

BAPTIST WORLD ALLIANCE

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A Survey of Baptist World Alliance Conversations with other Churches and some implications for Baptist Identity.^[1]

(Ken Manley)

The Baptist World Alliance has now completed four inter-church conversations. The first was with the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (1973-77); the second with Roman Catholics through the Vatican Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity (1984-88); the third with the Lutheran World Federation (1986-89); the fourth with the Mennonite World Conference (1989-92).^[2] Since then conversations have been held with the Orthodox Church or, more precisely, 'pre-conversations' have been shared with the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Istanbul (1994-97) although these seem to have been discontinued by the Orthodox representatives. Although initial conversations with the Anglican Consultative Council were commenced in 1991, formal conversations did not begin until 2000 (because of delays by the Anglicans) and are continuing. The question of further talks with the Roman Catholics is being considered. The General Secretary has also raised the desirability of conversations with Pentecostals, a possibility often canvassed also within the Doctrine and Interchurch Cooperation Study Commission.^[3]

As we prepare to celebrate the centenary of the BWA it is opportune to review these bilateral conversations, assess what has been achieved, acknowledge what has not been accomplished, explore what these conversations have revealed about Baptist identity, both to others and ourselves, and consider future possibilities and directions.

The first striking fact about these conversations is that they did not begin until the 1970s! To understand this it is necessary first to consider the larger question of the relationship between the BWA and the ecumenical movement generally.

(1) The BWA and the Ecumenical Movement.^[4]

The twentieth century is rightly regarded as the ecumenical century. Indeed, the formation of the BWA in London in 1905, as with other world denominational fellowships, was one expression of the new ecumenical spirit.^[5] As that remarkable ecumenical pioneer Rev J H Shakespeare of England, secretary of the first congress, noted, 'The most important fact of the Congress is that it has been a World Congress in the sense that representatives came from almost every country upon earth'.^[6] Those gathered in London were reminded of their links with other Christians when, during his President's Address, Rev Alexander Maclaren invited the audience to repeat the Apostles' Creed, a novel experience for most Baptists. This inspired invitation was to show 'where we stand in the continuity of the historic Church' and was 'an audible and unanimous acknowledgement of our Faith...a simple acknowledgement of where we stand and what we believe'.^[7] The British National Free Church Council was represented by Congregationalist Dr R F Horton who declared that this was 'a grand moment...when the Churches are flowing together

in a way we have never seen before and hardly hoped for'.^[8] Thus the history of the BWA has as an important aspect of its context the development of the ecumenical movement.

But the BWA, by its constitution, was concerned to manifest the unity of Baptists and 'to promote the spirit of fellowship, service, and co-operation' among them, whilst 'recognizing the independence of each particular church and not assuming the functions of any existing organization'.^[9] Theologian A H Strong declared at the second BWA Congress in Philadelphia in 1911 that the BWA was 'a true type of Christian unity...not a unity of government or of external organization, but it is a unity in Christ...'.^[10] President of the BWA, Dr John Clifford, later introduced as 'Dean of the World of Baptists',^[11] delivered one of the most outstanding addresses ever heard on a BWA platform. His statement on 'The Baptist World Alliance: Its origin and Character, meaning and Work' was frequently quoted in succeeding years.^[12] Clifford argued for 'the ecumenical character' of the Alliance, declaring it to be truly 'catholic' and 'orthodox' but irrevocably Baptist. The 'novelty' of the BWA was that it had emerged among a people marked by individualism, 'in mortal terror of the slightest invasion of their personal and ecclesiastical independence', but whose principles also embodied an 'intrinsic catholicity'. Clifford stressed that Baptists rejoiced in efforts being made for church unity and would 'gladly co-operate' in these endeavours: 'We crave it. We pray for it.' But he declared that 'a visible, formal, and mechanical unity has no charm for us whatever'.

Thus inevitably, in one way or another, the BWA frequently considered the implications of the ecumenical movement in succeeding years. In 1911 the nascent Faith and Order Movement invited the Alliance to appoint delegates but Shakespeare replied, on behalf of the Executive, that this was not appropriate for the BWA and individual Unions should be invited.^[13] At Stockholm in 1923, the first Congress since Philadelphia and after the trauma of World War I, J H Shakespeare received a personal invitation from Archbishop Söderblom to preach in the Cathedral of Uppsala.^[14] Although visibly shaken by accidentally knocking the Bible from the lectern as he entered the pulpit, his sermon on 'Peace and Unity' was well received. Despite his prominence in the BWA, Shakespeare's strong church unity emphasis was not, however, reflected in BWA policy; indeed his stance had not been successful among fellow-Baptists in Britain.^[15] The BWA at Stockholm issued a 'Message' to Christians worldwide which was largely the work of leading Southern Baptist Dr E Y Mullins.^[16] This 'Message' has been interpreted as undermining Shakespeare's stance on Christian unity^[17] and stressed world Baptist unity whilst rejecting any compromise of Baptist beliefs: 'infant baptism is utterly irreconcilable with the ideal of a spiritual Christianity'.

Rev J H Rushbrooke was appointed the first General Secretary of the BWA in 1928.^[18] Although a supporter of unity in broad terms, Rushbrooke was critical of some ecumenical endeavours and certainly well aware of differences among Baptists over this issue. During the 1928 congress at Toronto, President E Y Mullins, although physically absent through illness, included comments about 'Christian Unity', 'a burning question among some of the denominations', in his presidential address, 'Baptist Life in the World's Life', which was read by Dr George Truett. Drawing on Ephesians 4:3-6, Mullins argued that 'the Baptist formula for Christian unity' is 'unity plus loyalty plus liberty'.

We do not seek unity at the expense of liberty. Hence we oppose great ecclesiastical systems under episcopal authorities. We do not seek liberty at the expense of unity. Hence we oppose irresponsible individualism which would convert the denomination into a free lance club with every man doing and believing that which is right in his own eyes. We seek rather the Pauline standpoint and make loyalty the centre of liberty and unity. Loyalty to the one Lord makes the unity Christo-centric. Loyalty to the one faith makes it coherent and self-consistent. Loyalty to the one baptism gives it an impressive and convincing outward symbol.^[19]

At the same Congress Dr F W Patterson of Acadia University, Wolfville, Nova Scotia, gave an address on 'Our Relation to Other Protestants'. His position was straightforward:

First: Baptists generally are not antagonistic to other Protestants, nor in their major aims in competition with them. Second: In the present state of Protestantism, Baptists are justified in maintaining a separate existence.^[20]

Both statements may be judged to reflect dominant Baptist sentiment at this time.

At the Berlin Congress of 1934 Rev Gilbert Laws of England gave a paper on 'Baptists and Christian Unity: What is Possible'. This reviewed various unity movements and considered the denominations with which Baptists might consider closer relationships. In each case baptism was the problem. His conclusion was that Baptists should begin by promoting greater unity among themselves.^[21]

More systematic and substantial study was given in preparation for the sixth congress in Atlanta in 1939 when two Commissions considered Christian Unity. Three British College principals Drs H Wheeler Robinson, P W Evans and W Holms Coats drafted a questionnaire and this was the basis of the first report on 'The Baptist Contribution to Christian Unity'.^[22] Their findings ranged across several issues, not least regarding baptism about which Wheeler Robinson made his celebrated observation that 'very few of the answers showed any adequate realisation of the connection of the Holy Spirit with baptism'. The conclusion of the report was that there was 'little inclination among Baptists for closer incorporation' and that closer union with other bodies would 'compromise our Baptist witness'. The second Commission in Atlanta was chaired by Dr Carver of Louisville and was asked to consider the reports of the two major ecumenical conferences of Oxford (Life and Work) and Edinburgh (Faith and Order).^[23] This report concluded that Baptists had 'definite and reasoned fears that membership in the World Council of Churches would probably be embarrassing'. It is worth noting that several British Baptists had played a major contribution in the Edinburgh conference, although Rushbrooke's attitude was somewhat ambivalent.^[24] Carver's remarks on Baptists and the ecumenical movements probably represented the major view among Baptists:

We must be willing to continue a separate section of the Christian movement so long as other sections obey not the truth of the New Testament; but we shall have grief of heart that we may not walk and work with them in full and unrestrained fellowship. We will not choose separation, nor in our own spirit consent to be a sect in God's family.^[25]

After the Second World War and on the eve of the long-delayed formation of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in 1948 the Seventh Congress met in Copenhagen in 1947. Ecumenism was in the European air. At his welcome to delegates Rev J Norgaard, President of the Baptist Union of Denmark, spoke on 'Our Unity in Christ': 'So far as the will of Christ may succeed in unifying us, we shall be a means in His hands to unify others and to establish contacts among all Christians and all nations'.^[26] Rev Henry Cook of Britain gave a thoughtful paper on 'Baptists and the World Council of Churches'. Admitting this was not a subject of great enthusiasm for most Baptists he argued that Baptists should share in the movement and stressed that this did not involve any compromise of Baptist beliefs or commitment to the BWA. Baptists should join in order to 'stimulate the Council to evangelistic zeal'.^[27] As soon as Cook had concluded, Dr M E Dodd of Louisiana protested and gave the opposite point of view. A tense situation unfolded. An anxious questioner asked if the BWA was considering joining the World Council. Dr E A Payne noted that this was out of order: the BWA, by its constitution, could not interfere with the independence of the churches and, moreover, the WCC's constitution did not provide for a body like the BWA to join.^[28] The matter lapsed from the BWA agenda, but clearly the matter was one of considerable controversy among Baptists. Various Unions and Conventions had to decide the issue for themselves. Eight Baptist groups joined the WCC in 1948.

Inevitably the eighth congress in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1950 found Baptists still divided over the World Council. Both Rev Johannes Norgaard, Vice President and President Dr C Oscar Johnson stressed that differences about the WCC should be respected and equally should not distract from loyalty to the BWA.^[29] Dr Edwin Dahlberg of Syracuse, NY, in an address on evangelism, made an impassioned plea on behalf of the WCC, confessing how moved he had been in the Amsterdam meetings and claiming Baptists had much both to contribute and to receive. Canadian Dr M F McCutcheon also spoke positively about the possibilities of the WCC. The Commission on Contemporary Religious Movements commented on the WCC but basically reviewed earlier Alliance actions and quoted extensively from E Y Mullins' document at Atlanta.^[30]

The Jubilee Congress in London (1955) was not distracted by ecumenical discussions, although both Archbishop Fisher in his words of welcome and the President Dr F T Lord spoke positively about the ecumenical movement.^[31] Lord defended British Baptist involvement in the WCC: '...we decline to equate brotherly co-operation with the sacrifice of essential principle. We will pray with anybody and work with anybody for the extension of Christ's Kingdom'. Subsequent congresses heard reports from the Study Commissions on the doctrines of the Church and Baptism. Inevitably reports on these topics reflected the ecumenical climate. Thus, at Rio in 1960 Professor John Skoglund, chair of the commission on the Church, urged member bodies to study these two doctrines: 'Only through such responsible churchmanship...can we come to take our rightful place within the *oikoumene*, that is, within the whole household of God'.^[32] The commission had included scholars such as Dr Len Champion of Bristol, Professor Winthrop Hudson and Professor Dale Moody. In 1962 the two commissions were merged into a commission on Baptist doctrine. One notable paper at the 1965 Congress in Miami was by Dr George Beasley-Murray on 'Baptists and the Baptism of other Churches'.^[33] Perhaps it was significant that at this Congress greetings were brought from representatives of the Mennonite World Conference, the Presbyterian World Alliance and the Lutheran World Federation, three bodies with whom the BWA would soon be in conversation.^[34]

Thus, whilst many Baptists in their Unions or Conventions were involved in various expressions of the ecumenical movement, not least in the Faith and Order movement and in the WCC, and even though the question often surfaced in BWA meetings, the BWA, as such, was not involved in any discussions with other churches. The first and most comprehensive reason why Baptists through the BWA did not engage in bilateral conversations with other churches until the 1970s was that it was not part of the vision or the constitution of the Alliance. Leaders were inevitably preoccupied with other issues: cementing relations within the BWA family; giving energetic leadership to seeking religious freedom for persecuted Baptists and providing for refugees and relief after both World Wars.

A new constitution and by-laws were adopted in 1975 at the Stockholm Congress when one of the objectives of the BWA was agreed to be to 'promote understanding and unity among Baptists and with fellow Christians'.^[35] From this time on the bilateral conversations became clearly a legitimate if scarcely a central aspect of the work of the BWA.

In fact, a Commission on Cooperative Christianity had been formed in 1969 (although under discussion from 1967) and had undoubtedly reflected a larger ecumenical vision for the Alliance and prepared the way for the formal conversations that followed.^[36] At the Tokyo Congress in 1970, the Commission on Cooperative Christianity presented three short papers including one by Dr George Beasley-Murray on 'The New Testament Teaching on the Unity of the Church'. Larger papers featured in the associated conference were by Dr Günter Wagner of Rüschtikon on 'Christian Unity in the New Testament', Dr Rudolf Thaut of Germany on 'Baptist Relations with other Christians in Northern Europe' and Dr J Edwin Orr on 'Baptists, Great Awakenings, and Christian Cooperation'.^[37] The commission met regularly during the next quinquennium and at Stockholm in 1975 Dr Gerald Borchert gave a helpful overview of the goals and activities of the commission and Dr James Leo Garrett gave a substantive paper on 'Problems, Issues, and Challenges in Christian Unity'. Distinguished Mennonite scholar Dr John Howard Yoder gave a paper on 'The Believers' Church: Then, Now, Tomorrow'.^[38]

This Commission had clear guidelines. As Dr Nordenhaug told Gerald Borchert, 'The name of this Commission on Cooperative Christianity has been very carefully chosen. The name defines its scope'.^[39] Thus, the Commission avoided formulating any plans for church union and rejected the possibility of dialogue with non-Christian faiths. The cooperation, however, should extend to all Christian groups not only those, for example, in the WCC. A major interest was to research the history of Baptist relations with others, the theme of the volume of Commission papers, edited by Garrett.^[40] Moreover, this Commission made recommendations to the BWA regarding the initiating of conversations with the Reformed Churches (1972) and with the Lutherans (1974). Gerald Borchert summarised the purposes of these conversations: 'The conversations have not been aimed at structural unity but primarily at developing a greater sense of understanding and cooperation among Christians'.^[41]

This Commission had long been the dream of Josef Nordenhaug, the General Secretary of the BWA. The pioneer leaders as Chair and Secretary from 1969-75 were James Leo Garrett and Gerald Borchert whose continuing contributions to the cause of the BWA and its ecumenical conversations we do well to honour.

In 1975 the Commission was merged with the older Commission on Baptist Doctrine with Dr Bob Thompson of New Zealand as chair (1975-80) and has since continued as the Commission on Doctrine and Inter-church Cooperation. It remains the commission with special responsibility for inter-church conversations.

The wider ecumenical scene has been an important context for all these conversations. Of crucial significance was the 1982 Faith and Order paper, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (BEM), the 'Lima Text', which raised many issues, especially about baptism, which recur in these bilateral conversations.^[42] As part of the preparations for this, an important Consultation with Baptists was initiated by the Faith and Order Commission of the WCC and held at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky from March 28 to 1 April 1979.^[43] Participants included a number of leading Baptist scholars who had been active in the BWA Study Commission or the WCC and some shared in the Baptist bilateral conversations: Dr Morris West, Dr Thorwald Lorenzen,^[44] Dr George Beasley-Murray and Dr Horace Russell. The BWA prepared a response to BEM written by George Beasley Murray, Morris West and Robert Thompson.^[45] A greatly expanded version of this was subsequently prepared by Professor W R Estep and presented to the Commission on Baptist Doctrine and Interchurch Cooperation.^[46] Of course, many Baptist Unions or Conventions formulated responses also.^[47] All this discussion is significant as a background to the BWA conversations.

Also of significance is the varying policy of Baptist Unions and Conventions around the world to ecumenical issues. One such striking illustration is the development among at least some English Baptists, as represented in the discussion document *Believing and Being Baptized* (1996). A number of Baptist churches share in Local Ecumenical Partnerships in which the question of mutual recognition of differing forms of baptism inevitably arises. This report argued that 'only believers' baptism can be accepted as baptism in the proper theological meaning of the term', but did advocate the mutual recognition of initiation into the church of Christ of those baptized as infants and confirmed, while firmly dismissing the possibility of a 'common baptism'. This is not the place to discuss the implications of this report but it does illustrate the diversity found among Baptists on this issue and on the larger question of attitudes to participation in ecumenical initiatives of various kinds.^[48] Indeed, a recent analysis has concluded that a century of baptismal debate among British Baptists has created 'a schizophrenic denomination in which the only ones apparently interested in the theology and practice of baptism appear to be those involved within the ecumenical movement'.^[49]

(2) Inter-church Conversations: An Overview

A. World Alliance of Reformed Churches (1973-77)

This first conversation was an all-European affair. From the Baptist side the participants were Rev Dr Rudolf Thaut of the Federal Republic of Germany (Chair), Prof Jannes Reiling from the Netherlands and two scholars from Rüsclikon seminary in Switzerland, the North American Dr Penrose St Amant and the German Dr Günter Wagner. All four Reformed scholars were from Europe with only Dr Ronald Goulding from the BWA Washington office as the non-European

participant. This had obvious economic and logistic advantages although the participants were anxious that other continents be involved and welcomed responses to their report.^[50]

The conversations developed out of various contacts made between the two bodies during 1969 and 1973. Both groups recognised their common roots in history and that they shared many theological emphases such as ‘the normative source of Holy Scripture, the central place of the Word of God, the witness to Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, the sovereignty of grace’. Issues of concern were identified as including the doctrine and practice of baptism, and ecclesiological questions including attitudes to the church union movement. An initial planning meeting was held in February 1973 and a second at Rüslikon in June 1974. The first full session was held in December 1974 when the distinctive elements of both traditions were reviewed, including a paper from the Baptist side by Dr E A Payne of England. Perspectives in understanding the Gospel were also analysed. Subsequent meetings to explore a range of common issues were held in September 1975, March and December 1976 when the draft report was completed.

The report reveals a clear theological structure. A brief outline summary can scarcely give an adequate understanding of the arguments but will at least indicate the range of issues considered. The centrality of Scripture was affirmed although the differences in hermeneutics were significant. One key illustration of this was the concept of covenant and baptism. Reconsideration of the key issues of ecclesiology, baptism and the relationships between mission, church and baptism followed.

- (1) Ecclesiology. This analysed the tension between a ‘Volkskirche’ and a ‘gathered’ church. The status of children of believing parents raised significant differences though both traditions recognised the problems for Christian nurture flowing from the weakening of family life in many parts of the world. Whilst both Baptists and Reformed regard the church as a community of salvation and as mission the Reformed tend to stress the church as a mixed body with the Baptists stressing individual salvation and the church only as a community of committed believers.
- (2) Mutual questioning of baptismal teachings: baptism, grace and faith. Whilst agreeing that grace is prevenient, ‘we differ in our understanding of its consequences for the practice of baptism’. The relationship between baptism and faith was noted as a key issue.
- (3) The relationship between mission, church and baptism was briefly outlined.

Mission is the proper context for consideration of baptism and church questions. The report agreed that baptism is an act of God and of ‘man’, it is ‘a powerful sign and effective means of grace’. The tensions come in the question of faith and baptism. Baptists stress a personal response of faith whilst supporters of infant baptism find a response of faith not only from the baptised but also from the community of faith. The practice of baptism in the future was identified as an unresolved question although the practice of ‘double baptism’ (that is, recognising both forms in the one church) was noted as already present in some Reformed churches in France.

A series of twelve theses on ‘The Holy Spirit, Baptism and Membership in the Church of Christ’ were then formulated. These are central to the report and identified issues of agreement and continuing tension. They foreshadowed baptismal issues to be raised in BEM in 1982

- (4) The ministry of the Church of Jesus Christ and the Ministries of the Church. This showed considerable and fundamental agreement with only some minor variations in practice or tradition.
- (5) The Church-Local and Universal. Whilst again there was basic agreement Baptists have stressed the church as the local congregation and the Reformed attribute specific value to the 'wider councils' (presbytery, synod). Whilst Baptists value wider relationships they tend not to attach ecclesiological significance to these but affirm a pragmatic importance to them. Baptists seem to fear ecclesial structures above the local level. Each group can learn from the other in these differing emphases, it was suggested.

Member bodies of both Alliances were invited to respond to the report and a formal evaluation meeting was held in Geneva from 6-10 December 1982. (Dr Thaut had died earlier that year and Günter Wagner acted as Baptist co-chair.) This evaluation report, together with a summary of actions taken by both world bodies regarding the report, a suggested letter to member churches and a range of suggestions for local initiatives, was published as *Baptists and Reformed in Dialogue* by the Reformed Churches in 1984. This follow-up has not been as thoroughly pursued in any of the subsequent conversations and is worth noting as a model procedure. The responses were generally positive although only 22 from both Reformed and Baptist sources were received: only two from Asia and Africa and none from Latin America. This, it was admitted, suggested 'a deficiency in our plan of operation'. BEM was commended to the churches. Of special interest was the report of a 'Day of Encounter' and a joint Communion service with Baptists and Reformed held in the Grossmünster cathedral in Zürich, Zwingli's famous church, on 5 March 1983. The liturgy included a 'Reformed Confession of Sin' and a 'Baptist Confession of Sin'. A thoughtful reflection from the Mennonite Larry Miller who had also participated in the 'Day of Encounter' was included as an appendix. Amongst other observations he drew attention to the striking fact that there had been no real discussion of the Church and State issue, even though historically (and not least in Zürich) this had proved to be a point of tension between the Reformed and Baptist traditions.

B. Vatican Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity (1984-88)

Inevitably this was the most controversial of the conversations. Baptists have often engaged in vigorous polemics with the Roman Catholic Church.^[51] In August 1962 the BWA Executive Committee spent one whole day considering an inquiry from the Vatican as to whether the BWA would favourably receive a formal invitation to send observers to Vatican Council II. Strong if honest differences of conviction divided the committee which replied: 'It is not agreed it would be desirable for the Baptist World Alliance to encourage a formal invitation to the forthcoming Second Vatican Council'. The BWA was the only world confessional body not to accept the invitation, and the BWA executive resolved to exclude the discussion of the pros and cons from the minutes.^[52] Still, as Dr Garrett observed, 'the fact of such deliberations is important'.^[53] A few Baptists were actually present at various sessions of the Council.^[54]

Some Baptists were certainly open to dialogue with Roman Catholics. Distinguished Southern Baptist theologian Dr Garrett in 1965 recognised that, whilst many would mistrust or be

suspicious of any dialogue, he commended fraternal discussion and suggested the following as legitimate goals for a Baptist-Roman Catholic dialogue:

(1) the clarification of the common ground held against the anti-Christian and the non-Christian forces in the contemporary world; (2) the mutual use of a growing body of literature on biblical, historical, and theological subjects to which both communions have contributed; (3) the encouragement of the renewal of the truly catholic and the extirpation of the pagan and the peculiarly Roman elements in Roman Catholicism; and (4) the fuller realization that all nations, civilizations, peoples, and ecclesiastical structures stand under the punitive and purifying judgment of God.^[55]

Southern Baptists held their first Roman Catholic-Southern Baptist dialogue at Wake Forest University, a Baptist institution, in 1969. But such conversations at the BWA level did not eventuate until 1984, when formal discussions began. Garrett's prophecy was fulfilled: there was much mistrust, especially among Baptists of Latin America, but the goals were similar to those identified by Garrett nearly twenty years before. The 'primary goal' was to come to 'a mutual understanding of convergences and divergences' between the two 'confessional families'. In addition, the talks were designed to establish relations and maintain a 'channel of communication'; to identify new possibilities in regard to a common witness; and to address existing prejudices between the two 'families'. The co-chairs were an Australian, Bishop Bede Heather, Bishop of Parramatta, and Dr David Shannon, Vice-President for Academic Affairs of the Interdenominational Theological Centre in Atlanta, Georgia. Dr Glenn Igleheart, a Southern Baptist, was secretary, and other members were BWA President Dr Noel Vose, Southern Baptists Dr Richard Harmon and Professor Glenn Hinson, Professor Pablo Deiros of Argentina, Paolo Spanu of Italy and Michael Zhidkov of the USSR. Among the Roman Catholics was Fr John Radano who was to be a regular and valued visitor to numerous BWA meetings.^[56]

The theme of the discussions was 'Summons to Witness to Christ in Today's World'. Five meetings were held in West Berlin (1984), Los Angeles (1985), New York City (1986), Rome (1987) and Atlanta, Georgia (1988). An excellent Biblical summary of witness to Christ led into a common confession of Jesus Christ as Son of God, Lord and Saviour. Indeed a marked feature of this report is the detailed Biblical summary for each section. There were differences regarding 'the appropriation of Christ's saving work' and it was recognised that Roman Catholics give greater weight to creed and confessional statements whilst for Baptists Scripture alone is normative. It was also noted that conversion and discipleship are 'expressed differently in our ecclesial communions'. This referred to differences about the understanding and place of baptism in both traditions and the sacrament of penance for Roman Catholics.

In regard to the Church, it was stressed that for Baptists the church refers primarily to the local congregation whilst Catholics refer to the larger 'catholic' body. Both Baptists and Catholics stress the mission of the church. Baptists typically emphasise the free personal response of individuals to the gospel and have at times neglected corporate responsibility. There also seem to be differences between the two 'families' regarding salvation within non-Christian religions, although it was noted that Baptists have not issued any major statements directly on this theme and undoubtedly various perspectives are held by Baptists.^[57]

A section on 'Challenges to Common Witness' raised the question of competition among Christian missionaries and accusations of proselytism not only from other religions but from within Christian confessions. Thus there have at times been great tensions between Catholics and Baptists. Intolerance and suffering have often followed. Baptists in some traditionally Roman Catholic countries have been deprived of their full civil and religious rights and freedom. In areas where Baptists were a numerical majority Roman Catholics have at times suffered discrimination, injustice and intolerance. Baptist insistence on the separation of Church and state is also linked with their advocacy of religious freedom for all. Thus the question of religious liberty was identified as a point of continuing tension although in many places where both groups face persecution there is significant reason for common witness.

The final section of the report discusses five 'Areas Needing Continued Exploration'. The first is theological authority and method, namely the place of Scripture and the *magisterium* in theological authority. Differences are not as great as some might imagine, it was argued, though Baptists struggle with the place tradition has in formulating certain dogmas, such as the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption of Mary. The second issue was 'the shape of *Koinonia*'. For Catholics the *koinonia* is not only the local congregation (which has primacy for Baptists) but also 'the spiritual and institutional bonds which unite congregations into dioceses presided over by bishops and which unite dioceses into the whole church, presided over by the Bishop of Rome'. The relationship between the Spirit and structures remains a crucial issue. The third issue was the relationship between faith, baptism and Christian witness. This highlights issues already under discussion in reports such as BEM. The 'heart of the problem' was rightly perceived to be 'the nature of faith and the nature of the sacraments' (called 'ordinances' by most Baptists). The fourth issue was the need to clarify key terms such as 'mission', 'evangelization' and 'evangelism'. Finally, the place of Mary in faith and practice was briefly noted.

In conclusion, the report stressed that conversations 'will not lead in the near future to full communion between our two bodies'. But it invited cooperation in several areas: translation of the Scriptures, theological education, common concern and shared help in confronting famine and other natural disasters, health care for the underprivileged, advocacy of human rights and religious liberty, working for peace and justice, and strengthening of the family.

The strength of these conversations was, perhaps, the focus on one theme. Certainly there was no real discussion of, say, the Mass, the role of priests, bishops and the papacy. These were not central to the theme, it was presumably judged. Of course the wider ecumenical community was discussing these issues, notably in responding to BEM. As with all the conversations, participants paid a warm testimony to friendships formed, describing the experience together as 'a great gift from God'.

Nonetheless, there were some in the BWA who continued to oppose the conversations completely, notably Baptists from Latin America, a region strongly dominated by Roman Catholicism. Indeed, Brazilian Baptists submitted an alternate report to the General Council. But communications have remained open. Monsignor John Radano has been especially active in promoting cordial relations. In November 1996 BWA President Nilson Fanini from Brazil and General Secretary Denton Lotz met with the Secretariat for the Promotion of Christian unity in

Rome. Fanini was reported as believing that the world situation had brought a new climate and that further conversations could be commenced. Both leaders met Pope John Paul II.^[58] In December 2000 an international delegation of twelve Baptists met in Rome with leaders of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity where opposition to the controversial Vatican document *Dominus Iesus* was expressed.^[59] This was succeeded by a positive meeting in Latin America between Baptists and Roman Catholic leaders from the region in December 2001.^[60] The fact of this regional meeting is perhaps eloquent testimony to the value of the earlier BWA initiatives.

C. Lutheran World Federation (1986-89)

This conversation produced the longest report and included significant theological content.^[61] The Baptist co-chair was Dr Thorwald Lorenzen of Rüschtikon and other members were Nils Engelsen of Norway, Wiard Popkes of Federal Republic of Germany, Dr Douglas Waruta of Kenya and (at different times) B Shanti Kumari of India, Dr Wayne Pipkin of the USA and Jörg Swoboda of the Democratic Republic of Germany. BWA staff was represented by Knud Wümpelmann of Denmark, BWA President from 1990-95. All the meetings were held in continental Europe: Rummelsberg, FDR (1986), Wildbad, FDR (1987), Dresden, DDR, (1988), Smidstrup Strand, Denmark (1989). BWA had suggested that the topics to be discussed include 'faith, grace, baptism, ecclesiology and ministry' and BEM became 'a significant reference work' for the meetings.

One historical reason for the discussions, it was noted, was the Lutheran condemnation of Anabaptists (with whom Baptists share a kinship) in the 16th century confessional statements. The report addressed this issue directly, noting that only paragraph 9 of the Augsburg confession relating to baptism remained an issue for Baptists today. Lutherans criticised the role of condemnation in the persecution of Anabaptists and it was acknowledged that in some predominantly Lutheran countries Baptists can still experience discrimination. Lutherans deplored this and sought forgiveness whilst Baptists deplored 'an attitude of superiority which overlooks the spiritual treasure God has produced within the Lutheran churches'. It was recommended that future official editions of the Augsburg Confession contain a statement that the condemnations no longer apply.

The report contained three major sections, each of which concluded with recommendations. The first dealt with 'Authority for Preaching and Teaching in the Baptist and Lutheran Traditions'. The two denominations differ in the way they use Scripture for Christian life and practice: 'Baptists tend to seek explicit warrants in Scripture for their faith, practice and doctrines, while Lutheran practice and tradition allow for greater freedom in matters which are not explicitly commanded in Scripture'. Similarly, Baptists and Lutherans differ about the importance they give to written creeds and confessions. Again, there are differences in practice about ordination and the office of the minister. Recommendations encouraged shared services and exchanges and careful study of past and present relationship between the two traditions.

The second and longest section was on 'Faith-Baptism-Discipleship'. This introduced the 'most crucial and controversial subject, the problem of the baptism of infants'. This frankly acknowledged that 'Baptists in general cannot regard the baptism of infants and baptism of

adults as two different forms of one baptism...In general, Baptists are unable to acknowledge infant baptism as baptism'. Lutherans stress that 'baptism is a form of God's Word-a visible word, the expression of the priority of divine grace...lack of faith cannot nullify God's action; as God's gracious action baptism remains valid even without faith'. Baptists do not find biblical foundation for this interpretation. Recommendations invited Baptists and Lutherans to study their baptismal theology and practices in order to better understand their respective traditions. Lutherans were encouraged to practise 'a firm baptismal discipline' in a secular society whilst Baptists were asked to recognise the validity of the baptism of Lutherans who have been baptised as confessing believers. Mutual respect for each other over the issue of infant baptism was exhorted. Varieties of practice among Baptist churches regarding applicants for membership by Lutherans not baptised as confessing believers was noted.

The third section on 'The Church' acknowledged a common Biblical heritage as well as different emphases in understanding and being church. Luther's traditional seven 'marks of the church' are outlined, and the retention of traditional customs in worship noted. Baptists differ in their strong local congregational emphasis and their anti-hierarchical spirit. Their emphasis on the priesthood of all believers leads to the central place of the church meeting. Baptists admitted certain failings in their church life:

The emphasis on church affairs makes us sometimes reluctant to engage in the struggles for justice and peace in the world. Sometimes we too easily identify our faith in Christ with our socio-economic and cultural concerns and interests. Often we are so caught up with our own church life that we show insufficient interest in our ecumenical responsibilities. Baptists should be aware that their emphasis on piety leads to moralism. Baptists should realize that they are inconsistent when they emphasize the priesthood of all believers and the equality of all members and yet are reluctant to encourage the full ministry and ordination of women.

There was much agreement that the mission of the church should not only include evangelism but 'concern for and support of the present ecumenical process toward justice, peace and integrity of creation'. In the Lord's Supper there remain differences about understanding the mode of the presence of Christ in the sacrament. Recommendations included mutual recognition of each other as communions within the Church of Christ.

The report was presented to the General Council which met in Seoul in August 1990. As far as the writer is aware there have not been any further evaluations or formal conversations between the two bodies. Certainly the BWA General Council when it met in Dresden, July 1999, was keenly aware of the Lutheran heritage in Germany. A highlight was a shared service of prayer for peace held in the crypt of the historic Frauenkirche, the Gothic Lutheran church destroyed by Allied bombing in 1945 and now being rebuilt.

D Mennonite World Conference (1989-92)

These conversations between two 'Believers' Churches evidenced a relaxed and familial spirit although there was much to be learned from the sharing. Dr Noel Vose, President of the BWA from 1985 to 1990, had advocated this dialogue and, accompanied by his wife Heather who sadly died in 1990, was a keen participant. The Baptist chair was historian Dr Bill Brackney,

then of Canada; the first woman to be appointed to a BWA conversation was Dr Beverly Dunstan Scott of the USA and the other Baptists were Drs Richard Coffin, Daniel McGee and David Scholer, all of the USA. Meetings were held in St David's Pennsylvania; Elkhart, Indiana; Hamilton Ontario in Canada and at Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

Contacts between Mennonites and Baptists go back to the beginnings of the modern Baptist movement although the influence of Mennonites on Baptist origins remains a complex historical problem.^[62] A significant conference, organised by James Leo Garrett, was held at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1967 on the concept of the Believers' Church in which Baptists and Mennonites participated.^[63] Still, it was more than twenty years before the BWA conversations took place.

Conscious of much that was common in their heritages the conversations focussed on three issues: (1) the nature and role of authority in the Christian life; (2) the nature of the church; (3) the mission of the church in the world. For each topic Mennonite and Baptist perspectives were outlined and then an attempt to analyse convergences and divergences was offered. For present purposes a summary of the main 'divergences', some of them subtle and subject to query, will perhaps be useful although it is to be stressed that there was substantial agreement in each area.

With regard to authority, Mennonites have tended to appeal to the Jesus of the Synoptics and particularly the Sermon on the Mount whilst Baptists have tended to appeal to Johannine and Pauline sources. Baptists are more concerned with orthodoxy whereas Mennonites tend to emphasise orthopraxy. Baptists traditionally are concerned about 'soul freedom' and individual accountability before God whereas Mennonites stress accountability to God through community.

Different emphases about the church include the mode of baptism since Mennonites practise several modes of baptism and Baptists only immersion. Mennonites, unlike most Baptists, interpret suffering as a mark of the true church and Mennonites have been more concerned about issues of church discipline than Baptists. Baptists have stressed the death of Christ as a vicarious substitutionary atonement for sin whilst Mennonites tend to emphasise Christ's death as a demonstration of God's suffering love. Similarly, Baptists emphasise personal salvation whereas Mennonites stress commitment to follow Christ in life.

The section on the mission of the church reveals several differences of emphasis. Mennonites are one of the historic 'peace' churches and they see peace and non-resistance as a fundamental aspect of the gospel whilst many Baptists identify with the just war tradition. Baptist identity is shaped by concern for proclamation whereas Mennonite identity is shaped more by service. Baptists generally affirm participation in the political order whereas Mennonites tend to view it with scepticism. Baptists are more sympathetic to national patriotic concerns than Mennonites. Mennonites often have viewed suffering as a mark of faithfulness and have stressed simplicity of life both as a mark of rejecting worldly fashions and as a means of conserving the earth's resources and of economic sharing.

To list these divergences, it may be observed, is to note how many of the Mennonite emphases are increasingly having an impact on many Baptists (and vice-versa, it has been suggested). The

recommendations invited close study of each other's traditions and encouraged greater exchanges at meetings of the two bodies. Joint consultations on themes like peace and war, responsible use of coercive power, non-violent resistance and biblical pacifism were suggested. Cooperation in mission, service, peace and justice projects was also encouraged. A review of relationships was called for by 1999.

Dr Dan McGee gave a paper on the conversations to the Doctrine and Interchurch Cooperation Commission meeting at Montego Bay, Jamaica in July 1992 and the full report was jointly published by both bodies in 1992. In 2001 the Mennonite Central Committee in their *Courier* noted various insights gained from conversations with Baptists, notably the Baptist passion for missions.^[64] One tangible result of the conversations was a Baptist-Mennonite conference on 'Evangelism and the Peace Witness of the Church', an idea raised in the report, sponsored by the BWA Study and Research Division, and held at Eastern University in Philadelphia from January 10-12, 2002.^[65]

E. Continuing Conversations with (1) Anglicans and (2) the Orthodox Church.

(1) Initial conversations between Baptists and Anglicans began in 1991 but a decision of Anglican bishops in Johannesburg in 1993 caused them to be postponed. Rev Tony Cupit of the BWA noted that this decision occasioned 'perplexity and pain' to Baptists.^[66] Meanwhile 'informal conversations' between the Baptists of Great Britain and the Council for Christian Unity of the General Synod of the Church of England took place between December 1992 and September 1998. These encouraged further conversations at a world level. After the 1998 Lambeth Conference the way was cleared for world conversations between the BWA and the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) to begin.

A novel process was introduced. There is a permanent core committee of three from each denomination plus a representative from the head office of BWA and ACC. Meetings will be held in various regions of the world and selected persons from each region will be involved when the talks are held in that region. There have now been three meetings: the European phase at Norwich Cathedral, England (September, 2000); the Asian phase at Yangon, Myanmar, (January 2001); and the African phase at Nairobi, Kenya (January 2002). Further conversations are planned for Latin America, the Caribbean and North America in 2003. From the Baptist side the chair is Dr Paul Fiddes of Oxford; the other members are Dr Ken Manley of Australia and Dr Timothy George of the USA (now replaced by Dr. Malcolm Yarnell of the USA) with Tony Cupit as the BWA staff person. The basic idea was that the core committee provides for necessary continuity in the conversations but each region should be free to discuss issues of pressing relevance to their situation. The agenda for each dialogue would not be pre-determined by those that preceded it. There is considerable interest among other traditions as to how this form of a bilateral conversation works out in practice.

Clearly it would be premature to comment extensively on these unfinished conversations, although reports are brought each year to the Study Commission. Two general comments may be ventured. First, this method allows a far greater number of participants, including representatives from the developing world and women, than would otherwise be possible.^[67] To expose so many Baptists to the fellowship and challenge of ecumenical conversation seems eminently worthwhile

and hopefully will lead to a greater regional interest in the final report, to which all participants will be invited to contribute. Second, the process has indeed led to a variety of issues being explored, even though there has inevitably been a measure of overlap in the subjects considered. Each context has made a distinctive contribution to the process. Our chair has done an excellent job in summarising previous conversations without in any way dictating what the next conference should introduce. The core committee has tried to be listening to local voices far more than speaking. The drafting of the final report, it may be anticipated, will require considerable skill and sensitivity.

Perhaps a few illustrations of what has emerged will be helpful. In preparation for the Nairobi talks Paul Fiddes identified six themes which had been discussed at Norwich and Yangon: the importance of continuity; the meaning of recognition of each other as Christian churches; baptism and the process of initiation; membership of the church; *episkope* or oversight; confessing the apostolic faith. With reference to *episkope*, for example, it was instructive at Yangon to have, as a representative of the Church of North India, a bishop who is a Baptist and was trained in part at Regent's Park College, Oxford.^[68] Baptists of Myanmar place great emphasis on the role of an 'ordination council', consisting of seven neighbouring churches and ministers in the ordination process. The pattern of initiation in the Church of North India was of interest as was the strong ecumenical leadership given by the Baptists of Myanmar. Baptist churches in Myanmar, for example, used BEM as a study-guide to understand baptism in other traditions. There was a strong sense of unity in the need for mission in a non-Christian culture, and some raised the question of joint inter-faith dialogue with the dominant Buddhist faith. The degree to which either Anglicans or Baptists in both Asia and Africa reflect their own cultures was an important issue as was the extent of economic and cultural captivity to the 'sending' churches of the West. Again, the sense of crisis that engulfs so many African countries led one South African participant to observe that not much had been done about ecumenical discussions in her country because the two churches have little time to 'sit around and talk about our differences over the doctrine of baptism'.

Much more could be said and is yet to be done but hopefully the final report of the Baptist-Anglican conversations will be presented to the BWA Congress in 2005.

(2) Tensions between Orthodox churches and Baptists have at times been severe with Baptists enduring discrimination and persecution. For this reason the BWA welcomed the possibility of conversations in the wake of the changes in many Eastern European countries in the 1990s. Preliminary meetings were held in 1994, then a major dialogue was held in Istanbul May 10-13, 1996. These 'Conversations between Baptists and the Ecumenical Patriarchate', or 'Pre-conversations', were with a view to later full conversations between the BWA and representatives from the 15 autocephalous and autonomous Orthodox churches. The last 'pre-conversation' meeting took place at Oxford, May 16 to 19, 1997. The only meaningful contact since then has been a meeting between Dr Lotz and Dr Popkes with the Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church in Bucharest in December 1997. Relations between Baptists and Orthodox in a number of European countries have since become quite difficult with Baptists characteristically being accused of being a foreign sect. A striking illustration of this stance is the publication in 1995 of a pamphlet, with the imprimatur of the Patriarch of Moscow and all of Russia, entitled *Baptists. The Most pernicious Sect*.

The BWA sent a prestigious group to Istanbul for the 1996 meetings. Denton Lotz spoke on Baptist identity and Tony Cupit gave an overview of BWA world statistics; Wiard Popkes introduced Baptists in Europe, Euro-Asia and the Middle East; James Leo Garrett outlined the authority of the Bible for Baptists; Bruce Milne gave a Baptist perspective on evangelism in the life of the church.^[69] Others to participate included Dr Gerald Borchert, Dr William Brackney, Dr John Briggs, Dr Russ Bush and Dr Paul Fiddes. It was not that the Orthodox had no awareness of Evangelicals, as a consultation between Evangelicals and Orthodox, sponsored by the WCC, was held in Alexandria, Egypt in July 1995. None the less, it was apparent that there were deep-rooted differences, especially about the place of mission in the life of the church. Dr Bruce Milne had included a thoughtful distinction between proselytism and evangelism in his paper, but this remained a problem issue. Dr Erich Geldbach of Germany linked evangelism with religious liberty in a paper to the Vancouver (1997) Study Commission on ‘Religious Liberty, Proselytism, Evangelism: Some Baptist Considerations’^[70] and Paul Fiddes had addressed the topic, ‘Mission: Essence or Responsibility of the Church’ at the May meeting with the Orthodox in Oxford.

Baptists remain hopeful that conversations might resume. The observation of the General Secretary to the 1996 General Council in Hong Kong remains true:

Our understanding of evangelism and proselytism may differ, as well as our understanding of church and state, and authority. Nevertheless, we rejoice at the Orthodox defence throughout history of the trinity, the divinity of Christ, the cross and resurrection, and the triumph of Christ and His kingdom. We pray that conversations will take place for the edification of both communions.^[71]

(3) Implications for Baptist Identity

Discussion of Baptist Identity has become a major growth industry among Baptist scholars.^[72] Internal tensions within Baptist Unions or Conventions, fading loyalty to traditional denominations and ecumenical relationships have all prompted questions about what it means to be a Baptist in the twenty-first century. Some conventions or networks of Baptists have produced valuable statements on Baptist Identity.^[73] The BWA currently has a Study Commission committed to explore this central issue for Baptists.^[74]

One crucial source for Baptist identity is how others understand us. Sometimes we have been alarmed by gross distortions of our beliefs and practices and this has stimulated works of Baptist apologetics.^[75] But there are others with a sympathetic and accurate knowledge of our way of being Christian and being church who can help us see ourselves more clearly. I have made a habit of collecting descriptions of Baptists and, foregoing some of the more bizarre and humorous, select this 1958 account of ‘the mystery of Baptists’ by Dr Daniel Day Williams of the United Church of Christ in the USA as still an excellent depiction of Baptists:

Here is a form of the Christian community which rests upon an experience of the Gospel which is personal, rather easily intelligible, vividly symbolized, calling for personal

dedication, and open to the promptings of the Spirit. The Baptists seem to prove that the Christian church can live and grow as a personal fellowship based on a directly shared experience, provided it is interpreted through a commonly accepted language of Scriptural symbols. Other forms of the Christian church which depend more upon creed, liturgy or a highly articulated ecclesiastical organization are not the only sources of the unity of Christian groups. The power of the Spirit can produce the fellowship.^[76]

How, then, have the bilateral conversations of the BWA helped Baptists better understand themselves? There are no real surprises, it seems to me, although it is interesting to consider familiar Baptist emphases from the context of the conversations.

It is worth noting that other groups have recognised that Baptists share basic Christian beliefs and are pleased to work in various cooperative ways in mission. 'Table fellowship' between Baptists and Anglicans, Lutherans, Reformed and Mennonites is welcomed.

There are five broad topics that have arisen in each conversation: authority and Scripture, ecclesiology, baptism, mission, ministry. Of course these are all inter-related. Under the authority of God and the Lordship of Christ, Scripture as illuminated by the Holy Spirit is the determinative guide for understanding the gospel which shapes our understanding of the church as a community of believers. Response to the gospel and initiation into the church is expressed in baptism and leads to a life of mission in the world. All Christians are called into ministry although there are some called into a ministry of leadership.

It is not necessary to repeat what each report has said on each of these themes, but rather to identify some issues Baptists might together consider as they work on the identity question.

(1) Authority and Scripture.

Of course Baptists share with other Protestants an emphasis on Scripture as the normative source for faith and practice. Baptists are readily recognised as 'a people of the Book'. But what does this mean for us today? The conversations have underlined that hermeneutics remains a critical concern for the contemporary church. As the Reformed report noted, there is 'much common understanding in biblical and historical scholarship across the lines of traditions and denominations', although interpretation remains 'a crucial issue'. Perhaps the time has come for the BWA to foster serious discussion among Baptist Biblical scholars on the vexed question of hermeneutics. The tensions between 'fundamentalist' and 'liberal' Baptists may sometimes be more a matter of biblical interpretation than substantive theological divergence. Perhaps it would be good for Baptist teachers sometimes to emerge from their academic discourse with other like-minded biblical scholars and engage across the divergent schools of interpretation found among Baptists. Is not a strength of Baptists their emphasis on discerning the mind of God from Scriptures in a communal fashion? Can our scholars model this? Certainly Baptists will reject all forms of authoritarian interpretations but should also be aware of the risks of 'private interpretation'. Guidelines on this subject would be a significant gift to our churches.

A second issue to explore is the actual role of tradition in our church life. Most other denominations are clear about the legitimacy of church tradition as an authority for the

contemporary Christian. The dangers of tradition being wrongly used were illustrated in the Reformation era and an important part of our own tradition is precisely the supreme place given to Scripture. But as Dr Martin Sutherland of New Zealand has rightly observed, ‘Baptists have never quite known how to deal with history’. Whilst a sense of origins is important to us, ‘we have little vision for history in our theology’.^[77] Similarly, Dr Paul Fiddes has suggested;

It seems to be a mark of Baptist life to adapt to the present and constantly seek to reinvent itself, which at best can be seen as openness to the Spirit of God, and at worst, as a neglect of the lessons which the Spirit has wanted to teach the church during its history.^[78]

Of course tradition can be misleading and we often find it difficult to know exactly what happened in the past in any case. Baptists do well then to foster good historical research about their own history. Too frequently Baptist authorities have been known to pontificate about ‘the historic Baptist position’ on a theme without clearly perceiving the complexities of the actual historical events surrounding that position or bothering to justify the relevance of claiming that tradition as an authority for the contemporary Baptist.^[79] This is why the Mennonite report emphasises that for Baptists authority can never be separated from responsible freedom. Tradition is a golden legacy, not to bind us but to help us with our obedience today. As Baptists we have a great tradition and, as Jacques Maritain reminds us, to handle tradition correctly, we must do three things. We must ‘receive it gratefully, amend it purposefully and pass it on proudly’.^[80] This is a task the Baptist Heritage and Identity Commission can help Baptists undertake.

(2) Ecclesiology

Here again the familiar emphases of Baptists were uncovered in dialogue with other churches. The traditional Baptist stress on the primacy of the local church is readily acknowledged. Characteristic phrases are employed, such as the ‘gathered church’, the ‘fellowship of believers’, the ‘community of committed disciples’ (actually I first typed this last phrase as ‘committee disciples’ which may well reflect modern Baptist life too!). The Reformed report raised most sharply the question about how this definition relates to the children of believing parents and is a reminder that as Baptists we still have work to do on theological questions about the child and the church.^[81]

Surprisingly, only the Mennonite report specifically emphasised the important place of the covenant in the formation of the first Baptist churches. Recovery of the covenant concept as a basic feature of our ecclesiology has been argued for by British Baptists, most notably by Paul Fiddes, who has suggested that a theology of covenant is a major doctrine of strategic significance for Baptists in the new millennium.^[82] This is a way of binding Baptists together in a commitment to mutuality and sharing of resources. It is also a way of addressing the issue of ‘discipline’ which was of concern to the Mennonites. Whilst avoiding the dangers of legalism into which earlier Baptists often fell over this question, the notion of ‘watching over’ one another, as in a typical covenant commitment, needs to find a modern expression in our church life. Covenant can avoid an understanding of the church which sees it as simply the sum total of so many rugged individuals. As L S Thornton has well said, ‘We are in Christ, not as pebbles in a box, but as a branch in a tree’.^[83]

Each of the reports comments on the question of the relationship between the local congregation and the wider universal church. Baptists not only speak of the autonomy of the local church, but of the interdependence of churches. Baptists of course share in wider associations but, as the Reformed report commented, ‘they fear ecclesial structures above the local level’. The report continued:

This could cause a failure in the understanding and appreciation of the fullness of the body of Christ in the world and thus result in missionary colonialism and ghetto-like existence; there is the danger of isolation and thus of spiritual poverty and myopia: the danger of exchanging the Holy Spirit for a club mentality.

Here the concept of covenant may again be relevant. Churches may freely choose to share with others and acknowledge their need of others.

This has long been the rationale for the BWA. In 1928, Secretary J H Rushbrooke had described the BWA as ‘the logical and fitting expression of our unity...it rounds off our denominational polity’:

We belong together in virtue of a common religious experience; we have found one another, and we have clasped hands in a world-brotherhood acknowledging “one Lord, one faith, one baptism”. What God hath joined together no man may put asunder. ...It is as a purely fraternal association, whose members are bound to one another by the silken cords of love, that it holds its place in Baptist life.^[84]

More recently, our General Secretary Dr Denton Lotz has at least on two occasions publicly spoken about the ‘ecclesial function’ of the BWA. At the General Council meeting at Harare in 1993 he asked about this function.

Is the BWA the natural extension of the local congregation and national body on a world level? Have we even developed our ecclesiology globally so that we can think such thoughts? Have we developed our ecclesiology for a national Baptist body? Such serious theological thought is necessary for Baptists as we enter the 21st century, if we are to make a significant impact globally. This has significant implications, not only financially, but more significantly for the missionary and evangelistic witness of Baptists worldwide. Let it be clear we are NOT speaking here of becoming a missionary agency!^[85]

A special committee was asked to produce a paper on ‘The Ecclesial function of the Baptist World Alliance’. No report was publicly presented, but the topic was addressed in part by Dr Emmett Johnson in his paper ‘E Pluribus Unum’ given at the Hong Kong Commission meeting in 1996.^[86] At Dresden in 1999, Dr Lotz presented ‘A Vision for the Baptist World Alliance in the 21st Century’. Part of this vision read:

An ECCLESIAL function. To sensitize Baptists worldwide to the ECCLESIAL function of the BWA and as such to see a direct line of spiritual and moral authority flowing from

the local congregation to the association, state convention, national body and finally to the Baptist World Alliance--- and from the BWA back again to the local congregation. To create a sense of awareness among Baptists in local congregations that through BWA they are members of the worldwide body of Christ and the consequent necessity to work for, pray for, and support such an institution.^[87]

Subsequently, Lotz has written about this function in these terms:

By the grace of God the BWA has been blessed to be the instrument of God in uniting Baptists worldwide into fellowship expressing our unity, our love, our concern and dependence on one another as we share the Good News of Jesus Christ to a lost world. That is the ecclesial function of the BWA, uniting the local believer with the community of more than 110 million worshippers in 163,000 local churches.^[88]

(3) Baptism.

Naturally in all the conversations, with the exception of the Mennonites, this was a point of disagreement. BEM raised the issues clearly and in many ways the Baptist conversations were useful encounters on topics raised by that text. Dr Millard Erickson gave a thoughtful overview of the relevant issues in his paper presented to the Doctrine Commission in 1993: 'The Baptist Doctrine of Baptism in the Context of Interchurch Relations'.^[89] However, the question remains: can we really speak about 'the' Baptist doctrine of baptism? Whilst there is common agreement among all Baptists that baptism is for believers and that the Scriptural mode is immersion, one suspects that the comment made by Dr Ernest Payne more than forty years ago is still true. Payne observed that those appointed to the BWA Commission on the Doctrine of Baptism set up in 1950 to prepare the address on 'Baptism in Present-Day Theology' had not been able to agree upon even a brief statement as to the theology of baptism.^[90] Thus, when the BWA introductory booklet *We Baptists* (1999) outlined Baptist beliefs about baptism it could cite much that was uniformly agreed but then added these carefully worded sentences:

Baptism is both a human act (that is, of confession and dedication) and a moment for divine activity (that is, when God freely meets us anew with his gracious blessing). Both dimensions are involved, although Baptists differ on the emphasis they give to each aspect.^[91]

The other questions that remain crucial to the conversations is the question of 'rebaptism' by Baptists of those previously 'baptised' as infants, and the debates about whether all applicants for Baptist church membership need to have been baptised as believers by immersion. As noted above, the British Baptist document *Believing and Being Baptized* (1999) shows the developing attitude of openness on this last question by some in that Baptist Union. This document illustrates most effectively that those Baptist Unions in active participation in the ecumenical movement are likely to be at the cutting-edge of Baptist thought and practice on these complex questions. However, many Baptists, even in Britain, would not support the position of this report and the BWA retains a central role in providing opportunity for careful reflection on these questions by Baptists of the world.

(4) Mission.

The reports present an enthusiastic presentation of Baptist commitment to mission generally and to evangelism in particular. When Thomas Stransky outlined what Roman Catholics could learn from Baptists he included, ‘a passion to proclaim the Gospel in season and out of season’.^[92] Only in the Orthodox ‘pre-conversations’ and to some degree in the Roman Catholic report does this aspect of Baptist identity present problems. Both groups are concerned about the question of proselytism, and in some Anglican contexts this could be an issue. Lutherans and Reformed are also sensitive about ‘evangelising’ if it leads to ‘rebaptism’. In all ‘State Church’ situations, even in an otherwise avowedly secular society, this is a perpetual issue and the conversations have enabled the Baptist perspective to be understood.

Baptists in mission have practised what Dr Glenn Hinson has called ‘ecumenical pragmatism’. William Carey evidenced this approach and it is found among many Baptists who participate in ventures with others if they are persuaded of the evangelistic or missionary outcomes. Hinson links this with the voluntarist mentality among Baptists.^[93] Thus, whether it be a Billy Graham Crusade or some other venture of service, Baptists are quite likely to be thoroughly involved.

Thus, when Baptists met in Congress at Seoul in 1990 they formulated ‘The Seoul Covenant’, a call to evangelism by Baptists throughout the world. This illustrates that the unity of Baptists in the BWA derives from ‘a common confession of Christ and a sense of mission’, as Dr Emmett Johnson has observed.^[94] But our unity in mission extends to others. One sentence in the Covenant reads: ‘Since Baptists are part of the whole family of God, such witness calls us to pray and work with other Christians in this vital task’.^[95]

Whilst all reports emphasised the necessity of evangelism, there is a common concern to extend the understanding of mission to what the Reformed report called ‘the individual, churchly and societal dimensions’. The Lutheran Report noted that ‘part of our participation in God’s mission is our concern for and support of the present ecumenical process toward justice, peace and integrity of creation’. The Mennonite Report also stressed mission as including working for peace and engaging in relief work.

The Catholic report raised the question of inter-faith dialogue and the same issue emerged in the Anglican consultation in Myanmar. The Madras Statement (1995) on reaching unevangelized people called on Baptists ‘to affirm the importance of learning from and respecting people of other religions while remaining totally committed to the truth that Jesus Christ is unique and the only way to find salvation and peace with God’.^[96] Whilst it is abundantly clear that the BWA as such is not a missionary agency the time has perhaps come when the BWA can help facilitate such inter-faith dialogue. Scattered throughout the various Baptist missions there is a vast resource that could be useful in helping Baptists understand the other world religions, especially as we now live in a global village and where multiculturalism is a way of life for so many. At Seville in July 2002 General Secretary Lotz positively proposed such dialogues.^[97]

(5) Ministry

Once again, BEM set much of the agenda on this theme. There are only three points to be noted. The Anglican conversations will necessarily invite further consideration of the nature of *episkope* in the church. Baptists do commonly practise a form of superintendency and we still struggle both with a theology of *episkope* and even to find the right terminology (bishop, superintendent, area minister, etc.)

The second point concerns the understanding of ordination among Baptists. There is great variety of understanding and practice among Baptists and substantial discussion of this in BWA commissions could be of service to our churches.

In part, this confusion is because of the impact of the charismatic movement. Once again, we may urge the wisdom of seeking to initiate conversations with the world Pentecostal fellowship as soon as can be arranged. Evidently several other world bodies are talking with this dynamic part of the modern church but Baptists in particular may hope to learn much from this exercise, not least about the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the modern world.^[98]

Conclusion

At the 1997 Seventh Conference on Bilateral Dialogues one study group discussing emerging visions of unity emphasised the importance of a positive appreciation of the qualities of dialogue partners and the acknowledgement that one's own community is not immune from failures or shortcomings.

In this way dialogue can and should invite each partner to scrutinize its own ecclesiological orthodoxy and orthopraxis. ...dialogues can provide occasion for that conversion, repentance and renewal which are essential to ecumenism and which always find a prominent place in the life of the Christian community.^[99]

BWA conversations had the potential for this kind of experience. For the select few who shared in them this seems to have happened. The problem is how to extend this possibility to Baptists worldwide many of whom are suspicious even of the word 'ecumenical'.

We need to recognise that the General Secretaries, not least Dr Lotz, have been strong supporters of the conversations. Dr Lotz also shares in the annual Conference of Secretaries of the Christian World Communions and knows how important fellowship between the denominations is. Our current Director of Study and Research has given himself energetically to the conversations conducted in his time, but the fact is that, by comparison with most other world bodies, we seem able to invest only relatively small funds to assist the dialogues. Tribute should be paid, therefore, to the various participants many of whom have either been funded by their institutions or have financed themselves. The conversations have attracted the service of many distinguished Baptist leaders.

But how to make the conversations better known? Or, more importantly, how can the BWA encourage local unions and conventions to follow up on the many fine suggestions contained in the reports? It may be that the method adopted for the Anglican conversations will assist in this. Some years ago Erich Geldbach proposed that a 'dialogue coordinator' be appointed, that women

as well as lay people be appointed to delegations (which is happening in the Anglican meetings) and that a Baptist Ecumenical Foundation be established with support from interested conventions or individuals.^[100] If his suggestions are rejected as impractical in the face of other demands on BWA resources, can others propose positive ways of advancing ecumenical conversations among us?

As we approach the BWA centenary we do well to record our gratitude for ecumenical advances across the years of BWA's existence. In particular, it seems reasonable to agree with Tony Cupit's judgment that Baptists who were once suspicious of Baptist conversations now realise their positive benefits, that mistrust between Baptists and some other communions has been broken down, and that many Baptists see 'the very positive and meaningful results that can ensue when the people of God come together to talk, pray and have fellowship'.^[101] At Seville, Spain in July 2002 General Secretary Denton Lotz encouraged the BWA to participate in new forms of ecumenism such as the Global Christian Forum which includes representatives from various organizations such as the World Evangelical Fellowship, the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, World Vision as well as the denominations. At the meetings held at Fuller Seminary in June 2002 the BWA was represented by Dr Samuel Chetti of the USA and Prof Josue Fonseca of Chile.^[102]

At the BWA General Council meeting in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, Canada in July 2001 the continuing conversations were specifically endorsed, the Council believing 'that these conversations may provide greater understanding among communions that often have limited understanding of each other'. The purpose of the conversations was in order to:

- enhance the understanding by other Christian communions of Baptist distinctives such as the believers' church, believers' baptism, religious liberty, mission and evangelism;
- support Baptists who find themselves oppressed by a dominant Christian communion;
- strengthen the ministry of participating communions by discovering areas of cooperative Christian work;
- search for an expression of the apostolic faith which adequately represents the understandings of participating communions; and
- seek to fulfil the plea for spiritual unity in Christ's prayer "that all may be one...that the world may believe" (John 17:21).^[103]

The following values of bilateral conversations which appeared in a BWA Report by Tony Cupit offer a suitable note on which to conclude:

- (a) Divisions within Christendom are concern enough, without churches failing at least to come together to learn from each other. Jesus prayed in John 17, 'that they all may be one, so that the world may believe that you sent me'. As organic union is obviously unrealistic, and possibly to most Baptists not even desirable, at least we should strive for understanding and unity in the Spirit.

- (b) In every case where international conversations between Baptists and others have taken place, mutual trust of a very high degree has developed between those engaged in the discussions.
- (c) International conversations can serve as a model for Baptists to pursue conversations with other churches at the national or at other levels.
- (d) Conversations can lead to cooperation where a united voice can have influence in social and political matters at the international and national levels.
- (e) The secular world and other world religion's criticisms of the disunity among Christians can be minimised if it is seen that Christians are indeed in conversation and in fellowship.

The report then concluded:

...there are some drawbacks and some risks associated with international conversations. They take up a lot of energy and resources. They do not always achieve their potential. They have sometimes alienated that part of the Baptist constituency who are against ecumenical contact generally and against contact with particular churches for theological and historical reasons. However, on balance, the conversations are important for they decrease tension, develop trust and minimise misunderstanding between believers in Jesus as the Christ, Son of the living God.^[104]

^[1] This paper has been slightly revised following the Seville meetings. I wish to record my thanks to the Melbourne College of Divinity who awarded me a travel grant enabling me to present the paper to the BWA Study Commissions meeting in Seville, July 2002.

^[2] Reports of the four conversations were made available in one document through the Study and Research Division of the BWA in 1996.

^[3] Report of the General Secretary to the General Council of the BWA at Charlottetown, PEI, Canada, July 2001: General Council *Agenda Book*, p. 94. See also R C Campbell, 'The Charismatic Movement and Interchurch Relations' with a response by J L Garrett, in W A Brackney and T Cupit (eds), *Baptist Faith & Witness*, Birmingham, AL: Samford University Press, 1995, 12--19.

^[4] For discussions of Baptists and the ecumenical movement, see E Roberts-Thomson, *With Hands Outstretched: Baptists and the Ecumenical Movement*, London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1962; L G Champion, *Baptists and Unity*, London: Mowbray, 1962; E A Payne, 'Baptists and the Ecumenical Movement', *Baptist Quarterly*, 8 (6), 1960, 258-67, reprinted in E A Payne, *Free Churchmen Unrepentant and Repentant*, London: Carey Kingsgate, 1965, 120-29; W R Estep, *Baptists and Christian Unity*, Nashville: Broadman, 1966; J Skoglund, 'Baptists and World Christianity', in L G Champion (ed), *Outlook for Christianity*, London: Lutterworth, 1967, 119-44. Review and *Expositor*, 66 (3), 1969 is on the theme, 'Ecumenism and Baptists'; J L Garrett (ed), *Baptist Relations with Other Christians*, Valley Forge: Judson, 1974; W K Boney and G A Igleheart (eds) *Baptists and Ecumenism*, Valley Forge: Judson, 1980; E Geldbach, 'Baptists and the Ecumenical Movement. A Strategy Paper', in W H Brackney and R J Burke (eds), *Faith, Life and Witness. The Papers of the Study and Research Division of the Baptist World Alliance 1986-1990*, Birmingham, AL: Samford University Press, 1990, 30-48.

^[5] The Lambeth Conference in 1867, Reformed in 1875, Methodists in 1881, Congregationalists in 1891, and Lutherans in 1923. See R Rouse and S Neill (eds), *A History of the Ecumenical Movement 1517-1948*, London: SPCK, 1967, pp 263-68; 613-20.

^[6] *The Baptist World Congress, London July 11-19, 1905*, London, 1905, p. vi.

^[7] *Ibid*, p. 20

^[8] *Ibid*, p. 34.

^[9] *The Baptist World Alliance. Second Congress Philadelphia, June 19-25, 1911*, Philadelphia, 1911, p. xiii.

- ^[100] *Ibid*, p. 12.
- ^[111] *Ibid*, p. 130.
- ^[121] *Ibid*, pp. 53-70.
- ^[131] A brief review of BWA relations with the ecumenical movement was given at the 1950 Cleveland Congress: A T Ohrn (ed), *Eighth Baptist World Congress Cleveland, Ohio, USA July 22-27, 1950*, London, 1950, pp. 243-44.
- ^[141] W T Whitley (ed), *Third Baptist World Congress. Stockholm, July 21-27, 1923*, London: Kingsgate Press, 1923, pp. 31-36.
- ^[151] For Shakespeare see especially P Shepherd, 'John Howard Shakespeare and the English Baptists, 1898-1924', Durham University, PhD thesis, 1999. I am indebted for this reference to A R Cross, *Baptism and the Baptists. Theology and Practice in Twentieth-Century Britain*. Carlisle: Paternoster, 2000, especially pp. 360-61.
- ^[161] *Third Baptist World Congress*, pp. 223-28. See also J M Stubblefield, 'The Ecumenical Impact of E.Y. Mullins', in *Baptists and Ecumenism*, 1980, 94-102.
- ^[171] See Cross, *Baptism and the Baptists*, p. 61.
- ^[181] For Rushbrooke, see B Green, *Tomorrow's Man. A Biography of James Henry Rushbrooke*, Didcot: Baptist Historical Society, 1997 and F T Lord, *Baptist World Fellowship. A Short History of the Baptist World Alliance*, London: Carey Kingsgate, 1953.
- ^[191] W T Whitley (ed), *Fourth Baptist World Congress. Toronto, Canada, 23-29 June, 1928*, London:1928, p. 57.
- ^[201] *Ibid*, pp 111-15.
- ^[211] J H Rushbrooke (ed), *Fifth Baptist World Congress Berlin, August 4-10, 1934*, London, 1934, pp. 172-76.
- ^[221] J H Rushbrooke (ed), *Sixth Baptist World Congress. Atlanta, Georgia, July 22-28, 1939*, Atlanta, 1939, pp. 115-25.
- ^[231] *Ibid*, pp. 126-38.
- ^[241] See B Green, *Tomorrow's Man*, pp. 194-201.
- ^[251] *Sixth Baptist World Congress*, p. 137.
- ^[261] W O Lewis (ed), *Seventh Baptist World Congress. Copenhagen, Denmark, July 29-August 3, 1947*, London, 1948, p. 3.
- ^[271] *Ibid*, pp. 56-59.
- ^[281] *Ibid*, p. 59.
- ^[291] A T Ohrn (ed), *Eighth Baptist World Congress Cleveland, Ohio, USA*, London, 1950, pp. 256-57.
- ^[301] *Ibid*, pp. 189-91, 243-44, 256.
- ^[311] A T Ohrn (ed), *Golden Jubilee Congress (Ninth World Congress). London, England 16-22 July, 1955*. London, 1955, pp. 20-21, 67.
- ^[321] A T Ohrn (ed), *Tenth Baptist World Congress. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. June 26-July 3, 1960*, Nashville: Broadman, 1961, p. 172.
- ^[331] J Nordenhaug (ed), *The Truth that Makes Men Free. Official Report of the Eleventh Congress. Baptist World Alliance, Miami Beach, Florida, USA, June 25-30, 1965*, Nashville: Broadman, 1966, pp. 261-78.
- ^[341] *Ibid*, pp. 496-98.
- ^[351] C E Bryant and D Stewart (eds), *New People for a New World-through Christ: Official Report of the Thirteenth Congress, Stockholm Sweden July 8-13, 1975*, Nashville: Broadman Press, 1976, p. 292.
- ^[361] For a review of the early years of the Commission, see the paper by G Borchert, *ibid*, 197-201.
- ^[371] C T Bryant (ed), *Reconciliation through Christ. Official Report of the Twelfth Congress. Baptist World Alliance, Tokyo, Japan, July 12-18, 1970*, Valley Forge: Judson, 1971, pp. 231-37; 326-54.
- ^[381] *New People for a New World*, 1976, pp. 193-212.
- ^[391] *Ibid*, p. 201.
- ^[401] J. L. Garrett (ed), *Baptist Relations with other Christians*, 1974.
- ^[411] *New People for a New World*, p. 200.
- ^[421] *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (Faith and Order Paper No. 111), Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982.
- ^[431] The Consultation report is reproduced in *Review and Expositor*, 77(1), 1980 and in *Baptist Quarterly*, 28 (5), 1980, 232-39 and is accompanied by W M S West, 'Towards a Consensus on Baptism? Louisville 1979', 225-32.
- ^[441] See articles arising from his presentation to the consultation: 'Baptism and Church Membership: Some Baptist Positions and their Ecumenical Implications', *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 18 (4), 1981, 561-74; 'Baptists and Ecumenicity with Special Reference to Baptism', *The Ecumenical Review*, 32, 1980, 257-72.
- ^[451] R J Kerstan and R J Burke (eds), *Out of Darkness into the Light of Christ. Official Report of the Fifteenth Congress. Baptist World Congress, Los Angeles, California, USA July 2-7, 1985*, McLean Va.: BWA, 1985, 146-55.

- [46] W R Estep, 'A Response to *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry: Faith and Order Paper No 111*' in W H Brackney and R J Burke (eds), *Faith, Life and Witness. The Papers of the Study and Research Division of the Baptist World Alliance 1986-1990*, Birmingham. Al.: Samford University Press, 1990, 2-16.
- [47] See volumes 1-VI of M Thurian (ed), *Churches Respond to BEM*, Geneva: WCC, 1986-88 and *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry. Report of the Process and the Responses*, Geneva: WCC, 1990.
- [48] *Believing and Being Baptized*, Didcot: Baptist Union of Great Britain, 1996. For a summary and assessment of the report and its implications, see A R Cross, *Baptism and the Baptists*, 372-77.
- [49] A R Cross, *Baptism and the Baptists*, p. 463.
- [50] Details for this section are from *Baptists and Reformed in Dialogue*, Geneva: World Alliance of Reformed Churches, 1984.
- [51] For a useful survey of Baptist writings about Roman Catholics in North America, see J L Garrett, *Baptists and Roman Catholicism*, Nashville: Broadman, 1965. Garrett completed his Harvard doctoral dissertation, 'American Protestant Writings on Roman Catholicism between Vatican Council I and Vatican Council II' in 1966.
- [52] T F Stransky, 'A Roman Catholic Perspective on Baptist Ecumenism' in *Baptists and Ecumenism*, 1980, p. 130, note 10.
- [53] *Baptists and Roman Catholicism*, p. 7.
- [54] These included W Barry Garrett, press correspondent from the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, a body supported by seven Baptist bodies in North America, and at least four Baptists from the USA who were guests of the Vatican Secretariat: J H Jackson, Stanley I Stuber, W Morgan Patterson, and James Leo Garrett. (Information supplied by J L Garrett.)
- [55] *Ibid*, p. 45.
- [56] Details from the Report of the Conversations which was received at the General Council meeting at Zagreb, Yugoslavia in August 1989.
- [57] On this question see the later paper by J N Jonsson, 'Baptists and the Challenge of Interfaith Dialogue' in T Cupit (ed), *Baptist Faith and Witness. Book Two, The papers of the Study and Research Division of the Baptist World Alliance 1995-2000*, McLean: BWA, 1999, 29-40.
- [58] *BWA News*, Jan 1997 and *Baptist World*, Jan/March 1997, p.21 features a photo of Lotz and Fanini with the Pope.
- [59] *BWA News*, Jan 2001.
- [60] *BWA News*, Jan 2002; *Baptist World*, Jan/March 2002, p. 24 and April/June 2002, p. 18.
- [61] Details from *Baptists and Lutherans in Conversation. A Message to our Churches*, Geneva: BWA and Lutheran World Federation, 1990.
- [62] For a useful survey see E A Payne, 'Contacts between Mennonites and Baptists' in *Free Churchmen Unrepentant and Repentant*, London: Carey Kingsgate, 1965, 75-92 reprinted from *Foundations*, 4 (1), 1961, 39-55. On the question of origins, see W R Estep, 'On the Origins of English Baptists', *Baptist History and Heritage*, 22 (2), 1987, 19-26; K R Manley, 'Origins of the Baptists: The Case for development from Puritanism-Separatism', *Baptist History and Heritage*, 22 (4), 1987, 34-46 (also in *Faith, Life, and Witness*, 1990, 56-69).
- [63] J L Garrett (ed), *The Concept of the Believers' Church: Addresses from the 1967 Louisville Conference*, Scottdale, Pa: Herald Press, 1969.
- [64] *BWA News*, Nov 2001.
- [65] *BWA News*, Feb 2002; *Baptist World*, April/June 2002, 15-17 gives some extracts from papers presented at the conference.
- [66] T Cupit, 'The Vision of Unity emerging among Baptists as a result of Bilateral Dialogues', in *Seventh Forum on Bilateral Dialogues*, Geneva: WCC, 1997 (Faith and Order Paper No. 179), p. 47.
- [67] Additional participants so far have been: at Norwich, Chris Ellis and Myra Blyth (England), Ken Roxburgh (Scotland), Gethin Abraham-Williams (Wales), Anna Maffei (Italy), Karl Heinz Walter (Germany); at Yangon, Chang Young Shim (Korea), Bonny Resu (India), Jill Manton (Australia), Simon Pau Khan En, Anna May Say Pa, John Maung Latt, Arthur Ko Lay (Myanmar); at Nairobi, Frank Adams (Ghana), Chamanora Chiromo (Zimbabwe), Louise Kretzchmar (South Africa), Douglas Waruta (Kenya). Alex Wanyama (Uganda) was unable to attend.
- [68] For the Myanmar meetings, see *Baptist World*, April/June 2001, 9-11.
- [69] These Baptist papers were distributed by the BWA Division of Study and Research in 1996.
- [70] Published in *Baptist Faith & Witness. Book Two*, 23-28.
- [71] General Council Meeting Agenda Book July 3-9. 1996 (Hong Kong), p. 82.
- [72] From the many publications the following are illustrative. From Britain, B Haymes, *A Question of Identity. Reflections on Baptist Principles and Practice*, Leeds: Yorkshire Baptist Association, 1986; D Slater (ed), *A Perspective on Baptist Identity*, Mainstream, 1987; N Wright, *Challenge to Change*, Eastbourne: Kingsway, 1991.

From the USA, W B Shurden, *The Baptist Identity: Four Fragile Freedoms*, Macon, Ga.: Smyth & Helwys, 1993; W P Tuck, *Our Baptist Tradition*, Macon, Ga.: Smyth & Helwys, 1993.

[73] For example: American Baptist Churches in 1987, see *American Baptist Quarterly*, 6(2), 1987 for the statement and supporting documents; 'What are Baptists?', by the European Baptist Federation (1993); 'Re-envisioning Baptist Identity: A Manifesto for Baptist Communities in America', by a group of about fifty Baptist scholars, in (for example), *Baptists Today*, 26 June 1997, 8-10 and *The New Zealand Journal of Baptist Research*, Auckland: NZ Baptist Historical Society, 3 (1998), 3-18.

[74] The BWA Commission on Baptist Heritage in July 1989 issued a statement, 'Towards a Baptist Identity', in *Faith, Life and Witness*, 1990, 146-49 and in W B Shurden, *Four Fragile Freedoms*, 1993, 63-66, who describes this as 'the single best statement of the Baptist identity issued by a group of Baptists in the twentieth century' (p. 63).

[75] The BWA Study Commissions (1995-99) worked together to produce an introductory guide to Baptist beliefs and practices: J L Garrett (ed), *We Baptists*, Franklin, Tenn: Providence House, 1999.

[76] D D Williams, 'The Mystery of the Baptists', *Foundations* 1 (1), 1958, 9 and cited by R T Handy in his Foreword to W S Hudson, *Baptists in Transition*, Valley Forge: Judson, 1979, p. 16.

[77] M Sutherland, 'Towards a New Vision of Being Baptist', *New Zealand Journal of Baptist Research*, 3, Oct 1998, 3.

[78] P S Fiddes, "'Walking Together": The Place of Covenant Theology in Baptist Life Yesterday and Today' in W H Brackney, P S Fiddes J H Y Briggs (eds), *Pilgrim Pathways. Essays in honour of B R White*. Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1999, 47.

[79] On the role of tradition as an authority for Baptists, see B R White, *Authority. A Baptist View*, London: Baptist Publications, 1976, 23-26.

[80] Cited by B Hibbert in the Foreword to F Bowers, *A Bold Experiment. The Story of Bloomsbury Chapel and Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church 1848-1999*, London: Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church, 1999, p. 8.

[81] See G G Miller. 'A Baptist Theology of the Child', University of South Africa D Theol thesis, 1992; W M S West, 'The Child and the Church: A Baptist Perspective' in *Pilgrim Pathways*, 1999, 75-110; Dr. Russ Bush gave a paper on 'Baptists and the Child' to the Doctrine Commission at Durban in 1998.

[82] P S Fiddes (et al), *Bound to Love. The Covenant Basis of Baptist Life and Mission*, London: Baptist Union, 1985; P S Fiddes, 'Walking Together' in *Pilgrim Pathways*, 1999, 47-74; P S Fiddes, 'Towards a new Millennium: Doctrinal Themes of Strategic Significance for Baptists', in *Baptist Faith and Witness*. Book 2, 1999, 13-22. See also N G Wright, 'Covenant and Covenanting', *Baptist Quarterly*, 39 (6), 2002, 287-90. For a discussion of the use of church covenant in the North American situation, see C Deweese, *A Community of Believers. Making Church Membership more meaningful*, Valley Forge: Judson, 1978.

[83] As cited by J A T Robinson, *The Body*, London: SCM, 1957, p. 62.

[84] *Fourth Baptist Congress*. p. 63.

[85] BWA General Council Agenda Book, Harare August 1993, p. 54.

[86] E Johnson, 'E Pluribus Unum', in *Baptist Faith & Witness. Book Two*, 1999, 53-62.

[87] BWA General Council Agenda Book, Dresden, July 1999, p. 93.

[88] *BWA News*, July/August 2002, p. 1.

[89] *Baptist Faith & Witness*, 1995, pp. 29-38.

[90] E A Payne, 'Believers' Baptism in Ecumenical Discussions', *Foundations*, 3 (1), 1960, 36 as cited by A R Cross, *Baptism and the Baptists*, 2000, p. 175.

[91] *We Baptists*, p.27.

[92] *Baptists and Ecumenism*, 1980, p. 132.

[93] E G Hinson, 'William Carey and Ecumenical Pragmatism' in *Baptists and Ecumenism*, 1980, pp. 73-83.

[94] E Johnson, 'E Pluribus Unum', in *Baptist Faith & Witness*, Book 2, p. 60.

[95] H Monro (ed), *Witnesses Throughout the World*, Melbourne: Baptist Union of Australia, 1992 is a series of study guides based on the covenant; for comment on this sentence in the covenant, see pp. 17-20.

[96] T Cupit (ed), *Baptist World Alliance Covenants and Declarations 1990-2000*, Washington: BWA, 1999, p. 17.

[97] BWA General Council Meeting Agenda Book, Seville, 2002, p. 105.

[98] The BWA Doctrine Commission meetings at Uppsala in 1994 were largely devoted to this theme.

[99] *Seventh Forum on Bilateral Dialogues*, 1997, p. 88.

[100] 'Baptists and the Ecumenical Movement: A Strategy Paper' in *Faith, Life and Witness*, 1990, pp. 30-48.

[101] 'The Vision of Unity emerging among Baptists', p. 50. See also the helpful paper by G A Igleheart, 'Why Baptists dialogue with Others' in *Out of Darkness. Report of fifteenth Congress, Los Angeles 1985*, pp. 156-62.

[\[102\]](#) Baptist World Alliance General Council Agenda Book, Seville, Spain, 2002. p. 112. A brief report recommending that the BWA join this forum was presented to a Study Commission by Prof Fonseca.

[\[103\]](#) Baptist World Alliance General Council Agenda Book, Seville, Spain, 2002, p. 31.

[\[104\]](#) 'The Vision of Unity', pp. 50-51.