principalship as well.

We all learned much from Arthur Dakin and Henton Davies and our learning was not confined to academic subjects. It was always the Dakin policy to encourage responsibility and self-discipline by allowing the maximum amount of freedom, but perhaps it was especially marked in that period because of the maturity of the students. The influence of Dakin on Morris, as upon all of us, can be seen by anyone who knew both. In no sense did he attempt to copy him; he has always been sufficiently independent to follow the dictates of his own heart and mind, but the directness and the lack of pretension that was characteristic of Dakin can be seen in him too.

The words 'able' and 'evangelical' have been key words in the Bristol tradition from the beginning. In 1946 four of us had matriculated and so began the University course. In those days all the teaching for the final two years was given in the Theological Colleges and so we shared all classes with those who were not taking a degree, as well as with students from Western College. The name 'West', though well down alphabetically, was always high on the examination lists. The change from the Sciences to Arts was successfully negotiated. Classical Greek and Hebrew were managed, perhaps not without difficulty, but with distinction; not without difficulty, because although there was a natural academic gift it was accompanied and enhanced by hard, long and conscientious work. We were both early morning workers and so were up regularly at 6.30 and even earlier during the revision and exam period, retiring to bed about 11.30. I suspect that Morris stayed up even later than this at certain times. The result of this was not only a good degree but a habit of work and study which has continued throughout his working life.

Yet there was always time for other things. Afternoons were used almost exclusively for letter-writing, relaxation and recreation. Football occupied one afternoon and training or practice another one or two. Squash, table tennis and, in the summer term, tennis and cricket found a place in his curriculum. At all of these, too, Morris succeeded. He had a good eye and fine co-ordination of hand or foot and eye. He was largely responsible, along with others, for enthusing those of us who were less enthusiastic so that out of about twenty-four students we were able to field a very respectable Soccer XI which nearly won the Bardsley Brash Cup for the

Theological Colleges (four of them!), gaining a draw on Bristol City's ground. There was even an occasion when we managed to find two - rather less respectable - sides to play a match on the Downs, euphemistically speaking.

The 'evangelical' was also well in evidence not only in his preaching, but in his work in the student team at Studley in Wiltshire and in his participation in student missions. This, as is well-known, has remained a part of his theological make-up.

When we returned to College after one summer vacation we discovered that Morris had met a girl at a BMS Summer School in the Lake District who was later to become his wife. By coincidence both our fiancées were called Freda, both were Yorkshire girls and they lived no more than six or seven miles apart. From then on Morris and I saw a good deal of each other during vacations as well as during College term. In fact we were together at the Headingly Test Match in 1949 when our degree results were published! By then Morris and Freda had married, in the January of that year.

All four of us who had been on the University course graduated in 1949. As a Regent's Park student I went on to Oxford, and by that far-sighted agreement between the Colleges, the other three also went on to Oxford as Bristol students. Thus the friendship continued. Morris' decision to continue study in Oxford was not made without hesitation. He believed he was called to the ministry and, as for all of us, this meant to a local Baptist Church. There was a certain impatience to get on with the work to which he felt called. Yet those of us who knew him well were always sure that his good sense would prevail and that he would take advantage of the opportunity which Oxford offered.

Life in Oxford was very different from life in Bristol. The educational methods and the whole ethos were different and adjustments had to be made. I chose to do Hebrew as my optional subject; the others chose Reformation History. This brought Morris into even closer contact with Ernest Payne than I enjoyed and there developed between student and teacher a relationship of mutual respect which lasted as long as Ernest Payne lived. To anticipate a little, when Dr Payne died in 1980 Morris was entrusted with all his papers, notes and diaries from which he produced his excellent memoir, *To Be A Pilgrim*. With encouragement from Dr Payne, he pursued his studies in church history and, within that general field, Baptist and Anabaptist history. We should not forget either the influence of Principal R. L. Child. Morris has often testified to his scholarship and kindness, not only when he was a student, but also when he returned to Regent's as Tutor.

Although he held no office in the Junior Common Room at Regent's, his influence there was strong in all its affairs and the same application to study and to recreation - he played Soccer for St Catherine's First XI - ensured that at the end of the two year course he emerged with a very good degree.

The questions he had faced two years earlier in Bristol now returned to plague him again. Should he take a pastorate, so fulfilling his call at once, or should he take the opportunity which was being offered to him of further study abroad? Again I think his friends knew before he did what his answer would be. It was right, and from a wider, denominational point of view it was essential that he should pursue his studies. Consequently, as we settled in churches Morris and Freda went to Zurich on a B.U. scholarship. His work in the University there, under Emil Brunner and Edward Schweitzer among others, concentrated his interests in Reformation History, nourished by living in the city of Ulrich Zwingli. He wrote his doctoral dissertation on the English reforming bishop, John Hooper. It was a fine piece of work for which he was awarded a D.Theol. with highest honours. Brunner is reported to have said of him, 'If only the British would send us more students of this quality'. So his place as a Reformation scholar was assured, though he never was and never has been content to be an expert in one narrow field of study. His interests have remained wide and far-reaching.

In 1953, after two years in Switzerland, his desire to start his pastoral ministry was further frustrated and delayed. Ernest Payne had left Regent's in 1951 to become General Secretary of the Baptist Union. One of his successors stayed only a short time and by 1953 a new tutor was being sought. Where else should they turn but to Morris in Zurich? So he returned to Oxford where his scholarly ability was quickly recognised and where he was brought into touch with many other scholars of all denominations. So far as Regent's was concerned, however, it was not just his scholarship which endeared him to the students; it was even more his personal and pastoral concern. Certainly he was happier to be working in a theological college helping to prepare people for ministry than he would have been in a university department. The opportunity to encourage people to reach their greatest potential in both academic and vocational studies was grasped eagerly. At the same time he took on responsibility for the smooth working of the institution and found much satisfaction in doing so alongside Principal Child.

Other opportunities also began to come his way. In 1952 the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches met in Lund in Sweden. While still a student in Zurich, Morris had attended as a youth delegate and so was introduced at first hand to the ecumenical movement, with which he was to become increasingly involved. Along with E. A. Payne, L. G. Champion and others he made certain that the British Baptist voice was heard and that our historic principles were understood and respected.

His continuing concern for evangelism is demonstrated by the fact that while he was still in Oxford he met from time to time with a group of those who had been students with him in Bristol to discuss the question of how best to proclaim the Gospel in and through the local church, leading to his editorship of *Evangelism and the Churches* in 1958. The first of the nine essays was his own contribution: 'Evangelism in the Early Church'.

After six years at Regent's Park the opportunity came for Morris to reach his ambition of pastoral ministry, the fulfilment of which had now been delayed for ten years. He saw the College through the retirement of Principal Child and the beginning of Dr Henton Davies' Principalship and then, in 1959, accepted a call to the pastorate of Dagnall Street Baptist Church, St Albans. Just how conscious was the hope or belief that he would one day return to teach in a Theological College I cannot say, but his friends were clear that this was the case and that, therefore, a period as pastor of a local church was indispensable to his future as well as being the fulfilment of personal hopes. But his pastorate at St Albans was not just a means to an end. As far as he was concerned this was what he had been called to do and now at last he was doing it.

For twelve years he exercised an important and influential ministry there. It was a church with a long history and a large membership. It had seen many notable ministries and it played an important part in the life of the city. It, therefore, made considerable demands on one who had so far had little first-hand experience as pastor of a local church. This did not prevent him from exercising a very effective ministry appreciated by many. It was an evangelical ministry in the best sense of the word. Based upon the exposition of Scripture, the gospel was preached with that vigour that arose out of personal faith and conviction. Always seeking personal decisions, it took full account of the needs of the world as it was and of its people as they were.

Through him the church extended its influence into Hill End Mental Hospital where he was Chaplain. Others would be able to write more authoritatively about the help he was able to give to both patients and staff but it is just as important, from the point of view of this appreciation, to record the effect this had on Morris himself. Here he learned at first hand the demands and the cost of pastoral counselling and proved himself both skilled in it and personally and spiritually strong enough to sustain it.

His own personal gifts and the fact that he was minister of an influential church meant that he became deeply involved in the work of the Hertfordshire Association, and of the Baptist Union to whose Council he had already been elected in 1959. In 1960 he wrote a small booklet for the Union on *Baptist Principles*, which has remained to this day a standard statement of Baptist beliefs. When the Union set up a commission to look into the organisation and function of the Associations, he was appointed Chairman. This involved a great deal of thought and time. The Report, benefiting from his wide understanding of Baptist history, was generally recognised to be an excellent piece of work even if some of its most important recommendations were not implemented then or since. Though he would be the first to say that the Report was the work of the whole commission, much credit must go to him.

As if all this were not enough, his activities in the city of St Albans led to other offices. He became President of the Rotary Club and even more significantly he was appointed Justice of the Peace,

bringing him into touch with still more aspects of modern life and stimulating an awareness of the needs of individuals in trouble and a concern for social justice. Remarkably, there was still time for theological reading and reflection on all the varied aspects of life in which he was involved.

As the time for Dr Champion's retirement from the Principalship of the Bristol Baptist College drew near, a committee was set up to consider the succession. Other members of staff were not on this committee but I should be surprised if there was a great deal of doubt as to whom his successor would be. Most people in the denomination, I judge, took it for granted that Morris West would be appointed. It would be surprising, too, if he himself had not seen this as likely. He had already decided not to apply for academic posts, believing that in some way his future lay in or for the Baptist Ministry. His affection for Bristol College and his sense of indebtedness to it meant that he was a natural choice as Principal. So he returned to Bristol in 1971 first as Principal-elect and then, the following year, to take up the Presidency of the Bristol Education Society and the Principalship of the College. His appointment was a particular joy to me since it meant a resumption of the deep friendship which had begun in student days but which had to some extent been interrupted as we had each gone our separate ways of Christian service.

Changes were already beginning to be made in the College. A Policy Group had been set up a year or two previously of which Morris had been a member. That group, after a realistic scrutiny of the College and its possible future role in the denomination, re-affirmed its usefulness and pointed in the direction of its becoming a resource centre for the South West of England, where it was held in very high regard. It also encouraged the policy of accepting students on Open Option, that is, students wishing to read Theology and qualified to do so in the University, but uncertain about their future vocation. There had also been some dissatisfaction with the syllabus for the London University Diploma of Theology as the academic basis for those not reading for a degree. Efforts were being made, in conjunction with the Anglican and Methodist Colleges, to devise a more appropriate syllabus and qualification which would take account of both academic and vocational subjects. At the same time relationships with Bristol University were changing as the Department of Theology, started in 1964, developed and grew in numbers of both staff and students. In addition to all this relationships between staff and students in the College were beginning to become less formal. It was into this changing situation that Morris came, using his own personal skills and personality to see the College through a period of considerable and accelerating change.

As Principal of the College he was accepted immediately by the University as Special Lecturer in Theology and within the Department of Theology he began to develop courses in Reformation Studies which have attracted a large number of students over the years. Several staff changes within the Department, including a

change of Professor, have taken place but the College has been able to retain its standing throughout, due largely to the regard in which the Principal was held. When, in 1979, the College celebrated its Tercentenary with radio and television broadcasts and the publication of Norman Moon's book, *Education For Ministry*, the University marked the occasion by awarding the Principal the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Letters. The Professor of Theology at that time, the Reverend Kenneth Grayston, presented him, paying tribute not only to the College's contribution to the academic life in the city, but to Morris personally for his scholarship and for his work in the World Church.

It is not easy to write an adequate appreciation of Morris' work in the College during the fifteen years of his Principalship and what I write will be selective and subjective. I have already written about the importance which tradition had for him and also about the changes that were taking place in the College. The two may seem incompatible, but 'when we talk about a tradition it is important to remember that we are talking not about something which is fixed and finished, but about something which is a process and therefore in continuous development...' This quotation is the opening statement in a paper read by the Principal to the College Brotherhood at the Annual Meetings in October 1986, entitled *The Bristol Tradition - Now and Then*. It sought to show how the Bristol tradition had been maintained and at the same time developed over the years. The paper was all that it set out to be and more: it could easily be recognised by those who knew him as an expression of the personal 'credo' by which he lived his life and steered the College. I can, therefore, do no better than use the five headings which he himself provided in writing an appreciation of his contribution to the College.

'Biblical conviction' is every bit as much a part of Morris' own Christian make-up as it is part of the Bristol tradition. Although his academic expertise was proven in the realm of Church History, his concern for the proper understanding and use of the Bible, both Testaments, has been paramount. It has shown itself in those New Testament courses he has taught in the College where he has demanded the highest standard of exegesis from himself and from students according to their ability. Yet it has never been scholarship for its own sake. Studying Corinthians has not been only a matter of discovering Paul's attitude to the problems in the church there. That knowledge had to be applied to questions in the contemporary church and society. Similar demands have been made in the Sermon Class where preaching had to be rooted in the Bible, but where the Bible must become the Word of God for today. All this has been central to his idea of preparing people for ministry and its importance has been underlined in his own preaching both in the churches around the country and in the College Chapel whenever he has preached at the weekly Eucharist or led the College community in daily worship. He has always encouraged students to think for themselves and not simply to accept other people's views, yet because of his rigorous standards this has never meant that people could make the Bible mean what they wanted it to mean.

Like judgment can be given to his concern for 'theological awareness'. He has never sought to impose his own theology on students but has insisted that they thoughtfully work out their own understanding of the faith in the light of their own experience. Favourite words have been 'reflection' and 'contextualisation': to reflect on scripture in the light of contemporary ideas, and on contemporary thought in the light of the scriptures and the tradition of the Church have always been essential to him and he has demanded the same from his students. Consequently modern trends in theology have been explored but they have never been followed simply because they were modern. They have always had to be tested against scripture and tradition.

Both biblical conviction and theological awareness have been surrounded and undergirded by 'evangelical zeal'. No-one can hear him preach or engage in conversation for long without being made aware of the Good News of God who revealed himself in Jesus as holy and loving and as reconciling the world to himself. All preaching must seek a decision of some kind from its hearers, a decision to commit life to Christ or to deepen that commitment or to work out the implications of it in activities and relationships.

But evangelism has never been understood narrowly in terms of verbal proclamation alone. Alongside it there has been a deep 'social consciousness' which has found expression in his continuing work as a magistrate, including his recent appointment as Deputy Chairman of the Bristol Bench. His work on the Bench brought with it involvement with the Avon Probation Service and he has served not only on its Main Committee but on the Divorce and Domestic Sub-committee and as chairman of the prison Sub-committee. All this experience he has brought into the life of the College. Social issues and political affairs have thus never been side-stepped but have been opened up in both formal classes and informal conversation. Moreover the area of practical and vocational preparation has been greatly enriched for students as he has arranged for them to gain experience for themselves in so many aspects of modern life - in the courts, education, industry, hospitals, the needs of the inner city, of ethnic groups, of disadvantaged people and much more. Upon all this experience he has demanded theological reflection so that it may be properly understood from a Christian stand-point.

All this work has gone on within what he called 'community commitment' and the word 'community' is another of those which have been frequently on his lips. It is in this area, perhaps more than any other, that former students, returning to College on Sabbatical leave, have noticed the greatest change. Such change had begun when he came to the College in 1971. In the fifteen years since it has gone on apace in what may seem small ways, but when added together these have made a significant difference to life in the College community. It would have been easy to allow this powerful tide of change to sweep the College whither it would. This was not Morris' way. The tide had to be controlled and its power harnessed to the purposes of the College in preparing people for ministry. So though the relationship between staff and students became more

relaxed this never diminished the respect in which he and the rest of the staff were held. The College was to be a learning community in which everyone shared, each acknowledging the skills and experience of the rest. Similarly the increasing number of women students and of married students, especially those with families who have become student ministers, was seen as providing an opportunity for a more mixed and varied community having at its heart the weekly Eucharist in which wives and, where appropriate, children were encouraged to share. In this community-building Freda West also played a significant part both by arranging regular meetings for students' wives and more particularly by assuming responsibility for all the domestic arrangements in the College and so involving herself in all aspects of its life alongside Morris.

Patterns of study have also become more varied as students have had to plan their work with College, University, family and church in mind. Again this has been used to encourage the kind of self-discipline required in later life. The Principal has also ensured that those involved in administration, library, secretarial and domestic work have all been seen as members of the one Christian community entrusted with the task of preparing people for ministry. A glance at the College photograph will quickly make this clear. So, although changes were necessary and inevitable, he has seen to it that they were used positively in the service of God.

It would leave a serious omission if I did not mention his concern that the Colleges should co-operate even more closely within the denomination. So when Mansel John, the tutor in Cardiff, died so sadly and suddenly, Morris offered Bristol's help in teaching his Church History courses. As a result a most helpful link was established whereby first Norman Moon and Morris, and then, after Norman's retirement, Morris alone spent a day in Cardiff teaching in the University there, whilst Neville Clark, visited Bristol one day a week to teach mainly New Testament courses.

All this might be thought to be sufficient work for any one man but for Morris there were always heavy denominational and ecumenical commitments as well. He was elected President of the Union for the year 1979-80. Two years later he was elected Moderator of the Free Church Federal Council. From 1982 to 1985 he also served as Chairman of the Baptist Union Council. For many years this has meant very frequent trips to London and yet the College remained his primary concern and has never been neglected.

'What more shall I say, for time would fail me to tell...'. To know and to work with Morris has been to know and work with a man of wide interests and deep insights, a man with a keen intellect and the capacity for hard work to match it, a man of vision who knows where he wants to go and goes there, a man of faith who neither parades it nor hides it, a man for whom the Christian Gospel means everything and who is determined to spread it himself and to help others to do the same.

SERVANT OF THE UNION

It is the rare individual who singlehandedly moves history and profoundly influences events. Because we are human we wish to believe that we have made a significant difference. Perhaps it is this unexpressed half-conscious conviction that keeps us striving. Particularly it is true when commitment to the corporate life of an institution is in question. For institutions are notoriously resistant to change.

Where wisdom joins with realism, a more modest assessment and aspiration are born. Directions may perhaps be altered a compass point. History may be nudged to fractional effect. Pressures judged dangerous may be counterbalanced. Oil may be poured where the gears are grinding.

Yet if effectiveness rather than self-expression or self-fulfilment is to be the controlling goal, a further clear-eyed recognition of the inevitable restrictions may be indispensable. The actor is limited by the stage on which he performs and by the lines he is given to speak. He seldom has unfettered freedom to choose his part. He operates within constraints.

Once those constraints are accepted, one further requirement imposes itself. The participant who is content to play the cards dealt to him in the situation and not frustratedly call for a more congenial deck must then be prepared to offer a patient long-term commitment. In the end, the game is not to the fleet of foot, the short-term resident, the flashy card-sharper who rides into the institutional town and just as quickly rides out of it. The price of achievement is a long-term emotional investment, a preparedness to see things through, a willingness to absorb the losses and constantly go back to the table without inflated expectations. Morris West ranks high among the servants of the Baptist Union because to wisdom and realism he has been prepared to add patience and commitment over more than a third of a century.

He has been a Union and Association man from the beginning. It was indeed in the late fifties that he tabled unmistakably the contours of his steadfast commitments. At that early point, three controlling factors may readily be discerned. The first of them was his appointment as editor of the *Baptist Quarterly*.

That occurrence may on the face of it seem to have been but remotely connected to the service of the Union and the churches which belong to it. It was, however, profoundly significant because of the goals it unveiled and the concerns it made explicit. On the one hand, it signalled a policy shift. By 1958 the editor could write: 'It is our earnest desire to make this publication of the maximum use to readers *and to Baptist life in general*' (italics mine). Research into Baptist history was not to be relegated to the sidelines. Yet what was to take a place nearer centre stage was the conviction that history is not just a matter of dusting down the archives. It is also being made in the present; and it has contemporary implications.

On the other hand, and simultaneously, there began in the pages of the *Quarterly* a wide-ranging re-examination of Baptist theology of the Ministry, in the context of the 1957 Baptist Union report on Ordination. This series was the impressive first-fruits of the richer view of what preoccupation with Baptist history implied. It also signalled a preoccupation with the nature of the ordained Ministry which was to run like a constant thread through all Morris West's future way.

The second controlling factor was his speedy election to the Council of the Union. It expressed the recognition of some that a voice had begun to speak which needed to be more widely and influentially heard. It focused the Union commitment and gave it a structured vehicle of expression. It opened the avenue of service that was to extend over the ensuing decades.

The third factor was in its own way an extraordinary indicator of Morris West's own resolution and clear-mindedness. It is only the prima donna mentality that seeks exclusive occupation of the stage and imagines that victories are won by the isolated hero. If battles are successfully to be fought, then allies must be enlisted. The best commitment to a cause is shared commitment. Just as the new editor of the *Baptist Quarterly* had, to the consternation of not a few, sought a revamped editorial board, so the new Council member sought to enlist and entice others to echo his commitment and offer themselves for Union service.

Thus things stood as the nineteen fifties drew to their close. The coming decade provided the formative, and in certain respects the most crowded, years of Morris West's diverse contribution to the concerns of the Union. He was strongly influenced by, though never a naively uncritical supporter of, the then General Secretary, Ernest Payne, who initiated the Ter-Jubilee Celebrations of the Baptist Union. It was that long-running saga which in countless and often unrecognised ways dictated the preoccupations of the sixties. In the Denominational Conferences that opened and closed the crucial decade, those preoccupations found their clearest focus. Over the period, an abrupt change of mood is registered.

The report from the Denominational Conference of 1961 reads like a synopsis of the causes to which the new Council member would commit himself. It also reads like an advance agenda for the actual Union business of the sixties. Independence must be supplemented by interdependency. Association structures and life must be renewed. Ministry matters must be thought through. The spiritual and numerical weakness of the churches must prompt examination and experiment, and teaching and training be better provided. The ecumenical dimension must be grasped and clarified. The way into all these areas must be by the appointment of 'commissions'.

Commissions, under one name or another, there were to be, in almost reckless profusion. Seldom can the Union have expended so much time and paper in so short a period. In the calm before the storm, Morris West was steadily moving towards the heart of the Union's life. He was quickly appointed to the chairmanship of the

Young People's Department Committee, a ready recognition of his potential and a quick route to the General Purposes Executive. He was now a familiar voice and a recognised Council figure.

Arguably, and in many directions, 1963 was a watershed. The Council, by establishing the Advisory Committee for Church Relations, planted a gingerly permanent toe in the perilous ecumenical waters, a pool which Morris West was to make peculiarly his own. He was appointed a Union representative on the British Council of Churches, and a year later gained a place on the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches. He also represented the Union at the Nottingham Faith and Order Conference. Within the life of the Union, he was appointed chairman of the Commission on the Associations.

The Commission on the Associations was a testing assignment. Its Report set off a chain reaction the echoes of which are with us still. That a Report was in the end produced at all was heavily the result of the chairmanship. There was a good deal of the shepherd dog patiently herding recalcitrant sheep. Yet with it all there was a sensitive awareness of underlying issues. Amid the more obtrusive areas of the maximising of 'superintendents' and the re-examination of Association boundaries, it was easy to miss the concern evidenced by the sub-heading 'Towards a Recovery of Confidence'. Interdependency was seeking a cautious foothold and striving to commend herself to men and women of goodwill. The character of the Union as the Associations associating together was being tentatively tabled for calm assessment.

When the Report surfaced, the chairman made no secret of his implacable resolve to resist any familiar Council attempt to shunt off an unwelcome visitor into long-term limbo. If in the end he was outmanoeuvred, as the consequential Boundaries Commission wound its way to an inglorious close, it was partly because issues had been tabled before their 'time' had come. The snake had been scotched but not killed, and its spectre remains to haunt the Union twenty years on.

In the aftermath of the Commission on the Associations, Morris West attempted in more informal fashion to ring some alarm bells in a 1966 paper on 'Baptists and the Future'. Thereby he made it unmistakably clear that his overriding concern was not with abstract theology or organisational neatness but with the faithful effectiveness of congregations in their mission. It was a reaching back to notes already sounded in *Evangelism and the Churches* which he had edited eight years before, and to the living contemporary preoccupations that had marked his contribution to *The Pattern of the Church*. Indeed, in its own way it was a *cri de coeur*, calling for 'radical changes' to promote 'effective local churches' served by a 'properly trained ministry' effectively deployed.

The wider context of such reflections is not difficult to discern. Morris West's own unease was part of an increasing Union sense that the storm clouds were gathering. The Council had listened in 1963 to a call to the Secretariat to survey the state of the denomination and

gather factual information about the state of the churches. It had listened again in 1966 to talk of a 'declining' even 'dying' denomination. Morris West's own reflections barely preceded a Council discussion on the state and mission of the denomination. But the tenor of the debate had little of the sharpness of his own memorandum, and the report ('Call to Obedience') of the working group that followed in 1969 sank without trace. By that time, the Union had fallen victim to the disease of financial embarrassment which, with temporary remissions, was to plague it thereafter.

Yet not all the seed had fallen on stony ground. In 1967 the Council resolved to establish a Commission on the Ministry with Morris West as one of its members. To it he brought a powerful and influential voice. Into it he could and did pour the accumulated concern of the years which the 1966 paper had brought to focus. Within its Report will be found surfacing many of his urgent convictions. After all, had he not been one of the three co-authors of the earlier 1961 *Report on the Doctrine of the Ministry*?

Before the Commission on the Ministry had completed its work, the General Purposes Executive appointed in 1968 a Structure Group to re-examine the workings of the Union, its departments, and its committees. Once again it turned to Morris West for chairmanship. The work was completed in record time. Unusually, virtually all of its recommendations were adopted and implemented.

In all this there is cause for reflection. It is likely that certain qualities are to be found in someone who is invited to stand at the heart and often at the helm of so many significant and sensitive enquiries. Significant, they surely were. Not because all the conclusions commanded assent and approval. At important points they failed to do so. Yet that may not be the important point. Such diverse appointed involvement inescapably betrays the recognition of an unusually wide competence and an unusually judicious capability. Great matters were in issue. And again and again the effect of the work done was not properly measurable by the narrow standard of immediate acceptance or rejection. What counted was that at crucial points the unthinkable became thinkable; the unconscious inheritance surfaced and made its influence upon future years.

If these areas of Union involvement were significant, they were also sensitive. To touch the Associations was to move towards the beating heart of local denominational life. Congregations can watch with relative nonchalance most of the gyrations of the Union; but what if the probing finger comes too near home? To touch the Ministry was to hit a significant section of the denomination where it lives. To touch the structure of the Union was inevitably to throw the staff of Church House into paroxysms of understandable anxiety. A chairman who could handle such crosscurrents effectively as well as humanly and still survive respected and unscathed was by definition a rare animal.

Meanwhile, Morris West's ecumenical commitment and expertise were increasingly being called upon by the Union. The sixties were in this respect the proving years, as on the British and the world

scene he gathered experience and could, from an increasingly informed vantage point, feed into the Church Relations Committee wider perspectives and specialised knowledge. After a shaky start, that Committee began to find its feet and win acceptability. The report *Baptists and Unity* (1967) was the turning point. After long gestation it finally emerged to widespread acceptance even with the Annual Assembly. Baptists had finally something like an agreed platform so far as their understanding of and attitude towards the visible unity of the Church was concerned.

Yet, as Morris West assumed the Committee chairmanship in 1972, no informed observer could doubt that the ecumenical waters were turning choppy for the Union. Baptists might in principle judge that 'visible unity' was a biblically-based goal for the Churches. It was not so clear what Union reaction would or should be when rolling phrases sought translation into the raw specifics of action. The establishment in 1972 of an ecumenical congregation at Skelmersdale was a portent. Its application for membership of the Baptist Union was an embarrassment. Existing 'Union' (Baptist/Congregationalist) churches, faced with the problem of the creation of the United Reformed Church and of their own constitutional relationship to it, were thundering impatiently at the Union door. As the rain descended and the floods came and the wind blew, foundation rocks seemed to be in alarmingly short supply.

Such was the daunting West inheritance. It was dealt with in characteristically clear-minded, patient and moderate fashion, particularly through a newly-created Church Relations Working Group which Morris West also chaired. Agreement by consent was the formula. Only so could the process advance however protracted the discussions might prove. At every stage, Council opinion was consulted and tested. It was 1975 before the issues were finally resolved. There was a very broad consensus that justice had been done.

The implications of visible unity were not, however, to be disposed of merely by facilitating membership of the Union on the part of ecumenical congregations. Church relations in England were in ferment. The Nottingham Conference of 1964 had signalled a new era. The Anglican/Methodist Scheme of Union had failed, but the Congregational/Presbyterian had succeeded. At a conference at Selly Oak, a few short weeks before Morris West's appointment to the chair of the Church Relations Committee was formally accepted by the Council, Methodist representatives urged the United Reformed Church to promote a new ecumenical initiative. Talks about Talks, the Churches Unity Commission, the Churches Council for Covenanting, were about to be launched.

It was a classic and familiar situation, with the Union beset both behind and before. Those behind cried 'forward', and those in front cried 'back'. The degree of mingled balance and decisiveness shown by the chairman of the Church Relations Committee was bound to be of pivotal significance. Would the Union participate fully in the interdenominational negotiations? The case was made persuasively. The Council agreed in March 1974. So did the Assembly (with 56

dissentients).

Two years later, the Ten Propositions burst upon a wondering world. It was decision time. The reactions of local Baptist churches would be of enormous weight. Thankfully, the Church Relations Committee and its Working Group entrusted to their chairman the task of preparing 'A Statement to the Churches' and subsequently an Explanatory Paper to accompany the Council's 'Response'.

That 'Response' was tabled at Council in 1977, as Morris West's chairmanship of the Church Relations Committee reached its close. It was a document that had listened to the Baptist constituency and struggled to speak truth and embody realities in a positive and constructive way. Yet it unmistakably put the Union awkwardly out of step with the anticipated responses of many of its ecumenical partners. What would the Council make of it?

The Council listened to the introductory speech of its Committee chairman with almost painful attention. His survey was a model of clarity and sensitivity. It should probably be adjudged the most important single contribution he ever made to a Council debate. It elicited a depth of appreciation and a measure of united response rarely witnessed in the Council Chamber.

Such was the public face at the heart of the Union. Behind it and around it was a continuous flurry of activity in the constituency on behalf of the Union and the ecumenical enterprise. Speaking, debating, explaining, in denominational and interdenominational meetings alike, was the order of the day. It was a taxing, demanding, constructive enterprise, whose value to the Union it is difficult to measure, and more difficult to overestimate.

Chairmanships might come and go, but membership of the Church Relations Committee and the ecumenical service to the Union it focused went on. Through the better part of two decades, the Union had a continuing, powerful and respected voice on the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches, as Morris West's stature on the international scene steadily grew.

In the latter part of this period, his concern moved on from the explorations of the nature of church unity to issues of baptism and ministry. One, in fact, of his most helpful publications had been his long essay on 'The Anabaptists and the Rise of the Baptist Movement' contributed to the symposium on *Christian Baptism* edited by Alec Gilmore in 1959. He was thus very well equipped to be a principal spokesman of the Baptist position at the Louisville Consultation when, for perhaps the first time, Baptists and paedobaptists in relatively equal numbers confronted the Christian Initiation divide on the world front. He shared in the protracted Faith and Order enterprise that eventually produced *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, himself serving on the group charged with the baptismal discussion. He participated in informal contacts with the Church of England's Faith and Order Group which sought to clarify underlying issues of divergence on baptism and ministry. Under the aegis of the Church Relations Committee he provided a

Union Occasional Paper on *Church, Ministry and Episcopacy* which endeavoured to take seriously some of the unfinished business arising from the Council's Response to the Ten Propositions.

It would however be a serious miscalculation to imagine that the picture that latterly emerges is that of an ecumenical emissary but intermittently attached to the Union and denominational scene and almost exclusively preoccupied with international affairs. Long service on the Scholarships Committee befitted a College Principal wishing to keep a wary if not a beady eye on relevant doings. Longer service on the General Purposes Committee inexorably concentrated the mind on substantial tracts of the varied Union concerns. The increasingly recognised value of Morris West in this curious arena was partly that his wide scope and long background made him a repository of knowledge and experience. Equally, his value lay in the mediating and reconciling stance he adopted towards thorny issues, and in his acute sense of what in a given situation was practicable. How many others, for example, could reach back to the 1958 beginnings of that stately minuet, the latest number in the slow-moving collaborative dance of the Union and the Missionary Society? To him was to fall the chairmanship of the group charged with seeking joint headquarters for both bodies.

As the seventies drew to their close, he was elected to the Presidency of the Union. On the one hand, that drove him back with renewed vigour to the broad Baptist constituency to which his heart belonged. On the other hand, for a three year period, it formally constituted him an Officer of the Union, granting him a sort of key of the door, to poke out concealed skeletons in strange places if so minded.

Add to this the Moderatorship of the Free Church Federal Council, courtesy of Baptist Union nomination, and the suspicious might be driven to an interesting conclusion. Perhaps the role of elder statesman was at last being foisted upon him. If so, it was a role he adorned, and did not visibly shun. The hair was greying and growing a trifle more unkempt. A mellowing process was at work. The hint of pugnacious and combative angularity was fading. Was he losing his touch, if not his faculties, and effortlessly becoming an archetypal Establishment figure?

The Council had the wit to decide otherwise. In 1982 it elected him as its chairman, for the statutory three year period. Such appointment comes the way of two categories of people. The one is the company of those Council members who incessantly talk in debate and for whom a position of enforced relative silence is desperately sought. The other is the number of those who are believed to possess the competence, clearmindedness, and fairness to guide to a constructive conclusion discussion that too often threatens to teeter on the edge of confusion, chaos and catastrophe. There is little doubt that the Council choice located Morris West in the second compartment. Chairmanship was after all his business. That had been demonstrated as recently as his year of presidency, in a demanding session of the annual Assembly when continued membership of the World Council of Churches, in the light of grants made by the

Special Fund of its Programme to Combat Racism, was debated.

Three reflections impose themselves. The first relates to the necessary price that must be paid by those who would representatively serve others. Certainly, time is mortgaged, nerves are frayed, thought is demanded. If there is reward, there is also sacrifice. Yet there is another, more subtle and less obvious price to be assessed. Constructive work within a body like the Baptist Union requires an inevitable self-limitation on freedom of thought and action. The 'individual' may speak for him or her self, take an unrepresentative line, exert pressure to assist personal convictions to carry the day. The 'representative', though no automatic mouthpiece or captive of his constituency, has voluntarily accepted the limitations his responsibility inalienably carries. He is not simply a 'reflector'. He must lead. He may seek to carry others where he wants to go, but he is inevitably circumscribed. To fail to accept this is betrayal of those representatively served. The price is the danger of pleasing nobody. Enthusiasts at either end of the opinion spectrum may find their apparently reasonable expectancies dashed and may cry 'turncoat'. To preserve personal integrity, maintain a passion for the possible, and not lose touch with those represented, may be a costly and difficult simultaneous achievement. It is part of the genius of Morris West that on the whole he has kept his balance.

The second reflection focuses the issue more specifically on the ecumenical arena, always potentially explosive, where hostility and enthusiasm pull in diverse directions. Morris West has never wavered in his Baptist loyalties. More importantly, he has never neglected his Baptist roots. More importantly still, these things have been unmistakably apparent and perceived. They have been perceived both by a wide range of people in the Baptist constituency itself and by a diverse range of partners on the British and international ecumenical scene. That has meant that he has been in a peculiarly effective way the Baptist face of ecumenism; to the constituency the 'acceptable' face, to the representatives of other Churches the 'reliable' face. For that the Union is his substantial debtor.

The final reflection brings us back to the Baptist Union Council. In some respects the Council is not unlike many a local church. It has weird dynamics. It is unpredictable. It is generally fairly tolerant, except where unacceptable conduct is concerned. It abhors windbags. It can spot a phoney in sixty seconds at twenty paces. It knows quality when it sees it, even if it does not immediately welcome its presence. Its respect and trust have to be won. That Morris West so early gained and so enduringly holds that respect and trust is no mean achievement.

The Baptist Historical Society is right to salute him. So far as the Union and, therefore, its churches are concerned, he has marginally nudged history. It is a verdict that can be rendered on few men and women in any generation.

THE OLD MAN LUTHER

On a Tuesday morning in March 1647 the Presbyterian and Congregationalist Fathers of the Westminster Assembly had gathered as usual in the Jerusalem Chamber in Westminster Abbey when they were interrupted by a message from the House of Lords bidding them consider publishing an English translation of Luther's *Last Discourses*. Perhaps not unwilling to be diverted - it was after all their 808th session - they turned aside to see this strange sight, and appointed a high-powered committee to deal with the matter, led by Herbert Palmer, President of Queens', Cambridge, including dons, DDs, the great Ecumaniac, John Dury, and the ministers of the French churches in London and Canterbury.

It was perhaps too strong a committee, for when it met it subcontracted the business of reading the book to a small group which reported on 21st April that, though Luther was a man 'whose praise is throughout all the churches of Christ' and though the work contained 'many good things' yet there were many passages 'contrary to gravity and modesty'. Indeed the effect was as though a volume of *Private Eye* were suddenly intruded into the agenda of a General Assembly. No doubt the Revd Obadiah Sedgewick summed it up when he reported, 'I do find many good things, but some of the oddest concerns: I never met with the like', while the Master of Jesus, Cambridge, more severely said it contained 'nothing of use'. But despite this unanimous adverse judgment, an order from the House of Commons decreed in the following February that the work should be printed.

They were not in fact Luther's last words, but a translation of the Lauterbach edition of the *Table Talk* which had been done into vigorous seventeenth-century English, not many yards from the Jerusalem Chamber, in the Gatehouse prison just outside the Abbey by Captain Henry Bell, son of a Dean of Ely and a mercenary soldier, who found, unlike his fellow prisoner, the poet Lovelace, that stone walls did indeed a prison make and iron bars a cage. (When the book appeared in 1652 Captain Bell, a trooper in Colonel Whalley's famous regiment, had died in battle north of the Border. Since he had earlier submitted the manuscript to Archbishop Laud, whose judgment was astonishingly similar to that of the Puritan fathers, with deference to Professor Elton I do not think what put them off was anti-Presbyterian theology but that into Luther's theology cheerfulness keeps breaking in).

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'Volo esse miles emeritus' - the sigh lingers over the last years of Luther's life, when he was a tired old man, aged before his time by the immense strains of the great church struggle, the care of his churches, the prodigious effort of writing something like a treatise a fortnight over twenty-five years, causing him to complain that he had not time to think - a great ferment of mental energy we cannot begin to measure. But not for him like an old war-horse to be put

out to grass. For those whom Bunyan called 'the Champions' there is no let up, to the very end.

We cannot drive a wedge between the young, the middle-aged and the old Luther. In his last lectures, sermons and letters he returns time and again to the same themes, sometimes in a tired, but never in a petrified way. Even in the matter of polemic, I doubt if the old Luther uses a single three letter word or pungent metaphor which he had not used thirty years before. 'God has led me like an old blind horse', said Luther. He let history come to him, where God has set him, and so in the last decade of his life he went on lecturing, preaching and writing. We begin with the lectures which Professor Luther gave on Holy Scripture in these years (with frequent interruptions) from June 1535 to December 1545.

They have been called Luther's swan song and Melanchthon claimed that these last lectures of Luther are much plainer, much nearer to human life than his earlier lectures. Indeed, they merit the phrase 'Ripeness is all', for into them he put a great deal of hard work, and the experience of a lifetime of preaching, pastoral care, and his own fight of faith. He had carefully studied the text when translating his German Bible, and he now went over it again with Augustine, Nicholas of Lyra and Paul of Burgos. He stuck to the literal sense, deploring allegory, with one or two lapses of his own. Yet the fundamental framework of his hermeneutic is very similar to that of his great series on the Psalms thirty years before. He had long abandoned the mediaeval 'quadriga', yet the four-fold framework still underlies his work: the literal prophetic - God's work 'for us'; the tropological and figurative - God's work 'in us'; the solidarity of the Church; and lastly the eternal and eschatological dimension. He brought to it wider studies - maps, geographies (ancient and humanist), and chronology, which had become an almost obsessive hobby, as he tried to place the patriarchs within the span of world history.

Though he would not evade difficulties by allegorizing, he had no means of distinguishing between history, myth, saga and legend and no notion at all of historical development. And though he pours contempt on some of the readings of the rabbis, there are passages of his own which seem grotesque to a modern reader. Genesis he sees in the context of the 11th chapter of Hebrews. Accordingly it is the great hall of the Pioneers of Faith, with his successive portraits - Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and his women, Eve, Sarah, Rebecca - having something of the depth and grandeur of Michelangelo's prodigious figures in the Sistine Chapel.

About the state of mankind before the Fall, he writes some engaging science fiction. And he puts back into the golden age the kind of speculation modern men put into the distant future.

Adam's inner and outer sensations were of the purest kind. His intellect was the clearest, his memory was the best and his will was the most straightforward... without any fear of death or anxiety... I am convinced that before Adam's sin

his eyes were so sharp and clear that they surpassed those of the lynx and eagle.

(It has been said that an eagle can read *The Times* from ten miles away and Luther's Adam, one feels, could have done the Crossword in the same glance).

He was stronger than lions or bears whose strength is very great; and he handled them the way we handle puppies... I believe Adam could command a lion with a single word, just as we give command to a trained dog... Eve speaks to a serpent with as little fear as we have when we speak to a charming little bird or a lively puppy.

A comparison between Luther and Milton's *Paradise Lost* is interesting. C. S. Lewis has pointed out that for Milton Adam and Eve are public as well as private persons. Where they dwell is a White House or Buckingham Palace. Once in a lifetime, C. S. Lewis said, we might have been taken to see Adam like some living Lincoln Memorial, and bow before the father of our race. Luther's chronological puzzling led him to believe that in the age of Methuselah at least eight such Grand Old Men were still alive, and he pictures Eve meditating her great brood of descendants, much as Queen Victoria regarded the British Empire.

But if there are similarities with Milton there are differences which tilt in Luther's favour. Milton's God is like the famous headmaster, 'a beast but a just beast'. Luther's is a God who plays games with his children because in the end 'What are all of us but God's children?' and his justice is undergirded with compassion. If Milton's great Book IX is a more exact account of Genesis, Luther turns the law swiftly into premonition of the gospel: he thinks the famous Protevangelium, the promise to Eve that the serpent's heel would be bruised, came within a few hours of the Fall. He stresses both how the sense of condemnation came from the guilty consciences of Adam and Eve, and how God brought good from evil. Here in Luther's Genesis, then, is not Yahweh but the God and Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Eve as the great Queen Mother of the human race, like the other women in his portrait gallery, may be a riposte against the Catholic view of celibacy, but her portraiture is used to bring out positively the qualities of wives and mothers.

I often wonder at the way the female body was created for the purpose of nurturing children. How prettily even little girls carry babies on their bosoms. As for mothers, see how deftly they move whenever a crying baby has to be quietened or put in a cot. Get a man to do the same thing, and you will see a camel dancing, so clumsily will he do all the simplest jobs a baby demands.

From Adam and Eve he moves on to Noah, to the quality of patience, of faithful obedience under ridicule and reproach. For

Noah embodies Luther's Three Hierarchies of authority and government:

Noah was a bishop: it was his first concern to oppose the Devil and comfort the tempted, to restore the erring and to give confidence to the wavering, to encourage the despairing, shut out the impenitent... and receive back the penitent with fatherly joy... He had his civil tasks because he established the state and formulated laws... In addition there was the management of his own home, the care of his household.

Abraham is a full length portrait, the emblem of Faith. Apart from Kierkegaard's 'Fear and Trembling', I know no better meditation on the sacrifice of Isaac. And when Luther has done with him, it is with a kind of reverent awe:

In addition to Abraham's heroic qualities of faith, hope and love, the Holy Spirit also praises him for his civil qualities, reverence, humility, modesty, moderation and justice... in Abraham there is a host of all virtues... nothing surpasses his faith. How great was his love, even to the Sodomites, how patient his exile, how great his reverence and generosity towards the lords of the land... the whole doctrine of ethics could be gathered better from this source than Aristotle, the lawyers and the canonists have propounded it.

Luther's Abraham is a grave and reverend signor whom we encounter in his middle life. But his Joseph is a wonderful picture of a young man. As Abraham is the emblem of faith, so Joseph images the divine forgiveness. Luther does not miss a trick when unfolding to us, moment by moment, the beautiful narrative of Joseph's reconciliation with his brethren and his father.

Luther's important notion of 'larvae', the masks behind which God both hides himself and handles his creation, are shown here as terrifying mis-guises behind which God manifests and through which he displays his loving purpose finally revealed in his Son. That the God whom the patriarchs met and trusted is indeed the God and Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ was a theological commonplace but perhaps few sixteenth-century writers have so sensitively and delicately traced the Christlike quality of God's dealing with men in the primitive days. The games we play, our little psychological ploys, are as nothing, Luther seems to say, compared with God's great game of saving men and reconciling them to himself. Luther has done what some of us have done, teased an insect, say a caterpillar, by putting a large leaf in its way to see whether it would go over or round, and then moving it along, further ahead in its path. This, says Luther, is how God deals with us.

For God behaves towards his saints just as Joseph behaved towards his brethren... he pretends and feigns to be a

tyrant... not because he is estranged and his heart is hostile, but because it is brotherly and gentle, and with no other end than to put their penitence to the test and so to drive them to acknowledge their sin and the mercy of God.

God plays the same game with the world... in the Father's wisdom, the Incarnate God plays with, takes delight in behaving in this winning and kindly way with men and this game affords him the greatest pleasure.

Into these lectures he fits all the evangelical stresses of his Reformation. Although the patriarchs were in a sense bishops and priests and ministers of the Word, the fundamental quality is their faith and their obedience. They are not simply Ecclesiastical Man, Political Man, Domestic Man. The inwardness of true religion, its independence from external form, is shown here, where Abraham truly worships under a tree, and Jacob on a pillow of stone.

Esau and Jacob, so important for Paul and Augustine, are also important for Luther's doctrine of the church, as he too sees the story of the People of God in chiaroscuro, with the dialectic between the true and false church running through the whole story.

To the story of Isaac, and Rebecca, who has a Lady Macbeth side to her, Luther brings the note of cliff-hanging suspense during the Great Deception, the moment when a sweating Jacob waits to know if the great sting has come off.

He began to sweat profusely and silently to find fault with his mother's plan. 'O dear mother,' he said, 'What have you done? To what have you driven me?' At that point I would have let that dish of pottage fall and I would have run away as though my head was on fire. Then I would have got rid of the dish, and made a bolt for it.

Nor does Luther let us forget that Jacob was a very frightened little man:

It pleases me to hear of the weakness of the saints... The fact that David killed Goliath, a bear, a lion, does not edify me much, for I can't imitate such things... but when examples of weakness, sins, fear, and trials are shown us... these lift me up in a wonderful way... for I see how they did not perish but were buoyed up with the promises given to them and from this I conclude there is no need for me to despair either. For in all this struggle with hell, in fears and struggles of conscience they feel and speak as though they had no promises at all. Nevertheless they are preserved and maintained by the Word.

Genesis explained the holiness of the secular order. The Fathers of the Old Testament did not run away from the world. They did not need to become nuns or monks. They exercised their calling in the estate where God had called them: in the home, in the fields,

and in their daily business with their fellow men. Those primary human relations of man and wife, parent and child, grounded in love and faithfulness, determine the relations of children when they grow up, the fidelities of courtship and married life. It is this common life of ordinary men and women which is surrounded by the provident care and mercy of God that is our training ground for heaven. Above all it is a life where men and women learn, out of their pains and sorrows and temptations, to find the sheer mercy of God. Throughout these lectures grace is flowing like a river - now swift, now slow; now sunny, now shadowed; but always loving, for it is this stream, 'flumen est', which makes glad the city of God. If in these pages Luther sees simony as the most deadly of all sins, and if he seems to reduce the errors of all religions, including the Christian, to this, and if here is found the root of the false church, it is because what matters supremely is not a question of cheap or costly grace, but simply Grace. The love of God has no strings attached, and all the rest is what he calls 'Bockmilch' religion. It is like trying to milk a goat, to wring salvation out of God. But this is no subjectivism, for he will have nothing to do with unmediated religion. We cannot meet 'Deus Nudus' face to face in His holiness and majesty. Rather he meets us in the Incarnate Son and his presence comes to us in 'larvae', which partly hide, partly reveal and always remain the instruments of his merciful and saving action. Such 'larvae' are the Word and Sacraments.

It is well known that the lectures were worked over by hearers and editors, most of them pupils of Melancthon, and Peter Meinhold, in a classic study, suggested they may have been bowdlerised here and there. And there are passages where, for example, the state of the soul after death is argued in a philosophic manner.

Luther's own view was much simpler. He would have appreciated Stanley Spencer's splendid pictures where jolly sailors and hefty barmaids clamber over gravestones in the shadow of a Glasgow gas works. 'I shall go to sleep', he said, 'and the next thing I shall know will be when an angel knocks on my tomb - "Dr Luther, Dr Luther, (for God will call us up each by name) time to get up. Judgment Day!"'

By and large no other reformer could have given us these lectures. Often boring (there was a discussion of circumcision which must have gone on for months), monotonous, repetitive, they are uneven in quality. Yet into them he packs animadversions on church and world, on contemporary Germany, on human nature and the ways of men, rather in the manner of the *Adages* of Erasmus. There are some good personal touches also: 'I would not have done that... This is how I used to think'.

Above all he is the doctor of conscience. In all concerning sin, guilt, and forgiveness, he is magisterial. Yet this is not a sad or sombre commentary. In it, there recurs, time and again, the theme of joy.

We should ask God to give us a joyful heart for such joyful

promises in order that we too may exult and be glad with saintly Abraham because we are the People of God. But oh the wretched and corrupt flesh which restrains the spirit and does not let us laugh... if the flesh did not hamper us and we were true Christians, we could sing nothing during our entire life, but the Magnificat, Confitemini, the Gloria in Excelsis, the Sanctus.

So, every Monday, every Tuesday at seven or eight in the morning, Luther lectured on Genesis until the story ended for him with the death of his young hero, Joseph, dying at last in venerable old age, buried in a tomb which would remind his descendants to persevere in the same faith and promises, in which he had fallen asleep and been gathered to his fathers. So on Tuesday 17th November 1545 Martin Luther put down his notes for the last time with the poignant comment:

Here is my dear Genesis. God grant that others after me may make a better job of it. I can do no more. I am weak. Pray God for me that he will grant me a good and blessed last hour.

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In the last Act of John Osborne's play *Martin Luther*, he brings Staupitz back to the Black Cloister in Wittenberg (he had in historical fact been dead for some years) simply to make him comment on the loneliness of what had once been the thronged life of the Augustinian monastery. 'It's so odd. The place was full of men. And now there's only you and Katy. It's very, very strange'. Strange indeed, and quite untrue. We know of one travelling scholar who was warned not to stay with the Luthers because their home was always crowded out. The house was full: unmarried and unmarriageable spinsters, convalescents, derelict widows, refugee pastors, orphaned children, undergraduate boarders, ushers with their pupils, scholars, foreigners. It was a bustling Liberty Hall which often brought the mistress of the house to anger and near despair. There were very few of those blessed moments when a husband and wife look at one another in the silence and sigh with relief that all their guests have gone! And not least from 1530 onwards there were scribes who wrote down his conversation, so that breakfast and dinner became mini-Rotary club affairs. It was their memories which became the staple of Henry Bell's Table Talk. When James Boswell in one of his sublimely silly moments sprawled all over the tomb of Melancthon in Wittenberg to write a 'Wish you were here' note to Samuel Johnson, he never mentioned Luther, whom he thought Johnson would dislike. But in fact 'Luther and Samuel Johnson' would make a very profitable article. Both were sages, worth listening to, worth recording, though Luther's utterances have unhappily been deprived of that 'Sitz in Leben' which is half the fun in Boswell.

Their friends tended to show them off, at worst as though they were performing bears. Each could be boorishly rude, each could be

generous, wise, and full of pawky humour, so offensive to the pious ease of the Revd Obadiah Sedgewick and the Westminster Fathers. Sometimes Luther would sit silent through a meal but often at breakfast he would kick off with 'Well, what's the news?' and once off the mark would oblige with an astonishing range of anecdote and observation, gossip and invective.

And in the background was Kate Luther, one of his better sparring partners. She was the manager, and kept him from giving everything away. For he had not venality in him and died poorer than Erasmus. Others made fortunes from his books and bibles but he got nothing and at the end of his life was grateful for a small pension from the King of Denmark. He bought one or two small properties but the biggest deal was when his wife was able to buy her brother's farm at Zuladorf with a few cattle and pigs. 'Luther and Pigs' is an interesting minor theme, for they had for him some of the affectionate fascination of Lord Emsworth for the Empress of Blandings.

Like many elderly people he thought the world was getting worse, that seasons were more inclement, and trees not so long lived. The older historians talked about 'Weltpessimismus' but today we might call Luther a Doomwatcher, contemplating the sins of men, of which the decay in manners and morals, and the growing violence, were true signs of the end of time.

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Dürer's great picture of the Apocalypse reminds us that there was an apocalyptic setting to the sixteenth century's view of history. In an age of conflict Luther thought more about this in his last years: his great enemies, the Turk, the Pope and the Devil, all now become part of a dynamism of evil. In the brilliant *Theses* which in 1539 he wrote for a so-called 'Circular Disputation' at Frankfurt, he spoke of the Papacy in such demonic terms, as one whose tyrannic and usurping rule took it across and without the three hierarchies of spiritual, temporal and domestic government. The Pope, he now said, is a kind of 'Werewolf', a destructive ravening figure, which must be dealt with as a mad dog, while the Emperor within this context became the Pope's mercenary, 'miles papae' and was therefore to be met with armed resistance by protestant princes. Some of his most scurrilous attacks on the Papacy come in his last writings, though he was not responsible for the obscene drawings with which Lukas Cranach illustrated his *Against the Papacy at Rome, founded by the Devil*.

But almost his last conversation brought in the menace of Rome, and the famous rhyme, 'Dying I will be thy death, O Pope' shows where he was right and where he was mistaken. He had indeed given a death blow to Popery, that is, the entanglement of the Papacy in law and political power, and an intolerable secularization. But the Papacy was another thing. He never abandoned his early emphasis on the Church as a communion of saints, but he had also to reckon more and more with the practical problems of a Volkskirche and in

1539 and 1541 he wrote two important treatises, *Of Councils and Churches* and *Wider Hans Worst*. The latter tract was written against the most disreputable of all his enemies, Duke Henry of Brunswick, who flaunted a large, blonde Wagnerian mistress, who hijacked the representatives of the city of Goslar to the Diet of Augsburg. Luther accordingly satirised him as 'Hans Worst' - Jack the Sausage - one is tempted to translate it as Henry the Hamburger. But in this tract can be found some of Luther's finest writing about the nature of the church, including the sentence 'O it is a high deep hidden thing is the Church which a man can only recognize by Faith, in Word and sacrament'.

Jesus Christ is the heart of Luther's religion: Christology was important for him because the Person and the Work of Christ were for him inseparable. In these years he has some fine discussions of the Incarnation, in the first place in connection with the eucharist. In 1539 he ceased to elevate the Host and it was rumoured that he had abandoned his doctrine of the Real Presence, and so once again he bitterly attacked Martin Bucer and the Swiss theologians, as well as the doctrines of Caspar Schwenckfeld. His two anti-Semitic writings, *Schem Hamphoras* and *The Last Words of David*, despite much that is indefensible, have some fine Christological passages as he defends the Christian doctrine against a Gnostic anti-Christian writing of the Jews which had turned up again.

Above all the people of Wittenberg were his concern, even though Bugenhagen was the parish priest. Here when health permitted he preached thousands of sermons to a congregation of perhaps two thousand, ignoring the dons and DDs, in going (as Dr Newton Flew used to tell us at Cambridge) to preach to 'Gladys in the gallery'.

He was greatly concerned about the worsening manners of the time which drove him to his famous one Professor Protest of August 1545. Other cities beside Wittenberg had been driven to take action against the notorious 'round dances' and the fact that one of Luther's maids had got into trouble led him to decide to leave Wittenberg. He wrote to his wife: 'I want to make arrangements to leave Wittenberg. My heart is cold towards it and I have no pleasure in the place any more'. Then he thought perhaps the town will act against the shameless St Vitus Dance, St John's Dance, where back and side go bare in shameless behaviour:

I would rather wander round begging bread in my last days and old age than be martyred with the disorderly manners of Wittenberg, who thus requite my sour, dearly bought labours.

It was the ingratitude which hurt: there is more than a touch of Lear in the old man Luther.

In a pastoral way, too, he was concerned about the young people, and not least in his long fight against the canon law which decreed that secret engagements, the promise by a young couple

without witnesses, were legally binding as true lawful wedlock. He wrote a letter to the Elector which may appear rather modern.

We have here in Wittenberg a great crowd of young people from many lands. And the girls have become very forward, chasing the young men into their bedrooms and inviting them to a free for all 'Love In'. I hear that some parents have recalled their children and are still doing so on the grounds that 'we send our children to you to study and you hang wives round their necks and this is getting our University a bad name.

Kaspar Bayer, a student, was a boarder at the Luther's and rather a favourite of Mrs Luther. Taking refuge with other students from the plague he was billeted in Torgau in the home of relatives of the Professor of Law at Wittenberg, Jerome Schürpf. They had an unmarried sister named Margaret living with them and took care to leave the young people together. Kaspar seems to have made some kind of declaration to her but never mentioned it at home and seemed to have forgotten it when he got back to Wittenberg, where he fell in love with Sibylla, an agreeable girl with a small fortune. When he became betrothed to her, Margaret's kinsfolk invoked the law and Professor Schurpf gave judgment in terms of canon law against Kaspar.

Suddenly, in Epiphany 1544, Luther jumped to the defence of his student in four tremendous sermons, the first of which went down in history as 'The Lawyer's Sweat Bath'. He attacked his old enemy, secret engagements, and told how as a young priest he had been horrified at so much anguish of conscience. "They came to me and said, "Dear Father, help me! I was betrothed to Gretchen and now they say that Barbara is not my wife, and yet I sleep with Barbara. What shall I do? The girl I was secretly engaged to is not my wife - I shall be damned"". Luther said he was told by his superiors to counsel the distracted young man that he must continue to live with Barbara, but to lie by her side in chastity, and to keep Gretchen in his heart as his true wife. Luther had no trouble in showing the inhumanity of it all.

So he denounced secret engagements:

They are a bogy of the devil and a blasphemy against God, a wicked murderous ploy of the Devil himself. I, Dr Martin Luther, order you not to receive such engagements but to cast them into the abyss of hell, in the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Ghost.

He blamed the lawyers for going by the book, by the old canon law, when the Bible, the Evangelical theology and the preaching of Bugenhagen and Luther provides material for new trials and judgments:

those proud junkers, the lawyers, they do not read our books, they have no regard for our churches - so give

thanks to the Devil you hardened, blind lawyers... Somebody ought to take your tongue and wrap it round your neck - such confusion you have caused.

For Luther the evil was that it brought the consciences of young people into agony and confusion, and he again spoke of how, as a young parson, people had come to him in the greatest distress of mind. In his last sermon he made an apology to the good lawyers and told the young men they should take their calling as a solemn obligation from God - but keep clear of Popery! With the aid of Chancellor Brück, the great layman Luther called 'the Atlas of the Kingdom', Kaspar Bayer won the appeal and was at last united with Sibylla, while Margaret soon after married a citizen of renown. Melanchthon had agonised to see his long work of getting the two faculties together endangered, but Luther was prepared to take such action, for conscience sake and for one rather silly undergraduate.

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Illness often interrupted his preaching, for he was a chronic invalid and, with that melancholy which goes with deep humour, something of a valetudinarian. His mind and body were exhausted by the immense events and the prodigious mental output of the years. The marvellous sixteenth volume of the Weimar edition of his letters, out of which a biography could be written by itself, has several hundred references to his illnesses in every part of his body: gout, ulcerated leg, Myneres disease, fainting fits, catarrh, constipation, piles, and, what looks so dire in the German, a 'Nasen Hohlen entzündung' which may have been no more than inflammation of the nose. There was also the stone which nearly killed him in a great crisis in 1537 when he had a bladder stoppage for eight days and did not expect to recover, and the angina pectoris of which perhaps he died. But he kept up his great correspondence, and nearly 400 letters from the last years of his life have survived. Many are serious and complex memoranda on theological and political issues, many more about finding jobs for old students and pastors, together with academic notes written as Dean of the Faculty. There were homely intimate notes to old friends. For it was a time of the parting of friends, faithful old George Spalatin and his daughter Magdalena, and old enemies, too, like Andrew Karlstadt and John Eck, though old Albert of Mainz still hung obstinately on: 'I don't mind him going to hell; but I wish he wouldn't hurry as though he were frightened of being late'. There are some fine letters of consolation. When Jerome Baumgartner of Nuremberg was kidnapped on his way home from the Diet of Speyer in 1544 and shut up in prison for many months, Luther wrote a letter to his wife which she kept and over which she wept with her husband when at last he came home. He interceded for Karlstadt's widow and for Staupitz's aged elder sister. And when George Spalatin made an absolute ass of himself by marrying a man to his stepmother and in remorse became dangerously sick, Luther marshalled all his memories, saying things he had not written since 1516, in a wonderful letter of encouragement and absolution, so fine that it was copied and circulated among his friends. Myconius of Gotha sent it on to John Lange with the

comment :

I am sending you the letter which Dr Martin sent to Spalatin... Luther, that most expert doctor of all expert doctors in all pertaining to morbid, afflicted and dead consciences.

Although Luther disliked young noblemen as a class, it was a quarrel between two young princes, Count Philip and Count John George of Mansfeld, which brought about his last adventure. They had bitterly quarrelled over two matters. One, the rights of patronage for St Andrew's church, was a fairly simple affair, demanding no legal expertise and it was to be settled by an equity decision of Luther. The other was an intricate matter of jurisprudence which dragged on until 1572! Luther as a 'landeskind' felt the scandal and dragged Melanchthon and Justus Jonas into a visit, only to find the princes away from home. But he left a moving and memorable note behind.

I have not come in the hope of being allowed to act as a judge... but I hoped by preaching and admonition and prayer to be of some help to make peace... I will willingly risk my life if it can prevent harm to our dear principality so richly endowed not only with worldly goods but with fine intelligent gifted men and women and what is most important with the pure word of God and a church rightly ordered so that it is with great grief that I see that the foul Devil threatens this little Paradise. May God break him. It is high time.

In January 1546 he set out to keep his promise. It was a bitter winter with ice and snow and Melanchthon could not face the journey. Katherine was in an ecstasy of anxiety and there must have been sharp argument about the eighty mile journey. Justus Jonas had an ulcerated leg, but went along. The journey was to show Luther at his worst and at his best, as his letters show:

To my dear heart, my wife, the Lady Katherine, Doctress of Divinity, High Keeper of the Pig Market, grace and peace. My poor old darling, I was taken faint before Eisleben... my fault but if you had been here you would have blamed it on the Jews. I hear that in Eisleben there are fifty in one batch... when we have settled this business I must do something about those Jews.

What may have been his last sermon, a tired almost breathless homily, was an evangelical sermon but it ended with an attack on the Jews.

I see the Jews among you still. Now we have to deal with them in a Christian way and try to bring them to the Christian faith that they may receive the true Messiah... they must be invited to turn to him - if not we must not suffer them to remain for they daily abuse and blaspheme

Christ.

And then on 14th February his last letter:

We hope to leave for home this week... the two young lords are brothers again, and we have invited them to be my guests...

and his characteristic last word, 'We will wait and see what God will do'.

The whole experience had been too strenuous: days of intricate argument, preaching and celebrations and ordinations and the like. It was he who kept the conversation going at meals. His teenage sons, with Jonas, made the family circle, and there were even more little jokes and banter with the servants than usual. Later they remembered how they heard him at his prayers, standing as was his wont before an open window looking at the trees and sky. After supper on the evening of the seventeenth, he suddenly clutched his chest but refused a doctor and lay down, waking a few hours later in a cold sweat. They rushed for doctors and told Count Albert and his wife, who came with precious useless medicine, 'unicorn's horn'. His most intimate enemy, the Devil, does not seem to have been among those present: he had slunk away. Only too far away was his wife, who many months later still choked with grief at the very thought of him.

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Once this old man had shaken nations and moved the great ones of the earth. Now history passed on, its surface hardly ruffled. Five hundred years later men came to that little town, where he had been born and where he died, to do him honour. They included a Cardinal and Archbishops, and representatives of that great world-wide communion of his sons in the gospel. Had he chosen a text it might have been 'Give God the glory. As for this man we know that he is a sinner'. For as his last written words seem to have said, 'Poor beggars aren't we all, and that's the truth'. Yet he might have been pleased to know that after 500 years so many would still thank God for his servant, Martin Luther.

GORDON RUPP

(Professor Rupp died while this volume was in the press)

THE LONDON CALVINISTIC BAPTIST LEADERSHIP

1644 - 1660

The 1644 *Confession* provides the first clear example of intercongregational co-operation between the London Calvinistic Baptists. In its revised edition of 1646 it also provided the doctrinal standard for the first period of their expansion which closed with the restoration of Charles II in 1660. The two editions also introduced as signatories some of their earliest influential leaders.

Since the 1596 Separatist *Confession* provided the source which was used virtually verbatim by the 1644 *Confession* for matters ecclesiological the differences between them concerning both the ministry and church-state relationships are the more noteworthy. These were areas, among others, where the London Baptist leaders first established positions which were to be important for the future.

In 1596 the Separatist *Confession* had emphasized that every congregation of believers had power to elect, ordain and even, if necessary, to dismiss their ministers.(1) Further, they claimed, that Christ had

instituted and ratified to continue unto the world's end only this public ordinary Ministry of Pastors, Teachers, Elders, Deacons, Helpers to the instruction, government, and service of his Church.(2)

The Baptists took this over but omitted 'Helpers' in 1644 and 'Pastors' and 'Teachers' from 1646 onwards.(3) Furthermore, the men of 1644, unlike those in 1596, did not prohibit the administration of sacraments 'until the Pastors or Teachers be chosen and ordained into their office'.(4)

Equally, both statements agreed that they should be prepared to practise their form of churchmanship whether the secular authorities allowed them freedom to do so or not, and that they should be prepared to suffer any consequent penalties without resistance. While both also agreed in teaching obedience to the demands of the State in all other matters, they apparently differed in their expectations of what the State might ideally be expected to do for the Church. The Separatists had taught the government's responsibility for the suppression of every false church and ministry and believed that it should also positively 'establish and maintain by their laws every part of God's word, his pure religion and true ministry'.(5) Although they never explicitly asserted that the State should give financial support to true churches (such as they believed their own to be) they could be argued to have implied it. Certainly the period of the Civil War and Interregnum was to provide plenty of examples of the willingness of their successors among the Congregationalists to accept and even expect financial support for the ministry from tithes and other sources outside those of the gathered churches themselves. The Baptists of 1644 and thereafter, however, were to

find the question of payment of the ministry not only a source of considerable strain upon many of their congregations but also a matter of debate among some of them. Indeed, a minority of those pastors who held Baptist views were also prepared to accept secular financial support. However, in 1644 the London leaders asserted:

the due maintenance of the Officers aforesaid, should be the free and voluntary communication of the Church that according to Christ's ordinance, they that preach the Gospel should live on the Gospel and not by constraint to be compelled from the people by a forced law. (6)

Yet they came to accept a fair amount of government and secular support in individual cases without, apparently, any great embarrassment for a few years. Then, in the later 1650s, the line seems to have hardened. In the Leominster Churchbook there is a record of a letter from Devizes where a group of leaders, including Harrison, Kiffin and Hobson from London, had shared in constructing an answer to the Hereford church which had asked whether it was right to accept state maintenance for a minister. The letter was written in the August of 1657 and suggested that, while ministers should not be grasping, each church should see that its pastor was 'sufficiently and comfortably supplied'. If, they continued, an individual congregation were unable to do this it should seek help of others. It is significant that Abraham Cheare, minister at Plymouth, was present and that, three months earlier, he had played a part in the arguments which had led to the London leaders working towards a national fund to help supplement ministers' salaries. (7)

At the same time the Calvinistic Baptists of 1644 had some positive things to say about the State. They accepted that the civil power was an ordinance of God and that the supreme power at that time in England was 'the King and Parliament freely chosen by the Kingdom'. This power they must not merely obey but defend in all civil matters:

although we should suffer never so much from them in not actively submitting to some ecclesiastical laws, which might be conceived by them to be their duties to establish which we for the present could not see, nor our consciences could submit to; yet are we bound to yield our persons to their pleasures. (8)

Such a statement on the necessities of church-state confrontation could hardly be less belligerently put!

Cautiously, in the 1646 edition of the *Confession*, by means of an extensive marginal note, the writers went further and insisted that

it is the Magistrate's duty to tender the liberty of men's consciences... without which all other liberties will not be worth the naming, much less enjoying, and to protect all under them from all wrong, injury, oppression and molestation.

This claim to religious toleration as a universal human right was supported by a new article asserting that it was lawful for a Christian both to be a magistrate and to take an oath. By this means the Calvinistic Baptists stressed that they belonged to the mainstream upholders of Christian practice and that they did not share some of the views attributed to the Anabaptists. They then rounded off their statement with an admission that:

we know but in part, and we are ignorant of many things which we desire and seek to know: and if any shall do us that friendly part to show us from the word of God that we see not, we shall have cause to be thankful to God and them.(9)

It is clear that they were very sharply aware of the general damage done to their cause by the label 'anabaptist' and were seeking to move very carefully indeed in their public pronouncements. However, it may have been the suppression of the Levellers that caused the marginal note about freedom of conscience to be wholly omitted from the 1651 and 1652 London printings of the *Confession*.

The personnel and nature of the London leadership is somewhat difficult to assess during the 1640s and 1650s since its membership can only be reconstructed from the members' occasional appearance as authors and signatories of various documents of the time. Otherwise the part played by the various leaders can be assessed from their writings, their occasional appearance in other documents, and the part some of them played in the politics of the period.

Two or three things are quite clear, however: first, there were no discernible links with the London General Baptist community or its leaders before 1660 and, secondly, those who, like Henry Jessey, retained a mixed membership in their congregation of those who had been baptized as believers and those who held to their baptism as infants, remained much more closely linked with the wider circle of Independents, and were virtually excluded from the communion of mainstream Calvinistic Baptists. On the other hand the leaders of the mainstream group did have some links with the London Independents in such matters as the repudiation of John Lilburne and the Levellers.(10)

The membership of the London Calvinistic Baptist leadership was also somewhat fluid both in its geographical situation and in its theological convictions. For example, Paul Hobson, who with Thomas Gower signed both the 1644 *Confession* and its 1646 edition as a leader of one of the London churches, was even then spending most of his time away from London. In August 1644 he had been made a captain in the army of the Eastern Association at Lincoln.(11) He then became well-known as a Baptist evangelist in the London area and the west country during his travels with the army during the next couple of years. Then, in August 1648, he was appointed deputy-governor of Newcastle and, apparently, with Thomas Gower became the founder of a Baptist church there. From then on until the Restoration he became involved in a series of ecclesiastical

adventures and misadventures in the north which, while showing him to have continued his relationships with the London churches, must have been something of an embarrassment to them.(12)

Thomas Patient from 1644 onwards seems to have shared the leadership of another London congregation with William Kiffin, probably down to the time of Cromwell's invasion of Ireland in 1650. He then joined the army in Ireland early in that year. By December 1652 Patient, then in Dublin, was one of those who were appointed to preach in Christ Church cathedral on Sundays.(13) He soon became known as the pastor of a closed-membership Baptist church in the city. His relationships with Henry Cromwell tended to be uneasy and it seems probable that he was opposed also to the direction the Protector and his government in London were taking. Nevertheless, as late as 8th July 1659 Patient was listed as a chaplain to the headquarters staff of the army and it is clear that he received payment for this post even if not for his preaching in the cathedral.(14) After the Restoration Patient helped to lead another closed-membership congregation at Bristol (not Broadmead) and then returned to London to work once more with William Kiffin and his church. He died of the plague in 1666.(15)

William Kiffin (1616-1701),(16) shared in the London leadership throughout the period from 1644 to the Restoration. He apparently made himself a fortune in the cloth trade and he seems to have been the most financially secure of all the early leaders. About 1644 he shared in an unsuccessful mission with Thomas Patient in Kent from which the converts, in many cases, became General Baptists. From at least 1644 he seems to have been pastor of the congregation which later became the Devonshire Square Baptist church. He was a signatory of most of the important documents which the new denomination was to publish. The general mood of the London leadership was moderate politically and it was probably not merely characteristic of Kiffin's own policy that in 1649 he hastened to present a petition to the House of Commons on behalf of the Calvinistic Baptists dissociating themselves from John Lilburne and the Levellers.(17) He also joined with John Spilsbury to send a letter to the Baptists in Ireland during early 1654 to urge them to accept the Protectorate.(18) He served as M.P. for Middlesex in the Protectorate Parliament of 1656 and successfully opposed the western churches joining the Fifth Monarchists at a meeting in Dorchester, Dorset, held in 1658. In fact, he and John Spilsbury appear to have provided the core of the leadership of the Calvinistic Baptists throughout the period and he was himself to remain a significant leader down to his death in 1701.

John Spilsbury (1593-?1668),(19) a cobbler in Aldersgate, London, had led a congregation of Calvinistic Baptists since at least as early as 1638. In 1643 he published *A treatise concerning the lawfull subject of baptisme*. He was active as a leader of the group from at least the publication of the 1644 *Confession* onwards: in the 1650s, like Kiffin, he seems largely to have supported the Protectorate and to have opposed the Fifth Monarchists. During the 1650s his house appears to have been used as the meeting-place for

weekly gatherings of the London leaders and he, with his church, seems to have taken an active interest in the Abingdon Association and the wider development of association life. They even suggested, in 1657, a national programme to help the payment of ministers but this apparently came to nothing before the Restoration drove the whole movement underground.(20) He seems to have lived into the 1660s but the date of his death is uncertain.

There were at least two other businessmen, signatories of the 1644 and 1646 editions of the *Confession*, who are also likely to have shared in the central leadership for some years. The first was Thomas Kilcop,(21) who had been baptized as a believer in January 1642 but who, in a millenarian work, *The ancient and durable gospel* (1648) refuted *Justification by Christ alone* (1647) by Samuel Richardson, the other businessman of early significance.(22) What is quite unclear at this period is how much disagreement was accepted among the London leaders and how far the non-appearance of particular names on public documents means that the men concerned had by now either withdrawn from the group or been excluded from it or merely by some accidental circumstance (such as Hobson's posting to the Newcastle area a little later) were prevented from being part of it. Richardson, who was very probably still a leader at the time that he produced the important tract, *The necessity of toleration* (1647) almost certainly continued until the final break between the London Calvinistic Baptists and the Levellers in 1649. On the other hand, it is hardly conceivable that when he published *Of the torments of hell* (1658), denying the traditional doctrine of eternal punishment, he was still part of the leadership group.

Two other noteworthy signatures appeared upon the 1646 *Confession*. They were those of Hanserd Knollys(23) and Benjamin Cox(24). Both were former Anglican clergymen and both, once they had abandoned their Church of England ordination, moved into positions of leadership and considerable influence, no doubt on grounds of their experience, age and education. Only one other man with a similar background was apparently to play any noteworthy part in the London leadership: this was Edward Harrison(25) and he was, it seems, to come in only during the 1650s. Three other former ministers of the Church of England were to play a notable part outside the capital but would hardly touch the London scene directly. They were Christopher Blackwood,(26) who became prominent during the Irish invasion of the 1650s, John Miles (27) in South Wales and John Pendarves(28) in Abingdon and the West Country.

Hanserd Knollys (?1599-1691) returned to England from Massachusetts in December 1641 and by 1645 he had gathered the London Calvinistic Baptist congregation of which he was to be pastor for the rest of his life. Throughout the period to 1660 he supported himself as a schoolmaster although he seems to have been engaged in some evangelistic missions in the provinces. During the 1650s, unlike Kiffin, he seems to have been on the fringe of the Fifth Monarchy movement although it is difficult to determine precisely how far his sympathies were engaged with them. In 1657 he signed the letter to

Cromwell mentioned below, urging him not to accept the crown. Almost immediately after the Restoration Knollys was imprisoned and soon after his release went abroad. On his return he resumed his position among the London leaders although now Kiffin and he were supported by a younger generation of leaders. His interest in eschatology continued with several publications in the 1670s and 1680s. His last important contribution was to head the list with Kiffin of those who jointly summoned the Calvinistic Baptist assembly of 1689.(29)

Benjamin Cox not only signed the 1646 *Confession* but he also, by the end of the year, published *An appendix* to it, as the representative of the London leaders, for the sake, so the title page affirmed, 'of some well-affected and godly persons in the country'. Whether or not there had been specific enquiries, the pamphlet laid down the ground plan for the evangelistic programme of the years immediately to follow. It not only stressed its own particular brand of evangelical Calvinism but also explicitly laid down the policy which was to exclude such people as Henry Jessey and John Tombes, together with such congregations as Broadmead, Bristol and that at Bedford which John Bunyan was to join. So Cox asserted that 'we... do not admit any to the use of the supper, nor communicate with any in the use of this ordinance, but disciples baptized, lest we should have fellowship with them in doing contrary to order'. But he was not content merely to lay down the principle of 'closed-communion' and, by implication, closed-membership. He also sought to describe the task of a Calvinistic Baptist evangelist: he was not merely to convert and baptize individuals but to unite them into congregational church fellowship and 'guide the action of a church in the use of the supper'. Furthermore, Cox wrote, such evangelists 'may also call upon the churches and advise them to choose fit men for officers, and may settle such officers so chosen by a church, in the places or offices to which they are chosen, by imposition of hands and prayer'.(30) It was clear that Benjamin Cox did not believe that an evangelist had completed his work with the conversion of individuals. Those individuals must not only be drawn together into church fellowship but also the church was not adequately founded until the officers had been appointed whom he believed the New Testament model required.

Of course, it must be recognized that, while the Londoners gave the lead and sought to establish a uniform policy, they had no power to enforce it upon the individual churches and evangelists. No doubt the further from the capital the churches were the less likely it was that any close uniformity would exist, especially as individual leaders placed their own personal mark upon their work.

The third man, among those who had formerly been Anglican parsons, to play a notable part in the London leadership was Edward Harrison (1618-1689). He had been vicar of Kensworth in Bedfordshire with property both there and in London who had become known as a Baptist by 1646. He then seems to have moved to the capital where he signed the 1651 and 1652 editions of the *Confession* and led a congregation which often met in his home until

1672. In 1657 he signed the letter, also signed by the maverick Independent minister, John Goodwin, as well as a number of other Calvinistic Baptists, urging Cromwell not to accept the crown. It was notable both that William Kiffin did not sign the document and that the signatories apparently also welcomed the support of the open-membership minister, Henry Jessey.(31) Other London leaders who signed it included Knollys and Spilsbury. Kiffin himself tended to go, throughout his life, with those in power and, either on business or theological grounds or perhaps a little of both, tended to move as little against the government as possible whether he was dealing with the Stuarts or with Cromwell.

Meanwhile, an important but perhaps somewhat neglected document of the London leadership of this period is *Heartbleedings for professors abominations*. This was first published by itself in 1650 but it was reprinted with the 1652 and 1653 editions of the *Confession*. It was, on the one hand, an attempt to correct and summon to repentance those guilty of encouraging a 'slight esteem of Christ, his Word and Ordinances'. Such people were saying that there was 'no sin but what contradicts a man's own light' and that 'sin is only sin to him that thinks it so'. It was also believed that men might count all their actions good 'being acted by their own spirits, which (as they think) are God'. Such convictions had led some into a disobedience not merely to the Christian way but to 'the very principles and light of nature'. The way back from such disastrous antinomianism was, argued the authors of *Heartbleedings*, to return to Jesus Christ as living Saviour and Lord and to the Bible as 'the infallible Word of God'. It was evident from this tract that the Calvinistic Baptists were feeling the impact of the sectarian left wing for whom the world had really and truly turned upside down.(32)

In the last pages of the pamphlet the Baptists turned outwards and ventured some rather sketchy apologetics. They confessed that a number of those who had fallen into such 'desperate abominations' were from their ranks but insisted that most 'were never members with us'. After all, they argued, even the apostolic age had its losses; the Spirit in Scripture foretold such happenings - the sifting of wheat from tares; and, in any case, the Baptists had taken care to ensure that such persons, if guilty of errors of either doctrine or behaviour, had been expelled from their congregations. Having said this, they felt called upon to defend themselves against a charge of uncharity and asserted robustly that 'true love and charity is not the soothing of any in their sins'. Rather was it uncharity to allow 'God to be dishonoured, his Son to be vilified, his Truth trampled under foot, his Ordinances sleighted'.(33) This is the only document produced by the London leaders of this period to reflect something of the impact of the radicals upon their people.

There were also some signs that in matters, for example, concerning the ministry it was felt that the associations needed to develop some of the statements which had been made in the *Confession*. This was shown at one point by the Abingdon Association when it sought advice from Edward Harrison and the

church in Petty France in a letter dated 30 December 1656 concerning the proper testing, election and ordination of elders and deacons.(34)

The Petty France church answered with a very firm statement that, first, authority for testing the gifts and electing officers lay with the congregation as a whole. Ordination itself should then follow 'the trial and examination of the person's gifts and graces and endowments by scripture qualifications'. When the church was satisfied the election should take place with the public raising of hands. The Londoners went on to explain that the ordination should be

by fasting and prayers, together with the laying on of hands by an orderly evangelist or eldership, where such as [sic] to be had or, in case of that defect, by such gifted brethren of the same congregation as may be called prophets and teachers, (Acts 13.1)

In fact, they went on to explain, in order themselves to maintain an orderly succession of ministers and to have persons of 'approved wisdom, experience, gravity and fidelity' to carry through an ordination within their own congregation, they had sought the help of 'orderly elders from other congregations and others besides us have since done the like'.

While it is clear that in Petty France and in the Abingdon Association the shape of the ministry closely followed that reflected in the *Confession* with but two basic types of ministers, elders and deacons, it is interesting to note that when John Miles and the South Wales churches had discussed questions related to the ministry in 1654 they had laid out, at least ideally, something closer to the normal presbyterian ideal with pastors, teachers and elders.(35)

Nevertheless, the major initiatives undertaken by the London leaders were concerned with programmes of evangelism and church-planting described by Benjamin Cox in the *Appendix* to the 1646 *Confession*. When these were successful the infant congregations were drawn into the inter-congregational groups later called associations.(36) The circumstances in which these missions were financed and carried through varied very greatly and the relationships with London also varied partly due to the personalities involved.

One of the first of these missions was largely, if not wholly, the work of Thomas Collier. Collier had been an itinerant evangelist for the Calvinistic Baptists as early as 1646. He seems to have been a native of Somerset who was, nevertheless, in the 1640s a member of William Kiffin's church and an early writing of his, *The exaltation of Christ* (1646), had a preface by Hanserd Knollys. Collier became a chaplain with the parliamentary army in 1648 but finally returned to the west country in 1651. Within a year or two he had become a member of the Baptist church at Wells which he may have founded. This remained his base for some fifteen years.(37) In 1656 the

churches of Somerset and near that county published their own *Confession*. In its epistle dedicatory Collier made a point of saying that they were one with the London Calvinistic Baptists 'both in faith and practice' and that they published in order to show both that those in the provinces really were 'of our brethren's judgement that published that confession of faith in London' and to provide a renewed 'declaration of our faith' in days when believers were generally so divided.(38) This group nevertheless tended to show itself, as the years passed, rather sharply independent of London.

The situation in Ireland was quite different again. There the churches seem not to have been founded as the result of either a London initiative or the efforts of an individual evangelist. They developed rather as the result of Cromwell's invasion of Ireland and, it would seem, were largely composed of people from the English garrisons. The most significant detail of the period is derived from the letters brought to London by John Vernon,(39) himself an army officer who had previously signed *Heartbleedings*. It is noteworthy that the Baptists in Ireland sought the support of the London leaders for the new initiative they proposed in 1653. Among their leaders were Thomas Patient and the former Church of England minister, Christopher Blackwood. The letter came from some form of general meeting at Waterford at which members not only from the Waterford congregation but also from both Kilkenny and Dublin were present. News was given of seven other congregations at Clonmel, Cork, Limerick, Galway, Wexford, Kerry and Carrickfergus. The intention of the letter was to give information about affairs in Ireland, to report their intention to hold a monthly day of prayer, a more regular correspondence between the churches and to ask London to persuade the other congregations in England, Scotland and Wales to develop a similar quarterly link by letter. In particular, too, they asked that the London churches should send:

two or more faithful brethren, well acquainted with the discipline and order of the Lord's house that may be able to speak reasonable words suiting with the needs of his people, to visit, comfort and confirm all the flock of our Lord Jesus that are, or have given up their names to be, under his rule and government in England, Scotland and Wales. And for the small handful owned by the Lord in this nation, we trust it shall be our care more naturally to look after and watch over than heretofore.(40)

The expectation that London should and could provide the wise and experienced leadership which the country at large needed was very clear. The covering letter which the London churches sent with the copies of this material from Ireland was addressed from 'the Glasshouse, London'. One of the London Calvinistic Baptist churches had met at the Glaziers' Hall in Broad Street since 1649 but the letter on this occasion was sent out in the name of a representative meeting of 'the several [Calvinistic Baptist] churches of Christ in London.(41)

When John Miles and Thomas Proud had been sent out from

Glaziers' Hall in 1649 as evangelists and church planters it seems possible that they were sent out not necessarily as the representatives of one congregation but possibly as the representatives of the whole London community.(42) Incidentally the salaries of this pair were paid by the English government under the 'Act for the better propagation and preaching of the Gospel in Wales'. On the other hand, in 1653, when Knollys' church was meeting in Coleman Street, London, they may have dispatched Thomas Tillam as an evangelist to Hexham in Northumberland as an individual initiative of their own, rather than that of the whole body of their London community.(43) It is noteworthy, that whoever was responsible ultimately for this mission among the London Baptists, there was even as late as 1653 no apparent unease about one of their evangelists being funded by an outside body.

The Abingdon Association records give more indication of the influence of the London leadership during the 1650s. At the meeting in June 1653 at Tetsworth the newly formed association reported their 'Agreement' to 'the church of Christ to which our brethren John Spilsbury and William Kiffin are members and to the rest of the churches in and near London agreeing with the said church in principles and constitutions and accordingly holding communion with the same'.(44)

As was earlier noted, the same association sent to the London church in Petty France for advice about the settlement of the ministry: Benjamin Cox seems to have led the Kensworth church and the Hertfordshire wing of the association and Edward Harrison of Petty France had continuing links with the Kensworth congregation which he may well have founded. It was in 1657 that the London churches wrote to the Abingdon Association of their anxiety for the pastors of some churches in the provinces who were particularly poorly paid. The letter said that the Londoners had already gathered some money towards a yearly allowance to help such ministers. They then asked the churches of the Abingdon Association first, to ask themselves whether they were adequately caring for their own ministers and, secondly, whether, after providing for their own ministers and their poorer members, they could then spare some money for building up a central fund. It was agreed at the association meeting at which the letter had been read to commend this cause to the churches and ask them to make their response directly to the 'messengers at London meeting weekly at brother Spilsbury's house' as soon as possible.(45)

Thus the London Calvinistic Baptist community appears in this period to have fulfilled three functions.

First, it provided the doctrinal standards for all the churches belonging to them in the country at large by means of the 1644 *Confession* and its various editions.

Secondly, it provided a clearinghouse for ideas and a centre for consultation for those churches.

Thirdly, it initiated evangelistic missions in various parts of the British Isles.

NOTES

- 1 W. L. Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 1959, 89, article 23.
- 2 Ibid. 88, article 19.
- 3 Ibid. 166, article XXXVI and footnote (a).
- 4 Ibid. 93, article 34.
- 5 Ibid. 94f, article 39.
- 6 Ibid. 166f, article XXXVIII.
- 7 Leominster Churchbook. Cf. ed. B. R. White, *Association Records of the Particular Baptists... to 1660*, 1972-4, 43-50. Here Benjamin Cox took a very firm line against Richard Harrison of Hereford who wished to draw on state support. This letter was dated in early 1658 so the controversy in this case had continued.
- 8 Ibid. 169, article XLIX.
- 9 *A confession of faith of seven congregations* (1646) note to article XLVIII, article L, and The Conclusion.
- 10 B. R. White, 'Henry Jessey in the Great Rebellion', in ed. R. B. Knox, *Reformation, Conformity and Dissent*, 1977.
- 11 C. Holmes, *The Eastern Association in the English Civil War*, 1974, 199.
- 12 R. L. Greaves, *Saints and Rebels*, 1985, 133-56 gives a full account of Hobson and his later life.
- 13 St John D. Seymour, *The Puritans in Ireland 1647-1661*, 1912, 33.
- 14 T. C. Barnard, *Cromwellian Ireland*, 1975, 102, note 63.
- 15 B. R. White, 'Thomas Patient in England and Ireland', *Irish Baptist Historical Journal*, 2, 1969-70, 36-49.
- 16 R. L. Greaves and R. Zaller, *Biographical Dictionary of British Radicals, II*, 1983, 'Kiffin, William'.
- 17 William Kiffin and others, *The humble petition and representation of several churches of God in London*, 1649.
- 18 E. B. Underhill, *Confessions of Faith*, 1854, 322-4.
- 19 Greaves and Zaller, op.cit., 'Spilsbury, John'.
- 20 *Association Records*, 173-5.
- 21 Greaves and Zaller, op.cit., 'Kilcop, Thomas'.
- 22 Ibid., 'Richardson, Samuel'.
- 23 B. R. White, *Hanserd Knollys and Radical Dissent*, 1977, 5-18.
- 24 Greaves and Zaller, op.cit., 'Cox, Benjamin'.
- 25 Ibid., 'Harrison, Edward'.
- 26 Ibid., 'Blackwood, Christopher'.
- 27 B. R. White, 'John Miles and the structures of the Calvinistic Baptist mission to South Wales', *Welsh Baptist Studies*, 1976, ed. Mansel John.
- 28 B. R. White, 'John Pendarves, the Calvinistic Baptists and the Fifth Monarchy', *Baptist Quarterly*, 25, 251-271.
- 29 White, *Hanserd Knollys*, op.cit.
- 30 B. Cox, 'An appendix to a Confession of Faith', *Confessions of Faith*, 1854, ed. E. B. Underhill, 58-9.
- 31 Ibid., 335-8.

- 32 John Spilsbury, William Kiffin, etc., *Heartbleedings*, 1650, 4,7,8,11.
- 33 Ibid., 12,13.
- 34 *Association Records*, 168-72.
- 35 Ibid., 9-12.
- 36 B. R. White, 'The doctrine of the Church in the Particular Baptist Confession', *JTS New Series* 19, 1963, 570-90.
- 37 R. Land, 'Doctrinal Controversies of the English Particular Baptists (1644-91) as illustrated by the career and writings of Thomas Collier', unpublished Oxford D. Phil. thesis 1979, 18, 25, 44.
- 38 'A Confession of the faith of several churches of Christ', 1656, *Confessions of Faith*, 1854, ed. E. B. Underhill, 63 f.
- 39 Greaves and Zaller, *op.cit.*, 'Vernon, John'.
- 40 *Association Records*, *op.cit.*, 115.
- 41 Ibid., 112.
- 42 *Welsh Baptist Studies*, *op.cit.*, 35-6.
- 43 E. B. Underhill, *Records of the Churches of Christ gathered at Fenstanton, Warboys and Hexham*, 1854, 303f.
- 44 *Association Records*, *op.cit.*, 131.
- 45 Ibid., 173-5.

B. R. WHITE

A CASE FOR JUDGMENT

The Woman Taken In Adultery

(St John 7.53 - 8.11)

A sermon preached in Manchester Cathedral on 5th October 1986, on the occasion of the annual Service for Her Majesty's Judges.

Consider, if you will, the following situation.

A rich and powerful State has overrun many other countries, and has established a huge colonial Empire. In one of the less important corners of this Empire the local people have their own religion, and their own religious law which includes some capital offences. The colonial power does not, in general, seek to interfere with the local religion, but it has decided to reserve the capital penalty to itself; that is, to forbid executions by the local people acting on their own. Nevertheless, such executions do sometimes still take place, in defiance of the imperial edict.

In this unimportant country, a radical teacher called Jesus has emerged. He has shocked some of the respectable members of society by mixing with prostitutes and shady characters. He has also challenged many aspects of the local religious law, particularly its detailed rules on Saturday observance. This has greatly upset the religious traditionalists. At the same time, in some spheres - and notably those of marriage and sexuality - this independent-minded teacher has argued for stricter standards than those of the local religion. For example, he has opted for a tighter line on divorce, and has said that the existing law on adultery is not sufficient as a moral standard:

You have heard that it was said 'Do not commit adultery'. But now I tell you: anyone who looks at a woman and wants to possess her is guilty of committing adultery with her in his heart. (Matthew 5.27)

One day this Jesus is teaching in the precincts of the Temple, the headquarters of the Jewish religion. Suddenly, he is interrupted by some religious zealots dragging before him a woman who has been caught in the very act of adultery. There is, apparently, no doubt about the facts. The zealots remind Jesus that the written law of their ancestors, the Mosaic law, provides for the death penalty in such circumstances, even though that penalty has rarely been enforced in recent times. So, they demand, what does Jesus think?

This is, certainly, a test case; but it is a test case with a difference. There is no doubt about the letter of the law, or its applicability to these facts. What is at stake is, of course, the woman's life; but, just as importantly from the point of view of the zealots, at stake also is Jesus' own position and credibility.

This is so in two senses.

First, if he advocates the death penalty, he can be represented as going against the authority of the Roman Empire, which has forbidden executions in such circumstances; but if he does not recommend death, he can be portrayed as not upholding the settled written law of his own religion.

Secondly, the accusers of the woman assume that Jesus will be sympathetic to her - is he not notoriously sympathetic to bad characters? - but they believe that he cannot both show such sympathy and remain faithful to the law. And if he does reject the law on this occasion, then what price his previous teaching on the sanctity of marriage, and on the avoidance even of adulterous thoughts?

So, Jesus is tested; and of course we all know the rest of the story. He deals with the matter in a masterly way; as one commentator puts it:

He neither condones her sin nor denies the validity of the law; nevertheless, he gives the woman an incentive to make a new start in life.

What lessons can we learn, in our own very different situation, from this story? I would like to suggest that those of us who are involved with the criminal justice system can learn four things in particular.

First, there is a notable contrast throughout the story between the way the accusers treat the woman, and the way that Jesus does. For the accusers, she is just someone who has broken the law; or even, a convenient human pawn through whom it will be possible to compromise Jesus' authority as a teacher. Jesus, by contrast, treats the woman throughout the incident as a person. This is hardly surprising, coming as it does from the man who has taught that, in God's sight, even the hairs of our heads have all been counted; and that not one sparrow is forgotten by God, yet that each human being is worth many sparrows. (Matthew 10.29-30)

So, whatever anyone has done, God still loves him or her, and cares for her. She is entitled to be treated as a person in her own right, not as a thing, or as a means to some other end, such as getting back at an unloved teacher.

In our activities in the criminal justice system, it is easy enough in the pressure of daily activity to forget that we are dealing with people, whether they be offenders, suspects, victims, witnesses, or others; and it is easy enough also for legislators and administrators to create systems which do not reflect true respect and concern for persons.

May God grant us a discernment of when we fail in this manner, and may He grant us also the will to amend our ways as necessary.

The second of the four points refers to Jesus' challenge to the accusers. 'Let him who is without sin throw the first stone'.

Jesus was not referring here - as some have supposed - to those who had committed the specific sin of adultery. Rather, he was issuing a general challenge to the accusers to examine their own souls and, probably, their own motives in bringing this particular case. And, of course, the effect was extremely powerful - one by one, the accusers melted away.

So the story powerfully reminds us of the potential sinfulness of all those involved in the administration of justice. And that reminder, I would suggest, has two implications.

At the level of the individual, it challenges each one of us to consider whether our own sins - of pride, ambition, envy, slothfulness, or whatever - are getting in the way of the proper administration of justice.

At the system level, the awareness that each person involved in the administration of criminal justice is potentially a sinful person must have consequences for the kind of legal and administrative structures that we create. In short, we cannot afford to create a criminal justice system without proper accountability - for each person in an official position in the system is potentially a sinner, and if he is not accountable for his official actions there is a risk that he may shamefully abuse that position. At the same time, since we are all sinners to some extent, it would clearly not be possible to run the criminal justice system at all if only non-sinners were to be recruited, or if everyone in the system were to be heavily castigated every time he made a sinful mistake. The balance to be developed is, therefore, to create a framework which *supports* those who have to make difficult decisions; which is open and accountable and so *enhances the likelihood that the decisions made will be wise ones* - but without putting impossible pressure or constraint on the decision-makers; yet which, finally, *condemns strongly the serious misuse of power.* (2)

To create such a system is not easy, but it is required by our Christian understanding of God and man.

The third point to be learned from our story is a simple one, yet an important one - Jesus was, in this case, content with a less than full application of the law. Indeed, in this particular situation, he clearly saw non-enforcement as the most constructive solution. As one commentator puts it:

In his exercise of the divine compassion... Jesus gives [the woman] a real incentive for a better life in the future. She has already had a real fright, narrowly escaping the death penalty. (3)

Thus the wise judge will always look for the creative possibilities of a compassionate, or merciful, approach to the offender - although

it will not be possible to take this line on all occasions. In much the same way, we have learned in recent years that the 'hard' enforcement of the law by the police - by, for example, 'swamp' stop and search campaigns - is not always the best way forward in creating long-term order in our society.(4)

May we learn from Jesus the creative possibilities of a less than full enforcement of the law - and may God grant us the wisdom to know when to use this approach, and when not to.

The fourth and final point concerns Jesus' conversation with the woman when all the accusers had gone away. He has shown compassion - but he has not condoned the woman's act. He says to her: 'Go, and sin no more'.

With this word, Jesus shows us that compassion does not mean the absence of moral standards. Compassion has been shown to the woman, but now she is reminded that moral standards matter, and she is called to amend her ways.

As Christians, we too are called, like Jesus, to uphold moral standards, and to proclaim their importance - not in a strident way, but nevertheless clearly and firmly.

There is, however, another dimension to this - and it is one that was brought out in our Old Testament reading, which reminded us of God's call to social justice.(5) *Faith in the City*, the 1985 report of the Archbishop of Canterbury's commission on urban priority areas, correctly argued that Christian theology is not simply about the moral and spiritual worlds, but about the material world also, and the way the moral and material worlds interact.(6) The report called us to a more lively awareness of the social inequalities and injustices in our own society, and their consequences.

That message is relevant to our theme in this sermon. For the urban priority areas - some of them not far from this Cathedral - are also the most crime-ridden areas of our society so far as everyday street crimes are concerned; and the people who live in them are both more likely to appear in court as defendants, and more likely to become victims of crime, than those who live elsewhere. Those of us who are connected with the criminal justice system can certainly, and rightly, say to offenders: 'Go and sin no more'; but in good conscience we can scarcely say that without having some understanding of, and concern for, the social conditions in which crimes are committed and victims are created. We need, therefore, to strive to establish the social conditions in which the likelihood of 'sinning no more' is enhanced. A sermon is not the right occasion to launch into a technical discussion of what exactly that might mean; but certainly, *Faith in the City* was right to stress that if a society has a singular absence of social justice, it is not likely to encourage law-abidingness among those who are most alienated from the sources of power in that society.(7)

The story of the woman taken in adultery is not found in the earliest manuscripts of John's Gospel, and scholars are now certain that it did not originally form part of any of our four gospels. There is, however, no reason to doubt its authenticity as a true record of part of Jesus' ministry, and we can be deeply grateful that this wonderfully impressive story has survived.

I have suggested that the story speaks to us, in our situation, by emphasising the need to treat offenders, victims and witnesses as people; by calling attention to the sinfulness of all those involved in the criminal justice system, and hence the need to create proper structures of accountability; by reminding us that the full enforcement of the law is not always the most constructive solution; by reasserting the importance of moral standards; and by calling us to create conditions in our society which will reduce the likelihood of offending, including an Old Testament concern for social justice.

May God bless to each of us our reflections upon this incident. Amen.

NOTES

- 1 B. Lindars, *The Gospel of John* (New Century Bible), Oliphants 1972, p.305.
- 2 This formulation draws particularly on the discussion at pp.23-4 of the Home Office Prison Department Chaplaincy Report entitled *Working Party on Regimes for Dangerously Disruptive Prisoners Report*, Home Office, 1983.
- 3 Lindars, op.cit., p.312.
- 4 See the report by Lord Scarman on *The Brixton Disorders, 10-12 April 1981*, H.M.S.O. (Cmnd.8427).
- 5 Jeremiah 22.1-5, 11-16.
- 6 *Faith in the City*, the Report of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on Urban Priority Areas, Church House Publishing 1985.
- 7 *Faith in the City*, pp.338-9.

ANTHONY E. BOTTOMS

WHERE ARE WE? WHERE ARE WE GOING?

THE WORK OF FAITH & ORDER IN THE 1980s

I first met Morris West in 1974 in Ghana at the Accra meeting of the Faith & Order Commission of the World Council of churches. That meeting was a turning point for my own ecumenical development and I suspect, looking back, a turning point in the work of the Commission itself. For the first time Faith & Order was meeting in a developing country and the impact of that setting was to affect its work profoundly. There were more theologians from third world countries among the 121 theologians and a more confident Christian feminist voice was being raised. All of this left a significant mark not only on the *Giving Account of Hope* study but also on the classical agenda of baptism, eucharist and ministry.

To someone coming to Faith & Order for the first time from the background of narrow, academic discussions of theology and from the limited English talks of the Anglican-Methodist Scheme for Unity, with no previous Faith & Order experience, with little knowledge of Africa, and no encounter as yet with the Christian feminist movement, it was overwhelming. Just to survive the onslaught of new experiences, let alone make sense of what was happening in those two issue-packed weeks would have been impossible without the support, the quiet and sensitive interpretation of what was happening that Morris gave me. Many evenings he, Rupert Davies, Raymond George and I (the Bristol gang) walked around the darkened campus and against a background of chirping cicadas pondered together on the happenings of the day. Morris's long involvement in Faith & Order, going back to his own student days, enabled him to set what was happening to Faith & Order in Africa in a balanced perspective. His grasp of the issues being hammered out in the sacramental agenda of baptism, eucharist and ministry, and not least of all his understanding as a Baptist of the debate between those who baptise infants and his own tradition, made him an invaluable guide. His ability to keep a perspective in the midst of the onslaughts, creative onslaughts, from those newly brought into the Faith & Order context, helped me to stick with that international forum of theological debate which must be both the most perplexing and difficult because of the diversity of those it brings together: it is precisely because of that diversity that it is the most creative ecumenical forum that exists. It is with gratitude to Morris West for his friendship and guidance in Accra, in Bangalore and in Lima and his continuing friendship that I write these thoughts about the work of the Commission and ask where are we and where are we going in Faith & Order today?

It was at the meeting in Accra that the *Accra Text, One Baptism, One Eucharist and a Mutually Recognised Ministry* was completed. Already that 'provisional' text demonstrated a growing convergence in the broad ecumenical forum, particularly in the areas of baptism and eucharist, but also witnessing to significant shifts in the understanding of ministry. Equally significant was the initiation of a

new process of theological response and reception. The text was given to the churches.

They were asked to consider whether the work prepared by their theologians was consonant with their own beliefs. In this way agreed statements of convergence prepared by a few theologians were open to becoming statements of the churches themselves. Careful analysis of the 140 or so replies that were returned highlighted areas calling for further work, such as the division between those who practise infant baptism and those who practise so-called 'adult believers' baptism'; *episkope* and episcopacy; and the puzzle of the ordination of women to the priesthood. In this further work, particularly in the development of the work on baptism that took place at the Louisville Consultation, Morris West played an important role. And the fact that the text is acknowledged as one of the most readable texts to come from an international dialogue owes not a little to Morris' careful polishing and eradicating of ecumenical-committee-jargon.

At the Commission's meeting in Lima, Peru, in January 1982 *Baptism, Eucharist & Ministry* was judged to be 'mature' enough to send to the churches. Five years later it is clear that the many official responses from the churches, 'from the highest appropriate levels of authority' as well as unofficial replies from study groups of all sorts, will take far longer to collate and digest than was originally envisaged. The publication of five volumes of official responses indicates clearly the complexity of a process which cannot be hurried.(1)

Already, some common issues identified in the responses of the churches will need further attention. Three in particular stand out: the first is the relation of Scripture, Tradition and traditions that lie behind the theological convergences of the *Lima Text*. Many have not understood the profound effect that the earlier Faith & Order work at Montreal in 1963 had upon the formation of *BEM*.(2) Indeed, without the understanding of the relation between Scripture, Tradition and traditions achieved in the *Montreal Report*, the *Lima Text* could never have been written. Secondly, many responses have asked what is the ecclesiology lying behind the text? Max Thurian has already begun to show the ecclesiology implicit in the text, but it needs to be drawn out and explicated.(3) Thirdly, many churches have asked for a clearer definition of what a sacrament is. Although the text does not contain any explicit definition it certainly implies that a sacrament is a liturgical sign which 'effectively produces in reality that which it signifies in image or symbol'.(4) Such an understanding of sacramentality is closely bound up with *BEM's* understanding of the nature of the Church. Besides these three underlying issues, the churches in their official responses are pointing to a significant agenda for future work. Some of these issues are: the relation between the different parts of the initiation process; the understanding of the priesthood of the ordained ministry; the ministry of the whole people of God; the threefold order of ministry; the ordination of women to the priesthood. The responses from the British churches, while expressing general appreciation and recognising in the text an important tool for

self-education, also identify areas in all three sections where more work is needed.(5) An obvious example is over the issue of re-baptism. The *Lima Text* states clearly 'Baptism is an unrepeatable act. Any practice which might be interpreted as "re-baptism" must be avoided' (B.13). Baptists have stated their dissent from this:

The statement is wholly unacceptable in its present form since, on some interpretations, nothing could pass through so restrictive a sieve. In cases of infant baptism which are neither accompanied nor followed by any of the significant features of the initiating process to which the report amply draws attention and where the individual involved is convinced out of an instructed conscience that Christian obedience requires believer baptism, we cannot agree that an *a priori* universal bar should operate.(6)

The Baptist response to the eucharist section questions the over-emphasis on the theology of the elements rather than a theology of 'action'. It finds in the ministry section an unacceptable emphasis on the threefold ministry and looks for clarification on whether this pattern is a prerequisite for mutual recognition of ministries.

The importance of the second and third questions directed to the churches by the World Council is now becoming much clearer. Both of these questions prompt all the churches to move beyond response to the doctrinal statements of the text, to a credible reception of the theological convergences in life. It is not enough for divided Christians to answer how far they can recognise 'the faith of the Church through the ages' in the text. Now comes the demand for action and change. Responding to the text is showing us all a gap in our own lives between what we say we believe and what we practise. It challenges us to make changes in our own worship, educational, ethical and spiritual life and witness. If the churches can respond in their own lives, if they can take direction from the *Lima Text*, then growth towards one another will take place. The seriousness of our response to the *Lima Text* will be measured by our willingness to develop and deepen that fellowship with one another that already exists in virtue of our confession of the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The draft Ecumenical Canons currently before the Church of England which will allow greater eucharistic sharing could not have been drawn up without the theological convergences of the *Lima Text* and are, in part, a sign of a willingness to change and be changed in the process of receiving the insights of the *Lima Text*. The *Lima Text* is proving not simply a convergence text to be responded to in word but a convergence instrument with the power to change the lives of the churches, to produce a real *metanoia* and so to draw the churches together in deeper fellowship. The publication of *BEM* was not simply an ecumenical moment but the beginning of a significant convergence movement within the ecumenical community.

All this is only one part of the call of the churches to the goal of visible unity in one faith and in one eucharistic fellowship. The Vancouver Assembly suggested that three marks would belong to a visibly united Church:

First, the churches would share a common understanding of the apostolic faith, and be able to confess this message together in ways understandable, reconciling and liberating to their contemporaries. Living this apostolic faith together, the churches help the world to realise God's design for creation.

Second, confessing the apostolic faith together, the churches would share a full mutual recognition of baptism, the eucharist and ministry, and be able, through their visible communion, to let the healing and uniting power of these gifts become more evident amongst the divisions of humankind.

Third, the churches would agree on common ways of decision-making and ways of teaching authoritatively, and be able to demonstrate qualities of communion, participation and corporate responsibility which could shed healing light in a world of conflict.

Such a unity - overcoming church division, binding us together in the face of racism, sexism, injustice - would be a witnessing unity, a credible sign of new creation.(7)

The programme on a *Common Confession of the Apostolic Faith Today* is devoted to the first mark. The coming together of divided churches has to be on the basis of a common confession of the apostolic faith in word and life. Can the divided churches build confidence in one another that they do indeed believe the same things about the faith once delivered to the saints? To impose rigid uniformity of belief and expression upon Christians would be contrary to the diversity and plurality witnessed to in the Scriptures themselves. But limits to diversity will have to be recognised in the process of deepening fellowship between Christians, whilst a clearer articulation of the central mystery of the Christian faith will be needed to draw divided Christians together.

This new programme of Faith & Order is not an attempt to write a new creed for the year 2000 as a charter for unity. It is at once a more difficult and more imaginative process of ecumenical involvement and common witness and confession, with the potential of drawing Christians together around the central mystery of our faith. Using the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed as a methodological tool, the churches are asked to go back through the words of the Creed to the normative witness of Holy Scripture and to re-capture the faith of the Bible reflected in the Creed. At the same time the churches are asked how this faith can be confessed together today in word and in life in different cultural contexts. In the face of the many perplexing challenges to the Christian faith, how can Christians witness to the Gospel more faithfully today? Credal churches are invited to a renewed appropriation of the Creed in word and life and non-credal churches to affirm the Creed as an ecumenical symbol of common faith.

Faith & Order has progressed in two directions. Contemporary confessions of faith have been collected from Latin America, the

Caribbean and Europe, showing how Christians are re-stating their faith in different cultural settings under the pressures and challenges of secularism and communism. Secondly, a preliminary explication of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed is beginning to show what must be confessed together and what are the limits to tolerable diversity. This now has to become the study of the churches so that common confession around the Creed may become the confident proclamation of a truly united Church. The process is a long one for the text will have to be hammered out and refined again and again in the arena of church life.

The third feature of a visibly united Church identified in Vancouver was common ways of decision making and teaching authoritatively. A Church that is united will need to have organs through which the mind of the Church can be discovered in the face of new challenges to the faith and life and have ways of proclaiming that mind to the Church and the world. This third part of the agenda of Faith & Order is the most undeveloped part of its work. It is in the bilateral dialogues, particularly in the Authority statements of the Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue and the work of the Lutherans and Methodists with their Roman Catholic partner, that most advance has been made on this agenda. The multilateral forum must now develop an overarching context in which to set the convergences of the bilateral statements.

The *Lima Text* itself already contains important pointers in those paragraphs which deal with the exercise of the ordained ministry in a personal, collegial and communal way. Ordained persons need to proclaim the Gospel and to serve the Lord in unity of life and witness: there is need for a college of ordained ministers sharing in the common task of representing the concerns of the community but, because of the intimate relationships between ordained and lay, there must also be a communal dimension, so that together the ordained and the community may discover God's will. Such patterns of ministry have to be exercised at each level of the Church's life: the local congregational level, the regional level and the universal level. Although there is much not said in these short paragraphs in the *Lima Text*, what is clear is that the Church is not only manifested in the local community but has to be held together, so there need to be 'bonds of communion', 'bonds of affection' which hold all Christians in a visible fellowship.

The response process of all the churches to the *Lima Text* is teaching us all about how we cohere as churches and how we can respond with authority to questions asked of us. The Church of England's response, for example, has been formulated by the General Synod involving bishops, clergy and laity but only after consultation with theologians and with a lengthy process of study and consultation with diocesan synods. Since for Anglicans provincial response is not sufficient, the Lambeth Conference in 1988 will collate provincial responses showing that the autonomous provinces belong together, are interdependent, and therefore a united Anglican response needs also to be given.

In a similar way other churches, not always used to thinking of themselves as universal communions, are discovering embryonic structures in which a wider and more representative response can be framed. In a consultation of representatives from the World Confessional Families the collation of Baptist responses to the *Lima Text* was most impressively presented.

Behind the two short paragraphs in the *Lima Text* which relate closely to structures of decision-making lies earlier important work of the World Council that needs to be recovered and developed. In the 1970s Faith & Order worked on a study *How Does the Church Teach Authoritatively Today?*(8) In the process of each tradition looking at itself in partnership with other churches undergoing a similar self-examination, it was intended that the churches would discover how they might have common structures of decision-making and teaching authoritatively.

A third contribution came in the work done on conciliar fellowship in the period leading up to the Nairobi Assembly in 1976. That Assembly had this to say about a visibly united Church: 'The one Church is envisioned as a conciliar fellowship of local churches which are themselves truly united... Each church aims at maintaining sustained and sustaining relationships with her sister churches, expressed in conciliar gatherings whenever required for the fulfilment of their common calling'. This concept of conciliar fellowship did not receive much support or acclaim. Its double reference to both the structural requirements for realising the visibility of the one Church and also to the inner quality of the Church's life, the *Koinonia* and, with this, the potentiality for understanding the Church, was never grasped.

The task of Faith & Order in deepening the convergence in the churches' understanding of the three marks which belong to the visible unity of the Church is immense. It is not simply concerned with understanding and stating those marks but of refining and developing an understanding of those marks in dialogue with the churches. Moreover, the Commission is caught up more and more in the long term, spiritual process of helping the churches to receive the insights of this work.

Another major area of Faith & Order work is the work on unity and renewal in the programme *The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community*. The unity of the Church, not an end in itself, is integrally bound up with the unity of human community and the bringing of all things to completion in the final consummation of the Kingdom. The Church, the world and the Kingdom belong together and are at the heart of the study. The Church is called to be prophetic sign, foretaste, sacrament, and instrument of the eschatological Kingdom. The Church's testimony to the Kingdom is impaired as long as it remains divided within itself, as long as Christians do not witness to the Gospel together, do not share together at the Lord's Supper and do not engage in common acts of witness and service. The Church's sign to the world of that unity and wills for all humanity is, however, impaired by the human

divisions within the Church, divisions between rich and poor, black and white, women and men, employed and unemployed. Such forms of brokenness in human community belong as much within the Church as society; and the healing and mending of these divisions of human community come about through the working of God's Holy Spirit outside the Church as well as within the Church. The Church, indeed, is called to be a sign, foretaste and instrument but the world as well as the Church is being redeemed by God and the Church needs to be open to receive the insights of God at work in the world.

Since 1968 the programme on unity and renewal has been developed in two ways. Firstly in a series of studies on areas of brokenness - racism, the handicapped, the broken community of men and women. In the *Community of Women and Men in the Church* study the examination of the distorted relationships between men and women in secular structures were seen no less to permeate the life of the churches affecting theological and doctrinal expression, the worship of the Church, its ministry and structural life.(9) All too easily these studies on brokenness became unbalanced. Concentration was almost exclusively upon the exposure of the pain of division in human relationships and the ecclesiological implications often went unheard. But these studies were and are profoundly ecclesiological. They were about that which is destructive of the Church's unity and about the need for renewal within the Church in human relationships, in doctrinal expression, in worship and in ministry. It was precisely at this point that this newer work of Faith & Order had consequences for the classical agenda of baptism, eucharist and ministry. The two agendas need each other. If they are not held together the search for unity is in danger of becoming little more than 'ecclesiastical joinery' and has little to do with true fellowship (*Koinonia*) of those baptised and drawn together in the life of God, the Holy Trinity. The Vancouver Assembly glimpsed the inter-relation of the two agendas bringing them together in the presentation of the three marks of the Church. It spoke of confessing the faith in word and in life and so helping the world to realise God's design for creation; sharing sacramental life and letting the healing and uniting power of those gifts become more evident amongst the divisions of humankind; and demonstrating qualities of communion, participation and corporate responsibility which would shed healing light in a world of conflict. 'Such a unity - overcoming Church division, binding us together in the face of racism, sexism, injustice - would be a witnessing unity, a credible sign of new creation'.

The current work of the Commission on unity and renewal is focusing upon the Church as prophetic sign, instrument, sacrament, mystery in describing the vocation of the Church. In developing these themes in the next years the study will have much to contribute to the ecclesiological work that many churches indicate in their responses to *BEM* they are wanting. Already there are signs that the different emphases in ecclesiology between the churches are being explained and brought closer to one another in the study on *The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community*.(10)

We have travelled a long way in describing the current work of the Faith & Order Commission, work devoted to the central aim of the World Council of Churches to call the churches to the goal of visible unity in one faith and in one eucharistic fellowship. In reviewing the work of Faith & Order the vital role of the Commission in encouraging the reception of the theological convergences in the lives of the churches is clear. But where does Faith & Order go from here? Many areas in each branch of its work need joint exploration before consensus or even convergence can be celebrated. But perhaps what is most needed now in this last quarter of the twentieth century is a statement of the goal of unity to which we are committed. What does it mean for each of us to affirm the World Council's main aim to call the churches to visible unity? Can we begin to imagine what this would mean for denominational identity? Is there a shared goal at the centre of all our ecumenical endeavour? Even the few theologians engaged in multilateral and even bilateral dialogue when confronted with this question appear to have very different visions of the unity we seek. And yet, is it not the case that the convergence text *Baptism, Eucharist & Ministry*, the work on the *Common Confession of Faith*, and the less developed work on *Common Structures of Decision Making* and not least of all the ecclesiology of the *Unity and Renewal Study* carry within them profound implications for a shared vision of unity? Is it not time to draw out some of the implications of the work already accomplished for our vision of unity? Lesslie Newbigin once wrote that 'a sincere intention to seek unity is incompatible with an intention to remain permanently uncommitted to any particular form of unity'.⁽¹¹⁾ To suggest that work is now needed on the ecclesiological vision is not to ask for work unrelated to the agenda already being undertaken: nor is it to require a 'blue-print' of Church order, nor does it deny that our understanding of the goal will inevitably be deepened and enriched as we continue the process of moving together. Inevitably it will make us face urgent questions about unity and plurality, unity and conflict and unity and mission. It will also force us to ask more sharply and urgently what are the appropriate steps we can take now on the basis of the degree of agreement already achieved on the pilgrimage to that goal. And, most important of all the affirming of a goal - the confessing of a shared vision - will help us to assure one another, that we are one in our desire for unity.

NOTES

- 1 Ed. Max Thurian, *Churches respond to BEM* Vols 1-5,
Vol.1, 1986, Faith & Order Paper 129
Vol.2, 1986, Faith & Order Paper 132
Vols.3-5, to be published in 1987.
- 2 Ed. P. C. Rodger and L. Vischer, *Scripture, Tradition and traditions, The Montreal Report*, Faith & Order Paper 42, SCM Press, 1964.
- 3 *Churches respond to BEM*, Vol.1, op.cit. p.5.
- 4 Op.cit. p.10.
- 5 *Responses to BEM*, British Council of Churches, Autumn 1986.
- 6 *Churches respond to BEM*, Vol.1, op.cit. pp.70-78.

- 7 Ed. David Gill, *Gathered for Life*, Official Report of the VI Assembly of the WCC, 1983, p.45.
- 8 *How Does the Church Teach Authoritatively Today?* Faith & Order Paper 91, WCC, 1979.
- 9 Ed. C. Parvey, *The Community of Women and Men in the Church*, WCC, 1984.
- 10 Ed. Gennadios Limouris, *Church, Kingdom, World*, Faith & Order Paper 130, WCC, 1986.
- 11 Lesslie Newbigin, *All in Each Place*, WCC, 1981.

MARY TANNER

DOUBLE AFFIRMATIONS: BAPTISTS SINCE 1945

Dr West's ministry in the Baptist denomination, occupying almost forty years of service, prompts the question as to what changes and challenges have come to Baptists as the twentieth century progresses towards its maturity.

Denominational leadership for much of these forty years has been largely concerned with managing the contraction of well-ordered churches, attempting to halt the retreat. More recently, accepted patterns of churchmanship have been challenged by a new vitality, often apparently disrespectful of the received order. The new vitality, which at its best has revitalized moribund churches, deepened commitment, and brought a powerful spiritual energy into the life of the churches, is a real cause of thankfulness to God. At other times, the outcome has been divisive, embracing on occasions the acceptance of brittle and naive theological clichés, and an unhealthy seeking for signs, as uninterested in the general sustaining work of the Spirit as apparently oblivious of Our Lord's own warnings about sign-seeking. Such are the problems of the 1980s. Essentially they are new problems in so far as they are problems of life and growth, not death and decline. The impact of these influences on Baptist churches, as also the parallel growth of churches which are baptistic rather than Baptist, prompts questions as to what is a Baptist Church which is all to the good in so far as it drives us back first to the scriptures and then to the reformed and evangelical traditions from which we spring, to test our contemporary polity. This is not simply an academic exercise, for Baptist principles need not only to be proved but practised.

Increasingly, commentators have seen Baptists in these forty years as sitting between ecumenical Christendom and evangelical sectarianism.(1) It is not in fact a bad strategic position to occupy though involving very considerable pressures on denominational leadership to ensure that a proper balance of positive affirmation is secured: in polity, an order both congregational and associative; in ministry, both the vocation of the whole people of God and the separated ministry of word and sacrament; in worship, a liturgy at once structured but free; and in mission, a commitment to both evangelism and prophetic action.

The establishment of the Congregational Church in 1966 by most churches of the former Congregational Union left Baptists as the only major historical denomination making the local church, gathered together at the call of Christ, its starting-point for the definition of the church and of the authority structures of that church (though starting-points do not embrace the totality of definitions). Dr West himself has indicated how such a theology of the church relates to the theology of believer's baptism: 'It may be argued that those who practise infant baptism and those who practise believer's baptism start from different models of the Church. Those practising infant baptism see the Church as an ontologically given community into which a child is incorporated, whereas Baptists and those practising

believer's baptism view the Church as a community which is constituted by the activity of God on the individual who responds consciously and believes and so becomes a participating member of the community.'(2) The ecclesiological significance of baptism has also been stressed by such Baptist authors as Neville Clark, George Beasley-Murray and R. E. O. White, who called Baptists to a more careful and thoughtful baptismal discipline, underlining the corporate significance of the sacrament, and its witness to the givenness of grace in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, as over against a more subjective emphasis on the believer's baptismal vow. A biblical theology rich with liturgical significance had been attractively expounded but the impact upon the constituency was less than it deserved.

Within Baptist church structures, the associations and the Union have only such powers as are covenanted to them by the member churches. It is not so much that they lack power, as that the source of that power is in the consent and missionary vision of the local church. This has profound practical consequences for the relationships between the Union and its member churches, especially when their membership, new to Baptist church life, is unschooled in Baptist principles. The vulnerability of the Union to theological disaffection is apparent, as for example in the Christological dispute of 1971, in the questioning of the Union's membership of the World Council of Churches, and more recently in the emergence of new authority structures in those churches which accept the full thrust of restorationism.

For all this, it can be contended that the Union is organizationally stronger today than it was in the past. The concept of an accredited ministry is widely accepted, provision for that ministry secures widespread support, the agency of the Home Mission Fund for the missionary task of the church at home is well recognized, whilst it is surely rare today for a minister to boast that his settlements have been unaided by the superintendents. Indeed the growth in the acceptance of the ministry of the superintendents is a fundamental fact of Baptist history in the twentieth century, when so many other influences have tended towards the disintegration of the common denominational life.

Intrinsic to the 'gathered church' is the idea that the believers are so gathered not merely for their own sake but for service to the gospel and the world. Accordingly all members are committed to be active agents of the church's missionary task. In fact, a large number of smaller churches throughout this period have been dependent for regular ministry on laymen rather than ordained ministers. In addition, the advent of team ministry has led in many local situations to a blend of ministry (often under the title of eldership) embracing both lay and ordained members. Theology needs to be clarified to secure a practice which both affirms the vocation of all believers and recognises the ministry of word and sacrament as one of God's gifts to his church.

One of the signs of growing confidence in the denomination has

been the increased number of candidates applying for training for admission to the Baptist ministry. Following initiatives taken by the Northern College, other colleges have also experimented with patterns of training which are congregation-based. These, reflecting newer insights into ministerial training in many other parts of the world, put more emphasis upon the practical aspects of training and upon learning through theological reflection on particular pastoral situations. Academic theological education, crucial as it is, can never be the whole of ministerial training. Denominational leadership, the work of the colleges and the need to underpin life and service with theological insight will all continue to require the finest scholars we can produce. But an élitist ministry, distanced from the culture of the people, would be difficult to defend, and Baptists of all people ought to appreciate the arguments for a locally-trained leadership as biblical. Such training also reflects a difference in the perception of the ministerial task: no longer is the minister seen as essentially a pulpit orator, proverbially six foot above contradiction: much more attention is now given to a fuller range of pastoral gifts embracing leadership, guidance, comfort and counsel, such as the strains of modern life require.

A separated ministry, properly trained in biblical and theological scholarship, is particularly important for Baptists, since in the past they have shown themselves prone to pragmatism and easy seduction by the anticipation of short-term success. Reflecting on the Evangelical Calvinism that undergirded Baptist response to the new urban-industrial world of the early nineteenth century, Dr Champion argued in 1979, 'Proper structures of church life derive from a coherent theology ... Consequently I believe that if as a denomination we are to fashion new structures of church-life as an effective means of communicating the gospel and sustaining both faith and fellowship amid the radical changes occurring in contemporary society we need a clearer, more coherent and widely accepted theology than prevails among us at present.'⁽³⁾ Notwithstanding this plea, experience and experiment still tend to run ahead of theology.

Nowhere is this more conspicuous than in the conduct of public worship. In the immediate post-war years, almost without exception, Baptist churches would, save for an occasional ministerial gloss from Moffatt (or their own Baptist Weymouth), have read the scriptures from the Authorised Version. Today, save for an almost complete rejection of that version, the picture would be one of wide divergence. Again it might be said that although not tied to a Book of Common Prayer, in practice the denomination's worship was largely shaped by the use of a 'Book of Common Hymnody', which nurtured faith and devotion with a rich diet of evangelical spirituality. The sources of hymnody today are much more diverse, and even if properly contemporary, popular and praise-orientated, exhibit all too often much of that sentimentalism, introspection, and emotionalism that has ever been the pathology of Free-church hymnody. Taken as a whole it is doubtful whether the new hymnody would constitute what Wesley claimed for his collection of hymns, that it afforded 'a little body of experimental and practical divinity',⁽⁴⁾ a sure source of nurture both for congregations and

individual Christians. More worrying than this, however, has been the development of patterns of worship that omit major elements of the reformed liturgy in favour of unstructured immediacy.

Only in the most general way can the liturgical movement have been said to have affected Baptist churches. Whilst writers such as Stephen Winward and Neville Clark have ably demonstrated the ways in which liturgical renewal could enrich Baptist worship, they have not been widely influential, though Winward and Payne's *Orders and Prayers for Christian Worship* has been considered the most 'liturgically advanced directory of worship' of any of the Free Churches with its happy blend of Free-church flexibility with traditional liturgical structure.(5) But there have been changes; no longer, for the most part, is communion celebrated as a kind of liturgical appendix to the main diet of worship whereas in the 1950s that was still common. In like fashion, infant dedication (without too many scruples over that use of language) would not now be treated as a separate rite but would be incorporated within the main structure of morning worship. At a lower level of significance, distinctive clerical dress has become less common among Baptist ministers, whilst the sharing of lay people in the conduct of worship has become more common, though the world in which they live is not always as much the subject of prayerful concern as scriptural injunction demands.

Within their heritage Baptists discern within the one mission of the church a double commitment to both evangelism and a concern for 'justice, peace and the integrity of creation'. Dr West argues that evangelism as a separate item should always appear on the agenda of the church meeting: 'if this item is not on the agenda, then how can the Holy Spirit have His chance to reveal Christ's purpose?'(6) Baptists, generally supportive of campaign evangelism, especially that led by Billy Graham, a fellow Baptist, benefited by the admission of Graham converts into their membership. But increasingly campaign evangelism was seen as second best, since evangelism was properly the inalienable task of the local church, patiently and persistently undertaken within its own community.

Within the denomination there has been debate as to the appropriateness of the specific strategies of the Church Growth Movement. Certain tools of analysis have been helpful, as was the concentration on discipleship rather than decision-making. Sometimes, however, the movement seemed enslaved within its own jargon, and despite disavowals, to be over-concerned with numbers. In particular, the 'homogeneous growth' principle has been widely questioned in this country, even by those otherwise supportive of the movement, as denying a gospel of reconciliation that over-rides both ethnic and class divisions. Nor has the movement, for all its emphasis upon context, always been realistic about what is possible in a given situation, or sympathetic to the pain and cost of certain types of Christian witness.

The late twentieth century has not lacked large issues of social responsibility: the stock-piling of nuclear weapons, South Africa and

Central America, sexual permissiveness and the instability of so many marriages, the polarisation of wealth and poverty, to name but a few. Vigilance in all such issues, in programmes of both action and education, has been a constant and patient concern of many within the denomination. When, however, in 1978 E. R. Norman used his Reith Lectures to attack the World Council of Churches for 'politicizing' the church, a number of Baptist voices were raised in support of his position. It is probably symbolic that whereas in 1906 there were seventeen Baptist M.P.s (fifteen Liberal and two Labour), since 1983 there have been only two, both conservatives.(7) Certainly Baptist political affections have become more volatile than the almost total alliance with the Liberals at the beginning of the century. At the same time evangelicalism has become less pietistic: David Sheppard led the way in East London, in 1974 the Lausanne Conference underwrote a both/and approach to evangelism and social responsibility, whilst TEAR Fund allowed the Evangelical constituency, including many Baptists, no excuse for opting out of relief and development in the Third World. Particularly important for Baptists were the writings of several American Mennonites such as John Yoder, Ronald Sider, and Jim Wallis who defined the Biblical basis for radical discipleship.

All this serves to underline the double affirmations that Baptists have found themselves making in this period. Baptists, particularly in Britain, feel the double pull of ecumenical and evangelical demands, in many respects providing a bridge between those allegiances. Within the world family of Baptists, the unwillingness of many conventions and unions to be directly involved ecumenically makes it difficult for those who do so engage to be taken as seriously as they ought, for unlike other world denominational groupings, their ecumenical presence is only a fragment of their world confessional strength. Accordingly Baptist strength on the staff of the World Council (currently only two) is pitifully small, whilst membership of committees and commissions is limited. Even conventions and unions committed to ecumenical participation may seem over-cautious in ecumenical experimentation, constrained by the reluctance and conservatism of their member churches. For British Baptists since 1948, however, that has proved a creative, if not always an easy, tension.

NOTES

- 1 A. Hastings, *A History of English Christianity, 1920-85*, 1986, pp.458, 552, 621. *Prospect of the Eighties*, introduced by P. Brierley, Bible Society, 1979, pp.12-14.
- 2 W. M. S. West, 'Towards a Consensus on Baptism? Louisville 1979', *Baptist Quarterly*, January 1980, p.227.
- 3 L. G. Champion, 'Evangelical Calvinism and the Structures of Baptist Church Life', *Ibid.*, p.206.
- 4 *Wesley's Hymns*, 1779, Preface.
- 5 Horton Davies, *Worship and Theology in England*, Vol.V, 1965, p.47.
- 6 W. M. S. West, *Baptist Principles*, 1967 edition, p.17.
- 7 D. Bebbington, 'Baptist Members of Parliament in the Twentieth Century', *Baptist Quarterly*, April 1986, p.255.