

***The Report of the
Commission on the Associations
1964***

***The Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland
4 Southampton Row, London W.C.1***

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The following points should be noted:

1. This Report was received for denominational discussion by the Baptist Union Council on November 10th, 1964, but none of the recommendations on pages 1-6 have been discussed or been commended either to the General Purposes and Finance Executive or to the Associations.
2. The number of Association churches given in the table on page 27 is the number of fully constituted churches in membership with the Baptist Union.
3. The number of Association churches given on page 33 is the number of separate worshipping communities some of which are not, of course, fully constituted churches.
4. Some discrepancies may be detected in the statistics of the Welsh Associations. This is due to county boundaries and Association boundaries not coinciding.

Baptist Church House.
November, 1964.

Ernest A. Payne.

Throughout the report the statistics quoted are those published in the Association handbooks for 1962

FOREWORD

On 13th March, 1962, the Baptist Union Council passed the following resolution :

1. That an *ad hoc* Committee or Commission on the Associations be appointed. The Commission shall prepare a report with recommendations for the consideration of the Council, having particular reference in the light of Baptist principles, history and present practice, to :—

- (a) the relationship of the Associations to the Union and its Committees and Departments.
- (b) their relationship to the General Superintendents and their areas.
- (c) Association boundaries and relative strength.
- (d) representation upon and effectiveness of Association committees.
- (e) their relationship to the B.W.L. Federations, B.M.M. districts and B.M.S. auxiliaries.
- (f) the increasing pressure for the appointment of full-time Secretaries.
- (g) the present arrangements regarding the return of a percentage of Home Work Fund contributions, and other relevant matters.

2. That the Committee or Commission number twelve, with power to co-opt., and to seek views from any quarter as might seem desirable. A report to be presented by March 1964.

3. That the General Purposes and Finance Executive appoint the members of the Commission, after receiving further suggestions from the Associations.

The following were appointed by the General Purposes and Finance Executive on 10th July, 1962, to serve on the Commission :

Mr. Victor Brown	<i>North Western Area</i>
Mr. E. Roberts	<i>North Eastern Area</i>
Rev. S. D. Cuthbertson	<i>East Midland Area</i>
Rev. C. Hardiman	<i>West Midland Area</i>
Dr. L. G. Champion	<i>Western Area</i>
Rev. Hugh Reid	<i>Eastern Area</i>
Mr. Horace F. Gale	<i>Central Area</i>
Rev. J. Tweedley	<i>Southern Area</i>
Mr. W. R. Booth	<i>Metropolitan Area</i>
Rev. W. E. M. Williams	<i>South Wales Area</i>
Miss M. Russell	
Mrs. C. B. Jewson	

Chairman : Dr. W. M. S. West

Secretary : Rev. Arthur H. Bonser

At the first meeting of the Commission in September 1962 the following were co-opted :

Rev. S. F. Clark
Rev. T. A. Steen
Rev. M. F. Williams

On his election to the Vice-Presidency of the Baptist Union in 1963, Dr. L. G. Champion withdrew from the Commission.

The Commission has met six times including three residential meetings. The final meeting, at which the report was adopted, was held at Green Hills, Worthing, from 1st July to 3rd July, 1964, and the following members were present : Mr. W. R. Booth, Mr. V. Brown, Rev. S. D. Cuthbertson, Rev. C. Hardiman, Rev. H. Reid, Mr. E. Roberts, Miss M. Russell, Rev. T. A. Steen, Rev. J. Tweedley, Rev. W. E. M. Williams, Dr. W. M. S. West, Rev. A. H. Bonser.

The Commission expresses its appreciation of the ready co-operation it has received from the Associations. Much information has been sought from Associations, colleges and churches, and the group discussions at the Denominational Conference held at Swanwick in May 1964 supplied much confirmatory material to evidence already collected.

Although the terms of reference suggested that a report should be presented by March 1964, the Commission at its first meeting made it clear that it could not be bound by this date and expressed the opinion that it was more likely that the report would be ready late in 1964.

The Commission has deliberately felt it necessary to limit its thinking to the life of the Denomination itself, though its discussions have always tried to keep in mind the ecclesiastical and social context in which we live to-day.

It is the hope of the Commission that the report will stimulate discussion on matters vital to the Denomination, and that out of such discussions right decisions may be taken.

Finally, the Commission wishes to express its gratitude to the Officers of the Baptist Union, especially to Dr. E. A. Payne for his continual advice and encouragement, and to the Rev. R. W. Thomson for carrying so much of the administrative responsibility.

W. M. S. WEST
A. H. BONSER

INTRODUCTION

The consideration of any aspect of Baptist life must recognise, if it is to be accurate and fruitful, the diverse traditions, influences and theologies that contribute to the Baptist outlook and ethos. There are within our organisation and procedure anomalies and inconsistencies which are the products of history and geography. The British generally are individualists who disdain logic and uniformity and Baptists in particular are of an independent turn of mind. Baptist reformers have always to be on their guard against trying to tidy up too recklessly the exuberant and tangled foliage which has come to surround our corporate activities.

The earliest Baptist Churches of the seventeenth century came out of Elizabethan Separatism after Smyth and Helwys had had contacts with the Mennonites in Holland. Their theology included a rejection of certain of the chief tenets of Calvin about predestination and election, original sin and baptismal regeneration. They became known as General Baptist Churches. But from the middle of the seventeenth century there were churches which were strictly Calvinist in their views, though practising the baptism of believers on profession of faith and not the baptism of infants. These were the Particular Baptist Churches. In the second half of the century Baptists and Quakers were frequently in conflict, but in a number of ways each group influenced the other.

There was considerable intermingling of the two main streams of Baptist life, General and Particular, in the eighteenth century. Individuals and churches changed their theological allegiance from time to time. Many General Baptist Churches rejected the ancient creeds of the Church because they contained non-biblical language ; not a few of these churches moved gradually towards Unitarianism. In the Particular Baptist Churches a scholastic kind of High Calvinism reigned. Spiritual life and witness were at a low ebb in both groups until, during the flood-tide of the Methodist Revival, the New Connexion of General Baptist Churches was formed, while under influences stemming chiefly from Jonathan Edwards a more moderate evangelical Calvinism was proclaimed by Andrew Fuller and his associates.

It was ' Fullerism ' which in the end united all the Particular Baptist Churches (save the few which explicitly rejected Fuller's teaching and became the nucleus of the Strict and Particular Baptists, now a denomination with some 15,000 members) with the General Baptists of the New Connexion. In the process a discussion of ' Terms of Communion ' led most of the churches to open their Table to all believers and a steadily growing number to adopt ' open membership.'

From the seventeenth century Baptists cherished the principle of 'association' over against 'independency.' When the General Union was formed in 1812-13, and when it was reconstituted in 1831 and 1865, it was made clear that the Associations were constituent members. The Union consisted of Associations, churches, ministers and (after 1865) personal members, bound together by loyalty to Christ, by a common history, by a modified congregational form of polity and by observance of the New Testament rite of baptism in the New Testament manner. Any attempt to use or draw up a fully articulated creed as a basis or test of membership has been more than once rejected.

For several generations fellowship between those with different theological emphases, different views of Biblical inspiration and different methods of evangelism has been characteristic of Baptists. It is a fellowship which could be disrupted all too easily. It demands restraint, charity and loyalty on the part of all who share it. The characteristic variety of Baptist life makes the treatment of subjects like those dealt with in this report more difficult than it would be in a denomination more homogeneous and uniform in doctrine and practice. But our variety and our freedom are among our most precious possessions.

A recognition of this background is essential for the understanding of this report, for the Commission itself has been made up of those with differing emphases. It has refused to gloss over disagreements by comprehensive generalisations and therefore at one or two points the reader will discover alternative proposals set down side by side. The encouraging thing has been, however, that the Commission has found itself able to speak with one voice on so many vital issues. All its members will testify that out of lengthy debates and discussions there has come, not only a deepening understanding of each other's points of view, but also a discovery that on many matters there is fundamental agreement.

The summary of the Commission's findings and recommendations will, it is hoped, make this perfectly obvious.

A SUMMARY OF THE REPORT INCORPORATING RECOMMENDATIONS

What follows is a summary of the report set out in thesis form. Of these theses, forty are recommendations and are printed in **bold type**. The numbers in brackets following each thesis refer to the pages in the report, and the numbers in the margins of the main report refer to the theses.

The Commission asks the Baptist Union Council to receive this report and : (a) to commend to the General Purposes and Finance Executive for its consideration the recommendations numbered 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 26, 28, 34, 36, 37, 38, 39, 41, 53, 55, 61. (Marked "C" in the margin); (b) to commend to the Associations for their consideration those recommendations numbered 5, 6, 8, 22, 43, 44, 45, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 54, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 63, 64. (Marked "A" in the margin).

I. THE ORIGIN AND PURPOSE OF THE ASSOCIATION

1. The Origin of the Associations.

1. That the concept of local churches associating together is derived from the New Testament and reflected in Baptist History. (7-10)
2. That the motive for such associating is summed up in II Corinthians 1; 24.
"Do not think we are dictating the terms of your faith; your hold on the faith is secure enough. We are working with you for your own happiness." (New English Bible). (10)

2. The Development of the Baptist Union.

3. That the development of the Baptist Union over 150 years now demands a re-thinking of the relationship of the Association to the Union. (11)
4. That the concept of the Baptist Union as the Associations associating together could provide a starting point for such re-thinking and the working out of its implications. (11)

3. The Purpose of the Associations.

- A 5. That every Association should re-examine its stated general aims. (11-12)
- A 6. That the following particular matters should be under constant survey in each Association :
 - (a) Mutual inspiration and evangelical encouragement
 - (b) Christian education
 - (c) Christian citizenship
 - (d) Support of wider Baptist witness
 - (e) The ministry
 - (f) The strategy of church extension
 - (g) Church closure
 - (h) Grants administration (12-15)

II. TOWARDS A STRENGTHENING OF CONFIDENCE

7. That all of us need to work for a strengthening of confidence in each other. (16)
- A 8. **That if a basis of doctrine is felt to be necessary for an Association, the declaration of principle of the Union is commended for consideration.** (16-17)
9. That the motive for associating as already stated in Thesis 2 implies mutual encouragement, mutual love and mutual service. (17)
10. That all thinking about 'Authority' must be seen in the context of the distinction between 'magisterial authority' which is the authority of a master who dominates, and 'ministerial authority' which is the authority of one who serves. (17)
11. That the authority of Jesus is the authority of the servant and of the suffering servant at that. (17)
12. That such 'ministerial authority' is the distinguishing mark of Christian authority as against that so often exercised in the world. (17)
13. That any authority which rests with the Association, rests with it not that the churches might become subservient but that through the Association local churches in their mission and all their activities may be served. (17)
14. That the Commission is aware that there are those who advocate an introduction into the denomination of a policy resembling that of the Methodists or Presbyterians, where authority is viewed as delegated from the local church to wider groups and ultimately to a grouping at national level, but the Commission is agreed :
 - (a) that it cannot accept this as it appears to cut across the Baptist definition of the motive of associating ;
 - (b) that Baptists should go perhaps the more difficult way based on mutual trust between church and church in Association, and Association and Association in the Union ;
 - (c) that authority to serve can only be given by Christ ;
 - (d) that our Lord works not only through local churches but through Associations and through the Union ;
 - (e) that it is necessary therefore to recognise that local church, Association and Union are not to be viewed as working one above the other, but as working *together*, each having its essential part in all matters which concern the wider fellowship beyond the local church ;
 - (f) that in the last resort the strengthening of confidence in each other lies with each one of us as we recognise the other man as a brother in Christ whom we are to serve. (18)

III. THE ASSOCIATION AND THE UNION

1. **The Association, the Assembly and the Council.**
- C 15. **That the anomalous position whereby a church which is a member of an Association and is thereby a member of the Union whether or not that church has in its own right been admitted to the Union requires investigation.** (19-20)
- C 16. **That personal membership of the Union should cease and instead a scheme for 'Friends of the Union' should be developed.** (20)
- C 17. **That the clause permitting Associate members of the Assembly requires examination as to its purpose.** (20)
- C 18. **That the Welsh Association representation on the Baptist Union Council requires re-consideration.** (21)
- C 19. **That either (a) the Constitution of the Baptist Union Council should be revised, leaving the Assembly much as it is now, or (b) the Constitution of the Baptist Union should be revised so that an enlarged Baptist Union Council becomes the basic legislative body with the Annual Assembly remaining as an occasion for fellowship and inspiration.** (20-28)
- C 20. **That in either case the basis of election of Association representatives to the Council should remain the number of churches in an Association rather than the number of church members as has been suggested.** (22)
- C 21. **That in either case the number of representative members on the Council from Associations should be increased.** (22)
- A, C 22. **That the method of electing Association representatives to the Baptist Union Council calls for review.** (22)
- C 23. **That if (19a) is accepted the number of elected members should be reduced to 35 and Association representation be increased on the basis of 1 representative for every 25 churches.** (22-24)
- C 24. **That if (19b) is accepted the Baptist Union Council should be increased to approximately 350 members allowing 1 additional member for every 10 churches in addition to the Association Secretary.** (25)
25. **That the increased representative nature of the Baptist Union Council reflects the theological concept of the Union as the Associations associating together.** (26)
- C 26. **That consideration should again be given as to how far Baptist Union Council Papers and Baptist Union Council deliberations are private.** (26)
27. **That the responsibility of the Baptist Union, through its Council, is to consider those aspects of the topics proper to Associations (see thesis 6) which are more effectively and efficiently dealt with by representatives drawn from the whole country.** (28)

2. The Association and the Area.

- C 28. That the relationship of the General Superintendents to the Associations as distinct from the Areas requires re-examination and that this will come about when the relationship between the Association and the Union is more clearly defined (see 4 and 25 above). (29)
29. That the existence of Areas with Area Committees tends to separate the individual Association from the Associations in the Union. (29)
30. That the existence of Areas can tend to cause the General Superintendent to be viewed as an official once removed from the Association by the Area. (29)
31. That the Commission feels that the General Superintendents do their work magnificently. (29)
32. That some members of the Commission feel, however, that the General Superintendents are being asked to perform tasks which, in these days, are virtually impossible. (29)
33. That these same members would wish to call attention—as did the Polity Report of 1942—to the fact that the terms of reference of General Superintendents primarily envisage them as pastors to ministers and churches. (29-30)
- C 34. That the whole Commission is agreed that the functions of Area Committees could well be carried out by Association Committees and recommends therefore that Area Committees should cease to exist and that the word 'Area' should be taken to define simply the geographical area which a General Superintendent serves. (31)

IV. ASSOCIATION LIFE

1. Associations, their Size and relative Strength.

35. That, as more than half our churches have a membership of less than 100, the need for all churches to share in Association life is vital. (32-34)
- C 36. That some members of the Commission wish to recommend that the present tendency towards the breaking down of the larger Associations into smaller districts should be developed and encouraged (see thesis 28). (34)
- C 37. That there should be a periodic review of Association boundaries undertaken by the General Superintendents. (34)
- C 38. That attention should be drawn to the inequality in size of Associations. (34)
- C 39. That other members of the Commission suggest a more radical course is required and recommend :
- (a) That there should be an increase in the number of General Superintendents.

(b) That there should not be any major alteration to Association Boundaries but that some smaller Associations would share a General Superintendent whilst some larger Associations would have two. (34-35)

40. That the members of the Commission who make this radical proposal do so because they are convinced that the General Superintendents are the key figures in Association life, particularly as this life develops in closer relationship within the Baptist Union. (35-36)

2. Association Officers.

- C 41. That if the proposal in thesis 39 be not accepted then the appointment of some additional full-time Association Secretaries is inevitable. (36)
42. That the pressure for full-time Association Secretaries is due in large measure to the need for 'pastoral care' in its widest sense at Association level. (36)
- A 43. That the appointment of a Minute Secretary is commended as essential in every Association. (37)

3. Association Committees.

- A 44. That the question as to whether the General Superintendent is an Association Officer needs clarification. (38)
- A 45. That Life Membership of Associations requires examination. (38)
46. That a considerable variety of practice exists in the methods followed by Associations for electing Committee members. (38-41)
47. That a combination of elected and representative members produces the most effective results. (41)
- A 48. That the relationship between Association Executive Committees and Association General Committees requires constant consideration. (42)
- A 49. That the Ministerial Recognition Committee of an Association should concentrate its attention upon the candidate's sense of vocation, standing within his own church and acceptance of opportunities of service. (42)
- A 50. That great care should be taken by Associations in their methods of nominating Baptist Union Vice-Presidential Candidates. (43)
- A 51. That Associations should be asked to seek out and encourage those who might have a vocation to full-time Christian Service. (43)
- A 52. That every Association General Committee should have a committee member representing each department of the Baptist Union. (43)

- C 53. That the Commission welcomes the work of the Joint Officers' Committee for closer relationship between the Baptist Missionary Society and the Baptist Union and feels that the Baptist Missionary Society should be approached to discuss the possibility of closer relationship between the Missionary Auxiliaries and the Associations. (43)
- A 54. That it is vital that the local churches be kept informed of the work of the Association General Committee. (43)
- C 55. That regular meetings between Association Secretaries should be encouraged. (44)
- A 56. That Association Committees should normally meet in the evening. (44)

4. Association Assemblies

- A 57. That consideration be given to the idea of two Assemblies each year, one on a Saturday and the other on a week-day evening. (44)
- A 58. That more care be taken within the local church in the appointment of Assembly Delegates. (45)
- A 59. That each local church should ensure that opportunity is given for a report on matters arising from the Association Assembly. (45)
- A 60. That Annual Assembly Programmes should seek to deal with matters of practical importance to the churches and that there should be greater opportunities for Group discussion. (45-47)

5. Association Finance.

- C 61. That all Association Auditors be asked to certify that the requirements of the Home Work Fund Scheme have been complied with or, if not, the extent of the deviation. (47)
62. That the amounts refunded to the Associations are, in the main, necessary to meet the general expenses and the secretarial expenses. (48)
- A 63. That, however, some Associations show a large surplus from the refund after meeting all expenses, whilst one or two cannot meet their expenses solely from the refund. (48)
- A 64. That all Associations should make it widely known to the churches that their main source of income is through the Home Work Fund. (48)

CONCLUSION

65. That, although much of what the Commission has said and recommended is organisational, its motive all along has been at heart evangelical. (49)

THE ORIGIN AND PURPOSE OF THE ASSOCIATION

1. The Origin of the Associations.

1. Any report on the Associations should begin by asking the question as to how and why they came into being. The answer to this question takes us back to the seventeenth century, for five of the thirty-one Associations listed in the Baptist Union handbook were founded between 1640 and 1690. W. L. Lumpkin in his book *Baptist Confessions of Faith* comments thus: "Formal associationalism was primarily the result of a native Baptist connectional instinct (for Baptists were never independents, strictly speaking) and of expediency in view of the tasks to be undertaken. Political events hastened the development; military and political organisation followed associational patterns... Before 1660 permanent Associations had become typical Baptist institutions."¹

It is right that we should turn to the Confessions themselves and see how far they bear out such a claim. In doing this we have quoted intentionally from statements of purpose of the Confessions as well as from the Confessions themselves.

In 1644 seven Particular Baptist Churches in London associated together in producing a Confession of Faith. In the preamble, the representatives from the seven congregations write thus: "We doe therefore here subscribe to it, some of each body in the name, and by the appointment of seven congregations, who though wee be distinct in respect of our particular bodies, for conveniency sake, being as many as can well meete together in one place, yet are all one in Communion, holding Jesus Christ to be our head and Lord; under whose government wee desire alone to walke, in following the Lamb wheresoever he goeth; . . ." ²

Within the Confession of Faith itself we find a similar point made:—

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"And although the particular congregations be distinct and several Bodies, every one a compact and knit citie in its selfe; yet are they all to walk by one and the same rule, and by all means convenient to have the counsell and help one of another in all needfull affaires of the Church, as members of one body in the common faith under Christ their only head."³

The General Baptists were most active in the Midlands and particularly in the East Midlands. In 1651 representatives of thirty churches met together, probably at Leicester, and published a Confession of Faith. The preamble runs thus:

¹ Lumpkin. op. cit. 72

² Lumpkin. op. cit. 155

³ Lumpkin. op. cit. 166

“Published (in love) by consent of two from each Congregation, appointed for that purpose.

1. To inform those who have a desire to know what Religious Duties they hold forth.
2. To undeceive those that are misinformed thereof.
3. To the end that the said Congregations may in love, and in the spirit of Meekness, be informed by any that conceive they walk amiss.”¹

Once again we have the clear indication of local congregations delegating power to their representatives to act on their behalf in producing a Confession of Faith. The principle of mutual assistance is enunciated clearly within the Confession itself :

“That if any controversie should so fall out, that the case cannot easily be determined by that society or church where it is first presented, that then use be made of some other society which they are in fellowship with, for their assistance therein : Acts xv 1, 2.”²

The Particular Baptists in the Midlands were not slow in following their General Brethren with a Confession of Faith published in 1655. This date marks the formation of the Midland Association and to it the present West Midland Association traces its foundation. It is noteworthy that a London Baptist, Daniel King, helped in its formation. Lumpkin goes so far as to say of King “Probably at the suggestion of the London Churches, he was by 1655 giving much of his time to building up associations of churches in various parts of the country.”³

Each church examined the suggested Confession of Faith and after such examination adopted it. Representatives of the churches then came together at Moreton-in-the-Marsh in June 1655 and signed the Confession and Statement of Purpose. This is how it begins :—

“We do therefore . . . mutually acknowledge each other to be true Churches of Christ ; and that it is our duty to hold communion with each other . . . and so to be helpful to the other, as the Lord shall give opportunity and ability, endeavouring that we may all increase more and more, in faith and knowledge, in all purity and holiness, to the honour of our God. And it is our resolution, in the strength of Christ, to endeavour to do so.”

The Baptists of the West Country, under the influence of Thomas Collier, had been meeting together for several years prior to 1656 when, at Bridgwater, they approved their Confession of Faith. Within this Confession, Article XXVIII states that “it is the duty of the members of Christ in the order of the Gospel, tho’

¹ Lumpkin. op. cit. 174

² Lumpkin. op. cit. 186

³ Lumpkin. op. cit. 196

in several congregations and assemblies (being one in the head) if occasion be, to communicate each to other in things spiritual and things temporal (Rom. xv 26 ; Acts xi 24 ; xv 22 ; xi 22).”

Even in the seventeenth century, however, there were meetings together of Baptists which were more broadly based than Association gatherings. The first English Particular Baptist General Assembly was held in 1677 and from it came the Second London Confession. Within it there occur important articles which set out thinking about associating :

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“14. As each Church, and all the members of it, are bound to pray continually (Eph. vi. 18 ; Ps. cxxii 6), for the good and prosperity of all the Churches of Christ, in all places ; and upon all occasions to further it (every one within the bounds of their places, and callings, in the exercise of their gifts and graces) so the Churches (when planted by the providence of God so as they may enjoy opportunity and advantage for it) ought to hold communion amongst themselves for their peace, increase of love, and mutual edification (Rom. xvi 1, 2 ; III John 8, 9, 10).

“15. In cases of difficulties or differences, either in point of Doctrine or Administration ; wherein either the Churches in general are concerned or any one Church in their peace, union and edification ; or any member, or members of any Church are injured, in or by any proceedings in censures not agreeable to the truth, and order : it is according to the mind of Christ that many Churches holding communion together, do by their messengers meet to consider (Acts xv 2, 4, 6, and 22, 23, 25) and give their advice in, or about that matter in difference, to be reported to all the Churches concerned, howbeit these messengers assembled, are not entrusted with any Church-power¹ properly so called ; or with any jurisdiction over the Churches themselves, to exercise any censures either over any Churches, or persons (II Cor. i 24 ; I John iv 1) or to impose their determination on the Churches or Officers.”

This quotation sets out clearly the principle of associating, and at the same time seeks to safeguard the individual church against imposition of decisions. Nevertheless, so to speak is to emphasise the negative. The principle enunciated makes it evident that the advice given by the assembled messengers will be assumed worthy of the most serious consideration by the church in question. Furthermore, this basic question of the seat of “church-power properly so-called” is often complicated by stating it in terms of an ‘either-or’ as though the associating messengers (*i.e.*, the Association) will advise one thing and the church will desire another. In practice the matter more often became a ‘both-and’ in that the church’s thinking coincided with the advice offered by the wider community.

¹ See Appendix I, page 54.

Baptists have always sought the authority of the Word of God and it is necessary that we should take note of the scriptural texts quoted in the Confessions of Faith which relate to the principle of associating.

Psalm cxix 6 "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee."

Acts xi 22 "Then the tidings of these things (advance at Antioch) came to the ears of the Church at Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas that he should go as far as Antioch."

Acts xi 29 "Then the disciples (at Antioch), every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea."

Acts xv The Jerusalem Council and its outcome.

Romans xv 26 "For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make certain contributions for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem."

Romans xvi 1 and 2 "I commend unto you Phoebe our sister, which is a servant of the Church which is at Cenchrea; that you receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you; for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also."

2 II Corinthians i 24 (N.E.B.) "Do not think we are dictating the terms of your faith; your hold on the faith is secure enough. We are working with you for your own happiness."

Ephesians vi 18 "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints."

I John iv 1 "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world."

III John 8, 9, 10 "We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellow helpers to the truth. I wrote unto the Church, but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words; and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church."

From this variety of quotations there emerges the scriptural teaching that churches do not stand as units isolated from each other, and that, as a result, there is need for mutual prayer, mutual financial aid, mutual advice and mutual pastoral assistance. We note too St. John's grave disappointment at the rejection of help by the high-handed Diotrephes in the local church, and also the principle laid down by St. Paul that the motive of his concern for the churches was not to dictate to them the terms of their faith, but to work with them for their happiness.

In all our thinking about the Associations to-day we shall do well to bear in mind this scriptural background.

On this understanding the Associations of the seventeenth century came into being and since then, particularly in the nineteenth century, many more were founded until to-day they number more than thirty. But the Holy Spirit has brought about other changes over the past three-hundred years. The great vision of Fuller and Carey of Baptists working together in overseas missionary enterprise resulted in the growth and development of the Baptist Missionary Society. Then in 1812 the Baptist Union came into being.

2. The Development of the Baptist Union.

3. The development of the Baptist Union over the 150 years of its existence has gone on without a great deal of serious consideration ever being given to its relationship to the Associations. By its Constitution Associations belong to it. In the administration of the work of the Union in the country, the Associations play an essential part. We have seen that the historical origin of the Associations lay in the associating together of local churches. We know that the origin of the Baptist Union lay in the conviction of a number of pastors that their churches ought to associate. It is significant to note that the Chairman at the inaugural meeting enumerated the matters which would concern any meeting of the Union. These matters included prayer, support of the Mission, reports from the churches, support of the Academies and students, religious instruction in the home and Sunday School, village preaching, support of aged ministers, distribution of Christian literature, and the erection of new meeting houses in various districts. The Chairman's address thus defined the general objects of the Union which were 'the promotion of the cause of Christ in general; and the interests of the denomination in particular; with a primary view to the encouragement and support of the Baptist Mission.' The first committee of the Union was comprised of the 'Associating Ministers in London.'

Quite clearly the original purposes of the Union coincided closely with the accepted purposes of Associations. As the Union has developed in practice its activities have become ever more evidently, over the whole country, the same sort of activities as those carried out originally by the Associations. A consideration of the Associations to-day therefore leads inevitably not only to a consideration of the Association in relationship to the local church, but also to a definition of the Association in relationship to the Baptist Union. This latter question is clearly complex as many of the Associations were formed prior to the Union. It is further complicated by the present constitutional position of the Union whereby churches and Associations are both *directly* in membership. Any attempt to define the Union in relationship to the Associations must raise serious questions: the question, for instance, of whether the paragraphs of the Seventeenth Century Confessions and their biblical 'proof texts' which deal with 'associating' might well now be claimed as applicable to the churches 'associating' at the national level in the Union or whether, indeed, the Union ought not itself to be viewed as the Associations 'associating.' The need to take notice of these matters will be evident in the whole of this report.

3. The Purpose of the Associations.

5. The aims of the Associations are set out in most Association handbooks and in general we may suggest that the aims of an Association are:—

1. To express in one fellowship the unity we have in Christ which is wider than any one local church.
2. To foster the establishment of strong local churches.
3. To promote Christian fellowship amongst the associated churches.
4. To encourage co-operation in advancing the cause of Christ.
5. To provide an agency and channel for the work and witness of the Baptist Union.
6. To encourage a responsible interest in the work and witness of the Baptist Missionary Society.
7. To take united action in matters affecting the public good.
8. To represent Baptists on certain statutory bodies and committees where representation wider than a local church is required, e.g., Joint Education Policy Committees; Churches' Main Committee; etc.

Following from these general aims it is quite possible to enumerate particular matters which express the nature of church life in association, demonstrating as they do, that an Association is no mere administrative unit, and that its activities are not simply a repetition of what belongs to the life of the local church. The Commission has given thought to the following :—

A. MUTUAL INSPIRATION AND EVANGELICAL ENCOURAGEMENT.

The Association manifests the reality of Christian fellowship between churches of different types and sizes, between the large city church and the small village company. Baptists have always recognised that membership of the Church of Jesus Christ becomes real in membership of the local church. It is for this reason that stress is laid upon the effective functioning of the local church. The Association exists to aid this functioning. It is the churches working together for the encouragement of each. There is therefore a responsibility upon all churches to share in the Association fellowship, for through it there is not only the encouragement of the struggling cause but also the making aware to the prosperous church that such causes do exist and belong to an Association. Out of such knowledge there springs the possibility of aid and a pinpointing of particular challenges to the church's evangelism. Many smaller churches are encouraged and aided by Association assistance to undertake evangelical enterprises which would be out of the question for them to face up to alone.

B. CHRISTIAN EDUCATION.

Christian education becomes more and more the responsibility of the Association as it is the Association which finds it possible to arrange courses for deacons, lay-preachers, Sunday School and youth workers, and others serving the local church. Only a few churches have the personnel and facilities to undertake organised

training within their own fellowship and thus Association programmes of education assume an ever greater importance. The need for trained leadership within the local church is acknowledged as most urgent, and Associations are probably in the best position to meet this need.

C. CHRISTIAN CITIZENSHIP.

In an age in which society has largely abandoned Christian codes of behaviour, the matter of Christian Citizenship assumes very great importance. Faced with practical problems, the local church often finds itself lacking both experience and influence. It has already proved to be of great value if such a local church can draw on the experience already gained by other churches in similar circumstances or on the considered conclusions arrived at through the studies of citizenship groups in the Association or Union, and call for joint action by the churches of the Association. Associating churches are also able to make a stronger impact on the community in the matter of training in Christian Citizenship as they act together.

D. SUPPORT OF WIDER BAPTIST WITNESS.

Both the Baptist Missionary Society and the Baptist Union recognise the vital importance of the Association unit as a channel for information to the churches and also as the collecting unit of gifts. Although the Baptist Missionary Society has Missionary Auxiliaries—and these are not always linked satisfactorily to Association Missionary Committees—the Association Missionary Secretary is often rightly a key figure in the local situation. The Baptist Union Home Work Fund is even more clearly and closely related to the Association unit, with the Association Treasurer usually acting as the link between the local churches and the Baptist Church House, and the Home Work Fund providing a refund to finance the Association. The causes of the apparent failure of the Association line of communication as it affects both the Baptist Union and the Baptist Missionary Society are matters to which we return later.

E. THE MINISTRY.

As the pattern of ministerial recognition has developed over the past years, Associations have been given more and more a vital role to play. This, in itself, is enough to raise the question of the relationship of the Association to the Union, for as things stand at present it is the Union which finally grants ministerial accreditation. When it was desired that all candidates for the ministry should have a local commendation beyond that of their local church, it was the Association which was asked to supply it, so that now all candidates for the ministry have first to appear before the Association ministerial recognition committee. In a similar way the Association also has the responsibility of commending men seeking to pass from the Pre-Probationers' stage to the Probationers' List before they are interviewed by the Baptist Union Ministerial Recognition Committee.

The matter of the settlement of ministers and possible Association involvement in such a settlement is often raised. With an inadequate supply of ministers, the settlement of men becomes a matter of even greater importance. The General Superintendent is usually closely involved in settlements and brings a wider viewpoint to bear than that of the local church. A properly functioning Association is also in a position to see the over-all need. Consultation in which General Superintendent, Association Officers, and the local church are involved is suggested by some as a desirable preliminary in ministerial settlements. This question raises vital issues of the relationship of the local church to the Association as well as the Association to the Union and must be looked at separately.¹

F. THE STRATEGY OF CHURCH EXTENSION.

It is now generally accepted that church extension projects must be of wider concern than that of the local churches promoting them. Such practical matters as finance for building, allocation of sites, Home Work Fund Grants for the ministry take extension immediately into the purview of the Association. But in any case, as a matter of principle, if the idea of 'associating' has any content at all, any new church extension contemplated should be recognised as requiring Association consideration before being proceeded with seriously. This matter is becoming increasingly more complicated by the relatively large numbers of people who are 'on the move.' New towns have, for example, already sprung up where villages once stood, and populations have increased in a few years from a thousand or so to upwards of sixty thousand. There is evidence to suggest that the movement of population will be even greater in the next twenty years. We may cite draft designation orders that have already been made for new towns at Runcorn and Redditch with an initial population of 70,000 rising to about 90,000 by natural increase. There is a suggestion that the population of N. Bucks. will be increased by 350,000 chiefly by the establishment, in the next twenty years, of a monorail city with an estimated population of a quarter of a million. This sort of development presents Associations in reception areas with problems beyond their resources. In fact the need is now clearer than ever for church extension to be developed as a national policy rather than leaving it to local churches and Associations. This could mean a pooling, for the benefit of all, of Association resources of thought and foresight as well as of finance. In our judgment the formation of a denominational policy for church extension is urgent.²

G. CHURCH CLOSURE.

We are inevitably brought face to face with this problem. From time to time evidence has been produced of churches holding on in situations where reason suggests, and evangelical strategy demands,

¹ See page 18.

² In 1964, a survey of the situation was initiated by the Baptist Union and the help of Associations is being sought.

closure. Whilst it is true that reversionary clauses in Trust Deeds sometimes make it difficult, if not impossible, to release money from the sales of redundant churches for church extension, this statement is sometimes made an excuse for doing nothing and, in any case, the very sight of Baptist churches situated close to one another or left isolated by the moving tide of population scarcely proclaims the Gospel of enthusiasm and evangelical strategy. The matter of redundant churches is one of utmost urgency. But the total responsibility of the Association in this matter remains still to be defined. Certainly the Association has the task of surveying the church building position within its territory, out of which survey certain things will become clear. Taking action on the results of such a survey depends again upon the decision about the Association: local church relationship.

H. GRANTS ADMINISTRATION.

All applications for grants made by the Home Work Fund must have the recommendation of the Association in which the church making the application is situated. This places upon the Association the need for intimate and up-to-date knowledge of the condition of each such church and the opportunities that lie open to it.

* * * * *

The thinking of the Commission has been governed by the question as to how these defined responsibilities may be carried out in the light of the known situation to-day and the anticipated situation to-morrow. This has led to a discussion of denominational organisation as it affects the Association as well as consideration of the structure of the Association itself. It has also been found necessary to take serious note of the evident truth that an effective Association can result only from effective local churches. Yet beneath all these points lies the fundamental truth that no fellowship can ever function where there is not mutual trust. At heart the effectiveness of the Baptist Association life—and indeed of the Baptist Union life—depends upon there being a spirit of mutual trust amongst us. Although, in the last resort, this is a spiritual problem we feel bound to make some comments upon it.

TOWARDS A STRENGTHENING OF CONFIDENCE

7. We are all agreed that we need to work for a strengthening of mutual confidence in each other. In the denomination, at the moment, there are at least two matters which are producing a feeling of anxiety amongst us. The first concerns the basic motive for the existence of Associations and the call for rethinking about Associations at this present juncture. The second is the question of authority as it is related to the Union and to the Association and the local church. If the denomination can come to an understanding on these two matters then we shall have travelled a long way towards creating the mutual confidence without which neither Association nor Union can effectively function.

The historical survey with which this report opened set down the various texts quoted by Association Confessions to support the formation of Associations. Perhaps the least expected, yet most relevant at this point, is II Corinthians 1:24, which the New English Bible translates "Do not think we are dictating the terms of your faith; your hold on the faith is secure enough. We are working with you for your happiness." Baptist Associations have always been recognised as associations of local churches working together, and working together for the happiness of each constituent church. It is significant that St. Paul also says in this quotation that he is not dictating the terms of faith.

Some of us feel strongly that an Association should have some general indication of the faith and order of the churches in membership with it. Clearly there is much to be said for a mutual recognition amongst Baptists that there is a common faith which binds them together as Baptists. There are fundamental issues of the faith about which we are all agreed. We commend to the consideration of all the Declaration of Principle of the Union, which apart from the significant addition of the phrase 'God manifest in the flesh,' is that adopted by the Assembly in 1904. The Declaration states:—

The basis of this Union is:—

1. That our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh, is the sole and absolute authority in all matters pertaining to faith and practice, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures, and that each church has liberty, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to interpret and administer His Laws.

2. That Christian Baptism is the immersion in water into the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, of those who have professed repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ who "died for our sins according to the Scriptures; was buried; and rose again the third day."

3. That it is the duty of every disciple to bear personal witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to take part in the evangelization of the world.

The Declaration is followed by a list of objects of the Union. Whilst it may be that this Declaration is itself open to a variety of interpretations at certain points, as a statement of faith it might well provide a basis for Associations and beyond it there would go no dictation of the faith by anyone to anyone.

9. For the motive of Association is the "happiness" of each local church, just as the motives of the Union, as indicated by its declared objects add up to the same thing. It is happiness in the sense of mutual encouragement, mutual love and mutual service. The purpose of rethinking Association life as understood by the Commission is for no other reason than that the churches within the Associations might be helped to be more effective in every way for the sake of the Christian Gospel. About this motivation this Commission is agreed and we hope that such agreement might be reflected throughout the whole denomination.

Turning now to the second matter, we found that there were certain problems which complicated Baptist thinking on the subject of authority. First was the widespread idea that every local church had in itself all the wisdom, experience and knowledge necessary for it to remain obedient, effective and fruitful in its witness to its Lord. Second was the misconception of what Christian authority really was and of what it was for.

10. We may begin our thinking by reminding ourselves that John Owen in *The True Nature of a Gospel Church* distinguishes between 'magisterial' and 'ministerial' authority. The former is the authority of a master who dominates, whilst the latter is the authority of one who serves.

11. Jesus, to whom "all authority" is given did not compel men or exercise the authority of a master over them. His authority, which was so readily recognised during his ministry, was the authority of one who came "not to be ministered unto but to minister." It is the authority of the servant—and of the suffering servant at that. Such ministerial authority is the distinguishing mark of Christian authority as against that so often exercised in the 'world.'

13. *Any authority which may rest with the Association then, rests with it, not that the churches might become subservient but that through the Association local churches in their mission and all their activities may be served.*

One of the greatest difficulties we have met with in the Commission has had to do with defining the word 'authority' not only in theory, but as the theory works itself out in practice. For upon this depends the true relationship of the Association to the local church and of the Union to both. We have wished that we could drop the word altogether but this has proved impossible. Yet defined as we have tried to define it, we believe that it could well dispel much of the anxiety that undoubtedly exists amongst individuals and local churches towards both Association and Union. With this fear removed there is ground for hope for a true strengthening of confidence.

14. We are aware that this requires of us a statement of the polity which would be based upon such a definition and this we have tried to do in all that follows. We know that there are those who advocate an introduction into the denomination of a polity resembling that of the Methodists or Presbyterians where authority is viewed as delegated from the local church to wider groups and ultimately to a grouping at the centre of the denomination. This solution we cannot accept as it appears to cut across the Baptist definition of the motive for associating and our understanding of authority. We believe it right to go perhaps the more difficult way, based on mutual trust between church and church in Association and between church and church, Association and Association in the Union. Along this way there is the understanding that authority to serve can only be given by Christ. Our Lord works not only through local churches but through Associations and through the Union. This is a fact that cannot be denied. It is necessary therefore to recognise that local church, Association and Union are not to be viewed as working against each other, nor as working one above the other, but as working *together*, each having its essential part in all matters which concern the wider fellowship beyond the local church.

We may cite the ministry as a case in point. A young man who is called to the ministry discovers his call within the local church which then acknowledges support of it, the Association tests the standing of the young man in the light of the call and Colleges supported by the wider fellowship receive and train him.* At the satisfactory conclusion of the course the total fellowship of the Union acknowledges his ministry and supplies the help of the General Superintendents to suggest possible spheres where he may commence his ministry through a call by a local church. Every General Superintendent is in close touch with the Associations in his Area and is aware of the total picture of the Association as well as the individual church. But it is the local church which through the Church Meeting issues a call. Within this whole pattern no one is exercising 'magisterial' authority over anybody. All are working together with the Holy Spirit that the Will of Christ may be done. The motive is mutual service.

In all that we say we acknowledge freely that mutual trust cannot be obtained merely by writing it into a report. It must be won. What we have written simply outlines an understanding which could lead to a strengthening of confidence in each other. In the last resort the strengthening of confidence in each other lies with each one of us as we recognise the other man as a brother in Christ whom we are to serve.

*There are also new types of cases due to interdenominational missions and colleges.

THE ASSOCIATION AND THE BAPTIST UNION

1. The Association, the Assembly and the Council.

By its Constitution the Baptist Union functions at present through the Assembly and through the Council. The Constitution can only be altered by the Baptist Union Assembly. It is necessary, therefore, that we should examine closely the relationship of the Associations to these two bodies.

The Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland, so known and described since 1873, has at the present time an Assembly constituted as follows: Representative members, Personal members and Associate members. Associate members, who are elected annually by the Council, are retired pastors of churches in membership with the Union and retired missionaries of the Baptist Missionary Society. Personal members are 'Baptists or members of Baptist churches' duly accredited by three members of the Assembly and accepted by the Council, who are yearly subscribers to the General Expenses Fund of the Union. Representative members, by contrast, cannot be so simply enumerated. They comprise ministers serving in the churches, in Her Majesty's Forces, or in positions to which they have been appointed wholly or in part by the Union; deaconesses serving in churches and Associations; principals and tutors of colleges, plus two ministerial students of each college; the Council and Officers of the Union; and delegates from—'churches, Associations of churches and Associations of Lay Preachers.' The delegates, it should be noted, are appointed for each meeting of the Assembly,¹ churches providing one, two, or three, according to the size of their membership, and Associations being allowed two each.

This diversity of membership in the Assembly, initially confusing as it may be, is explicable by history without thereby being completely justified.

The present position thus is that both churches and Associations send delegates to the Assembly, with the great weight of representation resting obviously on the churches. This is in line with the constituency of the Union which includes churches and Associations of churches. This can produce the somewhat anomalous situation that a church which is a member of an Association is thereby related to the Union whether or not that church has sought affiliation with the Union.

¹ The duration of the Assembly came under discussion and, whilst the Constitution seems to provide for a continuing Assembly, e.g., Bye Law I. 2 (a) which provides for nomination of the Vice-President by 25 members of the Assembly to be sent to the Secretary by 14th February, the general assumption is that church and college delegates are appointed only for the Annual Assembly which lasts for a few days. This matter requires clarification as it affects the nomination of the Vice-President.

We have felt bound to consider in some detail the matter both of the Assembly and the Baptist Union Council as our enquiries have shown considerable concern in the country on these matters. Furthermore, from the point of view of the Associations we are bound to ask whether these two action bodies have the right constituency to reflect Association thought. We are aware, of course, once again that to call for drastic revisions is to ask the denomination to move along complex paths. Nevertheless there are certain things we feel bound to set before Baptists for consideration.

19. There are two possible lines of action :

- (1) To leave the Baptist Union Assembly largely as it is now and to revise the constitution of the Baptist Union Council.
- (2) To alter the constitution of the Union so that an enlarged Baptist Union Council becomes the basic legislative body, with the Assembly remaining as an occasion for fellowship and inspiration.

We consider each of these in turn.

(1) There is considerable feeling that the Annual Assembly should be made more deliberative yet there is a general recognition that the Assembly does not lend itself to deliberation. For apart from its size, many delegates are not sufficiently aware of the background to business under discussion. We do not feel that there can be any satisfactory alternative to the activities of the Assembly as it stands.

16. We have been asked to comment on the matter of Personal membership, especially as this is a matter which affects Association life as well. This we have done in Appendix II and conclude that on the whole the term ' Friends of the Union ' is preferable, with considerable alteration in the privileges accorded to such ' Friends.'

17. There is a further matter which we submit requires examination, namely the section on Associate members. The section reads : " Associate members, elected annually by the Council, shall comprise retired pastors of churches in membership with the Baptist Union and retired missionaries of the Baptist Missionary Society." Our information is that it is thirteen years since any action was taken under this clause and we suggest that its purpose be re-examined. The use of the word ' Pastor ' as against ' Minister ' used in the other clauses of the Assembly Constitution is presumably of some significance.

The Constitution of the Baptist Union Council has been criticised as not producing a body totally representative of the country and further it is suggested that fifty members elected by the Assembly and the further twenty co-opted by the Council on the nomination of the Assembly form too large a proportion of the whole.

On the present basis the Council, in addition to the Officers and *ex-officio* members, includes :—

40 Association Secretaries
56 Association Representatives
70 Elected members

18. We must at this juncture point out a further matter which we believe requires consideration by the Union, and that is the Welsh representation on the Baptist Union Council. Of the 96 representations—excluding the two Monmouthshire Associations which have five between them. This differentiation is made not because of English territorial claims on Monmouthshire, but because whilst the majority of churches in Monmouthshire are themselves members of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland, the majority of the churches in the eleven other Welsh Associations are not. Anglesey and Caernarvonshire with 37 and 40 churches respectively have two representatives each on the Baptist Union Council and have three churches each in membership with the Union. Whilst these are extreme cases we deem the matter one of sufficient importance to demand attention, as it obviously reflects the reality of interested and participatory representation on the Council and in the activities of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland. A detailed survey is included as an Appendix to this report, and it is for this reason that we make certain suggestions concerning Welsh representation.

As things are at present, Association representation on the Council is based on the number of churches in each Association. When this representation is related to the number of church-members in each Association, there appears to be appreciable disparity, as shown in Diagram 2 (Appendix).

When, however, the numbers of Elected and Representative members in each Association are added and related to the membership, the disparity is not so marked, except in three Associations. This is shown in Diagram 3 (Appendix).

The electoral process does not mitigate against true representation, as is often imagined. In fact it evens things up. It may be argued that this is accidental and an unsatisfactory way of balancing representation, and we return to this in a moment.

We have discussed the question whether there is not a case for a change of basis of representation from member-churches to number of church-members in an Association. Representation based only on the number of churches takes no account of the size of membership of the churches, it operates unevenly as between rural districts and industrial and city concentrations and it fails to recognise areas of development and rapid change. Thus Suffolk (36 churches, 2051 members), Herts (49 churches, 5201 members), Essex (71 churches, 7430 members), and Bristol (71 churches, 8216 members), have each two representative members. Devon and Cornwall (82 churches, 5608 members), sends three.

As against these points must be set the fact that the Baptist Union has always been conceived of as a union of churches, just as an Association is an Association of churches. To change the

basis of calculation to church membership might work out more evenly from the statistical point of view but would cut across the theological conception of the wider Baptist fellowship as local churches associating together. On balance, therefore, we feel that the basis of representation should remain as it is.

21. There are those who wish to make the Baptist Union Council entirely a body composed of *ex-officio* and representative members and to do away with elected members. We have spent a considerable amount of time examining this point. It does carry with it certain clear implications as to what the Union is. To follow this line is to say, in effect, that the Union is an association of Associations, and therefore must be seen to be such in the constitution of its Council. For it is only through the elected members at the Assembly that the churches, as churches, have at the moment an opportunity to influence directly who sits upon the Council. Yet it was not for this reason that we felt it right to suggest a retention of a number of elected members of the Council. Experience indicates that they provide a stable element of continuity on the Council. Association Secretaryships and Association representation are linked with the movement of ministers, for where there is the possibility of a third representative on the Council, Associations tend to appoint a minister—and thus a fairly high percentage of representative Council members are subject to change of pastorate. Elected members are not necessarily so subject. A further point is that from time to time there are men and women who are forced by circumstances to choose between service of the Association or of the Union, and if they choose the latter they might well not be nominated by an Association, and so be lost to the Union. We do, however, accept that there should be a reduction of elected members either to 35 or 30. We suggest that these members should be elected by the Council itself as its first business. Nominations would come, however, as now from members of the Assembly, or Associations, or churches. The present system of election of Council members by the Assembly presents many delegates with a problem of voting for people unknown to them and there is little evidence to suggest that many Church Meetings take seriously the possibility that it is their task to advise delegates as to how to vote. On the other hand, with the increased representation of Associations on the Council the method of election *within Associations* of the representatives requires careful scrutiny. We shall return to this point later, but if the local churches do not share through their Assembly delegates in the election of Council members there is all the more point to the requirement that they should share in the election of the Association representatives.
- 22.
23. We set down a possible basis of the Council :—

(i) An Association having fewer than 25 churches in its membership shall be represented on the Council by its Secretary *ex-officio* except as specified in (iii) below.

- (ii) Any other Association shall be represented on the Council by :
- (a) Its Secretary *ex-officio*
 - (b) One additional representative for each 25, or greater part of 25, churches in its membership.
- (iii) In view of the special situation in Wales, to which attention has already been drawn, it is suggested :
- (a) That the Associations of Anglesey and Caernarvonshire each with three churches affiliated to the Baptist Union, shall arrange between them to have one representative on the Council.
 - (b) That Brecon with eleven churches affiliated to the Baptist Union shall arrange with Radnor and Montgomery with nine such churches to have one representative on the Council until either becomes entitled to separate representation.
- (iv) The number of members elected by the Council shall be 35.

The table that follows shows representation as at present and as it would be on the basis now proposed.

Proposals for the Council of the Baptist Union
Basis of representation 25 churches

Association	Number of Churches	Present representation including Sec.	Proposed representation including Sec.
Beds.	34	2	2
Berks.	38	2	3
Bristol	71	2	4
Bucks.	38	2	3
Camb.	43	2	3
Devon & Cornwall ..	80	3	4
East Midland	224	5	10
Essex	71	2	4
Glouces. & Hereford ..	49	2	3
Herts.	46	2	3
Home Counties	22	1	1
Kent & Sussex	100	3	5
Lancs. & Cheshire ..	184	5	8
North Wales (Eng.) ..	21	1	1
London	277	7	12
Norfolk	40	2	3
Northants.	68	2	4
Northern	47	2	3
Oxon. & E. Glos. ..	40	2	3
Southern	86	3	4
Suffolk	36	2	2
Western	33	2	2
West Midland	133	4	6
Wilts. & E. Som. ..	33	2	2
Worcester	22	1	1
Yorkshire	150	3	7
in the B.U.			
Anglesey	36	3	2
Brecon	23	11	1
Caernarvon	40	3	2
Carm. & Card.	119	36	3
Denbigh, Flint & Merion.	97	16	3
East Glam. (Eng.) ..	103	100	3
„ „ (Welsh)	104	14	2
West Glam. (Welsh) ..	106	12	3
Pembroke	72	25	2
Rad. & Mont.	42	9	2
West Wales (Eng.) ..	50	42	2
Monmouth (Welsh) ..	84	54	3
„ (Eng.)	56	51	2

The adoption of these proposals would result in a Council constituted as below and compared with the existing arrangement :—

At present	Officers	Proposed
6		6
13	Ex-Presidents	14
40	Association Secretaries	37
56	Additional representatives	88
8	College Principals	8
1	Chairman, Lay Preachers' Fed.	1
1	President, Baptist Women's League	1
1	Treasurer, B.M.S.	1
2	Secretaries, B.M.S.	2
1	Secretary, Welsh B.U.	1
1	Secretary, Scottish B.U.	1
10	General Superintendents	10
5	Honorary Members	6
70	Elected members	35
215		211

24. (2) The more radical line of approach is to alter the Constitution of the Baptist Union so that an enlarged Baptist Union Council becomes the basic legislative body, with the Annual Assembly remaining as a possible occasion for fellowship and inspiration.

With this suggestion, membership of the Assembly might be left much as it is, but the size and composition of the Baptist Union Council require very serious consideration particularly in its mode of election. We cannot set out in detail the discussions we have had on this matter except to say that the conclusions we arrive at are based upon a definition of what the Baptist Union is. This is a matter to which we have referred in the first section of our report. If the Baptist Union is felt to be the Associations in association, then certain things follow. This sort of conception lies, as we have said, behind the pressure for more definite evidence of the representative nature of the Baptist Union Council as at present defined. We do not think that any real progress can be made in very many matters until the denomination is clear as to what the Union is.

To pin-point the issue in relationship to an enlarged Baptist Union Council, which would carry as much responsibility in acting in those things proper to it as would a Church Meeting or an Association Assembly, we may ask that, granted that the members would be mainly representative, is it to be local church to Council, or is it to be Association to Council, or a constitutional bit of each? If it is the last of these, is the weight of representation to be with the Associations or is it to be equally balanced? Here lies a basic issue. And behind it lies another one which it is relevant to mention here but which comes up for detailed discussion in a later section,¹—

¹ See pages 39—41.

namely, the question of the representative nature of Association Councils and Committees. For if the Baptist Union Council is to be representative of Associations then the Association must be truly representative of local churches, else we deny our own heritage.

25. The question which of the alternatives is to be accepted for the enlarged Council must not be decided upon grounds of convenience. The question rests, as we have said, upon theology. But good theology cannot by-pass history. The Union came late in time into history, yet it is here and here to stay. Behind it lie now, more than anything, the Associations. It could well be that clearly to say and clearly to act as if the Union were the Associations associating, both Associations and Union together would be greatly strengthened for their vital tasks. Some of us feel that this really is the way ahead for Associations and Union together. The creation of an enlarged Baptist Union Council which would continue to be deliberative, but which would be very largely representative of the Associations, and whose business would be made known, would open the way for Association representatives to consult with their Associations both before and after the Council meeting. This consultation would have the purpose of informing the representatives of the mind of the Association without thereby issuing instructions as to how to vote in Council. The Commission feels that this consultation is a vital necessity to the efficient working of the Council which is at present hampered by the marking of all Baptist Union Council papers as 'Strictly Private.' The purpose of this privacy is a matter which the Commission thinks requires consideration in any case.
26. Our opinion is that such a body should number about 350 people and a suggested composition is:—

The Council of the Baptist Union
(approximately 350 members)

- (i) The Secretary of each Association shall be a member of the Council.
- (ii) Each Association shall be allowed one additional member for every TEN churches. A remainder of five or more entitles to one representative also.
- (iii) The Welsh representation shall be as indicated, viz., based on the number of churches in membership with the Baptist Union. Those Associations entitled to send one representative shall appoint the Association Secretary. It is also suggested that the Anglesey and Caernarvon Associations shall be jointly represented by the Secretary of one of these Associations.

The Commission thought that at least one third of the Council should be laymen and that Associations should be urged to have this in mind when electing their representatives. Concern was expressed at the relatively small number of women serving on the Council.

**Suggestions for a Council of the Baptist Union
of approximately 350 members.**

Association	Number of Churches	Proposed Representation
Beds.	34	3
Berks.	38	4
Bristol	71	7
Bucks.	38	4
Cambs.	43	4
Devon & Cornwall	80	8
East Midland	224	22
Essex	71	7
Glouces. & Hereford	49	5
Herts.	46	5
Home Counties	22	2
Kent & Sussex	100	10
Lancs. & Cheshire	184	18
North Wales (Eng.)	21	2
London	277	28
Norfolk	40	4
Northants	68	7
Northern	47	5
Oxon. & E. Glos.	40	4
Southern	86	9
Suffolk	36	4
Western	33	3
West Midland	133	13
Wilts. & E. Som.	33	3
Worcs.	22	2
Yorkshire	150	15
		In the English (G.B.) B.U.
Anglesey	36	3
Brecon	23	11
Caernarvon	40	3
Carm. & Card.	119	36
Denbigh, Flint, Merion...	97	16
East Glam. (Eng.)	103	100
" " (Welsh)	104	14
West Glam. (Welsh)	106	12
Pembroke	72	25
Rad. & Mont.	42	9
West Wales (Eng.)	50	42
Monmouth (Welsh)	84	54
" (Eng.)	56	51
		231 (Excluding 5 Secs.)

study and more constant prayer and the churches to more continuous and more aggressive evangelism by Sunday School work and all other means of winning the world for Christ.

A superintendent shall also on behalf of the Council :—

- (a) Act as secretary of his area committee.
- (b) Facilitate the working of this scheme (Home Work Fund).
- (c) Facilitate ministerial settlements.
- (d) Be available for advising and guiding ministers and churches.
- (e) Generally promote the objects of the Union.’

The original intention was that the General Superintendent's office was primarily one of spiritual leadership. When the Committee on Baptist Polity set up in 1936 reported in 1942 it felt strongly that the General Superintendents should be relieved of office work and allowed to concentrate upon their primary task. Some action has been taken upon this but the problem has not been wholly resolved, and the recommendations which we shall make in connection with the Association personnel have to be seen in this light. It is relevant here, however, to state that a closer coincidence of function needs to be made clear between the General Superintendent as a servant of the Union and of the Association. This will happen when the Union is itself more obviously set in closer relationship with the Associations and accepted as such—rather than as often now—seen as over against the Associations. It is our opinion that it is along these lines that the position of the General Superintendent will be made clearer rather than seeking to provide a point of meeting between Union and Association in the Area.

We wish also to draw attention to the functioning of Area Committees as it would appear that there is a diversity of practice. In some cases the Area Committee takes upon itself functions which properly belong to the Association, *e.g.*, the interviewing of candidates for the ministry. The terms of reference of the Area Committee are :—

“ There shall be in each area a committee to assist the Grants Executive in matters concerning ministerial settlement.

In Area 9 (London) the Council of the Association and in Area 10 (South Wales) the Joint Board shall constitute the Area Committee. In every other Area the Committee shall consist of :—

- (a) Representatives appointed annually by each of the Associations in the Area. Each Association shall have such number of representatives as the Grants Executive may determine and the number of ministers and laymen shall be equal.
- (b) Those members of the Council who are appointed by the Council to be members of the Grants Executive as representing that Area.

The members of the Committee so appointed may, if they think fit, co-opt two women from each Association to be members of the Committee.”

Most Area Committees meet two or three times a year and receive reports concerning the ministry, vacant churches and the Home Work Fund. Some invite an outside speaker to address them. Although the Associations are represented upon the Area Committee, the relationship between the Association and the Area Committee is not clear. In the interviewing of ministers moving from the Probationers to the Accredited List it is clear that the Area Committee is acting on behalf of the Union, whose Ministerial Recognition Committee was originally responsible for the interview. If the Association and Union are set in a close relationship the need for Area Committees is very much open to question. After considerable discussion the Commission is of opinion that such committees should cease to exist. To follow this suggestion would mean that the word ‘Area’ is defined simply as a geographical area which the General Superintendent serves, and has no other content.

IV
ASSOCIATION LIFE

All that we have set down in the previous section presupposes an alert Association life. It is to this matter that we turn now in this section.

1. The Associations : Their Size and Relative Strength.

We begin by setting out an analysis of the position in the Associations. (*See opposite*).

35. From this table the practical need for Associations is surely established even apart from their theological justification. We can see that more than half our Churches have a membership of less than 100 members and that this is generally true in every Association except the London Baptist Association. The need for associating together is thus self-evident, and the need to try to ensure that no small church however isolated is neglected, and that no large church however prospering stands aloof is of paramount importance. We would hope that every Association Committee has these matters constantly before it.

The second thing that becomes evident is the considerable variation in size and numerical strength of the Associations. Associations have never been 'planned' into existence, they have come into being naturally out of geography, mutual need and history. The result is the remarkable contrasts. It is true, of course, that these contrasts reflect the concentrations of population in certain areas and that there is an obvious case for treating the London Baptist Association as exceptional. But granted that, the question remains as to whether in the present and the foreseeable future all the Associations as at present constituted can effectively, efficiently and in fellowship truly fulfil the purpose of an Association.

Included in the terms of reference given to us is the request to report on "Association boundaries and relative strength." The relative strength is obvious from the above table. We have not, however, interpreted the matter of Association boundaries as meaning that we should attempt to re-draw them. We have been made very much aware, that there is a considerable opposition to change. On the other hand, we have also been made aware of a feeling in the country that some Associations are too big to function as effectively in fellowship as many would wish.

It is a fact, of course, that most of the large Associations are further broken down into Districts or County groups. Whilst, in the present situation, this is a good thing to do, following such a policy creates the danger of unnecessarily multiplying and duplicating committees and activities and we should be on our guard against this risk. This policy has the merit of recognising that it is not necessarily the same sized unit of associating which is efficient both for fellowship and for planning and administration. The smaller district is said to be the right size for fellowship and the larger Association for planning and administration. There is the further danger

TABLE OF CHURCHES IN ASSOCIATIONS

Association	Member Churches	Members	600	500	400	300	250	200	150	100	50	20	10	5	1	Less
Beds. Union*	60	3,946			1		3	2	4	4	11	13	4	3	1	14
Berkshire	55	3,162					1	3	1	8	16	18	8	1	1	16
Bristol	101	8,216			3		2	3	5	13	16	17	11	1	3	24
Buckinghamshire	44	2,746				2	1	2	1	4	7	8	6	1	1	6
Cambridgeshire	46	2,401				1	1	1	1	7	8	13	3	5	3	3
Devon and Cornwall	116	5,608		1		1	1	4	3	7	17	25	23	10		24
East Midland	226	15,327	1		1	2	5	13	9	23	50	64	28	8	3	22
Essex	82	7,633					2	4	2	15	22	16	4	4		9
Gloucestershire & Hereford	62	3,499				4	2	3	2	5	9	16	11	1	1	13
Hertfordshire	59	5,201				1	1	1	3	11	13	13	3	1	1	8
Home Counties	22	2,094				1	1	1	3	3	7	7	3	1		16
Kent and Sussex	115	12,219	1			3	7	4	16	12	25	21	6	3		7
Lancashire and Cheshire	209	16,434				13	3	4	15	39	78	50	11	2		16
London	278	42,363	1		3	13	20	22	36	53	69	44	4	4		7
Norfolk	42	2,427				1	1	1	2	5	4	13	7	3	1	5
Northants.	75	4,699			2	1	1	1	4	6	13	16	13	11	1	7
Northern	51	3,701			1	1	1	1	4	4	16	14	1	1		9
Oxford and East Glos.	46	1,919			2	1	2	4	4	10	24	22	17	3	1	10
Southern	99	8,159				2	1	4	4	10	24	22	17	3	1	10
Suffolk	38	2,057				1	1	1	1	3	7	12	5	2	1	6
Western	52	2,512				1	4	3	12	25	36	39	12	1	1	19
West Midland	133	12,402		1		3	4	3	12	25	36	39	9	2	1	1
Wills. and East Somerset	34	1,944				1	1	1	1	5	6	13	2	6	4	10
Worcestershire	38	1,535				2	1	5	15	23	50	37	7	3		13
Yorkshire	157	12,577					2									
	2,240		4	8	24	39	60	86	145	291	517	525	110	75	17	249

* Comprising Union, Baptist and Congregational churches

that the District creates another grouping in between the local church, Association and Union. On the other hand there are those who say that the District fellowship provides an effective channel of communication for Union and Association matters.

36. We have here to record a division of opinion amongst members of the Commission. Some of us feel that the present tendency towards the breaking down of the larger Associations into smaller Districts for the sake of fellowship should be encouraged and developed and that, provided Association boundaries are periodically reviewed in the light of population movement and other matters, the present situation does not call for radical alteration.

37. All of us are agreed that in any case there should be a periodic review of Association boundaries and that the Superintendents' Board is the right group to advise on this.

A majority of the Commission feels, however, that the situation calls for consideration of more radical changes. It is recognised that to draw lines on a map on an arbitrary numerical basis of so many churches to an Association without a true concern for both geography and history could make utter nonsense of reality. But it is also believed that there is strong evidence of a desire within the denomination to support the consideration of associated units of a more uniform size, each cared for by a General Superintendent. Those members of the Commission who hold this view suggest that each of these units should contain roughly one hundred churches. It is realised that this would involve a significant increase in the number of General Superintendents.

38. It may be argued that such a scheme would mean the removal of more men from pastoral charge. As against this, it is maintained that, strictly speaking, they remain in pastoral charge and that local churches and ministers would benefit from the situation thus created. Important also is the point that, if the number of existing full-time Secretaries is noted together with the present pressure for more of them, then the number of additional men to be removed from the pastorate of the local church is not great. The belief is that this proposal would do away with the need for full-time Secretaries except in the case of London.

39. The matter of payment of the General Superintendents would also arise, and there would certainly be a case for each Association bearing part of the cost—from local churches—based on membership. This would mean that in Associations with a large membership because of larger churches there would be a greater part borne than in Associations where the number of the churches was roughly the same but the membership considerably less. It is of interest to note that the 1942 Polity Committee made a similar suggestion of the matter of payment, having pressed for the General Superintendents being given more time for wider spiritual leadership.¹

¹ Note should be taken of the fact that the Home Work Fund and the Churches' system of contribution is under review at the present time.

But how could all this be related to existing Associations? It is suggested that with the possible exception of the Home Counties Association, no Association would cease to exist. The proposal simply would be that some Associations would share a General Superintendent and others would have two within the one Association.

An illustration of how this might finally work out is given below, the aim being that each of the twenty should have a General Superintendent. It is stressed that this is a possible ultimate pattern which could only be reached by gradual stages and that such a pattern might need amendment in the light of developing experience.

- (1) Kent and Sussex
- (2) Southern
- (3) Western and Wilts & East Somerset
- (4) Bristol
- (5) Devon and Cornwall
- (6) Bucks and Herts
- (7) Berks and Oxford and East Gloucester
- (8) Beds and Northants
- (9) West Midland
- (10) Gloucestershire and Herefordshire and Worcestershire
- (11 & 12) East Midland
- (13 & 14) London
- (15) Essex
- (16) Cambridgeshire and Norfolk & Suffolk
- (17) Lancashire & Cheshire
- (18) Northern
- (19) Yorkshire
- (20) Monmouthshire and East Glamorgan and West Wales.

N.B. (a) The plan suggested is limited to the English Counties and South Wales.

(b) The matter of churches on the outskirts of London, e.g., in Essex might well be a subject of discussion between the London Baptist Association and the Essex Association.

(c) The allocation in the three Northern Associations would have to be a matter of discussion between the Associations involved as the total of churches is now more than four hundred unequally divided amongst the three Associations.

There was considerable discussion as to whether there should be a proposal to create new Associations on this basis. But this was rejected as unnecessary and unwise.

40. The members of the Commission who make this more radical proposal do so because they believe that in this way both fellowship and administration will be more effective. They feel that the

General Superintendents are the key figures in Association life, particularly as this life develops in closer relationship within the Baptist Union. They feel that the calling of more General Superintendents to serve will be of benefit to the whole life of the denomination—local church, Association and Union.

2. Association Officers.

41. Obviously the contents of this section will depend upon the decisions taken on the previous recommendations, but throughout our enquiries we have been made to feel aware of the growing pressure for more full-time Association Secretaries. This pressure is stated in the terms of reference as one of the reasons for the Commission's being set up at all.

If we analyse this pressure we discover it is a symptom first of all of the Association's feeling more and more itself and wanting to be recognised as such, and secondly of the need for Association concern, interest and administration to be personified. Where there are full-time Association Secretaries it is undoubted that this does happen to the benefit of all member churches. We believe that it is only in certain of the larger Associations that full-time Secretaries can be justified and that the really satisfactory solution to this matter lies in the adoption, in some form, of our suggestion in the previous section.

42. Nevertheless, there are certain things that can be said. First, that the pressure for full-time Secretaries is due in a large part to the need for 'pastoral' care in its widest sense at Association level. The need is felt for a fostering of a link with local churches which can be maintained through one who is thus in touch with and alive to local situations. The pastoral care of the ministry is obviously a responsibility which cannot be borne entirely by the General Superintendents and should be the concern of all the Associations. This applies not only to ministers in pastoral charge, but also to retired ministers who may be unable to take an active part in church and fraternal life and who, through circumstances, may even be cut off from pastoral care.

Association Secretaries with whom we have been in contact have stressed that a growing part of their responsibility was pastoral. This stemmed from a variety of situations. There was the younger minister for whom the Senior Friend scheme had not worked well (and in some parts of the country young men are settling in such numbers that there are not sufficient senior ministers to act as Senior Friends), or for whom problems had arisen soon after the probationary period had ended and the Senior Friend scheme ceased; the vacant church with its uncertainties and the perpetually vacant church with no hope of ministerial oversight, yet with an obvious mission to carry through.

We are aware that to report thus could be taken as implying lack of confidence by the ministry and churches in the General Superintendents. We can only repeat that this is not the case.

The position is—as we have already suggested—that the pressure of events has altered the emphasis of the Superintendent's work, and much of his time is involved with ministerial settlement and with office work. It has been represented to us that ministers in need of help will not always go to the General Superintendent simply because he is so inevitably tied in their minds to ministerial settlement and any approach might be construed as implying thoughts about moving. Whilst we do not believe that such a feeling is at all widespread, the very fact of its existence is significant and supports the view that General Superintendents should be enabled to give most of their time to pastoral activities towards ministers and churches.

43. This leads to the second matter to do with full-time Association Secretaries, namely that of increasing administrative work. In a sense, of course, this cannot be dissociated entirely from the pastoral side, as every letter sent represents a link with a church and minister. But however warm the expressions within a letter, a duplicated document appears inevitably cold and impersonal. In some Associations, the appointment of a Minute Secretary, who also does certain other administrative tasks, eases the burden upon the Association Secretary, whose chief responsibility is always to be the minister of his own local church. We commend such an appointment for consideration to every Association. Linked with this suggestion is one which would give much of the administrative work to a layman who might possibly have easier access to typing help and so encourage the ministerial Association Secretary to occupy himself with the pastoral work.

Of one thing we are sure and that is that as things are at present many Association Secretaries find themselves in difficulties over the division of time between their Association work and their church work. This inevitably leads to a lack of efficiency in both Association and church and many who are seeking to fulfil this dual role feel an increasing frustration.¹ If the present situation remains unaltered we feel that it will become increasingly difficult to persuade a potentially good Association Secretary to undertake the work at all. We are bound to remember, therefore, that the increased pressure for full-time Association Secretaries has a bearing upon our previous comments about the size of Associations and their relationship to the General Superintendents.

3. Association Committees.

A. Composition.

Our investigations have revealed a very wide divergence in the composition of Association Committees. There is, however, a measure of agreement as to the *ex-officio* membership. This class of membership covers the officers of the Association. They generally comprise the President, Vice-President, Secretary and

¹ We would draw attention to the disparity of the honoraria paid to Association Secretaries and urge that all Associations make sure that these are adequate.

44. Treasurer. To these some Associations add Minute or Assistant Secretary, Auditors and Legal Adviser. In Associations which do not coincide with Areas, the question as to whether the General Superintendent is an Association Officer is by no means clear. This is certainly a matter which requires definition as it affects membership of Committees in addition to the General Committee. We are doubtful as to whether a Minute Secretary is rightly to be claimed as an Association Officer.

45. Most Associations have Life Membership, which seems in practice to mean life membership of the General Committee. Why this should be is not always clear. Some Associations are generous in conferring this honour on individuals who have rendered generous service to the Association. Others confer few such awards. Our judgement is that it is not desirable to be too free with this honour, certainly if it carries with it membership of the Association General Committee.

Not all the Associations grant voting rights to those whom they honour with Honorary Life Membership. For example, Buckinghamshire has a small number of Honorary Life Members who have voting rights. There are three Honorary Life Members in Anglesey but they have not been given voting rights. In Denbigh, Flint and Merioneth Baptist Association all Ex-Presidents are members for life and have voting rights. The East Midlands Association has honoured an Ex-President of the Baptist Union with full membership of the General Committee for life. The Bedfordshire Union of Baptist and Congregational Churches has Honorary and Personal Members in a limited way. Such membership is granted in recognition of services rendered and not as an outcome of any subscription.

Many Associations are giving very careful consideration to the matter of Personal Membership. Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, Suffolk and Yorkshire do not have Personal Members, nor do the ten Associations affiliated to the Baptist Union of Wales. Devon and Cornwall, Essex, Kent and Sussex, London, Northern, Oxford and East Gloucestershire, West Midland, Monmouthshire English and the East Midland all have Personal Members and give them voting rights. In Berkshire, Gloucestershire and Herefordshire, Hertfordshire, Southern, Worcestershire, West Wales English, Personal Members are not given voting rights.

Most Associations have representatives appointed from the Baptist Women's League, the Baptist Men's Movement and the Lay Preachers' Federation.

46. When we came to examine the methods for obtaining the bulk of Committee members we were faced with a variety of practice. Whilst we recognise that some Associations have changed their Constitutions during the past year, the following analysis is substantially accurate.

Members of the General Committee.

(a) Elected Members.

Where the Constitution prescribes that Members shall be elected, these are chosen by ballot at the Annual Assembly of the Association from nominations submitted by the churches of the Association.

e.g., Berkshire, Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, Northern, Oxford and East Gloucestershire, Suffolk, Western.

(b) Representation based on Districts.

Where the principle of representation of districts is adopted, the Association area is divided into geographical areas or districts of convenience for grouping. From each district representatives are chosen to attend the Association Committee.

In some cases the districts are equally represented, in others unequally.

(i) *Equal representation.*

Kent and Sussex Association is divided into four districts, each with equal representation to a total of 24 members.

The Southern Association comprises five districts with equal representation to a total of 15 members, together with the Secretary of each district.

(ii) *Unequal representation.*

The East Midland Baptist Association comprises the four counties of Derby, Leicester, Lincoln and Nottingham, and also Rutland. The four counties provide 40 representatives, but they are not equally apportioned. The Secretary and Treasurer of each county also serve.

The Gloucester and Hereford Association is divided into four districts with unequal representation to a total of 16, together with the President, Secretary and Treasurer of each district.

The Lancashire and Cheshire Association comprises six districts with unequal representation in a total of 54 members, together with the Secretary and Treasurer of each district.

Monmouthshire with four districts has 17 representative members along with district Secretaries.

(c) Representation based on churches.

Buckinghamshire Association Committee is made up of all the ministers serving in the Association, together with church delegates, one delegate from each church.

The West Midland Association consists of five districts. Each District Committee elects representatives to the General Committee in the proportion of one member to every three churches in its district. The district Secretaries also serve.

(d) **A combination of Elected and District Representatives.**

The Devon and Cornwall Association is divided into five districts with a total of 33 members. To these are added 10 members nominated by the outgoing Committee.

The Yorkshire Association is divided into eight districts. The size of the Council is fixed by the Annual Assembly. Last year it was 61. Of these 23 are elected by the Districts. 9 are Women's representatives and there are 29 'additional members.' These are nominated at the meeting of the Association Council prior to the Assembly.

The Bristol and District Association is divided into four groups. These groups appoint to the Council as follows:—

15 men, 6 women ;	5 men, 2 women ;
5 men, 2 women ;	3 men, 2 women.

The first group appoints its 21 members by ballot. The others are appointed by the Group Committees from Church nominations.

The unsuccessful candidates are submitted to the Annual Assembly for the election of 20 to the Council. The Council is completed by the co-option of a further 8.

The Home Counties Association, comprising 24 churches, constitutes its Council from the Officers, representatives from various sections, four elected members and one co-opted member.

The London Baptist Association is divided into thirteen groups, each of which is entitled to send 5 representatives to the Council. (President, Vice-President, Secretary and two others). There are fourteen elected members (7 ministers and 7 laymen) elected at the Annual Meeting of the Association. The number of Honorary Members is small though it may be up to 12 and includes the Secretary of the Baptist Union. There are 5 Corporate Representatives, one each from Spurgeon's College, the Missionary Union, the Preachers' Association, the Men's Movement and the Women's League. An appreciable addition arises through the inclusion of all Ex-Presidents. The total membership of the Council is about 130.

(e) **Women on Association Committees.**

There appears to be no general principle governing the appointment of women to General Committees. In a few Associations the Constitution stipulates the election of a definite, though small, number of women. Where district representation operates, there appears to be no rule to ensure the inclusion of women but some are chosen.

In Lancashire and Cheshire from each of six districts one Women's League representative is appointed, and in Yorkshire one Women's League representative from each of 8 districts.

Altogether the representation of women is meagre. In Essex quite an exceptional instance occurs, where the General Committee comprises ministers, laymen, women in equal numbers, six of each.

(f) **Examples of the composition of General Committees.**

Taking election or representation as the basis of the Committee, additions are made which result in final composition as follows:—

- (i) Elected members + Co-opted members + Life members
- (ii) Elected members + Co-opted members + Departmental Representatives
- (iii) District representatives + Departmental representatives
- (iv) District representatives + co-opted members + life members + Departmental representatives
- (v) District representatives + Elected members, etc., etc.

From this analysis of the structure and composition of Association General Committees it may be seen that the Associations have approached the problem quite independently. Smaller Associations within a relatively small geographical area have adopted the principle of elected members, whereas Associations covering larger areas have developed District or Group organisations. Each District or Group appoints its own Officers and Committee and chooses representatives to the Association Committee.

In the present situation with some very large Associations, Districts or Groups have much to commend them, though the danger of duplication of activity at District and Association level has already been remarked upon. Certainly District representation on the Association Committee helps to spread interest and to strengthen purpose by channelling both from churches through Districts to Association and from Association through Districts to churches.

The process of election may result in a committee of outstanding personalities, but is open to the danger that if certain districts in an Association do not secure representation through lack of members of conspicuous talent, the problem arises of sustaining in the churches an interest in the affairs of the Association. To a certain extent this position may be safeguarded by the use of co-option, though this has its drawbacks in that those co-opted are usually drawn only from the list of nominated candidates.

The adoption of either type of Committee structure is probably due mainly to tradition, though in recent years several Associations have revised their Constitutions to improve representation and to promote more effective working. A combination of both Elected and Representative members seeks to make the best use of both systems though the Commission wish to stress that the Committee should always be made up basically of Representative members.¹ It is good to note that there is a strong desire for a greater sense of sharing both in the determining of policy and practice and in the acceptance of responsibility for work and witness.

¹ Elected members on Association Committees should be in roughly the same proportion as on the Baptist Union Council (see pages 22—28), and for the same reasons.

B. Work.

48. We have already suggested what matters are rightly dealt with by the Association and it is now a question of asking whether these are the matters which usually occupy the time of the Association General Committee. We think that considerable thought needs to be given to the relationship of the Executive to the General Committee. All too often the Executive merely duplicates the work that is properly handled by the General Committee. In some cases it would seem that the Executive Committee is thought of as a small group of people given executive power to act in cases of real emergency in which it would not be practicable to call together the whole of the General Committee. There is evidence, however, that the General Committee works most effectively when the Executive Committee meets beforehand to prepare the Agenda for the meeting of the General Committee, looking at each item of business to be discussed and presenting in a concise form the advantages and disadvantages of each alternative course of action, and in certain cases submitting a recommendation to the General Committee. Obviously it is necessary to make some provision for action in cases of emergency and either the Executive Committee or the Officers of the Association can be empowered to act in such circumstances.

The Agenda for the meeting of the General Committee should be prepared after the Executive has met and should be circulated to every member of the General Committee. This Agenda should be as informative as possible so allowing those on the Committee to study the implications of the decisions to be made.

It is felt that sub-committees charged with special responsibilities greatly assist the General Committee in its work and more use should be made of this pattern of Association life. This is particularly true of such matters as the general care of the churches, Home Work Fund Grants, Ministerial Recognition, Christian Citizenship and Youth Work. Where this pattern is adopted, it is essential that each sub-committee report to the General Committee.

49. Enquiries made of the College Principals have shown that there is concern regarding the interviewing of candidates by some of the Ministerial Recognition Committees in the Associations. The College Principals are unanimous in their conviction that the Associations can best help in this matter by concentrating their attention upon the candidate's sense of vocation; standing within his own church; acceptance of opportunities of service and general suitability for the work of the ministry. The College Candidate Board has the prime responsibility for pronouncing on his ability to benefit from any particular academic training.¹

We have found it difficult to obtain definite information regarding the method used by Associations to appoint their representatives to the Baptist Union Council. This is already a matter of considerable importance and will become of even greater significance

¹ It is suggested that any redrafting of the Ministerial Recognition Form issued by the Baptist Union might make this distinction more clear.

if Association representation on the Council is to be increased. If the Baptist Union is to be the Associations associating; and if the Associations are to be the churches in association, then such appointments should begin within the local church so that every church can feel that it is directly represented on the Council. This would suggest that the nominations should be made by the churches, and that from these nominations appointments should be made at the Annual Assembly where the churches are seen to be represented. We have noted that nominations for the Vice-President of the Baptist Union can only be made by Associations or by the Council or by twenty-five members of the Assembly. Every effort should be made to ensure that careful consideration is given by the Associations to this responsibility.

50. Whilst the Commission was opposed to any form of campaign for the recruitment of ministers and missionaries, it could not ignore the responsibility of a Christian community to seek out and encourage those who might have a vocation in full-time Christian service. A few Associations have held conferences to which those who were recommended by their churches as suitable and likely candidates were personally invited. Such gatherings have provided the opportunity whereby God's Call has been heard.

51. We have taken considerable trouble to determine the relationship of the Association General Committees to the various Departments within the Baptist Union. It must be stated frankly that all too often there appears lack of contact. Another way of putting it is that requests for information and information offered apparently get lost or blocked. As an example we may cite the fact that recently the Young People's Department sent out a questionnaire seeking information on certain important matters. 28 questionnaires were sent out, one to every Youth Secretary appointed by an Association. Just over half were returned. What happens to the others? Every Department of the Union reports similar problems. We would urge that every Association should look carefully at this matter, and it is our opinion that each Association should have a committee member representing each Department of the Union (*viz.*, Citizenship, Young People's, Lay Preachers' Federation, Baptist Union Corporation, Women's Department, etc.). The evidence in our possession suggests that in many cases the Auxiliaries to the Baptist Missionary Society function without any reference to the Association, though most Associations seem to have Missionary Secretaries. The Commission welcomes the work of the Joint Officers' Committee for closer relationship between the Baptist Missionary Society and the Baptist Union and is glad to learn of the discussions concerning the possibility of closer relationship between the Missionary Auxiliaries and the Associations.

52. Obviously, if the Associations are to be the churches in association, then it is necessary that the churches are made aware of what the Associations are doing. The relationship of the General

Committee to the local churches is one of supreme importance. We have been made aware of a considerable lack of communication at this point, and are convinced that it is vital that the churches be kept informed either by reports from the General Committee given by representatives or by personal visits by Association Officers or by some form of circular letter or information sheet.

55. Behind this problem of communication lies we believe the matter already dealt with at some length, namely the relationship of the Association to the Union and we are sure that the true communication and contact will occur when this relationship is clearly seen and generally accepted. There would seem also to be a strong case for closer contact between the Associations and it is suggested that regular meetings between Association Secretaries would make for better communication between the Associations. The whole question of the liaison with other denominations is a difficult one as each denomination has its own areas or provinces or districts and these are not co-extensive. But it is felt by the Commission that much more ought to be done by Associations to foster co-operation here.

56. One other matter remains to be mentioned and that is the time of meeting of Association Committees. Evidence suggests that more and more Association Committees are meeting in the evenings. This gives the opportunity for a wider constituency to be drawn upon for nomination to the Committee and is a development greatly to be welcomed. Whilst certain practical difficulties arise from evening meetings the advantages outweigh the disadvantages, for the possibility of more lay membership is of the greatest value to Associations.

4. Association Assemblies.

57. No survey such as we have been asked to undertake would be adequate without consideration being given to the question of Association Assemblies. In this matter our conclusions are based on evidence provided by a questionnaire sent to a hundred selected churches. If the Associations are 'the churches associating,' then it is obvious that the Assemblies must be representative of those churches. But it would seem that most churches are finding it increasingly difficult to appoint representatives because the Assemblies are held mostly during the day-time. Delegates to such gatherings can only be secured from among those not engaged in business. There is a very real demand that Assemblies should be so arranged that young people and those in business should have the opportunity of sharing in them and of making a contribution to their programmes. To meet this demand there was support, in our discussions, for the idea of two Assemblies each year — one on a Saturday and the other on an evening during the week. There was also some support for holding the Assembly at the week-end and including Sunday in the programme. On the whole there

seemed to be no solution that was likely to prove ideal and the Commission took encouragement from the fact that some Associations were experimenting along several lines.

58. There was considerable concern expressed regarding the method of appointment of delegates to such Assemblies. Most of the churches were satisfied to ask for volunteers at a Church Meeting usually without any reference to the Deacons' Meeting. A few churches who did take such appointments seriously stated that they did not ask young people to undertake this responsibility as they did not think that they had the experience to act as representatives. Hardly any churches discussed with their delegates beforehand matters to be brought before the Assembly. Most churches, however, did expect a report from those who had attended on their return.

59. In general it seems that there is very little in the way of practical result from the Assemblies. Only about a third of the churches stated that a resolution from the Assembly would be brought before the Diaconate and would then be placed on the Agenda of the Church Meeting. Few indeed were the churches that arranged special meetings to deal with matters arising from the Association Assembly. The conclusion to be drawn is that there is an insufficient link between the local church and the Association at this vitally important point.

60. Apart from the suggestion that there should be a change in the time of the Assemblies in order to allow more people to attend as delegates, there were other constructive ideas put forward. There was strong support for the idea that the larger Associations should be divided into smaller groups each holding its own gatherings and reporting to the Association Assembly by means of Messengers. There was a strong feeling that Assemblies should deal with matters of practical importance and that there should be far greater opportunity for group discussion on the subjects raised, it being always remembered that the Association should be working together for the happiness of each constituent church.

Whilst it is obviously necessary to set aside adequate time for the transaction of that business which can only be done by the Assembly, it was felt that such gatherings could be of immense spiritual value to the churches, if they were organised so as to afford the opportunity of sharing together in discussion of those matters which vitally concerned every local community.

5. Association Finance.

The following figures are the latest available to us and are taken from the Handbooks published by the Associations.

BAPTIST UNION
ASSOCIATION STATISTICS—BASED ON REPORTS ISSUED IN 1962

	Membership	Amount sent to Home Work Fund	Amount per Member per month	Amount refunded to Association
		£		£
Bedfordshire	2,650	1,236	9½d.	274
Berkshire	2,650	1,495	10½d.	319
Bristol	8,216	4,132	10d.	970
*Buckinghamshire ..	2,746	1,291	9½d.	307
Cambridgeshire ..	2,401	995	8½d.	258
Devon and Cornwall ..	5,608	2,523	9d.	618
*East Midlands	15,327	4,458	5¾d.	1,044
*Essex	7,633	3,600	9½d.	771
Gloucester and Hereford	3,499	1,471	8½d.	368
Hertfordshire	5,201	2,735	10½d.	561
Home Counties	2,094	1,340	1/0¾d.	302
*Kent and Sussex	11,913	8,259	1/2d.	1,884
Lancashire and Cheshire	16,434	5,160	6½d.	1,259
London	42,363	20,094	9½d.	4,406
Norfolk	2,427	1,568	1/1d.	339
*Northants	4,699	2,546	10½d.	577
Northern	3,701	1,521	8½d.	383
Oxford & E. Gloucester	1,919	1,312	1/1½d.	313
*Southern	8,159	3,732	9½d.	809
Suffolk	2,057	954	9½d.	238
Western	2,512	1,298	10½d.	295
West Midlands	12,402	5,366	8¾d.	1,183
*Wiltshire & E. Somerset	1,944	828	8¾d.	193
Worcestershire	1,535	1,008	1/1½d.	212
*Yorkshire	12,577	4,777	7½d.	1,062
			Average 9d. (approx.)	

*These Associations returned a proportion of the refund to the Baptist Union.

We may begin by setting down the relevant paragraphs from the Home Work Fund rules.

Paragraph 32. Each Association shall, on behalf of the General Purposes and Finance Executive, and as part of the Fund, keep an account into which shall be paid the following sums, namely:—

- (a) The proceeds of the Simultaneous Collections.
- (b) Other contributions to the Fund received *through the Associations* from individuals, churches or other denominational bodies. Contributions (other than legacies) received by an Association shall, in the absence of some express indication to the contrary on the part of the donor, be deemed to be intended for the Fund.
- (c) Fees paid by churches or other denominational bodies for affiliation to the Association.
- (d) Subscriptions of personal members of the Association.

On the other hand, it is clearly stated in paragraph 28 that, except as otherwise provided, every Association shall be at liberty,

within its own borders,¹ to appeal for and receive, contributions for the furtherance of objects in its own borders, and such contributions shall not form part of the Fund. Also excluded from the Fund are existing and future investments of monies belonging to the Association (including legacies expressly given to or for the benefit of an Association) and the income therefrom.

Almost all the Associations have funds of one kind or another which come within the terms of paragraph 28 and are outside the Home Work Fund. There are Church Extension Funds; Specific Trust Funds; and a whole variety of Trust Funds of one kind or another.

As far as monies which come within paragraph 32 are concerned, we would make the following comments:

- (1) The treatment of the proceeds of the Simultaneous Collections would appear to be beyond dispute.
- (2) It would appear that some Associations include the whole of their Assembly collections in the Home Work Fund. Others exclude all or part of these collections from the Home Work Fund and therefore have an advantage of up to 75 per cent. on these amounts as compared with the other Associations. It may be that in some of these cases collections are not taken at Assembly meetings, and any costs are borne out of General Expenses.
- (3) Some Associations apparently do not receive affiliation Fees from churches. Of those that do, in almost all cases, these fees are included in Home Work Fund monies.
- (4) With one or two exceptions, monies raised by Associations outside the Home Work Fund, appear to be within the provisos of paragraph 28, *i.e.*, for the furtherance of objects within the borders of the particular Association.
- (5) The accounts of seven of the Associations are audited by professional firms. The remainder have Honorary Auditors, some of whom are professionally qualified. As denominational funds of some magnitude are involved it might be helpful to require all Association Auditors to certify that the requirements of the Home Work Scheme have been complied with or, if not, the extent of the deviation.²

The overall average giving to the Home Work Fund, based on the membership shown is 9d. per member per month. It is obvious that there is a very wide variation in the average giving of the separate Associations.

¹ The Commission feel that Paragraph 30 (Part VI) needs clarifying and 'the constitutional objects of the Union' defining.

² Paragraph 31 (Part VI) makes it clear what cannot be done by an Association, it is by no means clear just what can be done. We would urge that more precise information be provided.

- Our examination of the Association Finances reveals that in the main the amounts refunded to the Associations by the Baptist Union are both necessary and adequate to meet the general expenses and secretarial expenses. Indeed, some Associations were able to make a return to the Union of part of the Refund. On the other hand some Associations found the Refund inadequate to meet their expenses.
62.
63.

Nevertheless, we think that it would be unwise to base the Refund on varied percentages and we do not recommend any change in the present system. In our view the implications of this recommendation are twofold. Firstly, that all Associations whose Refund exceeds expenses should look upon a return of part of the Refund to the Union as a prior charge on any surplus. Secondly, that careful consideration should be given in the disbursing of any monies and that, bearing in mind they have arisen from the Home Work Fund, the disbursing should be within the Home Work Fund purposes.

We recognise the fellowship value of monies used within an Association, but the fact that they derive in the main from the Home Work Fund makes careful stewardship imperative.

64. What we have said above makes it of the utmost importance that all Associations should make it widely known to the Churches that their main source of income is through the Home Work Fund.

CONCLUSION

Our terms of reference have required us to look at the denomination from the view point of Association life. This has, therefore, dictated the form our report has taken. But our final word must be one of reminder that the Baptist conception of the church is that membership becomes real in the local church. The 1948 statement reflects this: "It is in membership of a local church in one place that the fellowship of the one holy catholic Church becomes significant. Indeed, such gathered companies of believers are the local manifestation of the one Church of God on earth and in heaven To worship and serve in such a local Christian community is, for Baptists, of the essence of churchmanship."

No amount of reorganisation can, of itself, revive or renew denominational life. Within each local church there must be also an awareness of the call to deeper and closer fellowship to Christ and therefore to each other. All that we have written in this report presupposes that we are willing to be in fellowship with each other because we are all in fellowship with Christ.

Just as we would wish to lose the word 'authority' so we would wish to lose the words 'independent' and 'inter-dependent' because they, too, are now 'loaded' words. In their place we would set the recognition of our common faith in Christ, our desire, therefore, to encourage each other in that faith, and to serve each other for the sake of it.

65. We are convinced that Associations exist, in the last resort, for the purpose of assisting the more effective proclamation of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in local situations, as well as through wider groupings. Therefore, although much of what we have written and recommended is organisational, our motive all along has been, at heart, evangelical.