



Baptist Historical Society of Queensland Newsletter

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IS THERE LIFE AFTER 1988?

This issue focuses on Bicentennial and Expo features. With so much attention being placed on historical matters in 1988, there is bound to be some kind of feeling of anti-climax when the year comes to an end. Perhaps historians who have been working overtime will get a chance to catch their breath, but they'll soon be at it again!

While it has been stimulating to see the community become more historically conscious during this year, the question now facing us is, what next? No doubt there will be many more "special" events which will capture the enthusiasm of people, but we should also be looking at the basic issues upon which the special events depend.

Without the steady work of historical research the wide range of interesting information and insights would not be available when needed. We feature in this issue a review of the first national history of Australian Baptists. It is a pity that the much larger and more comprehensive volume of this kind which was hoped for earlier did not come to fruition. We must make sure that we lay good groundwork in the post-1988 years for the time ahead.

Here in Queensland there are many issues that need skilled, in-depth research. The BHSQ wants to encourage progress in these areas. Some are fascinating, others are more pedantic while there must be many surprises in store as the work goes on. We have been pleased to welcome some new members since our Bicentennial Spurgeon meeting, but there is room for many more yet to join the team!

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FOCUS ON SPURGEON

Successful Bicentennial Presentation

July 25, 1988

An enthusiastic audience of around fifty people gathered at Nundah Baptist Church on Monday evening, July 25th, to "focus on C.H. Spurgeon". The occasion was the bicentennial presentation of the Baptist Historical Society of Queensland, chaired by Rev. Paul Harrison, who is a graduate of Spurgeon's College, London.

Speakers for the occasion were Rev. Dr. Craig Skinner of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, USA and Mr Patrick O'Leary of Brisbane.

Dr Skinner sketched Spurgeon's influence in the Pacific area through published sermons, graduates of the college and his son Thomas. He commented, "I am sure we have not yet calculated the value of the impact of these men upon our Baptist life - the evangelical stamp, the love of the Bible that we have."

In outlining the significance and extent of Spurgeon's ministry in England, Dr Skinner pointed out that one of his greatest achievements was to preach sermons which were clear, forcefully presented, biblical and on a popular level in contrast with the erudite, religious essays which were common in his day. Consequently, his sermons were enthusiastically received by thousands of people every Sunday, as well as being printed in major newspapers and books in enormous quantities. As well as Sundays, he preached many times during each week.

Patrick O'Leary devoted his paper to the work of Rev. William Whale, a Spurgeon's college graduate, who was the successful and popular minister of the City Tabernacle Baptist Church, 1885-1903. Some of the Whale family were present in the audience to hear Mr O'Leary's paper which was based on information gained during research for a University of Queensland thesis which he completed recently.

Mr Whale was born at Redditch, England in 1842, and after a brief education began work while still only a child. As a result of the movement of the family to Birmingham when William was only ten years of age, he was brought in contact with church leaders and other figures who influenced him to take an interest in Christian witness and matters of great public concern.

Mr O'Leary showed how these early influences remained with Mr Whale so that after training at Spurgeon's College and a lengthy period of pastoral work in England, he became deeply involved in public life in Brisbane. O'Leary quoted the opinion of Brisbane historian, Ronald Lawson, who said, "Mr Whale was Brisbane's leading non-conformist clergyman."

During the meeting Dr David Parker, chairman of the Historical Society, announced that a manuscript of one of Spurgeon's sermons has recently been presented to the archives by Rev. Neville Abrahams. (Full details of this were printed in the last issue of the BHSQ Newsletter.)

A digest of the addresses follows, and tape was taken of the meeting. Planning is underway for the 1989 public meeting to be held mid-year.

SPURGEON AND THE SOUTH PACIFIC

Digest of an address given by Rev. Dr Craig Skinner,
Professor of Preaching, Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary
San Francisco, Ca., USA

at the Baptist Historical Society of Queensland
• Nundah Baptist Church, Monday, July 25th, 1988

C.H. Spurgeon is a well known figure, but it is vitally important for Australian Baptists to know about him because of the impact he made on Baptist life in its formative years. For example, from 1850-1950, 106 out of 437 Spurgeon's College graduates serving overseas had come to this area - about two a year at the peak of the influence. As yet, we have not calculated the impact of this movement upon our Baptist heritage - in its evangelical character, its love for Scripture.

One interesting sidelight is Spurgeon's strong preference for Greek rather than Gothic church architecture. Spurgeon's Metropolitan Tabernacle was one of the first of the Protestant churches to be erected with Corinthian columns and as an amphitheatre. This had a big influence on church architecture across the world. There are many "Tabernacle" looking buildings which were erected during that time. Many Baptists even called their buildings "Tabernacles." The Auckland Baptist Tabernacle is especially typical, being almost a reproduction of the London building.

Then, many great preachers were influenced by Spurgeon's methods, and many not so great preachers have used Spurgeon's published material as well.

Spurgeon's son Thomas who later succeeded his father was perhaps better known for his ministry in Australia and New Zealand. His father had been invited to visit this area, but pressure of ministry kept him in London. However, his son who was a great support to him was unwell. It was thought that the climate here would be a help to him. He intended to pursue his craft of engraving, but when people realised who he was, doors were opened for ministry which proved to be exceedingly fruitful, even though he was only a young man. He worked in Victoria (especially Geelong where he met the girl he would later marry), Sydney, Brisbane (including Sandgate) and other places.

Spurgeon's influence in Tasmania was especially strong due to the influence of the Gibson family. Mary Ann Gibson read all Spurgeon's sermons and influenced her formerly Anglican husband to become Baptist. They devoted their wealth (gained from sheep farming) to erecting churches and bringing graduates of Spurgeon's College to the island to pastor the congregations. (Many of these churches were called "Tabernacles") At one time, all the pastors in the Baptist Union of Tasmania were Spurgeon's College graduates.

Spurgeon's great art was to bring a fresh style in preaching. In his day, it was usual to have unpalatable and lengthy sermons which were more like religious essays, composed of many points and sub-points, on topics unrelated to the ordinary person's interests.

But Spurgeon's sermons were lucid, precise, zestful and

sometimes highly colloquial. He used homely and powerful illustrations, and lots of humour to good effect. Preaching orthodox doctrine (from a mildly Calvinistic perspective), he based his sermons solidly on the exposition of Scripture and centred them on the exaltation of Christ, and the substitutionary atonement. The providence of God was a key theme in Spurgeon's preaching and it reflected an important element in his own life and faith.

With sermons like this, he could gather in excess of 5000 people every Sunday for over 30 years, in addition to many other occasions during the week, especially a regular weeknight prayer meeting and special gatherings at the Crystal Palace when up to 25,000 would attend. The sheer physical achievement of preaching to crowds like this without electronic amplification is a feat in itself. Not all his sermons were necessarily perfect, but it has been said "He was a great preacher of sermons before he was a preacher of great sermons!"

His sermons were published weekly in the press and translated into many languages worldwide. About 25,000 copies of these sermons were sold separately each week for a penny each. About 4,000 remain in print, with the 63 official volumes forming the greatest body of sermons in the English language. They still outsell all other sermon volumes today. One of his previously unpublished sermons was published each week for 25 years after his death.

The quality of the content of Spurgeon's work did not suffer despite the enormous output. He kept up his reading, accumulating a 12,000 volume library in the course of his life, even though he gave many books away to his students and pastors. He covered a variety of topics and produced interesting, arresting topics which delighted and edified his audiences.

As well as preaching up to 12 times a week, Spurgeon also had a wide and effective ministry in other areas. For example, he founded a theological college, established an orphanage, fostered hundreds of churches, supervised the operations of 21 mission halls in the city, counselled innumerable enquirers, and baptised 10,000 people in his own congregation.

Other books of his also remain popular, including "Lectures to my Students", "John Ploughman's Pictures" and "The Treasury of David" (a commentary on the Psalms). It has been calculated that he published altogether some 23 million words!

His sermons and writings reflected his own spirituality and beliefs. He was a humble man who remained authentic and full of integrity, being unaffected by his popularity. Even though he found it necessary to speak out publicly about what he believed was a serious decline from biblical orthodoxy in his day (the famous "Down-Grade" controversy), he did not resort to cheap personal abuse in the process. He refused to disclose information given in confidence, preferring rather to resign as a minister of the Baptist Union. After his resignation, he declined to commence a new denomination, but instead fellowshipped with a local association of Baptists to show his underlying loyalty.

His ministry to the socially deprived was also significant, especially because he often gave generously from his own purse for the upkeep of institutions which he commenced.

WILLIAM WHALE, BRISBANE'S LEADING PASTOR

Digest of an address given by Patrick O'Leary, BA
at the Baptist Historical Society of Queensland
Mundah Baptist Church, Monday, July 25th, 1988

Rev. William Whale came to Brisbane from Middlesborough in Yorkshire, England on October 5, 1885 in response to a call from the Wharf Street church. Although the church building in which he was to preach held 500, within two years, planning began for new, much larger building. After a further two and half years, the City Tabernacle Baptist Church was opened, holding 800 people, and seating was still hard to obtain.

William Whale and one of his deacons began what was probably the first Christian Endeavour Society in Australia. He was president of the Baptist Union on three occasions (1887-8, 1893-5, 1902-3), edited the Queensland Baptist on several occasions and contributed 183 articles, 33 sermons and 20 reports over a period of 16 years.

Perhaps it was on the public stage that Mr Whale really left his mark. He was involved in several theological debates, the first only three months after his arrival. He was the first president and founder of the Brisbane Ministers' Union and took a public stand against the re-introduction of the iniquitous Kanaka trade, mediated in several bitter labour disputes and was chairman of the relief committee during the great flood of 1893. No wonder he has been referred to a "Brisbane's leading Nonconformist clergyman!"

He was born on September 10, 1842 in a farming family at Redditch in Worcestershire, and started his education at a private school. At age six and a half years he entered the workforce, possibly due to economic hardship and restlessness in school.

After working for about four years, his family (like many others at the time) moved into the industrialised city of Birmingham, 30 km to the north west. It was a city which was rapidly growing in population and with it was developing the social and environmental problems of urban life. For various historical reasons, it was also a city favoured by nonconformists and political dissenters. It is not surprising then that this move had a dramatic impact upon the impressionable William Whale. In fact, the political, social and religious attitudes he was to express in Brisbane in the 1880-90s were formulated in Birmingham in the 1850-60s.

In Birmingham, he came under the influence of three particular people with strong views. One was Joseph Sturge, a prominent lay person and outspoken voice in social issues such as the evils of indentured labour for the West Indies, repeal of the corn laws and the education of the poor. Another was the minister of the Newhall Street Baptist Chapel attend by Whale, whose name was Arthur O'Neill. He had been a political activist since his youth and had become involved in the Chartist movement at Glasgow University. After becoming a Baptist, he befriended the poor and used his influence as pastor of the church to work on their behalf. Another Baptist minister was Charles Vince whose prime interests were the education and training of young ministers and promising public speakers. He directly influenced Whale

in his decision to go to Spurgeon's College in London.

While in Birmingham, Whale became involved in the Penn Street Ragged School (run by Vince), Sunday school work, Mutual Improvement Classes and the Band of Hope. Although of a very limited education while a child, William took more interest as he grew older. Between 6am and 6pm he worked for his employer as an apprentice brass finisher and harness maker, but at lunch times and evenings he would engage in personal study, especially in association with the Birmingham Mutual Improvement Classes. By the time he was 20, he was found speaking on religious, social and political issues at various forums and platforms in the area. It was this ability and interest that suggested to people like Rev. Charles Vince that Whale should undertake pastoral training.

Clearly, he had received solid informal training and gained much experience, but God had not finished his education yet. That's where Spurgeon and the Pastors' College came into the scene. Whale was to gain much through his association with the great London preacher, writer and Christian leader. As a student, Whale proved to be above average in gifts and motivation. One contemporary account of his studies which were completed in May 1867 states that "he distinguished himself by his study and preaching powers, and became a favourite student of Mr Spurgeon." Another report said, "Mr Whale evidenced the result of previous study by soon being on the front form of the college, known as 'the apostles' bench'."

Before coming to Brisbane, Whale served creditably and conspicuously in the three English churches. They were Bures St Mary near Sudbury, the Stoke-green church in Ipswich (both in Surrey) and finally at New-port Road church in Middlesborough, Yorkshire. His interests were clear from the beginning when, apart from his pastoral and religious duties, he became involved in public matters and was given the title of "the political parson."

In Ipswich he took an deep interest in the Gladstone liberal government's Education Act and in 1872 founded his own political newspaper, The Ipswich Free Press. Later, in Yorkshire, he combined strong pastoral gifts with his public activities. His church grew at a time when others were stagnant or in decline, while visiting political speakers were often embarrassed to find that local people called "Whale, Whale" in preference to themselves!

After arrival in Brisbane, the new pastor settled into the religious life of his adopted city easily. He attracted large crowds as he had done in the homeland, and so the pressure was on to erect a new building. During a period of rapid growth, Whale remained keenly interested in his people, taking care to keep in touch with his congregations in the city and at outstations. He was not able to use his own transport as the manse provided by the church did not have stable facilities. Despite hardships faced during the difficult times in the depression of the 1890s and severe illness suffered by himself, his people remained loyal to him.

~~He was also a prominent figure within the denomination. The annual meetings of the Association were held just three weeks after his arrival in Brisbane, but of the eight motions moved at the final business session, Whale's name appears on four of them in his own right or in association with others. He was also called upon to deliver the annual sermon that evening. As well as being president on~~

various occasions, he represented the Union in visits to the southern states. Within the colony itself, he undertook a fact-finding tour to the north in April 1888. He consulted with Baptists in the centres he visited and reported back with recommendations for outreach.

So whether it was in the public arena defending orthodox belief and trying to mediate in a bootmakers' strike, or working as a pastor and church-leader, William Whale's impact in Queensland was outstanding, making him one of the greatest pastors of his day, and perhaps, of our entire history.

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JAMES SWAN, BAPTIST NEWSPAPER MAN

Vistors to the Queensland Newspapers pavilion at the World Expo 88 currently on in Brisbane will have been greeted by a life-size hi-tech talking representation of James Swan giving a overview of the history of the Courier Mail. It is quite effective as even his lips and face move totally realistically as he speaks.

As impressive as this is, readers of this publication will be interested to know that he was also a prominent Baptist whose influence lived on well after his death.

James Swan was born in Glasgow, Scotland in 1811. After a somewhat traumatic childhood, he entered law and then became a printer. He arrived in Australia in 1837 under Dr John Dunmore Lang's migration scheme, working on papers in Sydney, including the Herald.

In 1846 he moved to Brisbane and was employed on the Moreton Bay Courier, but bought out his employer when financial difficulty struck two years later. From then on, he exercised a wide influence in the city by taking an interest in a wide range of public affairs.

He sold the paper in 1859 when Queensland achieved separation from NSW. In the 1870s he became mayor of Brisbane on three occasions, and a member of the Legislative Council. He was succeeded as mayor by another Baptist, Richard Ash Kingsford.

It is not surprising that, because of Swan's connections with Dr Lang, he should also have been a member of the United Evangelical Church in Brisbane, founded by Lang's immigrants and at his suggestion. Swan then became involved in the Baptist work when it began a few years later. He was greatly influential in the establishment of the old Wharf Street church, the predecessor of the City Tabernacle. But this is where the real influence can be seen.

Swan's first wife, Christina, died in 1888 and in the following year, he married again, to another Christina who at only 31 years of age was much younger than he was. Two years later, the Swans left Brisbane for a visit to Britain, but James died en route through the Red Sea and was buried in Egypt.

He had intended to leave a good part of his wealth for Christian work. In his will, he directed that a proportion of his money should be devoted as a gift to the Wharf Street Church. Portion of the interest on the remainder (perhaps in the vicinity of 40,000 pounds) of his wealth was to be given to the Baptist Union for the support of evangelists. Unfortunately, the will was felt to be invalid because it needed to be witnessed in a different way from the usual due to legal requirements relating to the status of the beneficiaries.

The case went to court, which decided the will was invalid. The proceeds were split between the state and Mrs Swan, but upon her death in 1930, the matter was re-opened and it was not until then that the denomination received the benefit of James Swan's generosity. The "Swan Estate Fund" then began to appear in the Baptist Union accounts.

James Swan was one of those men who had a wide range of interests and who was influential in public life, but did not forget where his ultimate loyalties lay.

NATIONAL BAPTIST HISTORY PUBLISHED

For the first time ever, Australian Baptists have a national history of the denomination. Although it is less than 100 pages in length and costs a mere \$6.95 posted, it covers a good deal of material and provides an excellent basis for further developments in the future.

The volume is called "Australian Baptists - Past and Present" published by the NSW Baptist Historical Society as the fifth in their series of "Baptist Historical Studies." It is the text of papers delivered at the Baptist National Bicentenary Celebration in Sydney, January 1988, edited for publication by Michael Petras.

There are three papers in the volume, and the concluding section are study questions and some miscellaneous notes. Altogether, the volume covers the period from the establishment of Baptist work until the present in a thematic and reflective way, rather than attempting to provide a full narrative. There are already officially published histories of most states to give all the basic details, although these usually deal with the denominational life rather than covering local churches, personal, social and theological issues. That task still remains to be done, but the new volume breaks quite a bit of ground. As the editor explains, the underlying theme of the book is to offer some help in explaining why Australian Baptists are the way they are!

The first paper by Dr Heather Vose of WA covers the 19th century, roving over all the states as it takes up such issues as the influence of important figures, the numerical strength of Baptists, the background of the pioneers and their involvement in local life. Covered in some detail are people like John Saunders of Sydney and William and Mary Ann Gibson of Tasmania. Other names include John Ham, W.T. Whitley, George Fife Angus and Silas Mead.

The second chapter is devoted to the early 20th century and is contributed by the editor. Throughout his paper, he keeps in mind the relationship between Australian Baptists and the broader context of evangelical Protestantism in this country. He begins by taking up the issue of organisational development at both state and national level, including interesting aspects like the national Baptist paper and the idea of a national Baptist college. The final part of this chapter deal with church extension and social responsibility. One interesting reference worth more study takes up Baptist attitudes to war.

Chapter 3 is titled, Australian Baptists Today, and covers the period since World War II. Written by Dr Ken Manley of Melbourne, it uses a personal style, describing church life as it was earlier in the period and then noting changes that have taken place since. It is good to have a written record of some of these points as they may be overlooked too easily, but as the author acknowledges, it can be rather subjective. The chapter goes on to identify major forces which have impacted on Baptists during the period - the major one, according to the author is the American influence as contrasted with earlier British influences. The final part discusses a number of unresolved tensions facing Baptists, which include ecumenism, Baptist identity, the charismatic issue, the role of women, the inerrancy debate and issues related to mission.

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(See review of this book, page 9)

HELP HELP HELP HELP HELP HELP HELP HELP

We are still looking for back copies of the QUEENSLAND BAPTIST to make up some of the gaps in the Baptist Union Archives. If you know of any back issues between 1926 and 1950, please contact us immediately with details.

1989 PRESENTATION

Watch for details of our 1989 Public Meeting focusing on the first Principal of the Queensland Baptist College, Rev. T.J. Malyon, presented by Rev. S.W. Nickerson and other speakers.

MEMBERSHIP

Individuals, churches and other groups are invited to support the Baptist Historical Society of Queensland by becoming members. Membership subscriptions are the only regular source of finances. Members receive the BHSQ Newsletter, and are able to join in the Society's activities and have a good opportunity to contribute to its historical work.

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