

Spurgeon's Men: The Resurgence of Baptist Belief and Practice in Tasmania 1869-1884

Laurence F Rowston

This thesis seeks to explain why a number of men from Spurgeon's College, London, started arriving in Tasmania in 1869 to begin a new phase of Baptist work. It considers their impact on the lives of previously established Nonconformist churches and the ramifications of their association of churches formed in 1884. This thesis also seeks to assess the decline of the Particular Baptists in Tasmania. The thesis argues that a rebirth of the Baptist life and conviction began with the influx of these men from the Pastors' College in London which gave rise to evangelical Baptists under the Spurgeon banner.

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ABBREVIATIONS

DH	Devon Herald
LEx	Launceston Examiner
S&T	Sword and Trowel
SB	Southern Baptist
THRA	Tasmanian Historical Research Association
TSA	Tasmanian State Archives

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis is the result of a long held desire to document the history of the Baptists in Tasmania and to understand how in the second half of the nineteenth century the entry of men from Spurgeon's College in London, to Tasmania, brought about a remarkable transformation of Baptist persuasion in Tasmania and the formation of the Baptist Union of Tasmania in 1884. To do so it has been necessary to draw upon Baptist history in the colony since 1834 and up to and just beyond 1884. As the thesis progresses, it will also be necessary to seek to advance an understanding of the interconnectedness between the Tasmanian Particular Baptists in the second half of the Nineteenth Century and the Spurgeon's College men (who confessed to being Particular Baptists when they entered Spurgeon's College), and the transition which occurred in the colony at that time when Nonconformist churches were coming into their own.

Of all the major denominations, the Baptists were the last to attempt to establish themselves in the colony of New South Wales early in the nineteenth century. The first recorded Baptist service of worship was conducted on 24 April 1831 in the 'Rose and Crown' Hotel in Sydney by the erratic Rev John McKaeg (c1790-c1844?), a Highlander from the Baptist

Church at Lochgilphead, Argyllshire.¹ McKaeg also conducted the first Baptist baptism in the colony at Woolloomooloo Bay on 12 August 1832,² but a chapel had to wait for he resigned and began business as a tobacconist.³ The Baptists in the colony made a second start with the arrival of the Rev John Saunders (1806 - 1859) on 1 December 1834. Saunders responded to a request for help from McKaeg's congregation.⁴ On 23 November 1835 the foundation stone was laid for the chapel in

¹ Alan C Prior, *Some Fell on Good Ground: A History of the Beginnings and Development of the Baptist Church in New South Wales, Australia, 1831-1965* (Sydney, Baptist Union of New South Wales, 1966), pp. 19ff.

² Prior, *Some Fell on Good Ground: A History of the Beginnings and Development of the Baptist Church in New South Wales, Australia, 1831-1965*, p. 22; Ken R Manley, *Shapers of our Australian Baptist Identity* (in the holdings of the Victorian Baptist Historical Society, Camberwell), pp. 2f.

³ Michael Petras, *Extension or Extinction, Baptist Growth in New South Wales 1900-1939* (Sydney, Baptist Historical Society of New South Wales, 1983), pp. 16f. Following his business failure, McKaeg turned to alcohol and, later, spent time in the debtors' prison.

⁴ Saunders, trained as a solicitor, was sent out the colony by the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) even though the Society did not regard Australia as within its sphere of responsibility. Saunders was a member of the Baptist Church at Cold Harbour Lane, Camberwell. See Prior, *Some Fell on Good Ground: A History of the Beginnings and Development of the Baptist Church in New South Wales, Australia, 1831-1965*, pp. 14, 26ff; Manley, *Shapers of our Australian Baptist Identity*, pp. 6ff.

Bathurst Street on the same land that had been granted to McKaeg. On 23 September 1836 the building was opened and the church constituted on 15 December 1836.⁵

The Baptist Churches' official presence in Van Diemen's Land began on 2 December 1834 with the arrival of the Rev Henry Dowling. Dowling had been pastor of the Colchester Strict and Particular Baptist Church in England. Based in the north of the island, he became pastor of the Launceston York Street Chapel which opened in December 1840. A group of Hobart Town Baptists had previously constituted the first Baptist Church in the Australian colonies on 14 June 1835. Their Hobart chapel in Harrington Street was officially opened in March 1841.

By 1878 the work which the Rev Henry Dowling had commenced in Hobart Town fifty years earlier was slowly dying. It too had been a Strict and Particular work, 'Strict' in that the church was conducted on principles of strict communion - the Lord's Table was closed against any who had not been baptised as believers, and 'Particular' in that it was held that God is Particular in whom he has chosen - God has elected some to everlasting life, predestined others to everlasting death. The later doctrine was commonly known in derogatory terms as Hyper-Calvinism.

⁵ In Sydney, Saunders preached his first sermon for the Methodists but within a month of his arrival he had rented a room in York Street and had it fitted out with pulpit, seats and other furnishings. By April 1835 the congregation had grown and moved to a room attached to St James Church of England which was known as the Court House. See Prior, *Some Fell on Good Ground: A History of the Beginnings and Development of the Baptist Church in New South Wales, Australia, 1831-1965*, pp. 38 and 42 and Rod Benson, 'The Ministry of the Reverend John Saunders in Sydney, 1834-1847, Part 1', *The Baptist Recorder*, Number 102, pp. 2-10.

In the north Dowling's work was only holding its own. Dowling was never a strong close communionist and, on his retirement in 1867, the York Street chapel became open communion. Two years later, Dowling was dead and for many years thereafter the church was bereft of real and lasting leadership. The York Street work struggled on until 1916.

In the south, the membership of the Baptist chapel in Hobart Town wrote into their Trust Deed the principles of strict communion and so it was to remain until the Church's final days in 1886. Its leading elder and lay preacher, Henry Hinsby, was Hyper-Calvinist. Its life-long trustee, Francis Smither Edgar, was an avowed strict communionist. In the lead up to its close, aged and incapable leadership had been theirs for over twenty years. After years of disorder, division and dissolution, the cause died a slow death. The other two small Baptist causes at Constitution and Deloraine, both lapsed in time. It was at Perth, under William and Mary Ann Gibson, wealthy pastoralists of Native Point, that there was reason for hope in a Baptist future on the island.⁶

It was at the beginning of the 1870s that Baptist work began a new chapter. The eminent London preacher, the Rev CH Spurgeon,⁷ had begun sending out men from his Pastors' College. The active interest and generosity of the Gibsons made this possible, as the Gibsons paid for their passage. The Gibsons also built churches, chapels, halls and manses.

⁶ Laurence F Rowston, *Baptists in Van Diemen's Land: The Story of Tasmania's First Baptist Church* (Hobart, Baptist Union of Tasmania, 1985), chapter 7.

⁷ For Spurgeon see L Drummond, *Spurgeon, Prince of Preachers* (Grand Rapids, Kregel, 1992) and Iain H Murray, *The Forgotten Spurgeon* (London, Banner of Truth, 2 ed, 1973).

Spurgeon's son, Thomas, visited the island five times between 1878 and 1890. In 1884 the Baptist Union of Tasmania was formed with a combined membership of 305. By 1901 there were sixteen men from the Pastors' College working in Tasmanian Baptist churches.

The thesis will seek to show that by the end of 1880s the appeal of Calvinism had all but disappeared in Tasmanian Baptist circles. Context will also be provided by setting the arrival of men from Spurgeon's College against the health of the Non-conformist churches at the time thus furnishing something of the non-Baptists' interaction with these newly arrived migrants.

This thesis draws greatly upon source material which has never before been fully accessed. It directs attention to such sources as the Baptist references in the Northern Tasmanian newspapers until 1890, to Harry Wood's memories and to Peter Grant's extensive and recent collection of newspaper cuttings on Alfred W Grant. The Baptist references in newspapers were obtained from microfilm readers as digitisation of newspapers did not take place until the thesis was virtually complete.

Arguably, this study is unique because it opens up as never before a history of the Strict and Particular Baptists in Tasmania and the life and fortunes of Spurgeon's College men in the colony, neither subject ever having been the focus of any thorough scholarly investigation. This is the first time that a comprehensive study of a group of Spurgeon's College men in NSW, Victoria or elsewhere has been considered in detail. What has been previously written of Spurgeon's College men in Tasmania has been written in a chronological and uncritical

style with a somewhat biased and celebratory emphasis.

This thesis adds greatly to what little had been known about Samuel Cozens (1820-1887), the author of two small Tasmanian publications published in the memory of the Rev Henry Dowling: *A Tribute of Affection* and *Tracts of Truth and Incidents in the Life of the Rev Henry Dowling*.⁸

In numerous books and articles the decline of High-Calvinism among the English Strict and Particular Baptists in nineteenth century in England is well documented.⁹ This thesis documents

⁸ Samuel Cozens, *Tribute of Affection* (Launceston, Hudson and Hopwood, 1869) and *Incidents in the Life of the Rev Henry Dowling. Formerly of Colchester, Essex and More recently of Launceston, Tasmania* (Melbourne, Fountain Barber, 1871).

⁹ K Dix, *Strict and Particular. English Strict and Particular Baptists in the Nineteenth Century* (Didcot, Baptist Historical Society, 2001) and GR Breed, *Particular Baptists in Victorian England and their Strict Communion Organizations* (Didcot, Baptist Historical Society, 2003).

Strict and Particular Baptists grouped around their magazines – mainly the *Earthen Vessel* or the *Gospel Standard* – and were divided. Seventeenth century Baptists were generally Calvinistic Baptists who admitted believers on their declaration of their faith in baptism into congregationally ordered churches. High-Calvinists were not confined merely to the Baptist denomination, but had been espoused by Anglicans and Independents separately but concurrently. The initiative in salvation is of God, sovereignly, from election onwards. Hence Christ died to redeem no more and no less than the elect. The sinner is seen to be completely helpless: he cannot be exhorted as this would imply creature faith. So far as salvation is concerned, he can only be told to sit and wait for the Spirit of God to convict of sin and then give some token in this experience that he is indeed an elect soul. Faith is the gift of God and the unbeliever 'cannot believe till it be given him to believe'. After devotional study of Scripture, it was personal experience and profound reflection upon it that was most important in their doctrinal formulation, rather than study of a Particular corpus of theological material. In this experience, a point of crisis was reached,

the decline of both the Strict and Particular Baptists in Tasmania. This thesis explores in depth for the first time their sectarian nature and shows just how perilously close was the demise of the Baptist name in the colony by the 1870s.

The filling out of Mary Ann Gibson's story shows that she is the unifying element that runs through the story of the revitalisation of the Baptist faith in Tasmania in the second half of the nineteenth century.

The study of the nature of the theological instruction given at Spurgeon's College explains to some extent why the Baptists in the second half of the nineteenth century in Tasmania were so theologically conservative.

A greater understanding now exists on the fortunes of a number of the Nonconformist denominations between the years 1870 and 1890. A number of non-Baptist personalities

leading to an urgent search for a sense of assurance and acceptance by God, although this remained mixed with many fears. The personal anxiousness demanded a radical solution, which High-Calvinism provided. The authenticity of their call was judged by their lives from then on. True, folk were encouraged to attend the means of grace, in the hope that the Lord would speak to them. They were so zealous to maintain the sovereignty of God that they denied that preachers had the right 'to offer Christ' to unregenerate sinners. It was only legitimate to pray for the well-being of believers and not the conversion of sinners. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the majority of Baptist churches in England were moving on to a view called 'evangelical Calvinism', most notably taught by Baptist Andrew Fuller. This was a more moderate form of Calvinism which fully encouraged evangelism. On the other hand GR Breed in *Particular Baptists in Victorian England and their Strict Communion Organizations* tells of the phenomenal growth of Particular Baptist churches in the first half of the nineteenth century, from 361 to 1,574 churches (p. 10).

are now also better documented.¹⁰ There is a reasonable expectation that this study will break 'new ground' and bring to bear new historical insights into the area of Australian Baptist studies. There will also be some better understanding of colonial inter-church relationships.

Secondary sources underpinning this thesis are considerable but there are limitations. There have been a number of one-volume surveys of Baptist History such as Henry C Vedder's, *A Short History of the Baptists* (1892) in which CH Spurgeon is spoken of, but not in depth, and Baptists in Australia are barely mentioned, with Baptist life and witness in Tasmania generally ignored.¹¹ Work written on the Baptists that has proved valuable has come from three categories: British, Australian and Tasmanian. In *A History of the English Baptists* by AC Underwood,¹² the author, as the title suggests, confines himself to England, mentioning the Baptist churches of

¹⁰ See Chapter Six. People such as Congregationalist John Bennett, Church of Christ personalities George Moysey and Oliver Anderson Carr and Wesleyan Thomas Hainsworth.

¹¹ The others are: Robert G Torbet's, *A History of the Baptists* (Valley Forge, USA; Judson Press, 1950, revised 1963) and recently Leon McBeth's, *The Baptist Heritage: Four Centuries of Baptist Witness* (Nashville, USA; B&H Academic, 1987). The most recent is Bill Leonard's, *Baptist Ways: A History* (Valley Forge, USA; Judson Press, 2003). But none of these proved helpful for such a project as this thesis. In the 550 page Torbet work, 100 pages deal with the British scene while the balance concentrates on the American Baptists. The book is written from an American viewpoint. Furthermore, the two different Baptist communities in England – Strict and Particular and General (Union) of Baptists - are rarely distinguished from each other as the Baptist denomination there is regarded as a monolithic movement. The result is that the distinctive attitudes of the two groups to society and their contribution to Australian evangelicalism is misunderstood or ignored.

¹² AC Underwood, *A History of the English Baptists* (London, Kingsgate Press, 1947).

Wales and Scotland only in so far as they come into the story of the English churches. Underwood benefited greatly from William T Whitley's work, *A History of British Baptists*,¹³ and provides a readable replacement for that history. Underwood's book made the first attempt to use the insights provided by the sociology of religion and gives illuminating portraits of three great Baptists who stood out in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: CH Spurgeon, John Clifford and Alexander Maclaren.

Ernest Alexander Payne in his book, *The Baptist Union, a Short History*,¹⁴ traces the history of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland from its beginning in 1812, with the formation in London of the General Union of Particular Baptists to the present day. He discusses the various changes in doctrine and outlook, and at all points relates his story to the general political, economic, social and religious background. Payne's history is the institutional perspective of English Baptists.

The number of books written on Charles H Spurgeon is extensive, much of it hagiography. In many of them, such as Charles H Spurgeon, *Autobiography, Volume 2: 1854-1860*,¹⁵ a chapter is given on the Pastors' College but in all cases apart from the first student, Thomas Medhurst, little or no attention is given to other students. The Metropolitan Tabernacle's monthly magazine, *The Sword and Trowel*, was sourced for adequate biographical material.

¹³ William T Whitley, *A History of British Baptists* (London, Chas Griffin & Co, 1923). Whitley's book included materials on Australian Baptists.

¹⁴ Ernest A Payne, *The Baptist Union: A Short History* (London, Carey Kingsgate, 1958).

¹⁵ Charles H Spurgeon, *Autobiography, Volume 2: 1854-1860* (London, Passmore and Alabaster, 1898).

Mike Nicholls, in two very detailed articles in the Baptist Quarterly of 1986,¹⁶ provides details about Spurgeon's College. Nichols is complemented by David Bebbington who writes about Spurgeon as an educationalist in 'Spurgeon and British Evangelical Theological Education'.¹⁷ John Briggs in *The English Baptists of the Nineteenth Century*¹⁸ deals in detail with Baptist congregational life and worship, ministerial training and alliances as well as Baptists and the wider church and Baptists and education, society and politics. He provides the Baptist context for Spurgeon and his College.

Histories of Baptists worldwide generally fail to incorporate the Australian colonial experience of Baptists and their churches. This has been left to local authors in the various Australian States. The earliest is *Baptists in Victoria* by Frederick John Wilkin.¹⁹ He dealt with personalities and churches chronologically and listed their pastorates. Mention of the Spurgeon's College men who came to Tasmania is to be found in his work.

For the centenary history of the South Australian Baptist churches, H Estcourt Hughes wrote *Our One Hundred Years, The Baptist Churches*

¹⁶ 'Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Educationalist: Part I - General Educational Concerns', *Baptist Quarterly*, 31, No.8, October 1986, pp. 384-401, and Part II - 'The Principles and Practice of Pastors' College', 32, No.3, pp. 73-94.

¹⁷ David Bebbington, 'Spurgeon and British Evangelical Theological Education', in DG Hart and R Albert Mohler Jr (editors), *Theological Education in the Evangelical Tradition* (Grand Rapids, Michigan; Baker Books, 1996), chapter 11.

¹⁸ John HY Briggs, *The English Baptists of the Nineteenth Century* (London, Baptist Historical Society, 1994).

¹⁹ FJ Wilkin, *Baptists in Victoria: Our First Century, 1838-1938* (Melbourne, Baptist Union of Victoria, 1939).

of South Australia.²⁰ Later chapters, like Wilkin, considered the churches and the deaths of leading Baptists personalities chronologically. Hughes draws on the brief histories such as that of JH Sexton as found in the September 1906 *The Southern Baptist*, and in the 1908 South Australian Baptist Handbook.

Alan C Prior's, *Some Fell on Good Ground, a History of the Baptist Church in NSW, Australia*,²¹ covering the period 1831 to 1965, deals with NSW personalities and churches chronologically. While Prior devotes a chapter to the Strict and Particular Baptists, his concerns are much wider, and hence Calvinism and its associated controversies in NSW receive scant coverage. At the rear of the book are the lists of the churches and their pastorates.

JB Bollen's, *Australian Baptists, a Religious Minority*²² is an interpretative history of Baptists and covers an approximately similar time frame to Prior. This essay is not a history of Baptists in Australia but an attempt to interpret their history as the history of a religious minority. It looks at problems of identity and relations with other churches in three different social and geographical settings over the length of Baptist activity in this country and seeks to explain a pattern of outwardness and withdrawal in Australian Baptist life. In the Foreword, Bollen (who is not a Baptist) writes, '[Baptists] are a weather vane of

Australian Protestantism. Baptists made a slow start in this country. Their first and lasting problem was to define their place.' The purpose of the essay is to trace a theme in the century and a half of Baptist enterprise in Australia: the struggle of a religious minority to secure a place for itself and to come to terms with its own special doctrine. The discussion is largely confined to NSW, Victoria and South Australia. Bollen, like the foregoing Baptist histories dealing with Baptists in the various Australian States, does not specifically deal with Baptists in Tasmania nor the major issues posed in this thesis.

Manley and Petras', *Australian Baptists, Past and Present*,²³ is focused on early Baptist life in NSW to illustrate how the origins of Baptists coincided with a period of transition in the history of the colony. It also deals with the public ministries of John McKaeg and John Saunders and the composition of the Bathurst Street congregation. It is totally NSW focused.

Michael Chavura's, *A History of Calvinism in the Baptist Churches of NSW 1831-1914*,²⁴ is a PhD thesis documenting the fortunes of the Particulars in New South Wales. His treatment of their leader, Daniel Allen, gives keen insight into the Higher-Calvinist Baptist thinking of the day. His examination of Calvinism in the Baptist Churches of NSW from 1831 to 1914 shows its importance in understanding the development of Baptists in NSW. These years are the most crucial in revealing that process. Chavura's study investigated the way a distinctive Christian ideology took

²⁰ H Escourt Hughes, *Our First Hundred Years: The Baptist Church of South Australia*, (Adelaide, Baptist Union of South Australia, 1937).

²¹ Alan C Prior, *Some Fell on Good Ground: A History of the Beginnings and Development of the Baptist Church in New South Wales, Australia, 1831-1965* (Sydney, Baptist Union of New South Wales, 1966).

²² JD Bollen, *Australian Baptists: A Religious Minority*, (London, Baptist Historical Society, 1975).

²³ Ken R Manley and Michael Petras. *The First Australian Baptists*, (Sydney, Baptist Historical Society of NSW, 1981).

²⁴ Michael Chavura, 'A History of Calvinism in the Baptist Churches of NSW 1831-1914', PhD Thesis, Macquarie University, 1994.

shape, giving its adherents an identity and common purpose and assisting them to respond to the contemporary community. The importance of the subject arises from the impact that the Calvinistic struggle had on the men and women who were subject to rival calls for allegiance, and competing promises of success. Daniel Allen's thought is the subject of Chapter Four. His theology exemplifies sectarian Hyper-Calvinism. Chavura sees Allen as the one who helped propagate the hard, bitter rind of Calvinism created by the English Hyper-Calvinists, such as John Gill and William Gadsby. His 'no offer' theology left the denomination a legacy of Hyper-Calvinist sectarianism which was the death of the Strict and Particular Baptists as an organised religious force in Australia. In his Chapter Five Chavura makes a study of the thought of CH Spurgeon and the Spurgeonic tradition in NSW. Chavura finds that the Spurgeon's College men who migrated to New South Wales had very little commitment to the Calvinistic component of Spurgeonism. Essentially, what predominated were the evangelistic and missionary aspects of Spurgeonism. His Chapter Six details the sectarian siege mentality characteristic of the Hyper-Calvinism. The Strict and Particular Baptists declined to accommodate themselves to the secular by concentrating upon strict religious dogma. Chavura's study was important for understanding the Particulars in Tasmania, particularly Daniel Allen whose early life was lived in this colony.

Effectively there has only been one single comprehensive volume history of Baptists in Australia and it is a most recent one. The work of Ken Manley, *From Woolloomooloo to 'Eternity': A History of Australian Baptists*, covers

1831-2005 in two volumes.²⁵ It is a pioneering study which describes the quest of Baptists in the different colonies (later states) to develop their identity as Australians and Baptists. It is the first history of Baptists in Australia with a national focus.

Tasmania receives ample coverage and Manley draws from four works, *Baptists in Van Diemen's Land: The Story of Tasmania's First Baptist Church*,²⁶ *One Hundred Years of Witness: A History of the Hobart Baptist Church, 1884-1984*,²⁷ Greg Luxford's, *William and Mary Ann Gibson*²⁸ and Wesley Bligh's, *Altars of the Mountains*.²⁹ Without these works it is doubtful if Tasmania's Baptist story could be adequately told in his work. Manley also deals with the theology wars (dealing with interpretation of the Bible) between Tasmania and South Australian Baptists early in the twentieth century.

Greg Luxford's work is based on an exit thesis prepared in 1983 as a graduation requirement of the Baptist Theological College of Queensland. The aim was to document the Gibsons' contribution to the Baptist cause in Tasmania but their contribution here has only been recorded in fragmentary fashion. The areas covered are the personal biographical backgrounds of William and Mary Anne, William's work as a

²⁵ Ken R Manley, *From Woolloomooloo to 'Eternity': A History of Australian Baptists*, 2 parts (Milton Keynes, Paternoster, 2006).

²⁶ Rowston, *Baptists in Van Diemen's Land: The Story of Tasmania's First Baptist Church*.

²⁷ Laurence F Rowston, *One Hundred Years of Witness: A History of the Hobart Baptist Church, 1884-1984* (Hobart, Hobart Baptist Church, 1984).

²⁸ Greg Luxford, *William and Mary Ann Gibson* (Perth, Gould Books, 1984).

²⁹ Wesley J Bligh, *Altars of the Mountains in which is told the story of the Baptist Church of Tasmania* (Launceston, Baptist Union of Tasmania, 1935).

pastoralist and the influence on them of such men as Rev Henry Dowling and Thomas Dowling. Their gifts are listed and a photographic record of most of the buildings and the Spurgeon's College men is given. Mary Ann's church connections in England are merely touched upon. Nothing is given on the Ellinthorpe Ladies' College and the Dowling family ties. What is recorded by the likes of JE Walton is taken without question. Walton places Spurgeon's influence on Mary Ann too early, by ten years at least. While listed, little to nothing is said of the various Spurgeon's men who arrived in Tasmania.

Altars of the Mountains by Wesley Bligh is also an exit thesis and was written in Tasmania. It is an anecdotal and biographical history based on personal conversations with both first and second generation Spurgeon era personalities such as Harry Wood and WD Weston. But Bligh failed to delve deeply into the lives of other Spurgeon's men who came to the colony. His profile of the Rev Henry Dowling, and his accounts of the Launceston and Hobart Town Baptist chapels, were mainly drawn from the chapels' minutes and from Samuel Cozens' *Incidents in the Life of the Rev Henry Dowling*.³⁰ Bligh's work was written thirty-three years after the death of Mary Ann Gibson.

The accounts of the early years of the Methodists, Presbyterians and Congregationalists, as well as the Disciples of Christ (The Churches of Christ) and Brethren are piecemeal in their form but together give a reasonable account of their beginnings. These were drawn upon to give context to their disputes with Baptists and to fill out the nature of the

missionary work that was carried out in the colony.

Considerable work has been done over the past twenty years on the life of William Gibson's father, David, and this provided a context for an understanding of the Gibson family and its fortunes. Geoffery Stilwell's account of the Ellinthorpe school, as found in the THRA article, 'Mr and Mrs George Carr Clark of Ellinthorpe Hall',³¹ made the connections between the Dowlings, Blacklers and the Gibsons.

The beginnings of the Launceston Mission Church under Henry Reed are inadequately covered in sanctimonious biographies such as Margaret SE Reed's, *Henry Reed, an Eventual Life Devoted to God and Man*.³² There are few dates attached to the incidents described therein. What is given borders on hagiography even though the author says that she 'has been careful to use no varnish, and no exaggerations in relating any event'. As Anne Bailey writes, '...the spiritual assessment has been skilfully adjusted by Mrs Reed to suit her requirements.'³³ Mrs Reed deals with his early married life both in Tasmania and England, his work with William Booth, his return to Tasmania and the mission work in Launceston, among other matters. It is written in a sermonic way, similar to the narrative forms of the stories of the Patriarchs in the Biblical Book of *Genesis*. In part 2, chapter 3, of her thesis, Anne Bailey deals with Henry Reed's succession

³⁰ Cozens, *Incidents in the Life of the Rev Henry Dowling. Formerly of Colchester, Essex and More recently of Launceston, Tasmania*.

³¹ Geoffery Stilwell, 'Mr and Mrs George Carr Clark of Ellinthorpe Hall', *Papers and Proceedings*, vol. 11, no. 3. *Tasmanian Historical Research Association*, April 1963.

³² Margaret SE Reed, *Henry Reed, an Eventual Life Devoted to God and Man* (London, Morgan & Scott, 1906).

³³ Anne Bailey, 'Launceston Wesleyan Methodists 1832-1849: contributions, commerce, conscience', PhD thesis, University of Tasmania', Hobart, 2008, p. 6.

from the Wesleyan Church to form his own mission.³⁴

Primary sources on Baptist life in Tasmania covered in this period are sparse. The Gibsons themselves left no written records. The Minute Books of both the Launceston and Hobart chapels provided information on chapel business, membership lists and baptismal and departure records. *Baptists in Van Diemen's Land: The Story of Tasmania's First Baptist Church*³⁵ was my starting point in assessing the state of the English Particular Baptist work in Tasmania under the Rev Henry Dowling. Histories of the Particular Baptists in England also assisted greatly. The paucity of written documentation of what occurred between the erection of the Gibsons' chapel in Perth in 1862 and 1886 (the year the Baptist Union of Tasmania printed publications commenced), was met by an extensive survey of the newspapers of the period. Every issue of the Launceston *Examiner* from 1862 to 1890 was considered together with other newspapers such as the *Daily Telegraph*, the *Devon Herald* and the *Advocate and Emu Bay Times*. Developments in church life not necessarily restricted to the Baptists added to what can be known. Also noted were opinions as they arose and how they shaped and affected both Baptist and non-Baptist churches. The newspapers proved an invaluable research source in interpreting events in a fuller context. They provided key dates about crucial details and details about controversial subjects. Such a task as this may be completed only if sufficient contemporary records can be consulted.

The information gathered, initially from newspapers, greatly expands knowledge of Baptists' activities in the colony of Tasmania. There are three reasons why the period 1862 to 1890 was selected. First, the beginning of the period corresponds with the erection of the Gibsons' chapel in Perth and their subsequent request for a pastor for that church. Second, the time span is limited somewhat by the formation of the Baptist Association in 1884 (although it goes beyond this time, especially in the study of the reaction by other churches to Baptists with their emphasis on baptism by immersion, and the theology wars between the Tasmanian and South Australian Baptists). Third, such a period allows for consideration of the demise of the Strict and Particular Baptists in Tasmania even though the York Street chapel persisted until 1916.

A detailed survey of the Minutes of the Strict and Particular Baptist York Street chapel provided important details of the Gibsons' story and told the early stories of Daniel Allen and the later ones of Samuel Cozens and William White. The survey provided important dates and gave evidence of the movement of people thus building the chapel's story. The Minutes assisted the compilation of membership lists and the comings and goings of prominent persons.

Other primary sources such as Harry Wood's short diaries and Bligh's *Altars of the Mountains* added to the stories of Spurgeon's College men who came to Tasmania. The extensive literature on the Baptists and other Non-conformists in nineteenth century England gave the context of Spurgeon's College in London. A search through the Metropolitan Tabernacle's publication, *Sword and Trowel*, another important secondary source, provided a number of

³⁴ Bailey, 'Launceston Wesleyan Methodists 1832-1849', pp. 144-149.

³⁵ Rowston, *Baptists in Van Diemen's Land*.

biographies of these men. These profiles provided answers to some of the following questions:

- Where did they come from, what were their backgrounds and what inspired them to come?
- In what ways did Spurgeon's College prepare them for their calling?
- What did they hope to accomplish by coming to the colony?
- How did they cope in the colony?
- What brought them most concern?
- What did they face in their pastorates?
- Was there a pattern to their lives?
- How well was the Baptist message received and appropriated?

The findings from both primary and secondary sources were separated in respect to churches, people and events, and the verification of the authenticity and veracity of information collected was tested, primary source against secondary source, and secondary source against secondary source. The data, usually recorded word for word, was then sorted topically and chronologically. Finally, the findings were then recorded in a meaningful narrative and conclusions were drawn.

Finally, to explain the impact in Tasmania of Spurgeon's College men, consideration was given to the work and accomplishments of other Non-conformist churches in Tasmania from the 1830s to the time when the Baptist Association was formed. For instance, this research revealed how the Baptists, with their emphasis on baptism by immersion, fared against the other Nonconformists who sprinkled and held to a covenantal theology of the people of God. To achieve its aim, this thesis has been split into eight chapters. The arrival of

the men from CH Spurgeon's College in the 1880s took place at the time when the first Baptist work in Tasmania, begun and sustained by English Particular Baptist, the Rev Henry Dowling, was in terminal decline. The first chapter provides the substantial setting for the coming of the Spurgeon men to Tasmania. It will consider the history of the Particular Baptist movement in Tasmania which began in the 1830s and assess its state in the 1870s and 1880s. The thesis will give the reasons for its decline which, to a certain extent, was mirroring the eclipse of the Hyper-Calvinist Baptists in England.

Chapter Two will provide the essential background to the arrival of Spurgeon's men in Tasmania. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, as the initial Baptist work in Tasmania drew to a close, a rebirth of the Baptist conviction began with the influx of men from CH Spurgeon's College and their financial support by the Gibson family. That an entire denomination should benefit from the support of one family in Tasmania was not unique. The Congregationalists, the churches closest in doctrine and church government to the Baptists, benefited greatly in the early years of the colony from the support of Henry Hopkins and his wife Sarah.

Chapter Three is focused on the simple beginnings and the monumental growth of Spurgeon's College connected to CH Spurgeon's church in London, the Metropolitan Tabernacle. It is from this church that men were drawn to assist in the rebirth of the Baptist churches in Tasmania. Commencing with a few biographical details of Spurgeon's life, consideration is given to the College staffing, its target student clients and their accommodation, its educational priorities, curriculum, financial support,

graduate placement (especially in Tasmania) and its world-wide impact.

Chapter Four will explain how Spurgeon first came to Mary Ann Gibson's notice and how, subsequently, the need for a pastor at their Perth chapel was met with the arrival of one of his College graduates, Alfred William Grant, in July 1869. His arrival was the first of many from the College. This chapter is a biography of this pioneering Spurgeon's man and also explores the themes of Grant's addresses as a public speaker.

It would be a mistake to think that Spurgeon's men experienced little difficulty in their pioneering work in Tasmania due to the extravagant generosity of the Gibsons. In fact they faced significant difficulties which the Gibsons' money could not overcome. But they belonged to a different era from that of the first of the Wesleyan Methodist pioneers in Van Diemen's Land who had had no benefactor and who struggled greatly and in different ways as they engaged in itinerant ministry. The early Congregationalists belonged to the same era as the pioneer Wesleyan missionaries but they had their benefactors in Henry Hopkins and his wife Sarah. As with the Wesleyans, their first missionaries engaged in itinerancy and so experienced the same trials. The Spurgeon men, half a century later, commenced not with riding horse or buggy and dirt trails but each with their own church-centred ministries. Chapter Five focuses on the struggles faced by a number of Spurgeon's men, such as Robert McCullough and Harry Wood.

The influx of men to Tasmania from CH Spurgeon's College began in earnest at the end of 1879 with the second visit of Spurgeon's son, the Rev Thomas Spurgeon. This time Thomas was accompanied by Robert

McCullough and James Samuel Harrison. Chapter Six gives an account of McCullough's work in the township of Longford which was already occupied by churches that did not practise baptism by immersion. In publicly practising baptism by immersion, the hallmark of the Baptist faith, he drew the ire of those ministers who did not and thus commenced a public disputation on the subject. The chapter also gives accounts of a similar baptismal dispute in the Kentish area and the township of Latrobe, begun this time by Open Brethren and Disciples of Christ (Church of Christ) who also practised total immersion. In time it involved the Baptists. The chapter concludes with an account of a similar dispute over baptism in Burnie on the North-West coast at the end of the century. The doctrine of believer's baptism tended to set the Baptists apart, theologically speaking, from the ministry of the other churches. The Baptists were also charged with importing unnecessary controversy into the evangelical mission to a spiritually needy country. Later Spurgeon's men to arrive in Tasmania were also charged with 'sheep stealing', that is, proselytism.

Earlier chapters show that men from Spurgeon's College clearly rejected the idea that the message of salvation was restricted to the elect. They also exhibited little of what remained of Spurgeon's own Calvinism. While this is the case, Chapter Seven shows that they firmly retained his thinking on the interpretation of the Biblical scriptures, standing firm against all the so called modernist thinking associated with Higher Criticism.

By the early 1880s there were five Spurgeon's College men ministering in Tasmania, each with a church and manse. It was now considered time for the consolidation of the gains made

over the past seventeen years, since the first Spurgeon's College man had arrived in the colony in 1867, and for setting in place mechanisms for the expanding of the work beyond their local churches. To do so, in 1884, they began with the formation of an Association similar to that which had been created in England between the General and Particular Baptist churches and which had been attempted successfully by a number of the Non-conformist denominations in

Tasmania. Administrative positions were created and Colporteur work began.

Chapter Eight tells of how the Baptist benefactors, William Gibson Senior and his wife Mary Ann, and their son, William Gibson Junior, assisted further by setting up a fund to provide for future financial needs, thus in this way and others and leaving a permanent mark on Baptist fortunes in Tasmania.

Chapter One - The Demise of the Particular Baptists in Tasmania

Introduction

This chapter begins by examining the religious life of Launceston during the 1880s, the time when the fortunes of the Particular (Calvinistic) Baptist chapel in York Street were overtaken by the nearby new and competing churches of Henry Reed's Christian Mission Church and the imposing Baptist Tabernacle. The decade of the 1880s was a period when the first Baptist work in Tasmania, begun and sustained by English Particular Baptist, the Rev Henry Dowling, as illustrated primarily by the York Street chapel (and that of the Hobart Town and Deloraine chapels), was in terminal decline. Although this chapter does not attempt to explore every aspect of the history and theology of the Particular (Calvinistic) Baptist movement in Tasmania, which began in the 1830s, it seeks to explain its decline which to a certain extent mirrored the eclipse of Hyper-Calvinist Baptists in England. First and foremost, the necessity for a new beginning for Baptist life in the colony needs to be explained. This will set the scene for the following chapters which deal with the arrival of the men from the Pastors' College in London and with references to Mary Ann and William Gibson, the essential link between the older Baptist presence and the new.

Launceston in the 1880s

In 1886, the Rev William White, pastor of the York Street Particular Baptist chapel, Launceston, wrote, 'The erection of the large buildings by Henry Reed and Gibson meant the death knell for York St. Few care for the "Particular Baptists' tenets."' ¹ At the

time Tasmania had a population of about 104,000 with about 16,000 in Launceston. Of these about 75 per cent were Protestant, about 60 per cent were literate and about 50 per cent were born in the colony.² A few years earlier the fifteen churches in Launceston saw a regular attendance of 5,000 and could claim an attendance of 3,000 on Sunday evenings.³

The effects of the Wesleyan revival in England in the eighteenth century had filtered through to Launceston and new church buildings were in the course of being erected. The Princes Square Congregational Church, meeting in Milton Hall, was one of those churches with a new sanctuary in the course of construction.⁴ Moreover, the Salvation Army had recently arrived in the town and had by 1884 purchased land in Elizabeth Street for the erection of a circular circus tent capable of seating 1000. In the following year, with great success, it erected a citadel.⁵

p. 401. As a Wesleyan and fervent evangelist, Reed was conducting a mission church in central Launceston.

² Launceston *Examiner* (hereafter LEx) 3 August 1875, p2c6; 3 May 1881, p3c2 and 13 July 1887, p2c6.

³ LEx 24 May 1881, p3c5-6 and 8 June 1883, p3c3-4.

⁴ Anne Bailey, 'Launceston Wesleyan Methodists 1832-1849: contributions, commerce, conscience', PhD thesis University of Tasmania, Hobart, 2008. The foundation stone of Princes Square Congregational church was laid on 8 March 1883 and the building opened in October 1885. See LEx 9 March 1883, p3c4 and 20 October 1885, p3c5.

⁵ LEx 24 May 1881, p3c5-6; 19 January 1884, p2c6; 22 January, p2c5. Barbara Bolton, *Booth's Drum: The Salvation Army in Australia 1880-1980* (Sydney, Hodder and Stoughton, 1980) p. 164. Salvation Army was founded in England in 1880 to provide material as well as spiritual succor to the poor and the downtrodden.

¹ York Street Baptist Chapel Minutes (in the Baptist Union of Tasmania holdings at the archives of the University of Tasmania), 1886,

As a population centre, Launceston was naturally a focus for evangelistic effort. Controversial English businessman and preacher who had no time for prudish pastors, Henry Varley, visited there and the northern parts of the island in 1878.⁶ Itinerant female evangelists, Margaret Hampson and Emilia Lousia Baeyertz, both visited, Baeyertz a number of times commencing in 1878.⁷ At this time the long awaited new translation of the Bible was released in the form of the Revised Bible. It had the possibility of replacing the archaic King James Version of 1611.⁸

The Temperance Movement had by the 1880s found its way to the young in the churches through their Blue Ribbon societies. Temperance Halls were a feature of most population centres. The Bible Societies, the Town Mission and other forms of Christian endeavour enjoyed a good following, being supported by all the non-Roman Catholic denominations. Men and women of all Protestant and Anglican persuasions freely associated at such gatherings. Furthermore, the street parades of the Sabbath schools featured in the church calendar year.⁹ The *Cyclopedia of Tasmania* in 1900 recorded that Tasmania 'has now a

larger proportion of church-going people than England, a much larger number of Sabbath school attendants, and a degree of active benevolence, social prosperity, and even moral development ...'¹⁰

For the Christian churches in Launceston, there was optimism abroad in the 1880s except for the small exclusive group known as the Particular Baptists of Tasmania. As Pastor White correctly noted, their York Street chapel was being eclipsed by both the new Baptist Tabernacle in Cimitiere Street and Henry Reed's Mission Church in Wellington Street, the latter only a city block away from the York Street chapel. With their completion, Launceston was able to boast of four churches each able to hold 1000 persons.¹¹

The Christian Mission Church and the Launceston Tabernacle

Wesleyan Missioner Henry Reed (1806-1880) had returned to Tasmania from England in December 1873 full of religious zeal. He began street preaching and used his wealth gained through whaling, sealing and general trading to purchase Parr's Hotel in Wellington Street for a mission.¹² Behind the hotel was a long shed used as a skittle alley. He had the shed renovated and seats installed, and thus the Christian Mission Church became a reality in July 1876.¹³ In 1877, a year or two after purchasing the property in Wellington Street, Reed ungracefully resigned as a member of Paterson Street Church to which he

⁶ LEx 4 March 1878, p2c6 and 5 March 1878, p3c2. Varley also visited in 1888 and 1889. For Varley see Darrell Paproth, 'Henry Varley and Melbourne Evangelicals', *The Journal of Religious History* vol. 25 no.2, June 2001, pp. 173-187.

⁷ Baeyertz was in Launceston and the north from 1 January to 17 April 1878. For her biography see LEx 16 April 1878, p3c1. For the first mention of the Hampson mission see LEx 29 May 1884, p2c5. For Mrs Hampson see Shurlee Swain, 'In These Days of Female Evangelists and Hallelujah Lasses: Women Preachers and the Redefinition of Gender Roles in the Churches in Late Nineteenth-Century Australia', *The Journal of Religious History* vol. 26 no.1, February 2002, pp. 65-77.

⁸ LEx 5 July 1884, supplement p1c3.

⁹ Street processions went back as far as 1863, see LEx 19 May 1863, p5c5.

¹⁰ *Cyclopedia of Tasmania* (Hobart, Maitland and Krone, 1900), p. 389.

¹¹ LEx 15 April 1886, p3c4.

¹² Hudson Fysh, 'Henry Reed (1806-1880)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 2, 1788-1850, pp. 371-372; LEx p2c7.

¹³ LEx 11 July 1876, p2c7.

had given £500 for its erection¹⁴ as he objected to the collection being taken up after his sermon because he wanted monies merely placed in a collection box.¹⁵ He was also troubled by matters such as the church's administration, and thus he felt bound to carry on his mission work in his own way 'according to the light that was given him'. Further, Reed regarded infant baptism as unscriptural, convinced of baptism by immersion.¹⁶ Reed replaced the skittle alley with a brick building, opening it on 6 June 1880. Reed himself preached the first sermon sitting in an armchair because he was too ill to stand. He died on 10 October 1880 and henceforth his widow, Margaret, took charge of the work. A new weatherboard pavilion, with seating for nearly 1000, was erected on the site and opened on 23 July 1882.¹⁷ An average of 600 would regularly worship there Sunday mornings. In the evenings it was so full that chairs were placed down the aisles. By 1884 the Christian Mission Church had 300 members. Finally, in memory of her husband, Mrs Reed replaced the pavilion with the present imposing Memorial Church. The edifice, built at a cost of £8,900 and

seating 1200, was opened in July 1885.¹⁸

During the time of the weatherboard pavilion, Mrs Reed appointed the singing preacher, the Rev DW Hiddlestone, to replace the Rev JH Shallberg who had commenced earlier on 30 December 1879.¹⁹ In England Hiddlestone had evangelized, with Corrie Johnstone providing the singing. It was reported that Hiddlestone's well thought out sermons at the Christian Mission Church were delivered 'with much pathos and power'. He was seen by a journalist at the Launceston *Examiner* newspaper as:

an extempore preacher with a forceful and earnest delivery, in a voice which though not particularly powerful is sufficient to fill the Pavilion without effort. His language is extremely simple, but considerable care is exercised in the choice of words most appropriate to the concise, but full expression of the idea he intends to convey. His power of description is of high order... His sermons are strictly confined to gospel lines.²⁰

The Christian Mission Church and the Baptists worked closely together. In Evandale Hiddlestone worked closely with the Rev Robert Williamson of the Perth Baptist chapel at the new 'Evangelistic Hall'. For its erection the Baptists bought the land, while Mrs Reed paid for building.²¹

¹⁴ Lester Hovenden, 'Methodism in Launceston 1864-1890', BA Honours thesis, University of Tasmania, Hobart, 1968, p. 13.

¹⁵ Hovenden, 'Methodism in Launceston 1864-1890', pp. 48-57.

¹⁶ *Cyclopaedia of Tasmania*, p. 145; Tasmanian Methodism 1820-1975, p. 16. Temperance preacher, the Rev JH Shallberg, began as pastor on 30 December 1879, see LEx 5 March 1880, p2c7. Hovenden, 'Methodism in Launceston', p. 54.

¹⁷ Frank Dexter in his history of the Memorial Church (in the LEx of possibly 1961, no date) omits any reference to the weatherboard pavilion. It was formed by covering in and seating the chapel-yard but, as the *Pioneer* of June 1887, p1c2 says, '...hundreds were still unable to obtain admittance.'

¹⁸ LEx 25 July 1882, p2c5; the foundation stone was laid on 19 July 1883, see LEx 24 May 1884, p2c6 and 27 May, p2c5. The opening took place on 3 July 1885, see LEx 3 July 1885, p3c1; 4 July, p2c8; 6 July, p2c7. It was known as the Christian Mission Church until 1935 and then renamed the Memorial Baptist Church.

¹⁹ LEx 6 December 1879, p2c6.

²⁰ LEx 5 May 1887, p3c2; LEx 10 May 1887, p3c8.

²¹ LEx 26 July 1883, p4c2; 20 October 1883, p2c5; 26 October 1883, p3c7 and 27 October 1883, p2c3.

About three blocks away from Reed's church, William Gibson Senior had purchased land in Cimitiere Street for a new Baptist Tabernacle.²² The tender had been accepted in February 1883. The Rev Alfred Bird took charge in the second half of 1883. The foundation stone was laid on 7 June 1883.²³ There was no building committee for the edifice, only an architect and the Gibson donors.²⁴ William Gibson Senior consulted with the Rev Charles H Spurgeon in London about a minister and Spurgeon chose Bird who had trained at his College.²⁵

In England Bird had commenced ministry in the London suburb of Dalston in 1870, with a small congregation in the town's Luxembourg Hall. Steadily the congregations grew and a chapel in Ashwin Street was erected at a cost of near £5,300 with £800 in hand but subsequently the church fell heavily into debt.²⁶ In 1875, he became pastor of the Baptist Church, Commercial Road, Oxford. This was followed by pastorates at Middleton Cheney in Northhamptonshire (1879/80), Dalston again at Luxembourg Hall, Penzance in Cornwall and finally Sandown on the

Isle of Wight (1883).²⁷ Bird²⁸ arrived in Launceston in January 1884.²⁹ The Tabernacle opened 25 May 1884³⁰ and the church was constituted on the 14 July 1884. The miniscule thirty-six membership had as their home a building that could house 1200. It cost William Gibson Senior and his son, William Gibson Junior, £5,719.³¹ The total cost of the Tabernacle, the manse and the school rooms to the Gibsons was £11,000.³²

Calvinism and Closed Communionism at York Street chapel

In 1884 seven churches formed the fledgling Baptist Union of Tasmania, among them the York Street Particular Baptist chapel and the Harrington Street Particular Baptist chapel in Hobart. Earlier in 1882, the York Street chapel opened the communion table to all who wanted to attend. That year the membership of the chapel was only forty and decreasing. Of the forty, six were from White's own family. The new Baptist work in Cimitiere Street soon attracted a number from York Street

²² Craig Skinner, *Lamplighter and Son* (Nashville, Broadman Press, 1984), p. 74 suggests that the Tabernacle was erected in the hope that Thomas Spurgeon would be its first pastor. Skinner says, 'Thomas had refused [the position] a year prior to the building dedication.' Skinner offers no source for this statement. But by mid winter 1881 Thomas had accepted the permanent pastor position at the Wellesley Street Baptist church, Auckland. (Auckland Tabernacle leaflet, 'Shapers of Baptist Life' #4); *Sword and Trowel* (hereafter S&T) January 1882.

²³ LEx 5 June 1883, p2c4; 7 June 1883, p2c5 and 8 June, p3c3-4.

²⁴ S&T 1884 p. 432. Once the building was completed, the church itself was constituted on 14 July 1884.

²⁵ For an account of Bird's life before entering College, see chapter Three.

²⁶ S&T August 1878.

²⁷ S&T 1870 p. 383, August 1878, February 1882 and April 1882.

²⁸ Bird was described as 'tall and well-built, of fair complexion, and light coloured hair and beard; his expression kindly, yet resolute, and his features intellectual, with a forehead of unusual height and width; his delivery is fluent and clear, given in voice which fills the building with ease, while his deportment ... is full of earnestness, it is here that his chief defect appears: often in the minor parts of his sermon his earnestness would reach its highest pitch, and would be succeeded by a period which logically required a still greater degree of emphasis, but to which the preacher was incapable of rising.' See *Daily Telegraph* 28 July 1884, p2c2-3.

²⁹ LEx 29 February 1884, p2c6. Bird initially hired out the Mechanics' Institute, retaining the hall until 24 May 1884, see LEx 31 March 1884, p3c3.

³⁰ *Daily Telegraph* 24 May 1884, p2c8 and 26 May 1884, p3c2.

³¹ LEx 24 May 1884, p4c1.

³² LEx 28 July 1884, p3c2-3.

chapel, many from its leading families. The Bennell family had been associated with the chapel since its beginning when John Bennell Senior was baptised and admitted to membership. Among those who transferred were three of his sons: James, Robert and Henry. Henry became a foundation member of Tabernacle.³³ On 14 May 1885 James' daughter, Anna Lousia Kidgell, married Spurgeon's man, the Rev James Samuel Harrison.³⁴ Long serving York Street chapel secretary, Henry Dowling Junior, the eldest son of the Rev Henry Dowling, had by this time fallen out with White. Dowling had been deacon at the chapel for thirty-five years.³⁵ Further White's wife, Henrietta Augusta White deserted him, having 'persistently expressed herself very unfavourably of his personal bearing and his teaching.'³⁶ While there were 100 children at the chapel Sabbath school in 1881,³⁷ there were only thirty children present for the forty-eighth

Sabbath school anniversary in 1887. In comparison, 190 children attended the Tabernacle Sunday school in 1887.³⁸

White was born in 1829 in Allenbury, Sussex, and studied for the ministry in a Church of England College, London.³⁹ He had been employed for twenty-four years in the London Mission work. Arriving in the colony in 1877 'on account of his health',⁴⁰ he was soon invited to be the pastor of the York Street chapel for a period of twelve months.⁴¹ At the end of the first year he was asked to continue. In 1884, at the age of fifty-five years, he was described by a Launceston *Examiner* newspaper journalist as follows:

Slight in build and rather below the average height, he presents the appearance of a man active and busy in his habits, and bearing the marks of time and care on his features, which, however have not defaced a certain energy and keeping in his expression, which seem to characterize his life. In the pulpit he has a fair and clear delivery, not marked by any special peculiarity save a slight tendency to a pathetic emphasis on some parts of his sentences where it is hardly required. In style his sermon was simple, not of a profound nature, but rather an ordinary expansion of the text, bringing out into relief its salient points, and illustrating them with considerable aptness.⁴²

White was out of his depths at the farewell to Bird at the Launceston Tabernacle on 19 April 1887 when he was reported 'in a quaintly humorous speech' as saying that 'the ministerial age of preachers of modern days [is] 3

³³ LEx 9 March, 1894, p7c1. York Street Baptist Chapel Minutes 6 May 1863 and 28 September 1881.

³⁴ Anna was the widow of John Kidgell. Others followed to the new Tabernacle, among them Robert Marshall who was the Launceston City Missioner; E.L. Andrews; Miss Lillian Dowling; Mrs Annie Hill; Mrs Harriet Field; deacon Thomas Williams; Sister Howe; and Launceston timber merchant, builder and church deacon, John Todd Farmilo and his wife Amy. York Street Chapel Minutes pp. 376 and 383, March 1885. For JT Farmilo see *The Cyclopaedia of Tasmania*, p. 111.

³⁵ LEx 6 April 1880, p2c7. Henry Dowling Junior (1810-1885), was a printer, publisher, bank manager and philanthropist. He began the Launceston Bank for Savings. He encouraged emigration to the colonies. He became secretary of the anti-transportationist Australasian League. He was mayor of Launceston from 1857-61. He was Secretary and manager of the ill-fated Launceston and Western Railway Co until his services were dispensed with in 1872. See Isabella J Mead, 'Dowling, Henry (1810 - 1885)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 1, pp. 316-317.

³⁶ LEx 20 May 1884, p4c2.

³⁷ LEx 17 January 1881, p2c5.

³⁸ LEx 24 December 1888, p3c7-8; *Day-Star*, May 1887, p. 77, Launceston Tabernacle entry.

³⁹ LEx 12 April 1913, p7c1.

⁴⁰ York Street Chapel Minutes p. 297.

⁴¹ York Street Chapel Minutes p. 300.

⁴² *Daily Telegraph*, 18 August 1884, p3c3-4.

years and six months, and if by reason of strength they be 4 years yet there is strength, labour and sorrow; for soon they fly away and have gone.⁴³

A couple of years later, in 1891, having visited the chapel, the President of the Baptist Union, Samuel Bulgin Pitt, ungraciously described White and his chapel as follows:

An elderly man was the pastor, rather short, his hair, stipend, ditto, for I had the impression his locks wanted cutting, and that he could not afford that luxury out here, being fifty percent more in the old country. I have some dim remembrance of dropping a coin into the box on leaving sufficient for that purpose. The building lay back in a garden, quite the old style. It is still standing, the congregation has not increased; still they have a pastor, but how he is supported I know not.⁴⁴

White's associations indicate that he practised what has been called 'evangelical Calvinism', a more moderate form of Calvinism which fully encouraged evangelism. He participated in the evangelistic meetings of the time, working with the likes of Shallberg and Hiddlestone from Mrs Reed's Christian Mission Church and with the Rev Robert Marshall from the Launceston Town Mission. He gave his approval and support to evangelists such as Henry Varley, Margaret Hampson and Emilia Louise Baeyertz.⁴⁵ White was a member of the British and Foreign Bible Society,⁴⁶ the Launceston Town Mission,⁴⁷ the Good Templars and the YMCA.⁴⁸ He assisted at the Launceston Town Mission's Wharf Church and at the

Fallen Women's Aid Society.⁴⁹ He attended the United Meeting for Prayer and Exhortation⁵⁰ and the Salvation Army barrack's tea meetings. He was President and teacher of Juvenile Templars of Launceston. In his first decade in the colony, White freely associated with other Baptists from Spurgeon's College but the offer to preach in his pulpit was rarely extended.⁵¹

He was strongly anti-Roman Catholic in keeping with the Nonconformists of the day. Commencing mid-July 1889, he delivered a series of nine lectures on the Roman Catholic Church and its errors.⁵² White attended the Launceston lecture of Miss Edith O'Gorman on her trials and perils as an escaped nun.⁵³ His chapel benefitted to the sum of £132 from her address at the Academy of Music on a Sunday evening.⁵⁴ Resplendent in his Orange regalia, White would join the Lodge's demonstrations on the Launceston streets.⁵⁵ On the eve of the 'The Battle of the Boyne' in July 1884, White preached on the subject at the chapel to a congregation which included Orange Lodge officers also dressed in their regalia.⁵⁶

An ardent temperance worker, White held Band of Hope meetings for the young at his chapel.⁵⁷ He supported the visit to Launceston of temperance

⁴³ *Day-Star*, May 1887, p. 77.

⁴⁴ *Day-Star*, August 1891, p. 498.

⁴⁵ LEx 30 September 1880, p2c6 and 1 July 1882, p2c4.

⁴⁶ LEx 19 February 1880, p2c7.

⁴⁷ LEx 15 May 1879, p2c6-7.

⁴⁸ LEx 30 September 1880, p2c6.

⁴⁹ LEx 9 July 1885, p3c6.

⁵⁰ LEx 23 August 1887, p2c8.

⁵¹ An extensive search of the LEx reveals that of all the Spurgeon's men, only Alfred Grant and Edward Vaughan ever preached at the chapel. For Vaughan see LEx 16 June 1883, p2c5.

⁵² LEx 17 July 1889, p2c6; 24 July 1889, p2c5; 31 July 1889, p2c5; 7 August 1889, p2c6; 21 August 1889, p3c2, 28 August 1889, p4c2; 4 September 1889, p2c6 and 11 September 1889, p2c6.

⁵³ LEx 9 June 1887, p2c4 and 10 June, p2c7.

⁵⁴ *Victorian Standard*, July 1887.

⁵⁵ LEx 13 July 1889, p3c5.

⁵⁶ LEx 12 July 1884, p2c7 and 14 July, p3c8.

⁵⁷ LEx 31 August 1882, p2c4.

lecturers such as American Eli Johnson.⁵⁸ He was against drinking even 'in moderation'. Such a stance surely raised tensions in his own household for his wife was being gossiped about around Launceston as a heavy drinker.⁵⁹

By 1884 the financial position of York Street was in the balance, with the building in need of extensive repairs. That year White sought three months leave of absence having arranged to spend his time acting as pastor of the Baptist church in Maryborough, Queensland, with a view to the pastorate. But at the close of the three months, he returned to Launceston and continued as before.⁶⁰ In June 1886 he suggested that his salary of £2 a week be discontinued and that the amount of collections less expenses make up his allowance. He informed his congregation that he would live on the fees he charged for weddings.⁶¹

By 1889, a year after the chapel withdrew from the Baptist Union,⁶² there was a move to sell the property and rebuild. At a church meeting it was acknowledged that 'with the increasing accommodation for Baptists in the Town, there is no possibility of again attaining prosperity in the present buildings.'⁶³ Sadly for White and his small congregation of Particular Baptists, although exclusive, but hardly called extreme with his wide non-Baptist associations in and around Launceston, there were now, as the Baptist association paper, the *Day-Star* noted, 'Instead of one little Baptist

church ... there are now two commodious buildings beside.'⁶⁴ For White, the York Street chapel did not find in the Association a platform for its Calvinism and was now being physically squeezed out of Launceston.

Insight into the thinking which led to the demise of this strand of Baptist life in Tasmania can be gained first by considering the Particular Baptist leaders who were present in Launceston in the years surrounding Dowling's retirement and death in the late 1860s. The people in question were the Revs Daniel Allen, John Bunyan McCure and Samuel Cozens. Each one believed that the distinctive doctrines they held so firmly were rooted in scripture. They were also fully persuaded that in the stand they were making for restricted communion they were doing the will of God. In England, at the time of Queen Victoria's accession, the Particulars had divided over whether the Lord's Supper was to be ministered only to the baptised, i.e. to those baptised as adult believers. But between 1830 and 1860 open communion became ever more common until it dominated London and the south. Its spread accompanied a steady decline of Hyper-Calvinism within the denomination. For English Particulars, the doctrine of election and predestination was still potent and alive, the doctrinal controversies of the Protestant Reformation still meaningful and arresting. Those of open communion in England were turning towards liberal theology and away from rigid Calvinism; the men of closed communion becoming ever stricter and less willing to fraternise.⁶⁵ The Launceston Particulars of the 1860s were also convinced that High-

⁵⁸ LEx 24 October 1882, p3c4.

⁵⁹ LEx 5 December 1882 supplement, p1c5-6.

⁶⁰ York Street Chapel Minutes pp. 375, 378, 382, 383; LEx 20 November 1884, p2c6.

⁶¹ York Street Chapel Minutes p. 401.

⁶² On 18 March 1888, see LEx 12 April 1890, p3c7.

⁶³ York Street Chapel Minutes 7 July 1889, p. 409. Probably the idea was to relocate in Invermay,

⁶⁴ *Day-Star*, September 1891, p. 525.

⁶⁵ Owen Chadwick, *The Victorian Church*, 2 parts (London A & C Black, 1966 and 1970), vol. 1, p. 413.

Calvinism was Biblical truth and they were also against 'duty faith' or universal human responsibility teaching.⁶⁶

At this time of Dowling's death the Particular work in Tasmania struggled and lost influence. The Rev Henry Dowling, who arrived in the colony in 1834, was never a strong closed communionist as evidenced by Congregationalist George Best who attended his services in the Launceston Town Hall prior to the erection of the York Street chapel in 1841. Wrote Best, 'He is more liberal than most Baptists allowing mixed communion.'⁶⁷ In 1857 Dowling wrote of the work:

As a body they [the Baptists] are scattered, and the elements of division have been so great, that, for the present, at least, there is but little ground to hope for any reunion or co-operation in the Gospel of our God. There is no doubt but there are many who enjoy spiritual life under our denominational churches, but they are so fast bound in congregational standing with others, that it would require some especial providence connected with the power of God to induce a change.⁶⁸

Many of the 220 children he had dedicated in the colony were by then found in other denominations. During his years of ministry in Tasmania he baptised three hundred people but

⁶⁶ Duty Faith is not a denial of responsibility to believe in God or indeed anything that he has revealed in the Bible. It simply refers to a denial of a duty to savingly believe in Christ. Iain H Murray, *Spurgeon v Hyper-Calvinism: The Battle for Gospel Preaching* (Edinburgh, Banner of Truth, 1995), p. 57 defines it as the universal human responsibility to repent and believe the gospel which was characteristic of both Arminianism and Evangelical Calvinism.

⁶⁷ George Best Letter Book, NS 252/2 TSA.

⁶⁸ Letter by the Rev Henry Dowling of 16 November 1857 in 'Journal of J J Westwood', Melbourne 1865, p. 18.

only one person, Daniel Allen, became a full-time minister, working in Melbourne and Sydney. On Dowling's retirement in 1867, the York Street chapel became open communion to accommodate the thinking of the Rev Frederick Hibberd (c.1836-1908) of Sydney. Hibberd was the first Spurgeon's man to come to Australia.⁶⁹

In 1862 the Rev John Bunyan McCure, a Hyper-Calvinist from the British Baptists who had been in the colonies since 1852,⁷⁰ was preaching in Launceston often for Dowling, 'whose feebleness rendered him almost inaudible'.⁷¹ McCure returned to Launceston from the mainland four years later, lecturing and showing views using his dissolving view apparatus with the view of reducing the debt on his Sydney chapel.⁷² He stood

⁶⁹ Hibberd was born in Salisbury, England, and began lay preaching in 1857. In London, he trained at Spurgeon's Pastors' College and he was Spurgeon's personal choice to assume the pastorate of the William Street congregation in Sydney. He migrated in 1863.

⁷⁰ John Bunyan McCure was born in London in 1822. He had passed through several lowly employments before becoming a full-time preacher among the Strict and Particular Baptists. Hounded out of his pastorate by creditors and burdened to support his wife and their six children, he gained assistance to migrate to Australia. In Geelong, he was soon exercising a part-time ministry. He moved to Sydney in 1861, hired the Odd Fellows Hall in Sussex, Street, and saw the revival of Strict and Particular fortunes. Sydney Baptists described him to Spurgeon as 'an excellent & good man but uneducated'; he and his congregation were 'of that class known in England as of "high sentiment"'. From JD Bollen, *Australian Baptists A Religious Minority* (The Baptist Historical Society 1975), p. 14 citing John Bunyan McCure, *Life in England and Australia: Reminiscences of Travels and Voyages over One Hundred Thousand Miles; or, Forty Years in the Wilderness: A Memorial of the Loving Kindness of the Lord* (London, 1876).

⁷¹ LEx 5 April 1866, p5c3.

⁷² LEx 31 December 1864, p5c3; 7 January 1865, p5c2; 3 January 1865, p3c2 note and advertisement p1c5; 21 June 1866, p3c5 and advertisement p3c6; 13 July 1866, p3c5; 18

in the line of the English Hyper-Calvinists John Gill, William Gadsby and the Gospel Standard churches. Typical of English Strict and Particular Baptists, McCure rejected 'duty-faith'. These high Calvinists did not preach for conversion, but were convinced that preaching was the means by which the decree of election was made manifest in the lives of believers. For McCure and other Hyper-Calvinists, the message of salvation was to be restricted to the elect and not to be preached indiscriminately, that is, universal offering of salvation should not be made lest the non-elect be openly invited into the Christian fellowship, hence the term 'Particular'. Invitations and exhortations can be made but only to those who fit a certain character – the spiritually thirsty, hungry, lame, poor, etc. They held that no one can claim to be able to distinguish between the elect and the non-elect on a person by person basis. That prerogative belongs to God alone.⁷³

McCure's second visit was followed by that of author and preacher, the Rev Samuel Cozens, another itinerant Strict and Particular Baptist, seen by some as somewhat unsociable.⁷⁴ His visit

July 1866, p3c5; 31 July 1866, p3c5 and 1 August 1866, p3c5.

⁷³ At the end of his life, McCure finally embraced Fuller's views while remaining Calvinistic in his theology. History of the Eden Baptist church, Web page. For details of McCure's travels, see John Bunyan McCure, *Life in England and Australia*; and Michael Chavura, 'John Bunyan McCure' in Brian Dickey (ed.) *The Australian Dictionary of Evangelical Biography* (Sydney, Evangelical History Association, 1994), p. 230.

⁷⁴ Laurence F Rowston, 'The Life of Samuel Cozens' (Launceston Historical Society, 2009). John Chandler, in his book, *Forty Years in the Wilderness* (Main Ridge, Victoria; Loch Haven, 1990), p. 184, tells of the visit of Cozens about this time to the old Ebenezer Particular Baptist chapel in Market Lane, Melbourne. The visit was probably made on way to Adelaide. Chandler writes, 'We had Mr. Cousins (sic) to

coincided with the arrival in Launceston of Frederick Hibberd who had been in consultation with York Street chapel Secretary, Henry Dowling Junior, with respect to Dowling Senior's retirement. Hibberd offered to preach for the church on three Sundays in February 1867 and was invited to the pastorate on 20 April 1867. But there was the recurring problem of open and closed communion. Hibberd was no closed communionist.

Since the York Street chapel had become 'open communion' on 27 May 1867 in readiness for Hibberd's coming, nine members of closed communion persuasion seceded and Cozens became their shepherd. The company rented out the large room at the Town Hall for a term of twelve months. Cozens then began building work on a small chapel in Upper Balfour Street.⁷⁵ Cozens' visit thereby further helped polarise the theological differences that existed among Baptists at the York Street chapel. At a time when Australian Baptists were moving towards evangelical tolerance and unity, Cozens stood for the remoteness and rigidity of Hyper-Calvinist Baptist sectarianism.

Two years later, three months after the death of the Rev Henry Dowling on 29 March 1869, the Balfour chapel closed. Hibberd had returned to Sydney, presumably because of the financial struggles of the York Street chapel. York Street reverted to closed communion as Cozens now oversaw the pastorate. But within months, at the end of July 1869, Cozens preached his

preach for us a few times, and he was sound and truthful; but to me was rather unapproachable. I like a sociable minister. He went to Tasmania.'

⁷⁵ LEx 25 July 1867, p4c2; 20 August 1867, p4c6; 24 August 1867, p4c1-2 and p7c6. This chapel opened on 25 December 1867, see LEx 21 December 1867, p2c6 and advertisement 24 December 1867, p1c6.

farewell sermon at the chapel as he prepared to proceed to Adelaide having accepted a unanimous call from the Ebenezer church in North Adelaide.⁷⁶

Another to visit the York Street chapel at this time and remain until after Dowling's death was the controversial the Rev Daniel Allen, the scourge of the papacy in the late 1870s.⁷⁷ As a youth Allen migrated to Australia in 1845 at the request of his father, arriving in Sydney in January 1845. He then made his way to Launceston where he was reunited with his father, a deacon of the York Street chapel. Allen was soon baptised by Dowling and admitted to membership.⁷⁸ In 1849 he moved to Melbourne and began preaching. He later claimed to have been the first person to have held a religious service on the Ballarat goldfields. In 1853 he took charge of a church at Preston.⁷⁹ Over the years other preaching stations and chapels opened to him. On the Eaglehawk (Bendigo) goldfields he caused controversy on the subject of baptism.⁸⁰ Allen made his way to Launceston to be at Dowling's deathbed and supply the York Street pulpit

for three months.⁸¹ In 1871 Allen was invited to Castlereagh Street Particular Baptist Church, Sydney, in place of McCure who was leaving for England. He became the presidential chair of the Particular Baptist Association of Australia and was the leading minister in the colonies of the denomination.⁸² Allen was an Orange Lodge man of the first order. In Sydney during March 1878 he provoked 'the Hyde Park riots' because of his anti-Roman Catholic views.⁸³ In the Launceston press he even attacked Charles Spurgeon over Spurgeon's earlier sermon of 1861 on baptismal regeneration.⁸⁴ Spurgeon had been a Particular Baptist but he had followed the ways of Andrew Fuller and was attacked for it.⁸⁵ Spurgeon was dubbed an Arminian by High-Calvinist Baptists such as Allen who disliked Spurgeon's open communion views and the note of gospel invitation in his preaching.⁸⁶ Allen denounced error and all false doctrines wherever they could be found.

Allen held the Presidency of the Particular Baptist Association of Australia until his death. More than any other figure among Australian Baptists, Allen placed an indelible stamp of

⁷⁶ LEx 24 July 1869, p3c5; 27 July 1869, p3c3 and 29 July 1869, p2c5. For an account of Cozen's life up to his arrival in Australia, see S Cozens, *A Christmas Box, or The Great Festival to which is added The Author's Faith, Call to the Ministry, and Eventual Life up to this time* (T Matthews, Bethnal Green, c1864).

⁷⁷ Citing the *Protestant Standard*. For Allen see M Chavura, 'A History of Calvinism in the Baptist Churches of New South Wales, 1831-1914', PhD thesis, Macquarie University, 1994, ch. 4 and F Beedel, *Letters and Other Writings of the Late Pastor Daniel Allen Particular Baptist Church, Castlereagh Street, Sydney, and Minister of the Gospel For Over Forty Years in Tasmania, Victoria and New South Wales, With Memoir* (Sydney, 1901).

⁷⁸ York Street Chapel Minutes 10 and 24 September 1845.

⁷⁹ Chandler, *Forty Years in the Wilderness*, p. 41; York Street Chapel Minutes.

⁸⁰ LEx 16 April 1868, p5c1.

⁸¹ York Street Chapel Minutes p. 257.

⁸² See Beedel, *Letters and Other Writings of the Late Pastor Daniel Allen Particular Baptist Church, Castlereagh Street, Sydney, and Minister of the Gospel For Over Forty Years in Tasmania, Victoria and New South Wales, With Memoir*.

⁸³ *Protestant Standard*, 13 November 1886.

⁸⁴ LEx 8 March 1870, p6c4, 10 March, p5c7 bottom and 12 March 1870, p5c5-6.

⁸⁵ Iain H Murray, *Spurgeon vs. Hyper-Calvinism: The Battle for Gospel Preaching*, (Edinburgh, Banner of Truth, 1995), Chapters 3 and 4.

⁸⁶ According to Nichols Spurgeon's brand of Calvinism was 'illogical'. He could declare the majesty of God and the freedom of man. Spurgeon opposed as unscriptural open membership on the one hand and strict communion in the Lord's Supper on the other. See Mike Nichols, *Charles H Spurgeon: The Pastor Evangelist* (Dilcot, Baptist Historical Society 1992), p. 80.

Hyper-Calvinism on the Australian Strict and Particular Baptists. A successor to the theology of a long line of English Hyper-Calvinists such as John Gill and William Gadsby, Allen too preached that redemption is not universal and that the objects of redemption are the elect of God. Only God's elect had the responsibility to repent and believe. He repudiated the notion of 'duty-faith'. Narrow-minded Allen was so extreme that he even refused to recognize the baptism of the NSW Baptist churches which formed its Baptist Union.⁸⁷ After his death on 14 September 1891, interest in the Particular Baptist Association seems to have declined; Allen had been both its founder and its driving force.

From 1869 short ministries followed at the York Street chapel. They were carried out by the Revs John W Bamber, George P Lush of Melbourne, Charles Cater and William Bentley of Brunswick. The Particular Baptist cause at Constitution Hill built by English Baptist Henry Speak lapsed about this time.⁸⁸ In time the chapel was made available for other denominations. During Speak's time baptisms were held there either in a lagoon or a sheep-wash. When 'The Dippers', a term by which Baptists were then known, held such baptismal services crowds would often gather.⁸⁹

The Hobart and Deloraine Chapels

By 1878 the work in the south in Harrington Street, Hobart, which had begun in 1835 under the oversight of

⁸⁷ Ken R Manley, *From Woolloomooloo to 'Eternity': A History of Australian Baptists*, (Milton Keynes, Paternoster, 2006), vol. 1, pp. 110ff.

⁸⁸ At Constitution Hill, a stone chapel was built by Henry Speak in 1863. *Tasmanian Messenger* March 1862 and May 1863 cited by Laurence F Rowston, *Baptists in Van Diemen's Land, The Story of Tasmania's First Baptist Church* (Hobart, Baptist Union of Tasmania, 1985), p. 86.

⁸⁹ *Tasmanian*, 27 January 1872, p12c3.

the Rev Henry Dowling, was itself also dying. The chapel had written into its Trust Deed the principles of strict communion. After years of disorder, division and dissolution, it closed in 1886. The leading member of the Hobart chapel and lifelong trustee was Francis Smither Edgar, the son of Baptist parents of the Crewkerne Baptist Church, Somerset. This avowed strict communionist arrived in the colony on 30 November 1832 and married Baptist Harriett Elizabeth Mitchell. They had met at the Rev Frederick Miller's Congregational church, Hobart. During their time at Miller's church the question of open and closed communion was raised. Reported Miller:

Divisions had arisen, erroneous doctrines had been disseminated and in some instances various practical evils had been occasioned. The 'erroneous doctrines' included those raised by the Baptists - the questions of believer's baptism and closed communion.⁹⁰

In October 1842 the Edgars stood in the way when the first pastor of the Hobart Baptist chapel, the Rev William Wade, tried to move the church to open communion. Further disruptions occurred two years later over the same issue, this time bringing about the closure of the chapel. The church opened on closed communion lines in May 1845 with the Edgars in agreement⁹¹ but in 1848 they became disillusioned with their church when the then pastor, the Rev Samuel Hewlett, converted the church to open communion.⁹²

⁹⁰ Based on Miller's letters dated 19 August, 20 October and 25 November 1834, NS 663/13 Tasmanian State Archives (hereafter TSA).

⁹¹ FS Edgar's letter of 8 March 1837 to his parents in Crewkerne, 'Our church thinks it most scriptural to have closed communion,' NS 724 TSA.

⁹² Idiosyncrasy appears to have been in his blood. After Edgar purchased the substantial

The Edgars absented themselves from the chapel from April 1853 when the Rev Kerr Johnston took charge of the chapel on the basis of open communion. Upon Johnston's departure in May 1857, the chapel closed again. Late in 1858 services began once more with closed communion and the Edgars soon returned to membership. The chapel voted again on the question of closed or open communion in September 1860 and a number resigned as the chapel remained closed communion.

In August 1863, after three years without a pastor, open communionist the Rev James Allen arrived in Hobart Town from Sydney. His offer to preach at the Baptist chapel was accepted and his services were valued by the small church. But early in 1865 Allen broke with the closed communionists of the Baptist chapel and opened another church in the Alliance Rooms, Macquarie Street, observing open communion.⁹³ In 1867, when Allen applied for the use of the baptistry, Edgar who was now Superintendent and Treasurer of the Sabbath school, 'made a very lengthy objection in the church meeting to granting the application on the grounds of personal difference between himself and family and Allen.' When other members spoke in favour of granting the request, 'Edgar protested and so detained the church that many members left [the meeting] and it was considered

dwelling, Stanwell Hall, at the corner of Melville and Barrack Streets in 1846, he fitted the windows with iron bars. In explanation, this 'very tall patriarchal-looking gentleman' often told people that when he came into the neighbourhood the times were troublous, and unsafe, and in protecting his property and his person, he took no chances.' See *Critic*, 5 January 1923, p3c3. In his retirement he became the visiting truant officer for public schools, see LEx 19 June 1875, p3c4.

⁹³ Harrington Street Chapel Minutes of 26 July 1864 on arrangements for baptism and *Walch's Almanac* 1866.

advisable to lay the request before the church on the following Lord's Day.' On the agreement to allow Allen the use of the baptistry, the Edgars withdrew from the church for a decade.⁹⁴

Oliver Anderson Carr, an American Disciples of Christ evangelist moved to Hobart in January 1872. He had arrived in 1868 in Australia and worked in the Collingwood district. In Hobart he associated with the strife-ridden Baptists in Harrington Street and spoke at their services but his doctrines did not please Edgar and others so he departed taking a number of Baptists with him. Carr found success first at the Oddfellows' Hall and then at a building formerly used by the School of Arts in Collins Street.⁹⁵

The other leading member of the chapel was Henry Hinsby (1816-1888) who had arrived in Hobart in 1835. In 1848 he married Lucy Ware, daughter of Jeremiah Ware, the first Baptist to arrive in Tasmania. Bearded Hinsby became their leading elder and lay preacher. Like McCure, Allen and Cozens, Hinsby, a Hyper-Calvinist, never dreamed of offering salvation to sinners without the pale. He always preached to the 'dear children' and could sing lustily:

⁹⁴ Rowston, *Baptists in Van Diemen's Land*, p.72 citing the Harrington Street Chapel Minutes of 26 May 1867. Writing to the Congregationalist *Christian Witness* in 1876 a York Street member explained why they practise 'closed communion', that is 'denying communion at the Lord's table to other Christians'. These other Christians, such as the Wesleyans, had not only refused obedience to the example of Christ, but have set aside his command, to subscribe hand and deed to a sacrament [baptism by immersion] and stronghold of Antichrist, [the papacy].' See *Christian Witness*, 14 December 1876.

⁹⁵ AW Stephenson, *Pioneering For Christian Unity - In Australia and New Zealand. Being an Outline of the History of Churches of Christ in Australia and New Zealand and Brief Study of their Teachings and Ideals* (Melbourne: Austral Printing and Publishing Company, 1940).

We are a garden walled around,
Chosen and made peculiar ground,
A little spot enclosed by grace,
Out of the world's wide
wilderness.⁹⁶

By 1878 the chapel had called the Rev Alfred William Grant, one of Spurgeon's men who had had pastorates at Perth, Ballarat and elsewhere but Grant was neither Strict nor Particular. In calling Grant the chapel took out loans which in the years ahead would be pressing upon them. Aged or incapable leadership had been theirs for over twenty years. When the Hobart chapel finally closed in 1886 the Rev Robert McCullough, now the pastor of the new Baptist work in Elizabeth Street, Hobart wrote:

I am now the oldest of our men here (and there is only one Baptist minister in the island who is not from the Pastors' College), and I have seen great progress in the six years since I left England. There was then only a church at Perth, where our dear friends the Gibsons live, and churches of the old style at Launceston and Hobart. The latter may be said to have become defunct.⁹⁷

Continual disputes over whether the Lord's Table should be open or closed was the death of the small exclusive enclave known as the Harrington Street Baptist chapel. At the time of its close, closed communion was being observed.

Outside the population centres, and apart from the Constitution Hill Baptist chapel, the only other Strict and Particular work was at Deloraine. Services had commenced there by Dowling in 1859 and a chapel was built and a church formed. The chapel was

⁹⁶ SB Pitt, 'Recollections of an old Baptist Local Preacher', *Australian Baptist* 29 February 1916, p. 10, extract from a hymn.

⁹⁷ S&T Pastors' College Annual Report 1886.

described as 'very small, only the size of a room, and the baptistry had to be outside, for had it been inside it would have taken up half the building.'⁹⁸ From 1860 the pastor was a blacksmith, Jesse Pullen, who had arrived in Hobart as a Wesleyan in 1822 carrying his Wesleyan class ticket. A local preacher, he became one of the first seven trustees of the Wesley Church. In 1848 he accepted an appointment as an agent of the Colonial Missionary Society in Hobart. Later that year he was based at Richmond as an itinerant preacher to the Congregationalists at Richmond, Sorell, Cambridge, Pontville, Bagdad and further afield. So devoted was he to the work of ministry that he never spared himself in this work which could take him up to 1000 miles a year. He adopted Baptist views and was baptised⁹⁹ in 1851 under the influence of William and Mary Gibson at Eskdale while he acted as a chaplain on their grazing property.¹⁰⁰ He rejected the idea of a paid ministry holding that the church did not require bishops, elders and the like. He said:

The moment anything of a religious character is thought of, the minds of most men revert to a chapel and a minister, as if the securing of these would advance the interests of religion. There are many brethren engaged in worldly business well qualified to minister successfully to others. Then why not be satisfied with these brethren?

⁹⁸ *Day-Star*, August 1891, p. 498.

⁹⁹ Rowston, *Baptists in Van Diemen's Land*, p. 87, citing *Australian Evangelist*, 1861 p. 157 and February 1863, and further based on research on Jesse Pullen by Glenn Pullen, file Archives Office of Tasmania. On 26 August 1851 he submitted his final report to the Colonial Missionary Society from Cleveland. See *Jesse Pullen in Tasmania, 1822-1871*, by Glenn Charlton Pullen (Hobart, 1983), p. 12. Pullen file TSA.

¹⁰⁰ TL Pullen, *From Little Acorns, being The Pullen Story in Tasmania, with occasional excursions into mainland Australia* (1974).

He also thought it bad counsel to set up theological schools:

I think that training young men for the ministry is, next to Popery, the masterpiece of Satan. If a good sound education were given, irrespective of the ministry, and leave God to call and qualify whom he pleased, something like heart-searching preaching might be expected; but this dandy-training process brings into the work men no more qualified to speak of the deep things of God than is a miss, brought up in all the fooleries of a boarding-school, to command an expedition.¹⁰¹

Pullen admitted that his talents were more suitable 'among Sawyers, Splitters and little Farmers'. This tough-minded but hard-working lay pastor died in 1871 and the Baptist work at Deloraine lapsed until 1880 when it was recommenced by Spurgeon's man, the Rev James Samuel Harrison.¹⁰²

The Gibsons and the York Street Chapel

Mary Ann and William Gibson had a long association with the York Street chapel, an association which continued even after they built their own chapel at Perth in 1862.¹⁰³ Four years after her arrival in Tasmania on 15 January 1841,¹⁰⁴ and two years after her marriage to William, Mary Ann was baptised and brought into the York Street chapel membership.¹⁰⁵ It would be another twenty-two years before William himself would submit to a Baptist baptism. It took place on 14

April 1867 in his chapel in Perth with his son, William Gibson Junior, and their chief shepherd, William Bye. Connections meanwhile continued with the York Street chapel as William and his son took on the task as chapel trustees. They also assisted with its financial support. William Gibson Senior continued this support until his death in 1892 even though the chapel withdrew from the Baptist Union in 1887, the Union in which he was its first President and his son, its second President.

On 11 April 1913, with the York street chapel in poor repair and numbers low, William White 'crossed into the Great Beyond with his years thick upon him'.¹⁰⁶ The eighty-six year old was the surviving Strict and Particular Baptist pastor in Tasmania. In 1916 the property was transferred from the trustees to the Baptist Union of Tasmania and services discontinued. The dissolution of the church took place on 2 October 1917 and the property was leased to Plymouth (Open) Brethren.¹⁰⁷

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the attempt to propagate an extremely deterministic view of God's sovereignty - in that the message of salvation was restricted to the elect and not to be preached indiscriminately and that there was a futility of man's will in choosing his ultimate destiny - failed in Tasmania. By the 1870s the Particular Baptist churches in Tasmania were 'little gardens walled around', and the liberality and the equality claimed was for the 'saints' alone. In the end, this obscure and isolated facet of the Christian church dwindled in numbers and influence. The natural result was that very few people were brought into

¹⁰¹ *Australian Evangelist* 1861, p. 157.

¹⁰² See chapter Six for Harrison's contribution.

¹⁰³ See Chapter Two.

¹⁰⁴ *Hobart Town Courier*, 19 January 1841, p2c1.

¹⁰⁵ Her reception into membership took place on 30 January 1845, see York Street Chapel Minute book.

¹⁰⁶ LEx 12 April 1913, p7c1.

¹⁰⁷ From notes at the rear of the York Street Chapel Minute book.

its local churches save the children of those already members. This chapter shows that through the energising expansion of the Evangelical Revival in the eighteenth century,¹⁰⁸ as conveyed through the work of men from the Pastors' College in London, and their patrons, William Gibson Senior and his wife Mary Ann and their son, William Gibson Junior, in Tasmania, the severe interpretations of Calvinism quickly gave way to a more generous understanding of God's grace. By the end of the 1880s the debate between the Calvinists and Arminians was a thing of the past.¹⁰⁹ This chapter also shows that the confrontation between open and closed communion and the setting forth of a strong evangelical emphasis, was necessary for the continuance of the Baptist presence in Tasmania in the late nineteenth century. It was a triumph over Calvinism and closed communion. By this time there was no evident interest from the Tasmanian Particulars in propagating new churches or in creating denominational life. Spurgeonism had succeeded in Tasmania despite Spurgeon's own Calvinism. For Baptists in Tasmania in the 1880s, Spurgeonism meant a renewed theology, a rediscovery of mission and the creation of an

organisation for the fulfillment of that mission.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ 'The evangelical awakening was an intensely ecumenical affair ... Baptists were caught up, along with other evangelicals, in a whole range of extra-ecclesial or para-church ministries including foreign missions, ministerial training, the Sunday school movement, orphanages, campaigns for literacy, prison reform, the abolition of the slave trade and much more.' – Timothy George, 'Controversy and Communion: The Limits of Baptist Fellowship from Bunyan to Spurgeon', in DW Bebbington (ed), *Studies in Baptist History and Thought Volume 1* (Milton Keynes, Paternoster Press, 2002), p. 48.

¹⁰⁹ Jack McClelland, 'John Clifford and Open Church Membership: The Ecclesiology Behind the Policy', *Baptist History and Heritage*, Winter 1999, pp. 69-84.

¹¹⁰ In Lyman Beecher's *Lectures on Preaching*, Beecher asserted that Spurgeon had succeeded 'in spite of his Calvinism'; adding the remark that 'the camel does not travel any better, nor is it any more useful, because of the hump on its back.' John Watson, *Lyman Beecher's Lectures on Preaching* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co. 1896) as cited in Charles H Spurgeon, *Lectures to my Students* (London, Marshall Morgan and Scott, new edition 1954) p. 352. Spurgeon's men in Tasmania brought with them all that Spurgeon had taught them apart from his Calvinism. This agrees with Michael Chavura: 'Although the Spurgeon men who migrated to New South Wales were steeped in the Calvinism of Spurgeon's College, a perusal of their sermons and writings reflect the fact that there was very little commitment to the Calvinistic component of Spurgeonism. Essentially what predominated were the evangelistic and missionary aspects of Spurgeonism.' The evangelistic element of Spurgeonism was separated from its contentious Calvinist theology. See M Chavura, 'A history of Calvinism in the Baptist Churches of New South Wales, 1831-1914', PhD thesis, Macquarie University, 1994, Chapter 5 introduction.

Chapter Two – The Baptist Benefactors

Introduction

This chapter investigates how William Gibson and his wife, Mary Ann, came to leave a permanent mark on Baptist fortunes in Tasmania. It arises out of the realisation that while in the latter half of the nineteenth century as the initial Baptist work in Tasmania drew to its close, a rebirth of the Baptist life and conviction looked impossible. This chapter seeks to show that Mary Ann Gibson was the key to this development which, through her agency and that of her husband, William Gibson Senior, began with the influx of the men from the Pastors' College into the colony. This chapter throws light on her family and her church connections and the influence on her of the London preacher, the Rev Charles Spurgeon. Baptists were not the only religious grouping that benefited from the support of a wealthy family in Tasmania. The Congregationalists, one of the churches closest in doctrine and church government to the Baptists, also benefited greatly from the support of one of their number in early years.

Mary Ann Gibson

On 12 January 1843 wealthy pastoralist, William Gibson, the son of convict David and Elizabeth Gibson, married twenty-seven year old Mary Ann Blackler.¹ Mary Ann was connected to the family of the first Baptist minister in Van Diemen's Land, the Rev Henry Dowling, but prior to her arrival in Van Diemen's Land she was not yet a Baptist. William and his

parents were of Presbyterian persuasion and Presbyterian practices still played an important part in William and Mary Ann's early marriage. Presbyterians at the time were far more numerous than Baptists. Of the colony's estimated population of 41,562 in 1838, 2,551 were listed Presbyterian and 175 as Baptist.² Mary Ann was a Congregationalist. She had arrived in Launceston on 15 January 1841 on the *Barque Arab*.³ Sometime before her arrival she had written to Dowling, her uncle,⁴ asking his advice regarding her coming to the colony. He replied, 'the same God was here as in the Old Land, but he was not so much honoured.'⁵ Dowling's mother had married William Blackler of Devonshire following the death of her first husband. Mary Ann was born in 1816 while her sister, Anna Maria, was born in c1815.⁶

² Their first two children both died in their second years and were buried at the cemetery adjoining the Presbyterian Church in Evandale. Ross's Almanack as cited by Patricia Fitzgerald Ratcliff, *The Usefulness of John West: Dissent and Difference in the Australian Colonies* (Launceston, Albermar Press, 2003), p. 191.

³ Ozships site at

<http://www.blaxland.com/ozships/page.htm>.

⁴ John E Walton wrote that Mary Ann was Dowling's niece, see *Day Dawn and Baptist Church Messenger* (1900-1917) (hereafter *Day Dawn*), January 1903, p. 5 (in the Baptist holdings of the archives of the University of Tasmania).

⁵ JE Walton, *Day Dawn*, January 1903, p. 5. Compare this with an extract from Henry Hopkins' letter of 1840 to the Mechanics' Institute, as published in the *Hobart Town Courier*, '... our Sabbaths [in Van Diemen's Land] are much better observed than they were in many parts of England, and that we had many institutions formed for the improvement of youth and the welfare of society, which were liberally supported.' as cited by Alison Alexander, 'Hopkins and Clarke', MA thesis, University of Tasmania, Hobart, 1983, p. 69.

⁶ There is no information of their parents or Mary Ann's date of birth. MJ Maddock, *David*

¹ Launceston *Examiner* (hereafter LEx) 28 January 1843, p4c3. On the marriage certificate Mary Ann states that she was twenty-seven. William was twenty-three having been born at Pleasant Banks on 21 January 1820. 'In Memory of William Gibson', *Day-Star* (1886-1894), August 1892, pp. 114-116.

Mary Ann was brought up in the area of Camberwell, about three kilometres from the centre of London, and early she was associated with the Anglican Church. Later on she attended the church of the Rev Joseph Irons (1785-1852), Congregational Minister.⁷ Irons, following a time with the London Itinerant Society, had exercised two notable pastorates, that of the Independent churches of Ware Road, Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire (1812-1818) and then Grove Chapel, Camberwell (from 1819). During his years at Camberwell, the area was undergoing the transformation from a straggling semi-rural location to a rapidly developing residential area, with increasingly strong links to central London. Folk commuted to London by horse-coach and foot. Camberwell had a significant Dissenting religious presence: in 1820 it was estimated that out of a population of 7,000 within Camberwell itself, around 2,000 were Dissenters. During Iron's pastorate at Grove chapel, 1,237 people were received into church membership. Becoming a member of Grove Chapel was no easy matter. Individuals were admitted to the church in groups, often numbering ten or twenty at a time, only after repeated interview as to their spiritual state by Irons himself.⁸

Gibson, Convict to Capitalist (Evandale, Tasmania; Evandale Historical Society Inc, 1993), p. 9 gives c1810. Perth news in January 1903 *Day Dawn* suggest that she was born in 1809. Mary Ann's brother, William Henry Blackler, aged twenty years, was drowned in the Tamar with two other printers in October 1837. The three were working at Henry Dowling's Advertiser. *Cornwall Chronicle*, 14 October 1837, p2c3. Inquest 19 October 1837, see RGD 341 5111 (roll Z2431).

⁷ 'Mary Ann greatly rejoiced to hear the truth preached by Irons,' wrote John E Walton in *Day Dawn*, January 1903 p. 5.

⁸ Ian J Shaw, *High Calvinists in Action, Calvinism and the City, Manchester and London, 1810-1860* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 201, 209.

Irons, with his Bible-based beliefs, held to the teachings as stated in the Presbyterian Westminster Confession of Faith, and set this as the standard for members. Irons confessed that he was a 'Congregational Episcopalian'. In fact he was unashamedly a Hyper-Calvinist.⁹ His views on infant baptism drew much opposition from Baptists, which he dismissed as 'squib after squib... consisting of nothing but abuse'.¹⁰ In 1848 Irons began to publish his morning sermons with the intention of scattering 'the incorruptible seed of the pure truth'. Some 100,000 copies of the *Grove Chapel Pulpit* were in circulation by 1849. Published weekly and costing one penny each, in time they gained world-wide distribution.¹¹

Anna Maria Blackler and Ellinthorpe Hall, Van Diemen's Land

Mary Ann's sister, Anna Maria Blackler, migrated to Van Diemen's Land with free women passengers aboard the *Princess Royal* in 1832, arriving 6 September. Anna Maria travelled as housemaid to Mrs Tyrells. Fellow passengers under assisted passage were Sarah Tally Adams and her friend, Harriett Elizabeth Mitchell, members of the Baptist church at Montacute, Somerset, England.¹² In Van Diemen's Land from 1832 until 1836, Anna Maria lived at Ellinthorpe Hall, located some distance from Ross. There on 25 December 1836 she married the first son of David Gibson and Elizabeth Nichols, John Gibson. On her arrival nine years later Mary Ann had a ready welcome to the Gibson household.

⁹ Shaw, *High Calvinists in Action*, pp. 205ff.

¹⁰ Shaw, *High Calvinists in Action*, p. 219.

¹¹ Shaw, *High Calvinists in Action*, p. 220.

¹² Laurence F Rowston, *Baptists in Van Diemen's Land, The Story of Tasmania's First Baptist Church* (Hobart, Baptist Union of Tasmania, 1985), p. 2.

George Carr Clark, the owner of Ellinthorpe Hall, managed its large sheep station himself. His wife, Hannah, was the mistress of Ellinthorpe Hall's girls' school, which was regarded as the best school in the colony for young ladies. As the *Colonial Times* reported:

Mr. Clark's Establishment at Ellin Thorp Hall, was re-opened on the 29th September (1827). The pupils are Educated in every Branch of Female acquirement usually taught in the first Schools in England, comprising especially the English and French languages (in which the principles of general Grammar are carefully imparted), Writing and Arithmetic, Geography: useful and ornamental Needlework, Music, Drawing and Dancing.¹³

There were about forty students in residence in 1832 and Hannah employed well-qualified teachers. Susannah Darke Purbrick (1807-1873), whom Hannah had employed as a student-teacher, was the sister of Hannah Purbrick (1803-1880) and they were nieces of Elizabeth Dowling. Years later in 1854, Hannah married the Rev Henry Dowling, following the death of his wife, Elizabeth nee Darke, a year earlier. Anna Maria was possibly also one of teachers of Ellinthorpe Hall.¹⁴

On 23 February 1830 the Rev Henry Dowling's son, John Leonard, arrived in Van Diemen's Land and made his way to Ellinthorpe Hall to ultimately fulfil the position of manager. John's brother Henry Junior and sister, Hanna Maria, the latter aged twelve, followed that September. Henry Junior spent his first eight months in the colony at Ellinthorpe Hall. There he instructed children in the

Christian Faith and on Sundays held a morning worship for the women and school girls and in the evening he conducted a service for the servants in their cottage.¹⁵

The Rev Henry Dowling, a relative of Clark, was a visitor to Ellinthorpe Hall as were members of his family not residing there. He and his wife and three of their children – Hannah, John Leonard and Thomas – were among those present for the marriage of John Knight and Susannah Darke Purbrick in December 1834. Present too was Anna Maria Blackler.¹⁶ Dowling officiated at Anna Maria's and John Gibson's wedding two years later, which took place at the property of John's father, Pleasant Banks.¹⁷ Following their own marriage in 1843, Mary Ann and William Gibson settled at Cleveland south from Launceston, on the Eskdale estate of 1356 acres which had been given earlier to William by his father. Some years later it was advertised as 'one of the best agricultural and grazing farms in the colony'.¹⁸

David and Elizabeth Gibson

William Gibson was the third son of convict and pastoralist David Gibson (c1788-1858) and his wife Elizabeth. David, the son of John Gibson and his wife Giles (née Binning), was born at Aberuthven, Perthshire, Scotland, and christened on 26 April 1778. He was committed on 12 February 1802 to the gaol of the town and county of

¹⁵ Rowston, *Baptists in Van Diemen's Land*, p. 16 citing statement of Rev Henry Dowling to Rev F Miller and the Independent Congregation, Hobart Town, dated September 1835 NS 663/13 TSA.

¹⁶ Information from the marriage certificate of John Knight and Susannah Darke Purbrick, Knight. *First Knight, the John Knight Story*, p. 40.

¹⁷ Marriage certificate registered in Launceston, 12/1843, TSA RDG 37/1/3 Z2452.

¹⁸ LEx 14 November 1863, p5c6.

¹³ *Colonial Times* 5 October 1827, p1c3 as cited by Maurice C Knight, *First Knight, the John Knight Story* (self-published, 2007), p. 18.

¹⁴ The view of Maurice C Knight.

Kingston-upon-Hull, charged with stealing valuables from a London jeweller. The next month he was sentenced to transportation for life. As a convict he sailed in the 'Calcutta' in Lieutenant Colonel David Collins' expedition to settle at Port Phillip. In 1806 in Van Diemen's Land David was given charge of all Government stock and later was appointed Inspector of stock in the colony. Pardoned in 1809, he was granted property on the South Esk River¹⁹ and became the first settler in that locality. He must have quickly built a house for in 1811 Governor Macquarie mentioned that he 'stayed at the hospitable mansion of Mr. David Gibson' on his journey through the colony.

By October 1818 he had built Pleasant Banks on the property. David managed sheep for Robert Campbell and owned a flock jointly with Edward Lord, arrangements which testify to his ability in that such astute men would be in business with him.²⁰ In 1819 Gibson married Elizabeth Nichols who had been his mistress and mother of his children since 1810. In 1821 Governor Macquarie again stayed at his house, 'a most comfortable one indeed', on his way to Port Dalrymple. On his way back he determined the site for a township on the Esk, twenty-four kilometres from Launceston, naming it Perth after Gibson's birthplace.²¹ So in a period of less than thirty years,

Gibson rose from being a convict to become a leading agriculturalist and pastoralist and an acquaintance of Governor Macquarie. Perth was proclaimed a township on 3 July 1866.²²

By 1828 Gibson held 2954 ha of land,²³ and had 162 ha under tillage. He had spent £2200 on buildings, and owned 1500 head of cattle and 4000 sheep. By now Gibson's improved merinos were nearly pure Spanish.²⁴ He was one of the founders of St Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Evandale.²⁵

David Gibson's wife, Elizabeth Nichols, was born in 1794 on Norfolk Island. She was the daughter of convicts Elizabeth Haywood and William Nichols. William Nichols arrived in Sydney on the Royal Admiral in 1792. Elizabeth Haywood, born c1773, was thirteen years old when she arrived with the Third Fleet in New South Wales on the Lady Penrhyn on 13 March 1792. By 1805 Elizabeth Nichols was one of four children.

Following William Nichols' removal from Norfolk Island after three years, Elizabeth Haywood took a new partner, another convict George Collins. Their son was born 1801. Elizabeth Haywood then had a liaison with another convict, Joseph Lowe, with whom she travelled to Van Diemen's Land embarking in the Lady Nelson on

¹⁹ Soon known as Gibson's River

²⁰ Henry Lewis von Stieglitz (1808-1890), who had arrived in Hobart Town in November 1830, recorded that Gibson was the first man who treated the blacks in a sensible and kindly way, even going so far as to kill a bullock every now and then and hang it in a tree on his property so that the blacks could help themselves and leave his stock alone. Von Stieglitz p5 cited by Marjorie Tipping, *Calcutta Convicts*, (Hobart, Tasmanian Historical Research Association, 1975), p. 178.

²¹ Before Macquarie named it Perth, the district was known as 'The Punt', because of the ferry on the river.

²² Harry C Bean, *Perth Remembered* (1993), p. 2.

²³ Sharon Morgan, *Land Settlement in Early Tasmania, creating an antipodean England* (Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 31.

²⁴ *Hobart Town Gazette*, 23 December 1826, p2c2.

²⁵ M Gibson, 'Gibson, David (1780? -1858)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 1, pp. 439-440; Collins sailed in April 1803 from England and reached Port Phillip on 9 October; Maddock, *David Gibson, Convict to Capitalist*; Tipping, *The 'Calcutta' Convicts*.

20 January 1813 and arriving at Port Dalrymple.

Elizabeth Nichols was only fifteen years old in 1810 when she gave birth to a son, Norfolk, natural son of Captain John Piper. At sixteen she was one of two free women on the island who were land holders in their own right. When the settlement on Norfolk Island was closed, she received £16 compensation for her two-storey shingled and boarded house. Elizabeth arrived at Port Dalrymple with her son Norfolk. She then had a second child, Eliza Holmes.²⁶ In 1810 she became the mistress of David Gibson. She gave birth to John on 10 November 1815, the first of their ten Gibson children. The couple married at St John's Church, Launceston, on 16 January 1819. The Reverend Youl christened two of their children on the same day.²⁷

William and Mary Ann Gibson's Early Married Life

In delivering her obituary, JE Walton said that early in her married life, or perhaps just before, '... after much prayer and study of the scriptures, Mary Ann came to believe that the Baptist position was more in accordance with New Testament truth.'²⁸ Two years after her marriage she was baptised by the Rev Henry Dowling on 31 January 1845 at the York Street chapel and brought into church membership.²⁹ In the previous

year, on 7 April 1844, their third and only surviving child, William Gibson Junior, was dedicated at the chapel.³⁰ Their second child, Henry was born in 1845 and died on 16 December 1846, aged sixteen months. Their third, Marian, was born in 1847 and died 5 February 1849, aged twenty months. Both Henry and Marian were buried in the Presbyterian Cemetery, Evandale.³¹

On 12 December 1850 the Gibsons erected a chapel on their Eskdale estate. For the opening, the Revs John West and Henry Dowling travelled the thirty kilometres south from Launceston to be present with West preaching in the morning and Dowling in the afternoon.³² In the following years, whenever a Christian minister came to stay at their home, Mary Ann invited her employees and neighbours to join them in Christian worship. One such preacher was the Baptist pastor, the Rev Samuel Hewlett who enjoyed their hospitality in April 1849 following his resignation from the Harrington Street Strict and Particular Baptist chapel in Hobart Town.³³ On the occasion of accepting the ministerial role at Eskdale, he wrote to his former congregation:

A circumstance of late however has turned up that is likely to extend the Baptist interest in this land that a pressing invitation has been sent me from some friends on the other side of the Island to come and minister unto them in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, and I have after much prayer and consideration

²⁶ Elizabeth arrived on board the *Mistrel* on 4 March 1813.

²⁷ Maddock, *David Gibson*, p. 4; I Schaffer, *The Mistress of Pleasant Banks* (Hobart, I. Schaffer?, 1993?), Elizabeth died at 'Pleasant Banks' 28 January 1872, aged seventy-seven and was buried at St Andrew's Presbyterian Church with her husband.

²⁸ *Day Dawn*, January 1903, p. 5. The Rev JE Walton was pastor of the Perth chapel from January 1888 to November 1897.

²⁹ York Street Baptist Chapel Minutes (in the Baptist Union of Tasmania holdings at the

archives of the University of Tasmania), p. 15, dated 31 January 1845.

³⁰ York Street Baptist Chapel Minutes p. 11.

³¹ Maddock, *David Gibson*, p. 14.

³² LEx 4 December 1850, p778c4, 'in connection with Esk Dale Mission'.

³³ York Street Baptist Chapel Minutes p. 71.

made up my mind to accept that invitation.³⁴

William Senior created the famous Scone merino which, in its time, produced premier quality wool.³⁵ Gibson's famous Scone merino began in 1854 with the private purchase from James Youl of the whole of his pure ewe lambs, 300 in all. They had come from James Cox's pure flock of Clarendon which in turn had come from the pure Merino rams and ewes imported by John Macarthur early in the NSW colony. In 1820, 200 of these lambs had arrived in Hobart Town and had been distributed across the colony, Cox receiving seven ewes and one ram. Gibson constantly experimented with Youl's sheep to improve not only the quality of the wool, but also the quantity gained from each animal, purchasing ewes and rams from other stock.³⁶ In 1853 Gibson acquired a large tract of land on both sides of the South Esk, near Perth, and built a fine old English style home of Native Point.³⁷

William and Mary Ann attended the Perth Anglican Church under the care of the Rev Alfred Stackhouse while still travelling to Launceston each month

for 'Ordinance Sunday' at the Rev Henry Dowling's chapel in York Street, though due to its rules as a Strict Baptist church William was not able to partake of the communion elements because he had not been baptised by immersion.

When the district of Longford was raised to a rural municipality in 1862, William Gibson was one of the first councillors and remained on the Council until at least 1878.³⁸ He also assisted in the formation of the Northern Agricultural Society and in September 1859, being part of the landed-gentry,³⁹ contested and won the seat of North Esk in the fifteen-seat Legislative Council.⁴⁰ He became Warden of Longford Municipal Council. During this time he was also on the Longford Road Trust, acting for a time as its chairman.⁴¹

Following the transfer of Stackhouse to Longford in 1860, after eighteen years at Perth,⁴² William and Mary Ann built the Perth chapel so, according to John

³⁴ Harrington Street Hobart Baptist Chapel Minutes, 7 February 1848 (in the Baptist Union of Tasmania holdings at the archives of the University of Tasmania).

³⁵ J E Walton, In Memory of William Gibson, *Day-Star*, August 1892, pp. 114-116.

³⁶ In the 1889 Tommy Trot, columnist for 'Echoes of the Streets' in the LEX asked, 'Could Mr. Gibson be induced to send one of his merinos to the Royal Agricultural Show which was to be held in June of that year in the old grand Windsor park, England?' 'Echoes of the Streets' added, '[This] would also give great satisfaction to Mr. Youl, who was one of the originators of the stock,' see LEX 20 March 1889, p4c1; Charles Massy, *The Australian Merino* (Ringwood, Victoria: Viking O'Neil, 1901), p. 408.

³⁷ Knowlan sold Native Point to Gibson – Hawley Stancombe, *Highway in Van Diemen's Land* (Western Junction: National Trust of Australia, Tasmania, 1974), p. 204.

³⁸ In Memory of William Gibson, *Day-Star*, August 1892, pp. 114-116.

³⁹ The Tasmanian government's statistics for the 1850s defined class structure in terms of occupations. Rural Tasmania had a four-tiered class structure of gentry, professionals, tenant farmers and landless labourers. Urban class structure included merchants and bankers, professionals and self-employed, the middle-class waged, and the labouring class. Each class was broken down into sub-classes, and the structure was ordered top-down according to status and income. Shayne Breen, 'Class' in A Alexander (ed.), *Companion to Tasmanian History* (Hobart, Centre for Tasmanian Historical Studies, University of Tasmania, 2005), p. 408.

⁴⁰ Scott and Barbara Bennett, Biographical Register of the Tasmanian Parliament, 1851-60, ANU Press, 1980, cited by G Luxford, *William and Mary Ann Gibson* (Perth, Gould Books, 1984); LEX 23 April 1863, p2c4. William was granted leave of absence for most of the 1863, and almost the entire 1864 sittings. LEX 4 June 1864, p4c4.

⁴¹ LEX 11 March 1871, p5c1.

⁴² LEX 27 May 1876, p5c1; 10 June 1876, p4c5-6.

E Walton, they could worship God in greater harmony more in keeping with Mary Ann's Baptist and William's Presbyterian views. Walton further added that they had resisted this move out of their respect and esteem for Stackhouse so that they might not seem to be in opposition to him. They built an undenominational place of worship for the preaching of 'the plain, unadulterated Gospel, and a non-liturgical service', as a community church.⁴³ On Thursday, 9 May 1862:

the foundation-stone of a building was laid to be devoted to the purpose of education and religious worship, preference being given to the ministrations of the gospel, through the medium of the denomination of Calvinistic Baptists, who hold and practice the immersion of believers.

The Rev Henry Dowling was among those present for the occasion.⁴⁴ The chapel was opened later that year on 28 September 1862. The Rev S Wilson preached twice on the day.⁴⁵ Then, a year later 'a very innocent and interesting circumstance suddenly turned this undenominational movement into what it had tended to all along,' wrote the Baptist *Day-Star* years later.⁴⁶ It would be called the Perth Baptist Church. This came about because a number of young people wanted to be married there. In the negotiations which followed with the Government Registrar, it was found that the church needed to be registered under a denominational banner. The marriage licence would not be granted unless the church took a distinctive name so it was therefore decided to acquire the 'not too popular

title of Baptist'.⁴⁷ The Deputy-Registrar for the District of Longford soon gazetted the following:

REGISTRY OF BAPTIST CHAPEL, PERTH. Longford, 11th June, 1863. Notice is hereby given that the separate building known as the Baptist Chapel, Perth, in the district of Longford, having been duly certified according to law as a place of religious worship, was registered for the solemnization of marriage, in pursuance of the Act of Council of the colony, 2nd Victoria, No. 7, instituted an Act for regulating Marriages in Van Diemen's Land and its dependencies.⁴⁸

A Sunday school was formed in 1863. During the next seven years William Gibson struggled to obtain preachers for the chapel. There was no point in appealing to the Baptists in the home country as they were far more interested in foreign missions and this negated the call from the colonies.⁴⁹ While English aid, human and material, was essential to the building up of the religious life in the new colony, it had not been forth-coming from the home country.⁵⁰ This lack of support had been one of the reasons for Baptist lack of growth as the Rev Henry Dowling had discovered.⁵¹ As for local preachers, Gibson made use of the colony's Congregationalists and fellow Baptists holidaying from Victoria such as the Rev S Wilson from the

⁴³ J E Walton, 'In Memory of William Gibson', *Day-Star*, August 1892, p.114-116.

⁴⁴ LEx 22 May 1862, p3c3.

⁴⁵ LEx 23 October 1862, p4c4.

⁴⁶ 'In Memory of William Gibson', *Day-Star*, August 1892, p.114-116.

⁴⁷ LEx 13 June 1863, p5c5 and advertisement p6c1; LEx 23 June 1863, p3c6; *Day-Star*, August 1892, pp. 114-116.

⁴⁸ LEx 13 June 1863, p6c1.

⁴⁹ JD Bollen, *Religion in Australian Society* (The Leigh College Open Lectures, Winter Series 1973, Series II), pp. 7ff.

⁵⁰ Thirty years earlier the first Baptist minister to Van Diemen's Land, the Rev Henry Dowling, sought assistance from the old country but without success; see Rowston, *Baptists in Van Diemen's Land*, p. 23, citing *The Gospel Herald*, April 1939.

⁵¹ Rowston, *Baptists in Van Diemen's Land*, Chapter 2.

Ebenezer Chapel, Baptist Church, Tarnagulla, Victoria.⁵² The Gibsons offered generous hospitality to the preachers, among them the dying Frederick Miller who lodged with them in 1862 on his journey home to Hobart Town.⁵³ The Gibsons' hospitality with and friendship to ministers of other Protestant denominations kept them informed on the availability of preachers. In later years the men from Spurgeon's College would make Native Point their first 'port of call' where they would enjoy the hospitality of the Gibsons.⁵⁴ One of these, Robert McCullough, lodged there for a good part of his first year in Tasmania.

Wilson was engaged at the Perth Baptist Church for twelve months.⁵⁵ On completion of his engagement, the Rev W Tranter also from the Ebenezer Chapel, Baptist Church, Tarnagulla,⁵⁶ supplied for a year, departing in March 1865. After Tranter, a Tasmanian based Congregationalist minister, the Rev DB Tinning, officiated for a time.⁵⁷ Jesse Pullen who had been in charge of the Baptist chapel in Deloraine since 1859, also supplied for some months.

⁵² Wilson had arrived in Victoria from Roston, Lincolnshire about 1860. For his stay at Perth, see LEx 30 September 1862, p5c4 and 17 March 1863, p3c2.

⁵³ *Cyclopaedia of Tasmania* (Hobart, Maitland and Krone, 1900), p. 388, 'and a carriage brought [Miller] by easy stages home to 70 Murray Street,' G Lindsay Lockley, *Centenary of Congregationalism in Australia* (Melbourne, Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society, 2001), pp. 85f, 119; LEx 22 July 1862, p2c6.

⁵⁴ LEx 29 February 1884, p2c6.

⁵⁵ LEx 23 October 1862, p4c4 and 20 November 1862, p5c4.

⁵⁶ Donald W Clark, *Tarnagulla - A History* (Tarnagulla Hall Committee, 1985).

⁵⁷ LEx 2 April 1868, p4c4; LEx 19 November 1870, p5c3. In 1868 Tinning began a twenty-two years' ministry at Richmond, see G Lindsay Lockley, *Centenary of Congregationalism in Australia* (Melbourne, Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society, 2001), p. 125.

William Gibson would plead with visiting preachers to stay on. In 1866 the prominent Strict and Particular Baptist, the Rev John Bunyan McCure, who was travelling Australia giving illustrative talks using slides shown with a dissolving view apparatus to assist a fund for the erection of his Baptist chapel in Sydney, received such an entreaty. McCure was Pastor of the Baptist Church, Castlereagh Street, Sydney. The slides shown on his second visit, numbering two hundred in number, illustrated John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, Cruikshank's *Bottle* illustrating the *Drunkard's Home and Drunkard's children*, and a varied collection of landscape slides, the entire collection being exhibited over two nights.⁵⁸ McCure had previously passed this way in 1864.⁵⁹

On this his second visit, McCure commenced from Hobart and travelled to Launceston via the rural district of New Norfolk, Hamilton, Bothwell, Green Ponds, Oatlands, Ross, Campbell Town, Perth, Longford, Westbury and Deloraine. In each town he lectured and preached. He related in his *Memoirs, Life in England and Australia, a Memorial by John Bunyan McCure*:

After having travelled many hundreds of miles through the beautiful Island of Tasmania, I arrived in Launceston, and was received with great kindness by my venerable brother Dowling and his good wife. ... During my stay in Launceston I preached and baptized.

My arrangements were made to go to South Australia by way of Melbourne, and I was most anxious

⁵⁸ LEx 7 July 1866, p3c6.

⁵⁹ *Tasmanian Messenger* 1866 p16; LEx 31 December 1864, p5c2; 3 January 1865, p1c5.

to enter upon my work in that colony.

I was requested to preach in one of the inland towns [Perth] on a Tuesday evening. I had preached there three times one Lord's day on my way to Launceston. On this occasion there were seventy-two persons present, which was a good number for a week night. The people listened to the Word preached with great attention, and hoped that I would come again. I was to lodge at the very hospitable house of a rich squatter; the wife [Mary Ann Gibson] is a Christian indeed, and was formerly a member of the late Joseph Irons. ... Her husband [William Gibson Snr.] has not made a public profession, but is looked upon hopefully. He has built the chapel and schools at his own expense. As we were driving home in the carriage, [William Gibson Senior] looked at me and said, 'If what you have preached tonight is truth, that which was preached last Sunday are lies.'

I replied, 'Sir, I am confident of this, that what I have preached I know is the truth.' 'Yes, yes,' he said, 'I am sure that it is. I wish you would come and preach for us next Lord's-day.' I told him that I could not, as I expected to be 300 miles away by that time.

After a while he looked at me very earnestly and said, 'Mr. McCure, do come.' Oh! that 'do come' took hold of my mind in such a way that I could not shake it off. Next day I had to preach at Launceston. 'Do come' went with me all the way, and would not leave me when I arrived; but at length compelled me to write back and say that I would come and preach on Lord's day. I therefore made my arrangements accordingly. On Lord's day I again

preached to them the Gospel of Christ. ... When we arrived home from the evening service, [William Gibson Senior] said to me that he had never before heard a sermon that had taken hold of his mind as the one I preached in the morning; he wished me good night, for he could say no more.

In the morning we were having an early breakfast, for I had an engagement at Launceston for that night. As I was leaving he said to me, 'When you arrive in Sydney, if you find that the door is shut against you there, remember there is one opened for you here. If you cannot come yourself, do try and send us someone who will preach the whole counsel of God; I will gladly pay all expenses myself,' &c.⁶⁰

Although William Gibson was still not baptised according to the ways of the Baptists, he was appointed trustee of the Launceston chapel and as trustee, party to pastoral appointments. Strongly influenced by Mary Ann, he was finally baptised in his five-year old Baptist chapel on 14 April 1867. The service was conducted by the Rev Frederick Hibberd with the Rev Henry Dowling present. Among the others who were baptised that day were his son, William Gibson Junior, and their head shepherd, William Bye. Some years later, the Gibsons and Bye, together with other baptised believers, comprised the foundation members of the Perth Church.⁶¹ By 1872, nearly thirty years into their marriage, the Gibsons were the owners of a number of properties.⁶² By 1868 William had made his son a partner.

⁶⁰ JB McCure, *Memoirs, Life in England and Australia, a Memorial by John Bunyan McCure* (London, J & W Rider Printers, 1876), p. 238ff.

⁶¹ *Southern Baptist*, May 1917.

⁶² *Native Point, Scone, Dairy Plains and the Eagles Return Inn. Later they added Creekton and Woodhall.* See *Day-Star*, July 1892 p. 98.

For Mary Ann's part, wrote Walton:

Although Mary Ann greatly rejoiced to hear the truth preached by Irons, there came another voice which won her total allegiance, a voice which surpassed that of other Calvinist preachers, that of the London 'Prince of Preachers', Baptist, the Rev Charles Haddon Spurgeon. Spurgeon's sermons released weekly in printed form were first released in 1855. The truth was moderate yet unyielding Calvinism - a theology of grace in the evangelical succession of Paul, Augustine, Luther and the English Puritan Divines. His emphasis was on the Atonement rather than on the Incarnation, on the death of Christ rather than his life, and also for a disjunction between Creation and Regeneration. Christ was the Lord of individual souls. To the 'three R's' of Puritanism - Ruin, Redemption and Regeneration - this new preacher added predestination, election and substitutionary Atonement, eternal punishment for the unregenerate, and the inerrancy of the Scriptures. No hyper-Calvinist, he preached atonement for the whole world and salvation through Christ's blood to everyone who will believe, while [illogically] not departing from the doctrine of Predestination.⁶³

Walton recorded that Mary Ann welcomed Spurgeon's Calvinistic certainties, his directness, his phrasing, the clarity and order of his planning and the variety and aptness of his illustrations. So greatly was she influenced by Spurgeon, continued Walton, that during the early years of her marriage she persistently

distributed his sermons to the residents of Eskdale.⁶⁴

On his visit to Europe in 1868 William Gibson Junior called on Spurgeon and enquired about the possibility of one of his graduates being sent to Tasmania to pastor their chapel at Perth. Gibson's answer to his hope of a preacher who would minister to the chapel folk began with the arrival in 1869 of the Rev Alfred William Grant who had come from half a world away, from London.

The Congregationalists' Benefactors, Henry and Sarah Hopkins

That a religious grouping should benefit from the support on one family in Tasmania was not unique. The Congregationalists benefited greatly in early years of the colony from the support of two of their number, the successful business man Henry Hopkins and his wife Sarah. The most significant of the Independent settlers, Henry and Sarah arrived in 1822. Due to the efforts of the ministers, with financial support from Hopkins, Congregational chapels soon became widespread in southern Tasmania but not in the north. Born at Deptford, England, Henry grew up in a middle-class Nonconformist home. Having spent sixteen years in the wool trade, he arrived in Hobart Town in September 1822, equipped with sound business training. With Robert Mather, he became the colony's first wool buyer. He later went into business on his own. He bought and sold other properties in Van Diemen's Land and Victoria. He was a member of the Anti-Transportation League, a trustee and, later, president of the Hobart Savings Bank. At various times he was chairman of directors of the Hobart

With his wealth Gibson surrounded himself with beautiful and valuable paintings.

⁶³ *Day Dawn*, January 1903.

⁶⁴ Walton was at least ten years out. Spurgeon was only nine years old when Mary Ann married William in 1843.

Gas Company, the Van Diemen's Land Bank, the Tasmanian Insurance Company and the Mersey and Deloraine Tramway Company, president of the Chamber of Commerce, an original subscriber and shareholder of the Hobart High School and, for a short time, a member of the Legislative Council.

While is it more than questionable whether William Gibson Senior's religious interests exceeded that of his business interests, Henry Hopkins' religious beliefs and their out workings were more important than his business interests. Even so, he regarded his earnings as a trust and a stewardship held from God, as did Gibson.⁶⁵ Furthermore Henry, like Gibson also gave generously of his time and money to such religious and philanthropic causes as the Bible Society, the Ragged School, the Benevolent Society, the City Mission and the London Missionary Society. Hopkins contributed gifts of money and of land to the building of many churches in Tasmania and Victoria. His philanthropy greatly influenced the colony and his denomination until the turn of the century. Hopkins had a far greater command of language than Gibson, excelling in public speaking. Gibson never achieved his eloquence.

Born in 1793 Sarah was educated under the care of pious females. In her early twenties she joined the Congregational church, and her main interest was in planting the Gospel in the village where she taught in the Sunday school. Her writing suggests that she had received a better education than her husband, but they were very similar in background and

⁶⁵ In 1870 Hopkins recorded, 'Sixty years ago [in 1810] I wrote in my cash book that I would devote one tenth of my income to the spread of the Gospel and the welfare of the poor. I had not much then....', Alexander, 'Hopkins and Clarke', MA thesis, ch. 1 p. 1.

general outlook. Like Mary Ann, Sarah Hopkins had independence and a mind of her own, and was not content merely to follow her husband. For many years the conversion of her children was Sarah's main concern. Both women's work of conversion also included that of their servants and both women's personal relationship with God seems to have been the dominant interest in their lives.⁶⁶

Conclusion

This chapter adds to our understanding of the role played by Mary Ann Gibson in the re-vitalisation of Baptist fortunes in Tasmania in the 1870s and 1880s and shows how she was uniquely placed for such a role. Forty years after the arrival in Van Diemen's Land in 1834 of the first Baptist minister, the Calvinist, the Rev Henry Dowling, the stage was set for a new impetus through Mary Ann's persuasive influence on her wealthy grazier husband, William Gibson. The chapter explores the source of the Gibsons' wealth and the use they all made of it in furthering Baptist life and witness in the colony. This is evident through their bringing men to Tasmania from the Pastors' College, London, encouragement in their ministries and the erection of chapels and manses.

⁶⁶ Alexander, 'Hopkins and Clarke', MA thesis, ch.1 last page; Theo E Sharples, *Congregationalism in Tasmania 1830-1977* (Congregational Union of Tasmania Inc, 1977), pp. 48-50; John West, *The hope of life eternal* (Launceston, JS Waddell, 1950), a sermon occasioned by the death of Mrs Sarah Hopkins, delivered at Brisbane Street Chapel, Hobart Town, 25 November 1849 to which are added, extracts from the memoranda of the deceased.

Chapter Three – The Influence of CH Spurgeon and His College

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to show the nature of the students' training and the world-wide impact of the Pastors' College connected to Charles H Spurgeon's church in London, the Metropolitan Tabernacle. It is from this College that men were drawn to assist in the re-invigoration of Baptist churches in Tasmania. This chapter begins with an examination of nineteenth century London and the place religion occupied in the life of the English people at that time. Biographical details of Spurgeon's life have been kept to a minimum. The chapter will focus on the College's beginnings, staffing, its target student clients and their accommodation, its educational priorities and curriculum, publications, financial support, numbers and graduate placement (especially in Tasmania), amongst other matters. Biographical details of a number of men who came to Tasmania will seek to illustrate the background of College candidates and the College life itself.

Nineteenth Century London

In the course of the nineteenth century London grew from a city of about a million people to one of six and half times that number, becoming one of the first megalopolises the world had ever seen.¹ By 1866 one of the best-known preachers in the world, Baptist Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892) was preaching weekly in the city. At seventeen he had become the pastor of a Baptist Chapel near Cambridge drawing rapidly increasing congregations. His two-year ministry saw attendance grow in the thatched-

roof chapel from forty to 400. The 'boy preacher of Cambridge shire' was a prodigy. Then at nineteen he preached his first sermon in London in an historic but rapidly deteriorating Baptist church and was subsequently called as pastor.

The nineteenth century has been called a great age for religion in England.² In 1851 over fifty per cent of the population aged ten years and over attended church in England and Wales, roughly half of whom belonged to Nonconformist chapels. It was virtually impossible to escape the influence of religion in a society whose very customs and attitudes were so largely shaped by it. Sunday observance, questions of poverty, alcohol and recreation were significant issues in many people's lives. The majority of the population used the Church of England for baptisms, marriages and funerals. The church also provided the centre for a variety of social and educational pursuits.³ Nonconformity was giving its prosperous middle-class a sense of duty and a sense of social obligation.⁴ While many people still went to church in the cities, church attendance was now part of individual choice, not an over-arching community habit. In fact, church attendance was declining steadily among middle and working classes alike.⁵

¹ Jerry White, *London in Nineteenth Century: A Human Awful Wonder of God* (London, Jonathan Cape, 2007), p. 3.

² Peter N Stearns, *European Society in Upheaval: Social History Since 1750* (London, Macmillan, 1967), p. 175.

³ Kenneth D Brown, *A Social History of the Nonconformist Ministry in England and Wales, 1800-1930* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1988), pp. 5f.

⁴ Ernest A Payne, *The Free Church Tradition in the Life of England* (London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1965), p.110.

⁵ Stearns, *European Society in Upheaval: social history since 1800*, p. 271.

Born in the years when many Baptist chapels were of a low level in society - their pastors were less educated, the people more illiterate than the general populace⁶ - Spurgeon joined a number of other Nonconformists who were excelling in the art of sermon delivery: Dr Alexander McLaren (1826-1910) of Manchester whose expository preaching reached wide audiences both in Britain and throughout the English-speaking world; Baptist leader, Dr John Clifford (1829-1895) and Dr Richard Glover of Bristol who had been educated as a Presbyterian. Beyond the Baptists were other champions of the pulpit: English Congregationalist Dr Robert William Dale (1829-1895) of Birmingham; Congregationalist of vigorous utterance Dr Joseph Parker (1830-1902) of Cavendish Street, Manchester and later the great City Temple in Holborn Viaduct, London; and finally Wesleyan Methodist, Hugh Price Hughes (1847-1902) of London. From the foregoing list of great preachers in the second half of the nineteenth century, it can be seen that Nonconformity retained the following of the ordinary man and was one of the most formative influences in Victorian England.⁷

New Park Street chapel began to grow immediately under Spurgeon's preaching and pastoral guidance. According to Ernest Payne, he became an overnight sensation with his home-

grown gifts of sharpness and humour, unrivalled voice and tireless evangelistic zeal.⁸ As an orator he could move his congregation from laughter to tears and from joy to grief in a moment.⁹ Wrote Dr JC Carlile:

Among the great factors in any analysis of Spurgeon's power is that voice which still haunts the memory of those who heard it. I remember Spurgeon telling the students in college that he could whisper so as to be heard distinctly in every part of the Tabernacle. Some of the men seemed incredulous. Spurgeon said, 'We will adjourn to the Tabernacle.' He went to the pulpit, and fifty or sixty students went to different parts of the galleries. When they were ready Spurgeon whispered with wonderful distinctness and charm, 'Show your pocket handkerchiefs if you can hear.' When the handkerchiefs came out as flags in the distance the voice said: 'Put them away, they are not clean.' Who could hear that voice and ever forget its music and range and pathos? It was a clarion note, a child's laugh, a lover's whisper. Nature had richly endowed him, and nearly all that art could do had been done.¹⁰

The New Park Street chapel was almost immediately expanded to seat 1,500 (with standing room for 500 more), but still the crowds could not be contained. While plans were under way for a larger building, Spurgeon preached at the famous Exeter Hall but this building, which seated over 4,000, in time also became inadequate.

⁶ In Mark Rutherford's fictional village of Cowfold in the 1840s the Anglican, Independent and Wesleyan ministers all had nothing to do with the Baptist pastor because 'he was a poor man, and poor persons sat under him. His folk were fifty sullen, half-stupid, wholly ignorant people'. See Brown, *A Social History of the Nonconformist Ministry in England and Wales, 1800-1930*, p. 29. But Brown notes that Leonard Champion's researches suggest that the Baptist ministry in the eighteenth century also contained a core of men drawn from the highest social groups.

⁷ Brown, *A Social History of the Nonconformist Ministry in England and Wales, 1800-1930*, p. 8.

⁸ Payne, *The Free Church Tradition in the Life of England*, pp. 108f.

⁹ Owen Chadwick, *The Victorian Church, 2 parts* (London, A & C Black, 1966 and 1970), vol. 1, pp. 420f.

¹⁰ JC Carlile, *Charles H Spurgeon: An Interpretive Biography* (London, Religious Tract Society, 1933).

Sunday services were eventually held at the Surrey Music Hall, seating 10,000. By the age of twenty-two Spurgeon had become the most popular preacher of his day. In fact his preaching career was without parallel in modern history. Furthermore, in England he made the Baptist name respectable.¹¹

The Metropolitan Tabernacle

For many people a visit to London included the 'obligatory' trip to hear Spurgeon. Wrote one visitor in 1887:

My wife, son and self went to hear Mr Spurgeon one Sunday, and a grand treat it was. The place, morning and night, was crowded, and I don't wonder at it; he certainly is the king of preachers. It suited me exactly. There was no chanting ... the tunes sung were the good old fashioned ones, and were not accompanied by any musical instruments.¹²

Augustine Birrell, British chief secretary for Ireland (1907–16) and man of letters, wrote:

I only once heard Spurgeon preach in his own ugly tabernacle. I was seated in a high and crowded gallery, between a gentleman who ostentatiously sucked an orange (it was a hot day) and a lady who kept biting sumptuously at a sandwich. All of a sudden I heard Spurgeon, with that beautiful voice of his and his perfect articulation, quote three lines from Keats! They still sound in my ears, and no wonder! for they were from 'Endymion': 'Strange ministrant of undescribed sounds,/ That come a swooning over hollow grounds,/ And wither drearily on barren moors.' Straightway I forgot my surroundings, including the half-

sucked orange and the nibbled sandwich, and was borne aloft on the broad wings of poetry. Ever since that day I never hear Spurgeon accused of illiteracy, but I murmur to myself those three glorious lines, so magnificently rendered, by way of protest.¹³

In March 1861 the Metropolitan Tabernacle, with a seating capacity of nearly 5,000, and standing room for another 1,000, was opened debt free. This would be the home of Spurgeon's congregation and the centre of his pulpit ministry until his death. For thirty-one years the average attendance for both morning and evening worship approached 6,000, that is, a total of 10,000 every Sunday from 1861 to 1892.¹⁴ The congregation was predominately lower middle class, with men outnumbering women by about two to one. In London many were still encouraged by the continuing improvements in the transport systems to continue their attendance at evening church worship. Spurgeon tamed the revivalist mission into a chapel and congregation. He was also part of the sudden evangelical consciousness of the gulf that existed between the labouring class and Christianity.¹⁵ In Tasmania in 1887, the *Devon Herald* reported that he was seen as 'a popular and accredited teacher of the somewhat illiterate millions.'¹⁶ On the occasion of the opening of a new church in Camberwell in 1877, Spurgeon himself remarked:

I suppose two-thirds of my congregation at the Tabernacle are

¹¹ Chadwick, *The Victorian Church*, vol. 1, pp. 420f.

¹² *Protestant Standard*, 30 July 1887.

¹³ *Tasmanian Baptist Church Chronicle* (1918-1953), May 1921 p. 11. Letter by Augustine Birrell writing in the *Nation*.

¹⁴ Horton Davies, *Worship and Theology in Britain: Volume 4, From Newman to Martineau, 1859-1900* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1965), p. 334.

¹⁵ Chadwick, *The Victorian Church*, vol. 1, pp. 420f.

¹⁶ *Devon Herald*, 11 February 1887, p2c5.

working-men, and whenever you have a vigorous, living church you will find that the bulk of it is made up of the very men whom it is said to be the problem to get to go to the house of God.¹⁷

In 1884 a leading deacon said that at least 1000 Tabernacle members were out conducting meetings on Sunday evenings.¹⁸ The students from Spurgeon's College acted as ushers to the services and each was allotted a section to show people to their seats, to provide them with a hymn-book and to look out for enquirers at the close of the services.¹⁹ The year before he died, in 1892, the Metropolitan Tabernacle sponsored twenty-seven Sunday and Ragged schools, with 612 teachers and 8,034 scholars.²⁰ In 1880, John Clifford, a leading British Baptist, said of Spurgeon:

He is the most pronounced Baptist force of the last quarter of a century. His works are as abundant as his position is unique. The enthusiasm of the great Evangelical Revival appears in him; and the strong passion for 'saving souls', characteristic of Whitefield, is supreme. But he has at the same time the organising skill of a Wesley, and is the centre of a

splendid system of energetic and evangelistic beneficence. Theologically, he claims to stand by Calvin: but he will leave Calvin, and all his theologies to bring a man to Christ, and to extend the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus . . . 'Spurgeon's men' are going all over the planet; and the number of church members represented at the last Conference of the Spurgeon's section of the Baptists, reached a total of 44,505, i.e. nearly a sixth of the whole denomination.²¹

Publications

The publication of Spurgeon's sermons began in 1855. They were printed, published and mailed to subscribers and were published in newspapers around the English-speaking world. In 1883 an Australian minister wrote to the *Sword and Trowel*:

My eldest daughter, who is married to a minister in Tasmania, says in a recent letter — 'If Mr. Spurgeon knew how his sermons are appreciated in our Southern forests, where no preachers have been for years until my dear husband went to them, and how many cases of conversion met with through the reading of them, he would be amazed, and rejoice with unspeakable joy.'²²

In 1865 Spurgeon had begun publication of *The Sword and Trowel*, a monthly magazine that contained both original material and news of his ministry. The journal still continues today.²³ A prolific writer, Spurgeon

¹⁷ *Protestant Standard*, 6 January 1877, p6c1 drawing on *The Freeman*.

¹⁸ Mark Hopkins, *Nonconformity's Romantic Generation, Evangelical and Liberal Theologies in Victorian England* (Milton Keynes, Paternoster Press, 2004), p. 155; The membership of Spurgeon's congregation at the close of 1864 was 2,937; 1869 — 4,047; 1875 — 4,813; *Sword and Trowel* (hereafter S&T) January 1877. During his ministry a total of 14,692 members were added to the church, nearly 11,000 by baptism.

¹⁹ Fred H King, *Rev Fred H King's reminiscences* (self-published). Copy in possession of Laurence F Rowston.

²⁰ Mike Nicholls, 'Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Educationalist: Part I - General Educational Concerns', *Baptist Quarterly* vol. 31 no.8, October 1986, pp. 384-401.

²¹ Roger Hayden, *English Baptist History and Heritage* (Didcot, Oxfordshire, Baptist Union of Great Britain, 2005), p. 129.

²² S&T March 1883. The letter writer's name is not given.

²³ *Sword and the Trowel: A Record of Combat with Sin and of Labour for the Lord* (Metropolitan Tabernacle, London, Passmore & Alabaster, 1865). The title, *The Sword and the Trowel*, is based upon the scripture passage of

wrote some 135 books, was editor of twenty-eight others and produced a number of pamphlets and albums.²⁴ In all, he produced over 200 titles. Other initiatives followed: in 1867 an orphanage for boys and girls opened. Almshouses for the poor were founded in 1868. An association for the dissemination of gospel literature had scores of workers.²⁵ Local mission work was done by students in the slums of London; they established churches and Sunday schools. Then there was his college as part of Spurgeon's active and vigorous church.

The Pastor's College

Spurgeon called the Pastor's College his 'first born and best loved' and 'our greatest life work'.²⁶ 'By [it] I multiply myself,' he once told his friend Carlile.²⁷ It might appear incongruous that one who had not been educated in a Dissenting academy might head such an institution, but Spurgeon learnt to read well by the age of six and attended 'dame-schools'. He also studied at Stockwell House School in Colchester and at the age of fourteen spent a year at All Saints' Agricultural College, Maidstone. Spurgeon was the recipient of a broad education and his

Nehemiah 4.14. The context of this verse is the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls. But since the enemies of Jerusalem would do all they could to prevent this, Nehemiah called on his men to work with sword (to defend) in one hand and trowel (to build) in the other. Spurgeon was saying that both are needed.

²⁴ Pictorial publications described the Tabernacle, the orphanage and Spurgeon's home.

²⁵ Ernest Bacon, *Spurgeon: Heir of the Puritans* (London, Allen & Unwin, 1967), pp. 70, 90, 95ff, 100.

²⁶ Charles Ray, *The Life of Charles Haddon Spurgeon* (London, Passmore and Alabaster, 1903), p. 321; Hopkins, *Nonconformity's Romantic Generation*, p. 157.

²⁷ Carlile, *Charles H Spurgeon: An Interpretive Biography*, p. 169. For the first fifteen years of the institution's existence, the apostrophe in its title, Pastor's College, was placed before the s.

voracious appetite for learning was stimulated not only in schools but at home. By the age of sixteen he was an assistant at Edwin Leeding's school in Colchester and contemplated opening his own school to help the poor obtain education.²⁸ He was familiar with Greek and Hebrew. His speed and retention in reading were extraordinary and helped him acquire an exceptional knowledge of several branches of Christian literature, notably the works of Calvin and the Puritans, biblical commentaries and homiletics.²⁹

In 1856 Spurgeon began to tutor a student, Thomas William Medhurst. His student had been baptised at New Park Street Chapel, and soon afterwards was received into the church. Immediately he began preaching in the street with some success but some of the members of chapel complained to Spurgeon about his 'want of education' and the disgrace he was bringing to the chapel so Spurgeon spoke to him and Medhurst admitted that there was some truth in what they said and added, 'I must preach, sir; and I shall preach unless you cut off my head.'³⁰ Of the College beginnings, Spurgeon explained:

... at New Park Street, several zealous young men were brought to a knowledge of the truth; and among them some whose preaching in the street was blessed of God to the conversion of souls. Knowing that these men had capacities for usefulness, but laboured under the serious disadvantage of having no

²⁸ Nicholls, 'Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Educationalist: Part I - General Educational Concerns', pp. 384-401.

²⁹ Hopkins, *Nonconformity's Romantic Generation*, p. 133.

³⁰ Charles Ray, *The Life of Charles Haddon Spurgeon* (London, Passmore and Alabaster, 1903), p. 321.

education, and were, moreover, in such circumstances that they would not be likely to obtain admission into any of our Colleges, it entered into my heart to provide them with a course of elementary instruction, which might, at least, correct their inaccuracies of speech, and put them in the way of obtaining information by reading.³¹

Spurgeon had touched a real need. In the eighteenth century, the Dissenters who were excluded from many schools either by law or by custom, started all over the country a number of schools and academies of their own. As a reaction, the Church of England founded Charity Schools in hundreds to educate the children of the poor and in the principles of the Church of England. By 1715 there were 5,000 or more boys and girls attending the new Charity Schools in London area, and some 20,000 in the rest of England.³² The Charity Schools, followed by the Sunday school movement that took on such large proportions after 1780, were indeed the first systematic attempt to give education to the bulk of the working people.³³ The Education Act of 1870 allowed for the continued existence of denominational schools, but in districts where schools accommodation was deficient, a locally elected school Board was set up with the power to organize schools and enforce attendance of all children between the ages of five and twelve who were not being educated in any other way. It was calculated that there were 3,936,513 children of school age and the available accommodation

could only accommodate 1,824,306.³⁴ On the eve of the Education Act the Church schools had about a million and a half children on their books with, in addition, 4,000 night schools containing 150,000 scholars.³⁵ But G Kitson Clark points out that the most effective adult education a young man of the working or lower class could receive was to become a member of, and possibly a lay preacher in a Dissenting congregation,³⁶ thus many without much formal education became formidably well educated.

Spurgeon sent Medhurst to a Collegiate School at Bexleyheath in Kent for his general education.³⁷ In addition, Medhurst went to Spurgeon's home for several hours each week to study and discuss theology. Carlile, who was also Spurgeon's biographer, wrote that at this point Spurgeon 'had not even a remote idea whereunto the College would grow'.³⁸ Spurgeon took another student the next year. Spurgeon continues:

This, however, was a small matter ere long, for other brethren, who required the same aid, and were equally worthy, came forward to ask for similar instruction, and we could not deny them. The single student, in 1856, grew into eight ere long; and then into twenty; and, anon, the number rose to nearly one hundred men. Faith trembled when tried with the weight of the support of one man, but the Lord has strengthened

³¹ Charles H Spurgeon, *Autobiography, Volume 2: 1854-1860* (London, Passmore and Alabaster, 1898), pp. 147ff.

³² Trevelyan, *English Social History*, pp. 326ff.

³³ Trevelyan, *English Social History*, p. 363.

³⁴ Anthony Wood, *Nineteenth Century Britain: 1815-1914* (London; Longmans, Green, 1960), pp. 18f, 283ff; G Kitson Clark, *The Making of Victorian England* (London, Methuen, 1963), p. 193.

³⁵ Clark, *The Making of Victorian England*, p. 174.

³⁶ Clark, *The Making of Victorian England*, p. 176.

³⁷ Bacon, *Spurgeon: Heir of the Puritans*, p. 90.

³⁸ Carlile, Charles H Spurgeon: *An Interpretive Biography*, p.171.

her by exercise, so that she has rejoiced under the load when multiplied a hundred-fold.³⁹

He added, 'It was no project of mine, it grew without sound of my axe or hammer; grew because it could not be otherwise.'⁴⁰

Financial Support

Spurgeon adhered to the principle that no student was asked for any money. He even accepted some married men. Other theological colleges gave financial help to students but only on a very limited scale.⁴¹ Again in the account of his early years, Spurgeon noted: 'We determined never to refuse a man on account of absolute poverty, but rather to provide him with needful lodging, board, and raiment, that he might not be hindered on that account.'⁴²

At the beginning Spurgeon funded the fledging College out of his own finances, as he explained:

Encouraged by the readiness with which the young men found spheres of labour, and by their singular success in soul-winning, I enlarged the number, but the whole means of sustaining them came from my own purse. The large sale of my sermons in America, together with my dear wife's economy, enabled me to spend from £600 to £800 a year in my own favourite work; but on a sudden — owing to my denunciations of the then existing slavery in the States — my entire resources from that brook Cherith were dried up. I paid as large sums as I could from my own income, and resolved to spend all I had, and

then take the cessation of my means as a voice from the Lord to stay the effort, as I am firmly persuaded that we ought, under no pretence, to go into debt.⁴³

Soon two of his deacons, Winsor and William Olney, promised aid. Following the debacle with his publications in the States, in 1861, several anonymous donors sent gifts to maintain the work. Ultimately assistance in the financial aspects of the College was accepted by the Tabernacle congregations,⁴⁴ with a weekly offering, which year by year matched the year itself, that is, £1,869 in 1869. By 1877 it was costing about £5,000 annually to keep the Pastors' College solvent.⁴⁵

Staffing and Student Lodging

In 1856 the first two students lodged with the Rev George Rogers, the first Principal of the College. Rogers' task was that of competent administrator and lecturer. The number of those lodging with him grew to eight. Rogers, a Congregational minister, was Puritan in his thinking, adhering to the old evangelical truths. He retained his position of Principal until his retirement. Glasgow University educated the Rev David Gracey was appointed classics' tutor. This meant Gracey went from being a student to a tutor, having previously left the Presbyterian Church. Prior to his appointment as Principal, replacing Rogers, Gracey was minister of Albany Road Chapel, Camberwell. Spurgeon's brother, the

³⁹ Spurgeon, *Autobiography, Volume 2: 1854-1860*, p. 148.

⁴⁰ S&T April 1873.

⁴¹ Lomax MacKenzie, 'Memories of Spurgeon', *Australian Baptist*, 19 September 1956, p. 2.

⁴² Spurgeon, *Autobiography, Volume 2: 1854-1860*, p. 149.

⁴³ Robert Shindler, *From the Usher's Desk to the Tabernacle Pulpit. The Life and Labours of Pastor CH Spurgeon* (London, Passmore and Alabaster, 1892), p. 136.

⁴⁴ Nicholls, 'Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Educationalist', *Baptist Quarterly* vol. 32 no.2, pp. 73-94.

⁴⁵ David Bebbington, 'Spurgeon and British Evangelical Theological Education', Chapter 11 of *Theological Education in the Evangelical Tradition*, edited by D G Hart and R Albert Mohler, Jr (Grand Rapids, Michigan; Baker Books, 1996), p. 218; S&T January 1877.

Rev John A Spurgeon, also joined the staff.⁴⁶

Alfred Bird, who entered the College in August 1867, found accommodation with Gracey. Bird would arrive on Tasmanian shores in 1884. He was born on 19 October 1847 of godly parents who were members of the West End Baptist Church, Hammersmith. Alfred's grandfather was its pastor. Alfred was educated at a preparatory school at Brixton and the City of London School. At the age of sixteen he became a Christian and a member of the Baptist Bloomsbury Chapel, Central London, under the evangelical and forceful ministry of Dr William Brock (1807–1875). Bird began Christian work with tract distribution and he invited young men whom he met in the street to his Bible classes. He also became a Sunday school teacher and an open air preacher. Friends urged him to devote his life to the Christian ministry. To that end he undertook a twelve months' evangelistic tour holding missions in two neighbouring areas of London. His application for admission to the Pastors' College was supported by Dr Brock and acceded to by Spurgeon.⁴⁷

Subsequent to the accommodation arrangements of Rogers and Gracey, members and friends of the Tabernacle boarded the young men in their homes in twos and threes at moderate rates. Spurgeon, however, championed home residence on the basis that the young men 'should continue in association with ordinary humanity'. To keep them from family life might breed artificiality, he said, a clerical tone that he often called 'officialism'. Further, the lodging

system allowed him to receive regular reports on the students' habits.⁴⁸

College Accommodation

In 1861, sixteen students took classes in the basement of the new Metropolitan Tabernacle, and once a week they met at Spurgeon's house. This gathering was the origin of the Friday afternoon weekly lectures. For the next fourteen years the classes continued in the rooms beneath the Tabernacle, rooms which were large enough to meet the needs of at least 150 students.⁴⁹

Because of growing numbers, it became necessary to move to more suitable accommodation. Its foundation stone was laid on 14 October 1873.⁵⁰ Opening services were held on 28 August 1874. The entire cost of £15,000 was defrayed by the liberality of the folk from the Tabernacle and the wider Christian public as well as the legacies and other gifts Spurgeon had been putting aside for many years to this end. The Tabernacle's own Evangelists' Association proved to be one of the two sources in supplying the College with students. The other source was the Evening Classes.

The Evening Classes

As there were many young men associated with the Tabernacle whose lack of education hindered their prospects in life, Spurgeon commenced the Evening Classes which were known as 'The Christian Working Men's College'. There they could, after their paid employment ceased for the day, gain a good general knowledge and also study

⁴⁶ Ray, *The Life of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, p. 330.

⁴⁷ 'Our Own Men and their Work', S&T 1896 pp. 369ff.

⁴⁸ Bebbington, 'Spurgeon and British Evangelical Theological Education', Chapter 11 of *Theological Education in the Evangelical Tradition*, pp. 218-234.

⁴⁹ A Dallimore, *Spurgeon* (Chicago, Moody, 1984), p. 142.

⁵⁰ Ray, *The Life of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, p. 340.

theology. Such evening classes' attendance did not depend on an intention to enter the ministry,⁵¹ although many of the Pastor's College students had attended those classes. They proved to be a means of 'sending out colporteurs, city missionaries, lay preachers, Sabbath-school teachers and workers of all sorts', notes Mike Nichols in his discussion of Spurgeon as an educationalist.⁵² Most theological colleges in the mid-nineteenth century found it necessary to provide some elementary instruction for some of their poorly educated students. University College of London pioneered evening classes in London in 1849. In 1827 Nonconformists and secularists, excluded from Oxford and Cambridge, founded this undenominational teaching centre in the Capital.⁵³

The evening classes began in 1862 in the same rooms that the College occupied under the Tabernacle. A number of the young men came from non-Baptist churches. By 1867 the curriculum of the classes included the Classics, Mathematics, Natural Science, English, French, Greek, Latin and Writing.⁵⁴ In 1865 attendance reached 230 and numbered about the same in 1879.⁵⁵

Pastor's College Educational Priorities

The Pastor's College began in 1856 with an initial enrolment of eight students and while Bristol College, the

Baptist College in Bristol, wanted 'highly cultivated' students,⁵⁶ Spurgeon had decided that the goal of his College, 'a new school of the prophets', was to be that of training men with a limited formal education.⁵⁷ It was not intended to create preachers or scholars, but to assist men who were already preachers whether they were preaching in mission halls, at ragged schools or on street corners. But they had to have the gift of preaching. To enter his College one had to be preaching regularly over the previous two years,⁵⁸ and to be men 'touched with live coals from off the altar'. Mark Hopkins records that 'in this way Spurgeon pioneered the provision of cheaper, briefer and less academic courses of study for the ministry making preachers out of candidates of moderate talent and humble social background.'⁵⁹ In an autobiography of his early years, Spurgeon wrote:

To preach with acceptance, men, lacking in education, need to be instructed; and therefore our Institution set itself further to instruct those whom God had evidently called to preach the gospel, but who laboured under early

⁵¹ Dallimore, *Spurgeon*, p. 108.

⁵² Nicholls, 'Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Educationalist: Part I - General Educational Concerns', pp. 384-401.

⁵³ GM Trevelyan, *English Social History* (Longmans, Green, London, 1960), p. 480.

⁵⁴ Mike Nicholls, 'Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Educationalist: Part 2 - The Principles and Practice of the Pastors' College', *Baptist Quarterly* vol. 32 no.3, April 1987, pp. 73-94.

⁵⁵ Dallimore, *Spurgeon*, p. 114; S&T September 1879.

⁵⁶ Lomax MacKenzie, 'Memories of Spurgeon - Oldest Surviving Student Recalls College Founder', *The Australian Baptist*, 19 September 1956, p. 2. Apart from Spurgeon's College and Bristol Baptist College, Baptist ministers who came to Australia also trained at Rawdon and Regent's Park Baptist Colleges. See Ken R Manley, 'To the Far Country: The influence of former Bristol students on Australian Baptists', in *Bible, History and Ministry: Essays for LG Champion on his ninetieth Birthday*, eds R Hayden and B Haymes, (Bristol, Bristol Baptist College, 1997), pp. 91-106, and Ken R Manley, 'And to the ends of the earth: Regent's Park College and Australian Baptists', *Baptist Quarterly* 42.1 part 2, April 2007, pp. 130-47.

⁵⁷ In Britain literacy stood at 66 per cent in 1870 but rose to 95 per cent in 1900, see Stearns, *European Society in Upheaval*, p. 205.

⁵⁸ S&T December 1874.

⁵⁹ Hopkins, *Nonconformity's Romantic Generation*, p. 156.

disadvantages. We never dreamed of making men preachers, but we desired to help those whom God had already called to be such. Hence, we laid down, as a basis, the condition that a man must, during about two years, have been engaged in preaching, and must have had some seals to his ministry, before we could entertain his application. No matter how talented or promising he might appear to be, the College could not act upon mere hopes, but must have evident marks of a Divine call, so far as human judgment can discover them.⁶⁰

Prospective students were not required to show any educational qualifications whatsoever and none would have to sit external examinations. There was accordingly no possibility in gaining a degree at the Pastor's College but as a rule they had to be Baptists and Calvinists.⁶¹ Furthermore, he added:

We also placed the literary qualifications of admission so low that even brethren who could not read have been able to enter.

We sought for earnest preachers, not for readers of sermons, or makers of philosophical essays. 'Have you won souls for Jesus?' was and is our leading enquiry for all applicants. Our men seek no Collegiate degrees, or classical honours—though many of them could readily attain them; but to preach efficiently, to get at the hearts of the masses, to evangelize

the poor — this is the College ambition, this and nothing else.⁶²

Let the men be scholars by all means, to their fullest bent, but first and foremost let them study their Bibles, hold the faith clearly, and know how to defend it valiantly. If they become so bookish that they cannot speak except in a pedantic latinised language, their education has failed; if they grow so refined and affected that they cannot condescend to men of low estate, their learning has made them fools; and if they are so fascinated by literary pursuits that they think lightly of the preaching of the gospel, they have missed the mark: but should they be rendered humble by the knowledge which they gain, should their minds be well stored, should their tongues become more fluent, and their thoughts more deep, and above all should their piety be strengthened and their graces be cultivated, it will prove an essential benefit to the men, and an immense gain to the churches, that they have passed through a college course.⁶³

The requirement that all prospective students should be earnest preachers of at least a couple of years experience was easily met by Harry Wood who would arrive in Tasmania in 1883 by way of New Zealand and South Australia. Wood was born at Brighton on 16 March 1854 into a large family. He was raised as an Anglican. At an early age was he sent to work to augment the family income. At sixteen years of age, following a serious illness, he made a Christian commitment at a gospel meeting and took to 'soul-saving'. He worked among the young male flower sellers,

⁶⁰ Spurgeon, *Autobiography, Volume 2: 1854-1860*, p. 148. England at the time had no national educational system and the children of poorer families usually grew up with little or no schooling.

⁶¹ Hopkins, *Nonconformity's Romantic Generation*, p. 156.

⁶² Spurgeon, *Autobiography, Volume 2: 1854-1860*, p. 149.

⁶³ S&T April 1873.

offering them carbonated lemon drink if they attended meetings. Encouraged by clergy, business men and others he gathered a number of workers around himself and together they ran gospel meetings. Such were the demands of all this that he eventually devoted all his time to these ventures. Two of those won over entered into Christian ministry while others moved to better employment. Wood was finally baptised in Bond Street Baptist Chapel, Brighton, and his name was placed before Spurgeon. There had been prospects of him training for the Wesleyan ministry but the matter of believer's baptism had arisen. The outcome was Wood's entrance into the College in 1877 or 1878.⁶⁴

Great stress was always laid on the role of the sending church and great value attached to the references provided by those who knew the candidate best.⁶⁵ James Samuel Harrison gladly used such references to gain the good education he needed for ministry. In 1879 Harrison would accompany student Robert McCullough and Spurgeon's son, Thomas, on the *SS Sobraon* bound for Tasmania. Harrison was about twenty-five years of age when he entered Spurgeon's College in 1876. Harrison's colleague, Alfred Bird, recorded that Spurgeon welcomed this preacher who was so thoroughly after his own heart. Harrison was born in London about 1851. In his nineteenth year he embraced the Christian faith and sought Baptist baptism and membership with the Baptist church. In Bristol he joined the Brethren church of the philanthropic George Muller, working in the Sunday school, tract distribution, YMCA cottage meetings and open-air preaching. Once he felt

the call to the Christian ministry, he spent three years working as an evangelist in the villages of Gloucester, Somerset, Wiltshire, and Dorset, the last two years having as his companion Baptist JH Moore. It was while conducting services at Iwerne Minster Baptist Chapel, Dorset, that Harrison sought admission to Spurgeon's College. At the close of his College course, Harrison received an unanimous invitation to the pastorate of Montague Street Baptist, Blackburn, which, by the advice of Spurgeon and his tutors, he accepted temporarily.⁶⁶

James Rides Cooper who was born in September 1856, entered the Pastors' College in January 1882 to prepare for the Christian ministry. Cooper arrived in Tasmania in December 1884 in the *SS Liguria* with fellow student Harry H Driver and Spurgeon's sickly son, Thomas. This was Thomas' third visit to the colony for health reasons. Cooper had been selected by Spurgeon at the request of William Gibson to take charge of the church at Perth.⁶⁷ Earlier studious Cooper desired to become a teacher but his father apprenticed him to his eldest brother, a coach builder. About sixteen years of age, Cooper moved to London and attended the Metropolitan Tabernacle. There on 27 May 1876 he was baptised and joined the church. Each Sunday morning he taught a class in the Almshouses' Sunday school, assisted with the afternoon Bible class and in the evenings he engaged in evangelistic mission work in the New Kent Road. Leaving London, he moved to Peterborough and attended the Baptist chapel in Westgate where he ran open-air services and conducted services at the

⁶⁴ LEx 6 November 1889, p2c5; 'Our Own Men and their Work', S&T 1896 pp. 561-565.

⁶⁵ Nicholls, 'Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Educationalist: Part 2', pp. 73-94.

⁶⁶ S&T May 1879; 'Our Own men' and their Work', S&T 1903 pp. 560-563.

⁶⁷ WY Fullerton, *Thomas Spurgeon, a biography* (London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1919), p. 117; S&T December 1884.

Stanground branch chapel. His first sermon at the branch chapel Cooper started well, but suddenly came to an abrupt pause. The embarrassing silence was at last broken by the preacher exclaiming, 'I do not know what to say, but I do love my Saviour, and wish that you loved Him, too.' Not losing heart, he worked at his preaching and was finally sent as a supply to Pinchbeck, in Lincolnshire, where he was invited to become the pastor in August 1880. After eighteen months he resigned and began his studies at Spurgeon's College, in January 1882. While still a student, Cooper was sent to establish Baptist churches at Aldershot and at Batley in Yorkshire.⁶⁸

Loyal and keenly Baptist, Edward Vaughan also received a poor education, having left school early to support himself because of the death of his Welsh parents. He spent three years at the Pastor's College and was given in 1874 a three year pastorate at the small church in Surrey Lane, Battersea, London. Vaughan sailed for Australia in 1878.⁶⁹

Involved in Spurgeon's strategy of reaching the lower and lower-middle classes lay his suspicion of what was being taught in the other theological colleges:

It must be frankly admitted that my views of the Gospel and of the mode of training preachers were and are somewhat peculiar. I may have been uncharitable in my judgment, but I thought the Calvinism of the theology usually taught [in other colleges] to be very doubtful, and the fervour of the generality of the students to be far behind their literary attainments. It seemed to me that the preachers of

the grand old truths of the Gospel, ministers suitable for the masses, were more likely to be found in an institution where preaching and divinity would be the main objects, and not degrees and other insignia of human learning. I felt that without interfering with the laudable object of other colleges I could do good in my own way.⁷⁰

Against Congregationalist Dr Robert William Dale, who normally read his sermons because 'if I spoke extemporaneously I should never sit down again',⁷¹ Spurgeon lay great stress on extemporaneous speaking characterised by clear, plain speech and he emphasised that preachers had to be aware of their audiences and make proper use of language.⁷² He explained:

An earnest exhorter is all the better for being able to speak the English language correctly, and when he can do that he will be none the worse for having some acquaintance with general literature. God does not need man's knowledge, but neither does he need man's ignorance.

He continued:

The preacher who should address an educated congregation in the language which he would use in speaking to a company of

⁷⁰ Barnes, Reginald Henry, and Charles Edward Brown, *Spurgeon, The People's Preacher By the Authors of 'The Life of General Gordon'* (London and Felling on Tyne: Walter Scott Publishing Co, 1892), p. 107.

⁷¹ For Dale see Davies, *Worship and Theology in Britain: Volume 4, From Newman to Martineau, 1859-1900*, pp. 322ff. Dale observed, 'I do not accept the superstition which implies that the spirit of God is with us in the pulpit and not in the study.'

⁷² All his sermons were delivered extemporarily, and were taken down by short-hand reporters, afterwards revised by Spurgeon, and then printed.

⁶⁸ S&T April 1883 and April 1884; 'Our Own Men and their Work', S&T 1897 pp. 533ff.

⁶⁹ S&T September 1878 pp. 254, 446.

costermongers would prove himself a fool: and on the other hand he who goes down amongst miners and colliers, with technical theological terms and drawing-room phrases, acts like an idiot.⁷³

Curriculum

While training lasted four or even five years at other Baptist colleges, at Spurgeon's College it was initially of a two-year course in mathematics, logic, homiletics, pastoral theology, English composition and biblical Greek and Hebrew. By 1888 some students were spending four years in college.⁷⁴

David Bebbington notes that the College curriculum itself was remarkably diverse, with no discipline being pursued to any great depth but the real advantage in the system was that the curriculum was tailored to the needs of particular students. The learning of Hebrew would be restricted to a few. Although mathematics, which Spurgeon called 'the drill of the mind', was taught to all, the level attained in geometry ('Euclid') necessarily varied enormously. Apart from biblical knowledge, doctrine, and philosophy, there was instruction in history, both of the church and of the nations, in English composition and style, and in the ancient languages. Geography, taught in 1869, disappeared in later years, but Latin remained a mainstay of each man's training. Science also found a place in the curriculum, though chiefly as a source of sermon illustrations. While there were no written or printed certificates issued saying that a certain course of study had been completed or that the person had graduated, there were internal assessments.⁷⁵ By 1879 the standard

course was extended to three years instead of two as the demand for pastors had slackened.⁷⁶ As Spurgeon wrote in the College Annual Report for 1880-1881:

Probably the third year is to many a student more useful than the other two, and he goes forth to his life-work more thoroughly prepared. I could not lengthen the course in former days, when churches tempted the brethren away before the proper time, as they too often did. They told these raw youths that it was a pity to delay, that if they left their studies souls might be saved, and I know not what besides; and some were induced to run away, as Rowland Hill would have said, before they had pulled their boots on. If I constrained them to remain, the good deacons of the eager churches thought me a sort of harsh jailer who locked up his prisoners, and would not give them up at the entreaty of their friends. One wrote and bade me loose the brother, for the Lord had need of him, and I would have let the young man go if I had thought that he was one of the donkeys to whom the passage referred.⁷⁷

Numbers

Of the first 157 students of Spurgeon's College, fifty came from Southwark, the area in which the Metropolitan Tabernacle was situated. One of its missions met in 'deplorable buildings' in this squalid area which was described as 'dim, dirty and destitute' and 'the poorest part of the Metropolis'.⁷⁸ Of the other students,

of *Theological Education in the Evangelical Tradition*, pp. 229f.

⁷⁶ S&T April 1879.

⁷⁷ S&T March 1881.

⁷⁸ Nicholls, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *Educationalist: Part I* – p. 394 citing Charles H Spurgeon, *Metropolitan Tabernacle: Its History and Work* (London 1876), p. 30 and WR

⁷³ Pastors' College Conference, S&T April 1874.

⁷⁴ S&T 1888 p. 325.

⁷⁵ Bebbington, 'Spurgeon and British Evangelical Theological Education', Chapter 11

twenty came from London, eighteen from East Anglia, twenty-four from the Southern Counties and forty-five from elsewhere. As such the students mirrored those who attended the Tabernacle itself, in that they too were from the lower sections of the London middle class.⁷⁹ It was Spurgeon's wish that the students' future work would lie among 'the working population, the real sinew and blood and bone of England' and they needed to be men 'among men, practical, working, thoughtful'.⁸⁰

In 1862 forty-six students were accepted for training and in another three years the numbers had grown to ninety-three.⁸¹ Of the 1,648 active and retired Baptist ministers in England for 1871 only 58 per cent of all Baptist ministers had been trained at an academy or college and more than a tenth listed had trained at Spurgeon's College.⁸² Membership statistics of the Baptist Union of Great Britain in 1881 showed that one sixth of the denomination were from churches pastored by Spurgeon's students.⁸³

By 1884, 675 had completed studies at the Pastor's College. Of the 675, 505 were in Baptist ministry as pastors, missionaries and evangelists.⁸⁴ By the end of 1892, the year Spurgeon died, a total of 863 men had been trained at the college, and they constituted over 50 percent of the Baptist ministers in

England and Wales.⁸⁵ By 1900, one thousand men had been trained at the College and 775 were engaged in Christian ministry.⁸⁶ On considering the makeup of the Baptist Ministry in England in the nineteenth century, John Briggs, drawing on the research of Kenneth Brown, writes:

A high number of sons of the manse [in the first half of the nineteenth century] entered the Baptist ministry, and from the eighteenth century up to 1910 around 5% of Baptist ministers came from the professional classes. Small craftsmen, however, represented the most likely social origin for Baptist ministers in the first half of the nineteenth century. From 1860 onward white-collar workers, including teachers, were increasingly significant, outnumbering artisans after 1880. Until the latter decades of the nineteenth century ministers were likely to have a rural or small town background, but from 1880 urban and suburban backgrounds began to increase.

The number of Baptist ministers who were formally trained for ministry in contrast to the older pattern of 'learning on the job' rose markedly from 1850: as late as 1871 only 58% had training at academy or college, but by 1911 that figure had risen to 84.5%, including some who entered the ministry direct from education and without prior secular employment. Within that increase, however, Pastors' (later Spurgeon's) College played a major role. Brown offers the following percentages of total

Nicholl, *Princes of the Church* (London, 1921), p. 50.

⁷⁹ Nicholls, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *Educationalist: Part I*, pp. 384-401.

⁸⁰ Nicholls, *Charles H Spurgeon, The Pastor Evangelist*, p. 78; S&T July 1869.

⁸¹ Dallimore, *Spurgeon* p. 114; Bebbington, *Theological Education in the Evangelical Tradition*, pp. 219ff.

⁸² Based on the Baptist Handbook of 1871 as cited by Brown, *A Social History of Nonconformist ministry*, p. 33.

⁸³ Hopkins, *Nonconformity's Romantic Generation*, p.156.

⁸⁴ S&T June 1884; Hopkins, *Nonconformity's Romantic Generation*, p. 324.

⁸⁵ Bebbington, 'Spurgeon and British Evangelical Theological Education', Chapter 11 of *Theological Education in the Evangelical Tradition*, p. 221.

⁸⁶ *Southern Baptist* (hereafter SB), 12 July 1900.

Baptist ministry deriving from Spurgeon's College: 1871 c.10%, 1891 c.20%, 1911 24%.⁸⁷

In 1877 the College paid the passage of Henry George Blackie to Delhi. He became pastor of the Lal Bazar Baptist Church in Calcutta. There he also taught in the mission schools, became secretary and treasurer of the Benevolent Institution and secretary of the Baptist Indian Mission and the Calcutta Temperance League. In 1880 he transferred to the Bombay English Baptist Church. Blackie arrived in Tasmania from England in October 1886.⁸⁸

Church Planting

All entrants to the Pastors' College had to promise to undertake any Christian ministry allotted to them during their studies. This involved the College in a considerable outlay for the hire of rooms and halls. Such was the success of these ventures that a large number of new churches in London and the southeast of England, together with their class rooms for Sabbath schools, were erected.⁸⁹ In 1864 Spurgeon had set up a chapel building fund, with himself as treasurer and his deacons as donors, to supply loans for erecting places of worship where his students were preaching.⁹⁰ By 1866, in London alone, the Spurgeon's men had formed eighteen new churches. By 1873 the number of chapels formed had risen to seventy-three and 132 by 1879. By 1879 Spurgeon graduates in their chapels had baptised 36,123

persons and 470 men had been educated at the College.⁹¹

In the early years of the college their studies were often interrupted as Spurgeon gave in to the incessant demands for churches wanting pastors in the hope of renewed growth.⁹² One student was sent to a church after only three months of study.⁹³ In that way they were not always well prepared for the tasks awaiting them both at home and abroad. A number went to the USA. The rule by 1880 was that a man's usual period of study terminated at the end of two years, and his remaining longer depended upon the judgment formed of him.⁹⁴

Robert McCullough, who barely saw out the two years of study, arrived in Tasmania on the last day of 1879. His first sphere of work was at the small town of Longford. He had entered the Pastors' College in 1877. McCullough was born in 1853 at the village of Randalstown, on the banks of the Maine River, County Antrim, Ireland. His father was a farmer. He was educated at the neighbourhood Anglican school and confirmed in the Anglican Church. Upon leaving school he worked for the Old Bleach Irish Linen Company. The first time he heard of Baptists was when evangelist Grattan Guinness and his wife visited the north of Ireland holding evangelistic rallies. At the age of nineteen, he was 'awakened' at revival meetings. He came to believe that the despised 'Dippers' were right, and felt that it was his duty to cast in his lot with them. He joined the little Baptist church about five miles from his home.

⁸⁷ JHY Briggs, *The English Baptists of the Nineteenth Century*, Baptist Historical Society (Didcot, Oxfordshire, 1994), pp. 88ff.

⁸⁸ S&T September 1877, January 1878, September 1879 and January 1880; LEx 16 October 1886, p2c8.

⁸⁹ S&T April 1873 and September 1879.

⁹⁰ Bebbington, 'Spurgeon and British Evangelical Theological Education', Chapter 11 of *Theological Education in the Evangelical Tradition*, p. 224.

⁹¹ Dallimore, *Spurgeon*, p. 108; S&T April 1873 and September 1879.

⁹² Briggs, *The English Baptists of the Nineteenth Century*, p. 85.

⁹³ John Wilson, 'How Spurgeon Trained Preachers'; *Australian Baptist*, 25 February 1936, p. 9.

⁹⁴ S&T March 1881.

At the Baptist meeting he began 'exhorting' as was the custom with the Irish Baptists. He was led on to conduct services and, notwithstanding his busy life, he preached almost every week in various districts. His spare time was given to study under the direction of his pastor, the Rev WS Eccles. Friends for some time urged him to devote himself to the ministry. At last, feeling a call to the ministry, he gave up his paid employment of nine years to begin his theological studies at the Pastors' College. He was twenty-four years old.⁹⁵

The Pastors' College was integrated in the life of the Metropolitan Tabernacle. This meant that its students were constantly associated with Christian mission. Rather than being assigned to another church for an apprenticeship, they gained the equivalent benefits without leaving the Tabernacle.⁹⁶ Probably the great attraction of the link with the Tabernacle for students was the association with its pastor. A close rapport developed between Spurgeon and the body of students as seen in the Friday afternoon lectures where he spent two hours addressing the whole body before counselling individuals about their future work. Years later a Tasmanian born Baptist, Herbert Davies Archer, who studied at the Pastors' College related his experiences of being present at the Friday afternoon visit:

Punctually at three o'clock he would enter. His advent was the signal for every man to rise and welcome him by cheers and clapping, which, when the president was seated, would take the form of beating the desks, to which sometimes he protested by putting his hands to his

ears, and bidding someone open the windows for fresh air. His first words were always cheerful, and sometimes quaint. Mr. Spurgeon was never long on the platform before there would be laughter from the benches. ... He knew we had been grinding away all the week at our studies, or should have been, and that many of us would be preaching on the coming Sunday, and so his words were cheering and helpful withal. He ever aimed, too, at preparing us for our future life work. Almost every student would be seen with his note-book, jotting down for future reference, and so gathering together a thesaurus of pointed and pungent sayings.⁹⁷

Continuing loyalty was fostered by an annual conference of the Pastors' College Association, bringing together former and current students for a week. Participants at these gatherings were joined by outstanding church men and evangelists.⁹⁸

Farewells

The College fostered strong connections with the Baptist Missionary Society⁹⁹ and Spurgeon wanted to see some of his students consider India and reach English speakers and some like Blackie did. Many of Spurgeon's students were to exercise their pastoral ministries overseas in English-speaking countries: in America and the colonies of the British Empire. Between 1856 and 1880 the number exercising

⁹⁵ HD Archer, 'Friday Afternoon at the Pastors' College', *Day-Star*, December 1893 p. 171.

⁹⁶ Bebbington, 'Spurgeon and British Evangelical Theological Education', Chapter 11 of *Theological Education in the Evangelical Tradition*, pp. 218-234; Hopkins, *Nonconformity's Romantic Generation*, p. 156; Carlile, Charles H *Spurgeon*, p. 180.

⁹⁹ The Society formed by William Carey in 1792 and first known as the 'Particular Baptist Society for the Propagation of the Gospel'.

⁹⁵ SB, 3 January 1901, p. 6.

⁹⁶ Bebbington, 'Spurgeon and British Evangelical Theological Education', Chapter 11 of *Theological Education in the Evangelical Tradition*, pp. 218-234.

ministries overseas was 511 men or 13 per cent of those trained, rising to 23 per cent for the sixty years 1856 to 1916.¹⁰⁰ Spurgeon would personally farewell them from College, or encourage them when they moved to another pastorate. To Harry Wood, whose hair was so bright that his fellow-students used playfully to gather round him to warm their hands at the fire, Spurgeon wrote a loving letter which concluded:

You are so well known to me that I think I see you — especially your distinguished head of hair — and I look you in the face with a tear of love in separation, and say, God bless you, Wood! Go, and blaze away for your Lord.¹⁰¹

Those who migrated to Australia regularly wrote to him informing him of their progress and conveying their affection for him, such was his persisting influence after his students settled in the churches. One such letter in 1877 read: 'The Australian brethren are doing well, and are not unmindful of "the old house at home."' ¹⁰² When the former students gathered together at important Baptist functions they would often compose such a letter to 'the Governor' as he was called. In November 1880 the Victorian Baptist Association met and Spurgeon's students in attendance saw this as an opportunity and to send such a letter.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ Briggs, *The English Baptists of the Nineteenth Century*, pp. 88ff.

¹⁰¹ Charles H Spurgeon, *Autobiography Volume 3: 1856-1878* (London, Passmore and Alabaster, 1899), p. 151, letter by Spurgeon.

¹⁰² S&T May 1877.

¹⁰³ S&T May 1881. Compare S&T August 1884: 'Among the numerous addresses of congratulation received since the Jubilee meetings, none have been more welcome than a splendidly illuminated and beautifully bound message from the former students of the College now settled in Victoria, Australia, and a loving letter from the Baptist Union of

Their affection for Spurgeon was a factor in the maintenance their identity. He followed the fortunes of his students and reports of their work were given in the *Sword and Trowel*. He also maintained an interest in many of them through his personal letters. The first man from Spurgeon's Pastors' College to arrive in Tasmania, the Rev Alfred William Grant, would recite from time to time, with Spurgeon's permission, Spurgeon's own 'Sermons in Candles'.¹⁰⁴ Later in his ministerial career, Grant lectured on the life of Spurgeon.¹⁰⁵ Australian historian JD Bollen wrote, 'Spurgeon had become a sign, the embodiment of their distinctiveness and the promise of what they might become.'¹⁰⁶

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that seeds of the Pastors' College which commenced in 1856 were sown when the preacher of the Tabernacle, the Rev Charles H Spurgeon, saw the need to tutor a number of young men connected with his church. The increasing numbers set the stage for the appointment of staff and Principal. This chapter uncovers the College's remarkable growth in that one third of the Baptist men in ministerial training in Great Britain were studying there by the late 1860s. An important feature of this College was that it operated on the principle that its task was to produce preachers, not scholars. It sought to assist men of moderate talent and

Tasmania, which was formed principally by our brethren in that island.' Another such letter was sent from the Tasmanian Baptist Conference of 1891.

¹⁰⁴ A 5,000 word outline of *Sermons in Candles* appeared in S&T in April 1865. Lectures #1 and #2 in full are available online at :

<http://www.spurgeon.org/misc/candles.htm>

¹⁰⁵ *Bathurst Times*, 9 August 1876; see Chapter Four for AW Grant.

¹⁰⁶ JD Bollen, *Australian Baptists: A Religious Minority* (London, The Baptist Historical Society, 1975), p.15.

humble social backgrounds who were already lay preachers. In this way Spurgeon sought to reach the working classes, by choosing men from among them. Spurgeon had touched a real need; other theological colleges, such as Bristol Baptist College, accepted only those who had attained some academic standing. Men were generally accepted at Spurgeon's College on the basis that they were Baptist and Calvinist in persuasion and had the backing of their respective

churches. Their training helped to prepare them for many ministerial challenges. For those who were to arrive in Tasmania, the art of preaching, the discharge of plain pastoral duties, church planting, the ability to counter the claims of other churches and networking between their churches in order to consolidate their gains in the formation of an association of Baptist churches, all were of great significance.

Chapter Four – The First of Spurgeon’s Students in Tasmania

Introduction

This chapter is a biography of one of Spurgeon’s graduates, Alfred William Grant. The chapter will examine how Grant’s mentor, the Rev Charles H Spurgeon, first came to Mary Ann Gibson’s notice and how, subsequently, the perceived need for a pastor at their Perth chapel was met with the arrival of Grant in July 1869. Although this chapter does not attempt to explore every aspect of the life of this public speaker, it explores his ministries in Tasmania and beyond. The themes of his addresses will also be examined. This chapter seeks to provide some understanding of the state of the Baptist churches in Tasmania, Victoria and NSW during these years. It is important to see this chapter as providing an understanding of a preacher of the day as public speaker and lecturer. This understanding is assisted by reference to the Rev Charles Clark. The chapter will conclude with Grant’s final years in New Zealand following the collapse of his marriage.

Mary Ann Gibson and Spurgeon’s Sermons

The nineteenth century was a great age of the pulpit and for many sermon-tasting was both a duty and a delight. The weekly publication of the sermons of Charles H Spurgeon began in 1855. They were mailed to subscribers and were also published in newspapers around the world. Mary Ann Gibson was a keen follower of the preacher and his sermons would probably have come to her notice at the time she and her husband William moved home to Native Point just outside Perth and opened the Perth community church, in

1862.¹ Following a decision of the church in December 1865 to establish a ministry,² the Gibsons proposed to approach Spurgeon personally in the hope of securing a pastor from his College.

The first of Spurgeon’s men to arrive in Australia was Frederick Hibberd (c.1836 - 1908). He landed on 29 October 1863 in New South Wales. He was chosen by both Spurgeon himself and the deacons of the Metropolitan Tabernacle despite the fact Hibberd had a limited pastoral experience.³

In 1868 Gibson’s son, William Gibson Junior, who was by now in business partnership with his father, visited Europe to purchase sheep.⁴ He also made time to visit Spurgeon and put before him the need at Perth,⁵ emphasizing that all costs associated with the candidate’s voyage would be met.

The Appointment of William Alfred Grant

Spurgeon selected twenty-seven year old Alfred William Grant who had entered the Pastor’s College in 1864 when it was situated in the basement

¹ John E Walton, her biographer at the time of her death, said that during the early years of her marriage she persistently distributed his sermons to the residents of Eskdale. But it is impossible that she was familiar with Spurgeon in those early years as Spurgeon was only nine years of age in the year that she married William Gibson, in 1843. See Walton, *Day Dawn and Baptist Church Messenger* (1900-1917), January 1903 p. 5.

² Perth Baptist Church Minutes.

³ Michael Petras, *Our Yesterdays* (Camberwell, Victorian Baptist Historical Society), vol. 1, p. 60.

⁴ The sheep were two rams and five ewes from the celebrated Gadegoest flock at Thal Oschatz, Saxony, and rams from Sturgeon’s English (George III’s) flock, see *Mercury* 18 October 1883, Supplement p1c2.

⁵ *Day-Star* (1886-1894), July 1892, p. 98.

of the new Metropolitan Tabernacle. Accordingly, he would have been among those who first met at Spurgeon's house once a week. Following completion of his studies, he accepted his first pastorate in 1865 at the Barrow-in-Furness, Lancashire. He married Caroline Perkins on 30 August 1865 in the Kent Street Chapel, Portsea Island,⁶ and this would probably have been the reason for his acceptance of the pastorate. Their first child was born the following year. From October 1868 he ministered at Ryde on the Isle of Wight. In March 1869, while his church was deliberating on his call, he received through Spurgeon, Gibson's invitation to go to Tasmania. He and Caroline now had two children. On 15 April he sailed on the *Macduff* accompanied by his family and servant, Mary Taylor.⁷

Grant was born on 23 March 1842 to William Grant, a widower, and his second wife Charlotte (nee Cheeseman). He was christened on 15 May 1842 at St John's chapel Portsea, Hampshire. Grant referred to himself as a Portsmouth man and an old sailor, so he probably worked with his father or his father-in-law at the dock yard prior to his attendance at Spurgeon's College.⁸

While Spurgeon sought 'rough and ready men who could be drilled in the simple rudiments of education and so fitted for the work of preaching and the discharge of plain pastoral duties',⁹

⁶ Information supplied by great grandson Peter Grant.

⁷ Information supplied by Peter Grant.

⁸ Alfred's father was a leading labourer at HM Dock Yard while Charlotte's father, Joseph Cheeseman, was a Shipwright. Information supplied by Peter Grant in 2008; *Ballarat Star*, 27 March 1872, p2c5-6. William Alfred's father gives himself the title 'gentleman' on his marriage certificate.

⁹ JHY Briggs, *The English Baptists of the Nineteenth Century*, Baptist Historical Society (Didcot, Oxfordshire, 1994), p. 89 citing A

Grant does not come within this orbit. His command of the English language and lecturing capabilities soon so evident in Australia indicate some secondary school education though this cannot be ascertained. The migrants arrived in Melbourne on 3 July 1869. Four days later they arrived in Tasmania.¹⁰ Grant immediately commenced his ministry at the Perth Baptist chapel.¹¹ Six months later, on 2 January 1870, nineteen members formed the Perth Baptist Church.¹² But it would be nine months from his arrival in the colony before he was officially welcomed as pastor of the Perth Baptist chapel on 16 March 1870. The welcome coincided with the return of William Gibson Junior from Europe.¹³

Grant proved a vigorous, powerful and attractive preacher and a known Spurgeon's man who excelled at delivering his mentor's well-known sermon, 'Sermons in Candles'. Six weeks after his arrival he gave this recital at the Perth chapel on a Thursday evening. He would commence the recitals of this sermon with the explanation that he and several other students of the Pastor's College had been granted permission to deliver the lecture at any time and for any purpose they might think best.¹⁴ Reported the *Cornwall Chronicle*:

Some time before the hour named, seven o'clock, the streets of Perth were alive with the inhabitants, and visitors from the neighbourhood, and some from a distance, indicating that something unusual

Dallimore, *Spurgeon* (Moody, Chicago, 1984, p. 105).

¹⁰ *Launceston Examiner* (hereafter LEx) 10 July 1869, p4c1.

¹¹ LEx 15 July 1869, supplement p2c3.

¹² Perth Chapel Minutes.

¹³ It seems fitting that the person who would travel half-way around the world to secure Grant's services should be present on such an occasion. See LEx 17 March 1870, p3c1.

¹⁴ LEx 7 October 1869, p2c6 and p3c1.

was going to take place; and a great many opinions were advanced suggestive of what this strange lecture would be like, and soon as the Chapel door was opened the crowd began to pour into the gallery and the body of the chapel. William Gibson presided at the gathering ... and he congratulated 'the audience on being the first to hear this lecture in the Australian colonies'.

After giving something of the lecture's content, the journalist continued:

The lecture surpassed anything I ever heard in appropriateness and simplicity, and it had the happy effect of combining the highest instruction with interest and liveliness, as the illustrations were all familiar to those who use candles, and when the Rev lecturer told us the lessons we were wonder-struck that we did not notice them before. The drift of the lecture was decidedly to show what professing Christians should be, and what they should not be; and, at the same time, a lesson to every man, woman, and child in every conceivable condition of life.

He concluded, 'We never had an entertainment in Perth that gave such universal satisfaction as this before...'¹⁵ Within a month of this recital, Grant delivered the same two-hour lecture at the Launceston Mechanics' Institute, on 25 September.¹⁶ During his two-year stay at Perth, he delivered the same lecture twice more at the Launceston Mechanics' Institute, twice at the Assembly Rooms in Longford and once at the Patterson Street Wesleyan school room in Launceston.

Grant was an evangelical Protestant in a general sense. During his few years

at Perth he was sought as a preacher for many Sunday school or church anniversary services and foreign mission meetings, preaching at the York Street Baptist chapel,¹⁷ the Primitive Methodist Churches, the Chalmers Free Church, the Presbyterian Church, the Wesleyan Methodist Churches and even once at the Anglican Church. During his Launceston years, the Launceston *Examiner* reported on at least twenty-five of Grant's meetings at non-Baptist places. In keeping with all Protestant ministers, he was highly supportive of the British and Foreign Bible Society. His frequent engagements with the Primitive and Wesleyan Methodists¹⁸ while serving in Baptist churches in Australia, suggests that while he was christened an Anglican, he had had Methodist connections.¹⁹ At the Longford Primitive Methodist Church he took as his chosen subject, 'the Primitive Methodist Church', and as this was the first sermon he preached at a Primitive or Wesleyan Methodist Church in the new colony, he could hardly have been speaking from his familiarity with the denominations in Tasmania, so it most likely have come from his associations in the home country.²⁰

¹⁷ LEx 1 March 1870, p3c1 and 25 April 1871, p2c6.

¹⁸ Primitive Methodism was born in Staffordshire in 1811 with the amalgamation of Hugh Bourne's Camp Meeting Methodists and William Clowes' 'Clowesites'.

¹⁹ January to March 1871 preaching at Methodist services or functions, at the Wesleyan Sabbath School Butleigh Hill, Green Rise on 8 January, see LEx 5 January 1871, p1c6; for the Wesleyan Foreign Missions on 12 February, see LEx 9 February 1871, p4c1; for Wesleyan Foreign Missions at Longford 27 February, see LEx 25 February 1871, p7c2; at the Primitive Methodist Church Longford on 5 March 1871, see LEx 4 March 1871, p5c1; at the Wesleyan Church Patterson Street on 12 March 1871, see LEx 11 March 1871, p5c2.

²⁰ LEx 25 September 1869, p6c1.

¹⁵ *Cornwall Chronicle*, 23 January 1869, p3c6.

¹⁶ LEx 5 October 1869, p5c1.

He made annual visits to the York Street Baptist chapel for Sunday school celebrations, but had no contact with the Hobart Town Baptist chapel in Harrington Street which was also Strict and Particular by nature. There were at this time few Baptists for him to strengthen and he was not inclined to work with the Strict and Particular York Street chapel as it did not appeal to his broader evangelical Protestant sympathies. So in regard to Baptists, he virtually limited himself to those connected with the Perth chapel and its outreach.

At the invitation of Mrs Noakes, the owner of the Longford Assembly Rooms, Grant commenced 'unsectarian worship'²¹ on Sunday afternoons in her establishment soon after his arrival in the colony. After his first lecture in this establishment on 'The World Turned Upside Down', which was 'tolerably well attended', she offered him the room free of charge for regular afternoon services. His acceptance of the offer came with the backing and support of William Gibson Senior. For the first eight months Gibson transported him there on Sundays.²² After a year of ministrations in the establishment, an evening presentation was given to Grant. Present was the Rev S Ironside, Longford's Primitive Methodist minister, who spoke of his approval of Grant's well-supported Sunday afternoons. Ironside did not think that 'Mr. Grant's meetings in the afternoons would take one from either the Wesleyan or Primitive congregations'. It was acknowledged that he had come across as a truly catholic and very charitable Christian character, who would always give the right hand of fellowship to those who believe in one

common salvation.²³ Unbeknown to Ironside and other non-Baptist clergy in Longford, Grant's ministrations in Longford, which were continued by other Baptists who followed him at the Perth chapel, set the ground work for the beginnings of a permanent and decidedly Baptist work in Longford commencing in early 1880. Grant's lectures continued there until his removal to Ballarat in 1871.²⁴

Such was his appeal that during his first annual leave in Tasmania he spent a month in Melbourne lecturing.²⁵ The admission price to his many public lectures varied between six pence and one shilling with the proceeds going to good causes as well as a means of generating extra income. When word leaked out of his pending removal from the colony to Ballarat, two large nearly identical notices were posted in the Launceston *Examiner* decrying such a move.²⁶

Something of his following in Launceston can be gauged by three reports from the Launceston *Examiner* in late 1870. It was reported that on Sunday 23 October 1870, in the large hall of the Mechanics' Institute, Grant preached 'to probably the largest congregation that ever assembled in the hall, the aisles and every available space being densely crowded and numbers were unable to obtain admission.'²⁷ Within a couple of weeks of that engagement, Grant was again preaching in the Launceston Wesleyan Sunday School in the Patterson Street Church, where for 'twenty minutes previous to the time for commencing the evening service the extensive

²¹ LEx 5 January 1870, p5c2-3.

²² Grant was then given a horse as a gift by one of the congregation. Later he was supplied with a vehicle.

²³ LEx 5 January 1870, p5c2-3.

²⁴ See Chapter Six.

²⁵ Shipping News Departures - LEx 23 June 1870, p2c1; Shipping News Arrivals - LEx 28 July 1870, p2c1 and 23 June - 27 July 1870, visits to Melbourne for preaching engagements.

²⁶ LEx 11 May 1871, p3c6.

²⁷ LEx 25 October 1870, p2c6.

accommodation of the church was taxed to the utmost, forms being placed in the aisles and many persons standing in the porch.²⁸ At the twenty-second anniversary of Chalmers Free Church Sabbath school in Frederick Street, Launceston, on Sunday 27 November 1870 Grant again was the evening speaker. The Launceston *Examiner* reported that Grant preached there to a densely crowded church.

Grant was farewelled from the Perth chapel on 23 August 1871.²⁹ He was moving on to Dawson Street Baptist Church, Ballarat. It was said that 'there was a strong attachment existing between him and his church at Perth'.³⁰ Even so, it is a mystery as to why, on his many return visits to Launceston and nearby towns during his annual holidays from Ballarat, when he continued to preach in their Primitive Methodist and Wesleyan Methodist churches and in the Longford Assembly Rooms, he never returned again to preach at the Perth Baptist chapel.³¹

Dawson Street Baptist, Ballarat, and Beyond

Grant began at the imposing Dawson Street Baptist Tabernacle in Ballarat on 10 September 1871 and soon drew

very large congregations.³² At his special weekly services in the Ballarat Theatre Royal after the Sunday evening church services, he delivered many of his popular sermons and the services attracted congregations of 600 to 1,000.³³

Grant was obviously challenged by the biblical injunctions and contemporary social conventions of a woman's place. For him a woman speaker such as female evangelist Emilia Louise Baeyertz in a Baptist gathering was indeed something of an anathema and he expressed this in July 1872 at his second lecture on 'Illuminated Teachings' at the Mechanics' Institute in Ballarat. Reported the *Ballarat Star*:

He evoked much fun out of the rush light [candle stick holder] simile, though it was scarcely complimentary to the gentler sex. He did not believe in petticoats in the pulpit, and a rush light always reminded him of a lady preacher. In order to mark his peculiar repugnance to this style of oratory he was obliged to adopt an outside simile, namely that of Dr Johnson, who compared a female preacher to a dog standing on his hind legs.³⁴

Within less than a decade Ballarat would be taken by Mrs Baeyertz. By 1878 she was gaining a name for herself as one of the two notable women on the colonial revival circuit

²⁸ LEx 8 November 1870, p5c4.

²⁹ The Rev C Cater, late town missionary of Launceston, succeeded Grant as pastor of Perth Baptist Church. See *Ballarat Star*, 27 October 1871, p2c3.

³⁰ LEx 6 July 1871, p2c6.

³¹ Grant took holidays from Ballarat in Tasmania from 29 October to 21 November 1872, 25 December 1873 to 15 January 1874 and 23 December 1874 to early March 1875. Another to follow Grant at Perth was the Rev Thomas Crabtree who had been pastor of the Montague Street Blackburn Baptist Church, UK. After a year at Perth Crabtree took leave and returned to England where he suddenly died on 25 August 1873, see LEx 30 October 1873, p2c6. Gibson was faced again with the need of a regular preacher.

³² Shipping News Outwards, LEx 5 September 1871, p2c1.

³³ Grant's addresses at the Theatre Royal Ballarat were *The Gospel according to Beelzebub* on 18 August 1872, *The World Turned Upside Down* on 1 September 1872, *Love's Labour Lost* on 8 September 1872, *Birds Of A Feather Flock Together* on 29 September 1872, *The Half-baked Cake* on 6 October 1872, *As You Like It* on 7 October 1872, *The Spendthrift* on 20 October 1872, *The New Governor* on 1 June 1873, *Profit and Loss* on 8 June 1873, *Only a Look* on 15 June 1873 and *Come* on 22 June 1873.

³⁴ *Ballarat Star*, 3 July 1872, p3c5.

(the other was Mrs Margaret Hampson of Liverpool) and Mrs Baeyertz's reputation was being made in Ballarat as well as the other gold-mining centre, Sandhurst. Crowds were thronging to hear her simple homely anecdotal style of preaching. Invited to South Australia in 1880 by the Baptists, Mrs Baeyertz conducted missions in virtually every Baptist church in the colony over the next two years. From there she conducted successful evangelistic campaigns in Victoria and Brisbane and in 1889 she journeyed to New Zealand. Soon she shifted her attention to North America where she preached to large gatherings. Missions followed throughout Britain in 1892 where her work gained wide acceptance among evangelicals of different denominations. She ran a mission in 1905 in the Hobart Baptist Church.³⁵

Something of Grant's pastoral signature was publicly evident in 1874 in his dealing with a young female church member, Miss Alice Louisa Farr, a rising young vocalist and the leading singer in the choir of the Dawson Street Church.³⁶ In Grant's

³⁵ Elisabeth Wilson, 'Totally devoid of sensationalism': Mrs Baeyertz, the 'Jewish lady evangelist from Melbourne', THRA Papers and Proceedings, vol. 49, no.3, September 2002, pp.153-166; Shurlee Swain, "In These Days of Female Evangelists and Hallelujah Lasses": Women Preachers and the Redefinition of Gender Roles in the Churches in Late Nineteenth-Century Australia', *The Journal of Religious History* vol. 26 no.1, February 2002, pp. 65-77.

³⁶ On Christmas Day 1871 Alice Farr was one of the principal soloists with the Ballarat Harmonic Society in their performance of Samson in the Alfred Hall. The Courier wrote: 'Miss Farr, who has been previously known in Ballarat as a promising lady amateur, made her first appearance as prima donna, and, we must say, went through the trying ordeal not only to the satisfaction of the audience, but with very great credit to herself and Mr Turner.' From correspondence with Elizabeth Trudgeon of the Ballarat Historical Society.

eyes Farr was straying from the 'straight and narrow path' by singing on the stage at the Mechanics' Institute in what Grant considered were far from respectable performances. The *Ballarat Star* closely followed the course of events carrying the correspondence between Grant and Farr and her supporters, with letters to the Editor supporting each camp being chronicled over the course of two months.

It began with what was at first called 'a polite note' from Grant, who noticed her name advertised in connection with the concert in the Institute. In his first 'private' letter to her in the *Ballarat Star* he compared the advertisement in which she was featured to some of the advertisements disseminated by the common music-halls of Melbourne. He also spoke of his shame that a member of his church would so appear in public and wondered what harm she would be doing to her pupils in her Sunday school class. He called on her to change her ways or resign from the church.³⁷

In her response, printed in the *Ballarat Star*, Farr replied saying that his offending letter was an insult and that her parents intended to take legal proceedings against him.³⁸ Some weeks later the matter concluded with a letter from her father, Thomas Farr, asking that the correspondence be closed as he and his family had ceased attending Grant's church.³⁹

Six months later, on 5 January 1875, after a three and a half years pastorate, Grant resigned, 'giving as his reasons the apparent want of success attending his labours, and the difficulty of raising sufficient money to pay current expenses', so said a history of the church written many

³⁷ *Ballarat Star*, 23 May 1874.

³⁸ *Ballarat Star*, 4 July 1874.

³⁹ *Ballarat Star*, 29 July 1874, p3c2.

years later. The history continued, 'The latter days of his ministry were, unfortunately, clouded. There were defects in his character. Although he was able to hold very large congregations, it was considered that if his fine elocutionary and mental gifts had been sustained by more strength of character, he might have taken his place in the front rank of Australian preachers.'⁴⁰ On 21 February 1875 he preached farewell sermons.

The preacher as public lecturer came to the fore in Australia at this time with the advent of Baptist, the Rev Charles Clark. In September 1871 Grant's church in Ballarat hosted at the town's Alfred Hall the visit of this leading 'preacher as public speaker and lecturer' of the day, on his second visit to Ballarat. Grant was moderator for the evening at which Clark preached.⁴¹ At the time Clark was the minister of the Albert Street Baptist Church in Melbourne. Clark would easily eclipse anything that Grant had sought to achieve in the area of public speaking. In early May 1870 Clark turned his Albert Street Baptist Church into a theatre with 'his dramatic and lifelike sketch of the immortal but inebriated Pickwick'. His two lectures on *Christmas Carols* and *Charles Dickens* raised £800 on behalf of his church and various charities. It was noted that while other preachers had transformed a theatre into a church, Clark had transformed a church into a theatre!⁴² He began his international tours in 1875 as an elocutionist on works of Charles Dickens, Oliver Goldsmith and others. The previous year he had resigned from the Albert Street Church. He visited Launceston and Hobart in February 1876. As early as 1867, huge crowds flocked to hear him. In January

1869 he preached his last sermon in England at Spurgeon's Tabernacle. Clark is credited with introducing a paying lecture platform in the Australian colonies.⁴³

A time in New South Wales, at the Bathurst Baptist Church, followed an interim ministry at the George Street Baptist Church, Fitzroy. Grant began at Bathurst on 27 July 1875. At his official welcome on 14 September 1875, he said that he considered there was room for the Baptists even in Bathurst and gave his credentials as a Baptist, 'Let other denominations do their best — and he wished them all God speed in their work — but there was one thing they could not do, and that was lead the people into the water.'⁴⁴ After two years in Bathurst, the Baptist Union of New South Wales held its annual meetings at his church and Grant had the high honour of being elected their President.⁴⁵ But he never served out his term in office, resigning after some months. He also resigned as Pastor of the church.

After the pastorate in NSW, he then accepted a call to Hobart in 1878 to minister at the Harrington Street Strict and Particular Baptist chapel but it was badly situated for a man whose drinking habit was now becoming obvious to all. The manse was situated next to the chapel itself, on the corner of Harrington and Goulburn Streets. Goulburn Street in those days had twenty-six hotels. Grant arrived in Hobart on 22 March. His preaching at the Baptist chapel was much to the

⁴⁰ *A History of Ballarat Baptist Church*, leaflet housed in the Victorian Baptist Union archives.

⁴¹ *Ballarat Star*, 13 September 1871, p2c4.

⁴² LEx 17 May 1870, p3c2.

⁴³ Judith Walker, 'Clark, Charles (1838-1903)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 3, 1788-1850, pp. 402-403; Ken R Manley, *From Woolloomooloo to 'Eternity': A History of Australian Baptists* (Milton Keynes, Paternoster, 2006), vol. 1, pp. 76ff citing B Hoare, *Looking Back Gaily* (Melbourne, 1927), pp. 233-34.

⁴⁴ *Bathurst Times*, 18 September 1875, p2c7.

⁴⁵ *Bathurst Times*, 12 September 1877, p3c4.

pleasure of the *Tasmanian Tribune* which wrote:

The Rev gentleman, during his stay here, bids fair to secure a large share of that popularity which always attends the efforts of a sound preacher and his power of description and exposition is of no mean order, and an excellence of delivery added to these great essentials, renders his discourses most interesting and instructive, and accordingly large gatherings may be expected at his meetings.⁴⁶

The newspaper correspondent, attending the following Thursday evening, further reported:

The address of the preacher, which was one that for elegance of language, justness of thought, and sound reasoning, is not often heard by Church goers, who in the majority of cases have their religious feelings indulged and satisfied at the expense of their reasoning faculties being offended, and their literary tastes 'put to pain'.⁴⁷

Grant's arrival coincided with the visit of Spurgeon's son, Thomas. The year before Thomas had been again advised to travel to a warm climate for his health.⁴⁸ With the name of Spurgeon being spoken about, Grant decided to preach again the great sermon, 'Sermons in Candles'. The discourse took place at the chapel on a Tuesday evening and Templar's Hall on the following day.⁴⁹ Such was the appeal of the youthful son of Spurgeon and Grant that the members of the chapel decided to celebrate the thirty-eighth anniversary of the church at the Town Hall on 4 May. In the evening the

spacious hall was filled to overflowing. Following his earlier pattern at Ballarat, Grant decided to hire the Town Hall for himself for the purpose of delivering a series of Sunday afternoon lectures. The lectures were 'planned to be unsectarian in character but for a sectarian object'. The purpose was to increase the congregation of the Baptist chapel, Harrington Street.⁵⁰

And while the *Tasmanian Tribune* continued with its praise of the two men, another columnist, this time of the *Tasmanian Evening Herald* had other things to say:

Several propositions as to what amusement shall be provided the youthful generation on Sundays are being debated. One earnest divine thinks that the morals of the community will be improved by the delivery of a series of Sunday afternoon lectures, a second is of the opinion that street preaching will do, but I hold different views from either, I am with the committee of the public library who intend opening that institution on the afternoon of the Sabbath days, and I believe the innovation will be a success and a benefit to many in spite of the howl that some are beginning to make. Sunday evening meetings are very well in their way, but only old people should attend. They are dangerous for ardent young pietists, as indeed are most gatherings of the kind.⁵¹

The outstanding performance of these two men gave great hope of a bright future for the Baptists of Hobart.

⁴⁶ *Tasmanian Tribune*, 25 March 1878, p2c7.

⁴⁷ *Tasmanian Tribune*, 28 March 1878, p2c7.

⁴⁸ *Christian Witness*, April 1878.

⁴⁹ *Tasmanian Tribune*, 19 April 1878, p3c4.

⁵⁰ *Mercury*, 11 May 1878 summary, p1c4 and 20 May 1878, p2c7; *Tasmanian Tribune*, 20 May 1878, p2c5.

⁵¹ *Tasmanian Evening Herald*, 6 June 1878, p3c2.

Spurgeon's final meeting with the church had been its anniversary at the chapel late in May with the school room packed with over 300 people. Later that year Grant began another series of Town Hall meetings on the Sunday afternoons. The *Tasmanian Tribune* was still able to add its testimony to the many high opinions of his oratorical ability and entertaining capacity. The lectures included *England, Home and Beauty*, *The Prodigal Son* and *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*.⁵²

Although outwardly things looked well for the Baptists and their minister, internally there was much concern. The first area was that of finance. They had taken out loans to raise the funds to bring Grant from NSW and the loans had to be repaid. The returns were not as had been desired. Then there were the rentals of the Town Hall. To cut their losses the church wrote through their solicitors, to the directors of the Tasmanian Steam Navigation Company and requested a reduction in the passage money for bringing Grant and his family from Sydney.⁵³ Secondly, Grant's behaviour had not been in keeping with that expected of a man of the cloth. On 13 January 1879, before a church meeting, Grant agreed to the resolution concerning himself and expressed his willingness to sign the following statement:

I hereby agree to totally abstain from all intoxicating liquids, and to cease to visit Public Houses for any purpose and to discontinue all practices which are inconsistent with Christianity under penalty of resigning my connection with the church upon breach of the afore

said obligation being proved to the satisfaction of the Committee.⁵⁴

In just over a month Grant was directed to preach farewell services prior to his leaving the colony. At the services he explained the reasons which had induced him to sever the pastoral tie, embracing unfounded rumours in respect of himself. These included the existence of a difference of opinion between the church and himself on doctrinal matters. He found by reference to the Trust Deed that

⁵⁴ Church Minutes 13 January 1879. In the nineteenth century temperance was a crucial test of progress towards a respectable society. By the middle of the nineteenth century Baptists such as the Rev Kerr Johnston of Hobart Town, being a supporter of the Total Abstinence Society, spoke strongly against and petitioned Parliament regarding the liquor trade (see *Mercury*, 8 August 1855, p2). In the 1880s Tasmania, when the Australian Protestant churches had come into their own, the rising Temperance Movement had found its way to the youth in the churches through its Blue Ribbon Societies and Temperance Halls were a feature of most population centres. For a minister of religion for whom the work of redeeming souls and redeeming drunkards should go hand in hand, to be openly imbibing in public houses was seen as a sin. Grant's behavior suggests that he was at the second stage of 'alcoholism' as seen in his denial of the problem. In the first stage of alcoholism, drinking is no longer social but becomes a means of emotional escape from problems, inhibitions, anxiety, and in many instances, from the realities of life. In the second stage the person drinks because of dependence on alcohol, rather than because of emotional and psychological stress and anxiety relief. During this stage, loss of control does not yet happen on a regular basis; it is, however, gradually observed by others such as neighbours, co-workers, relatives, friends, and family members. Also at this stage of the disease, the problem drinker may begin to feel shame and to worry about his or drinking. Sadly, to help quiet the internal conflicts they now experience, problem drinkers during this stage of the disease resort to denial of their drinking problem. One might infer that Grant was subject to mood swings which he found hard to handle and perhaps some fellow Baptists did too.

⁵² *Tasmanian Tribune*, 4 November 1878, p2c5.

⁵³ Church Minutes 12 September 1878.

their minister was required to preach Calvinistic doctrines which he could not subscribe to, as his views were 'in harmony with broad and liberal thought'. Closed communion was also a provision of the Trust Deed, to which he could not assent. Grant was being dishonest. While he was Chairman of the NSW Baptist Union, he said, 'Let us most religiously avoid that clannishness which some evince, and which is only one remove from bigotry of the worst sort'. Chavura says that this quote from the New South Wales Baptist Association Minute Book of 1867-78 was prefaced by sentiments that rejected 'the introspection and the sect hood of the Particulars'.⁵⁵

After raising these matters which he was aware of before he accepted the call, he continued by saying that as far as baptism was concerned, he would always remain an adherent, to immersion. Although he had 'hoped his stay would be life-long' in Hobart Town,⁵⁶ it was his intention to retire from the ministry, at least for some time.⁵⁷ The lessons learned had been hard. In 1881 in seeking a new man, the church wrote:

Past circumstances have painfully shown us not to lay hands suddenly on any man, so that we do not wish again to engage a minister unless he be of 'good report' known to us or others that we can confide in.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ M Chavura, 'A History of Calvinism in the Baptist Churches of New South Wales, 1831-1914', PhD thesis, Macquarie University, 1994, ch. 3, footnote 57. No date is given to the Minute Book entry.

⁵⁶ *Victorian Freeman* 1878, p. 107. It is the view of Peter Grant that there could be no doubt that the Baptist Church at Harrington Street was in financial trouble but he could not link its financial state to the lectures and sermons at the Town Hall.

⁵⁷ *Mercury*, 12 April 1879 summary, p1c5.

⁵⁸ Church Minutes 4 August 1881.

Seek they might, but they did not have the means to call another man, the coffers were more than empty. If any preacher had come it would have been at his own expense and he would have had to support himself financially.⁵⁹ In response to an offer from one Baptist minister to supply for a season or continuously, the church, replied:

As a church we are sadly feeling the disastrous effect of having had some very unsuitable ministers, Mr. Grant having left us numerically and financially in a worse position than when he arrived here. In fact the many pretenders to the pastoral office of different denominations who 'go out of themselves' not being called to the important office by the Holy Spirit, thereby weakening and dispersing the flock, instead of strengthening and building up Zion, drive many to the Plymouth Brethren or elsewhere.⁶⁰

Family life had not been easy for Grant and his wife Caroline. In 1873, while in Ballarat and connected with the Dawson Street Baptist Church, their second daughter of fourteen months died. Grant did not preach for some time following their loss. A third son was born on 4 July 1875 and another son, Frank Alan, in early 1878. Frank Alan too succumbed, dying in Bathurst in 1881 aged three. Grant and Caroline separated at the end of his time in Hobart or very soon after they returned to the mainland. Grant made his way to New Zealand and never saw his family again. At the time of his separation, the children were aged fifteen, thirteen and five.⁶¹ The shame of it all must have been hard to bear. If his colleagues from Spurgeon's College knew of his

⁵⁹ Church Minutes 26 January 1880 and 4 August 1881.

⁶⁰ Church Minutes 27 August 1879, citing letter to Rev Whitney dated 30 August 1879.

⁶¹ Information supplied by Peter Grant. The second daughter died on 18 September 1873.

drinking problem, the shame would have been even greater. Fellow Spurgeon's man, the Rev Harry Wood, at a Temperance Demonstration in 1895 spoke of a minister who some time earlier was delivering lectures in Hobart, 'and the last he heard of him was that he was a besotted drunkard'.⁶²

The year before Frank Alan's death, Grant had arrived in Milton to become the editor of the *Bruce Herald*. He continued to excel as a public speaker on behalf of religious causes but was rather stuck in a groove when he delivered once again Spurgeon's 'Sermons in Candles'.⁶³ During his time as Editor, *The Bruce Herald* carried many 'Letters to the Editor' dealing with religious questions.⁶⁴

Grant and Caroline did not divorce and he kept in contact with her. It is unlikely that he returned to Australia, at any time after arriving in Milton.⁶⁵ He was editor of the *Bruce Herald* from shortly after his arrival in New Zealand until shortly before his death, on 29 June 1892.

The Content and Style of Grant's Lectures and Sermons

Preachers in nineteenth century England were either Biblical expositors, teachers of doctrine, apologists, ethicists or polemicists. Grant was not one for teaching

Christian doctrine although he always sought to commend the Gospel and to strengthen religious affections. This is seen in his sermon, 'Love's Labour Lost'.⁶⁶ For Grant Christ's love is shown by his great sacrifice, which is completely thrown away on those who fail to appreciate it. At the conclusion of this address he called for a response to the Gospel. Two similar addresses were 'Only a Look'⁶⁷ and 'COME'.⁶⁸

In Tasmania Grant gave a number of recitals of 'Sermons in Candles'. During his six-month interim pastorate at the George Street Baptist Church, Fitzroy, in 1874, he delivered it four times. During the three year pastorate at Bathurst he delivered it five more times. In his final pastorate in Hobart in the late 1870s, he delivered it twice.⁶⁹ This sermon, his favourite, was an object lesson, as were a number of others. In it he made use of everyday items to illustrate Biblical and spiritual

⁶⁶ *Love's Labour Lost* was delivered at the Assembly Rooms Longford on 8 September 1872.

⁶⁷ *Ballarat Star*, 14 June 1873, p2c5.

⁶⁸ *Ballarat Star*, 21 June 1873, p2c7.

⁶⁹ For lectures in Baptist churches as fund raisers see *Day Dawn and Baptist Church Messenger* (1900-1917) (hereafter Day Dawn) (in the Baptist holdings of the archives of the University of Tasmania) Deloraine church news of June and August 1902 and Devonport church news of August 1905. What follows is the location and dates for these lectures: at Perth chapel on evening of 19 August 1869; at the Launceston Mechanics' Institute, see *Cornwall Chronicle*, 29 September 1869 p2c3; at the Assembly Rooms Longford on 28 September 1869 and 15 June 1870; at Launceston Mechanics' Hall on 5 October 1869 and 13 June 1870; at Launceston Wesleyan school room, Patterson-street, on 19 August 1870; at George Street Baptist Church Fitzroy on 10 April 1875, 20 April 1875 and 6 July 1875; at the Baptist Church at St Kilda on 14 July 1875; at the School of Arts Bathurst on 27 July 1875 and 10 August 1875; at the Baptist Church, Keppel Street, Bathurst, on 27 August 1877; at the Hobart Particular Baptist chapel see *Tasmanian Tribune* 19 April 1878. I am indebted to Peter Grant for his research of the *Bathurst Times*.

⁶² *North West Post*, 11 July 1895, p4c1. SB Pitt recalling the life of William Clark, begins by mentioning his predecessor at Ballarat, Grant, and wrote: 'His [Grant's] pastorate [at Ballarat] was of short duration, and of him and his doings, and also his terrible end, I shall say nothing.' See *Australian Baptist*, 29 February 1916, p. 10.

⁶³ NZ *Tuapeka Times*, 21 December 1889, p3. The lecture began at 8pm and concluded at 10pm.

⁶⁴ *Bruce Herald*, 1 July 1892. I am indebted to Peter Grant for his research of the *Bruce Herald*.

⁶⁵ Information supplied by Peter Grant in 2008.

truths in an interesting and meaningful way. He began with seven lighted candles of different lengths to illustrate as many periods in life — from a child of ten years to a man of four score years. Then he displayed a number of unlighted candles to represent professors of religion, suggesting that they were useless in that they gave no light.

Then candles were placed on a variety of candle sticks to suggest that some people are never satisfied with their position in life. They also represented people who move from one Christian denomination to another. He brought out a 'dark lantern', that is a lantern whose light can be blocked by a sliding panel, as an illustration of people who possessed a Bible but in their use of it, it gains them no light. He also paraded a sealed lamp with a lighted candle within which represented the true Christian since their light too could not be put out. The propagation of Christianity was illustrated by lighting one candle from another. Finally a group of lighted candles of different colours, the candelabra, was displayed and this claimed Grant was a faint emblem of the different branches of the one Christian Church. Yet Grant concluded that all these were but darkness compared to the Light of the world, Christ himself.

During his time in Ballarat he re-wrote the 'Sermons in Candles' lecture to such an extent that 'he could almost claim it as his own'. He called it *Illuminated Teachings*.⁷⁰ It was moralistic and evangelical and by it he illustrated both the vices and virtues of men, with especial reference being made to members of Christian churches.

⁷⁰ *Ballarat Star*, 2 July 1872, p2c5; at the Mechanics' Institute Ballarat on 1 and 2 July 1872; at the Dawson Street Baptist Church on 18 May 1873. I am indebted to Peter Grant for his research of the *Ballarat Star*.

In his address, *As You Like It*,⁷¹ he made use of appropriate illustrations connected to the various trades and callings such as that of the printer, the shoemaker and the publican which he combined with scriptural truths.

One of his favourite lectures, again, this time one of his own, was the nostalgic, *England, Home, and Beauty*, which spoke of England's 'glorious' line of her kings and queens, her commerce, her navy and army. He also touched on Scotland and Ireland. He dealt with the domestic character of the people of England and the manner in which they kept Christmas with 'its beef and puddings, its festivities, its holly and mistletoe'. He compared the Christmas in England with Christmas in Australia, 'by which comparison the Australian Christmas looked very small'. It also reviewed the history of British commerce and wealth and the military and naval glories of Britain. Further the general characteristics of Englishmen and Frenchmen were compared. Complimentary remarks were made on Scotland and Ireland, on the Prince of Wales, on language, and on the general moral character of Englishmen wherever situated. He also touched on the beauty of an English winter. This lecture had sentimental appeal. He delivered it during each of his pastorates, a total of eleven times.⁷²

⁷¹ Grant delivered *As You Like It* on 7 October 1872.

⁷² What follows is the location and dates for these lectures: at Launceston Mechanics' Hall on 1 August 1871; at the Assembly rooms, Longford, on 15 August 1871; at the Temperance Hall Perth on 22 August 1871; at the Launceston Mechanics' Institute Hall on 1 August 1871, on 1 September 1871 and in March 1872; at the Dawson Street Baptist Church on 25 March 1872; at the Mechanics' Institute Ballarat on 27 February 1872; at the School of Arts Bathurst on 19 October 1875 and 29 August 1876; for Hobart, see *Tasmanian Tribune*, 4 November 1878 p2c5.

Grant was interested in the social implications of the Christian message. In 1874 in Ballarat he strongly denounced the free educational system as it was presently being conducted.⁷³ He also regretted that the State had prevented religious teaching in the schools. On another occasion he informed his audience that he was a pronounced free trader and a federationist. In October 1872 in Tasmania he referred:

to the sad state of things in Tasmania — the people making only a bare pittance by the sweat of their brows, and a portion of that had to be given to the Government to support a parcel of flunkies in Hobart Town. Tasmanian capitalists did not know how to use money. Her abundant resources were not developed till Victorian capital was brought over. Even the late discoveries of iron were being worked by Victorians. He believed one company was at work, and he knew another company was in course of formation in Victoria. Tasmanians were too fond of locking up their thousands in the banks, or of investing in other colonies.⁷⁴

But generally he followed his mentor, Spurgeon, by keeping politics out of the pulpit.⁷⁵ That he was interested in the social implications of the Christian message was seen in the self-help sermon, *On Money*. This popular lecture spoke on how to increase one's funds or just to retain what one had already, how to put one's money to good use in the cause of religion. He

⁷³ *Ballarat Star*, 11 May 1874 p2c5.

⁷⁴ LEx 31 October 1872, p2c4/5, delivered at the Launceston Mechanics' Institute 29 October 1872.

⁷⁵ Horton Davies, *Worship and Theology in Britain: Volume 4, From Newman to Martineau, 1859–1900* (New Jersey; Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1965), p. 345.

dealt with money markets, bartering, the history of money and coinage. He condemned the use of 'lucky boxes'. On the matter of the all pervading love of money, he referred to churches:

When a church required a new pastor, his real Christian character was not all that was looked to sometimes. It was very frequent that a popular man was preferred, a man that could draw large congregations and money out of their pockets in order to get the church out of debt, and impress their neighbours with a sense of their importance. Sometimes, too, ministers were eager after money.

His lecture, *A New Way to Pay off Old Debts*,⁷⁶ was also in this frame of mind.

Grant made good use of quotations in his sermons and lectures, such as in *Dum Spiro Spero* (whilst I Breathe, I hope) delivered in 1878. A 'masterly amplification of an Irish poet's well known stanzas', wrote a newspaper journalist. It commenced:

The world is all a fleeting show,
For man's illusion given;
The smiles of joy, the tears of woe,
Deceitful shine, deceitful flow -
There is nothing true but, Heaven!
He showed that hope was the truest
that had its foundation on the
Gospel
and was to be realised in Heaven,⁷⁷

In respect to his weekly sermons at the Theatre Royal in Ballarat, a columnist with the *Ballarat Times* wrote, 'Each successive Sunday his style grows more homely, and his strings of anecdotes more entertaining.'⁷⁸ In 1878 the *Tasmanian Tribune* commended him as being one of the

⁷⁶ *A New Way to Pay off Old Debts* was delivered in Hobart on 17 November and 1 December 1878.

⁷⁷ *Tasmanian Tribune*, 3 June 1878 p2c6.

⁷⁸ *Ballarat Times*, 29 September 1872.

most finished orators who ever visited Tasmania, identifying him as an excellent extempore speaker.⁷⁹

While his preaching was rarely a philosophical defence of the Christian Faith, neither was it generally expository,⁸⁰ but it implied that Christian faith had relevance and he was happy to awaken that faith. On the other hand his mentor, while he too practised plain gospel preaching, placed 'solid planks of biblical doctrine shaped to enable a firm grip from even the weakest in the faith'. Spurgeon's method was to select a text which summarized a major doctrine or biblical topic and view it from various directions.⁸¹ Grant took an apologetic approach in his lecture, *The Gospel according to Beelzebub*. In this address in the Hobart Town Hall on a Sunday evening in 1878, he attacked the philosophy of Auguste Comte which advocated that metaphysics and theology should be replaced by a hierarchy of sciences from mathematics at the base to sociology at the top. In this sermon he also dealt with other matters which were attacking the Christian faith: the triple onslaught from the natural, biological and social sciences, Charles Lyell, Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer respectively.⁸²

His sermons were at times pastoral and directed at young families. *Larrikinism its Evils and its Cure* was one of these. A cure for larrikinism, he proposed, was improved dwelling houses, a multiplication of educational appliances, a more general exercise of

parental control and greater exertions on the part of the Christian Churches. In another such message he urged parents not only to train their children in a moral sense but most earnestly to bring their children to Christ.⁸³ In Ballarat in 1873 he lectured on Sir George Ferguson Bowen, the new Governor of Victoria.⁸⁴

In his lecture series there were the old standbys on the life and times of John Bunyan and Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. Both were accompanied by magic lantern views. Another of his standbys was *Oliver Cromwell*.

Forever content with ancient landmarks, he forever found solace in his mentor, Spurgeon. Grant stood firmly, but uncritically, in the Evangelical tradition. He held to only one avenue to God, through Christ, yet there was nothing of the cast-iron decrees of Calvinism in his messages. He never mentioned 'predestination' or total depravity. Grant is no Jonathan Edwards for he never speaks on 'everlasting punishment'. In Tasmania as early as 1872, he spoke on his mentor, *Spurgeon*,⁸⁵ and Spurgeon's death was reported on in his newspaper, the *Bruce Herald*, in 1892. The newspaper column read:

⁸³ LEx 3 February 1870, p3c5.

⁸⁴ *Ballarat Star*, 2 June 1873, p2c4.

⁸⁵ *On Money* - Launceston Mechanics' Institute 29 October 1872, Tamar Street Independent Church 29 November 1872, Hobart Town Hall 1878; *Oliver Cromwell* - Dawson Street Baptist Church 7 May 1872; *A new way to pay off old debts* - Hobart on 17 November and 1 December 1878, see advertisements in *Tasmanian Tribune*, 16 November 1878, p3c5 and 30 November 1878, p3c7; *Pilgrim's Progress* - Dawson Street Baptist Church 30 September 1873; *Bunyan* - Dawson Street Baptist Church 30 September 1873, Mechanics' Institute Ballarat 27 October, 1873; *The YMCA - Young Men's Christian Association of Bathurst* 24 September 1875; *Dum Spiro Spero* - Hobart, see *Tasmanian Tribune*, 3 June 1878, p2c6; *Spurgeon* - Town Hall Bathurst 8 August 1876.

⁷⁹ *Tasmanian Tribune*, 24 April 1878, p2c6-7.

⁸⁰ Although we have evidence of one expository sermon on Hosea 7:8 where Ephraim is called 'The Half-baked Cake'. See *Ballarat Star*, 5 October 1872, p2c7.

⁸¹ Craig Skinner, 'The Preaching of Charles Haddon Spurgeon' (*Baptist History and Heritage* Vol.19, pp.16-26).

⁸² *Hobart Town Mercury*, 20 May 1878 p2c7.

The news of the death of Charles Haddon Spurgeon has created profound sorrow in the hearts of hundreds of thousands in all parts of the earth. His words have echoed throughout the globe, his own voice, that wonderful bell-like organ, which without an effort on the speaker's part could be distinctly heard throughout his own Tabernacle, and even in that very much larger building, the Agricultural Hall, Islington, has been heard by enormous numbers, but how many have been brought into touch with him through the press, it would be impossible to conceive. That ringing voice is now silent, that facile pen laid aside and that gifted preacher is dead.⁸⁶

In keeping with his evangelical bent, he lectured on *The Revival in Scotland*⁸⁷ describing the great gatherings in various parts of Scotland caused by the appearance of Messrs Moody and Sankey from Chicago. He called for earnest prayer while at the same time deprecating any 'carnal excitement at such gatherings'.

Conclusion

Avowedly Protestant Alfred William Grant, graduate of Spurgeon's College in London, was the first College man to arrive in the colony of Tasmania. He was willing to preach and lecture in any of the Nonconformist pulpits in the colony. He was not a typical Pastors' College graduate, but this chapter shows he was a marked Spurgeon's man to the end of his life. Of his time he was a vigorous, powerful and attractive preacher as well as a public speaker of some note. The story of his time in Tasmania and elsewhere reveals how Spurgeon's students were readily heard in the Australian colonies and were greatly sought as Baptist

pastors. His biography also reveals that Baptist networking was strong between the colonies in the second half of the nineteenth century. Ballarat in Victoria, like his placement after Perth in Tasmania, was the church to which others from Australia's second colony would gravitate. His final call to the Strict and Particular Baptist chapel in Hobart Town shows how the demarcation between this stream of Baptists and the non-Calvinist Baptists had not yet hardened in Australia. The wide appeal of Grant's lectures on the subject of England also reveals the strong colonial nostalgia in the 1870s for the 'home country'. His ministry at Ballarat markedly demonstrates aspects of the place of women in church circles at the time. That he could openly question a woman's place in the preaching life of the church even when a female evangelist of some note could be so welcomed in his town, shows that there were varied viewpoints freely existing in the life of the wider church. Finally, Grant lived through an age when public lectures were extremely popular as entertainment. Even though what we know of what he said now might seem bland, often over-sentimental and sometimes monotonously repetitive and frequently self-important, we must not be led to believe that what was imparted, was inconsequential for it obviously meant something of vital worth to contemporary men and women. His life also shows conclusively that he, a graduate from the Spurgeon's College, had mastered that art.

⁸⁶ *Bruce Herald*, 5 February 1892.

⁸⁷ *Ballarat Star*, 13 June 1874, p3c7.

Chapter Five – Spurgeon’s Men and Tuberculosis

Introduction

This chapter will commence with an examination of the difficulties faced by itinerant Methodists and Congregationalists in Van Diemen’s Land with a view to comparing their struggles with that of the men from Spurgeon’s College in Tasmania. This comparison is designed to show that one would be mistaken to think that the Spurgeon’s men experienced little difficulty in their pioneering work in Tasmania considering the extravagant generosity of the Gibsons who in all cases made possible chapel-centred ministries. The study will examine the significant difficulties the Spurgeon’s men faced commencing with that of tuberculosis, a complaint of many of them. What follows is a number of case studies centred on the Spurgeon’s College men suffering this debilitating disease. The study of this historically important disease seeks to reveal something of the hopes and expectations of tuberculosis sufferers in those days. The chapter continues by considering other difficulties faced by the Spurgeon’s men such as pastoral failure, the difficulty in finding suitable meeting places and difficulties with finding adequate residential housing. The chapter then moves on to consider the stresses and trials of maintaining church structures. It is important to understanding that there were difficulties to face which the Gibsons’ money could not overcome.

The Itinerant Methodists, Congregationalists and Others

Nothing better typified the early Wesleyan and Primitive Methodist pioneering work, which had begun under the Primitive Methodists ‘connexion’ in Launceston in 1857,

than their arduous endeavours in opening up the north-western portion of Tasmania. During the 1860s and 1870s the Deloraine and Mersey Circuits covered the whole of the north-western part of the State where the roads were rough, sandy or muddy and the only means of transport by horse, horse-drawn buggies or foot. James Cunnings, a local preacher of the Primitive Methodists at Penguin Creek, walked the eleven miles of sandy track to conduct services at Emu Bay (Burnie).¹ Although Primitive Methodist, the Rev Joseph Langham, had first journeyed along the North West Coast in the middle of 1861 and reported on the potential of the district, his colleague, the Rev William Walton, is credited by Wallace Barns in opening up the Methodist work in the area. Walton commenced his ministry in England in 1859 and arrived in Tasmania four years later. In his journal of 1867 he wrote: ‘Travelling was both difficult and dangerous, but I pushed my way among the scattered settlers preaching the Gospel of Christ at Penguin, North Motion and Leven, and Emu Bay. Services officially commenced fairly regularly in the district about 1864.’² On 14 January 1866, a chapel was opened at Penguin on twenty acres of land which Walton had purchased. At the time it was the only church between Forth and Emu Bay. The first services were held in Emu Bay in 1868. By this time the slow growth of Emu Bay just exceeded 400

¹ M Stansall, *Tasmanian Methodism 1820–1975* (Launceston, Methodist Church of Australasia, 1975), p. 78.

² Wallace Barns, *An Abridgement of a History of the Primitive Methodist Connexion in Tasmania 1857–1902* (Tasmania District Committee of the Methodist Church, 1970), p. 13.

persons. There in May 1869, the first Primitive Methodist chapel was opened. It was built of donated timber and the cost was £50. The pulpit was a small home-made Blackwood table accompanied by a four-legged stool to sit upon. Writing of those days, Wesleyan Methodist, the Rev GT Heyward, who had visited Penguin on his pioneer journeys, wrote:

of gatherings of mere handfuls of the toilers of the bush, when the welcome Sabbath came around and axe and hoe were laid aside; of the long tramps through dripping scrub and all but fathomless mud and slush, to the little bark or paling chapel; of the weary miles the bushmen local preachers had battled through to come and preach; of the great comfort it was if only there happened to be a good 'tune-striker' in the little congregation; of what a grand thing it was if somebody could be found who would keep Sunday School for the children, and not let them grow up 'Sabbathless'; of the high day it was when the circuit minister came round, and they gathered together at the Lord's table.³

During the two years of his ministry in the Mersey Circuit, this minister rode several thousands of miles over unbridged and roadless country along the rugged coast-line from Torquay to Stanley. Not infrequently he swam on horseback over rivers and tide-flooded creeks.⁴

Methodism could claim three percent of the population in the 1840s and grew rapidly, to plateau between 15 and 18 percent from the 1890s to the

1950s. Its itinerant ministry and emphasis on evangelism were well fitted for these pioneer conditions. Their lay preachers, such as the aforementioned Cunningns, walked long distances in rough conditions and all weathers to isolated settlements and Sunday school halls in order to spread the gospel. Apart from spreading to the north-east in the 1870s, Methodism had already spread to the north-west in the 1850s. In the 1880s its influence reached the mining towns of the west coast. In time few places in the colony had never experienced a Methodist meeting of some sort.⁵

Thirty years earlier, in 1839, the first Baptist minister in Van Diemen's Land wrote, 'A missionary work is far more suited to our state of things.'⁶ The Baptist in question was the Rev Henry Dowling. He arrived in Hobart Town in 1834 and he made his way north to centre his work in Launceston. For his first five years in the colony no Baptist church was constituted in Launceston (although a Baptist church was constituted in Hobart Town) for he worked under the title of the Particular Baptist Society of Van Diemen's Land. He was not at this stage one for consolidation or church building but for outreach and expansion. Dowling, like the Methodists, was a circuit-rider ministering to outlying districts, thereby not limiting his duties to the two main centres of Launceston and Hobart Town. In England he had been engaged in very extensive itinerant labours but discovered in the colony a freedom which he had not known in the old country. On his quarterly journeys, which extended from Fingal to Westbury and from Launceston to Hobart Town, Dowling preached the gospel literally 'from house to house' and, at the discovery of illegitimate

³ CC Dugan, *A Century of Tasmanian Methodism, 1820-1920* (Hobart, Tasmanian Methodist Assembly, 1920), p. 72.

⁴ Barns, *An Abridgement of a History of the Primitive Methodist Connection in Tasmania 1857-1902*, p. 13.

⁵ Dugan, *A Century of Tasmanian Methodism, 1820-1920*, Chapter 5.

⁶ *Gospel Herald*, April 1839.

children, performed marriages. In time he preached over most of the colony, baptising believers in many of its streams and pools in the country.⁷ At the 1839 Annual Meeting of the Van Diemen's Land Home Missionary and Christian Instruction Society in Hobart he mentioned his ministerial colleagues who itinerated under the name of Congregationalists. He commended them for their work which paralleled that of the Methodists. He wrote:

Though they would have long and fatiguing journeys, though they must go many times over the saddle of the hill, and down every gully, and along the sidling road, in the prosecution of their missionary labours, they would find all through the length and breadth of the land, the comfort of a cheerful welcome by the hospitable settlers.⁸

In 1838 three men arrived from England in Van Diemen's Land having been requested by those already in the colonies. The first, the Rev William Waterfield, was sent to Port Phillip via Hobart Town in May 1838. In 1843 he arrived back in Van Diemen's Land and began working on the north-west coast where settlement was in its infancy. At one settlement he preached from a roadside stump to a fair gathering twice each Sunday. For five years he rode the forest tracks, swam rivers and sailed the coast to reach other settlements as did the

Methodists. His was a pioneering ministry. He worked among people who often were living in primitive conditions as they sought a livelihood from the soil. Alexander Morison, who had been in Dublin since 1834 training for the ministry, arrived in December 1838. He replaced Joseph Beazley in the south-east (who had arrived in December 1836) and considerably enlarged the district Beazley had been working in. Over four and one half years Morison preached at forty-two centres. The third arrival for itinerant work was John West but in Van Diemen's Land he restricted his ministry to Launceston.⁹ The harsh reality for these home missionaries, whether Methodist or Congregationalist (apart from West), was often one of isolation, privation and inadequate support.

Something of the early Wesleyan and Primitive Methodist pioneering work was echoed in the later work of the Open Brethren and Disciples of Christ (Churches of Christ) evangelists in Tasmania in the 1870s. In respect of the Brethren who came to Tasmania as part of the evangelical floodtide following the English religious revival of 1859, four names stand out: Walter Douglas, William Brown, Charles Frederick Perrin and Edward Moyse. Douglas was in Circular Head January to March 1871. They saw Tasmania as a very suitable field for evangelistic endeavour because the land was still being opened up and settled, and their stated intention was to gain a toehold before the mainstream churches arrived, to preach 'where the Gospel had never been before'. Even so, in

⁷ Samuel Cozens, *Incidents in the Life of the Rev. Henry Dowling* (Melbourne, Fountain and Barber, 1871), p. 61; Samuel Cozens, *Tribute of Affection* (Launceston, Hudson and Hopwood, 1869), p. 3; *Colonial Record*, 11 March 1839; *Tasmanian*, 20 September 1839, p3c3 (p8c3) advertisement, all as cited by Laurence F Rowston, *Baptists in Van Diemen's Land, The Story of Tasmania's First Baptist Church* (Hobart, Baptist Union of Tasmania, 1985), p. 22.

⁸ *Colonial Record* April 1839 as cited by Rowston, *Baptists in Van Diemen's Land*, p. 22.

⁹ G Lindsay Lockley, *Centenary of Congregationalism in Australia* (Melbourne, Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society, 2001), pp. 114ff; Patricia Fitzgerald Ratcliff, *The Usefulness of John West: Dissent and Difference in the Australian Colonies* (Launceston, Albernian Press, 2003).

many cases the Christian faith had gone before, having been planted and nourished by the itinerant Methodists and Congregationalists. In country areas, Brethren visited farms and small towns, and held meetings in barns as there was a lack of suitable meeting places in remote districts. They came at a time when non-denominationalism still had an appeal. They argued that they were 'unsectarian', merely gathering together groups of born-again believers, not establishing a new denomination, a concept which was abhorrent to them.¹⁰

William Brown, like Edward Moyse, from the Christian Brethren assemblies in England, came to Tasmania from 1872. He traversed the island for the next few years, with breaks in Victoria. He saw fellowships established at Sheffield, Sherwood, Northdown and Sassafras. He was also involved in strengthening or starting meetings in the Esperance area, Scottsdale, and Circular Head. Perrin's letters, as published by his widow, detail his travels to Circular Head on the north-west coast. Perrin despaired of the lack of religion that he found in the isolated areas he ventured into. At one of open-air baptisms on the beach at Stanley crowds of up to 200 attended. Perrin carried out three missions to Tasmania between January 1873 and May 1875. Moyse arrived in Hobart in 1871. He travelled through the Huon and Esperance area for the next eighteen months bringing about a number of conversions and the formation of a gathering at Dover. A few years later he was active in the Kentish and Scottsdale areas. Although these evangelists were linked through the Brethren network, they were adamant that they were not part

¹⁰ Anne Killalea, *Frontier Religion in Tasmania: Explaining the Success of the Christian Brethren in the 1870s* (Tasmanian Historical Studies vol. 5.2, 1997), p. 106.

of a denomination, but encouraging Christians to meet as simply as did the early church. At Wynyard in January 1873 they played a leading part in the first among many of 'believers' conferences'.¹¹

Spurgeon's Men and the Scourge of Tuberculosis

What sent many of the graduates of Spurgeon's College in London abroad forty or fifty years after the arrival of Dowling and the first of the Methodist and Congregational preachers in Van Diemen's Land, was not the challenge of itinerant ministry, with the view of seeing men and women 'won for Christ', but something much more personal, that of overcoming the debilitating disease of tuberculosis. Tuberculosis, which was generally deeply respectful of wealth and rank,¹² caused widespread public concern in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as an endemic disease of the urban poor. London itself was a city of grime and smog. In 1815 one in four deaths in England was due to 'consumption', as tuberculosis was commonly. It was the leading cause of death in Britain between 1861 and 1870 for both males and females aged over sixteen years. A person with active but untreated tuberculosis could infect ten to fifteen other people per year. At the time it was not known that tuberculosis is a bacterial infection of environmental origin. Moreover, until 1882, its modes of transmission remained mysterious, and many

¹¹ Elisabeth Wilson, 'Ineffable impudence? Christian Brethren Missionaries in Northern Tasmania, 1860s and 70s' citing Alan Dyer, *God was Their Rock* (Sheffield, 1974), pp. 13-14; Sarah Perrin, 'One Thing I Do', or *Memorials of Chas F Perrin by his Widow*, (Melbourne, 1878) pp. 147ff; and Ann Maskell, 'Brethren on the N-W Coast', *Tasmanian Historical Studies* vol. 4, 1996, pp. 105-113.

¹² Thomas Dormandy, *A History of Tuberculosis, The White Death* (London, Hambledon, 1999), p. 12.

doctors considered it to be an unfortunate family trait rather than a dangerous infectious disease. Affected people often had symptoms such as red, swollen eyes, pale skin and coughing blood. It is now known that when those with tuberculosis cough, sneeze, speak, kiss or spit, they expel infectious aerosol droplets. Eventually, the amount of lung tissue available for exchange of gases in respiration decreases, and the untreated patient dies from failure of the ventilation and general toxemia and exhaustion. The work of Robert Koch (1843 - 1910) led to the prohibition of spitting in public.¹³

In the second half of the nineteenth century the British had greater scope for emigration than any people in the history of mankind. The wealthy and enterprising braved the journey to the United States of America, millions more settled in the Dominions, in Canada, the Pacific Islands, Australia and New Zealand. Others sought their milder climates for their salvation in India and the Cape or outside the empire altogether, in Argentina. Vast spaces spread over about a third of the globe were open to those who wanted to leave Britain.¹⁴ Before 1882, the answer for a cure was isolation from the source which often meant emigration to the Antipodes where the infected would slowly regain their health. As such Australia was promoted as a health resort for tubercular patients. Rest, fresh air and high altitudes were seen as the cure. Well-off, but sometimes frail and near death consumptives, sailed in extraordinarily large numbers in pursuit of a cure. An improved diet, full employment and better living

¹³ Dormandy, *A History of Tuberculosis, The White Death*, p. 137.

¹⁴ David Gilmour, book review of 'Andrew Ross, David Livingstone: Mission and Empire' (Hambleton, 2005), *New York Review of Books*, 23 June 2005, pp. 28-30.

conditions in the colonies no doubt boosted their resistance to further attacks. Australia was seen as the dumping ground for consumptives.¹⁵

By 1882 a good number of the Rev Charles H Spurgeon's students from his Pastors' College had already gone abroad. Some had been refused by the missionary societies on account of the doctors declaring that they were consumptive but Spurgeon was determined that his consumptive students would go out somehow. He was supportive of sending the sick as well as the healthy.¹⁶

While the Rev Alfred William Grant, the first graduate from Spurgeon's College to arrive in Tasmania, was tuberculosis free,¹⁷ the first to arrive with tuberculosis was the Rev William Clark, commencing at Perth in October 1874. As a student in July 1867, Clark opened a preaching station at North Finchley, London. Three years later, early in 1870, he began a pastorate at the Baptist Church in High Street, Ashford, Kent.¹⁸ Clark had none of the flamboyance of Grant, but he was an

¹⁵ Diary of GF Fletcher on the Essex, 1877-78, type script, Oxley Library, M794, transcribed by Shirley Fletcher, cited by Robin Haines, *Life and Death in the Age of Sail, The Passage to Australia* (UNSW Press, 2003), p. 281; Helen R. Woolcock, *Rights of Passage – Emigration to Australia in the Nineteenth Century* (Tavistock Publications 1986), pp. 226-227, 283; compare Geoffrey Best, *Mid-Victorian Britain 1851-75* (Glasgow, Fontana Press, William Coles, 1979), p. 74 which reads, 'Tuberculosis slowly diminished from the early fifties [1850s] on.'

¹⁶ Barnes, Reginald Henry, and Charles Edward Brown, *Spurgeon, the People's Preacher by the Authors of 'The Life of General Gordon'* (London and Felling on Tyne, Walter Scott Publishing Co, 1892), p. 111.

¹⁷ Grant arrived in 1869. See Chapter Four.

¹⁸ *Sword and Trowel* (hereafter S&T) August 1878.

indefatigable visitor,¹⁹ and served at the Perth chapel until April 1876. He responded to a call from the Dawson Street Baptist Church, Ballarat, to follow Grant who had ministered there following his own time at Perth. After eight years in Ballarat, he was able to say, 'I have been blessedly sustained these eight years, while steady progress has marked the whole course of my ministry.' His health had held and the church persisted through the depression in the gold mining in the town, which in one year saw forty church members leave the locality.²⁰ In 1882-1883 he filled the position of President of the Baptist Union of Victoria. He had resigned from the Ballarat ministry in February 1885 and pastored the Crimea Street St Kilda Baptist Church from 1885 to 1892. His final church was at North Carlton commencing in 1892. For many years he fulfilled the duties of secretary of the Baptist Union of Victoria. So with Clark's arrival in Tasmania eighteen years earlier, this scourge of the nineteenth century had begun to play a part in the rebuilding of Baptist work in the colony and sustaining Baptist work beyond.²¹

To replace Clark, William Gibson Senior secured another in need of physical well-being, this time from the Sandhurst (Bendigo) Baptist Church. The Rev WG Gillings commenced at Perth in June 1877. While engaged at Sandhurst, Gillings had undertaken evangelistic work for the Baptist Home Mission and Church Extension Committee in the country districts in northern Victoria, between Sandhurst and the Murray River. After forming a

church at Echuca, Gillings turned his attention to the north-west. He resigned from his Sandhurst church early in 1877 so that he might engage in further missionary work. His heart was in the work but through ill-health he was obliged to accept Gibson's offer at Perth.²² Gillings served there until March 1880. He continued Grant's endeavour of Sunday afternoon services in the Longford Assembly Rooms. In later years Gillings also pastored the St Kilda Church in Victoria and was author of several works on the Second Coming of Christ under the titles of 'Maranatha', 'Days of the Son of Man' and 'Gold in Prophetic Mines'.²³

Spurgeon's twenty year old son, Thomas, was among the many diagnosed with consumption. He was advised to travel to a warm climate for his health. On 15 June 1877 Thomas left England for Melbourne. The visit of this well-connected preacher to the colonies became a news-worthy event. He had merely planned to follow his trade as an artist and wood engraver during his visit but his letter of introduction to the Rev WC Bunning, a graduate of the Pastors' College and Baptist minister in Geelong, had the words, 'He can preach a bit', added on by his father. He had been a lay preacher in cottage services around London and hoped one day to enter Theological College but it was not his preaching that brought about the

¹⁹ Clark was the 'indefatigable visitor', *Victorian Baptist Historical Society Newsletter* no. 41, June 2003.

²⁰ S&T College Annual Report 1886.

²¹ Clarke resigned from North Carlton in 1906 but continued on as Secretary of the Baptist Union of Victoria. He died on 15 March 1917.

²² Basil S Brown, *Members One of Another* (Melbourne, Baptist Union of Victoria, 1962), p. 62; FJ Wilkin, *A Romance of Home Missions – An Account of the Early Days of the Baptist Home Mission Work in Victoria* (Baptist Home Mission and Church Extension Committee, 1927), p. 4.

²³ Henry Hussey, *Colonial Life and Christian Experience* (Adelaide, Hussey & Gillingham, 1897), Chapter 22. See also Ken R Manley, *From Woolloomooloo to 'Eternity': A History of Australian Baptists* (Milton Keynes, Paternoster, 2006), vol. 1, p. 400 citing *Victorian Baptist*, April 1890, pp. 56-57.

response. Hundreds rushed to hear him because he brought back memories of his father and England. At some of the meetings so great was the crush that it was impossible to gain admission after the service began.

He arrived in Tasmania for three months to recuperate at 'Native Point', William and Mary Ann Gibson's home. This was the first of five visits to the island from 1878 to 1890. As his health improved, the Gibsons drove him from place to place to fulfill preaching engagements. Spurgeon's College man, Harry Wood, recorded that Thomas 'became more like a son than a visitor'.²⁴ Thomas' preaching venues (apart from the Perth chapel) included locations in Launceston and Longford.²⁵ Thomas was farewelled in mid June 1878 as he departed for further engagements in Melbourne. He then travelled north through New South Wales and Queensland and then on to New Zealand. He arrived back home in London at the end of October that year seemingly in good health²⁶ and began studies at his father's College but his tuberculosis had not been eradicated and in time he reappeared at the Gibson's home.

On 2 October September 1879, Thomas, with two companions, the Revs Robert McCullough and James Samuel (JS) Harrison had sailed in the SS *Sobraon* from Plymouth.²⁷ Two

months later Thomas' father wrote to Gibson, to entrust his son to his care. McCullough, the man destined for Longford in 1880 and then Hobart in 1883, also had tuberculosis. It had been his full intention to give his life to mission work in Ireland, but lung disease had intervened. The call to minister in the Antipodes had come as his studies at the college drew to a close. Their ship arrived in Melbourne on 11 December 1879.²⁸ In Melbourne large welcoming meetings for Thomas were held at Kew and West Melbourne.²⁹ Between pastorates in Australia commencing at Deloraine³⁰ and at Geelong, Ashfield in Sydney and West Hawthorn in Victoria, Harrison made the long voyage back to England and on one such rather lengthy stay in England, from 1886 to 1902, was invalided for a year. He spent his last nine years in Victoria, dying on 30 November 1935.

In January 1880 another of Spurgeon's consumptive men made his way to Tasmania. This time it was the Rev Robert Williamson. Three years later Dr Harry Benjafield reported, 'By the way if his friends in England and Scotland saw him now, they would scarcely believe he was the same bent, consumptive man as landed here a few years ago.'³¹ In England, Williamson had been pastor of the Paradise Row Chapel in the Essex town of Waltham Abbey until ill-health forced his resignation. Arriving in Sydney about September 1877 he

²⁴ Harry Wood, *Pioneer Work for the Lord in Tasmania* (1892), in the possession of Laurence F Rowston.

²⁵ See also Launceston *Examiner* (hereafter LEx) 20 March 1878, p2c7; an extended account of Thomas' visit to Henry Reed's mansion at Wesley Dale in found in WY Fullerton, *Thomas Spurgeon, a biography* (London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1919), pp. 95ff. Craig Skinner in *Lampighter and Son* (Nashville, Broadman Press, 1984), briefly mentions the visit. See p. 43.

²⁶ LEx 6 July 1878, p3c5; S&T November 1878.

²⁷ S&T November 1879.

²⁸ LEx 22 December 1879, p2c6; S&T April 1880 states the arrival date as 16 December.

²⁹ For Robert McCullough's and JS Harrison's lives up to this time, see Chapter Three. For further on McCullough's career, see later in this chapter and Chapter Seven.

³⁰ See Chapter Seven for Harrison's time in Deloraine.

³¹ Dr Harry Benjafield's report on Baptist Churches in Tasmania, date unknown; Michael Roe, 'Benjafield, Harry (1845-1917)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Supplement pp. 26-27.

gained secular employment but hoped for opportunities to continue in Christian ministry. It seemed that his health improved for a time at Parramatta, but in January 1880 illness forced him to seek rest and a change in Tasmania.³² Upon his arrival in Tasmania many thought that he would not live long, but he regained his health and remained for four years before moving to Kyneton in country Victoria before spending six years at the South Yarra Baptist Church. The Kyneton church reported in March 1885 that Williamson was having 'premonitory symptoms of a return of illness from which he suffered most seriously some years ago ...and will in all probability return to Tasmania, the climate of which suited him better than either that of New South Wales or Victoria.'³³ He returned to the Perth church in 1892 before further pastorates in Victoria, Queensland and once again in Tasmania, this time at Sheffield. Like so many migrants he survived tubercular infection and lived a long and productive life. He died on 20 August 1916.³⁴

In 1882 yet another man from Spurgeon's with consumptive disease` arrived in Tasmania to minister at the Deloraine Tabernacle. Edward Vaughan had spent three years at the Pastors' College commencing in 1872. He had entered college from Vernon Chapel, Pentonville. He was given his first and only pastorate in London in 1874 at the small church in Surrey

Lane, Battersea, and worked there until he sailed for South Australia in September 1878. In South Australia he commenced a three year pastorate at South Rhine but his 'bodily affliction' continued³⁵ and Tasmania became his new home in 1882. After three years at Deloraine he moved back to the mainland and ministered both in Victoria and again in South Australia.³⁶ At Mannum on the Murray River in 1893, his health again necessitated a change to a cooler climate, and Tasmania was once more tried,³⁷ but the relocation to Sheffield proved injurious. As Charles Pickering, his fellow missionary in the Northern Victoria wrote:

... the hilly nature of the district which had to be traversed, the dampness of the climate and a protracted series of evangelistic services enfeebled our brother's health, and apparently undermined his constitution. A heavy cold was followed with what seemed to be haemorrhage of the lungs. His removal became imperative.

His final pastorate was at Castlemaine. He commenced there in October 1896, but his health never returned and he died on 17 January 1897 at forty-four years of age.³⁸

In 1879, another student while studying at Spurgeon's College discovered that his physique would not stand the strain of both study and of

³² No author, History of the Parramatta Baptist Church, 1878-1880, (no date). For more on Williamson, see also H Watkin-Smith, *Baptists in the Cradle City. The Story of Parramatta Baptist Church 1838-1986* (Eastwood, Baptist Historical Society of NSW, 1986).

³³ *Victorian Freeman*, March 1885, p. 59.

³⁴ *Daily Telegraph*, 2 August 1884 p3c5; Wesley J Bligh, *Altars of the Mountains in which is told the story of the Baptist Church of Tasmania* (Launceston, Baptist Union of Tasmania, 1935), p. 53.

³⁵ S&T 1878 p. 254 and September 1878 p. 446.

³⁶ His pastorates were at Shepparton in Victoria (for twelve months as a Home Mission agent), Bendigo and Mannum in South Australia.

³⁷ At Sheffield from 22 January 1893 - 13 July 1896.

³⁸ Chas Pickering, *Southern Baptist* (1895-1912), 4 February 1897, pp. 31ff; S&T August 1878; JE Walton, *Southern Baptist*, 4 February 1897, pp. 31; *Our Yesterdays* vol. 6, pp. 25ff. For Vaughan's early life before entering College, see Chapter Three.

missions together, and a breakdown followed. That student, Harry Wood, was ordered him to 'the colonies' because of his heart disease.³⁹ Wood arrived briefly in Tasmania in 1883. He moved on to New Zealand and served a Thames pastorate for twelve months before transferring to Saddleworth in South Australia where he began in May 1880. For a time the climate markedly restored his health, but the disease returned again.⁴⁰ He remained in contact with William Gibson Senior and he finally responded to Gibson's repeated invitation to take charge of the Tabernacle at Deloraine. Following his time at Deloraine, Wood returned to London for further studies but a fortnight after his wedding to Elizabeth Childs was forced back to Australia because of his health. He sailed on 11 October 1883 by the SS *Orient* together with Spurgeon's son, Thomas. This was Thomas' second voyage to Australia. They were accompanied by their colleague from the Pastors' College, Alfred James Clarke.⁴¹

In Melbourne, Wood assisted Clarke at the West Melbourne Baptist Church and was subsequently given supervision of its branch church at Williamstown. But in July 1883, after six months, Wood and his wife made for Tasmania. They found Williamstown too cold and damp in the winter and they had received urgent letters from William Gibson to return to 'the tight little island'.⁴² Gibson's letters were coupled with a letter of call from the Longford Baptist Church cognisant

of his delicate state of health and allowing him leave to be 'free as the Lord's servant to arrange your meetings and do your work as you feel best able'.⁴³ Wood concluded his ministry at Longford in August 1887, having responded to a call to be pastor of the Launceston Tabernacle in Cimitiere Street. While at Cimitiere Street Wood's health began to deteriorate towards the second half of 1888. He took his annual holidays but returned in a weakened state.⁴⁴ By May 1890 his doctors forbade him to preach. He finally resigned on 2 July 1890, making possible an extended time of rehabilitation and the possibility of entry into a lesser sphere of work⁴⁵ which would be at Sheffield, a district of 1,500 people. After two years in Sheffield, Wood's health had deteriorated again. At the half-yearly Baptist Assembly meetings at Latrobe in October, Wood, who was the first speaker, 'wisely' curtailed his address.⁴⁶ Pastorates followed at his old church at Deloraine and at Latrobe⁴⁷ where his health problems continued. The doctor's verdict on one occasion was that he was minus half of his left lung, and was suffering with valvular heart disease.⁴⁸ In December 1898, near the end of his time at Latrobe, he was compelled to rest as he was threatened with an attack of paralysis.⁴⁹ He now began to absent himself from the various Baptist Annual and Half-Yearly Assemblies. Against advice Wood commenced the new

³⁹ Bligh, *Altars of the Mountain* (1935), pp. 28ff.

⁴⁰ S&T April 1880; Bligh, *Altars of the Mountain*, pp. 25ff.

⁴¹ S&T Pastors' College Annual Report 1886; S&T 1882 p. 444; Wood's pocket diary records that they left Gravesend for Melbourne on 19 October.

⁴² S&T 1896 pp. 561-565; Harry Wood, 'Leaves from my life story – a tribute to my wife', *Tasmanian Baptist Church Chronicle* (1918-1953), December 1926 pp. 4-5.

⁴³ Bligh, *Altars of the Mountains*, pp. 25ff.

⁴⁴ *Day-Star*, (1886-1894), October 1888, p. 154.

⁴⁵ Harry Wood, *Pioneer Work for the Lord in Tasmania*.

⁴⁶ *Day-Star*, November 1892, p. 162.

⁴⁷ *Southern Baptist*, 1 August 1895.

⁴⁸ *Tasmanian Baptist Church Chronicle*, September 1926.

⁴⁹ *Day Dawn and Baptist Church Messenger* (1900-1917) (in the Baptist holdings of the archives of the University of Tasmania), December 1898.

work at Burnie. In his memoirs he wrote:

It was at this time that heart weakness, from which I have suffered so long, began to show serious symptoms. My doctor advised me strongly, for health reasons, not to go to Burnie. A petition signed by a number of heads of families had been sent to the Council requesting that I might be sent to start a Baptist cause there. It was a big undertaking for a weakly man, but I felt it was the Lord's will I should go.⁵⁰

There was little change in his health. He could not preach in the last quarter of 1899.⁵¹ At the end of his eighteen months there, he was advised to resign as soon as possible to 'be free from the anxiety incidental to pioneer work'.⁵² He was to transfer to Longford for twelve months and there to do as much or as little as he wished.⁵³

He began at Longford in January 1901 but he was too ill to conduct public worship. He recorded an account of his first Sunday there: 'I shall never forget the first Sunday morning when I sat up in bed and held a little service in the manse. We all literally wept when we remembered Zion.' In time he recovered sufficiently to take both services on Sunday and supervise the work. 'It was a trial of faith', he wrote, 'but the Lord did not fail us. He was our Bank and our Banker.'⁵⁴ Wood's poor health continued.⁵⁵ From that time his apology was received at Baptist

Assembly after Assembly. For the next five years he battled his way back to health,⁵⁶ and finally made an appearance at an Assembly in November 1905, his first appearance in five years. The last Assembly he attended was in Burnie in November 1906.⁵⁷ In broken health, he had concluded his ministry at Longford a month before. In 1906 he was called to Perth by a unanimous decision of the church. But after a little over a year of ministry at Perth he was obliged to resign from the pastorate. He never regained his health sufficiently to undertake a pastorate again.⁵⁸ His final days were spent in a residence in Launceston, now 'Locked indoors by Giant Ill-Health'.⁵⁹ He died in Launceston on 29 June 1935, after twenty-eight years of incapacitation.

Many consumptives survived the voyage to the sunny Australia colonies only to die shortly after arrival. Thirty-two years old Spurgeon's man, William Compton, was one of these, dying in Perth on 27 August 1887. Compton, who had attended a Congregational church, began at the College 1876. Two years later he took charge of the Western Road Baptist Church, Hove, Brighton, and then two churches in Gosport, all the while 'weak and suffering'.⁶⁰ The *Sword and Trowel* reported that 'his hopeful disposition and unconquerable spirit baffled the disease so long'. With his wife already dead, and leaving his two little children behind, he sailed for Tasmania in 1887 hoping that the climate would enable him to continue preaching. Even in the months before his death in Tasmania, he was planning his return to 'dear old

⁵⁰ Wood, *Pioneer Work for the Lord in Tasmania*.

⁵¹ *Southern Baptist*, 29 March 1890.

⁵² Wood, *Pioneer Work for the Lord in Tasmania*.

⁵³ *Day Dawn*, November 1900 p. 5.

⁵⁴ Wood, *Pioneer Work for the Lord in Tasmania*.

⁵⁵ *Day Dawn*, March, May, July and December 1901; May and June 1902; February and April 1906.

⁵⁶ *Day Dawn*, February 1906.

⁵⁷ Based on Tasmanian Baptist Union Assembly reports.

⁵⁸ Bligh, *Altars of the Mountains*, pp. 25ff.

⁵⁹ *Tasmanian Baptist Church Chronicle* (1918-1953), September 1926.

⁶⁰ S&T 1886 p. 508.

England'. The *Sword and Trowel* in 1887 reported his passing saying that he 'has been laid to rest in a foreign land,' and adding that his fellow students in Tasmania 'little thought that he would follow them out here to die'. The journal continued: 'We helped him to go out in the hope that his valuable life might be lengthened for a few years, but his departure was delayed too long [and] he gradually faded away.'⁶¹

Another who suffered 'an attack of inflammation of the lungs' and eased out to the colonies was the Rev John E Walton, commencing at Perth in Tasmania in January 1888. He was born at Clay Cross, Derbyshire in 1856 and brought up a Baptist. In 1875 he entered the Pastors' College but upon the death of his father he had to bear the burden of the family's support. Upon his mother's remarriage he returned to College in January 1880 and studied there for three years. In January 1883 Walton began a five year ministry at Balsall Heath, Birmingham. Through Spurgeon he received a call from the Perth church 'with expenses out, paid for himself and family'. Having just partially recovered from an attack of inflammation of the lungs, his medical adviser recommended the change. He had always wished to see the colonies, so he started for Tasmania at the end of 1887. At the close of his ten years ministry at Perth, he took up the Tasmanian Baptist Home Mission work in outlying Devonport instead of returning home as he had originally intended. Twice he was chosen President of the Baptist Union of Tasmania.⁶² He also had pastorates in Brisbane where he was President of the Baptist Union of Queensland, and in Sydney. He died

⁶¹ S&T May 1878, April 1882 and 1887 p. 599; *Day-Star*, September 1887; LEx 30 August 1887, p2c5.

⁶² Bligh, *Altars of the Mountains*, p. 50.

1914 in Homebush, New South Wales, aged fifty-eight years.

Among the others who suffered tuberculosis and ministered in Tasmania were the aforementioned Alfred James Clarke and James Blaikie. From about 1873 to 1877 Clarke worked with much success as an evangelist in England with the Metropolitan Tabernacle's Evangelization Society but his health deteriorated. After some rest, he commenced in 1878 but again his health failed with the *Sword and Trowel* reporting, 'Mr. Clarke appears to be utterly disabled.'⁶³ An invitation came from the church at West Melbourne, and, after due consideration, Clarke accepted the pastorate⁶⁴ migrating in 1882 with Thomas Spurgeon and James Harrison.⁶⁵ After his pastorate there and another at Woolloomooloo in NSW, he took charge of the Cimitiere Street Tabernacle in Launceston, in December 1890. The church was the leading Tasmanian Baptist church at the time. Later pastorates were conducted in NSW, SA and Victoria. He died on 14 April 1916. The Rev James Blaikie, was one who made a remarkable recovery from tuberculosis. In 1886 Blaikie wrote to Spurgeon from Kew in Victoria:

I was compelled in the year 1882, through a long illness, to seek a more genial climate in search of health. In the providence of God my attention, through you, was directed to this country and city. Deeming it the call of God, I left London with my wife and family on June 1st, of the year stated, reaching these

⁶³ S&T 1877 p. 334, May and June 1879 and 1884 p. 330; WY Fullerton, *Thomas Spurgeon, a Biography* (London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1919), p. 86; LEx 11 February 1880, p2c5.

⁶⁴ S&T June 1879.

⁶⁵ S&T 1882 p. 444. They left England by SS Sorata on 30 November 1882.

shores on the 17th of the following month. The border of this land has been to me the hem of the Master's garment, making me whole.⁶⁶

Upon completing his studies at the Pastors' College, Edinburgh born Blaikie began at his only pastorate in England in 1876 at Bank Street Baptist Church, Irvine, North Ayrshire. He began in Tasmania at the Hobart Baptist church in August 1897. He had further pastorates in New Zealand and Townsville. He died on 2 January 1907.

In 1885 every Baptist church in Tasmania, with one exception, was occupied by a Spurgeon's man. By 1887 some forty-four Spurgeon's men were serving in Australia. It was noted in 1910 that Tasmania had been a 'Sanatorium' where the sick had been healed.⁶⁷ Harry Wood calculated that up to that year he had seen thirty-eight ministers come and go from Tasmanian pastorates.⁶⁸ By 1883 there were twenty-six Pastors' College students in Australia.⁶⁹ Of them nine ministered in Tasmania. Six are known to have migrated to Australia because of tuberculosis. But with the rise of

sanatoria, faith in travelling as such began to wane. Further it was found over the years that fewer and fewer geographical locations were safe. By 1900 tuberculosis was killing men and women as surely as in San Francisco, Cape Town and Tasmania as it was among the people of Old England and New England.⁷⁰

The state of one's health was not the only difficulty faced by the Spurgeon's men in Tasmania. Success in ministry could often be assured, but there was always the possibility of pastoral failure. In 1893 the Launceston Tabernacle sustained a severe setback during the pastoral settlement of the Rev Alfred James Clarke. He was engaged by the church from December 1890 to November 1893.⁷¹ For month after month the Baptist journal, the *Day-Star*, gave a glowing report of the Launceston work, but unbeknown to the wider Baptist church family, the true state of the church was not being disclosed. The diaconate was badly split. WDW Weston was subsequently excommunicated and two other deacons voted out. In fact four deacons were involved. Finally, due to the failure in leadership, the church was disrupted and the congregation scattered. At the conclusion of the Assembly held in Launceston in 1894, following Clarke's departure, a whole day was devoted to humiliation and prayer. By now the Council of the Union had assumed control and taken measures for the resuscitation of the work.⁷²

⁶⁶ S&T Pastors' College Annual Report December 1886, letter by James Blaikie.

⁶⁷ There was a Consumptive Sanatorium in Echuca, see *Victorian Baptist*, May 1892, pp. 97f.

⁶⁸ Ken R Manley, 'The Magic Name – Charles Haddon Spurgeon and the evangelical ethos of Australian Baptists, Part 1, *Baptist Quarterly* vol. 40 no.3, pp. 173-184; Ken R Manley, *From Woolloomooloo to 'Eternity': A History of Australian Baptists* (Milton Keynes, Paternoster, 2006), vol. 1, p115 citing *Southern Baptist*, 6 January 1910 p. 29.

⁶⁹ James Blaikie, Alfred Bird, E Booth, Thomas Breewood, FG Buckingham, WC Bunning, AJ Clarke, Henry Clark, William Clark, William Coller, J Downing, Samuel Fairey, AP Fulton, DJ Graham, AJ Hamilton, James Samuel Harrison, Frederick Hibberd, William Higlett, EG Ince, Edward Isaac, Henry Marsden, Robert McCullough, H Morgan, M Morris, F Page, CJAN Padley, N Rogers, JA Soper, Edward Vaughan, Robert Williamson and Harry Wood.

⁷⁰ Dormandy, *A History of Tuberculosis, The White Death*, p. 125.

⁷¹ AJ Clarke welcomed at Launceston Tabernacle on 17 December 1890, see LEx 18 December 1890, p2c5 and farewellled on 26 November 1893, see LEx 27 November 1893, p5c2-3.

⁷² Weston was excommunicated in 1892. At the end of the decade Weston was Editor of "The Day Dawn" and in 1901 he became the Union honorary legal adviser. In his *Altars of the*

The Rev Alfred Hyde who entered Spurgeon's College in 1882 from Regents Park Chapel also saw lack of progress while at Longford, from September 1887 to October 1888 such that he was moved on to Latrobe. The Launceston *Examiner* reporter wrote at the time of his departure: 'This step, I understand, has been taken by Pastor Hyde, he being of the opinion that a change in the pastorate would prove beneficial both to pastor and people.'⁷³ In 1893 he arrived in South Australia to take charge part time of the Goodwood and Richmond churches but after two years commenced a book-selling business in Flinders Street, Adelaide, purchasing the stock from the Bible Hall and Tract Depot of the millenarian Henry Hussey.⁷⁴

The Difficulty in Finding Suitable Meeting Places and Difficulties with Housing

The Longford Baptist work grew out of the community worship services held in the Longford Assembly Rooms of Mrs Noakes. The new Launceston Baptist work of the 1880s began in the Mechanics' Institute building. These pioneering works utilized the available venues without disruption. The new Baptist venture in Hobart, however, had a longer and a stormier gestation period. Following his pioneering work at Longford, McCullough's work in Hobart began in the Exhibition Building

Mountain, Wesley Bligh wrote that Clarke's settlement at Launceston was made by the church without reference to the Council of the Union but the Union Council minutes record the transfer of Clarke's credentials from NSW Baptist Executive Committee (see Council Minutes of 5 March 1891.) Further Clarke himself became a member of the Council.

⁷³ LEx 19 September 1888, p4c1.

⁷⁴ Hussey, *Colonial Life and Christian Experience*, chapter 12. Hyde continued with the part-time Goodwood-Richmond arrangement until 1898. He was back at the Goodwood church some years later. He died in July 1933.

in Collins Street on 7 October 1883.⁷⁵ But bad feelings brought about the need to find some other place to conduct divine worship. The complaint first surfaced at a meeting of the various denominations held to make arrangements for a mission to be undertaken by Mrs Margaret Hampson of New Zealand.⁷⁶ The proposition had been made that the building was being used as a Baptist church! Soon the church seats were just bundled into the street. An application to the trustees of St John's Presbyterian Church in Macquarie Street for the temporary use of the building was refused,⁷⁷ so for their first Sunday out of the Exhibition Building they had nowhere to meet. Use of the Temperance Alliance rooms in Macquarie Street was ultimately granted for a few Sundays.

When land on which the Hobart Baptist Church's buildings stand today was purchased a bush chapel was erected. Accordingly, a structure was built of such a character that it was facetiously called a 'shedifice' with its sawdust floors, rough timber walls lined with ragged tarpaulins and old iron. The structure stood at the front of the property where the Tabernacle now stands.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ LEx 26 Sept 1883, p3c8. For the longer account of the early days of McCullough's days in Hobart and of the formation of the Hobart Baptist church, see Laurence F Rowston, *One Hundred Years of Witness: A History of the Hobart Baptist Church, 1884-1984* (Hobart, Hobart Baptist Church, 1984).

⁷⁶ *Devon Herald*, 13 May 1884, p3c1; *Mercury*, 10 May 1884, p1c3.

⁷⁷ While Clara Haywood's (nee Pitt) account of the early life of the church claims that St John's Church was not used, Bligh in *Altars of the Mountains* says that St John's Church was used. Bligh also says that the Harrington Street chapel was also used. The last advertisements under 'religious notices' for services in the Exhibition Buildings appeared in the *Mercury*, 21 June 1884, p3c9.

⁷⁸ Alfred W Pitt's letter to John Soundy, giving his account of the early life of the church (no

Services were to begin in shedifice in August 1884, but when served with a notice that the Building Act had been infringed, the following advertisement appeared in the *Mercury*:

Being TURNED OUT of the Exhibition Building, our things put in the street, and now being STOPPED with our new building, after obtaining permission to build, we have NO SERVICE on SUNDAY. R. McCullough.⁷⁹

Despite the threat of the Council, the temporary building was completed and occupied for five months. Wrote the approving northern church paper, *The Pioneer*:

Brother McCullough preaches in a building which is certainly a curiosity in this colony. We have been in bush chapels, but never one to equal this for cold, damp, or rough appearance. On a warm evening there is a good congregation, but when it rains the people are huddled together in the centre to escape the wet. Under such circumstances great success could hardly be expected. Mr. Spurgeon says, 'You cannot get souls saved where there is no fresh air,' and we suppose the same might be said where there is too much air... As the weather improves the rude building will be more suitable.⁸⁰

With the pending laying of the chapel's foundation stone, the church inserted a notice in the *Mercury*:

The Baptist Tabernacle, Elizabeth Street. Anyone who has any regard for the fitness of things will rejoice to learn that this unsightly 'shedifice' is soon to be removed to give place to a better structure, the foundation

stone of which will be laid on Tuesday afternoon next ...⁸¹

The foundation stone of the new school room was laid on 4 November 1884.⁸² Four months later, another notice appeared in the *Mercury*, 'Hobart Tabernacle Schoolroom: Those who complained of the temporary Tabernacle in Elizabeth St. as an eyesore, will be pleased with the neat edifice that is now almost completed on the ground.'⁸³ The difficulties at Hobart were replicated at Sheffield some years later. Harry Wood recorded his beginnings there in 1890:

A greater contrast to the work in Launceston could hardly be imaged (sic). We [Baptists] were a comparative stranger. Our first meetings were held in the open air. Then we rented the dingy old Skating Rink for Sunday services and soon a Sunday school was formed.⁸⁴

Soon William Gibson Junior purchased land in the township and financed the erection of the Sheffield Tabernacle.⁸⁵

There are no records of the difficulties the Baptists faced in baptising people at the Exhibition Buildings but with baptism being central to the Baptist ethos, the setting up of a baptistry inside a rented building was a labour intensive matter. Such was the case in Burnie in 1899. When Harry Wood began at Burnie that year, the Town Hall was hired for Sunday services. It was a spacious two-storeyed building. On the ground floor there was a large

⁸¹ *Mercury*, 1 November 1884, p3c1.

⁸² *Mercury*, 1 November 1884, p1c7.

⁸³ *Mercury*, 21 March 1885, p3c1.

⁸⁴ Wood, *Pioneer Work for the Lord in Tasmania*.

⁸⁵ *A Short History of the Sheffield Baptist Church* dated 23 September 1918 (in the Baptist holdings of the archives of the University of Tasmania); *Day-Star*, June 1891, p. 476.

date), in the possession of Laurence F Rowston.

⁷⁹ *Mercury*, 5 July 1884, p4c5.

⁸⁰ *Pioneer*, October 1884, p2c1.

meeting room which could accommodate about 500 people. On the upper floor were the municipal offices and the library. Large congregations were attracted to the Baptist services but the Town Hall was inconvenient in many ways. The baptistry, a heavy iron-sheet lined wooden structure, had to be taken to the front of the stage and then filled by buckets. After each baptism it had to be emptied and taken to the rear of the hall. Their first baptismal service of thirteen men and one woman was the first baptism witnessed in the town.⁸⁶

Wood transferred from Burnie to Longford for twelve months commencing in January 1901. It was here that he faced different challenges. The Longford church had languished as Wood soon discovered. In his memoirs he recorded the impressions of his first few weeks there:

The Longford church had been without a minister for a long time. It was in apparently hopeless condition. Broken in health I returned to my old sphere, only to find the once prosperous church in a state of heartbreaking desolation. The property had well nigh gone to ruin. Fences were down, gates off the hinges, shingles off the roof of the Tabernacle, the Manse which had been let to an R. C. Constable was in a fearful state. The entrance to the Tabernacle and paths was grown with weeds. The once fine, large stable was in a state of collapse. Only a Sunday afternoon service was held with about a dozen people attending, [there was] no week night meetings, or Sunday school. The once prosperous church of eighty-six members were (sic) reduced to a mere handful.

⁸⁶ Laurence F Rowston, *Yesterday, Today & Tomorrow, A History of the Burnie Baptist Church 1899-1999* (1999), chapter 1.

The property was well-nigh in ruins. Finances were at low ebb. There were 5 members including one deacon.⁸⁷

In the early years of Spurgeon's men in Tasmania the Gibsons generally provided both a church building and a manse. As the new Baptist work spread across the north-west and to the south of the island in William Gibson Senior's last years, the Baptists had to do the best they could in terms of both manses and meeting places. A Sustentation Fund had been set up by the Gibsons in 1887 for this end, but the funds were not unlimited. While Wood was one of Gibson's 'favourite sons' receiving special treatment from Gibson Senior with a cheque for his lodging at Sheffield when he began there,⁸⁸ this was not the case in 1895 when he began in Latrobe. The only house that could be secured for the Wood family was a large brick building that was so damp and run down that it should have been condemned. Sometime later when he commenced the new work at Burnie the matter of securing suitable lodging returned. The only available house was a rough four-roomed, plain cottage at the far end of South Burnie which was too small for a family of six people. To add to the family's woes, Wood sent their furniture on the day before they left Latrobe. Initially the weather was fine but the wagon was uncovered and heavy rain fell before it reached its destination. On arrival the family found their bedding and belongings saturated, some of the goods being

⁸⁷ Wood, *Pioneer Work for the Lord in Tasmania*. Rev JF McAllister (1894-1896) and Rev AJ Casley (1896-1899) preceded Wood at Longford. Casely worked at Longford as McAllister's assistant prior to 1896.

⁸⁸ The cheque covered the purchase price of a four-room cottage which Wood was renting.

completely spoiled. It was an expensive move.⁸⁹

Maintenance of Church Structures

The maintenance of church structures is a continual challenge for religious institutions and it is revealing that some of the Gibsons' chapels and Tabernacles were left to deteriorate so early in their lives. The Tabernacles at Deloraine and Latrobe suffered such a fate. In his *Memoirs*, Harry Wood recorded his experiences in these locations. He was in poor health after leaving Sheffield at the end of 1892. He was asked to return, immediately, to his old church at Deloraine. Upon arrival he found things had greatly changed for the worse. The church was in a low state and the people were dispirited.⁹⁰ The same calamitous state faced him at his next posting, to Latrobe in July 1895.⁹¹ The Baptist Union Council wanted him there because the cause was in danger of becoming defunct. He found the work was in a much worse state than it was thought to be. The church property, although comparatively new, was in a bad state of disrepair. The services were so poorly attended that they were held in the Tabernacle vestry. There were also outstanding church debts. There was only one deacon and only thirteen people attended his welcome. 'I was receiving £20 a year less than the Minister who [had] left the church on the rocks,' he complained.⁹² Baptists had commenced in Latrobe with a Sunday school in November 1886. In 1889 William Gibson Junior purchased a block of land on Latrobe's

main street, Gilbert Street, for £500 for erection of a Tabernacle.⁹³ He opened the building he provided on 31 January 1892.⁹⁴

Spurgeon's men in Tasmania not only faced difficulties in respect to meeting places, lodgings and health, they also faced the wrath of the leadership in non-Baptist churches. The doctrine of believer's baptism tended to set them apart, theologically speaking from the ministry of the other churches. Through their emphasis on this ordinance they were charged with importing unnecessary controversy into the evangelical mission to a spiritually needy country. To this charge was added 'sheep stealing', that is, proselytism in their competition with other churches, particularly the Methodists.⁹⁵

Itinerating Baptists

The Baptists took a similar course of action as the early itinerating Methodists in the Blackwood Creek area. In the 1880s local identity, Bracknell store keeper William Ross, walked many miles through the bush at night to conduct services in the rough bush huts that were the dwellings of the settlers who worked in gravel pits and on the roads. Often he would spend the greater part of Saturday night in prayer in the bush, emerging next morning to conduct the Sunday services 'with his clothes saturated by the heavy dew from the undergrowth'. Prior to his time with the Baptists, he and his family conducted the Bracknell Primitive Methodist Sabbath school but he threw his lot in with the Baptists with the opening of the Blackwood Creek Baptist chapel in 1880.⁹⁶ At the time Blackwood Creek was a rough and

⁸⁹ Wood, *Pioneer Work for the Lord in Tasmania*.

⁹⁰ Wood, *Pioneer Work for the Lord in Tasmania*.

⁹¹ *Southern Baptist*, 1 August 1895.

⁹² Wood, *Pioneer Work for the Lord in Tasmania*. Englishman John Chamberlain, a layman from the Hobart Tabernacle, had preceded Wood.

⁹³ LEx 27 April 1889 p3c6.

⁹⁴ *Day-Star*, November 1891, p. 547.

⁹⁵ See Chapter Six.

⁹⁶ LEx 24 October 1878, p2c7 and 30 January 1879, p3c5.

godless place, the only roads being rough corduroy bush tracks. Harry Wood, being stationed at Longford, associated with Ross. According to Wood who itinerated with Ross in the Blackwood Creek, 'To travel two or three hundred yards was a real shake up for a sluggish liver.' Bligh records that it was a frequent thing to hear the shooting of kangaroo and wallaby in the thick shrub near at hand during the conducting of the services, Sundays being little regarded among the inhabitants.⁹⁷

Conclusion

While this chapter began by considering the struggles of early church life in the colony faced by the Methodists and Congregationalists and by the Calvinist Baptist, the Rev Henry Dowling, whose ministries were also of an itinerant nature, it demonstrates that the Spurgeon's men half a century later with their chapel-centred ministries confronted somewhat different struggles. This chapter has revealed that the most significant difficulty faced by the majority of the Spurgeon's men was the personal curse of tuberculosis which was part of the history of British migration to Australia at the time. Of the nine Pastors' College students who arrived in the 1870s and 1880s, six⁹⁸ are known to have migrated to Australia because of this disease. But the study shows that, ironically, consumption proved a boon in that the disease forced the emigration of Spurgeon's son, Thomas Spurgeon, also to Tasmania in search of health. His presence at five different times in the colony as an active Baptist preacher with the added appeal of the Spurgeon

name strengthened Baptist fortunes immensely.

The chapter also discussed how Baptists, like clergy of other denominations and the Brethren and Disciples of Christ missionaries, struggled to obtain suitable meeting places, whether it was public buildings or even an ice-skating rink. A note is made that the Baptists had the added burden of providing a suitable baptismal tank, that is, if baptisms were to be conducted indoors. Baptists also put up with poor maintenance of their buildings whether the Gibsons had provided for the building in question or not. This chapter has uncovered the fact that not all of Spurgeon's men in Tasmania experienced pastoral success. A couple of failures are recorded. In following the ministries of these Spurgeon's men, a number as pioneer pastors, insight is given into the struggle of early church life in Tasmania, both Baptist and non-Baptist.

⁹⁷ The account of the Blackwood Creek Baptist church is from Bligh's, *Altars of the Mountain*.

⁹⁸ William Clark, GW Gillings, Robert McCullough, Robert Williamson, Edward Vaughan and Harry Wood.

Chapter Six - Disputes about Baptism

Introduction

This chapter will examine three accounts of baptismal disputes in Tasmania involving Spurgeon's College men and clergy from other Nonconformist churches. It commences with an account of the baptisms performed by the first Baptist minister in Van Diemen's Land, the Rev Henry Dowling, beginning in 1836. From this foundation the chapter will examine the dispute over baptism that arose from Robert McCullough's work in the township of Longford at the end of 1879. He drew the ire of those Longford ministers who did not baptise by immersion. The public airing of the subject will be considered. The second dispute to be discussed is in connection with baptisms by immersion in the Latrobe-Kentish area begun this time by Open Brethren and Disciples of Christ (Church of Christ) into which the Baptists were finally drawn. The third dispute to be discussed is that which took place in Burnie and Penguin on the North-West coast at the end of the century. This chapter will explore how the doctrine of believer's baptism tended to set the Baptists, the Open Brethren and Disciples of Christ apart, theologically speaking, from the ministry of the other churches. With baptism by immersion being the hallmark of the Baptist faith, this study will reveal how they faced the criticism that came their way.

Baptists in Van Diemen's Land

Baptism by immersion had been practised by the first Baptists to arrive in the colony. The first Baptist baptism took place in John Walker's mill pond at the corner of Collins and Barrack

Streets in Hobart Town on 26 January 1836 by the Rev Henry Dowling.¹ In 1863 Dowling's son, the renowned painter, Robert Dowling, had completed a new painting of the 'Baptism of our Lord'. At its public display in Launceston in 1866, the Launceston *Examiner* commented: 'Robert Dowling is a son of a Baptist minister of Launceston and his peculiar view as an immersionist may be inferred from the water shown as dropping from the dress of the recently baptised Jesus of Nazareth.'²

There was no exclusiveness to the Rev Henry Dowling in his manner or practice. His biographer, Samuel Cozens, wrote that he was kindly viewed by most people, forgiving almost to a fault with a happy and cheerful disposition. He added that Dowling found favour with all denominations of Protestant Christians in the colony. It was said that the Anglicans, Francis Russel Nixon and Rowland Davies, were welcome to preach in his pulpit. Dowling readily involved himself in public meetings, whether Christian or otherwise.³

¹ Laurence F Rowston, *Baptists in Van Diemen's Land, The Story of Tasmania's First Baptist Church* (Hobart, Baptist Union of Tasmania, 1985), p9 citing Francis Edgar letter of 20 February 1836, NS 724 TSA.

² LEx 29 August 1865, p5c7 and 4 June 1866, p3c5.

³ Rowston, *Baptists in Van Diemen's Land* citing Samuel Cozens, *Tribute of Affection* (Hudson and Hopwood, Launceston, 1869), p6; John Roberts, *A Mirror of Religion and Society in Tasmania During the Years 1857 and 1858* (Hobart Town, Walch & Sons, 1858), p20; *Colonial Record*, 11 March 1839, p3c2 and 18 March 1839, p2c3; *Hobart Town Courier*, 9 January 1839.

Dowling's toleration of other creeds was not followed by his most successful student, Daniel Allen, 'the scourge of the papacy in the late 1870s'. Allen migrated to Australia, arriving in Sydney in January 1845. He soon left for Launceston, where he met up with his father and joined Dowling's church and was baptised by him. In 1849 he moved to Melbourne and began to preach, gathering around him those of like mind. While preaching on the gold fields in 1868, he created controversy at Eaglehawk on the subject of baptism.⁴ Arriving back in Launceston in 1869 in time for the Rev Henry Dowling's death, he lectured on baptismal regeneration⁵ at the Mechanics' Institute claiming that 'immersion was the only mode authorized by the word of God'.⁶

Robert McCullough at Longford

Baptists were the first church grouping known to introduce baptism by immersion to Van Diemen's Land but there was little outcry against the practice until the decades of the 1870s and 1880s when Disciples of Christ and Brethren evangelists and Baptists from Spurgeon's College

began work in areas already occupied by churches that did not practice baptism by immersion. The rite of baptism proved an acute difficulty in working with other Free Church bodies.

One of the first of Spurgeon's men in Tasmania who caused an outcry over who should be baptised and in what form baptism should take, was Robert McCullough who arrived in Tasmania on 1 January 1880 with JS Harrison and Thomas Spurgeon.

McCullough's first sphere of work was at Longford, five kilometres from Perth.⁷ He remained there for four years. It was not an entirely new work. Baptists were already conducting community church services in what was then known as the Assembly Rooms. The Rev Alfred William Grant from the Perth Baptist chapel commenced these services in 1870.⁸ Perth's pastor at the time of McCullough's arrival, the Rev GW Gillings, as well as his wife Harriet (a capable preacher in her own right), continued this practice.⁹ On Sunday 4 January 1880 McCullough, 'in usual neat and chaste style', and Harrison, preached at both the Perth Baptist chapel and at the Longford Assembly

⁴ LEx 16 April 1868, p5c1.

⁵ Baptismal regeneration holds that salvation is dependent upon the act of baptism. In baptism there is the washing away of the guilt of original sin by the application of the merits of the death of Christ and the interior baptism by the Holy Spirit which is the 'new birth'. Supporters of this doctrine include the Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Lutheran and Anglican churches, as well as the Church of Christ (in earlier times).

⁶ LEx 3 March, p2c5, 5 March, p3c1 and 10 March 1870, p6c5; for reply see 17 March 1870, p5c5-6; for Daniel Allen's letter on baptismal regeneration see LEx 8 March 1870, p6c4; for replies see 5 April 1870, p5c7; 12 March, p5c5-6, 15 March, p6c2 and 19 March 1870, p3c5-6; for responses see *Tasmanian Independent*, March 1870 and for a further reply LEx 22 March 1870, p6c3-5. The first Baptist baptism in Deloraine took place in a baptistry in chapel grounds in West Barrack Street in 1864 and the occasion created 'considerable interest', see LEx 23 January 1864, p3c1.

⁷ In Longford the Anglican Christ Church opened in October 1841. On 27 January 1862 Longford was proclaimed a municipality. The population of the municipality was then about 5000, and included the towns of Cressy, Bishopsbourne and Perth. It was represented in Parliament at this time in the Legislative Council and in the House of Assembly. The Launceston and Western railway was opened in 1871; see *Cyclopedia of Tasmania* (Hobart, Maitland and Krone, 1900), p. 206.

⁸ See Chapter Four.

⁹ LEx 21 May, p3c6 and 25 May 1878, p3c1. In Baptist circles at this time women rarely played a role in preaching. For Harriet's obituary see *Victorian Baptist* August 1890, p. 122. Her views on women's ministry were carried in *Victorian Baptist* of January 1892.

Rooms,¹⁰ and McCullough would continue to share the Assembly Room services with the Gillings.¹¹ On the second Sunday, 11 January, McCullough preached there again 'to a large congregation' and informed the gathering that the Baptists intended to build a place of worship in Longford as soon as a suitable site could be procured.¹² This was not good news to the Longford Wesleyans who were building a new church building.¹³

By May 1880 work had begun on the new Longford Tabernacle which, with its manse, would cost £2,000.¹⁴ The foundation stone was laid by Mary Ann Gibson on 11 June 1880.¹⁵ There are accounts which state that Gibson sold one of his merino rams at the Royal Melbourne Show for 1,000 guineas and used this money to build the Tabernacle.¹⁶ The Longford building of 'a neat and substantial appearance, without anything grand in the way of architecture', was opened by Thomas Spurgeon on 11

December 1880.¹⁷ Just over a week later McCullough baptised four females. One of the first baptismal candidates was Eva Richardson of Longford and she soon became the young minister's wife. The Baptists soon learned that they were a despised sect, widely reported in the newspapers of the day. The public baptism resulted in reactions from other Longford ministers who felt obliged to defend their own church's practices. Denominational warfare commenced. Within a week of the announcement of the opening of a Baptist church in Longford, the Launceston *Examiner* reported:

A pamphlet upon 'Christian Baptism' by the Rev B Butchers, BA, of Victoria (formerly of Hobart and reprinted from the *Spectator* and *Methodist Chronicle*, the organ of the Wesleyan body in that colony), has been extensively circulated in Longford lately and on Sunday morning a distribution took place at the doors of the Wesleyan Church, the writer's object to truly disabuse readers on the necessity of immersion pamphlets on baptism. Copies have also been sent through the mail to persons attending the Baptist Tabernacle.¹⁸

This would be the beginning of McCullough's 'many discouragements, for the other churches in the town saw him as an intruder'.¹⁹ James Byard Senior of Chudleigh, an aged Baptist now removed from the Strict and Particular Baptist chapel in York Street, Launceston, had published in the Launceston *Examiner* his lengthy estimate of Butchers'

¹⁰ For McCullough's style of preaching see LEX 16 December 1882 supplement, p1c6-7.

¹¹ LEX 2 January 1880, p2c5 and advertisement 3 January 1880, p5c1.

¹² LEX 14 January 1880, p3c4.

¹³ LEX 17 April 1880, p3c1.

¹⁴ LEX 1 May 1880, p5c7.

¹⁵ LEX 12 June, p2c4; 15 June, p3c6 and 18 June 1880, p3c5.

¹⁶ 'A Short History of the Deloraine Baptist Church, 1859-1959', p. 5 (in the Baptist holdings of the archives of the University of Tasmania); Greg Luxford, *William & Mary Ann Gibson* (Perth, Gould Books, 1984) p. 4. The figure of 1000 guineas for even a prized animal seems excessive. LEX 12 September 1888 p2c5 reported that William's son, William Gibson Junior, sold a ram for 620 guineas and another for only 100 guineas; LEX 10 June 1880 p3c4 reported that the Deloraine Tabernacle, identical to the Longford Tabernacle, was a gift of both William Gibson and his son and later the LEX also reported that the Deloraine Tabernacle, including the manse, cost £2,500, see LEX 16 December 1882 supplement, p1c6-7.

¹⁷ LEX Supplement 15 December 1880, p1c5; advertisement 10 December, p3c6 and 17 December 1880 supplement, p2c7.

¹⁸ LEX 19 January 1881, p3c3; Butchers was based in Geelong, see LEX 11 February 1880, p2c5.

¹⁹ S&T Pastors' College Annual Report 1886.

widely disseminated work having read it 'with mingled feelings of amusement, astonishment, and disgust'. Although glad that it would set people thinking upon the subject of baptism, he could not see any truthfulness in Butchers' assertion that 'there is not throughout the New Testament a solitary trace of any such baptisms as are now administered in the Baptist Churches.' The learned Byard, drawing on *Robinson's History of Baptism*,²⁰ referred to the witnesses from early church history as to the rightness of baptism by immersion, witnesses such as Augustine, Ambrose and Jerome. He also added:

Messrs Gibson might build as many Tabernacles, and the so-called Evangelists might dip as many people as they like in their close neighbourhood without much danger of exciting their ire or disturbing their equanimity in the least.

He insinuated that Butchers was the one who was importing controversy where there was none. He concluded: 'I will gladly wipe my hands of this paltry pamphlet and its worse than worthless contents,' adding that he never saw, nor heard of such things 'in England or the colonies till told of it by Mr. Butchers, B.A.'²¹

The following month McCullough flew again the Baptist colours by immersing on a Friday evening sixteen folk in the baptistry of his Tabernacle.²² In August he set the cat among the pigeons with a devious and most provocative advertisement in the Launceston *Examiner*.

²⁰ Robert Robinson's *The History of Baptism* was originally published in London, England in 1790. David Benedict edited the book and re-published it in Boston in 1817.

²¹ LEx 21 March 1881, p3c5-7.

²² LEx 16 April 1881 supplement, p1c7.

TEN POUNDS REWARD – The undersigned is a humble disciple of the Lord Jesus. He is very anxious to obey exactly his master's commandments. He also loves other Christians, and would most gladly unite in fellowship with them. It would even be advantageous to him to join another denomination, but he has separated himself hitherto on a scruple of baptism. He will, therefore, give a reward of 5 pounds to any person producing a text commanding infants to be sprinkled. He will also give a reward of 5 pounds to any person who will demonstrate that Matthew xxviii, 19 commands the sprinkling of infants and not the immersion of disciples. Robert McCullough, Longford.²³

McCullough's advertisement set off an extensive literary feud:

- Immersion is drowning—Mat. xxviii.19. All taught must be baptized, and none must forbid water to be brought in a basin to be used in this rite. Acts x.47. Immersion is not baptism.²⁴

- I would suggest that Mr M'Cullough be more guarded, both as to what he says and what he writes, in future. – Yours truly, FARMER.²⁵

- From an outside view of your community in Launceston there doth not appear to be any strife or

²³ LEx 6 August 1881, p3c7. In the June issue of 1876 *Christian Witness* 'T.T.', a 'Tasmanian Baptist champion' from the York Street chapel offered a purse of one hundred sovereigns to anyone who could 'produce one single precept or example within the boards of that same Testament, as authority for the sprinkling of an infant.' TT was possibly John Prescodd, see *Christian Witness* 8 June 1876 p5. For the *Christian Witness* debate, see *Christian Witness*, 22 June pp. 8f and 14 December 1876 pp. 8f.

²⁴ LEx 5 August 1881, p3c6.

²⁵ LEx 6 August 1881, p3c8.

striving for the mastery amongst the different sects of religion, but all classes appear to have but one motive in view, namely, the advance of their Redeemer's Kingdom in the salvation of sinners, and brotherly love. This is one of the best Heaven-born blessings within the reach of mankind, especially in a large community like Launceston: may the God of Heaven whom you serve, ever protect you to live in peace and work together aide by side, however you may differ in creeds. We of Longford in our nutshell community have for many years as far as I know amongst the different sects, worked together in peace and brotherly love; but since the Baptists have been amongst us an antagonism has arisen, first from a panegyric on Christian Baptism. I wrote to the party at the time (important as this matter was), stating that it could do no good and altogether uncalled for; I saw the storm gathering. This panegyric has been floating upon the surface of public converse for some months. There is but very little genuine godliness, pure faith, or life-raising. W. BOND SEN. Bondville.²⁶

For his effort Bond received in his mail eleven tracts on immersion which pleased him little.²⁷ 'Pasquin' from the *Daily Telegraph* in his column, 'THIS AND THAT', countered with a humorous article noting: 'More water the better according to the recent immersion controversy that means in plain English less Greek but more creek', informing his readers that McCullough has offered a reward of

£10 to anyone who will prove that baptism does not mean dipping. He continued:

All I can say is that Paul I know and Barnabas I know, but the knowledge of the Rev Mr. McCullough is a luxury yet to be enjoyed. I do know this however that ... if a person is dipped plunged, washed, dyed, sprinkled, doused or poured upon, if he is not baptized he ought to be and if 'much water' is needed, and the controversialists cannot agree as to the exact mode .. while they conjugate the verb 'baptiso' till further orders.²⁸

With so much antagonism in Longford over the question of what form baptism should take and who should be baptised,²⁹ the Wesleyan circuit minister convened a meeting in which a literary search would be conducted for immersion references among the baptismal references of the New Testament. The subsequent attendance was larger than usual and went on longer than usual. A few Sundays earlier his sermon topic had been, 'The baptism of our Lord not immersion, and not an example to be followed by His people.'³⁰

Disputes over Baptism in the Kentish Area

From 1872 baptism by immersion was practised by the Brethren Christian Assemblies evangelists in the Kentish area through the efforts of two travelling evangelists, William Brown and Edward Moyse. With Baptists not yet in the area, believers' baptism by immersion proved a novelty creating intense interest.³¹ The Disciples of

²⁶ LEx 8 August 1881, p3c6. Bond was a sincere but not ultra devout Wesleyan, and the pillar of the Longford Good Templars. Bond rather enjoyed rows. An ex-convict, he was a bark farmer doing well. Information supplied by Richard Ely.

²⁷ LEx 11 August 1881, p4c1.

²⁸ *Daily Telegraph* 10 August 1881 p3c3-4.

²⁹ LEx 8 August 1881, p3c6.

³⁰ LEx 23 August 1881, p3c7.

³¹ Alan F Dyer, *God Was Their Rock* (Sheffield, 1974), pp. 6ff; *Cornwall Chronicle*, 25 June

Christ (now Church of Christ) also began in the area at the same time. Mr and Mrs RC Fairlam came from Victoria to live at Northdown on the North-west Coast in April 1865. The fledging denomination opened a church in Latrobe in 1872. Mr W Moffit, also of the Disciples of Christ, was active for some years at their New Ground (Moriarty) chapel. Over one month in 1879 he used a new baptistry at a private house in Northdown to baptise thirteen converts.³²

The youthful George Bickford Moysey, another of the Disciples of Christ evangelists, also worked in the area. He was born of English parents, in Beaumaris, Victoria, on 13 December 1850. His first churches in Victoria were at Carlton and Collingwood. He had an intensely musical nature, and his gospel meetings were frequently helped by appropriate solos rendered by him. Moysey was instrumental in winning Tasmanian Stephen Cheek³³ to the Disciples of Christ cause. According to the *Devon Herald* Moysey was short, with a very neat moustache and well-formed mutton-chop whiskers, of less polish and less of a student than his Latrobe rival, the aged and studious American Congregationalist, the Rev John Bennett, in whose 'hands the Queen's English ... never suffers'.³⁴ According to local personality Thomas

Hainsworth, Bennett was an 'eloquent preacher and popular lecturer and classical scholar' who had 'been heard in two hemispheres, and we all know what he has done to advance Latrobe, morally, socially, religiously and intellectually...'³⁵ Moysey was active in Hobart in 1874, having replaced Oliver Anderson Carr who had begun at the Strict and Particular Baptist chapel in Harrington Street.³⁶ While in Hobart, Moysey responded to a series of articles on infant baptism in the *Christian Witness*, the literary organ of the Congregational church.³⁷

The paedobaptist churches of Latrobe did not take kindly to these Brethren or the Disciples of Christ evangelists questioning their practices as the majority of people had been at least christened. Prejudice arose against these 're-baptisers', as they were called. The Church of England had been at the nearby New Ground (Moriarty) since 1851. In Latrobe, Saint Luke's Church of England opened in May 1868. The following year, on 24 October 1869, a Wesleyan Methodist Church

1875, p3c1; Robert Evans, *Early Evangelical Revivals in Australia* (2000), pp. 151-153.

³² *Devon Herald* (hereafter DH), 26 March 1879, p2c4; 8 January, p2c4 and 12 November 1881, p2c2.

³³ Richard Ely, 'Communities of Generation, Communities of Choice: Stephen Cheek at Bream Creek', by, *Lucas*, No.12, December 1991, pp. 6-41. Cheek was later involved in disputes over baptism with Baptists in Queensland, see Ken R Manley, *From Woolloomooloo to 'Eternity': A History of Australian Baptists* (Milton Keynes, Paternoster, 2006) vol. 2, p. 455.

³⁴ DH, 1 February 1887, p2c5.

³⁵ DH, 24 July 1885, p3c1 and 24 April 1888, p2c5. The Churches of Christ hold that churches should be similar to those described in the New Testament, simple and with autonomous congregations – similar to that of the Christian Brethren, though of American not British influences. The first members arrived in Tasmania in 1865, when the Fairlam family moved to Northdown, Latrobe, and began a church. In the 1870s churches were set up in Launceston and Hobart. They were listed in 1872 merely as 'Christians', from 1885 as 'Disciples of Christ', and from 1915 as 'Churches of Christ', see Alison Alexander, 'Churches of Christ' in A Alexander (ed.), *Companion to Tasmanian History* (Hobart, Centre for Tasmanian Historical Studies, University of Tasmania, 2005), p. 76.

³⁶ Church Minutes of 11 April 1862; *Truth in Love* (Hobart), January 1882, p. 7.

³⁷ Thomas Hagger, *Heralds of Christian Unity: Being Brief Biographical Sketches of Some Pioneers of the Restoration Movement* (Melbourne, Austral Printing and Publishing Company, 1938).

opened.³⁸ A Congregational Church opened in April 1877 under the charge of Bennett who for more than a decade would publicly combat the re-baptisers. The Salvation Army opened a barracks in Latrobe in December 1883.

About the middle of 1870, a public school was opened in Latrobe in a temporary building and Thomas Hainsworth, assisted by his wife, became its master. He had just transferred from the school at Table Cape. Through the 1880s Wesleyan Hainsworth became one of Latrobe's leading citizens and he and the Rev John Bennett of the Latrobe Congregational Church engaged in a number of very public feuds through the *Devon Herald* over the nature of the temperance movement.³⁹ In one of these feuds Bennet attacked Hainsworth with a most revealing epitaph, 'Noble Thomas Hainsworth! – would that your "double immersion" had made you another man!'⁴⁰ It appears that Hainsworth had been re-baptised by immersion by either the Brethren or more likely the Disciples of Christ.

Those who baptised by immersion on the declaration of faith insisted that if members of another denomination came to see baptism as a matter of personal obedience, what else could they do but baptise them and receive them? The Disciples of Christ received some support by a paid advertisement in the *Devon Herald* in June 1881 in the form of a lengthy play on the 'Trial of Simon Peter'.⁴¹

³⁸ The Latrobe Wesleyan church was relocated from Sherwood having been built in the 1850s. The foundation stone of a new brick church was laid on 9 July 1879.

³⁹ DH, 28 January, p3c2; 11 February, p3c3 and 14 February 1880, p2-3c5-6.

⁴⁰ DH, 13 August 1881, p3c4.

⁴¹ DH, 4 June 1881, p3c4.

By 1885 the Baptists were also infiltrating the area but it would be some years before a Baptist body would form. In late 1885 the *Launceston Examiner* reported:

FORMBY November 16 – An excursion of the members of the Baptist community, numbering from 30 to 40 persons, arrived today by the river steamer *Thistle* from Latrobe. After proceeding to the buoy they landed, and spent a pleasant day in rambling and picnicking on the beach, returning in the evening to Latrobe.⁴²

A letter rebutting the size of the Baptist body and its claims soon followed:

You have received a curious statement from Formby the other day, viz. that 30 or 40 of 'the Baptist community' from Latrobe alighted here per *Thistle* for a picnicking. Your readers ought to be informed that there is no such body as a 'Baptist community' in Latrobe, but an individual who gathers 2 or 3 others to his house to 'break bread', and teach that immersion saves men, and they are alone the church of Christ – sentiments which every intelligent Baptist reprobates. These occasionally beat the bush and pick up innocent strangers, as recently, and go a-picnicking. – Baptist.⁴³

In response a further letter appeared early in December:

I was much surprised and grieved at reading the letter signed 'Baptist' in the open columns of your issue of 27th. Surprised to find we had such a man in Tasmania, and grieved to think he had been allowed to give publicity to such deliberate misrepresentations. First he says

⁴² LEx 17 November 1885, p3c1.

⁴³ LEx 27 November 1885, p3c8, letter by Baptist.

there is no 'Baptist community at Latrobe, only an individual who,' etc. (here 'Baptist' vents his personal petty spleen in a few false remarks), and 'these (the individual) beat the bush,' etc., which seems to me to be much like carrying out the old command of 'Go to the highways and hedges.' Now for the truth of 'Baptist's' letter. This individual gathers others to his house to 'break bread' — no harm in that all must admit — and teach that 'immersion saves men!' A wilful misrepresentation. They teach that baptism with faith and repentance, or as the outcome of these and as an act of obedience, saves men. They teach 'He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved'. Baptists teach the same, else why do they baptise? This scribe continues, 'They teach they alone are the Church of Christ.' Another misrepresentation. They say that only those who take the Bible for their guide constitute the Church of Christ, or Christians, and they refuse to accept any other name than Christians, or members of the Church of Christ. —Yours, etc., CHRISTIAN.⁴⁴

By early 1887 Baptists and Presbyterians had commenced services in Latrobe so competing with the Church of England, the Roman Catholics, the Independents (Congregationalists), the Disciples of Christ, the Salvation Army and the Wesleyans. On 3 and 4 February 1887 a debate took place in the Oddfellow's Hall, incidentally the building in which the Baptists were meeting, between Disciples of Christ Moysey, who during the debate 'persisted in reading quotations from the lexicons' and Congregationalist

Bennett on the question of baptism.⁴⁵ The Methodists saw the Brethren and Church of Christ evangelists as 'teachers of divers and strange doctrines'.⁴⁶

In the public press the anti-Moysey side asked Moysey if the Church of Christ holds that it is essential to salvation that everyone should be immersed? Furthermore, do the Disciples of Christ preach all persons that die, or have died in the past, without having been baptised by immersion, are inevitably damned?⁴⁷ The Baptists were also attacked publicly.⁴⁸

By 1887 the Rev Henry George Blackie, one of the five Spurgeon's College men in the colony, was appointed to supervise the Baptist work in Latrobe thus making the Baptists the eighth religious group in the town. Latrobe at that time had a population of less than 3000. In March of that year Blackie 'dipped' six of his converts in the River Mersey witnessed by a crowd of 300. For the Latrobe Baptists at this time there was no alternative but to conduct baptisms in a public place.⁴⁹ Further open air baptisms followed.⁵⁰ In 1891 Baptists in nearby Sheffield were also stirring up other denominations, among them the Anglicans. The Anglican Canon Missioner of St David's cathedral, the Rev AW Icely, in defending his own

⁴⁵ DH, 18 January 1887, p2c6 and 21 January 1887, p2c6. For the actual debate see 1 February 1887, p2c5.

⁴⁶ CC Dugan, *A Century of Tasmanian Methodism, 1820-1920* (Hobart, Tasmanian Methodist Assembly, 1920), p. 74.

⁴⁷ DH, 4 February 1887, p2c5.

⁴⁸ Samuel B Pitt wrote in 1891, 'When [the Baptists] first started [at Latrobe], a resident minister who thought them intruders preached against them in the open air, and said this doctrine of theirs [regarding baptism] was of the devil.' See *Day-Star*, August 1891, p. 499.

⁴⁹ DH, 29 March 1887, p2c4.

⁵⁰ *Day-Star*, (1886-1894), March 1888 p. 43, recorded a further baptism in the river Mersey.

⁴⁴ LEx 5 December 1885 supplement, p1c7, letter.

church's practice in respect of baptising children, was taken to task by Baptists for saying that unbaptised infants are no better than dogs.⁵¹

The Baptist – Methodist Dispute in Burnie of 1899

In the middle of 1899 the Rev Harry Wood⁵² arrived in Burnie to commence a new Baptist cause in the town, with services at the Town Hall. In Burnie Wood engaged in a lengthy and public dispute on the nature of baptism and to whom it should be administered. Some years later he recorded his early days there:

When I commenced work here... there was a very strong spirit of opposition to the new Baptist cause, both from the church and the world. We were attacked by pulpit and press. We were looked upon as a new sect.⁵³

But the Baptists were late comers in the town. Primitive Methodist the Rev William H Walton was there in 1867. He had commenced his ministry in England in 1859 and arrived in Tasmania four years later. Initially stationed in Longford, Walton paid visits to pioneering settlements on the Coast. Finally, he was appointed to the North-West Coast Methodist Mission. He is credited with opening up the Primitive Methodist work in the area. Their headquarters was at the newly erected Mission House at nearby Penguin. The Penguin Methodist circuit of 1867 under Walton included Emu Bay (Burnie) as a preaching place. Apart from the Primitive Methodist Church building which opened at Penguin Creek in 1867, the United Methodist Free Church which was active in the town

from 1882 until the union of 1902 was permitted to use the old Primitive building. For a time the Wesleyans included Penguin in its circuit. In those days there were three categories of Methodists in Tasmania – Walton's Primitives who held to the early Methodist 'Camp Meetings' of day-long, open air meetings involving public praying, preaching and 'love feasts'. Then there were the Wesleyans who would have nothing to do with 'camp meetings'. Finally, the United Methodist Free Church arrived in 1885. In 1867 the population of Burnie just exceeded 400 persons.⁵⁴

On 9 July 1899 Wood preached at the Town Hall on the subject of baptism quoting from the 'highest authorities of other denominations and the Bible in support of baptism by immersion'.⁵⁵

The Town Hall message, which carried the sentiment that the Baptists 'refuse to stay with the corrupt Church of the 4th and 5th centuries', and they 'will press back to the first, when she had come fresh from the hand of her Lord. Her early practice shall be our guide,' inflamed a local Methodist minister.⁵⁶ Using the pen-name of 'Iipse Dixit', he led the attack having considered the Town Hall message as 'a most extravagant one' and further, that Wood had distributed tracts on

⁵⁴ Wesleyan work in the area closed about 1896, but early in 1900, the United and Primitive churches agreed to Union. The United and Wesleyan buildings were sold and the two Primitive buildings were moved to the present site and now form the Sunday school hall. The present church's foundations were laid in January 1901, and the church completed in June at a cost of £1700, with a debt of £1000.

⁵⁵ *Emu Bay Times*, 18 July, p4c4; 27 July, p4c1; 24 August 1899, p4c3-5 and 5 September 1899, p4c6.

⁵⁶ The Methodist minister was most likely the Rev William Hamilton who was from the United Methodist Free Church. He was based at Burnie in 1901 and then at Deloraine in 1902 and 1903.

⁵¹ *Day-Star*, March 1891, p. 428; LEx 18 July 1887, p2c6.

⁵² For Wood's story up to this time see Chapters Three and Five.

⁵³ S&T 1900 p. 323.

baptism to non-Baptists and this was an example of 'denominational discourtesy'. Charged 'Ipse Dixit':

...we cannot suppose that he was so indifferent about the matter as not to enquire who the young man was, and whether he belonged to any church; and he must have known that such an act was a 'breach of denominational discourtesy'.⁵⁷

Wood replied that he only gave out tracts to those who requested them. Wood claimed the right as a Free Churchman to preach the whole truth as he found it in the Word of God.⁵⁸

Another charge of denominational discourtesy by the Baptists began the subsequent feud in Burnie four years later between the Baptists on the one side and the Methodists and Congregationalists on the other. It began in 1903 when the Baptists of Burnie, under the leadership of the Rev Samuel Harrison, sought to open a work along the coast at nearby Penguin.⁵⁹

Spurgeon's men were not sectarian but seen as such. They were accommodating denominationalists whose ultimate purpose was that of 'saving souls'. They were only too

happy to work with fellow Christians of all shades of opinions and as prejudice diminished, they were readily accepted. This is seen in Robert McCullough's case. As early as September 1882 the *Launceston Examiner* reported that Robert McCullough had become a popular minister in Longford through the liberality of the Gibsons.⁶⁰ Such were the numbers at his farewell in October 1883, that the Longford Tabernacle needed seating in both aisles. At the following tea meeting, which 'was extensively patronized', there needed to be 'not only a second but a third relay'. Among the speakers were the Revs F Sinden (Primitive Methodist) and C Dunboug (Wesleyan).⁶¹

In Latrobe in 1890 there was such a turnout of children and adults for the annual Baptist Sunday school picnic that the Baptists declared that the event was 'an evident sign that the Baptist cause has gained considerable favour in this district.'⁶² In 1903 'Ipse Dixit', the Methodist of Deloraine, confessed, 'I have differed from Mr Wood in controversy and may have been led to say some stinging things, still I admire him for his work's sake ...'⁶³ In Latrobe the Wesleyans, Congregationalists, the Salvation Army and the Baptists combined in time for evangelistic effort.⁶⁴ For Perth's Annual picnic on New Year's Day 1900, the Anglican and the Wesleyan Sabbath schools were present by invitation.⁶⁵

⁵⁷ *Emu Bay Times*, 21 September 1899, p4c2, letter by Deloraine Methodist. Wesley Bligh in *Altars of the Mountains in which is told the story of the Baptist Church of Tasmania*, Launceston, Baptist Union of Tasmania, (1935) says that at the height of the controversy Wood received a visit from a minister of another denomination, who, with evident distress, urged him to stop the controversy as it was emptying his church.

⁵⁸ *Emu Bay Times*, 24 August 1899, p4c3-5.

⁵⁹ *Advocate*, 23 May 1903, p4c1; 1 June 1903, p4c1, letter by Samuel Harrison; 5 June 1903, p4c2 letter by Samuel Harrison; 11 June 1903, p4c4-5, letter by Samuel Harrison; 12 June 1903, p4c1; 25 June 1903, p4c1-4, letter by Samuel Harrison; 26 June 1903, p3c2-5, letter by Samuel Harrison; 29 June 1903, p4c1-3, letter by Samuel Harrison; 3 July 1903, p4c1-3; 17 June 1903, p4c1-2.

⁶⁰ LEx 10 May 1882, p3c6. Among his public commitments was membership of the Committee of Longford Library and Reading Room. See LEx 30 September 1882 supplement, p1c8.

⁶¹ LEx 3 October 1883, p4c1.

⁶² *Day-Star*, December 1890, p. 380.

⁶³ *Advocate*, 29 June 1903, p4c1-3.

⁶⁴ *Day-Star*, August 1893, p. 124.

⁶⁵ *Day Dawn and Baptist Church Messenger* (1900-1917) (in the Baptist holdings of the archives of the University of Tasmania), Perth notices, February 1900.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that once the Open Brethren, Disciples of Christ and Spurgeon's College men acted on believer's baptism in Tasmania gaining the nick-name 'dippers', there was inevitable reaction from other church ministers who did not baptise by immersion and so felt obliged to defend their own church's practices. It shows that those who held to a belief in baptism by immersion readily drew the criticism of those who considered that those who immersed were importing unnecessary disharmony into the

evangelical mission of this spiritually needy country. They were also charged with 'sheep stealing', that is, of proselytism, and by not baptising the children in their care, they were guilty of spiritual neglect.

This chapter adds to the growing body of work that shows that for Baptists baptism stood next to conversion in importance in the New Testament. It also demonstrates that while baptism was always fundamental to being a Baptist in those days, as far as a number of other Nonconformists saw it, the Baptists' great offence was in limiting baptism to believers only.

Chapter Seven: Tasmanian Baptists and Higher Criticism

Introduction

Earlier chapters have shown that men in Tasmania from Spurgeon's College clearly rejected the exclusive aspects of Particular Baptists by giving no credence to the idea that the message of salvation was restricted to the elect. Thus, they exhibit little of what remained of Spurgeon's own Calvinism. This chapter will seek to show, however, that they firmly retained his thinking on the interpretation of the Bible, standing firm against all the modernist thinking associated with Higher Criticism. This chapter will commence with a study of Charles Spurgeon's response to Higher Criticism and the Downgrade incident. From this foundation the use of the Bible by Spurgeon's men in Tasmania will be considered focusing on the thoughts of JS Harrison, Alfred Bird and others. Some context will be given by considering Freethinkers in Tasmania at the time. Other examples, too, will be considered, including that of Lily Soundy of Hobart 'rejoicing in old truths'; Soundy's pastor was a Spurgeon's man. To further highlight Tasmanian Baptist thinking at the time, consideration will be given to Dr John Clifford's visit to Hobart and the theological differences between Tasmanian and South Australian Baptists as shown in the turn of the century disputes.

Charles Spurgeon and Higher Criticism

Through the 1880s no human figure was more revered among Tasmanian Baptists than Charles H Spurgeon himself. He was a dramatic symbol of what it meant to be an evangelical and a Baptist. Generally, his Tasmanian men aspired to be evangelical in his mould. Through his Pastors' College,

Spurgeon set himself the task of producing preachers of the gospel: not scholars but those who could 'get to the hearts of the masses, to evangelise the poor - this is the College ambition, this and nothing else', he wrote, and if for this purpose it was necessary to allow a 'lowering of the average of scholarship, so be it,' he continued. The curriculum of the college embraced classic Puritan theology set within a broad context of scientific, philosophical and historical knowledge, with appropriate instruction in biblical languages and contemporary church work. Spurgeon's College was far more than an academic institution. The College engendered loyalty, community and fellowship which indirectly created a formidable psychological barrier to 'modernist thinking'. The environment gave no room for the questioning of Spurgeon's and other tutors' opinions. It thereby failed to really deal with new ideas about nature, evolution, and biblical reliability.¹ Kenneth Brown says that modernistic views were taught only to be able to defend what was being propagated elsewhere on the basis that preachers must know the errors of their day in order to meet them. Spurgeon was only interested in inculcating certainty, otherwise faith could be weakened and resolve dispersed.² Of his College he wrote:

We know nothing of the new ologies, we stand by the old ways. The improvements brought forth by what is called 'modern thought' we regard with suspicion, and believe

¹ David Hempton, *Evangelical Disenchantment: Nine Portraits of Faith and Doubt* (Yale, Yale University Press 2008).

² Willis B Glover, *Evangelical Nonconformists and Higher Criticism in the Nineteenth Century* (London, Independent Press, 1954). pp. 163, 191.

them to be, at best, dilutions of the truth, and most of them old, rusted heresies, tinkered up again and sent abroad with a new face put upon them, to repeat the mischief which they wrought in ages past. We are old-fashioned enough to prefer Manton to Maurice, Charnock to Robertson, and Owen to Voysey.³

While the second half of the nineteenth century in England was marked by intense religious mindedness, high church attendance and much learning and thought,⁴ its decades were also of much intellectual and religious uncertainty and confusion. In the light of their knowledge of the physical world men and women were finding it difficult to subscribe to Christian creeds and to accept the literal truth of scripture. Many Christians were also troubled by the development of biblical criticism and by unease regarding the doctrines of hell and substitutionary atonement, which as currently proclaimed, seemed to involve the eternal punishment of sinners and unbelievers in a way contrary to the conception of a merciful God. For those who were accustomed to thinking of the Bible as totally reliable in all matters, the new Higher Criticism seemed to challenge the very basis of their faith. Higher critics were applying the same methods of textual, historical

³ Charles H Spurgeon, *Autobiography, Volume 2: 1854-1860* (London, Passmore and Alabaster, 1898), p. 149, ie., Puritan Thomas Manton (1620-1677) to Professor Frederick Denison Maurice (1805-1872) mentor to Bishop John William Colenso, Puritan Stephen Charnock (1628-1680) to F W Robertson who denied the doctrine of everlasting punishment and vicarious atonement, and Puritan John Owen (1616-1683) to Charles Francis Annesley Voysey who was tried as heretic for denying the doctrine of everlasting hell.

⁴ Elie Halevy, *A History of the English People in the Nineteenth Century Vol. 4 Victorian Years 1841-1895* (London, Ernest Benn, 1951), pp. 436f.

and literary criticism to the Bible as were applied to other literature.

By 1862 Bishop John William Colenso had caused a great controversy with his work, *The Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua Critically Examined*, when he tried to remove points of doctrine which men of the mid-nineteenth century found impossible to believe.⁵ On the other hand, Burgon's 1861 *Inspiration and Interpretation*, seven sermons preached to his students at the University of Oxford, being a standard work for ministerial students (the creed of the school in which Colenso was educated), stated:

The BIBLE is none other than the Voice of Him that sitteth upon the Throne! Every book of it — every chapter of it — every verse of it — every word of it — every syllable of it — (where are we to stop?) every letter of it — is the direct utterance of the Most High! The Bible is none other than the word of God — not some part of it more, some part of it less, but all alike, the utterance of Him, who sitteth upon the Throne — absolute — faultless — unerring — supreme.⁶

By 1875 traditional understandings of Christianity were being subjected to rigorous social, intellectual and theological criticism. Established Christian beliefs concerning human origins and the authority of Scripture were being assailed by new approaches to science and biblical Higher Criticism.⁷

⁵ For a Tasmanian response, see the Rev James Hutchinson's address at the 1863 Cornwall Auxiliary Bible Society meeting, LEx 17 March 1863, p2.

⁶ George P Landow, *The Aesthetic and Critical Theories of John Ruskin* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1971).

⁷ Textual criticism aimed at ascertaining the genuine text and meaning of an author, while higher or historical criticism sought to answer a series of questions affecting the composition,

The world of religious thought was divided between those who sought to reconcile scientific methods with the scriptures and those who accepted the more critical views of scriptural evidence. In the latter camp were Benjamin Jowett and others who contributed in 1860 to the publication, 'Essays and Reviews'.⁸ The Church of England as well as the main Nonconformist bodies found it far from easy to adjust themselves to a critical study of Scripture hitherto generally regarded as an unbroken unity and verbally infallible.⁹ With the event and publication of the theory of evolution

after 1859, even greater doubts spread about the validity of Christianity.¹⁰

Baptists in Great Britain responded to liberal Protestantism and their responses were varied. John Clifford (1836–1923), the leading British Baptist who had become well known as a Nonconformist of strong conscience, a thoughtful supporter of socialism and open to liberal theological developments, found himself on opposite sides of the issue to Spurgeon.¹¹ Spurgeon's attitude to liberal Protestantism was well-known. He held out against any lessening of the belief in the full literal truth of Scripture. As one of his best-known contemporaries, Dr Joseph Parker, Minister of the City Temple, London, in Spurgeon's obituary for *The Times* in 1892 wrote:

He was ever simple, loving, gentle and boundlessly kind, except when he was stung by the nettle of 'modern thought'. Then he became almost papal; he excommunicated whole assemblies; he issued manifestoes; he darkened the whole chapel sky with thunder, whose bolts of tallow wrought no havoc.

Parker perceived that Spurgeon was intolerant of opposing views:

Mr Spurgeon was absolutely destitute of intellectual benevolence. If men saw as he did they were orthodox; if men saw some things in some other way, they were heterodox, pestilent and

editing and collection of the Sacred Books. The controversy over the use of higher critical methods focused for the most part upon the Old Testament. In particular, critics dismissed the Mosaic authorship and unity of the Pentateuch, arguing that it was the compilation of a number of early documentary fragments brought together by priests after the Babylonian Exile in the sixth century BC. This 'documentary hypothesis' is most often associated with the German scholar, Julius Wellhausen. (Andrew R Holmes, 'Higher Criticism in Irish Presbyterianism, ca 1850-1930', *Church History* 75:2 (June 2006), pp. 343ff.

The critical attitudes to the Bible began in the 16th century and became focused in the Protestant theological faculties in Germany in the mid eighteenth century. By 1800 historical criticism in Germany reached a point where Genesis had been divided into two or more sources, the unity of Isaiah and Daniel had been disputed, the interdependence of the first three Gospels had been demonstrated and the miraculous elements in the Old and New Testaments had been explained as resulting from the primitive or pre-scientific outlook of the Biblical writers. In the hands of non-believers it can be pressed to positions that may be embarrassing to traditional Christian belief. – see JW Rogerson, *The Oxford Companion to Christian Thought*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 297f.

⁸ Halevy, *History of The English People In the Nineteenth Century* vol. 4, p. 437.

⁹ Ernest A Payne, *The Free Church Tradition in the Life of England* (London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1965), p. 113.

¹⁰ Peter N Stearns, *European Society in Upheaval: Social History Since 1750* (London, Macmillan, 1967), p. 175. But by the 1880s there was the acceptance of Higher Criticism by British biblical scholars according to Walter Phillips, *Defending 'a Christian Country': churchmen and society in New South Wales in the 1880* (Brisbane, University of Queensland Press, 1981), p. 138.

¹¹ For Clifford see John HY Briggs, *The English Baptists of the Nineteenth Century* (London, Baptist Historical Society, 1994).

unfit to lead the minds of students or inquirers.¹²

For Spurgeon the Bible was 'perfect and pure'. He challenged people to 'examine it from its Genesis to its Revelation, and find an error.'¹³ Spurgeon and Clifford were personal friends, but Spurgeon was a Calvinist who emphasised evangelism and was totally opposed to alarming new trends in contemporary theology thus swimming strongly against the tide of the age. As the leader of the New Connexion of General Baptists, John Clifford was Arminian in his interpretation of Christianity and he greatly appreciated the new Biblical scholarship while still holding on to the New Testament and its understanding of the church. He opposed unthinking conservatism and saw no clash between science and religion. He was an outstanding speaker, and, like Spurgeon, closely identified with the working class.¹⁴ Clifford had long urged attention to Darwin's work and German Higher Criticism, two issues Spurgeon saw as symptomatic of the 'Down Grade' of Baptist life and thought. Eventually Spurgeon withdrew from the Baptist Union in 1887, and Clifford was subsequently elected its president. In his inaugural address in 1891 Clifford, addressed the topic, 'The Coming Theology'. He argued for the increase in the unity of humanity and a greater appreciation for Christianity. Clifford became the symbol of global Baptist leadership moving into the twentieth century. His openness led to him

gaining a strong voice in both the Baptist World Alliance and the Evangelical Free Churches in Great Britain.¹⁵

Mike Nichols suggests that Spurgeon's brand of Calvinism was 'illogical'. He could declare the majesty of God and the freedom of man. He was dubbed an Arminian by High-Calvinist Baptists who disliked both his open-communion views and the note of gospel invitation in his preaching. Spurgeon defended zealously the doctrines of substitutionary atonement and everlasting punishment, and he maintained belief in an infallible Bible and verbal inspiration. Nichols suggests that Spurgeon's reading was nonetheless selective, neglecting some important subjects:

Spurgeon was reluctant to read anything he regarded as heretical, confessing that when he did do so it was as an unwelcome duty, performed in the belief that he could help refute the error or keep people from falling into it. This criterion more or less wrote off the entire field of biblical criticism so far as he was concerned. Philosophy did not fare much better, near the end of his life he said that its history was absolutely identical with the history of fools, except where it diverges into madness.¹⁶

'The Bible is our Only Guide' for Tasmanian Baptists

The Rev James Samuel Harrison who conducted services at Deloraine and

¹² *The New South Wales Baptist*, April 1892 p. 8 cited by Michael Petras in *Charles Haddon Spurgeon – His influence upon Australia*, 'Our Yesterdays' vol. 1 (Camberwell, Victorian Baptist Historical Society, 1993), p. 64.

¹³ 'Spurgeon on the Bible', *Southern Baptist* (1895-1912) (hereafter SB), 31 August 1899, p. 186.

¹⁴ Roger Hayden, *English Baptist History and Heritage* (Baptist Union of Great Britain, 2005), pp. 128f.

¹⁵ William Henry Brackney, *The Baptists* (New York, Greenwood Press, 1983).

¹⁶ Mike Nicholls, 'Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Educationalist: Part 2 – The Principles and Practice of Pastors' College, *Baptist Quarterly* vol. 32 no.3 (April 1987), pp. 73-94. For further on Spurgeon's brand of Calvinism being 'illogical', see K Dix, *Strict and Particular. English Strict and Particular Baptists in the Nineteenth Century* (Didcot, Baptist Historical Society, 2001), pp. 214ff.

oversaw the reconstituting of the church on 26 December 1880, was a product of the Spurgeon mould. He was content that Deloraine Church's first constitution should simply read, 'For the present the Bible is our only guide as to church matters. We expect it will be enough.'¹⁷

Tasmanian Baptists were focused on the sin of man and that salvation was offered through Christ. They were not learned on the details of Higher Criticism. For example, it was noted by the Rev Alfred Bird at the Annual meeting of the Launceston Mission in 1884, 'here, as in England, there was a mass of deep dark sin.'¹⁸ Bird, a Spurgeon's College graduate, was Pastor of the Launceston Tabernacle. Temperance was also high on the agenda. Bird, too, was uncritical in his use of Scripture texts, completely rejecting both the methods and conclusions of modern biblical scholarship and seeking refuge in Second Coming hopes.¹⁹ The following year he commented on an article written by Congregationalist, the Rev George Clarke, on the inspiration of the Bible by saying that 'the spiritual man discerns that all scripture is given by inspiration of God and so frees men from unbelief.'²⁰ Bird was totally out of his depth in endeavouring to comment on what was being discussed and therefore completely missed what Clarke was trying to say. For Bird and his colleagues, the other evils of the age were foremost in their minds, namely, 'the Social evil, secularism, the love of pleasure, and the Popery'.²¹

¹⁷ TW Fist, *A Brief History of the Deloraine Baptist Church, 1859-1959* (in the Baptist Union of Tasmania holdings at the archives of the University of Tasmania).

¹⁸ LEx 22 May 1884, p3c7.

¹⁹ LEx 26 July p2c7 and 16 August 1884, p2c5.

²⁰ LEx 16 September p3c4-5 and 21 September 1885, p3c8; for the response by Clarke see LEx 24 September 1885, p3c7-8.

²¹ SB, 2 May 1895, p. 109.

William Gibson Junior, President of the Baptist Union of Tasmania for the year 1889-90, set the agenda for the Union's pastors in his Presidential address that year, 'Brethren,' he said, 'men are perishing; hell is filled; heaven's gates are open wide, but God has commanded you to stand between the living and the dead and preach the gospel to every creature, and time is too short to miss a single opportunity.'²² For one and all of Spurgeon's men in Tasmania, the new theology had to be opposed if Christianity were to retain its position as an unerring guide to happiness and heaven.²³ Tasmanian Baptists, when compared with their brethren in Victoria and South Australia, were conservative and proud of the fact. They rejoiced in old truths. They were of such a one mind that one wonders whether there was there a conspiracy of silence among them, which kept those who thought otherwise from speaking out.²⁴

Freethinkers in Tasmania

The Spurgeon's men were not speaking in a vacuum. Freethinker Joseph Symes visited Launceston late in August 1884²⁵ and gave a number of lectures in conjunction with his colleague, Mr M Crystal, the latter

²² *Day-Star* (1886-1894), May 1889, p. 70.

²³ *Day-Star*, 1888, pp. 98f.

²⁴ It appears that there was not one Baptist in Tasmania who was willing at the time to put the case that historical criticism was favourable to Christian belief, a continuation of the Reformation recovery of the Bible and a necessary tool to enable intelligent churchgoers to make sense of it. Neither were they willing nor able to show that the acceptance of historical criticism did not necessarily mean the rejection of the supernatural origins of Christianity. The first hint of dissent in this regard is suggested in the ministry of the non-Spurgeon's College man, the Rev JF McAllister, MA, who was based at Longford from January 1894 to June 1896.

²⁵ LEx 29 August, p3c6; 30 August, p3c7-8; 30 August supplement, p1c1-5 and 1 September 1884, p3c8.

speaking on 'The Mistakes of Moses'.²⁶ Symes had only recently arrived in Australia to head up the Victorian secularists (atheists). In response to one of his lectures, the Anglican, Canon Marcus Brownrigg, gave a reply in the form of a lecture entitled, 'Christianity Contrasted with Modern Belief'.²⁷ Congregationalist, the Rev William Law, also gave a number of lectures on the Bible.²⁸ Symes found a strong follower in the young Miss Ada Campbell who made 'ridicule, sarcasm and a cheap kind of wit' her weapons to convince folk that there was no supreme power or being and that the Bible was riddled with errors. She was seen as 'remarkably clever'. Campbell made her first appearance in Launceston in March 1885. She appeared a number of times that month and in April and on each occasion created quite a stir. The Launceston *Examiner* inadvertently gave her all the publicity she desired.²⁹ Higher Criticism in the hands of non-believers was being pressed to positions that were embarrassing to traditional Christian belief. With the advent of another Freethinker in Launceston in 1886, this time Mr Lucy of Melbourne, Harry Wood, together with the evangelist Dr Henry Grattan Guinness, left for Sydney to fetch HG Picton. Picton was an enthusiastic lay

apologist who took steps in 1883 to bring about the formation of the NSW Association for the Defence of Christianity. Wood considered Lucy worse than Symes because of the wide distribution of his 'Liberators' pamphlets.³⁰

On his arrival at Launceston in December 1890 to take up the pastorate after being on the evangelistic circuits in England, Alfred James Clarke³¹ said plainly that 'he had not come to find anything new in the Bible, but would preach the old truths.' Clarke, a Spurgeon's College evangelist, was known as a man who was 'thoroughly loyal to the Old Gospel'.³²

Baptist Lily Soundy Rejoicing in Old Truths

The strength of the belief in 'old truths' can be seen in the pages of a well-marked and well-worn Bible belonging to Tasmanian Baptist missionary, Lily Soundy. Lily, the daughter of Joshua Tovell Soundy, sat through the ministry of Spurgeon's College men Robert McCullough and James Blaikie at the Hobart Tabernacle. McCullough and Blaikie stood where Spurgeon stood, so in this climate Lily resolved the questions of Genesis by taking the text literally. Her Bible is marked throughout by quotations from such people as the American evangelist, Dwight Lyman Moody. One such quote of Moody reads:

A man came to me with what he thought was a very difficult passage and said – 'Mr. Moody, how do you explain it?' I said, 'I don't explain it.'

²⁶ LEx 25 August 1884, p2c4.

²⁷ LEx 4 September, p3c8 and 6 September 1884 supplement, p1c6; on the Bible see LEx 8 September 1884, p3c4; for Brownrigg lecture see LEx 13 September 1884 supplement, p1c1-6 and on Thomas Hainsworth see 6 October 1884, p3c7.

²⁸ LEx 7 July 1884, p2c5. Years earlier Law had lectured on Pentateuch, see LEx 18 August, p2c7; 1 September, p2c7 and 10 September 1874, p3c1-2.

²⁹ LEx 6 March, p2c7; 16 March, p2c6; letter of reply 27 March, p3c6; 2 April, p3c8; 4 April, p3c7; 11 April supplement, p1c7; 18 April supplement, p1c5; 13 May, p2c7; for advertisement see 6 March 1885, p4c1; Symes was finally refused entry to Mechanics' Institute and Town Hall.

³⁰ Walter Phillips, *Defending 'a Christian Country': churchmen and society in New South Wales in the 1880* (Brisbane, University of Queensland Press, 1981), p. 125 and *Protestant Standard*, 14 August 1886.

³¹ *Day-Star*, (1886 -1894), December 1890, p. 374.

³² *Day-Star*, January 1891, p. 387.

'But how do you interpret it?' 'I don't interpret it.' 'Well, how do you understand it?' 'I don't understand it.' 'But what do you do with it?' 'I don't do anything with it.' 'You don't believe it?' 'Yes, I believe it.'

On another page in her Bible she quotes James Hastings, the compiler of the early Christian dictionary published in a number of volumes:

Christians sometimes try to defend the Word of God. It seems like half a dozen dogs trying to devour a lion in its cage. The best thing to do is to slip the bars and let the lion out, and he will defend himself. And the best thing for us to do is to bring out the Word of God and let the Sword of the Spirit prove its own power as it's pierced even to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit.

In the Genesis section of her Bible she lists all the technical details which a Professor Wright of Oberlin gives in speaking against the tendency of Higher Criticism in not accepting the Biblical account of the Flood. For Lily, God's Word was the anvil on which the sceptic's hammers were worn out.³³

The *Southern Baptist* paper, which began in 1895 as a joint venture of the South Australia, Victorian and Tasmanian Baptist Unions, carried a short story mocking Higher Criticism. The story illustrated that a revised Bible of the Higher Critics meant practically no Bible at all. It spoke of 'an old couple, settled in the old faith, noting their minister's censorship of the old book, [had] applied the scissors to the disputed parts until less than the covers was (sic) left.'³⁴

³³ Lily's Soundy's Bible is in the possession of Laurence F Rowston.

³⁴ *Day-Star*, November 1890, p. 358 and *Day Dawn and Baptist Church Messenger* (1900-1917) (in the Baptist holdings of the archives of the University of Tasmania), 13 December 1900, p. 283.

At the half-yearly meetings in Perth in 1891 another Spurgeon's College student, the Rev Alfred Blackie, gave a paper on the 'Inspiration of the Bible' attacking 'Biblical critics, Professors and D.'sD [Doctors of Divinity] who question its inspiration and attacking men who are called its ministers [who] are undermining the confidence of the simple in what is the basis of their faith, the Word of God.' Blackie noted that Spurgeon was convinced that the Scriptures possessed a verbal as well as a plenary inspiration.³⁵ During the Assembly discussion which followed 'all members were unanimous in holding the Bible as the infallible word of God; in the original manuscript there was no possibility of an error, else the whole book would be worthless. Tasmanian Baptists are not going to bring a penknife to the Bible.'³⁶

Dr Harry Benjafield, Hobart Homeopathic Surgeon, was one with his fellow Baptists in these matters. Speaking as President in 1888 he continued the theme:

...we must be true to the traditions of our denomination, which ... has stood close to the old Bible at all costs. Modern thought is now busy in our churches. Oh yes, it is very fond of the grand old book or rather very fond of certain parts of it, but it very deftly cuts out pages here and there which it does not like. The old book says the sinner shall die eternally if he dies in his sins, but modern thought says, 'Oh, dear no, nothing of the kind, he will be just put into purgatory for a little time, and then God will take him to heaven.' Well, sirs, if this is the true

³⁵ Plenary inspiration is that kind of inspiration which excludes all defects in the utterance of the inspired message. Verbal inspiration is that kind of inspiration which extends to the very words and forms of expression of the divine message.

³⁶ *Day-Star*, October 1891, p. 542.

meaning of the Bible, I do not see the use of building churches, or spending huge sums every year in keeping up a paid ministry to preach. That grand old book gives us teachings about everything - and I don't see why so much of it should be omitted from our pulpit teaching. Shall we fall into line and march into the world with them, or shall we take a firm stand on the old book? The new theology must be opposed if Christianity is to retain its position as an unerring guide to happiness and heaven.³⁷

In opposing the new developments, Benjafield believed that far from ensuring the future of the church, liberal trends in theology were undermining religious vitality. Certainly many Australians supported Spurgeon in his stand against liberalism among English Baptists. Not all Spurgeon's men, of course, were as dogmatic or conservative as the Tasmanians in their theology appeared to be, but many who opposed the inroads of modern scholarship did come from this Spurgeonic tradition. Robert McCullough was one of these.

The 'Down Grade' Controversy and the Visit of Dr John Clifford

On 29 October 1887 Spurgeon resigned from the Baptist Union of Great Britain of which Clifford was President. Tasmanian Baptists sided immediately with Spurgeon. The 'Down Grade' controversy had begun as early as 1883. Following the 'Down Grade' protest, Spurgeon re-structured his Pastors' College Association. Each student was asked to give his consent to a statement of belief agreed to by the College and to agree to resign if his views changed. The creed was rather flexible in its interpretation of scripture but it was an emphatic protest against

the theory of probation after death in any form.³⁸

If there were fears in Britain that the 'Down Grade' might lead to a damaging split in the Baptist Union of Great Britain, no such threat existed in Tasmania such was the support for Spurgeon. The Tasmanian Baptists were glad to report at their Annual meeting in 1899:

We believe that many outside the Denomination are looking to us, while within there are large expectations. We have churches following the teaching of the New Testament so far as we have learned, endeavouring to keep up a thorough separation from the world, and entirely free from contamination with all the wide-spreading errors called Modern Thought. Our Union is formed on a solid doctrinal basis that will enable us to deal with all tendency to error. All this will win for us the confidence of the many who are filled with perplexity in these days of doubt.³⁹

Spurgeon died on 31 January 1892. Having heard of his death, some of the women at the Hobart church draped the pulpit with black and purple material as 'an expression of the world-wide sorrow at the demise of so great a preacher'.⁴⁰ Tributes flowed at the Tasmanian Baptist Annual meetings the following year. The Baptist Union believed that 'much good was done by his fearless outspokenness,' and those gathered declared, 'We pledge ourselves to stand immovably by the same position, and to go on contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints.'⁴¹

³⁸ LEx 5 May 1888, p4c7.

³⁹ *Day-Star*, April 1888, p. 51.

⁴⁰ Laurence F Rowston, *One Hundred Years of Witness*, (unpublished and unabridged version) citing Les Kerr's early hand-written history of the Hobart Baptist Church.

⁴¹ *Day-Star*, May 1892, p. 73.

³⁷ LEx 11 April 1888, p3c5-7; *Day-Star*, May 1888, p. 67.

The theological divide between Tasmania and the other colonies became evident in the Southern Baptist and the Tasmanian Baptist journal, the *Day-Star*. The divide widened in 1897 with the visit of Dr Clifford to the colonies. Clifford's visit demonstrated the fragility of the unity achieved in the joint publishing of the *Southern Baptist*. Clear differences in attitude to 'modern' questions about the Bible, science, social issues and theology appeared in the articles and letters of the paper.⁴² In Adelaide and Melbourne, his visits were extremely successful. In Tasmania the divide was made obvious but not so much in the north as in the south. His tour began in Launceston where he was given a civic welcome. He also met with Launceston's church leaders at the Baptist Tabernacle and spoke on the matter of Higher Criticism. The *Southern Baptist* reported:

There was a general acceptance of many of the conclusions arrived at. These threw a flood of light on many of the books of the Old Testament, historic, prophetic, and poetic. Up till late years the work of the critics had mainly been destructive, as in the cases of Strauss and Bauer. The present work was reconstructive, and many later critics, such as A.B. Bruce, Marcus Dods, and Professor Cheyne, were men of devoted reverential spirit. Clifford also affirmed that the Churches in England never held so firmly as at present the Deity of Jesus. In regards to the atonement, the belief in the fact remained unshaken.⁴³

The following weekend the officers of the Hobart Tabernacle declined to

make Dr Clifford welcome. They refused to allow the Tabernacle to be the venue for his reception. Further, they refused to be present at his welcome at the Temperance Hall. The only Baptist on the platform was Dr Benjafield. In response Dr Clifford said that if the Baptists understood him as he ought to be understood, they would voice their welcome with that of the other denominations represented. But they had acted upon reports which reached them, and which they had not sifted. The reports which had influenced the Baptists, he said, were in the main absolutely false; their judgment was formed on insufficient data. Dr Clifford preached at the New Town and Elizabeth Street Congregational Churches. Hobart was the only Australian city in which he met with such a response from Baptists.⁴⁴

Theological Differences Between Tasmanian and South Australian Baptists

In the late nineteenth century the open membership denominationalism of South Australian Baptists was now fused with a more liberal theology. In 1901 visiting English Baptist Charles Williams declared that South Australian Baptists were 'broad and tolerant'; they belonged 'to the same school as the real leaders of Baptist life and work in England'; moreover, 'conservatives here would be called radicals at home'.⁴⁵

Seven new South Australian Baptist leaders were trained at the United Theological Union College in Adelaide, several of them becoming leaders in the more liberal development among South Australian Baptists. There were other key Baptist figures in South Australia who also fostered a more liberal position. One of these was the

⁴² Ken Manley, *Shapers of our Australian Baptist Identity* (in the holdings of the Victorian Baptist Historical Society, Camberwell). p. 17.

⁴³ SB, 1 July 1897, p. 146.

⁴⁴ *Mercury*, 18 June 1897, p3.

⁴⁵ SB, 13 November 1901, p. 258 and 12 February 1902, p. 39.

Rev John G Raws, who argued that any human system of doctrine was fallible.⁴⁶ Another was the Rev JH Sexton, who advocated a new approach to the Higher Criticism of the Bible.⁴⁷ Sexton became secretary of the South Australian Baptist Union in 1900, was President in 1906 and editor for the state of the *Southern Baptist* from 1905 to 1907. The majority of Baptists in the state, for the next generation at least, were inclined towards his perspectives. For them the basic authority for the Christian was 'the living Christ, not an infallible Bible'.⁴⁸

Sexton also made a long indictment against the *Southern Baptist*, 'Unless difficulties could be overcome the (South Australian) Union agreed it would start its own paper. The view was clearly expressed that liberty of speech is the birthright of an Englishman. It is the birthright of Baptists.'⁴⁹ In their own South Australian Baptist publications, a number of Baptists even attacked Spurgeon's theology.

In 1894 South Australian Baptists were dissatisfied with the conservatism of the Southern Baptist journal under the editorships of the Rev Allan Webb in Victoria and the Rev McCullough now in South Australia at the Parkside Church. Sexton countered, 'The editors love Puritanism and prefer the ancient creeds, evidently believing that theology long ago reached its terminus. It is our loss that the editors do not read the signs of the times.'⁵⁰ McCullough understandably disagreed:

⁴⁶ SB, 28 April 1898, p. 98.

⁴⁷ SB, 16 November 1899, p. 245.

⁴⁸ John Walker, 'The Baptists in South Australia, circa 1900 to 1939', PhD thesis, Flinders University, South Australia, 2006, chapter 2 citing the Handbook of Union College for 1882 (Adelaide 1982), pp. 26f.

⁴⁹ SB, 18 October 1900, p. 235.

⁵⁰ SB, 14 December 1899, p. 269. Also cited by Ken R Manley, *From Woolloomooloo to*

I had an opportunity recently of listening to an exposition of some of the conclusions of the 'Higher Criticism' by a minister who identifies himself with that school. We heard little that was new, and were not much edified, but surprised to learn how much ministerial sympathy there is with these attacks on the old faith. Surely our feet are in slippery places if we are beginning to get our minds filled with doubts about the authenticity of the Book we have revered as the Word of God.

He then went on to question whether the Hebrews 'thought nothing of bringing out a book 400 BC, and pretending it was written by Moses!' McCullough continued:

The great evil of this destructive criticism is that it deals with the whole of the Bible in the same way. It finds a delight in pulling the Book to pieces. Its advocates say they are helping men with their difficulties, but they should rather be charged with making difficulties, for it is through listening to them that so many are becoming bold in their treatment of sacred writings. The terrors of Divine truth have ceased for them, for it is a matter of every man's private judgment what is the Divine and what the human element in the Bible!⁵¹

'Eternity': A History of Australian Baptists (Milton Keynes, Paternoster, 2006) vol. 1, p. 137.

⁵¹ SB, 13 February 1896, p. 31. McCullough's thirty years in Australia appeared to have finally mellowed him on his hard line literalist stance. He came to advocate freedom of conscience much as any of his more liberally inclined colleagues. In the *Southern Baptist* of 1912, in reviewing the history of the Ministers' School of Theology, McCullough commented, 'In the early days there was sometimes a feeling of alarm when opinions were freely expressed which threatened to upset old views. But it is now recognised that we can only get at the truth by everyone speaking out just what he thinks.' See

In 1901 the Tasmanian Baptist paper, the *Day Dawn and Baptist Church Messenger*, gave the following advice to their Victorian counterparts: 'The Baptists of the Colonies have been so united in the old truths that it would be a great evil to even endanger the harmony that exists.'⁵² Just as the Tasmanians were finding fault with the Victorians, the South Australians were not too pleased with the Tasmanians.

Recriminations between South Australia and Tasmania came to a head with the call of Alfred Metters (1863-1918), one of the seven Baptist students who graduated from South Australian Union College in the 1880s and who was somewhat liberal in his thinking. He had been invited to the pastorate of a Baptist church in Tasmania but on a preaching occasion in Tasmania had denied the existence of a literal fiery hell.⁵³ Following the invitation he once again visited and discussed his teaching with some church folk in a positive way. He discovered, after returning home, that some in the Union Council required assurances from him on two doctrines: 'the universal Fatherhood of God' and 'the final destiny of the wicked'. He was also asked to give a promise not to interfere with the closed membership policy of the churches in Tasmania. He resented this as he had given his assent to the Tasmanian doctrinal basis. Clearly, only a few agreed with what the Council had done but not so Samuel Bulgin Pitt from the Hobart Baptist Church. He added to the argument in the *Southern Baptist*

paper by tersely stating, 'Tasmanian Baptists as a rule cannot support preachers who do not clearly proclaim ruin through sin, redemption through the blood, and regeneration by the Spirit.'⁵⁴ Soundy agreed with Pitt and also defended Tasmania. Under the pseudonym of 'Old Baptist', a savage attack was unleashed in the *Southern Baptist* on Tasmanian Baptists:

It is a marvel that no one in Tasmania protests against such bigotry. Is there no party in Tasmania bold enough to protest against certain narrow-minded men making the Baptists of that Island ridiculous in the eyes of the intelligent religious public of Australia?⁵⁵

The *Southern Baptist* complained:

South Australian Baptists find grave fault with us Tasmanian Baptists. In the 'Southern Baptist' we are charged with being 'illiberal', 'unreasoning', 'bigoted', and 'narrow-minded!' We simply reply: that 'speaking the truth in love' we continue to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints.⁵⁶

Another shot was fired by Edward Duthoit of Hobart who suggested South Australians should leave the *Southern Baptist* and revert to their 'old regime under Truth and Progress (backwards)'.⁵⁷ But Metters did receive numerous letters from Tasmania expressing regret. Furthermore, the Council itself formally apologised to him and expressed its full confidence in him as a minister.⁵⁸

In the very next issue was a selection of letters bluntly headed, 'TASMANIA

SB, 23 May 1912, p. 329 as cited by Walker, 'The Baptists in South Australia, circa 1900 to 1939'.

⁵² *Day Dawn and Baptist Church Messenger* (1900-1917) (in the Baptist holdings of the archives of the University of Tasmania), 1901.

⁵³ SB, 15 May, p. 109 and 17 July 1901, p. 168. Metters preached at Latrobe and its outstation, Sassafra, on 24 March 1901, see Latrobe entry in *Day Dawn* for May 1901.

⁵⁴ SB, 17 July 1901, p. 168.

⁵⁵ SB, 28 August 1901, p. 203f.

⁵⁶ SB, 11 September 1901, p. 216.

⁵⁷ SB, 11 September 1901, p. 216.

⁵⁸ SB, 16 October 1901, p. 240.

v. SOUTH AUSTRALIA'.⁵⁹ William Gibson Junior, as President of the Union, reacted to letters of Duthoit and others and insisted they did not represent his views or the majority of Tasmanian Baptists.⁶⁰ In the end Metters declined the call to Tasmania and accepted another to Katanning in Western Australia. After all this the editors understandably resolved to terminate the correspondence on Higher Criticism. The dispute had revealed that theological differences between South Australia and the other two states had hardened.

As Willis Glover made clear, as the century drew to a close, the liberal views of scripture began to prevail, and men and women were no longer repulsed from church association by having to accept the Book of Genesis as literal truth. Higher Criticism has shown that many of the books of the Bible, Genesis among them, had been formed through a gradual process that was much more complex than hitherto believed. The acceptance of Higher Criticism made Christianity less vulnerable to the attacks of Freethinkers and removed many of the difficulties which faced better educated members of the churches.⁶¹ Glover continued:

The decline of evangelicalism at the end of the century was by no means entirely a product of Higher Criticism. Protestant theology had become increasingly irrelevant to the general intellectual life and was in desperate need of just such a thorough re-examination as has been taking place since the First World War. Perhaps equally important was the failure of

Protestantism either to solve the social problems created by the industrial revolution or to adapt itself to the changed conditions.⁶²

Conclusion

What this chapter uncovered is the conservative thinking of the Tasmanian Baptists who had trained at Spurgeon's College. This related particularly to the rejection of Higher Criticism of the Bible. This chapter has shown that Higher Criticism was primarily an effort to determine what the Bible was in itself, independent of all formal pronouncements about it by the Church. It was seen as a necessary tool to enable intelligent churchgoers to make sense of the Bible. Following the lead of their mentor, Charles Spurgeon, Tasmanian Baptists failed to appreciate that the Higher Critics in South Australia and Victoria were not attacking their fundamental evangelical faiths regarding the incarnation, the atonement and the resurrection of Jesus. The acceptance by individual Baptists in South Australia and Victoria of the proposition that Higher Criticism could go hand in hand with doctrinal orthodoxy set the stage for confrontation as these two Unions and Tasmania were sharing the same journal. An impasse on the question of Higher Criticism was reached late in 1901. For the Higher Critics in South Australia and Victoria, their acceptance of Higher Criticism did not mean rejecting the supernatural origins of Christianity. It did for the Tasmanians. The Tasmanian Baptists could not see that Higher Criticism was potentially liberating for Christians who wished their faith to be intelligently grounded and intellectually honest. The Tasmanians from Spurgeon's College had been introduced to modern

⁵⁹ SB, 2 October 1901.

⁶⁰ SB, 16 October 1901, p. 240.

⁶¹ Walter Phillips, 'Defence of Christian Belief in Australia 1875-1914: The Responses to Evolution and Higher Criticism', *Journal of Religious History*, vol. 9, 1976-7, pp. 419ff.

⁶² Willis B Glover, *Evangelical Nonconformists and Higher Criticism in the Nineteenth Century* (London, Independent Press, 1954). p. 287.

scholarship but only sufficiently so as to counter it. This meant that they could not adequately address the intellectual struggles of their increasingly well-educated populace in a positive way. One reason for not doing so was the fear of disturbing the faith of their congregations. Unfortunately this chapter reveals that from the late 1880s any person, young or old in Tasmania who was troubled by aspects of the Bible and its relationship to modern science would have found it difficult to turn to any intelligent and sympathetic Baptist Pastor prepared to help resolve the difficulties. Invoking the authority of the Bible would prove in time not enough to convince upcoming generations of the uniqueness of Jesus. The Tasmanian Baptists could not see that once the idea of infallibility of the Biblical text is jettisoned, one can come to a true appreciation of the Bible literature and its claims. If they saw matters this way, they would have had to agree that Higher Criticism could no longer be dismissed on theological grounds.⁶³ However, as Glover has argued, increasingly from the 1880s, many evangelicals gradually accepted the validity of Higher Criticism, but not of the most radical kind.

As Manley suggests:

There is a close connection between this aspect of the Spurgeonic tradition (as seen best in Tasmania) and the later fundamentalism to emerge clearly in the second decade of the twentieth century in North America. The Rev James Blaikie, a Spurgeon's man in Tasmania in the 1900 debate about Higher Criticism in *The Southern Baptist*, sounds exactly like the later fundamentalists when he deplored

the loss of old landmarks and opposed claims made for 'inspired scholarship'.⁶⁴

Tasmania's connection with the *Southern Baptist* ceased at end of 1902 but local church news entries continued. There had been no meeting of minds. There was no way forward. In 1900 Tasmania wanted six more men from the old country who thought just like they did.⁶⁵ Tasmanian Baptists had still to learn that all truth is of God.

⁶³ Glover, *Evangelical Nonconformists and Higher Criticism in the Nineteenth Century*, chs. 2-3.

⁶⁴ Manley, *Shapers of our Australian Baptist Identity*, p. 17 and SB, 13 December 1900, p. 283.

⁶⁵ SB, 1900, p. 278.

Chapter Eight - The Formation of an Association

Introduction

This chapter will explore the formation of the Baptist Union of Tasmania. By the mid-1880s there were still five Spurgeon's College men ministering in Tasmania, each with a church and manse. The gains made over the past seventeen years were consolidated by setting in place mechanisms for the expansion of the work beyond their local churches, the formation of the Association itself. Consideration will be given to the rise of Nonconformist Associations in Tasmania, among Baptists in Great Britain and also among Australian Baptists as they would have provided the necessary models since they sought the same ends. Mention will be made of what the Baptist benefactors, the Gibsons, provided to meet future financial needs. The chapter will also examine the Gibsons' closing years and the nature of their relationship with Spurgeon's men. It will also seek to estimate the full extent of the Gibsons' giving. This chapter will conclude with an examination of the subsequent ventures of the newly formed Tasmanian Baptist Association.

The Formation of the Baptist Union of Tasmania

On 25 May 1884 the newly built Launceston Tabernacle in Cimitiere Street opened. The Tabernacle and the formation of the Baptist Association were two triumphs of the developments that had begun in 1862 with the erection of the Perth chapel and William Gibson Senior's baptism in 1867 and, earlier, of Mary Ann Gibson's conversion to a Baptist position in 1841 and her baptism in 1845, as well as the arrival of the first Spurgeon's man in Tasmania in 1869. On 27 May, two days after the

opening of the Launceston Tabernacle, the Association of Tasmanian Baptist churches was formed with all the pastors of the seven Baptist churches present. Five had trained at Spurgeon's College, London, the sixth was a friend of Spurgeon himself and the seventh was an interim missionary. Spurgeon's men were the Rev Robert Williamson from Perth, the Rev Edward Vaughan from Deloraine, the Rev Harry Wood from Longford,¹ the Rev Albert Bird of Launceston² and the Rev Robert McCullough from Hobart.

The church at Perth had been constituted in 1870, the Deloraine church in 1880, the Longford church a week before the Deloraine church, the Hobart church on 20 February 1884, and the Launceston church on 26 May 1884. That the Association should include Particular Baptist churches mirrored the events in the home country. In Tasmania there had been serious attempts by the Particular Baptists and the Spurgeon's men to work together, their connection in the north being through the Gibsons. Mary Ann was brought into membership at the York Street chapel in 1845 and about thirty years later both William Senior and Junior were numbered among its trustees. Spurgeon's College man, the Rev Frederick Hibberd, had taken charge

¹ In a letter to the Treasurer of the Baptist Union of Tasmania in 1935, months before his death, Harry Wood wrote, 'I am the only survivor of the fifteen brethren that met to form our Tas. Baptist Union in the large vestry of the Launceston Tabernacle on May 27th 1884.' - Letter to BUT Legal Advisor, William Dubrelle Weston, April 1935.

² At the time when only the foundations of the Launceston Tabernacle were laid, Gibson had no idea who would be the pastor. See Dr Harry Benjafield's report on Baptist Churches in Tasmania, date unknown.

of the York Street chapel in 1867.³ The Rev Alfred Grant of the Perth chapel preached at times at York Street chapel.⁴ Some years later, in March 1878, Grant took charge of the Hobart Baptist Particular chapel but the pastorate was short lived.⁵ For his first ten years in Tasmania the Rev William White of the York Street Particular chapel was happy to associate with the men from Spurgeon's College, which is not surprising since White had originally come from the West Croydon Baptist Church, England, which was under the ministry of the Rev James Spurgeon. James was a brother of CH Spurgeon.⁶

Others present for a two-day conference in the Launceston Tabernacle vestry were William Gibson Senior and Junior; the Rev William White; Dr Harry Benjafield of Hobart; the Rev Edward Tucker from the Particular Baptist chapel in Hobart; Longford municipal councillor and member of the Longford church, Thomas W Hortle; Mr A Frosting; Mr ACH Hodgman of Constitutional Hill; secretary of the Launceston YMCA and member of the Longford church, William Stokes; Launceston City Missioner and Launceston Tabernacle member, the Rev Robert Marshall; and currently stationed at Auckland, New Zealand, the Rev Thomas Spurgeon.⁷ Tucker had arrived in Hobart in January 1884 for the

express purpose of organising a ten-day Gospel Temperance Blue Ribbon mission run by Richard T Booth and co-worker TW Glover.⁸ Arriving in Hobart, Tucker associated himself with the Harrington Street chapel.

Early in the two-day conference, the representatives formed a Union consisting of the seven churches and their Pastors. Prior to this groundbreaking event, fellowship between Spurgeon's men had been maintained through correspondence, frequent meetings and joint evangelistic endeavours. As a group they had also met in Victoria from time to time with other Spurgeon's College men during Baptist Association meetings there.⁹ The formation of the Baptist Union of Tasmania in 1884 was by no means the first Nonconformist association to be formed in the colony. Congregationalists formed their own association in 1837 and the Presbyterians in 1835 but the Methodists waited until 1902.

The Rise of Nonconformist Associations in Tasmania

Early in the life of Van Diemen's Land, Congregational chapels became widespread, in southern Tasmania, in Launceston and at the Forth River, due to the efforts of its ministers and the financial support from their benefactors, Henry Hopkins and his wife Sarah.¹⁰ An auxiliary of the

³ Launceston *Examiner* (hereafter LEx), 18 July 1867, p3c1-4.

⁴ LEx 25 April 1871, p2c7.

⁵ See Chapter Four.

⁶ LEx 12 April 1913, p7c1.

⁷ On the day after the formation of the Association, the members of the newly formed BUT marched down in a body to see Spurgeon on board the 'Iberia'. He was on the way home. *Daily Telegraph*, 27 May 1884, p3c5-6. By now Thomas was regarded by the editors of the *Sword and the Trowel* (hereafter S&T), as the Bishop of Tasmania. See S&T May 1885 p. 228.

⁸ *Mercury*, 22 January 1884, p4c6.

⁹ S&T May 1881.

¹⁰ The Congregational (or Independent) church had been formed in the seventeenth century in England, and consisted of individual congregations, each independent of any outside authority, and whose actions were decided on by all church members. The minister had influence but less direct power than in most other churches. Congregationalists liked a plain religion without ritual, and believed that all hierarchy was inessential, and that the church must be independent of the State so that it could retain its own independence.

interdenominational but Congregationalist-minded Society was set up in Hobart Town in 1826. But it came to be believed that some fuller form of association was needed to bind Congregationalists together and effectively tackle the tasks of local evangelisation even though the churches held firm to their distinctive doctrine of the independence of each congregation. To that end, the *Van Diemen's Land Home Missionary and Christian Instruction Society* was formed on 11 September 1837, only a few years after the establishment of such a Union in England and Wales.¹¹ While the Congregational Union in England sought among its many objects 'to promote Evangelical Religion, in connection with the Congregational Denomination' and 'to assist in maintaining and enlarging the civil rights of Protestant Dissenters',¹² the Tasmanian Society's aims were:

- The promotion of Evangelical religion in connection with the Congregational denomination;
- To cultivate brotherly affection and cordial co-operation between the Union's members;
- To disseminate information about Congregational principles, fraternal correspondence with Congregationalists throughout the world;
- To raise funds to assist in chapel building;
- To introduce Congregational ministers to the colony and the establishment of a Theological Academy.

¹¹ G Lindsay Lockley, *Centenary of Congregationalism in Australia* (Melbourne, Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society, 2001), p. 113; Patricia Ratcliff, 'Congregationalism' in A Alexander (ed.), *Companion to Tasmanian History* (Hobart, Centre for Tasmanian Historical Studies, University of Tasmania, 2005), p. 84.

¹² Ernest A Payne, *The Free Church Tradition in the Life of England* (London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1965), p. 107.

Unsurprisingly, the Congregational Union Constitution contained a provision that the Union had no power to invade the rights of its constituent churches.¹³

Early in the life of the colony Presbyterians also saw the value in forming their own association. A number of Presbyterians arrived in Tasmania as early as 1804. The first Presbyterian service in Van Diemen's Land conducted by an ordained minister was held in Hobart on 5 January 1823. In 1835 the Presbytery of Van Diemen's Land was constituted. Attention was soon given to the establishment of Presbyterian congregations, with church buildings erected at various centres on the east coast, Midlands and in northern Tasmania. The effects of the 1843 Great Disruption of the Church of Scotland over the question of separation of State and Church were also felt in the colony with a Launceston Presbyterian Free Church Association forming in 1844 in sympathy with those ministers in Scotland who had seceded from the Scots establishment and relinquished their stipends rather than allow the State to interfere in the life of the church.¹⁴ A Free Church Presbytery was set up in 1853 but, at the time the Free Kirkers erected a Chalmers Church in both Hobart and Launceston, efforts were being made for reunion. Success was finally achieved in Tasmania in 1896, with the Presbyterian Church of Tasmania embracing all congregations of an undivided Church.¹⁵

¹³ Lockley, *Centenary of Congregationalism in Australia*, p. 255.

¹⁴ J Heyer, *The Presbyterian Pioneers of Van Diemen's Land* (Launceston, Presbytery of Tasmania, 1935), p. 63.

¹⁵ Ivan Gaggin, 'The Presbyterian Church' in A Alexander (ed.), *Companion to Tasmanian History*, p. 289.

The Methodists in their various 'connexions' in the colony also valued the formations of associations but due to legal problems, they struggled greatly in achieving a single association. A Wesleyan Methodist 'society' was formed in Launceston in 1826. By 1840 there were fourteen of its chapels in and around the two main population centres and in the Midlands. The church grew rapidly to between 15 and 18 percent of the population by 1890. The Primitive Methodist 'connexion' began in Launceston in 1857. Some towns had churches from both 'connexions', but the Wesleyans outnumbered the Primitives by four to one except in the north-west. The United Free Methodists had only a few churches, having established their branch of Methodism in Hobart in 1855. As early as 1866 there were calls for Union by the joint Victoria and Tasmania Conference but for such a Union to be effected, approval was required from the English Conferences of the Union. By 1902 the Wesleyan, Primitive Methodist and United Methodist churches in Tasmania had buried their differences and formed an Association.¹⁶ Naturally those who formed the Baptist Union of Tasmania in 1884 were greatly influenced by earlier events in Great Britain as so many of their number had emigrated from the 'old country'.

Associations among Baptists in Great Britain

¹⁶ CC Dugan, *A Century of Tasmanian Methodism, 1820-1920* (Hobart, Tasmanian Methodist Assembly, 1920), p. 85f; W Barns, *An Abridgement of a History of the Primitive Methodist Connexion in Tasmania 1857-1902* (Tasmania District Committee of the Methodist Church, 1970), p. 16; M Stansall, *Tasmanian Methodism 1820-1975* (Launceston, Methodist Church of Australasia, 1975), pp.6f; Elisabeth Wilson, 'The Methodist Movement' in A Alexander (ed.), *Companion to Tasmanian History*, pp. 234f.

Two major groups of Baptists emerged in England in the early 1600s, one being the General Baptists¹⁷ and the other, the Particular Baptists.¹⁸ In 1863 the President of

¹⁷ The General Baptists were so named because they understood the work of Christ at the cross to have a 'general' application: that all people have the possibility of repenting and believing the Gospel, that is, they did not believe that anyone was destined by a divine decree to damnation. They were influenced by the Dutch theologian Jacob Arminius, whose theology was Calvinist in origin but who made allowance for the freedom of the will in matters of salvation. In terms of church structure, the General Baptists allowed limited congregational autonomy, and gave much more power to Associations and the General Assembly. The originator of the General Baptists was John Smyth (?1570-1612), an Anglican clergyman become separatist, assisted by a wealthy layman, Thomas Helwys. Together they formed the first English Baptist church, on Dutch soil, in 1609. The General Baptists were very strong in the Midlands and Kent, as well as London, sharing in local Associations, and a General Assembly which issued Confessions of Faith. These Confessions were issued so that others might know where the General Baptists stood, not only in regard to baptism, but on other matters of doctrine and church practice. - See Roger Hayden, *Baptist History and Heritage* (Didcot, Baptist Union of Great Britain, 2005), pp. 11, 30.

¹⁸ The Particular Baptists emerged by the late 1630s, led by Henry Jessey, William Kiffin and John Spilsbury. The roots of the English Particular Baptists were in the same soil from which the General Baptists had already grown but were also Calvinist in theology and separatist in outlook. A Baptist congregation emerged as a result of members of an existing Independent church advocating believer's baptism as the only right and proper forms of the sacrament. These Baptists taught a view of the atonement which claimed that Christ did not die for all mankind but only for 'particular' individuals, elect by God's grace from eternity. It was this which gave them their title of Particular Baptists. Like Calvin, they believed God had elected only some to salvation and that the elect would persevere and be saved. The earliest church of this persuasion can be dated about 1638. The church structure gave each local fellowship complete church power, while Associations and Assemblies had only advisory powers. Though originating a generation later than the General Baptists, they were destined

the Baptist denomination in Great Britain, JH Hinton, said:

while in name one, [the Baptist Union] is in fact many ... it is divided into two by a difference of doctrinal sentiment, some churches holding the Calvinistic system, some the Arminian . . . Of these two bodies the larger, the Particular Baptists, is itself divided by a doctrinal diversity, according as the Calvinistic system has been found capable of being modified into two forms, which have been called High and Moderate Calvinism. The Particular Baptist body is further divided by a practical diversity on the subject of communion. It contains churches which restrict fellowship at the Lord's Table to persons who have made profession of their faith by Baptism, and churches who admit to Communion professed believers in Jesus, although unbaptised. These are called respectively Open-Communionists and Strict-Communionists. We have then six parties.¹⁹

National assemblies of the Particular and General Baptists took place in 1677 and the Particular Baptists issued a 'Second London Confession' which underlined the conviction of the 1644 Confession that their churches shared a common life, '... though we be distinct of our particular bodies, for conveniency sake, being as many as can well meet together in one place, yet all are one in Communion ...'²⁰

The first national Particular Assembly was held in 1689. 'Messengers' were welcomed from local Associations

to become the larger of the two groups. – See Hayden, *English Baptist History and Heritage*, pp. 11, 44.

¹⁹ Hayden, *English Baptist History and Heritage*, p. 120. Hinton had been General Secretary since 1841.

²⁰ Hayden, *English Baptist History and Heritage*, pp. 66, 71.

representing over 100 churches.²¹ In 1770, a new Baptist body was formed, this time 'The General Baptist New Connexion'. It was influenced greatly by the Methodist awakening and outworking. It provided mutual encouragement and practical support. The opportunity for doctrinal instruction and the opportunity to share fresh ideas resulted.²² When the constitution of the General Union of Particular Baptists was reformulated in 1832, its doctrinal basis was redrafted to refer to 'Baptist ministers and churches who agree in the sentiments usually denominated evangelical', thereby opening up the opportunity for churches and ministers of the New Connexion to join the Union.²³ The census of 1851 revealed the growth of Baptist churches up to that time with a combined membership of about 366,000 persons with 1491 Particular Baptists chapels in England and 456 chapels in Wales. The census also recorded The New Connexion of General Baptists with 179 chapels in England and three chapels in Wales. The Old General Baptists (mostly Unitarian) had ninety-three chapels. By then Baptist Association life across the country was lively as seen in itinerant preaching, Sunday schools, overseas missions and an expanding programme of ministerial education brought on by the increasing acceptance of Fuller's moderate Calvinism.²⁴ The Baptist General

²¹ Raymond Brown, *The English Baptists of the Eighteenth Century* (London, Baptist Historical Society, 1986), pp. 35.

²² Brown, *The English Baptists of the Eighteenth Century*, pp. 67ff.

²³ Brown, *The English Baptists of the Eighteenth Century*, pp. 101ff.

²⁴ Hayden, *English Baptist History and Heritage*, p. 107ff; 'Fullerism' was the strand of Particular Baptists who, through the Evangelical revival, insisted on the importance not only of preaching to the unconverted, but also of openly inviting their hearers to put their trust in Christ. Followers of Fuller's teaching, Fullerites,

Assembly's churches, however, were declining into Unitarianism through the widespread denial of the Trinity.²⁵

The constant demand for joint co-operation with overseas missionary work was the circumstance encouraging the movement towards a national Baptist organisation which came to pass in 1812 and 1813. Its constitution stated that the Baptist Union's first task was the support of 'our missions'. At its beginning the Union was a voluntary fund-raising arm of the Missionary Society. Its original title of the organisation was 'The General Meeting of the Particular (or Calvinistic) Baptist Denomination'. In 1873 it became the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland and was generally known as 'The Baptist Union'.²⁶

Early Associations among Australian Baptists

Because Port Phillip separated from NSW in 1851 and Queensland decades later, Baptist Associations in each colony became separate entities.²⁷ The first Association of

were also greatly influenced by George Whitefield's and Jonathan Edwards' Calvinistic strands of the Evangelical revival rather than the Arminian preaching of the Wesleys. Hayden, *English Baptist History and Heritage*, p. 93.

²⁵ Hayden, *English Baptist History and Heritage*, pp. 83.

²⁶ A further moderating of Calvinism among the Particular Baptists, the growth of open communion in both bodies, and working together over thirty years on the common platform of the Baptist Union, made possible the formal uniting in 1891. The Union left far behind the outdated Eighteenth century methods which it inherited in 1813, and in 1832 reorganised itself in such a way that Baptist ministers and churches recognized the potential of union for furthering the mission of the churches in a rapidly expanding industrial society - Hayden, *English Baptist History and Heritage*, pp. 119, 136.

²⁷ Basil Brown, *Baptised Into One Body: A Short History of the Baptist Union of Australia*

Baptist churches in Victoria came into being on 20 April 1858 and comprised eleven churches.²⁸ Its architects, the senior deacon of Collins Street Church, Robert Kerr, and the Rev James Taylor and the Rev Isaac New, both from Birmingham, were denominationalists united, in Kerr's words, on 'the pressing need which existed for thoroly [thoroughly] establishing the Baptist Denomination in the colony'.²⁹

Within a year there were thirteen churches in the Victorian Association having a total membership of 492 persons.³⁰ With the colony passing through a period of deep economic depression and the Association pledging itself beyond its financial resources, the Association died in 1861.³¹ It was resurrected on 4 and 5 November 1862 on the same basis as the previous one, but this time with fifteen signatory churches.³² It was called 'The Baptist Association and Home Mission of Victoria'. A major amendment to its constitution took place in 1879. In 1891 its title became the Baptist Union of Victoria. The fellowship of churches had outgrown an organization, modelled upon the country association in England and was now a fully-fledged Union of churches.³³

An Association of Baptist churches in the colony of NSW, 'The New South

(Melbourne, Baptist Union of Australia, 1987), pp. 5f.

²⁸ Ten churches according to FJ Wilkin, *Baptists in Victoria: Our First Century, 1838-1938* (Melbourne, Baptist Union of Victoria, 1939), p. 147.

²⁹ JD Bollen, *Australian Baptists: A Religious Minority* (London, Baptist Historical Society, 1975), pp. 23f.

³⁰ Wilkin, *Baptists in Victoria*, p. 147.

³¹ Brown, *Baptised Into One Body*, pp. 22ff.

³² Basil S Brown, *Members One of Another* (Melbourne, Baptist Union of Victoria, 1962), p. 30. Bollen has sixteen churches.

³³ Brown, *Baptised Into One Body*, p. 89.

Wales Association of Baptist Churches', was formed on 20 July 1858 with four churches.³⁴ The inaugural Baptist Union of 1868 comprised eleven churches with a total membership of 359 persons. In 1870 the basis of membership was widened and two more churches joined.³⁵ Its objects were:

- To promote brotherly love;
- To plant and strengthen Baptist churches without interfering with the independent character of such churches;
- To aid small and struggling churches in the maintaining of their pastors;
- To train suitable men for the ministry.³⁶

In South Australia, 'The South Australian Baptist Association' was formed on 26 May 1863. At the time the twenty-two or twenty-three Baptist churches had a total membership of between 650 and 700 persons. For the first twenty-five years of the colony there had been no effort made to combine the Baptist churches into an Association, forcing the individual churches to struggle alone.³⁷

The Gibsons' Latter Years

In his last days, when the work he had done for God was referred to in his presence, William Gibson Senior would say, 'I have only done what was my duty to do, and given to the Lord

what He has given to me.' If suffering for Christ's sake was mentioned as a sign of grace, he would say, 'Ah! I haven't suffered much for Him.' JE Walton recorded that Gibson expressed the deepest convictions of his heart when he repeated his favourite hymns, 'Jesus lover of my soul.' and 'My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness.' It was said that he was a brusque man whose natural dignity 'forbade imprudent familiarity'; he did not find company easy.³⁸ He was a man of simple words: to the picnickers at a Sabbath school picnic in 1870, he said:

Dear friends, I shall say but very little, but that little will be from the bottom of my heart. I am very happy to have you all here, for all are welcome. It is my greatest pleasure to make you happy, and will be as long as I live.³⁹

Presiding at the 'tea meeting' for the Deloraine Baptist Church anniversary in 1887 he said that:

the Tabernacle had been erected for the preaching of the Gospel, and that he did not regret building it nor helping in its maintenance. He spoke feelingly of the acquaintance he had had with the present pastor, and urged the members to help him [the present pastor] in his work and by their prayers.⁴⁰

Walton added that through her life Mary Ann had read every published sermon and most of the other works of Spurgeon, and that to the end of her days she was still reading his

³⁴ Alan C Prior, *Some Fell on Good Ground: A History of the Beginnings and Development of the Baptist Church in New South Wales, Australia, 1831–1965* (Sydney, Baptist Union of New South Wales, 1966), p. 100.

³⁵ Ken R Manley, *From Woolloomooloo to 'Eternity': A History of Australian Baptists* (Milton Keynes, Paternoster, 2006), vol. 1, p. 84.

³⁶ Prior, *Some Fell on Good Ground*, p. 106.

³⁷ H Escourt Hughes, *Our First Hundred Years: The Baptist Church of South Australia* (Adelaide, Baptist Union of South Australia, 1937), pp. 81ff.

³⁸ JE Walton, 'In Memory of William Gibson', *Day-Star*, August 1892, p.114-116.

³⁹ *Cornwall Chronicle*, 15 January 1870, p11c4.

⁴⁰ The sixth anniversary of the Deloraine Baptist Church, *Day-Star*, December 1887, p. 185.

writings.⁴¹ At the Perth chapel, she took an active part as Sabbath school teacher and as visitor of the sick. She enjoyed handing out religious tracts.⁴² William Bye, their chief shepherd, attributed his conversion and his love for the Bible largely due to the influence of Mary Ann. She had given him Spurgeon's sermons to read, had encouraged him to read the Bible and taken every opportunity of speaking to him 'about his soul's salvation'. He held that Mary Ann 'was a great factor in her husband and son [also] being led to Christ'.⁴³

Mary Ann accepted the Spurgeon's College men as her own family and she took pride of place among them. On one occasion she was travelling with three of them on a country train to a Baptist Assembly. Sharing the compartment with her were Samuel Bulgin Pitt of Hobart, the Rev William L Heaven and a young home missionary, Albert Holloway. As they travelled, Mary Ann asked them to rearrange their positions so that Holloway sat between the two older men, with herself opposite them. Then with a twinkle in her eye, she explained that she had requested the re-arrangement of their seating so that she could see the 'Holloway' between 'Heaven' and the 'Pitt'.⁴⁴

On another train journey in 1888 for the laying of the foundation stone of the Hobart Tabernacle, she was again with a number of the Baptist Pastors.

As the train entered the long tunnel at Rhyndaston, she withdrew her purse from her bag and tightly held on to it. Asked why she had done so, she replied, 'You don't know who you can trust these days!'⁴⁵

In 1884 it was overstated that there was not a house in Perth where Mary Ann was not loved.⁴⁶ In this decade she was irreverently called 'the Revd Maryann'.⁴⁷ In her later years, she was affectionately identified as 'The Dear Old Lady' by close associates.⁴⁸

Perth was seen as a 'sleepy hollow' even though drunkenness, disorder and crime accompanied its seven hotels. During the Rev James Rider Cooper's twelve month pastorate commencing January 1885 at the Perth Baptist chapel there were 800 inhabitants in the town which was said to be the cleanest, healthiest and godliest on the island.⁴⁹ By 1900 evangelist and temperance advocate, Henry Varley, stated that in his opinion the drunkenness, disorder and crime in the town had gone. He attributed this to the strong Baptist presence in the town.⁵⁰ But as early as 1880, others saw Mary Ann's Perth differently. Wrote correspondents to the Launceston *Examiner*.

- Perth is a sanctimonious place. If any people in the world are blessed with spiritual advisers Perth is, but some of them, the Pharisees say, 'I thank the Lord I am not as other men,' but 'as no road's so rough as

⁴¹ Walton records that Mary Ann was familiar with Spurgeon in the early years of her marriage. But this is impossible as Spurgeon was only nine years of age in 1843, the year that she married William Gibson. The publication of Spurgeon's sermons began in 1855.

⁴² John E Walton, 'CH Spurgeon's Influence in Tasmania through his Sermon and His Students', *Southern Baptist*, 1901 p. 2.

⁴³ *Australian Baptist*, 11 February 1930, p. 1.

⁴⁴ Graeme Pitt, *A Better Chance* (Adelaide, Self-published, 1987), p. 49.

⁴⁵ Wesley J Bligh, *Altars of the Mountains in which is told the story of the Baptist Church of Tasmania in which is told the story of the Baptist Church of Tasmania*, Launceston, Baptist Union of Tasmania (1935), p. 27.

⁴⁶ *Daily Telegraph*, 2 August 1884, p3c5.

⁴⁷ Francis A Vernon & Michael N Sprod, *The Whitehead Letters*, (Tasmanian Historical Research Association 1991), 21 June 1880, p. 173.

⁴⁸ *Day Dawn*, January 1903, p. 5.

⁴⁹ Source unknown.

⁵⁰ *Daily Telegraph*, 31 January 1891, p4c4.

those that are newly mended, so no person is so intolerant and bigoted as a neophyte.⁵¹

- 'Gibbet Hill' would prove more effectual than the earnest discourses the residents of Perth are accustomed to listen to.⁵²

In 1882 an acquaintance of the Gibsons, John Whitehead, wrote, 'Wm Gibson & Son have sold over £10,000 worth of Stud sheep this year. I don't know what they are doing with their surplus money. Their income from all sources must now be over £20,000 a year.'⁵³ General income tax was not introduced in Tasmania until 1902. Originally indirect taxes were applied, such as tariffs and excise. Baptist Dr Harry Benjafield recorded that in October 1883, on a visit to Native Point, he was shown 'a thousand-guinea gentleman'.⁵⁴ Such was their success that the Gibsons won prizes in many exhibitions in Australia, England and America. William Gibson also possessed the best herd of Durham cattle in the colony.⁵⁵ By the time of his death in June 1892, the Gibson flocks were known throughout the world. By 1900 one of the finest sheep stud stations in Tasmania was that of 'Scone', William Gibson Junior's property.⁵⁶

There have been a number of estimates made on the amount William and Mary Ann and their son William Junior spent on the provision

of Baptist chapels and Tabernacles, manses, land and shipping fares for the Pastors' College students and graduates to and from England and funds for the future. Gibson Junior gave pound for pound with his father. Robert McCullough remembered receiving a cheque for £850 and another for £2000 signed by William Gibson Junior alone.⁵⁷ The Perth Tabernacle cost £3,600 but with the manse and other properties, the Perth church complex was valued at £6,000.⁵⁸ The total cost to the Gibsons of the Launceston Tabernacle, its manse and its school rooms was £11,000.⁵⁹

A year before William's death, evangelist Henry Varley said that William and Mary Ann's giving totalled £40,000.⁶⁰ A month before William's death the *Day-Star* agreed.⁶¹ At the time of William's death, the *Day-Star* had increased the figure to £50,000. The Rev Harry Wood, spoke of £70,000, but Wood's figure includes the giving of that of their son, William Junior.⁶²

The Subsequent Ventures of the Tasmanian Baptist Association

As its first President, William Gibson Senior presided over the inaugural meeting of the Baptist Union of Tasmania on 27 May 1884 in which its aims and objectives were formulated.

⁵¹ LEx 16 March 1880, p2c7.

⁵² LEx 20 March 1880, p5c2.

⁵³ Vernon & Sprod, *The Whitehead Letters: Tasmanian Society and Politics 1871-1882*, p. 206.

⁵⁴ Harry Benjafield report on Baptist Churches in Tasmania, *Day-Star*.

⁵⁵ *Day-Star*, July 1892, p. 98. William and Thomas Cumming bought a Gibson ram, Sir Thomas, in 1874 for 680 guineas. See Charles Massy, *The Australian Merino* (Ringwood, Victoria; Viking O'Neil, 1901), p. 411.

⁵⁶ *Cyclopedia of Tasmania* (Hobart, Maitland and Krone, 1900), p. 203.

⁵⁷ *Australian Baptist*, 7 January 1930.

⁵⁸ Harry Wood, *Harry Wood's Memories*, September 1907, in the possession of Laurence F Rowston.

⁵⁹ LEx 28 July 1884, p2c2-3.

⁶⁰ *Daily Telegraph*, 31 January 1891, p6c1; S&T 1891 Annual report of the Pastors' College pp. 294-301.

⁶¹ *Day-Star*, July 1892, p. 98.

⁶² 'In Memory of William Gibson', *Day-Star*, August 1892, p.114-116. If we extrapolate £60,000 today, the sum would be near \$24,000,000 (Australian) based on a labourer's wage in 1880 of around £2 a week with a labourer today say at \$800 a week, therefore 400 times.

Among them was the goal to promote the unity, edification and prosperity of the Baptist churches in Tasmania. It would also seek to spread the Gospel throughout Tasmania by promoting evangelistic work, by establishing churches of baptised believers and by erecting suitable buildings. Another object was the training of young men for the Christian ministry. Only by such training could the infant Association ensure that it would not face the situation that had confronted the Rev Henry Dowling at the end of his career in 1867. At that time no successor could be found. A further object was to maintain fraternal relations with all other evangelical churches, and to co-operate with all who were seeking to preach the Gospel.⁶³

It was agreed that the Assemblies of the Association would consist of the accredited pastors of the churches in association with the Union and delegates as elected by the churches. Each church in the Association was required prior to the annual meeting of the Assembly to furnish a report of work done during the year, and at the same time to remit a contribution towards the Home Mission Fund. Among the other rules were:

- The Assembly, while fully recognising the right of each individual church to manage its own internal affairs, requires that in the event of a Pastor's resignation an early intimation of the fact be sent to the Council through its Secretary, and that before final choice of a successor be made, his name and credentials be submitted to the Council for approval;
- That there be half-yearly meetings of the Union;

- That each church be expected to contribute to the expenses of the Union;

- That evangelistic work be undertaken by the pastors of the associated churches.⁶⁴

The number of members of the affiliated churches in 1884 was 305. The seating accommodation of the chapels and tabernacles was 2100 persons. The affairs of the Union were to be administered by a President (William Gibson Senior for the first year), a Vice-President (William Gibson Junior), a Treasurer (Dr Harry Benjafield), a Secretary (the Rev Albert Bird) and a Council of six (Wood, McCullough, Vaughan, Hodgeman, Hortle and Propsting of Deloraine). The whole of the officers were to be elected annually by the Assembly.

The Association also provided the means of church planting without infringing the independence of local churches. In the years following the formation of the Association, new churches were established in Evandale (1884), Latrobe (1886), Sheffield (1890), Devonport (1897), Burnie (1899), Ulverstone and Penguin (1903), Wynyard (1905) and Yolla in 1908. Its Home Mission work, which did not officially commence until 1895,⁶⁵ grew out of earlier bush missions commenced from the Perth church. A bush mission in Upper Liffey in 1880 resembled that begun by the Tasmanian Methodists in earlier years, the only difference being the Methodists formed Sunday schools. At Upper Liffey on the Stamford Estate, through Gibson's generosity, a chapel was completed in November

⁶³ Baptist Union of Tasmania, report of the 27-28 May 1884 Conference.

⁶⁴ Baptist Union of Tasmania, report of the 27-28 May 1884 Conference.

⁶⁵ *Tasmanian Baptist Advance*, October 1989, pp. 9ff.

1880 at a cost of £100.⁶⁶ Soon a chapel was erected at Brumby Bush (now Blackwood Creek).⁶⁷ Further bush missions began as outstations of the Deloraine church.

The inaugural Assembly in 1884 also took steps to commence a Colporteur service - a travelling Bible salesman - for the dissemination of religious books and tracts. To that end William Gibson Junior made a bequest of £100 per annum.⁶⁸ At the August Council meeting that year it was agreed that 'the secy (sic) send Mr Spurgeon a draft for £50 for Colporteur's passage to Tasmania and that any residue over passage money be put towards providing the necessary stock of books for the prosecution of the work.'⁶⁹ Two years earlier the *Sword and Trowel* journal had carried a message from Spurgeon which read:

I hope I shall see the day when colporteurs from the Metropolitan Tabernacle will be seen to carry the word of God to the settlers in the Bush of the Australian Colonies as they do today in the country villages of England.⁷⁰

Subsequently, the Rev William Lake from Spurgeon's College was secured. He worked at Launceston, Perth, Longford, Evandale, Deloraine and on the North West Coast. At the 1885 Annual Assembly it was reported that in his task of visiting the lonely dwellers in the bush, Lake had

visited forty-six townships, delivered 160 gospel addresses, sold 1600 books, 240 Bibles and New Testaments, 466 cheap testaments and 12,000 scripture text cards. His journeys were not always without incident. Reported the Launceston *Examiner* in February 1886:

Book hawker of Bibles - Journeying from Perth to Longford came to grief in a Perth back street when the horse set off on a lively pace and throwing the driver out and scattering his Bibles and albums with only the shafts and the two fore wheels of the 4 wheeled vehicle and finally running into a prickly bush. The driver finally rescued the horse and reassembled the carriage and left little worse for wear.⁷¹

In 1887 the Association began a monthly paper, *The Day-Star*.⁷² This publication continued until 1894. It was replaced by *the Daydawn and Baptist Church Messenger* in 1900 (continuing to 1917), *the Tasmanian Baptist* in 1910 (continuing to 1912); the *Baptist Church Chronicle* in 1921 (continuing to 1954) and the *Tasmanian Baptist Advance* in 1958 (continuing). A joint journal of the Tasmanian, Victorian and South Australian Baptist Unions, called the *Southern Baptist*, was commenced in 1895 and continued until 1912. A Federal *Australian Baptist* commenced in 1913. As with other Associations, the Baptist Union of Tasmania also became a trust body. This was a consequence of the need of the Association to hold the

⁶⁶ The foundation stone was laid on 17 March 1881, see LEx 23 March Supplement, p1c2 and opened 21 August 1881 free from debt, see LEx 16 August, p2c5 and 29 August 1881, p3c4.

⁶⁷ The foundation was laid on 9 May 1880, see LEx 21 May, p3c4 and 5 June 1880, p2c6; and opened debt free on 21 November, see LEx 8 January 1881, p2c4.

⁶⁸ Assembly Report 27 May 1884.

⁶⁹ Council Minutes 12 August 1884; S&T December 1884.

⁷⁰ S&T April 1882.

⁷¹ LEx 27 February 1886, p3c7. In later years, Lake worked for the Hobart Town City Mission, taking leave for a while to work with the Evangelisation Society of Victoria, see *Day-Star*, (1886-1894), August 1889, p. 125.

⁷² At the first Council meeting on 12 August 1884, it was moved that consideration be given to 'a religious paper for the colony' - Council Meeting Minutes.

properties in trust and thus ensure for future generations the fidelity of the Gibsons' intentions.

At the beginning of the Association Gibson Senior was welcomed with open arms. He was appointed chairman for the first Half-Yearly meeting held in the Longford Tabernacle in October 1884.⁷³ But by 1888 the two Particular churches had withdrawn from the Association, one, the Harrington Street Hobart, by default. The new 'Spurgeon' work in Hobart had already built a chapel and was now in the course of erecting its stately Tabernacle. White, on behalf of the northern York Street chapel, withdrew on 18 March 1888. In the Chapel Minutes White recorded: 'Some of the rules of the Baptist Union of Tasmania were not approved by York St and these rules clashed with York St's "Church Deed".⁷⁴ Apart from York Street, the churches forming the Association had been generally united in theology and practice.

Three years after the formation of the Association, a Sustentation Fund was set up, the interest from which was to be used in the founding of new churches and in aiding weak ones. It was substantially formed by the gift of £6,000 from William Gibson Senior and Junior.⁷⁵ The churches were continuing to appeal at regular intervals for the Gibsons' assistance. Such appeals, at times bordering on manipulation and badgering, were made whenever it was thought some work needed financial assistance and

should be attempted. These appeals suggest a culture of dependency. But the setting up of the Sustentation Fund did not lessen this dependency. In the January 1890 issue of *Day-Star* the Baptists at Latrobe reported:

Our difficulties are many, and we find it a great drawback having to worship in a public hall that is used for all sorts of purposes, but we are full of hope that the Lord [read the Gibsons] may clear the way, so that a Tabernacle at Latrobe may be a fact.⁷⁶

By 1890 there were twenty Baptist families meeting in Sheffield. Again the message was reiterated in the April edition of the *Day-Star*, 'that local Baptists thought that matters were moving too slowly.'⁷⁷ In early 1889 in Latrobe William Gibson Senior had purchased a block of land on Gilbert Street near the Post Office for £500 and soon had architectural drawings prepared for a Tabernacle.⁷⁸ Baptist services had commenced in the Oddfellows Hall on 19 December 1886.⁷⁹ The Latrobe Baptists commented in the *Day-Star* of 1899, 'Doubtless if there had been a Tabernacle at Latrobe, as in the sister township, the work would have been as successful, and carried on with greater efficiency.'⁸⁰ This message was again repeated in the February 1891 edition of the *Day-Star*, 'A building is our urgent need, in order to consolidate our work and establish it on a thoroughly satisfactory basis.'⁸¹

⁷³ *The Victorian Freeman*, December 1884, p. 11.

⁷⁴ LEx 12 April 1890, p3c7; York Street Baptist Chapel Minutes 7 April 1888, p. 406 (in archives of Baptist Union of Tasmania holdings at the University of Tasmania).

⁷⁵ The Sustentation Fund began at the Annual Assembly of 1887, *Day-Star*, May 1887, p. 72. The fund is still in operation.

⁷⁶ *Day-Star*, January 1890, p. 221.

⁷⁷ *Day-Star*, April 1890, p. 246.

⁷⁸ LEx 27 April, p3c6 and 4 May 1889, p6c4.

⁷⁹ *North Coast Standard*, 14 October 1891, p2c7 and p3c1.

⁸⁰ *Day Dawn and Baptist Church Messenger* (1900-1917) (in the Baptist holdings of the archives of the University of Tasmania), May 1899, p. 67.

⁸¹ *Day-Star*, February 1891, p. 411.

Any such requests for financial assistance were placed in the hands of William Gibson Senior and the Secretary of the Union Council who, as the Union Minutes reported, 'would ... see what can be done towards furthering their wishes.'⁸² In the same year of its formation, the Association commenced both a Sunday School Union and a Baptist Total Abstinence Association.⁸³

As with Baptists in Britain, the Association made possible the support of an overseas mission. The beginning of foreign mission work for Baptists in Tasmania took place in 1885 when pioneer Baptist missionary, Ellen Arnold, toured the Australian colonies seeking support for the new venture of foreign mission work. Armed with maps, papers, curiosities and a boundless enthusiasm, she set off to Tasmania, New Zealand, NSW, Queensland, Victoria and to Tasmania, again. One of the few personal glimpses into the lives of Mary Ann and William Gibson is recorded at this time:

Before the federation of the Australian Baptist Foreign Missionary work each of the several Australian State Unions accepted responsibility for a particular field in India. Mr. Gibson was opposed to the formation of a society in Tasmania to undertake responsibility for the work at Serajunge in East Bengal. His main objection appears to have been that he did not feel the numerical strength of the Tasmanian Baptists adequate to the support of the work. Mrs. Gibson, on the other hand, was heartily in accord with the proposal. When the resolution to form the missionary

society came before the Baptist assembly, Mr. Gibson rose to oppose it. Mrs. Gibson said in an audible whisper, 'William, if you oppose this God will visit you.' She promptly took hold of the tails of his frock coat and literally pulled him to the seat and held him there until the motion was carried.⁸⁴

Soon afterwards the Gibsons promised to join in the formation of a missionary committee. In 1891 Tasmanian Baptists accepted Lucie Kealley of Adelaide, South Australia, as their first missionary. South Australia Baptists had sent out their first male missionary in 1887 with Victoria having done so four years earlier. An appeal had been made to South Australia to seek the services of someone who could be recognised as Tasmania's own missionary. Nurse Kealley, who had never visited Tasmania and was seen as 'a stranger to us', offered herself. Kealley had arrived in India in December 1890 and was working with Arnold and others in the Pabna and Serajunge districts. She would remain there until her first furlough in 1896.⁸⁵ The next two decades would see something mirroring of what was being accomplished through the

⁸² Council Minutes 12 August 1884.

⁸³ Mid-year Assembly Minutes of October 1884.

⁸⁴ Bligh, *Altars of the Mountains*, p. 27. Another account is given in the *Tasmanian Baptist Advance* of May 1991: While being entertained by Mary Ann and William Gibson of Native Point, Perth, Miss Arnold sought to win their support in the evangelisation of East Bengal [now Bangladesh] but William proved a difficult convert. At length he rose from his chair and paced back and forth. Finally he said, 'No, my dear lady. I feel that our own work for the Lord lies right here for the present. We must see that our own people, so widely scattered, have every opportunity of hearing the gospel and of worshipping in the house of God.' Suddenly Mary Ann pulled William's coat tail and said, 'Pray, sit down William. The Lord sometimes speaks to me too. I am convinced that he would have us take this step forward and support this new idea.'

⁸⁵ *Tasmanian Baptist Advance*, May 1991.

Metropolitan Tabernacle in London: the commencement and services of preaching stations, the gathering together of a body of preachers, the erection of chapels and tabernacles and the establishing of the Baptist institutions. Up to the arrival of the Rev Alfred Grant in 1869, the Baptist work in Tasmania was solely a Strict and Particular Baptist work but the Particulars' chapels in Hobart and Launceston were on the point of extinction even though the Gibsons, with their own chapel in Perth, retained their association with and financial interest in the Launceston chapel. The Strict and Particular Baptist work in Deloraine, begun in 1863, had already ceased to function.

Conclusion

This chapter shows that those involved in the new Baptist work in Tasmania in the early 1880s had their eyes on the future. With the formation of their Association in 1884 they were assuring themselves of a future. Apart from the enhanced respect their local churches would receive within their local communities, this chapter demonstrates how Associations provided more effective and wider Christian witness and service and readily provided a greater opportunity for church planting (or extension) without taking away from the independence of local churches. One can see how local churches in association were immeasurably strengthened through consolidations between churches, through exchange of pulpits, and through the assistance offered in all the areas of church life. Struggling churches were continually helped by their benefactors, the Gibsons, who up to the ends of their lives continued their close association (and some will say their Providential relationship) with the Spurgeon's men in the colony.

In 1881, the Tasmanian census registered 3,285 Baptists, which is a remarkable number for such a minute gathering of religious persons under a single banner. Three years hence, with the formation of the Association, there were 482 Baptist church members. In 1903 there were 864 Baptist church members climbing to 1,447 members in 1926. By now the Baptists and Methodists were greater forces than the Congregationalists who were in a state of decline.⁸⁶ Due to the influx of men from Spurgeon's College, coupled with the many visits of Spurgeon's son, and the backing of the Gibson family, the Baptists' work was reinvigorated and saw remarkable numerical growth.

⁸⁶ Elisabeth Wilson, 'The Methodist Movement' in A Alexander (ed.), *Companion to Tasmanian History* (Hobart, Centre for Tasmanian Historical Studies, University of Tasmania, 2005), pp. 234f. The Congregationalists had early appeal. In 1869 there were about 3,000 Tasmanian Congregationalists.

CONCLUSION

By 1862 the term Baptist was far from being a byword in Tasmania. That year, William Gibson Senior and his wife, Mary Ann, opened their community church in Perth. Through Mary Ann's enthusiastic following of the London preacher, the Rev Charles H Spurgeon, the necessity of finding a preacher who would minister to their Perth people, was met. Encouraged by reports that Spurgeon was sending out his graduates to far flung places such as India, America and Australia, their son, William Gibson Junior, met Spurgeon in London and requested that one of his College graduates migrate to Tasmania and minister at the chapel. The arrival of the Rev Alfred William Grant in 1869 began the influx of Spurgeon's College men to the colony. This was a reversal of the early trend of churches of the British Baptists. The earlier calls of the Tasmanian Baptists to their mother churches to fulfil their missionary responsibilities by sending suitable men to the colony were unheeded as the possible candidates were largely taken up with other work, either being employed in ministries to the Christian masses of England or sent to the new stations in India, Africa and elsewhere. Up to this time Australian Baptists had a low priority in the missionary strategy of British Baptist churches.

By the time of Grant's arrival, the churches belonging to the first Baptists in the colony, the Strict and Particular Baptists, remained isolated from the culture in which they operated with few people being won over to their tenets. This school of Baptist life and thought at the time of the death of their first minister, the Rev Henry Dowling, in 1869, was still preaching a High-

Calvinism which taught that salvation is restricted to the elect. Furthermore, they were excluding from their communion tables non-members. In fact time was against them. By the end of the nineteenth century, their harsh interpretation of Calvinism had lost its appeal. The Particulars in Tasmania had never had an interest in denominational progress and a number of their brothers and sisters in the south had spent their years squabbling among themselves, much to their detriment.

Mary Ann's religious devotion and commitment to what Spurgeon stood for was the drive that refocused the interest and wealth of her grazier husband to such an extent that the Gibson family become the prime financial benefactor to this Baptist new beginning. According to JD Bollen, dependence on a large donor, the wealthy patron, was a good old English tradition¹ and it was the likes of Gibson Senior and Congregationalists Henry Hopkins and his wife Sarah, who proved their earnestness and fervour for the Christian message in this way. Spurgeon's men came not to fill vacant pastorates, but to create pastorates, with the Gibsons' help. For once in Australia, funds, interest and personnel were equal to the demands of the situation. Thus there came about the continuance of the Baptist presence in Tasmania in the late nineteenth century.

Spurgeon's College sought to produce effective pastors and powerful evangelistic preachers from men of moderate talent and humble social

¹ JD Bollen, *Religion in Australian Society* (The Leigh College Open Lectures, Winter Series, 1973, Series II), p. 31.

backgrounds who were already enthusiastic lay preachers at the time of their entry into the College which commenced in 1856. By the end of 1892, the year Spurgeon died, 863 men had been trained there. The students were initially accepted into training on the condition that they would undertake any Christian ministry allotted to them during their studies and that ministry chosen could be either at home or overseas. In Tasmania, their evangelical emphasis and desire for denominational building triumphed over the Calvinism and the closed communion of the Particulars. The presence of Spurgeon's men in the colony, including Spurgeon's son, the Rev Thomas Spurgeon, meant for Tasmanian Baptists, in time, a renewed theology, a rediscovery of mission and the creation of an organisation for the fulfilment of that mission.

Apart from Spurgeon's satisfaction in fulfilling Gibson's request for pastors for his chapels and churches, a number of those who responded to his request did so as they were suffering from tuberculosis and had been advised to travel to warmer climates in the hope of recovery. Again the timing was right. During their years of arrival, Tasmania was seen as a Sanatorium. Since colonial service was not high on the agenda of many of Spurgeon's men, tuberculosis thus played its part in forcing a number of them to the Australian colonies. But this again suggests that Australia was still the recipient of the left-overs of the English missionary movement. Overcoming tuberculosis was not the only problem that awaited them in their new land. Difficulties in finding suitable meeting places and housing, of attending to the arduous task of maintaining church structures, of facing the possibility of pastoral failure and of encountering

theological conflict hampered their ministries.

Spurgeon's men made baptism by immersion fundamental to being a Baptist in Tasmania. Inevitably there was reaction from other Nonconformist and Anglican clergy who did not carry out the rite of total immersion on confession of faith. The objectors naturally felt obliged to defend their own churches' practices. Spurgeon's men were charged with importing unnecessary disharmony into the colony that needed to hear the Gospel and were denying a 'birth-privilege' to the children in their care. Spurgeon's men's great offence was that of limiting baptism to believers only. Even so, in time they were accepted by the likes of the Primitive Methodists, the Wesleyans and the Congregationalists as they all banded together in the colony's evangelistic effort.

The later nineteenth century was a vibrant period for Tasmanians generally. By the late 1870s Tasmania was emerging from the economic depression that had characterized the 1860s and early 1870s and the migration to the mainland had been arrested.² Bollen in *History of Religion in Australia* also says:

This was an age of building. Roads, railways, court-houses, post-offices, schools and police stations; to this day (most easily in the country town) we see about us the monuments of the second half of the nineteenth century. Christians were sharing in the great work of national development, providing the material pre-requisites of social life.³

The years 1850 to 1914 are considered by Stuart Piggin to be the high-noon of Nonconformity when the 'compatibility of freedom of thought

² Darrell Paproth, 'Henry Varley Down Under Part 1', *Lucas* 30, 2001, p. 51.

³ Bollen, *Religion in Australian Society*, p. 61.

and sound scholarship with the verities of evangelical scholarship was widely assumed.⁴ By the 1870s the churches were becoming respectable. Indeed in Victoria, in the two decades beginning in 1870, Protestantism doubled in size, in membership, church buildings, Sunday school pupils, and clergy.⁵ This was also true in 1870s and 1880s for Nonconformist churches in the colony of Tasmania as the churches were coming into their own. In the 1880s the Sunday-school movement was strong, the Salvation Army began work in Launceston, the Tasmanian Baptists were putting down new roots and the Congregational and Methodist churches were at their peak. In short, Spurgeon's men arrived at a time when figures for church attendance were most impressive. The churches were respectable and the children of members were growing up within the church.⁶ In this period of stability in the history of religion of Australia the erection of a church or chapel assured a congregation.

Data provided by Hans Mol in *Religion in Australia, A Sociological Investigation* confirms that churches' attendance figures were at a peak. Mol gives the figures for Victoria during this third quarter of the nineteenth century which show that Roman Catholics and Presbyterians increased their church attendance substantially while Anglicans maintained their relatively low and Methodists their extremely high level of church activity. Mol suggests that the pronounced increase during this period was a result of better

provision of religious facilities and personnel.⁷ Local churches indeed embraced a large part of the life of its adherents.

If Spurgeon's men had come earlier than 1870, they would have had to have been involved in itinerant work as the Tasmanian colony was still opening up to settlement. The Methodist circuit system of the time easily coped with a spreading population. Their laymen were used to sharing in pastoral and evangelical work. Spurgeon's men were not prepared for this approach as they were town orientated.

If they had come after 1890, they would have been faced with questions of a theological nature which they were ill-prepared to answer and for a theological position they were increasingly unhappy to espouse. This was already happening in Victoria. According to Geoffrey Serle, 'the early eighties [in Victoria] were the years of tense excitement when men and women debated theology as never before or since.'⁸ Hugh Jackson confirms this observation expressing the view that in the mid-1870s there was no public questioning of religious orthodoxy by any group of colonists and that for the Congregationalists the storm would not break over their churches until the 1890s. This was he says, 'The period in which the time bomb, planted by the biblical critics, went off.'⁹ In England it was the last decades of the nineteenth century that the Christian faith in England was on the defensive both intellectually and

⁴ Stuart Piggin, 'The Role of Baptists in the History of Australian Evangelicism', *Lucas*, 1992, p. 5.

⁵ Geoffrey Serle, *The Rush to be Rich: A History of the Colony of Victoria, 1883-1889*, (Carlton, Victoria; Melbourne University Press, 1971), p. 127.

⁶ Maurice Schild, 'Christian Beginnings in Australia', *Lutheran Theological Journal*, 1981, pp.74ff.

⁷ Hans Mol, *Religion in Australia, A Sociological Investigation* (Australia, Nelson, 1971), pp. 11, 13.

⁸ Serle, *The Rush to Be Rich: A History of the Colony of Victoria, 1883-1889*, p. 127.

⁹ Hugh Jackson, 'Religious Ideas and Practice in Australian Congregationalism 1870-1930: Part II', *Journal Religious History*, vol. 12, p. 433.

socially.¹⁰ The Spurgeon men never publicly asked detailed historical questions or showed any willingness to come to conclusions which conflicted with what they had been taught at Spurgeon's College. The essence of the Spurgeon tradition in Tasmania was an unashamed, powerful and evangelistic preaching tradition. Spurgeon's men were men of the Book. Their preaching and teaching was based in the firm conviction that the Bible is the Word of God and that it speaks with an authority that is to be obeyed. To some extent their fundamentalism rendered them remote from intellectual debates. Spurgeon's men, due to the conservative nature of their theological education at Spurgeon's College, did experience theological conflict from none other than fellow Baptists in the other Australian colonies. Spurgeon's graduates brought with them his abhorrence of so called 'modernist' thinking. By as late as the turn of the century there was no meeting of minds between Baptists in Tasmania and those more liberal in South Australia and there was no way forward. Spurgeon's men and the Gibsons were ambitious doers rather than thinkers. The timing of the arrival of Spurgeon's men was appropriate for their contribution and because of this, success was assured, a case of the right approach at the right time. For Tasmanian Baptists, the nineteenth century did not close with a still grander outburst of evangelical life. The 1890s Depression saw all the Australian colonies feel the cold winds of severe recession. In Tasmania, it had a profound impact with the collapse of flagship institution, the Bank of Van Diemen's Land and the Tasmanian government being short of

money. Unemployment rose dramatically and there was no effective social welfare safety net.¹¹ In fact during this severe depression all denominations faced major financial difficulties as well as exceptional demographic mobility.¹² Moreover, in this decade William Gibson Senior died, in 1892, and within ten years his widow, too, had passed on and with them the loss of their generosity. While their preaching was presented with a sense of authority and boldness and attracted ready hearers, the foregoing does not imply that Spurgeon's men theological conflict was only in respect of Higher Criticism. The nature of their baptism made this impossible as it did for the Disciples of Christ and the Brethren who also practised believers' baptism.

In the early 1880s the need to register the Perth chapel as a denominational place of worship set off a chain of events which saw the revitalisation of the Baptist faith in Tasmania and led to the formation of an association of churches, the Baptist Union of Tasmania. Spurgeon's men in Tasmania had had their eyes on the future and the formation of the Association in 1884 fulfilled this vision. Tasmanian Baptists, in conjunction with the Gibsons, established additional churches, with even later churches benefiting from the Gibson Junior's benefice.¹³ By 1887 some forty-four of Spurgeon's men were serving in Australasia. Further

¹¹ Bruce Felmingham, 'Economy' in A Alexander (ed.), *Companion to Tasmanian History*, p. 422.

¹² Jim Stebbins, 'Historical Models for Christianity in Australia', *The Shape of Belief, Christianity in Australia Today* (Lancer, Homebush, NSW, 1982), Chapter 4.

¹³ William Gibson Junior made an annual contribution to the Home Mission until 1916. See the Home Mission Minutes of the Baptist Union of Tasmania, 15 September 1916.

¹⁰ Brown, Kenneth D, *A Social History of Nonconformist Ministry 1800-1930* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1988), p. 10.

Association initiatives included a monthly religious paper and engagement of a colporteur. Before the century was out, the Association began overseas missionary work. A fund was also set up for church extension.

The small army of Spurgeon's students brought by the Gibsons helped shape Tasmania. Three years after the formation of the 1884 Association, there were 482 Tasmanian Baptist church members, while in 1903 there were 864 Baptist church members climbing to 1447 members in 1926.

In the years of 1900 to 1939 the Baptists and Methodists were greater forces in Tasmania than the Congregationalists who were in a state of decline. Yet for the Baptists there was little progress in the forging of a uniquely Australian version of Baptist life. English Baptist life, from the time of the Rev. Henry Dowling, had been

firmly planted in Tasmania. This study shows that the history of Baptist churches in Australia, and in Tasmania in particular, was a series of implantations. Spurgeon's men took as their task the preservation of the ways of home. They believed that Spurgeon stood for true religion and his message was changeless and needed only to be proclaimed. They lovingly remembered their roots and sought to preserve, amidst all the peculiarity of the colonies, a church life they had embraced and which remained for them a tie with home. It was not a question of innovating or improvising but defending and propagating. But rather than taking root in Australian soil, the Spurgeon-Gibson venture to some extent remained a potted plant. But that could be said about most of the major denominations in the colonies in the later part of the nineteenth century.

Appendix A

Appendix B

Appendix C

SPURGEON'S COLLEGE STUDENTS IN TASMANIA**BURNIE**

from Latrobe	Harry Wood 7 May 1899 - 28 November 1890, to Longford
from Rockhampton	Thomas Vigis 6 February 1901 - January 1902, to Fenwick St Geelong
from Hobart church	Assistant George Craike from 1909

DELORAINIE

from Spurgeon's College	James S Harrison January to December 1880, to evangelistic work
from Saddleworth, SA	Harry Wood March 1881 to January 1882, to Spurgeon's College
from South Rhine, SA	Edward Vaughan 1882 to December 1884, to Shepparton
from Spurgeon's College	Albert Hyde 4 June 1886 to 28 August 1887, to Longford
from Spurgeon's College	Herbert D Archer 4 September 1887 to November 1891, to Longford
from Sheffield	Harry Wood January 1893 to June 1895, to Latrobe

DEVONPORT

at Latrobe	Albert Hyde November 1888 – June 1899
from Longford	James E Walton July 1899 – February 1900, to England
from Chesham, England	George Craike 1 May 1912 – 1915, to Clifton Hill

HOBART

from Longford	Robert McCullough 7 October 1883 - March 1894, to Parkside, SA
evangelistic missions	James Blaikie 22 August 1897 - February 1906, to Castlemaine
from Mosgiel	Frank W Boreham July 1906 – 1916, to Armadale.

LATROBE

from India	Henry G Blackie 1886 to 1888, to Longford
from Longford	Alfred Hyde 25 December 1888 - March 1890, to Formby
from Deloraine	Harry Wood 9 July 1895 to 1899, to Burnie
from England	John E Walton 8 August 1901- February 1905, to Jireh, Brisbane

LAUNCESTON: CIMITERE ST.

from England	Alfred Bird January 1884 - 21 April 1887, to Ballarat
from Longford	Harry Wood 4 September 1887 - 10 September 1890, to Sheffield
from Woolloomooloo	Alfred J Clarke 6 December 1890 - December 1893, to Burwood NSW

from Bournemouth George Wainwright 13 March 1898 to 6 April 1899, to
England

LONGFORD

from Spurgeon's College Robert McCullough October 1880 - September 1883, to
Hobart
again from Spurgeon's Harry Wood 1883 - August 1887, to Cimitere St
from Deloraine Albert Hyde 4 September 1887 - 4 November 1888, to
Latrobe
from Latrobe Henry G Blackie 23 December 1888 - December 1891, to
Albert Park
from Deloraine Herbert D Archer September 1892 - July 1894, to Koroit,
Victoria
from Burnie Harry Wood January 1901 - October 1906, to Perth

MOONAH

from Spurgeon's College Albert L Leeder 13 December 1908 - August 1910, to
Maryborough, Qld

PERTH

from Spurgeon's College Alfred W Grant January 1870 - 28 August 1870, to Ballarat
from Spurgeon's College William Clark December 1874 – June 1876, to Ballarat
from Spurgeon's College Robert Williamson May 1880 – 1 August 1884, to Kyneton
from Spurgeon's College James R Cooper 4 February 1885 - 21 January 1887, to
Portland
from Birmingham John E Walton 22 January 1888 – 10 September 1897, to
England

SANDY BAY

from England George Wainwright October 1921 - November 1925

SHEFFIELD

from Cimitiere Street Harry Wood 7 September 1890 – January 1893, to
Deloraine
from Mannun, York Peninsula Edward Vaughan 22 January 1893 - 13 July 1896, to
Castlemaine
from Hamilton Robert Williamson 9 February 1904 - March 1908, to
Brighton, Vic.

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