



'... look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest' (John 4:35)

In 2009, to commemorate the 400th anniversary of Baptists worldwide, and the 150th anniversary of Queensland during which time there has been a continuous Baptist presence in the State, D Morcom (Vice-Principal of Malyon College) wrote a series of articles about Baptist history. This is the first of five articles which first appeared in *The qb* magazine.

Where did Baptists come from?

Good question! Not from John the Baptist, although some people may be really disappointed to hear this. The people we know today as Baptists, the largest Protestant grouping in the world, trace their origins to the early 1600s.

Queen Elizabeth I (1558-1603), in an attempt to unify religiously-divided England, had parliament legislate for a religious "middle way" between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. She hoped that most people in England would be satisfied with the terms of this religious settlement, and on the whole her hopes were realised. But there were minorities on both ends of the Roman Catholic/Protestant spectrum who regarded Elizabeth's mediating Church of England as an ugly compromise.

On the Protestant side, the Puritans (so-called because they wanted to "purify" the Church of England from all vestiges of Roman Catholicism) continued to agitate for further reform of the Church of England in a Protestant direction. Most Puritans remained faithful

to the Church of England, hoping to reform the church from within. Some concluded, however, that the only way they would be able to worship freely in the way they believed God approved and Scripture required was to separate from the Church of England (an illegal and treasonable move in those days). From these "separatists" the first Baptists emerged, although the name "Baptist" only came later.

The story of Baptists begins with John Smyth (1570-1612), a Cambridge university lecturer and Church of England preacher of the city of Lincoln. A contemporary described him as "a learned man, and of good ability, but of an unsettled head". In October 1602 he was deposed from his position as preacher for "personal preaching" (!), an apparent reference to his rather reckless habit of rebuking prominent leaders for their sins from the pulpit. By about 1605 Smyth was beginning to have serious doubts about the Church of England, and attached himself to an (illegal) separatist congregation in the town of Gainsborough, Lincolnshire.

When part of this congregation left England for the comparative religious freedom of the new world in

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1606, Smyth became the leader of the Gainsborough congregation. The dangers for separatists continued to increase, however, with the new King James I (1603-1625) threatening to *"harrie them out of the land"*. In early 1608 conditions were so hazardous that Smyth and about forty of his congregation left to go to Amsterdam, a haven of religious tolerance at the time. Bradford, a leader of the Gainsborough congregation, described their action as follows: *"They shooke of this yoake of antichristian bondage, and as the Lord's free people, joined them selves (by a covenant of the Lord) into a church estate, in the fellowship of the gospel, to walke in all his wayes, made known, or to be made known unto them, according to their best endeavours, whatsoever it should cost them, the Lord assisting them."* True worship, Smyth insisted, must come *"from the hart"*; and thus *"reading out of a booke"* (a reference to The Book of Common Prayer) *"is no part of spiritual worship, but rather the invention of the man of synne."*

By 1609, Smyth was convinced that the New Testament did not teach infant baptism and had become aware of the need for believers' baptism which, he argued, constitutes the basis of the church. He thus persuaded his followers to disband and to reconstitute their congregation on the basis of believers' baptism: *"They dissolved their church ... and Mr. Smyth being the Pastor thereof, gave over his office, as did also the Deacons, and devised to enter a new communion by renouncing their former baptism, and taking upon them another.... Mr. Smyth, Mr. Helwisse, and the rest, having utterly dissolved and disclaimed their former church state and ministry, came together to erect a new church by baptism."* Thus, the first "Baptist" church came into being, four hundred years ago this year.

John Robinson, pastor of another English separatist church in Holland and an eye-witness of this event, wrote that *"Mr Smyth baptised first himself, and next Mr Helwisse."* The other forty members of the congregation

Article No. 2

By 1609, John Smyth and his little English-speaking "Baptist" congregation at Amsterdam (where they had fled to avoid persecution in England) had become convinced of believers' baptism. But Smyth (he of the "unsettled head" - see the article in the previous qb magazine) began to feel that they had made a mistake in baptising themselves and should have joined up with a group already practising believers' baptism (such as the Mennonites). The announcement of his doubts caused disagreement in the group (sadly, disagreement seems to have been a feature of Baptists since the beginning!). Some of them, led by Thomas Helwys, disagreed strongly with the position now adopted by

were then baptised in turn. These baptisms were by affusion (pouring); but the important point is that Smyth and his followers had come to the conclusion that the proper subject of baptism is the believer.

As Smyth explained in his book, *The Character of the Beast* (1609), *"This therefor is the question: whither the baptisme of infants be lawful, yea or nay: & whither persons baptised being infants must not renounce that false baptisme, and assume the true baptisme of Chr[ist]: which is to be administered uppon persons confessing their faith & their sinnes.... [Infant baptism has been an error], a cheef point of Antichristianisme, and the very essence and constitution of the false Church, as is cleerly discovered in this treatise."*

'Early Baptist convictions were thus shaped by a firm belief that the word of Christ in the Scriptures is the final authority for both belief and practice.'

Believers' baptism was obviously of enormous importance to Smyth; even more important, however, was his conviction that this was what the New Testament taught.

Early Baptist convictions were thus shaped by a firm belief that the word of Christ in the Scriptures is the final authority for both belief and practice. (So committed was Smyth to this principle that preachers should not even read from an English translation which might have been subject to "official" manipulation - the person doing the preaching should bring a Hebrew or Greek Bible into the pulpit and provide a free verbal translation on the spot!) Among other practices clearly taught in Scripture, as far as Smyth and his followers were concerned, was the baptism of believers, not infants. Following such convictions would inevitably bring religious dissenters such as these into conflict with the secular authorities, and raise acutely the question of how to respond when the law of Christ and the law of the land came into conflict.

Wrestling with that question will comprise the next instalment of the Baptist story.

Smyth, even accusing him of believing that *"the Church & Ministrie must come by succession"*. Smyth proceeded to make application to the Mennonites for membership, together with about thirty of the congregation. Helwys, on the other hand, wrote to the Mennonite leaders, warning them that Smyth was unstable (the suspicion referred to earlier, that he had an "unsettled head", perhaps had some truth to it).

The Mennonites did not respond immediately - they were evidently more careful than many of us today about whom they admitted to membership in their church. Smyth's group of followers were only ultimately

accepted into the Mennonite church in 1615, three years after Smyth himself had died.

While waiting for the Mennonites' reply, and in failing health, Smyth wrote his **Propositions and Conclusions concerning True Christian Religion**, containing a Confession of Faith of certain English people, living at Amsterdam (1612), marked by its very early expression of freedom of conscience and separation of church and state. The following paragraph is often quoted:

84. That the magistrate is not by virtue of his office to meddle with religion, or matters of conscience, to force or compel men to this or that form of religion, or doctrine; but to leave Christian religion free, to every man's conscience, and to handle only civil transgressions (Rom. xiii), injuries and wrongs of man against man, in murder, adultery, theft, etc., for Christ only is the king, and lawgiver of the church and conscience (James iv. 12).

In the meantime, Helwys had also been busy writing and in 1611 he published **A Declaration of English People Remaining at Amsterdam in Holland**.

Its stated purpose was to defend the "Truth of God", to give enlightenment to their own members because of the "fearful falls of some that hath been of us" (doubtless referring to Smyth's group), and to clear his own group of the false charges that had been laid against them. Each church may elect its own officers, including preaching elders, and both men and women deacons. The autonomy of the local church also receives clear expression:

12. That as one congregacion hath CHRIST, so hath all, 2 Cor. 10.7. And that the Word off GOD cometh not out from anie one, neither to anie one congregacion in particular. 1 Cor. 14.36. But vnto everie particular Church, as it doth vnto all the world. Coll. 1.5, 6. And therefore no church ought to challenge anie prerogative over anie other.

Believers' baptism and regenerate church membership are dealt with as follows:

13. That everie Church is to receive in all their members by Baptisme vpon the Confession off their faith and sinnes wrought by the preaching off the Gospel, according to the primitive Institucion. Mat. 28.19. And therefore Churches constituted after anie other manner, or off anie other persons are not according to CHRIST'S Testament.

14. That Baptisme or washing with Water, is the outward manifestacion off dieing vnto sinn, and walkeing in newness of life. Roman. 6.2, 3, 4. And therefore in no wise apperteyneth to infants.

In 1611, Helwys and the rest of the group (about ten in all, under Helwys' leadership) decided to return to England. Apparently they felt that they should not have left in the first place and that they should have faced the harassment and persecution boldly. They settled at Spitalfields, then on the outskirts of London, thus forming the first "Baptist" congregation on English soil (although they did not, as yet, use the name "Baptist" of themselves).

Under the leadership of Helwys the little group grew slowly. Helwys was a man of considerable principle and courage, consumed with the importance of the principle of religious liberty, which prompted him to write **A Short Declaration of the Mistery of Iniquity** in 1612. He sought to present a copy to King James I, who was anything but inclined towards the principle of religious liberty! In keeping with the convictions that have characterised Baptists ever since, Helwys had fearlessly written in the flyleaf of the King's complimentary copy:

The king is a mortal man, & not God, therefore hath no power over the immortal souls of his subiects, to make laws and ordinances for them, and to set spirituall Lords over them. If the king have authority to make spirituall Lords and lawes, then he is an immortal God, and not a mere man. O king, be not seduced by deceivers to sin so against God whome thou oughtest to obey, nor against thy poore subiects who ought and will obey thee in all things with body, life and goods, or els let their lives be taken from the earth. God save the king. Spittlefield neare London. Tho: Helwys.

James I was doubtless offended by this bluntness. In any event, in 1612 he had Helwys thrown into Newgate prison, from which he did not emerge alive, dying probably in 1616.

It is clear therefore, that Baptist distinctives such as the direct Lordship of Christ, liberty of conscience, freedom of religion and the separation of church and state were part of the Baptist DNA from the beginning of the movement. Baptists may again be required to take a stand on these fundamental values in our own times, as legislation and social pressure again place them under threat.

Article No. 3

The first two articles in this series described the origin and initial development of the people called Baptists in the early 1600s. Although they did not initially call themselves “Baptists” (a designation given them by their opponents), they had already settled on important distinctives we now recognise as Baptist, such as the baptism of believers, regenerate church membership, the autonomy of the local church, and freedom of conscience. These earliest Baptists came to be known as “General Baptists” because they held to the theology that Christ died for all people “generally” (a theology which is also called Arminian after the Dutch theologian Jacob Arminius). By 1650 there were 47 General Baptist churches in England.

At roughly the same time, a movement referred to as “Particular Baptists” was coming into existence. They emerged from an independent church of Puritan sympathies and reformed theology, including the view that Christ’s death was for a restricted or “particular” number of people, namely, the elect (thus their name “Particular Baptists”). By the late 1630s a small group became convinced that the subjects of baptism should not be infants but rather professed believers.

A certain Richard Blunt became convinced that baptism “ought to be by dipping the Body into the Water, resembling Burial and rising again.” Since there was no one in England who was practising believers’ baptism by immersion at the time and because Blunt could speak Dutch, he was sent to Holland to research the matter. On his return in 1642, “Mr Blunt Baptized Mr Blacklock that was teacher amongst them, & Mr Blunt being baptized, he and Mr Blacklock Baptized the rest of their friends that ware so minded, & many being added to them they increased much.”

By 1644 the number of “Particular Baptist” churches in the London area had grown to seven, and together they drew up The London Confession, a statement of faith that includes the following:

XXXIX. That Baptisme is an Ordinance of the new Testament, given by Christ, to be dispensed onely upon persons professing faith, or that are Disciples, or taught, who upon a profession of faith, ought to be baptized.

XL. The way and manner of the dispensing of this Ordinance the Scripture holds out to be dipping or plunging the whole body under water: it being a signe, must answer the thing signified, which are these: first, the washing the whole soule in the blood

of Christ: Secondly, that interest the Saints have in the death, burial and resurrection; thirdly, together with a confirmation of our faith, that as certainly as the body is buried under water, and riseth againe, so certainly shall the bodies of the saints be raised by the power of Christ, in the day of the resurrection, to reign with Christ. [A quaint note in the margin adds, “The word Baptizo, signifying to dip under water, yet so as with convenient garments both upon the administrator and subject, with all modestie.”]

XLI. The persons designed by Christ, to dispense this Ordinance, the Scriptures hold forth to be a preaching Disciple, it being no where tyed to a particular Church, Officer, or person extraordinarily sent, the Commision injoyning the administration, being given to them under no other consideration, but as considered Disciples.

‘Ever since about 1644 therefore, Baptists have been the same in all essential features as they are today.’

This makes The London Confession the first English confession of faith to contain an article on immersion as the scriptural mode of baptism. Ever since about 1644 therefore, Baptists have been the same in all essential features as they are today. At this early stage

there was very little contact – if any – between General and Particular Baptists (mainly because of the climate of persecution and the need for secrecy), and they may not even have known of each other’s existence.

In 1677 Particular Baptists drew up The Second London Confession (reissued in 1689 after the cessation of persecution which came about after the Act of Toleration in 1688, and since then often referred to simply as The 1689). It was written primarily to demonstrate the substantial agreement of Particular Baptists with the Presbyterian Westminster Confession of Faith (and was largely based upon it).

The only significant points of departure from the Westminster Confession of Faith in The Second London Confession are the Baptist understanding of the ordinances (especially baptism), church government, and the relation between church and state. It is therefore predominantly reformed in its theology. It was signed by 107 Particular Baptist churches from England and Wales, meeting in London. It has assumed a massive importance in Baptist history in the English-speaking world, and is still deeply respected today by Baptists of a reformed persuasion.

Article No. 4

English Baptists in the Eighteenth Century: Decline and Revival

The Baptist historian Ivimey, writing in 1823 of the period around 1750, observed that the General Baptists at that time “*were but few in number, and their congregations small and languishing*” and that “*there is no reason to doubt that our churches [that is, the Particular Baptists] were far more prosperous and numerous at the Revolution in 1688, than at this period, sixty-five years afterwards; so that prosperity had indeed slain more than the sword*” (quoted in Torbet, History, p. 71). When external pressure ceases, decline and internal disputes often begin. This is the sad truth about Baptists in the eighteenth century.

There were theological tensions not only between General and Particular Baptists, but also within both groups. General Baptists were progressively infected with extreme Arminianism and Socinian ideas (that is, a denial of the trinity, including a denial of the deity of Christ). Particular Baptists, on the other hand, varied in the extent to which they embraced Calvinism, many of them becoming hyper-Calvinists who were opposed to any evangelism, since Christ died for the elect only and that the elect would be saved by God’s irresistible grace.

This trend can be seen in the comment of an older man to William Carey (“the father of modern missions”) late in the 1700s when Carey was trying to raise support to go to India as a missionary: “*Young man, if God wants to save the heathen, He’ll do it without your help or mine.*” In this view the preaching of the Gospel becomes unnecessary.

These tensions sapped Baptists’ vitality and contributed to their stagnation and decline. A survey of Baptist ministers in London in 1731 reveals 7 Antinomian/Hyper-Calvinist, 7 Calvinist, 6 Arminian, 3 Unitarian and 2 Seventh Day (Torbet, History, p. 63). Preaching was often polemical and abstract, certainly not evangelistic.

In addition to these theological tensions, less attention was given to evangelism than to buildings and organisational structure. After the Toleration Act of 1689, Baptists began erecting church buildings, but many grew weary of the constant begging of money for building programmes. Generally such buildings were situated in the town centre, and ministry tended to focus on the immediate neighbourhood with very few evangelistic outreaches to the wider population. Also, attention was given, especially in the case of the General Baptists, to organisational structures such as the General Assembly. Evangelism was generally neglected.

A further reason for decline was that Baptists failed to adapt themselves to the Industrial Revolution. Little if any account was taken of the enormous changes in demography and social conditions brought about by the Industrial Revolution.

Finally, the training and care of Baptist ministers was poor. Ministerial training was lacking in any formal sense – it was done largely through being “apprenticed” to a senior pastor. Some Baptist pastors had been through university training as Anglicans before their conversion to Baptist views, but university training was denied to Baptists. Furthermore, ministers were woefully poorly paid. Most of them were bivocational. Many, even if they felt called, did not enter the ministry because they knew they would be unable to care for their families on the meagre stipends provided. In 1717, the Particular Baptists established the “London Fund” to assist needy ministers. The General Baptists followed suit in 1725, but even so, financial provision was extremely meagre.

When the spiritual revival so desperately needed by England did come, it was sparked not by Baptists but by Anglicans such as George Whitefield and the Wesleys. But Baptists were touched by these revivals in significant ways. Wesley’s preachers had a particular impact on the General Baptists, since they shared a common Arminian theology, and this impact was felt both in converts from the revivals becoming members of General Baptist churches, and many General Baptist churches themselves being revived. John Wesley didn’t particularly like his converts becoming Baptists with their doctrine of believers’ baptism by immersion, complaining that many of his Methodist chickens had become Baptist ducks!

One of Wesley’s converts was Dan Taylor (1738-1816) from North England. After his conversion he became a Methodist preacher, but as a result of his study of the New Testament he became convinced of his need for believers’ baptism by immersion. On one occasion he walked fifty miles to ask baptism of the Particular Baptists, but he was refused owing to his “general” (Arminian/Wesleyan) view on the atonement! He was, however, referred to the General Baptists, was baptised by them, and ultimately became a General Baptist minister in 1763.

With his ability, energy and convictions, Taylor soon became a leader among the General Baptists. He was greatly concerned about the decline of the General Baptist churches and about the defective Christology held by many of them. Taylor’s assessment of the General Baptist decline was that “*They degraded Christ, and He degraded them.*” Taylor continued to try to

renew the General Baptists from within, but in this he was largely unsuccessful. Eventually, in 1770, he called for a meeting of all “orthodox” (that is, Christologically sound) General Baptist ministers in London. Eighteen of them were present, and they decided to resign from the General Baptists and establish what they called *“The New Connection of General Baptists formed in 1770; with a design to revive Experimental Religion or Primitive Christianity in Faith and Practice.”* (For obvious reasons, they soon became known simply as “The New Connection”). By “experimental” in their name we should understand “experienced” – they wanted their Christian faith to be a living relationship with Christ because that is what they saw in the New Testament, not just a set of abstract ideas. The New Connection was characterised by evangelistic zeal, and under the untiring leadership of Dan Taylor it grew steadily.

So by the end of the eighteenth century there were three main groups of Baptists in England. The Particular Baptists were of a Calvinistic or Hyper-Calvinistic persuasion, and their resistance to centralisation had

Article No. 5

English Baptists in the 19th Century

The nineteenth century in English Baptist history was characterised by the denominational consolidation of Baptists, outstanding Baptist pulpiteers, and internal controversy – all of which have left their mark on Queensland Baptists, their step-children.

Attempts to bring English Baptists together into some kind of organisational unity was not an easy task. They were theologically diverse, including the Calvinistic, often Hyper-Calvinistic views of the Particular Baptists, and the Arminian theology and evangelical vitality of the New Connection. They also disagreed about the shape such unity should take and the powers of a central body. Another point of dissension was open versus closed communion (open communion meaning that all believers were welcome at the Lord’s table; closed that only baptised believers should be admitted). The story of the formation of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland is a long and complex one, but as early as 1813, some Particular Baptists began to meet together annually with a view to bringing a “Union” into being. The Particular Baptists were becoming less Calvinistic owing to the enormous spread of Arminian theology through the Evangelical Revivals and their own increasing interest in missions and thus renunciation of Hyper-Calvinism.

By 1831 this “Union” also voted to welcome into

resulted in no more than a loose association between their respective churches. The General Baptists were Arminian and often Unitarian in theology, and because they had much stronger associational tendencies, they had formed the General Assembly of General Baptists as far back as 1654. And now there were also the New Connection General Baptists, founded by Dan Taylor and his associates in 1770 as an evangelical breakaway from the General Baptists. In time, the “Old Connection” General Baptists who had remained orthodox in their theology (especially their Christology) joined the New Connection; the less orthodox General Baptists dissipated into unitarianism and thus the old “General Baptist” grouping ceased to exist. A variety of other smaller Baptist groups also came into being in the eighteenth century, such as the “Sabbatarian (Seventh Day) Baptists”, and the “Strict Baptists” (who were anti-organisation, anti-mission and anti-education). Thus was laid the foundation for the staggering diversity among Baptists which has characterised the movement pretty much from the beginning.

its fellowship New Connection churches, although the New Connection as a body remained separate. However, support for the venture of “Union” remained very weak. It was only in 1891 that the New Connection voted by an overwhelming majority to “accept the invitation offered.” Thus the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland was finally established.

Baptists also produced some outstanding preachers during the nineteenth century. Among these was Robert Hall (1764-1831), who became one of the most eloquent and best-known Baptist preachers of his day. Although a moderate Calvinist, he was a vigorous opponent of Hyper-Calvinism. The famous Welsh preacher Christmas Evans once told Hall how much he wished that the works of John Gill, the Hyper-Calvinist, had been written in the expressive Welsh language, to which Hall replied, “I wish they had, sir; I wish they had, with all my heart, sir, for then I should never have read them! They are a continent of mud, sir!” On another occasion, an influential member of Hall’s congregation took him to task for not preaching more frequently on predestination. Looking him steadily in the face and speaking slowly, Hall said, “Sir, I perceive that nature predestined you to be an ass, and what is more, I see that you are determined to make your calling and election sure.”

Another famous Baptist preacher of the nineteenth century was Alexander Maclaren (1826-1910). Son of a Glasgow businessman, he was converted at

“I wish they had, sir; I wish they had, with all my heart, sir, for then I should never have read them! They are a continent of mud, sir!”

the age of fifteen. He studied at Stepney College in London (the predecessor of Regent's Park College, the Baptist College now attached to Oxford University), and excelled at biblical languages. After an initial pastorate in Southampton, he moved to Union Chapel in Manchester in 1858 and remained there until his retirement in 1903. He gave himself to his pulpit ministry and became a fine expository preacher of the Scriptures. "Sermon-lovers and young ministers made special journeys to Manchester to hear him, hoping to fathom the secret of his pulpit mastery." Baptists honoured him by electing him as President of the Baptist Union on two occasions and he was also chosen to preside at the first meeting of the Baptist World Alliance which was held in London in 1905.

Yet another influential Baptist leader, of a more progressive streak, was John Clifford (1836-1923). He was well-known not only for his humility and spirituality, but also for his "broad interpretation of evangelicalism, his appreciation of the work of Biblical scholarship, his resolute opposition to blind conservatism, his repudiation of the antagonism between Religion and Science so often proclaimed by some in our own Church, and his steadfast adherence to the New Testament idea of the Church." He was twice elected as President of the Baptist Union and was elected as the first President of the Baptist World Alliance (1905-1910). He also served the Free Churches well as a spokesman against the Church of England establishment.

A close friend of Clifford, but of considerably more conservative theology, was the "prince of Baptist preachers", the famous Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892). A remarkable and unusually gifted person, he excelled in pulpit delivery, literary skills and administrative ability. Raised in a Paedobaptist home (advocates of infant baptism), he was converted in a Methodist chapel. After becoming convinced of believers' baptism by immersion, he became pastor of the Waterbeach Baptist Chapel in 1851 (when only seventeen years of age!). In 1854 he was called to the New Park Street Baptist Chapel in Southwark, London, which was soon filled to overflowing under Spurgeon's powerful preaching. This necessitated the building of the Metropolitan Tabernacle in 1859 (seating about 5,500 people), where he ministered until a few months before his death. His preaching was filled with anecdotes and illustrations and he

possessed a marvellous wit, but he was passionately committed to the faithful exposition of Scripture. He was never ordained—he refused it, claiming that it was superfluous for men to repeat what God had already done! Spurgeon was a moderate Calvinist, opposing both Hyper-Calvinism and Arminianism, although he was accused of being an Arminian because of his passion to see souls saved.

Spurgeon was never a lover of controversy. But his fears that heresy was creeping into Baptist pulpits led in 1887 to his writing a series of articles which were published in the *Sword and Trowel*, complaining that Baptists were going downhill doctrinally. The resulting dispute came to be called the "Down-Grade Controversy". Spurgeon's main concerns were the following: an

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increasing interest among Baptists in Darwin's ideas about evolution, increasing interest in biblical criticism, the spread of ideas about inspiration which allowed for errors in the Bible, a rejection by some of the penal-substitutionary view of the atonement, and universalist convictions which were to be found in some Baptist churches (the idea that all will ultimately be saved). The Baptist Union executive asked Spurgeon to document his allegations that the Baptist Union tolerated heresy. This placed Spurgeon in a difficult position,

because he had derived some of his information from the President of the Union, who had asked that his name not be revealed. One of the stranger results of the controversy was that, in order to protect doctrinal purity, Spurgeon proposed that a creed be adopted in place of the confession of faith, but his proposal was not accepted. Another result was that Spurgeon and his church withdrew from the Baptist Union in October 1887, prompting the Union to pass a motion of censure upon him; a motion which was never withdrawn. This grieved him deeply, and probably hastened his death. Australian Baptists (including Queensland Baptists) come predominantly from English Baptist stock and many of the features of Queensland Baptist life in the twentieth and twenty-first century – emphasis on biblical preaching, debates about the place and power of the Union, and doctrinal controversy – can be seen in our English forebears too.

(The quotations in this final article come from A C Underwood, A History of the English Baptists.)

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