

‘THE STRUGGLE FOR SPIRITUAL VALUES’: SCOTTISH BAPTISTS AND THE SECOND WORLD WAR

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ABSTRACT. The Second World War was a conflict which many British people feared might happen, but they strongly supported the efforts of Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain to seek a peaceful resolution of tensions with Germany over disputes in Continental Europe. Baptists in Scotland shared these concerns of their fellow citizens, but equally supported the declaration of war in 1939 after the German invasion of Poland. They saw the conflict as a struggle for spiritual values and were as concerned about winning the peace that followed as well as the war. During the years 1939 to 1945 they recommitted themselves to sharing the Christian message with their fellow citizens and engaged in varied forms of evangelism and extended times of prayer for the nation. The success of their Armed Forces Chaplains in World War One ensured that Scottish Baptist padres had greater opportunities for service a generation later. Scottish Baptists had seen closer ties established with other churches in their country under the auspices of the Scottish Churches Council. This co-operation in the context of planning for helping refugees and engaging in reconstruction at the conclusion of the war led to proposals for a World Council of Churches. Scottish Baptists were more cautious about this extension of ecumenical relationships. In line with other Scottish Churches they recognised a weakening of Christian commitment in the wider nation, but were committed to the challenge of proclaiming their faith at this time. They had both high hopes and expectations for the post-war years in Scotland.

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In the post-war years, very few people indeed considered it likely that there would be another world war within a generation of the conclusion of the 1914-1918 conflict (Robbins 2007: 279). The trauma inflicted by what took place during those years ensured that there was a real determination that it would not happen again. It is important to grasp how deeply such a conviction was held by the majority of the population, not just the churches (Wilkinson 1986: 85-90). As late as October 1938, James Maxton, MP for Bridgeton and a former ‘Red Clydesider’, rose in the House of Commons to commend Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain for the agreements made

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with Hitler at Bad Godesburg and Munich over the fate of Sudetan Germans in Czechoslovakia. He thanked the Prime Minister for doing ‘something that the mass of common people of the country wanted done’ (cited in Royle 2011: 9). However, with hindsight it is clear that the harshness and vindictiveness of the terms of the Treaty of Versailles, the peace treaty that concluded hostilities between Germany and the Allied Powers, ensured that the conditions were in place that could be exploited in later years by Adolf Hitler and his National Socialists (Hoover 1999: 3-4), although it was the Great Depression in 1929 and the economically challenging times that followed in the early 1930s that provided the conditions in which the Nazis rose to power in Germany (Holland 2015: 15). Many voices recognised that military solutions to conflict were less than adequate. There had to be a better way to resolve differences between the nations. As a senior army officer noted, ‘nothing but a potentially vast moral and spiritual reformation of global proportions could possibly be honoured by antagonisms so venomous and contradictory in character, and so world-wide in scope’ (Buchman 1947: xxvii). The individual just cited was a supporter of the influential Moral Rearmament movement, but his judgement was similar to many other people who were not affiliated to that particular cause. Another war was unthinkable and no step must be neglected that could prevent it. This paper attempts to look at the response of one Scottish denomination, the Baptist Union of Scotland and its response to the Second World War.

On the Threshold of the Second World War

A good example of the mood in this constituency was given in ‘The Outlook’ an editorial article in the January 1939 issue of the *Scottish Baptist Magazine* (SBM). The author, James Hair, Minister of Bristo Baptist Church, Edinburgh, recognised that there had been some difficult times in the previous year but urged a spirit of fortitude upon its readers. He highlighted an example of this spirit in the media.

During the week of tension in September one of our newspapers persisted, day in day out, despite all appearances to the contrary, in declaring that there would be no war, and urged its readers to be of good courage. Not always have we deemed that journal a wise and reliable guide; but on that occasion we relished its optimism and thanked God for its message (1939: 3).

In addition, the author commended the Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain for the path he had taken. He ‘keeps to his chosen path with a pertinacity that is beyond praise. So long as he is in power, we can rest assured that the last possibility of maintaining peace will be explored’ (1939: 3). This stance was not taken in ignorance of what was happening to Jewish people in Germany. Scottish Baptists had become, like other Scottish Churches,

together with English Baptists, increasingly critical of the actions of the German Government, with real fears as to what might happen in the next few years (Rushbrooke 1939). Although some Jews had been able to emigrate to other countries, many more were unable to find a destination to take them. It was not only Germany that was increasingly unwelcoming to the Jewish people, but Germany was by far the worst oppressor and the cause of this crisis. What might be the way forward? J. Allan Wright, Minister of Knightswood Baptist Church, Glasgow, was convinced that moral and spiritual rearmament was the key. He cited the Queen of the Netherlands and H.W. (Bunny) Austin, of tennis fame, as promoters of this cause. He reminded readers of this Scottish periodical that the next Baptist youth conference would be looking at this subject as a fruitful way forward and also quoted a letter from several individuals last Armistice Day, in *The Times* newspaper that articulated so clearly his own perspective.

The choice is moral rearmament or national decay. Moral rearmament must be the foundation of national life, as it must be of any world settlement. The miracle of God's Living Spirit can break the power of pride and selfishness, of lust and fear and hatred; for spiritual power is the greatest force in the world (Wright 1939: 7-8).

Scots too shared these convictions, he argued, citing a letter by several prominent Scotsmen in the Edinburgh newspaper, *The Scotsman*, last St Andrews Day. They advocated 'the call of an enterprise greater by far than the crossing of continents and launching of mighty ships. Moral and Spiritual Rearmament calls forth that strength of character which has always been Scotland's greatest wealth. The voice of God must become the will of the people' (Wright 1939: 8). It is important to grasp how people viewed the crisis unfolding around them in the 1930s prior to war, without the perspective of hindsight. What was abundantly clear was that Scottish Baptists in line with the wider constituency were very supportive of every attempt by the Government to maintain the peace and avoid the start of another World War. A call for a moral reformation at home was the priority in the nation at that time.

William C. Charteris, a distinguished former WW1 chaplain and now Minister of Stirling Baptist Church (see Talbot 2005), had also articulated clearly the message consistently proclaimed in Scottish Baptists ranks in a motion he proposed to the 1938 Baptist Union Assembly in Edinburgh on Thursday October 27.

The Assembly of the Baptist Union of Scotland, met in Edinburgh, expresses its thankfulness to Almighty God that war has been averted. The members recognise how much the country owes to the earnest and unrelaxing efforts of the

British Prime Minister in the saving of the Peace. They have marked with satisfaction the universal dread of war, and the consensus of opinion among the common people all over the world in favour of the settlement of international difference by agreement. While insisting that no abiding settlement can be reached save on the basis of righteousness... (1939 *SBY*: 165-166). [Mainstream American church leaders took a similar line to their colleagues in the UK, see Sittser 1997: 16-26.]

It is important to note that two amendments to this motion were rejected. The first in particular was significant as two ministers Campbell Dovey (Crieff Baptist Church) and R. W. Aitken (Kirkintilloch Baptist Church), wanted to delate the paragraph commending Neville Chamberlain for the decisions he had made. It was a first hint in Scottish Baptist ranks that a stronger line against the actions of the German Government needed to be taken.

A further example of Scottish Baptist opinions on the eve of the war comes from the 1938 Baptist Union Presidential address delivered by W. Holms Coats, the Principal of the Scottish Baptist Theological College. It was a very frank and sobering address as Coats shared his assessment of the world situation at that time. 'Amid all our relief at being delivered from the nightmare of war, we cannot disguise from ourselves that that deliverance was effected by yielding to a show of naked and brutal force such as the world has seldom witnessed' (1939 *SBY*: 168). He admitted that 'we have all sinned' in allowing these events to take place. 'The present situation is disheartening and terrifying enough. But from another point of view it is full of hope. For it does not, as is often said, demonstrate the failure of Christianity, but rather its vindication' (1939 *SBY*: 168-169). The Scottish Churches had demonstrated a similar conviction of the need for a return to Christian principles in the nation. In the winters of 1937 and 1938 Scottish Baptists had co-operated fully in the 'Recall to Religion Campaign', which appeared to have had an encouraging response (details of what happened in the 'Recall to Religion' campaigns is given in Bardgett 2010: 152-157). [One Baptist Church that participated in this campaign was Adelaide Place Baptist Church, Glasgow (Stewart 1983: 1).] In his Seventieth Annual Report in October 1938 the Baptist Union Secretary came to the following conclusions about the need of the nation at that time. 'It is recognised on all hands that there is a clamant need for a re-emphasis on spiritual values' (1939 *SBY*: 184). It can be suggested in summary that Scottish Baptists were aware of what was going on in the world during the 1930s, but like fellow Christians in other denominations, there was a strong determination to explore every possible avenue for peace to avoid if at all possible another world war.

One factor that ought to be mentioned was the strength of the pacifist movement amongst both British Christians and the wider society (see Ce-

adel 1980; brief comments on Baptist pacifism in the 1920s and 1930s is given in Randall 2014: 36-39). In the early 1930s pacifists had developed a growing confidence that disarmament was achievable and that the League of Nations might be able to police international agreements and bring 'moral sanctions' on nations that stepped out of line (Ceadel 1980: 87). Attempts to form pacifist groups within British denominations began when W. H. Auden sent out letters to the clergy of the major denominations in 1929 commending the pacifist 'Congregational Covenant'. ['The Baptist Pacifist Fellowship, Minute Book 1933—9 September 1946', Angus Library, Regent's Park College, Oxford. There are no page numbers for entries.]

By 1931 an attempt was made to form a Baptist Ministers Peace Group. It took until December 8, 1932 for a committee promoting this cause to meet at Baptist Church House in London. They undertook to get two peace sermons published in the *Christian World Pulpit* periodical the following year, and then to distribute 1000 copies of this issue at the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland Assembly in Glasgow in April 1933. The level of interest was high as 400 ministers attended a session for this cause at the 1934 Assembly. By 1937 up to 448 Baptist ministers and lay-people in the UK had formally associated with this cause. In the minutes of the January 1938 meeting six Scottish Baptist ministers were listed as members: R. G. Black (Kilmarnock); R. G. W. Cowie (Airdrie); A. D. Law (Glasgow); J. McGuiness (Girvan); R. W. Waddelow and F. R. Scofield (Glasgow). [The Baptist Pacifist Fellowship (printed) List of Members, December 31st, 1936, gives a full list of names at that time, Angus Library, Regent's Park College, Oxford.] Once the war began significantly less detail was recorded of members, but membership continued to rise up to the end of 1942. ('Annual Committee Report', February 15, 1943, Baptist Pacifist Fellowship, Minute Book 1933-9 September 1946, n.p., listed 1276 men and 628 women in the fellowship, including 270 Baptist ministers. The Anglican Pacifist Fellowship had 1,500 members by September 1939 and the Methodist Peace Fellowship had 3,500 members at that time. All the Pacifist Societies had rapid growth in membership in the late 1930s. See Ceadel 1980: 210).

Although the majority of Scottish Baptists did not identify with this position, there was a greater determination to support the liberty of conscience for those who did. It was a surprise when Neville Chamberlain announced the introduction of conscription in peace time in the House of Commons on April 26, 1939, however, both his speech and the opposition comments were dignified and restrained. The responses amongst the churches were similarly subdued as most people recognised that difficult times were ahead. R B Hannen wrote an article in the June 1939 issue of the *SBM* reminding Scottish Baptists that it was our Baptist forbears who were the first to articulate

clearly the full doctrine of liberty of conscience. The Cupar Baptist Church minister concluded with these words:

If a man cannot see his way to take part in a war, or have anything to do with the military machine after he has given the matter every consideration and intelligently consulted his conscience, then every Baptist worthy of the traditions of his denomination, ought to recognise and respect that man's right to make that stand... We must at all costs maintain the principle of liberty of conscience (1939: 3-4).

Hannan, as a representative Scottish Baptist, was one of many convinced that maintaining our spiritual values was absolutely essential even in difficult circumstances.

The Declaration of War

It was not a surprise when Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain issued his ultimatum to Germany in a radio broadcast on Sunday September 3, 1939. The invasion of Poland by Hitler two days previously was the final straw which led to this course of action. Sidlow Baxter, minister of Charlotte Baptist Chapel, Edinburgh, made this comment:

We ourselves deplore war even as the extreme resort, but we are at one with all our fellow-Britishers in believing that our cause is righteous. The war was thrust upon us... ample facts have accumulated before us to expose Hitler's hypocrisy and his blame for the newly broken out conflict. The fact remains, therefore, that in this war we are without doubt championing right and truth against a brutal system of oppression which threatens our very civilisation (Cited Balfour 2007: 251). (The editorial article in the September 7, 1939 issue of the BUGBI periodical the Baptist Times issued similar sentiments. 'In all our Country's long history Britain has not entered upon war with a conscience more at ease or a conviction more clear of a righteous cause'.)

Henry Turner, minister of John Knox Street Baptist Church, Glasgow, while regretting the necessity of the war, noted his thankfulness, that 'our statesmen did all that was in their power to prevent war' (1940 SBY: 115). The Baptist Union Council met on September 20, 1939. The major item of business was a motion presented by Alexander Clark, Minister of Viewfield Baptist Church, Dunfermline, on behalf of the Social Services Committee, which was subsequently adopted by the Council. The motion expressed 'its profound sorrow at the outbreak of war' and its sympathies to the Polish nation for what they had to endure.

It marks with thanksgiving the unity, solemnity and self-dedication with which the British Commonwealth of Nations has entered the struggle for spiritual val-

ues, without which civilisation must perish. It offers unceasing prayer that these values may not be lost sight of during the war or in the making of peace, but that righteousness, mercy and peace may characterise the nation in all its actions (1940 *SBY*: 126).

The motion was taken to the Annual Assembly on October 25, 1939, and carried with thirteen dissentients. No reason was given for the few that voted against the motion, but it is possible it was an expression of pacifist sympathies. In the 1930s pacifist convictions had been particularly influential in Free Church ranks (Snape 2005: 85), though out of 16,500 conscientious objects registered during the war only 73 were Baptists (Balfour 2007: 251). David Hicks, one of those who held to this position, later reflected on it.

I grew up in the aftermath of the First World War and the memory of that awful slaughter cast a long dark shadow... It seemed obvious to me and to many others that if only everyone refused to fight then wars would cease; and this surely was what the teaching of Jesus required?... The Revd Dick Shepherd of St Martins-in-the Field had founded the Peace Pledge Union in the thirties and I was one of many who signed it. The rise of Hitler could surely best be met—so it rather naively seemed to me at the time —by spreading the Gospel of Pacifism in Germany (cited Allison 2014: 193).

However, as the Second World War progressed even some committed pacifists had a change of mind and joined the Armed Forces. A representative Baptist example was William Speirs, who had been convinced of the case for pacifism in his school years. He had registered as a Conscientious Objector while at New College, Edinburgh. He joined the Forces as a Baptist Chaplain in 1942. It was a hard decision to make but the bombing of the free city of Rotterdam by the German Armed Forces was decisive. He spoke later of suffering 'a conflict of conscience as if in a sense (he) was denying Christ' (Letter of William Speirs to N. E. Allison, March 18 1997 cited in Allison 2013: 10-11). However, the horrors perpetrated by the Nazi regime were such that many pacifists such as Speirs were convicted that opposition to it was the lesser evil.

The official responses to the war declaration in Scottish Baptist ranks had been measured, though clear. This was in line with the pronouncements of the Church of Scotland and other Scottish Churches (see Smith 1987: 373). The editorial article, 'The Outlook', in the *SBM*, accepted that the Government had no choice under the circumstances. However, 'pacifist and non-pacifist alike agree that the ultimate aim of all Christian people must be to keep the Christian values alive even during this frightful time, so that they may be the dominant influence in the peace that must be made someday' (October 1939, 65.10: 1). James Scott, Secretary of the Baptist Union, in his own reflections noted that: 'Doubtless there are economic

causes underlying all wars, but we are convinced that the main causes are of a moral nature. Greed, selfishness, lust of power, racial hatred and pride, are among the root causes of war' (October 1939, 65.10: 6). The same issue of this periodical contained a sermon preached by R.J. Smithson on September 10, 1939. It was a stirring call to courage to stand for their principles. At its heart this war, Smithson claimed, was a conflict between Christianity and Nazism, but not between ordinary British people and Germans. His hearers were urged not to hate or bear ill-will towards ordinary German people. The mistake of doing so by many in the previous war should not be repeated. (This view was widely held amongst British Church leaders—see Chandler 2006: 265. American Church leaders were also much more careful to speak in considered tones about the war and many denominations declined to give an official blessing to the war—see Hope 1943: 37-38). However, Smithson also asserted 'it is plainly evident that the vast majority of Christian people feel that they go into this conflict with a clear conscience, and that it is God's work to which they have put their hands. In the last analysis the battle is not ours: it is God's' (1939: 4-5). The BUGBI Council acknowledged that 'the British Government after the invasion of Poland could have avoided war only by disastrous moral surrender' (The Baptist Union and the Present Situation. *Baptist Times*, March 21, 1940, 86.4439: 184). The editor of *Life and Work*, the Church of Scotland periodical wrote: 'Never in the history of the world has a war been entered on in a less warlike spirit' (October 1939, New series 10: 406-407). In similar fashion, Scottish Baptists broadly welcomed Neville Chamberlain's Allied war aims, commending him for stating: 'No gains at the expense of Germany: no vindictiveness towards Germany: and a renewed system of collective security' (November 1939, *The Outlook* 65.11: 1). These comments reveal a quiet confidence that God would bring the nation through this testing time, but they had to retain their spiritual values in how they conducted themselves during the war and in the planning for the peace that would follow.

Scottish Baptists Making Sense of the War

The war was now going ahead, but how did Scottish Baptists attempt to make sense of what was taking place? The war was undoubtedly a test of their convictions –would they stand true to them: 'truth, righteousness, peace, loyalty and love'? In his 1941 seventy-third Annual Report the Union Secretary was convinced that at this point in the war 'the devotion of our people has never wavered' (1942 *SBY*: 172). This is not surprising as this relatively small Christian denomination had attracted many dedicated hard-working Christian men and women to its ranks. However, the issue here was in understanding the significance of the conflict in which European nations were once again engaged. It appeared that there was a consen-

sus amongst British Church leaders from the Archbishop of Canterbury downwards that 'war is the judgement of God' (cited in Tattersall 1940: 4). Minister of Marshall Street Baptist Church, Edinburgh, and former distinguished padre from World War One, T. N. Tattersall, wholeheartedly agreed with this diagnosis. He added: 'A moral law runs through the world: whatsoever a nation soweth, that shall the people also reap' (1940: 4). However, Tattersall warned against advancing simplistic notions as to why the war was happening. The reasons advanced in common conversation just as much as those sounded on the lips of religious leaders may be part of the truth, but are far from the whole explanation (1940: 4-6). Life on the front line in the previous war ensured that simplistic solutions would not find favour with Tattersall. Whatever views were put forward by local ministers not all would agree. R. W. Waddelow, one of the strongest pacifists amongst Scottish Baptist clergy, admitted that one or two of his congregation in Adelaide Place Baptist Church, Glasgow, had left the church unhappy at the 'politics in the pulpit' (1940: 4-5). [However, there were people who came back to church after time away in the light of the efforts of Neville Chamberlain to avoid war and the more considered tone of Church leaders during the war.] W. Harold Parsons, the lay President of Angus and Perthshire Baptist Association told assembled delegates at their summer conference in 1940 that he found the present situation more comfortable than it had been a year earlier. 'As a nation we are in this awful conflict with clean hands, and if we had stood aside our neutrality would have been a crime' (1941 *SBY*: 109-110).

It is likely this more robust approach to supporting the war effort resonated better with the majority of people in the congregations, but there was certainly no joy at the prospects of what lay before them. Alexander Clark, vice-President of the Baptist Union called the war an 'Optimistic Tragedy', quoting the words of theologian Hugh R. Mackintosh. He used the stories of the testing of Abraham and Isaac on Mount Moriah in Genesis 22 and the offering of Jesus by God the Father in John 3:16 to illustrate how good can come out of apparently tragic situations (1940: 4-5). Yet in his Presidential Address given six months later in October 1940, Clark underlined just how serious the problems had become which needed to be addressed. He highlighted the extremist political ideologies dominant in Russia, Italy and Germany, but recognised that a deeper problem still had to be overcome. 'The spiritual foundations of Western civilisation have been undermined. There is need for radical transformation, for a spiritual, moral and mental energy to make all things new' (1941 *SBY*: 154-164). In other words, our struggle for the retention or restoration of spiritual values at the centre of our national life would determine whether the war had been won or lost in our nation.

It was to be expected that Baptists and other Scottish and other British Christians would express a desire for a national day of prayer. William Whyte, minister of Portobello Baptist Church, Edinburgh, on behalf of the Evangelism Committee, at the quarterly meeting of the Baptist Union Council on 28 February 1940, called for 'His Majesty the King, to appoint a National Day of Repentance for our shortcomings, and of prayer to Almighty God for a just and righteous peace, in which the Houses of Parliament would participate' (1940: 11). The Union Secretary later the same year in his annual report explained why the priority of prayer in this situation must be upheld.

One thing is clear. The war is not a mere clashing of rival powers but a conflict between good and evil, for Germany has challenged those great principles which the Christian Church has cherished for generations and for which our forefathers shed their blood—the principles of freedom, righteousness, truth and peace. That being so, we must resort to prayer and continue in prayer; spiritual evil can only be defeated by spiritual power... Prayer is the great secret of spiritual power (1941 *SBY*: 170).

Scottish Baptists did not see a contradiction between declaring the priority of prayer and also in expecting the Government to do what it could to win the war. Or as it was expressed in the pages of the *SBM*: 'Trust in God and re-armament are no contradiction, unless 'Give us this day our daily bread' is an encouragement to idleness... Prayer will keep our motives pure, deliver us from fear and the spirit of revenge that fear breeds and enable God to give us a victory that will be His not ours' (June 1940 *SBM*: 66.6: 2). As news filtered out about the impact of Nazi ideology in German-dominated territories and that of Communism in Russian domains, it was not difficult to argue as some did that this was a war to defend 'Christian civilisation', as opposed to godless ones (cited June 1940 *SBM*: 66.6: 7). However, there was still care needed as to how we pray for victory, according to W. Holms Coats. He had highlighted a dispute within Church of Scotland ranks where some had rightly taken issue with colleagues over their inaccurate portrayal of the Allies as entirely innocent and the Nazis the opposite in this conflict. By contrast:

As Christians we must acknowledge very humbly and penitently that we have had our share as a nation in the widespread materialism, secularism, selfishness, cowardice, opportunism, political irresponsibility, lack of social conscience that are the deeper causes of the present dreadful state of things in Europe. To acknowledge this is not weakness but strength. We believe that the cause of Christian civilisation would be put back by generations by a victory for Germany, therefore we pray for courage and strength to win the war (1940: 2).

There was both clarity and a consistency in the Scottish Baptist understanding of World War II. [There was a quiet satisfaction in Scottish Baptist ranks after the war that its Padres and others had spoken and acted much more consistently as Christians in this conflict than in WW1. August 1946 *SBM*, 72.8: 1.] However, it was a vision shared very widely in the broader Christian constituency. It would be an interpretation of events with which they could live very comfortably after this war, unlike the revisionary interpretations that began after 1918.

Changing Attitudes during the War

Scottish Baptists attempted to see what positive benefits arise could from this situation which their Government had tried so hard to avoid. W. Holms Coats, as early as the October 1939 Baptist Union Assembly, made these comments in a speech on behalf of the Office-bearers of the Baptist Union. 'The situation offers an opportunity of recalling our people and the nation to the abiding virtues and the things which cannot be shaken; to faith in Divine providence, judgement and mercy; to consecration, self-surrender and sacrifice; to the sustaining power of Christian faith in the hour of crisis and suffering' (1939: 3). It was an acknowledgement that though difficult times lay ahead there was an opportunity to reassess priorities and to gain a clearer sense of moral focus in the coming years.

There were, though, two key themes that were particularly prominent in the messages and addresses from both Baptist and other Church leaders in Scotland during the war years. The first and most expected was a renewed call for greater personal renewal and evangelistic efforts. This had already begun in the years immediately preceding the war, already mentioned in the 'Recall to Religion' campaign in 1937 and 1938, but was sustained in the years that followed. For example, 'The Five Years Plan' that included a stronger emphasis on Bible Study and Prayer, had begun in 1941. Alexander Clark, in his Presidential address of October 1940 declared: 'Fearless proclamation of the Gospel is the Church's best answer to the assertion that: <religion is opiate> by those who have no time for Jesus Christ. Clark urged his hearers to make 'a highway for our God into home and school, into the slums and suburbs of our cities, into Stock Exchange, market place and factory, into the Houses of Parliament, and wherever the fate and fortune of men, women and children are being decided...' (1941 *SBY*: 159). John Noble, Burgh Chamberlain, Peterhead, and lay-President of the Northern Association, delivered his Presidential address on November 12, 1941 on the subject of: 'The Emphasis of Conversion'. Noble was pointedly reminding his hearers that desirable improvements in social and economic conditions in the country would only be beneficial if there were 'new men' transformed by the Spirit of God. 'They could not have Christian principles unless they

first had Christian men' (1942 *SBY*: 118). The other speaker at that event, John MacBeath, Minister of Inverness Baptist Church, reinforced the same point in his address entitled: 'The Peril of God-forgetfulness'. Scottish Baptist congregations were making every effort to take the opportunities they had for evangelism at this time. In the winter of 1940 it was noted that Baptist churches were almost the only ones open for evangelistic 'gospel services'. In the early war years, a number of churches had tried open-air Sunday Schools with 'considerable encouragement'. Others tried open-air services in the back courts of tenement blocks or public places that are popular for socialising in public. In Princes Street Gardens in Edinburgh churches of different denominations joined for open air services that attracted audiences varying from two to three thousand people at a time. Others held seaside services in Ayr, Dunoon, Kinghorn, and Portobello with reported professions of faith from both children and adults (1941 *SBY*: 174). The convenor of the Evangelistic Committee, William Whyte, attributed the increased evangelistic activity to an invitation from the Baptist World Alliance Congress in Atlanta in 1939 to member Unions and Conventions 'wherever it is possible, our Conventions and Unions should lay plans for an organised advance in evangelism. Your Committee and Council have answered the call, and a campaign committee has been appointed representative of the whole life and activity of our Union' (1941 *SBY*: 174). [The motto of the Atlanta Congress was 'None but changed people can change the world' (Rushbrooke 1940: 60). Details of this congress are given in (Rushbrooke 1939b).] Scottish Baptists had been consistently committed to organised outreach initiatives during the war years.

The year 1942 in the 'Five Years Campaign' was highlighted in the Baptist Union as a year in which a significant emphasis on preparation for and the active participation in personal evangelistic efforts by church members. (An update on the proposed work in year four (of five) in this campaign is given in Matthew F. Wright, 'The Five-Year Campaign'. April 1944 *SBM*, 70.4: 2). Members of the Baptist Union Evangelistic Committee were visiting local congregations promoting three forms of evangelism: 'specialised evangelism'—with reference to work by people called to serve as 'Evangelists'; 'pastoral evangelism', by which they understood evangelistic sermons by local pastors and 'personal evangelism'—the work of all church members (March 1942 *SBM*, 68.3: 3). Thomas A. McQuiston, Minister of Cambridge Street Baptist Church, Glasgow, in his 1942 Presidential Address declared: 'To become static is to perish; to evangelise is imperative... The lack of a militant evangelism is responsible for the multiplicity of quack and counterfeit substitutes. We plead for personal evangelism, pastoral evangelism, church evangelism, inter-church evangelism, and ecumenical evangelism' (1942 *SBY*: 48). The Baptist Union Secretary James Scott noted that some of

the churches were seeing encouraging responses to this increased focus on outreach. One city church saw conversions at its winter Sunday evening services; another church in a provincial town experienced the joy of a record ten candidates professing faith at a baptism service; other congregations reported encouraging interactions with members of the Armed Forces stationed in their area (1943 *SBY*: 67). The following year, in October 1943, James Scott reported that although active membership figures for Union congregations was down by 400 compared with the previous year, Sunday School numbers were up by 400 in the same time period (1944 *SBY*: 46). In addition, by creative new approaches other churches increased their numbers of evening services by, for example, having 'youth services' or 'women's services'. Other signs of renewal were increases in attendances at some church prayer meetings and the early repayment of building debts by other Baptist congregations (1944 *SBY*: 46, 66). Scottish Baptists had seen a slight drop in membership figures in the years immediately prior to World War Two, but this fall accelerated during the war years with a drop from 23,024 members in 1940 to 21,121 reported in 1945 (Hunt 1997: Appendix 2: Table of Annual Statistics, n.p.). The work of the churches was undoubtedly hindered by conscription, requisitioning of buildings and transfers of members to work in England during the war (see Balfour 1984: 68), together with the deaths of some members in the Forces and the significant civilian losses in the blitzed Clyde area (see Murray 1969: 105), but the enthusiasm for sharing their faith was still clearly a significant priority at that time.

The second prominent emphasis that was particularly in evidence in the years prior to and during the war was the moves to greater unity between the Christian Churches. In the years following World War One the Churches realised the benefits of working more closely with one another. There were both Communist and Fascist ideologies flourishing as well as social and economic challenges throughout Europe which presented a challenge the Churches which they were convinced were better faced in a stronger partnership with each other. This pattern seen in different European countries was clearly in evidence in Scotland. The Scottish Churches Council (SCC) began in 1924 (1924 *SBY*: 86; see also Forrester 1993: 273-274; Talbot 2006) and Scottish Baptists sent delegates to SCC meetings until that body's demise in 1948 (Murray 1969: 103). Relationships between Scottish Protestant Churches were increasingly warm in the interwar years and this spirit continued into the 1940s. At the Baptist Union of Scotland Annual Assembly in October 1940 George Kirk, a Minister from Glasgow and representative to the Assembly from the Congregational Union of Scotland, offered greetings that included these words on this subject:

... emphasising there were many things in common between his denomination and our own. In view of the big problems presently confronting the Church and

which would confront the Church after the war, he stressed the need for a greater degree of unity amongst the different denominations. The Church ought to be leading public opinion, but could not do so unless she spoke with a united voice (1941 SBY: 141-142).

This was a common conviction. At the very same Assembly the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, the Right Rev. J. R. Forgan, in his greetings to assembled delegates 'emphasised the need for greater unity in the church'. In introducing the Moderator to the Assembly the Baptist Union President Alexander Clark reported that the Church of Scotland had taken the initiative in requesting that there should be reciprocal visits to the respective assemblies by representatives of these two denominations, and in his own Presidential address that year heartily commended this ecumenical initiative towards the Baptist Union of Scotland and wished God's blessing on their future partnership with the National Kirk (1941 SBY: 142, 162). A similar warm commendation of the closer ties with other Scottish Churches came from Thomas McQuiston in his Presidential address in October 1942:

The Church may be all the better for diversity in unity, the call for the outward unification of Christendom is in the air around us and we welcome the movement. We are keen and eager for the closest and heartiest co-operation with our brethren of other churches; but always on New Testament terms (1943 SBY: 59).

Scottish Baptists had been enthusiastic about working with other Baptists since the present Union was formed in 1869, but closer co-operation with other Christian Churches was also now seen as a priority. The success of the Scottish Churches Council discussed earlier, was the reason why Scottish Baptists were to reject a Continuing United Free Church proposal for the establishment of a Free Church Council in Scotland (see BUS Council, May 25 1943, *Baptist Union of Scotland Minute Book*, 1942-1945: 245). The closest affinity was felt towards the Congregational Union of Scotland with whom Assembly delegates had been routinely exchanged. A similar offer was made to the Churches of Christ in Scotland, but in their reply they indicated that there was no separate annual meeting for their connexion in Scotland. There was, therefore, no need to exchange representatives with this small group of Scottish Christians (BUS Council, February 26 1946, *Baptist Union of Scotland Minute Book*, 1945-1950, 59). The 1940s was a decade in which Scottish Baptists had felt sufficiently secure in their own identity to seek to build better relationships with most other Scottish Christians. The narrow insularity of some earlier years appeared to have been abandoned as out of step with the needs of the mid-twentieth Century (December 1942 SBM: 68.12: 4-5). However, the fears that had diminished were still held by a sig-

nificant proportion of the constituency and the potential for their reawakening would become clearer in the post-war era. There were some limits to the extent of formal unity with other churches. In 1939 BUS Office-bearers, for example, 'after careful consideration they decided not to recommend affiliation with the proposed World Council of Churches. It was felt the Baptist position would be sufficiently represented by the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland (BUGBI)' (1940 SBY: 124) on the grounds that as Scottish Baptists had 'little hope of sending a representative' to meetings there was little point in a formal affiliation (BUS Council, May 25 1938, *Baptist Union of Scotland Minute Book*, 1935-1939: 556). The growth in inter-church co-operation in helping the refugees and displaced people in Europe after World War II, including the formation of Christian Aid, had led to renewed calls for the formation of a World Council of Churches. This body was duly set up in Amsterdam in 1948. Alexander Clark, then minister of Motherwell Baptist Church, represented the interests of this small Scottish denomination. On his return a favourable report to the BUS Council led these church leaders to recommend affiliation with the WCC to the October annual assembly (1949 SBY: 124). A favourable decision was attained in 1948 by the smallest of majorities, eighty-one votes to eighty, that would lead to regular calls for re-consideration of 'the official Baptist position' in the years to come, especially following the 1951 assembly debate led by the delegates of Charlotte Baptist Chapel, Edinburgh, who had demanded an immediate withdrawal from the WCC. Wider ecumenical affairs had become a source of tension for Baptists in Scotland unpersuaded of the case for this new body (Balfour 1984: 75).

The special relationship with the Scottish Congregationalists had been enhanced by some common grievances. One particular issue, which will serve as an example, had been the lack of Baptist and Congregationalist chaplains in the Armed Forces during the First World War. Part of the reported difficulty was due to incorrect listing of a soldier's denominational allegiance by a recruiting sergeant when enlisted, as it was too often assumed that an individual was Anglican, if English, and Presbyterian, if Scottish. As a result, very few soldiers were listed as associated with other denominations, thus weakening their case for appointed chaplains (see *SBM*, 40.10: 154). The first Scottish Baptist Army Chaplain had been appointed in 1914 (See *SBM* 40.10: 158). Success in this matter was rightly attributed to the United Army and Navy Board. This body comprising Baptists, Congregationalists, Primitive and United Methodists enabled these denominations to join together to ensure a fair representation of their men were placed in post in the British Army and Navy (August 1915, *SBM* 41.8: 118-119, Allison 2005). It was not a battle won overnight as problems had persisted in the Navy into 1918. Great improvements in relationships between

the churches by the 1940s ensured that by the Second World War there was a better allocation of chaplaincy posts (see Allison 2015). An article in the *SBM*, in December 1941, described how chaplains of different denominations were working harmoniously together (*SBM* 67.12: 5). Other joint ventures included an ordination training course in Jerusalem for United Board candidates for ministry in the Middle East (*SBM*, 71.3: 2). A refresher course for Anglican and Free Church chaplains was held in Brussels in May 1945 (*SBM* 71.5: 2), and a joint series of membership preparation classes was run by chaplains jointly for Baptist, Congregationalist and Methodist service personnel working in Germany in December 1945 (*SBM* 71.12: 2). Scottish Baptist padre William Speirs was also invited to supervise theological training for German chaplains, in Italy, in 1946 (*SBM* 72.8: 2). Chaplaincy work in the Armed Forces was another sphere of Christian service in which Scottish Baptists recognised their need to work with other Christian Churches. Ecumenical relations in the middle of the Twentieth Century between Scottish Churches appeared to be in a healthy state. Scottish Baptists had recognised that they could work not only with traditional friends such as the Congregationalists, but also other Protestant denominations in their native land. Barriers between churches that had once seemed insurmountable were removed to enable a more healthy ecumenism to take its place, but this ecumenism was a 'tender plant' whose continued growth was far from certain, at least amongst the Baptist constituency in Scotland.

The Post-War Settlement

There was a wide-ranging recognition that although the Allied Forces had won the military aspects of the First World War, yet there had been too little attention paid to the peace settlement that followed after it. As a result, there was a determination that things needed to be very different for both churches and the state once the Second World War was concluded. (For example, see an address entitled 'Church and Readjustment' by the President of the Glasgow Baptist Association at this organisation's 1944 Annual Meeting (*SBM* 71.1: 4). Also, see Robbins 1993: 195-213). The editorial article in the March 1940 *SBM* devoted some space to considering what was required to achieve lasting peace in Europe. In addition to the military defeat of Germany, the author argued that Germany needed to see she had more to gain by living in co-operation with her neighbours than by domination of them. The peace treaty must not leave Germany with a legitimate sense of grievances otherwise it will only lead to another conflict at a later date. 'Let the German nation be heartily welcomed into a comprehensive plan for economic reconstruction, disarmament and peace in Europe under democratic leadership and there is hope' (*SBM* 66.3: 1). It was a vision commonly shared at the time and was broadly in line with the post war set-

tlement. In the following issue of the *SBM* there was a brief discussion of various peace proposals on which the war might potentially be ended. In particular, the editor W. Holms Coats highlighted the similar proposals of President Roosevelt of the USA and the Pope, compared to those potentially on offer from Hitler's Germany. Although approving President Roosevelt's statement: 'We seek a moral basis for peace' and the same sentiments expressed in other words in the Vatican document, he argued that the Allied leadership could not trust the Nazi leadership to honour any potential settlement. A new type of leadership was required in Germany to build that nation's future (*SBM* 66.4: 1-2). In addition, he commended another document published by representatives of American Churches that denounced those who claimed the war was about 'rival imperialisms'. Anyone taking such a view, he argued, was suffering from 'moral blindness' (*SBM* 66.4: 2). The German Fuehrer had advocated a Nazi 'New Order in Europe'. It was felt that some statesmen in Britain had failed in response to articulate clearly enough that what was required was 'a Christian order, based on the freedom of nations to determine their own destinies in co-operation with all men of good will' (*SBM* 66.9: 2). The consistent advocacy of the importance of moral and spiritual values was something he and other Church leaders saw as distinctive in their advocacy of the Allied cause in contrast to their absence in discussions of war aims and objectives in Germany. [An example of another reminder of these principles is given in (September 1941) *The Outlook*. *SBM* 67.9: 1. An example of Allied Forces living these high moral principles was seen when the crew of 'The Rodney' met to pray with their chaplain for the families of the German sailors lost in the sinking of The Bismark. Coats, W. Holms (November 1941) *Praying for the Enemy*. *SBM* 67.11: 2. An example of Continental European countries holding similar standards is seen in the decision of legal bodies in Poland, Russia, Czechoslovakia and Holland to prepare for trials of Nazi war criminals after hostilities are concluded rather than allowing such individuals to be killed on the streets by angry crowds during the war. (February 1942) *SBM* 68.2: 1. The documents produced by the Federal Council of Churches in America and the Churches' Peace Aims Group in the UK concerning how 'to establish a just and lasting peace' showed remarkable similarities. They were agreed that: Above all else is needed the recognition of clear moral standards which the nations and the citizens accept'. (September 1943) *The Churches' Peace Aims*. *SBM* 69.9: 2.]

This forward thinking not only concerned international relations and how they would be addressed in the post-war years, but also a significant amount of time was spent on reflecting on the kind of changes that were required in the United Kingdom to make our own society a much fairer one for all our citizens. It was commonly agreed that in 1919 not only had

there been a failure to deal with the root causes of the war, but also a similar failure to address the serious problems of unemployment in both the United Kingdom and Germany. Better future prospects needed to be available for the whole of society (*SBM* 67.1: 2). Other Scottish Churches too were giving careful consideration to the future needs of the nation. For example, the Church of Scotland's establishment of the Baillie Commission, 1941-1945, under the chairmanship of John Baillie, produced some visionary reports that showed a real understand of contemporary social and economic issues and marked a clear change of direction in the thinking of that denomination. It wholeheartedly welcomed the Beveridge report with its vision of comprehensive social welfare schemes and a national health service (see Storrar 1994: 60-72 and Smith 1987: 373-381). William McInnes, Minister of Renfrew Baptist Church, was very clear that the Church in both its local and national context needed to demonstrate more clearly the relevance of the Christian message to a contemporary society that he claimed often viewed it as irrelevant (*SBM* 66.9: 8). Scottish Baptists were well aware from the experience of the years immediately following the First World War that it was far from easy to attract former service personnel back to the churches once they had returned to civilian life. One document that was particularly insightful with a Christian vision for the post-war years was Anglican Archbishop William Temple's *Christianity and Social Order* published in 1942. It was a strong commendation of greater social justice and fairness in post-war Britain. It was in tune with the thinking of many Christians including Scottish Baptists at that time. Mr Thomas Coats in his Baptist Union Presidential Address in October 1943 made a reference to both these subjects, but indicated that the spiritual issues were the most significant ones to be addressed. He stated:

We welcome the Atlantic Charter with its four freedoms, the Beveridge Report, and its remedies for many of our social ills, and gladly support those measures which have for their object the uplift of the people and the drawing together of all nations in the spirit of brotherhood. Important and necessary as all these measures may be, we must not allow them to obscure the spiritual issues that face us today (*1944 SBY*: 57).

Coats' point was that the most important changes required in society were spiritual. The nation needed to gain a complete and unwavering faith in God; give loyalty to Jesus Christ and recognise the transformative power of the cross of Jesus Christ. His successor as Union President, J. T. Stark, Minister of Victoria Place Baptist Church, Paisley, gave a stirring address at his induction to office. He gave a challenge to the assembled delegates concerning the years that lay ahead of them.

Five years' experience of a second world war has surely given us an unprecedented ray from the Lamp of Sacrifice. There has never been salvation of any sort, temporal or spiritual, without sacrifice. The great head of the Church is the Only Saviour of men because He appeared 'to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself'. A generation of youth baptized by fire in the holocaust of war, will return to us in a mood and mind moulded to appreciate the meaning of the Cross of Christ. Let them then not find us unprepared, but ready to match their sacrifices with ours. We shall not win them for Christ and His Church while we engage in theological controversy, but only as we present the Lord of All Good Life who once died that they might live. (1945 *SBY*: 61)

In other words, the churches to which servicemen and women returned needed to demonstrate a wholehearted commitment to the principles they proclaimed or risk being viewed as a people lacking credibility in the eyes of many who had risked their lives for their country during the war. One initiative Scottish Baptists focussed on was the establishment of Men's Fellowship groups in an attempt to replicate the close ties former servicemen would have had in the years spent in the Forces. The Women's Auxiliary had been seen to work well for women, but there had been no equivalent organisation for men. It aimed to provide not only spiritual input but also outdoor activities men could do together (for instance (June 1945) *SBM* 71.6: 4-5; (September 1945) *SBM* 71.9: 3-4; (December 1945) *SBM* 71.12: 2 These issues reported that a Men's Fellowship had started in many churches). A 1946 Church of Scotland report on Evangelism illustrated the depth of the problem. There was 'far more cynicism, bitterness and sense of frustration in young people returning from the services than their parents ever knew in 1919. Many of them have lost even the willingness to believe in anything' (Church of Scotland 1946: 55). A Free Church of Scotland report the previous year had concluded: '...that religious fervour, which had been on the wane for half a century, has reached its nadir...attendance at Sunday School and Bible Classes is now the exception rather than the rule' (*Free Church Monthly Record* December 1945: 188-189). The tone of Scottish Baptist reflections were more positive, but that had reflected the sustained numerical growth in their constituency up to 1935, in contrast to the decline in the more numerous Presbyterian ranks in the Twentieth Century.

Yet it was not just the churches that needed to take spiritual values seriously, for the wider society and its Government to prosper also needed to do so. James Scott, General Secretary of the Baptist Union, made this very clear in his 1944 annual report. He commended the Government for their advance planning for housing needs, for their preparation for European reconstruction and the reestablishment of trading relationships disrupted by the war, but this still left the most important issues unaddressed.

The supreme values are moral and spiritual, and must be put in the forefront of any scheme of reconstruction if our civilisation is to survive. No society is worthy of the name unless it is based upon the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ. If the new civilisation is not sustained and directed by a spiritual unity, the sacrifices of the past five years will largely have been in vain (1945 *SBY*: 66).

Scott's assessment of the situation facing the Union and its churches was sober but also realistic. There had been great disruption of the work of the churches due to the war and the membership losses which had begun in the late 1930s were not entirely due to the recent conflict. In 1945 the rate of decline in membership had reduced, but the numbers of baptisms, Sunday School children and teachers had increased. There were signs of optimism for the future, but he warned it was conditional upon 'an intensification of spiritual life in the churches' (1946 *SBY*: 57).

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