

The Queensland Baptist Forum

The Journal of the Baptist Heritage Queensland

No. 78 April 2011

Central Queensland—A Baptist Story

Work is progressing strongly on our “Central Queensland Project”- compiling the story of the origins, development and current life of Baptist churches in the Central Queensland region, in association with the 150th anniversary of work commencing in Rockhampton. We will publish a book and CD covering the approx. 20 former and current churches in the area. There are also a number of other activities that will be mentioned. The project coincides with the 2012 Qld Baptists Convention to be held in Rockhampton.

We are in urgent need of information about these churches, particularly in more recent times, and also sources and leads that we can follow up. We are also in need help in writing and producing the publication. We have written to churches asking them for assistance and details of their work, and we hope they will respond. We are also wanting to contact people (either residents in the district or former residents) who can help with information, documents and photographs.

If you can help yourself or know of people who could, please contact us urgently so we can continue to make good progress.

BHQ 2010 Essay Prize

We are pleased to present the winning entry in the 2010 BHQ Heritage Essay Competition, written by Anne Klose (of Gateway Church). This competition is held every two years. The essay fully occupies this issue, commencing page 2, and is illustrated by some pictures of earlier Queensland Baptist life. The competition is held in conjunction with the course in Baptist History and Principles taught by Malyon College but it open to others outside the college class.

BHQ Activities

We have other projects in process and hope to bring others on line in due course. We are sorry to record that our Secretary, Dr and Mrs Ken Smith, were badly affected by the flood and had to move out of their residence at Yeronga for several weeks. Our Chair and Publications Officer, Eric and Rosemary Koppitke, were also affected by the flood in their property; their family was also badly affected. Our work has been hampered by this.

The next meeting of BHQ will be held 2pm June 6 at the Baptist Archives. All invited! Bring a friend!

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>Baptist Heritage Queensland <i>The Baptist Historical Society of Queensland</i> (est. 1984)</p> <p>Membership (2009) Individual \$10 p.a. Family \$15 p.a. Corporate \$20 p.a.</p> <p><i>Qld Baptist Forum</i> 3 issues p.a. Free to Members Others \$2 each posted</p> <p>President: Mr Eric W. Koppitke 98 Yallambee Rd., Jindalee 4074 Phone 3376 4339 koppitke@tpg.com.au</p> <p>Secretary: Dr Ken G. Smith, 2301/15 Cansdale Street, Yeronga, Qld 4104 Phone 3892 6337 tizzardsmith@hotmail.com http://home.pacific.net.au/~dparker/bhsq.htm</p> <p>BWA Baptist Heritage & Identity Commission www.bwa-baptist-heritage.org</p> | <p>CONTENTS</p> <p>Qld Baptist Forum No 78 Apr 2011</p> <p>News and Notes p 1</p> <p>Baptist DNA—What about our view of the Church? By Anne Klose p 2</p> |
|---|---|



Baptist DNA—What about our view of the Church?

By Anne Klose

This is the winning entry in the 2010 Baptist Heritage Queensland Essay Competition. The lecturer, Rev Dr D Morcom, says it presents a “lucid, convincing argument” with “well substantiated conclusions.” BHQ was more than happy to endorse his view that this was an outstanding contribution. Anne Klose (from Gateway Church), who received a cash prize (picture), is working on a PhD in Baptist theology. BHQ is pleased to publish this essay, the third in the series of the Essay Competition, and hopes that making it available to readers will stimulate thinking on the topic that it discusses.

Introduction

A recent statement by the Baptist Churches of New Zealand claimed that “we can be hampered by an ecclesiology which can be shaped more by our beginnings emerging from the Anabaptists than by the New Testament values of the different parts of the body enhancing each other’s ministry as described in Ephesians 4:16.”¹ The statement was made within the context of the appointment of new staff members as part of a plan “to reshape the way the New Zealand Baptist Union fosters church and pastor development,” and with a view, in particular, to “their mission context.”² The statement proposes that the department of Church Health and Development, “will partner strategically with churches” and seek to unite them “in thinking strategically about their future direction.”³

The thrust of the statement, though not entirely clear from the article itself, has been clarified by Rodney Macann (National Leader of the New Zealand Baptist Union of Churches): “Our Anabaptist forefathers with their passion to see the church governed by believers and not the state unwittingly left us an inheritance of determined independence which has become a part of our dna [sic].”⁴ Although acknowledging that this was appropriate to the historical context, Macann argues that “the scriptures unequivocally encourage us to be in harmony, to be the body of Christ etc. and we live in a totally different context to that of our forefathers therefore it is time to temper our independence.” I understand these statements to concern the tension between local church autonomy versus cooperation and mutuality between churches (which, in Baptist circles, is described as “associationalism”), placing an emphasis, in respect to the current New Zealand situation, on the latter over the former.

Such a position raises multiple issues, to some of which this essay will seek to respond – but within the Queensland rather than New Zealand context. I will begin by exploring the historical and theological realities of early Anabaptist and Baptist ecclesiologies and the links between them, with particular attention to associationalism, as the basis for our “DNA.” I will then focus on the Queensland situation, outlining, again, the historical context, and then seeking to explore a current expression of the tension between autonomy and association with regard to ordination. In conclusion, I will suggest that, at both the local and denominational level, ways forward lie in the clarification of Baptist theological understandings of what it means to be “church.”

2. The Historical and Theological Context

2.1 Early Anabaptist Ecclesiology

The sixteenth century European Radical Reformation was a varied movement including “Anabaptists proper, the Spiritualists, and the Evangelical Rationalists.”⁵ As the Anabaptists began to distinguish themselves from amongst this “loose fellowship,” it was on the basis that it was the very nature of the church which was at stake.⁶ For the early Anabaptists, Luther’s Reformation was both a cause for praise for his initial leadership, but also sorrow on account of his failure to carry through the Reformation in regard to the Church, despite his early leanings in such a direction.⁷ It was not baptism of infants or believers per se which was the major issue, but the inevitable consequences of these two practices for the “bitter and irreducible struggle between two mutually exclusive concepts of the church.”⁸ For the Anabaptists, as they sought a scriptural pattern for their gatherings, their guiding principle was not reformatio, but rather restitutio – to a gathered, regenerate church.⁹

The Anabaptist movement consisted of multiple threads drawn, in this case, across the northern European continent from Wittenberg to various Swiss cantons, Moravia, the Netherlands and southern Germany.¹⁰ In 1527 there was a meeting of radical leaders at Schleitheim, near the Swiss-German border and the resulting confession outlined the basic ideas which distinguished the participants and their associates from the established churches.¹¹ The articles of the confession pertained to believer’s baptism, the ban based on Matthew 18, the sharing of the Lord’s Supper only amongst the duly baptised, separation from “all the unrighteousness which is in the world,” pastoral leadership, and the rejection of both “the sword” (including the participation of Anabaptists in the magistracy) and of oath-making.¹² The overall tone, both in this document and in the writings of Menno Simons, is that churches (or more preferably for Menno, communities) were envisioned as small, voluntary groups which met in houses and governed their own functioning under God.¹³

The relationship between such congregations appears to have relied heavily on the influence and leadership of various itinerant teachers, such as Menno, who responded to a call to act as elder to an “extended brotherhood... of churches.”¹⁴ Thus, elders appear to have functioned at various levels and, whilst ultimate authority lay in each congregation as a whole, and they each appointed their own elders,¹⁵ some elders appear to have

functioned, as did Menno, in a regional capacity. In doing so, he exercised “authoritative oversight, including the discipline and occasional ban, or excommunication, of leaders.”¹⁶ Further, the Waterlander Mennonite response to the application for membership from John Smyth in 1610 clearly indicates that Anabaptist churches saw themselves as part of a larger community. Smyth’s application was delayed at length whilst discussions were held by the Waterlander community with Dutch Mennonites beyond Amsterdam, and as far away as Prussia and Germany, in order “to forestall possible later disharmony and disunity.”¹⁷

2.2 Anabaptist Influence on Baptist Ecclesiology

The impact of such Anabaptist ecclesiology on early Baptist thought and practice is the subject of the various theories of origin of the Baptist movement. These are succinctly summarised by Les Ball as having three main foci: those which interpret the origins of Baptists as lying in the Primitive Church of the New Testament, those which look to the European Anabaptists of the Reformation period, and those which find Baptist roots in the English Separatist movement of the seventeenth century.¹⁸ The second of these is of interest here and Ball goes on to indicate the particular points at which Baptist thought and practice reflected both similarities to and differences the Schleithem Confession. The strongest similarities appear to lie in the areas of the authority of Scripture, baptism and the nature of the Church, but there are significant differences around the ideas of discipline as practised by the Ban, complete withdrawal from the secular world, communal life-style, pacifism and rejection of involvement in civil affairs.¹⁹

Any more definite links between Anabaptist thought and Baptist origins might be expected to be found in the Continental sojourn of John Smyth and Thomas Helwys in the early seventeenth century. Their migration, together with a small congregation, from England to Holland came as a result of the English persecution of Separatists and certainly brought them into contact with Mennonites,²⁰ but Smyth’s writings appear to show an independent development of thought which he himself saw as being “the true development of his earlier Puritan and Separatist beliefs.”²¹ Leon McBeth suggests that Smyth’s failure to ask to be baptised by the Waterlander Mennonites in Amsterdam might have been due to the language barrier (which in any case suggests a limited impact of Mennonite ideas on his thinking),²² but Anthony Cross points out that, even after the time when Smyth baptised himself and then the rest of the congregation, he did not regard the Mennonites as a true church.²³ Whilst Smyth did, at a later stage seek membership with the Waterlander Mennonites for himself and that segment of the congregation which continued to follow him, Helwys and his group denounced such action on the basis of Mennonite successionism and continued to support the validity of their own baptism – and it was this group which in c. 1612 returned to England to form the basis of the General Baptist movement.²⁴

If there had been at least some geographical proximity between the forerunners of General Baptists and representatives of the Anabaptist movement, even this cannot be claimed for those in England who would become



A Home Missionary at Work (Pastor C H Nicholls)

known as Particular Baptists. Their roots are traced to moderate Separatist beginnings and the formation of the so-called JLJ (Jacob, Lathrop and Jessey) Church by Henry Jacob in 1616.²⁵ The church in Southwark became marked by an increasing disquiet with the established Church of England and its various practices including infant baptism, and in 1633 the church divided, both for the sake of convenience and safety and, perhaps, on the basis of a growing conviction on the part of some members concerning believer’s baptism.²⁶ In 1638, either a continuation of this latter group or an additional Separatist church, adopted believer’s baptism, and by 1644 there were seven Particular Baptist churches in or around London which together issued The First London Confession.²⁷ The Confession which was issued in that same year went to some length to deny any association with the Continental Anabaptists, being fully entitled The Confession of Faith, of all those Churches which are commonly (though falsely [sic] called Anabaptists.²⁸ The major concern was, of course, to deny any sympathy with the violent events in Münster, but specific denial was also made of “holding Free-will, Falling away from grace, denying Originall sinne, [and] disclaiming of Magistracy, denying to assist them either in persons or purse in any of their lawfull Commands.”²⁹ Some question of connection through Richard Blunt has been raised, but it also seems possible that convictions concerning baptist developed within the JLJ church.³⁰

2.3 Early Baptist Associationalism

Even before the departure from Amsterdam, Helwys was pressing the independence and autonomy of the local church:

That though in respect off CHRIST, the Church bee one, Ephes. 4.4. yet it consisteth off divers particular congregacions, even so manie as there shallbee in the World, every off which congregacion, though they be but two or three, have CHRIST given them, with all the meanes off their salvacion. Mat. 18.20. Roman. 8.32. I. Corin. 3.22. Are the Bodie off CHRIST. I. Cor. 12.27. and a whole Church. I Cor. 14.23. And therefore may, and ought, when they are come together, to Pray, Prophecie, breake bread, and administer in all the holy ordinances, although as yet they have no Officers, or that their Officers should bee in Prison, sick or by anie other meanes hindered from the Church. I : Pet. 4.10 & 2.5.³¹

But alongside such independence, McBeth also notes the beginnings of “the rudiments of denominational structure.”³² Amongst the General Baptists there were increasing numbers of associations which responded to particular issues and adopted joint confessions of faith.³³ By the mid-seventeenth century there was a nationwide assembly and the role and authority of such assemblies were more substantially developed in the Orthodox Creed of 1678 which, in the light of the previous quote, rather surprisingly declared:

General councils, or assemblies, consisting of the Bishops, Elders, and Brethren, of the several churches of Christ, and being legally convened, and met together out of all the churches, and the churches appearing there by their representatives, make but one church, and have lawful right, and suffrage in this general meeting, or assembly, to act in the name of Christ.³⁴

When, due to doctrinal heterodoxy, outdated practices and general apathy, the General Baptists declined in the eighteenth century, their tendencies toward associationalism were continued in the work of Dan Taylor and his New Connexion.³⁵ Taylor preached and wrote widely, and was deeply committed to a warm associationalism amongst the churches in his charge. For Raymond Brown, “Although committed to the autonomy of the local church, they knew the dangers of congregational isolation” and “proved the value of mutual encouragement, of sharing fresh ideas, as well as of giving practical support and healthy doctrinal instruction to one another.”³⁶

The Particular Baptists similarly, at their Abingdon Association of 1652, recognised the significance of association based on the belief that “there is the same relation betwixt the particular churches each towards other as there is betwixt particular members of one church.”³⁷ However, as a result of persecution, assemblies were infrequent and in the Second London Confession of 1677, their authority was mitigated in that, “these messengers assembled, are not entrusted with any Church-power properly so called; or with any jurisdiction over the Churches themselves, to exercise any censures either over any Churches, or Persons: or to impose their determination on the Churches, or Officers.”³⁸ This statement was still, however, set within a firmly established commitment to and practice of “communion”:

As each Church, and all the Members of it, are bound to pray continually, for the good and prosperity of all the Churches of Christ, in all places; and upon all occasions to further it (everyone 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.³⁹

For James Renihan, the conclusion concerning the early Particular Baptists’ commitment to associationalism was that it was clearly “a vital element in [their] ecclesiology. Independency did not imply isolation, but rather required mutual encouragement, edification and cooperation.”⁴⁰

In summary, “Baptists from the beginning sought to maintain sisterly intercourse between local churches; they never thought that one church was independent of others.”⁴¹ For Alan Sell, the “parochialism and isolationism” which have characterized more modern Baptist practices concerning associationalism are, rather than being part of our DNA, a reflection of “the force of the individualism flowing down from the nineteenth century.”⁴² The conclusion of this section must therefore be that evidence of any influence of an alleged Anabaptist emphasis on independence is thin on two counts. Their independence is overstated and the links between Anabaptist and Baptist ecclesiology are tenuous. There is also significant evidence that the early Baptists, who did indeed contribute to our DNA, were in fact committed to and practiced a strong form of associationalism which was lost to later influences.

3. Associationalism amongst Queensland Baptists – Past and Present

3.1 The Historical Context

Les Ball has traced the early development of associationalism in nineteenth century Queensland. The autonomy of local churches was strongly asserted throughout this early period of development, both in the maturation of local preaching stations into independent churches and the increasingly confident expression of “independence of thought and action” by those churches.⁴³ To some extent this was doctrinally driven, but also appears to have been largely the result of the divisive nature of the strong personalities of those in leadership which undermined early attempts at association.⁴⁴ Despite these difficulties, and the failure of early, localised attempts to bring churches together (e.g. “the Queensland Association of Baptist churches in the Ipswich District”),⁴⁵ the Baptist Association of Queensland did indeed come into being in 1877 as “local ecclesiastical empires were losing their siege mentality.”⁴⁶

The Association’s conditions of membership related to biblical authority, salvation by faith, believer’s baptism, and, the “liberty of each church to manage its own affairs, and to interpret and administer the laws of Christ.”⁴⁷ Among its nine objects were: the promotion of brotherly love, joint action, conferring and cooperation, assistance of small or poor churches and the provision of suitably trained men for ministry.⁴⁸ The fourth object is of particular interest and proposes that the association will seek to “originate and strengthen churches of the same faith and order, without attempting anything that would compromise the perfect independence of any of the churches.”⁴⁹ The wording might be simply a restatement of Baptist principles, or perhaps suggest a certain defensiveness concerning the impact of the association’s activities on local church autonomy. The point appears, at least, to have been a sensitive one.

The intervening century has seen the rise (and, in some cases, decline) of a raft of denominational functions including, the Queensland Baptist Foreign Mission, Queensland Baptist Care, the Queensland Baptist College, Queensland Baptist Men’s Society, Queensland

Baptist Women's Ministries and the Queensland Camps and Conference Centres ministry.⁵⁰ The balance between an emphasis on autonomy and association appears to have shifted from time to time with various situations and personalities. Dealing with the impact of the charismatic movement of the 1980s, for example, resulted in a variety of outcomes including some breakdown of fellowship both within and between churches, increased diversity in styles of worship, and attempts by the Union Executive to provide some common-ground for understanding through the publication of a book which "helped to clarify the situation by offering definitions of various practices and beliefs but [which] could not do much about the allegations of false teaching and unbiblical practices or destructive attitudes that often flew around."⁵¹

3.2 The Current Situation

Such is the historical background to the ongoing interplay between local church autonomy and associationalism in Queensland. The current status of Queensland associationalism is, to at least some extent, reflected in current QB documents. The Queensland Baptist Guidelines for Belief and Practice, for example, affirm as a core value that "each local church has the freedom and responsibility to conduct its own ministry," guided but not controlled by leaders, with final authority, under Christ, lying in the local Baptist congregation.⁵² Relationality, "whether within churches, among churches, between churches and support services, or across to other denominations," is dealt with at far greater length in the section entitled "Relationships among Queensland Baptists." Here, Queensland Baptists are exhorted to found their relationships on God's love, acknowledging that:

* Building relationships within the Body of Christ is essential for Queensland Baptists (1 Cor 12:25)

* The Body of Christ is to be united but diverse (Eph 4:3, 13; 1 Cor 12)

* Unity among Queensland Baptists does not mean 'uniformity'; and diversity does not mean 'division'

* The Kingdom of God advances most effectively through the cooperative effort of the Body of Christ – i.e. sharing together (Eph 4:16)

* Queensland Baptists should help each other to develop their maximum potential – i.e. sharing with others (Eph 4:2)

* Queensland Baptists need a denomination structure which will facilitate the building of relationships.⁵³

The implication of this lengthy section, particularly in comparison with the brief reference to autonomy in a clause which is actually more concerned with congregational government, would seem to suggest that autonomy and independence are perhaps regarded as coming more naturally to current Baptists than do associationalism and relational mutuality.⁵⁴ The fact should also be noted that this is a denominational document and its priorities understandably tend, therefore, toward the latter emphasis rather than the former.⁵⁵

A further section of Guidelines for Belief and Prac-

tice on "Autonomy and Accountability among Queensland Baptists" attempts to build a New Testament rationale for both autonomy and accountability and, in doing so, raises the question of the appropriate use of Scripture both here and in the New Zealand statement. Autonomy, it is suggested, is demonstrated by the "individual small groups" which met as "autonomous groups" which formed after Pentecost.⁵⁶ "Accountability" is said to be reflected in Eph 4:1 ff and elsewhere. The difficulties of presenting a coherent and appropriate representation of a very complex issue in such a brief manner are, of course, significant. The imposition of such terms as "individual," "autonomous" and "accountability" on the scriptural text does, however, appear strained and anachronistic and the choice of these particular references is perhaps also less than ideal.⁵⁷ The issue concerning the use of Scripture in the New Zealand statement is related to this problem in that it chooses a single verse of Scripture which, whilst serving the purpose of its authors by promoting mutuality, glosses over the complexity of both the Scriptural and contemporary contexts.

In the same section of the Beliefs and Practices document, autonomy is defined as "freedom to function within mutually accepted position statements and policies," and accountability as "mutual cooperation to ensure that we individually and corporately remain within the accepted position statements and policies."⁵⁸ How this is, or is not, worked out in practice was exemplified in the debate concerning ordination, and particularly the ordination of women, held in 2009.⁵⁹

3.3 Ordination and Women

– Caught in the Tension

Ordination has, across the breadth of Baptist history and streams of thought, been variously considered to be un-Scriptural, as belonging to the local church, as belonging to Baptist denominational associations, or some synthesis of the latter two positions. Fisher Humphreys, for example, notes the rejection of ordination as biblical by members of the early Radical Reformation movement and finds that the New Testament provides neither "warrants nor precedents" for contemporary ordination practices,⁶⁰ yet early confessions of both General and Particular Baptist persuasions include references to ordination.⁶¹ Everett Ferguson seeks to recall free churches to their pre-Constantinian patristic roots in establishing the earliest practice of ordination by local churches,⁶² whilst for Nigel Wright ordination is clearly "an act of legitimation, authorization, and formal commissioning both within and beyond the local congregation."⁶³ For Stanley Grenz, ordination is one of the "church powers" (specifically, the "power of organisation") which belong to the local church and which includes "the prerogative to select officers for the local assembly (Acts 6:1-5) and to ordain leaders for the entire church, within the context of the advice of sister congregations (Acts 13:1-4; 1 Tim 4:14)."⁶⁴

From the inception of a Baptist association in Queensland, responsibility for identifying, training and ordination of pastors has been an association or Union

function, with an accompanying shift “from recognising ordination as vested in the spiritual authority of the local church towards recognising the power to ordain as vested in the legal authority of the wider Association.”⁶⁵ This largely remains the situation into the modern period, but it now stands alongside “the development of team ministry and a greater propensity of churches to employ unordained specialist support staff.”⁶⁶ Reports concerning both ordination in general, and that of women in particular, were made in 1986, but resulted in no substantive changes despite lengthy debate over the next three years.⁶⁷ The result was a “state of confusion,”⁶⁸ which was not much clarified by a shift in terminology from “accreditation” to “registration.” In 2007 the QB Board appointed an Ordination Review Committee (ORC) “to review the denomination’s understanding of ordination.”⁶⁹ In reflecting on the historical issues concerning ordination for Baptists, the Committee sought to address questions concerning the legitimacy of ordination, whether it is a local church or denominational function, who should be ordained and whether it should be open to women.⁷⁰ It noted the necessity for Queensland Baptists “to arrive at a settled and distinctively Baptist theological understanding of ordination but with the flexibility to adapt to the ever-changing ministry of the gospel in this state’s diverse towns, suburbs, and subcultures.”⁷¹

The ORC defined ordination as “both the spiritual act of recognition that God has called a person to, and gifted and prepared a person for, vocational pastoral ministry (centring on the ministry of the Word, the care of people, and equipping for service), and also the commitment to this calling and responsibility by the ordinand.”⁷² On the point of particular interest here, the Report supported the ordination of women, provided that they met the requirements for ordination, and recommended that “the act of ordination in most cases be the combined responsibility of the local Baptist church to whom the candidate is accountable and Ministerial Services.”⁷³ The issues of ordination for women and autonomy versus associationalism came together in a further recommendation that “individual churches, in making their own decisions on the ordination of women in their church, be respected for their opinions.”⁷⁴

At the QB General Assembly meeting in May 2009, the new definition of ordination and the criteria for ordination were adopted.⁷⁵ The resolution “that both men and women may be ordained if they fulfil the requirements for ordination as outlined in the previous resolutions”, and an amendment that such ordination be limited in the case of women to exclude senior or sole pastoral positions, were both lost. The resolution concerning “the combined responsibility of the local Baptist church... and Ministerial Services” for ordination was affirmed. A further resolution that decisions by local churches regarding the ordination of women be respected was, given the loss of the prior resolution and the consequent lack of a framework for such decisions, dropped.

Several related issues appear to have perhaps added to the confusion which (together with the angst which apparently attended the whole debate – I was not per-

sonally present) muddied the waters at the meeting. Firstly, despite the recognised need for “a settled and distinctively Baptist theological understanding of ordination,” I would suggest that what was meant by “ordination” nevertheless remained somewhat obscure in the ORC Report. The definition appears to have addressed a particular aspect of ordination (i.e. that it is a joint recognition of calling) but to have remained silent on several other issues. This might be understood to provide maximum flexibility in application but significant questions remained, I would suggest, unanswered. Is, for example, ordination to/by a local church or to/by the wider denomination? If it is to/by a particular local congregation, might this be transferable in some sense to another local church, or would a further ordination be required?⁷⁶ If, on the other hand, ordination is to/by the wider denomination, is that simply on the understanding that an ordained person might be called to a different local church from that in he/she was ordained, or is there some wider sense in which “the minister represents the whole church [i.e. not just the local congregation] on the local scene”?⁷⁷ Unfortunately, general statements concerning the desire for “a stronger involvement by the local church,” the recommendation that “the local church has an important role to play,” and the resolution that “the act of ordination in most cases be the combined responsibility of the local Baptist church... and Ministerial Services,” did not appear to clarify this situation.⁷⁸

I would suggest that, if by ordination Queensland Baptists mean a mutually acknowledged call to ministry between the individual and a local church which, either at a strictly local, or in a local context which is nevertheless embedded within the denominational structure, then, according to Baptist principles and the current QB framework, the autonomy of the local church would indeed take precedence over uniformity. Local churches are required by the QB Constitution to accept the minimum doctrinal statement with, it is understood, other matters such as gender issues, being beyond the purview of the Union’s right to require local church compliance.⁷⁹ And, given the process of the Assembly meeting on this topic, it would appear difficult to claim that any resultant position or statement could be described as “mutually accepted.”⁸⁰ Only if ordination is understood



An Early Bush Church—Palmwoods

to have some wider sense of being representative of the denominational body, would it appear, that, within the current framework, the Assembly has reason to rule upon the suitability, or otherwise, of women recommended by their local churches for such an office.

Beyond and behind these issues, lies the question of whether we, as Queensland Baptists, believe that our state association possesses the churchly power to ordain, or whether this is, in fact, limited only to the local church – so that the very nature of the local and wider church and the relationship between the two requires exploration.⁸¹ The assumption or decision that ordination is a denominational function seems to have been made at some point following the formation of the original Queensland association, although in my current research I have been unable to identify how or why such a decision was made. I would suggest that the ORC Committee's finding that "most want ordination to be retained at the denominational level," even if it is with "stronger involvement by the local church," is insufficient basis for informed discernment, and that further clarification of the Scriptural and theological basis of the denomination's involvement in ordination is required.

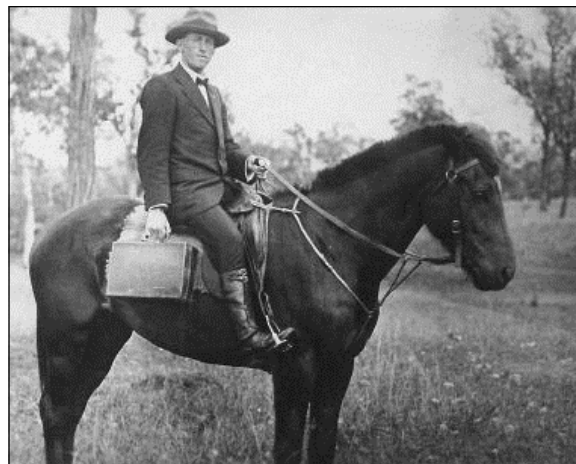
The exploration of ordination in this section suggests that it is difficult to draw conclusions concerning the current balance between local church autonomy and associationalism. The debate concerning ordination in general, and the ordination of women in particular, has been muddied by a lack of theological clarity concerning both ordination and the relationship between the local church and the association and it would be unsurprising to perhaps find that this lack of clarity might impact on other issues related to associationalism.

4. Conclusion

What then, as Queensland Baptists, is our DNA with regard to "balancing autonomy with the associational impulse?"⁸² The New Zealand statement is inaccurate in suggesting that their (or our) Baptist inclinations in this regard are dependent on an Anabaptist heritage. The findings of this paper would also appear to refute the suggestion that any exaggerated sense of independence

amongst local churches is a result of our early Baptist DNA. Rather this appears, more accurately, to be the result of the impact of Enlightenment individualism at both local church and association levels. As Alan Sell puts it: "if there is not a strong sense of church locally, it is difficult to see how there can be mutuality between the local church and the wider denominational associations, since the latter will find an ecclesiological void, and attempts to develop relationships will be vitiated."⁸³

The current state of balance between autonomy and association in Queensland is, in the light of an exploration of the ordination issue conducted in this essay, unclear, and set against a background of conversations which complain of both a perceived lack of cooperation amongst churches, and an ongoing suspicion of moves to centralise power in the association. Such confusion is best countered, I have suggested, by the clarification of Baptist theological understandings of what it means to be "church."



A Home Missionary at Work (Pastor Ted Smith)

1 Linda Grigg, "What BWA Member Bodies Are Doing: Baptist Union of New Zealand," BWA Connect, <http://archive.constantcontact.com/fs058/1102288672315/archive/1102794904925.html>.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 Rodney Macann, Email Correspondence, 2010.

5 Roger Haight, *Christian Community in History*, vol. 2 Comparative Ecclesiology (London: Continuum, 2005), 221.

6 Franklin H. Littell, *The Anabaptist View of the Church: A Study in the Origins of Sectarian Protestantism* (Boston: Starr King Press), 3.

7 Ibid., 4.

8 Ibid., 14.

9 Ibid., 79.

10 Ibid., Chap 1.

11 Curtis W. Freeman, James Wm. McClendon Jr, and C. Rosalee Velloso Ewell, eds., *Baptist Roots: A Reader in the Theology of a Christian People* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1999), 41.

12 Michael Sattler, "The Schleithem Confession (1527)," in *Baptist Roots: A Reader in the Theology of a Christian People*, ed. Curtis W. Freeman, James Wm. McClendon Jr, and C. Rosalee Velloso Ewell (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1999), 43-47.

13 Haight, *Christian Community in History*, 230.

14 Ibid., 229.

15 Littell, *The Anabaptist View of the Church*, 93.

16 Haight, *Christian Community in History*.

17 William L. Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1969), 114.

18 Leslie James Ball, "Queensland Baptists in the Nineteenth Century: The Historical Development of a Denominational Identity" (PhD Thesis, University of Queensland, 1994), 8.

19 Ibid., 11-12.

20 H. Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage: Four Centuries of Baptist Witness* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1987), 34.

21 Anthony R. Cross, "The Adoption of Believer's Baptism and Baptist Beginnings," in *Exploring Baptist Origins*, ed. Anthony R. Cross and Nicholas J. Wood, Centre for Bap-

- tist History and Heritage Studies (Oxford: Centre for Baptist History and Heritage, 2010), 14.
- 22 McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage*, 37.
- 23 Cross, "The Adoption of Believer's Baptism and Baptist Beginnings," 15.
- 24 Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 114, 15. Lumpkin points to Helwys' Arminian views of atonement as an indication of Anabaptist influence but still concludes that the relevant document displays "considerable independence of thought."
- 25 McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage*, 42.
- 26 Ibid., 43. McBeth notes that it is unclear whether, at this stage, the objection was to infant baptism per se, or to the Church of England as its source.
- 27 Ibid., 44. "The London Confession" (1644), in *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, ed. William L. Lumpkin (Valley Forge: Judson, 1969).
- 28 "The London Confession", 153.
- 29 Ibid., 155.
- 30 James M. Renihan, *Edification and Beauty: The Practical Ecclesiology of the English Particular Baptists 1675-1705* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008), 7.
- 31 "A Declaration of Faith of English People Remaining at Amsterdam" (1611), in *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, ed. William L. Lumpkin (Valley Forge: PA: Judson Press, 1969), 120.
- 32 McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage*, 95.
- 33 Ibid., 96.
- 34 "The Orthodox Creed" (1678), in *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, ed. William L. Lumpkin (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1969), 327.
- 35 Adam Taylor, "The History of the English General Baptists (1819) (The Formation of the New Connection)," in *A Sourcebook for the Baptist Heritage*, ed. H. Leon McBeth (Nashville, TE: Broadman Press, 1990), 105.
- 36 Brown, *The English Baptists of the Eighteenth Century*, 111.
- 37 Barrington R. White, ed. *Association Records of the Particular Baptists of England, Wales and Ireland to 1660* (London: Baptist Historical Society, 1971), 126. Quoted in McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage*, 97.
- 38 "The Second London Confession of Faith (1677)," in *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, ed. William L. Lumpkin (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1969), 289.
- 39 "The London Confession" (1644), 288-89.
- 40 Renihan, *Edification and Beauty*, 182.
- 41 W.T. Whitley, *A History of British Baptists* (London: Charles Griffin, 1923), 86.
- 42 Alan P.F. Sell, "Doctrine, Polity, Liberty: What Do Baptists Stand For?," in *Pilgrim Pathways: Essays in Baptist History in Honour of B.R. White*, ed. William H. Brackney, Fiddes Paul S., and John H.Y. Briggs (Macon: GA: Mercer University Press, 1999), 35.
- 43 Ball, "Queensland Baptists", 326.
- 44 Ibid., 349.
- 45 Ibid., 345.
- 46 Ibid., 349.
- 47 Baptist Association of Queensland Constitution, (1877). Reproduced in Ball, "Queensland Baptists", Appendix B, 413.
- 48 There is no mention of ordination at this point.
- 49 Baptist Association of Queensland Constitution, 414.
- 50 David Parker, Leslie J. Ball, and Stanley W. Nickerson, *Pressing on with the Gospel: The Story of Baptists in Queensland 1855-2005*, BHSQ Baptist Historical Series (Brisbane: Baptist Historical Society of Queensland, 2005), 182.
- 51 Ibid., 142.
- 52 "Queensland Baptists Guidelines for Belief and Practice," (2001/4), http://www.qb.com.au/database/files/Guidelines%20for%20Belief%20and%20Practice_as%20amended%20for%202004%20Assembly_.pdf (accessed Oct 25, 2010), 4.
- 53 Ibid. 5.
- 54 Sell, "Doctrine, Polity, Liberty," 34.
- 55 I am not suggesting any improper self-interest but rather that those engaged with QB activities have, by their very involvement, already indicated their commitment to associationalism.
- 56 "Queensland Baptists Guidelines for Belief and Practice." 6.
- 57 For a better choice of references see, for example, Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Broadman & Holman, 2000), 551-52.
- 58 "Queensland Baptists Guidelines for Belief and Practice."
- 59 I am aware that there are many other issues (for example, the lapse of interest in the QB presidency and non-payment of membership fees) which may speak to the state of play in Queensland, but given my limited awareness of these and the consequent necessity for me to use a specific focus for my exploration, I have selected this particular issue as current and well-documented.
- 60 Fisher Humphreys, "Ordination and the Church," in *The People of God: Essays on the Believers' Church*, ed. Paul Basden and David Dockery (Nashville: TE: Broadman Press, 1991), 290.
- 61 "The Orthodox Creed" (1678), 319-20. "The Second London Confession of Faith" (1677), 287 (though the practice is described here, the term ordination is not used). In both of these documents the authority of the person ordained is limited to that congregation which participated in his election.
- 62 Ferguson Everett, "The 'Congregationalism' of the Early Church," in *The Free Church and the Early Church: Bridging the Historical and Theological Divide*, ed. D.H. Williams (Grand Rapids, MI: 2002), 134.
- 63 Nigel G. Wright, *New Baptists, New Agenda* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2002), 123.
- 64 Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 553.
- 65 QB Ordination Review Committee, "Ordination among Queensland Baptists," (QB, 2008), 10.
- 66 Ibid.
- 67 Parker, Ball, and Nickerson, *Pressing On* 143.
- 68 ORC, "Ordination among Queensland Baptists," 11.
- 69 Ibid., 1.
- 70 Ibid.
- 71 Ibid., 11.
- 72 Ibid., 5.
- 73 Ibid., 6.
- 74 Ibid.
- 75 QB, "Minutes of the General Assembly," (2009).
- 76 I note that the previous definition of ordination indicated that "there should only be one ordination in a person's life" but that this was omitted in the new definition. ORC, "Ordination among Queensland Baptists," 3. A mixed view of the permanency, or otherwise, of ordination is represented in Recommendation 4.
- 77 Paul S. Fiddes, *Tracks and Traces: Baptist Identity in Church and Theology*, Studies in Baptist History and Thought (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2003), 105. How this is understood needs to be carefully thought through in light of Miroslav Volf's clarification that, in contrast with Roman Catholic ecclesiology, it is the Holy Spirit, rather than the pastor, who is the link between the local church and the wider body of such local churches. Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 141.
- 78 ORC, "Ordination among Queensland Baptists," 3, 4.
- 79 "The Baptist Union of Queensland Constitution and by-Laws," (2009), <http://www.qb.com.au/database/files/admin%20services/Constitution%20and%20By-laws%20May%202009.pdf> (accessed Oct 25, 2010) 5.
- 80 "Queensland Baptists Guidelines for Belief and Practice."
- 81 Such an exploration is beyond the scope of this enquiry but the work of Miroslav Volf (Volf, *After Our Likeness*, for example 138-39.) comes to mind.
- 82 Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 552.
- 83 Sell, "Doctrine, Polity, Liberty," 34.