

Baptist Historical Society of Queensland

Newsletter

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Free to Members

Membership: Individual \$6 p.a. Family \$10 p.a. Corporate \$20 p.a.

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Moving Forward

Welcome to our "new look" BHSQ Newsletter for November 1990. This is an experimental issue, The different printing methods mean we can present as much material before, but in fewer pages, thus saving a little in costs. If all goes well, we hope to switch over to this method on a permanent basis.

This issue contains a review of BHSQ activities for 1990 as presented to the Annual Meeting. There is much for which to be thankful, and the prospects for the future are good. The key factor is whether or not the Society is in a position to take up the opportunities which are before it. Existing office bearers were re-elected for the new year. Finances are gradually being depleted due to greater expenses than income, which is a common problem these days! So, after 6 years, we have decided it is time to raise subscription fees. These are listed above. See also the back page for other details.

1991 Program

Planning is in progress for our public presentation for 1991. Please make a note in your diaries - the date will be *Monday August 12* and the location *Greenslopes Baptist Church*. The topic will be the *camping ministries of the Baptist Union of Queensland*. We plan to have a number of segments to the program including men and women who used to be young people at the early camps with their impressions of those pioneering days. We will also have some more up to date reflections and an assessment of camping as a ministry. If you have material or contacts you think might be helpful, please contact the secretary as soon as possible.

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Celebrations in 1991

According to Baptist Union records, Margate church will be celebrating 50 years since its constitution, and for Labrador and Acacia Ridge, it will be 25 years. Baptist work commenced in the Bundaberg area 50 years ago.

Essay Competition

There is an increasing interest in Australian Church History. It is good to know that the Baptists of Australia are working so well on their own material through their own state historical societies. In 1985, 1987 and 1989, the Baptist Historical Society of NSW held an essay competition. It will do the same again 1991. Those who wrote essays in the previous competitions made valuable contributions to Baptists' knowledge of their past. The NSW BHS looks forward to next year's entries.

The winning essay in 1985 was about northward development of Baptist work in South Australia in the last century. In 1987 it was a fresh assessment of C.J. Tinsley. In 1989, it was a biographical essay on Rev. James Worboys. Essays, therefore, may be about churches or processes, or people or other aspects of Baptist history anywhere in Australia.

Any who are interested in submitting an essay in 1991 must obtain an entry form and statement which sets out the conditions of the competition and gives guidance to the participants. These may be obtained from Mr P.G. Young, PO Box 8, Drummoyne, 2047 or from the secretary of the BHS of Q. Entries must reach Mr Young by 1st October, 1991.

Disasters

Any disasters happened around you? Sorry, we do not want to be personal! The Natural Hazards Research Group based at Macquarie University, NSW, is interested in knowing about all the disasters that have happened throughout the history of our country! They are compiling a database of such events to assist in research and in understanding what has happened to us and our land.

In a letter to the BHSQ earlier this year, the Group advised: "To date we have completed a database on the effects of tropical cyclones on people (deaths and injuries), buildings, agriculture, economic activity and the natural environment. We are also working on databases on bushfires, tornadoes, floods, earthquakes, landslides, hailstorms, lightning strikes, other severe weather, tsunami (often incorrectly called tidal waves) and similar natural events."

The Group is interested in details (including photocopies of newspaper stories and precise references to published histories) of any such events which may be known to readers. They will pay for photocopying costs and will also make a copy of the database for the local area available to those who supply information for it. The Group can be contacted at Macquarie University, 2109 NSW or phone 02/805 8428).

Help wanted

The work of the BHSQ is carried out by its members and friends. There are many projects which we would like to develop, so there are many opportunities for interested people to give assistance. Our major on-going projects are the Ministers File and the Prominent Baptists File. Then there is much material in the Archives that requires classification and preparation for use.

Most of these jobs can be done at varied times to suit the convenience of those doing them, especially if they are able to visit the Archives during office hours. If you are able to help, please contact the Society.

There are also more complex projects which we would like to commence, but they will require longer term involvement. Some of them would be more suited to an academic research project, while others relate to the overall development of the Baptist Union Archives.

Social Issues and the Baptist Union of Queensland 1938-1973.

by Ken Smith

In an earlier issue of this Newsletter there was a brief note mentioning the work of Neville Buch on social issues in the Protestant churches in Queensland. His work covered the period 1919-1939.

I have started looking at the way social issues have been treated in resolutions and discussions at Assembly meetings of the Baptist Union of Queensland after this time. A number of rather interesting, and sometimes amusing, points have emerged. This short item mentions some of these. A more complete survey will appear in a later issue of this Newsletter.

During the early part of this period the general sentiment was that we should do all in our power to help overcome the forces of evil which were rampant in our society. But if Hitler was to be overcome we needed to make sure our fighting forces were in good trim. In the report of the Temperance, Morals and Public Questions Committee, recorded on page 62 of the Union's Yearbook for 1940, there are a couple of sentences which show how this could be carried out. One read:

In view of the present crisis we observe with alarm the increasing drinking habits of the community, and urge patriotic hosts and hostesses to exclude intoxicants from social and farewell functions.

There were regular appeals to patriotism in subsequent years, not only about alcohol, but also about Sunday Observance, gambling, and assorted other issues. Another sentence reads:

We notice with much approval the determination of the military to protect their men from immoral women and sly-grog. Throughout the war years there seems to have been no suggestion that women might need to be protected from immoral members of the military forces!

Also during the earlier part of the period under discussion there is adequate evidence that Baptists in Queensland were solidly middle class. The report of the Committee to the 1944 Assembly (Yearbook, 1944, page 76) stated:

There is no doubt that the moral landslide so noticeable during the past few years and to which we have referred in previous reports has been aided by the unusual amount of money being handled by many who have not previously been so well off.

Nowhere in this Report, or previous ones, is there any suggestion that a large part of any "moral landslide" in the years immediately preceding 1944 could be attributed, as other writers have said, to the presence of large numbers of United States (and other) servicemen on recreation leave in Brisbane. Clearly the lower classes are not to be trusted with extra money.

In 1949 it was suggested that they could not be trusted with additional free time, either. That year the Committee reported (Yearbook , 1949, page 88):

It is to be feared that one of the causes of the recent heavy increase in gambling is the extra idle time on the hands of so many since the adoption of the 40-hour week.

Fortunately a rather more enlightened attitude now prevails.

Looking over some of the resolutions one is struck, repeatedly, by the apparent isolation of Baptists. At times they seem to have been almost living in a ghetto, and quite ignorant of what was going on in the world around. A good example of this is a resolution passed at the 1955 Assembly. It read (Assembly Minutes, 1955-1962, page 30):

The Baptist Union of Queensland in Annual Meeting assembled expresses gratitude to God for the past few years kept free from major conflict in spite of the many indications of ill-will and the fears caused by the Cold War; and prays

that the recent conference of the heads of State may yet produce conditions leading to international goodwill and peace, bringing to an end the present upheavals in several parts of the world, that all the Kingdoms of the world may speedily become in fact as well as in vision "the Kingdoms of the Lord and of His Christ".

It is far from clear what the framer of the resolution, or those who supported it, had in mind by either "few years" or "major conflict". In fact, looking back to that time, it is hard to see how anyone could have described the previous few years as "free from major conflict". The war in Korea had come to a halt just over two years before, in July 1953. The French had finally given up in Vietnam in May the previous year, after a sound thrashing at Dien Bien Phu.

Of course, these were the days before TV. It is unlikely that world affairs would be overlooked in such a way today. However it serves as a warning to anyone wishing to move a resolution in the future. Have you got your facts straight?

Label and Date all Documents

by Ken Smith

One of the things which frustrates the amateur historian is finding an important, but unidentifiable, document.

Over the past eighteen months I have been slowly putting together some information on various social issues, as these were treated in resolutions and discussions at Assembly meetings of the Baptist Union of Queensland, over the years 1938-1973. A number of rather interesting, and sometimes amusing, things have emerged. Some of these will be treated elsewhere in this newsletter.

As usual with church history, the raw historical data is in a rather incomplete state. But I have found a document from the early part of the period under consideration which condemned gambling.

It read:

This Assembly re-affirms the abhorrence so frequently expressed in the past of all forms of gambling, including wagering, betting and the golden casket, and urges both Federal and State Government to recognise the present state of war as a call to eliminate or at least minimise them with a view of diverting the interests and energies of a large section of the people into useful channels. We further suggest to the federal Government that, in the present crisis, it would be preferable to impose a tax on amusements rather than on the necessities of life.

In view of various other resolutions about gambling this is only to be expected in wartime. The only problem is, when? The words quoted above are the only words on a piece of paper, which is a loose half sheet between pages 189 and 190 of the Assembly Minutes book dealing with the years 1934-1945. These pages cover the 1939 Assembly. The sheet is a carbon copy, so there was an original somewhere. Was the resolution one which somebody handed to the minute secretary and then failed to move? Was it moved at the Assembly and then withdrawn, but no record made of any such motion? Was the motion presented at a different Assembly, and placed in the wrong place in the Minute book? It could belong to the 1940 Assembly, since then a number of resolutions were passed which are referred to only by number, with no record of their wording.

Is there a reader out there who, by some chance, has preserved any documents circulated at the Assembly meetings of around this period? If so, you may be able to solve the problem of who moved this motion, when, and what the result was.

But for other people, please, PLEASE, put some label or title on ANY piece of paper, even if it is only a scribbled note to the minute secretary. And, above all, put a date on it! All future historical researchers will call down blessings on your head, rather than thinking unkind thoughts about you.

“Traditional Queensland Baptists”

The purpose of this article is to look briefly at “Traditional Queensland Baptists,” especially to glance at those elements “carried across” from former generations. Of particular personal concern are the Baptists of nineteenth century colonial Queensland - the pioneers of our denomination. From 1851-90, thirty of our current Baptist churches were founded, as well as a number of works no longer operating. Such modern ideas as Outreach and Church Planting, Renewal, Home Fellowships, and Musical Ministry were very early on the agenda.

“Outreach” and “Church Planting” were terms not used, as they were not needed. The Lord’s Great Commission of evangelism was, after all, every church’s concern. The idea of “Mother-Daughter” churches was common. Virtually all churches spawned “out-stations.” both in rural communities such as Snake Gully (in the Lockyer area) and in urban centres such as Wharf Street. *The Queensland Evangelical Standard*, July 29, 1876, reported the appointment of the Rev. J.B. Sneyd as an evangelist in the Beenleigh district, in connection with the Wharf Street Baptist Church. Home Fellowship groups were also common. In fact, most rural churches began that way. German Baptists in the Lockyer in the 1850-60’s, the Zillman family in the same period at Nundah (rural then), the Jensen family at Wamuran (near Caboolture) from 1882 - all brought their faith with them, and used their homes as centres of Baptist witness and work in their area. In some cases, it was not until the next generation that a church was officially constituted (e.g. Wamuran 1921), but the horse-riding, foot-slogging, open-house efforts of these pioneering traditionalists ensured that God’s Word was proclaimed. Their purpose was to maintain and to advance the traditional evangelism of their fore-fathers.

At the Spurgeon Jubilee, it was reported that the most popular sermon in print was his “Baptismal Regeneration” of 1864, in its 199th thousand by 1884. *The Christian Messenger*, March 1, 1884, reported that “the sermons in largest circulation . . . are . . . evangelical in their tone,” and “largely exported to our colonies,” including Queensland. From Toowoomba came the 1876 report in the same paper of an “unusual ceremony . . . of baptism by immersion . . . in the Queen’s Park,” involving two candidates, with 300 people present, accompanied by “a levity quite unbecoming the occasion.” Renewal of lives in Christ was important to these traditional Baptists, and they did not mind letting their joy flow openly into public places.

Music has always been important to Queensland Baptists. In 1877, the strait-laced Strict and Particular Jireh Baptist Church celebrated its pastor’s sixteenth anniversary at the Good Friday service, a choral service entitled “The Woman of Samaria.” In July 1884, the Toowoomba church choir presented “The Oiled Feather” at the School of Arts. Only four months later, they were at it again, with a new composition, “The Waldensian Exiles.” Music was a must with early Queensland Baptists, whether singing “Sweet bye and bye” around the family piano, or composing new pieces for public performances. Music old and new was important for both spreading the Gospel and having warm fellowship within the church. In times of few recreations, nineteenth century Baptists knew the importance of church fellowship. In 1884, 300-400 tickets were sold for Albion’s Anniversary service. Quarterly teas were common, but almost any occasion was a good opportunity to share fellowship in this way: anniversaries, settlement of pastors, baptisms, whatever. Music, food, fun, and fellowship have been constants in Queensland Baptist tradition.

As well as reaching out to the lost and providing fellowship for the saved, other issues arose. The cherished Baptist tradition of individual liberty of conscience has sometimes been sharply divisive. *The Queensland Evangelical Standard*, August 5, 1876, ran the article, “The Ministry of Women,” by the Rev. A. Maclaren, which would satisfy many modern women in ministry positions, though it raised the odd eye-brow or two then. The Nundah church left its mother church, Jireh, over differences concerning open and closed communion. One point of interest to modern fund-raisers is the strict tradition of voluntarism, i.e. funding ALL aspects of ministry through members’ giving, and rejecting any Government grants of land or funds. It was the proud boast of the pastor at Petrie Terrace’s tenth anniversary that there had never even been an offering taken, with the system of a retiring offering providing successfully for all the church’s needs.

Without entering the “Traditional Baptist vs Something-else Baptist” issue currently doing the

rounds of our local churches, it is hoped that this brief look at just what is "traditional" might help some to see that controversy arises when people use terminology that is not well understood. If present-day Queensland Baptists want evangelism, church planting and renewal; warm fellowship and inspirational music; and the liberty of conscience that allows a true spiritual liberty; then perhaps "Traditional Baptist" might be worth another look.

1990 The Year in Review

The Secretary's Report to the Annual Meeting of the BHSQ, November 3, 1990

Growth is evident as we review the past twelve months of our BHSQ. Membership has grown; our mailing list which takes the Newsletters to an increasingly larger group of recipients bears testimony to this. Whilst maintaining our intention to concentrate effort on one major project annually, thanks to the energy and expertise of our president, two excellent brochures have also been printed and circulated. Thus a wider public has become aware that the BHSQ is indeed a many faceted organization. Increasingly, people are realizing the significance of having access to archival records.

The brochure, "Your Local Church History" produced by Dr Parker has attracted wide interest from other states as well as our own. Expenses for the production of this brochure were borne by the Baptist Union of Queensland and the Historical Societies of NSW and Victoria. An "Inventory of Historical Records" was distributed as far as physically possible to delegates of the 1990 annual Assembly by our Treasurer.

The Secretary is compiling a list of significant Church anniversaries in order that prior contact may be made with churches to ensure that we receive copies of any printed records or other similar material. The popular Newsletters (three in number for 1990) have featured topics such as Christian Endeavour, Clifford House and Social Issues.

The annual public presentation highlighting Clifford House, the first of our Baptist Homes for the Aged was held at The Grange Baptist Church on Monday evening July 23, 1990. The only disappointing feature of the otherwise marvellous night was the paucity of attendance (fewer than thirty people were present). Keith Denham and Audrey Thomson, staff workers of the Department of Community Services of the Baptist Union, presented a fascinating visual record (video and slides) encompassing the work of Clifford House from its opening and during its time at Ascot.

Mr Max Lockhart, a former Chairman of Community Services, spoke on a "Vision for Aged Care", a thoughtful presentation on a subject dear to his heart. Miss Emily Lord, a former Matron at Resthaven, was to have spoken out of the wealth of her experiences there, but because of illness was unable to be present in person. Our secretary, Ellen Chataway very ably filled in speaking on her behalf using Miss Lord's notes, which included some heart-warming anecdotes gleaned from those years. A delightful supper was served by the ladies of the Church.

It is anticipated that our emphasis for 1991 will be in the realm of Christian Camping. It has been a good year in many respects not the least of which is news of a number of college and university students engaged in research into Baptist history. In facing the challenge of 1991, may we be further privileged to collect and collate more Christian history as it pertains to our family of Baptist Churches in Queensland.

Finances & Subscriptions

The BHSQ began the year with a credit balance of \$182.69. Subscriptions were \$170 and bank interest \$6.37. Expenses, almost all related to publishing the newsletter and other publicity, were \$216.06, leaving a credit balance at the end of the year of \$143. Because of the shortfall, caused by increasing costs, it has been decided to increase the subscription rates for 1991 to \$6 for individuals and \$10 for couples or families. In six years of operation, this is our first increase! May we remind you that subs. for 1991 (under the new rate!) are now due. Why not encourage a friend to join?