

# The Queensland Baptist Forum

The Journal of the Baptist Heritage Queensland

No. 74 December 2009

## 25 Years of Baptist Heritage

This year marks our 25th anniversary as the Baptist Historical Society of Queensland (Baptist Heritage Qld). At the annual meeting on 7 November, some of the highlights of the current year were noted, including the publication of *Women who Made a Difference* with the stories of 24 women connected with Queensland Baptist churches, assistance given to many churches, organisations and families seeking details of their background, and involvement in programmes connected with the celebration of Queensland's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary. This is all part of fulfilling our aim—"to preserve, promote and publish our heritage."

Since BHQ was established in 1984 we have published more than 20 books, sponsored many gatherings featuring the stories of people, churches and missions, and assisted churches and individuals with research, caring for their records and presenting their stories. The society has also been responsible for erecting historical markers, discovering forgotten information about the origins and developments of Baptist witness and assisting university and school students in their studies. During this time, members of BHQ have also been busy with their own projects which range from family history to numismatics and the biographies of well known Baptist figures. This journal, *BHQ Forum* is now up to Number 74! Current projects include research into the little known Edward Street Baptist Church in Brisbane, the care and maintenance of the historic German Baptist cemeteries and the development of the charismatic movement in Queensland.

Two of the most important books published by BHQ are *Pressing on with the Gospel*, the story of Baptists in Queensland 1855-2005, and *Baptists in Queensland*, which is a small book designed to give an overview of Baptist beliefs, history and practice for newcomers, church membership classes and students.

Many churches and other groups have also promoted their history, including this year Queensland Baptist Care which had a significant presentation for its 60th anniversary at the annual Assembly, and the Ipswich church.

We are seeking those who are interested in Queensland, Baptist and family history to participate in our activities. Membership is invited from individuals, families and churches. Meetings where BHQ and personal projects can be discussed are held three times a year. Volunteers are sought also for possible assistance in the Baptist Church Archives located at the Queensland Baptist headquarters. BHQ is available for consultancy with churches and related organisations to assist with the care and use of historical records.

*Note — Meeting dates for 2010 are: 6 March, 5 June and 6 November—2pm at the Baptist Archives.*

<p><b>Baptist Heritage Queensland</b> The Baptist Historical Society of Queensland (est. 1984)</p> <p><b>Membership (2009)</b> Individual \$10 p.a. Family \$15 p.a. Corporate \$20 p.a.</p> <p><i>Qld Baptist Forum</i> 3 issues p.a. Free to Members Others \$2 each posted</p> <p><b>President:</b> Mr Eric W. Kopittke 98 Yallambee Rd., Jindalee 4074 Phone 3376 4339 kopittke@tpg.com.au</p> <p><b>Secretary:</b> Dr Ken G. Smith, 2301/15 Cansdale Street, Yeronga, Qld 4104 Phone 3892 6337 tizzardsmith@hotmail.com <a href="http://home.pacific.net.au/~dparker/bhsq.htm">http://home.pacific.net.au/~dparker/bhsq.htm</a></p> <p><b>BWA Baptist Heritage &amp; Identity Commission</b> <a href="http://www.bwa-baptist-heritage.org">www.bwa-baptist-heritage.org</a></p>	<p><b>CONTENTS</b></p> <p><b>Qld Baptist Forum No 74 Dec 2009</b></p> <p>BHQ marks 25 years p 1</p> <p>BHQ Annual Reports 2009 p 2</p> <p>Jireh Baptist Church Honour Board by Bill Hughes p 3</p> <p>Baptists Today Part II by Mark Mackay p 4</p> <p>Baptists 400th Anniversary p 8</p>
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## **Baptist Heritage Qld—25th Annual Secretary's Report**

2009 has seen continued interest in our history by people in Baptist churches throughout Queensland. In 2005 we celebrated the 150th anniversary of the first Baptist church in Queensland with the launching of a new history of Baptist work in Queensland, entitled *Pressing On with the Gospel*. This year has seen a number of celebrations of historical interest: the 150th anniversary of the setting up of Queensland as a separate State in 1859; the 150th anniversary of the Ipswich Baptist Church, the first Baptist church to be established in the new State; the 400th anniversary of the Baptist movement; and celebrations of the 500th anniversary of the birth of John Calvin.

Our major historical work in 2009 was the publication of the book *Women Who Made a Difference*, commonly known as *WWMD*, containing brief biographies of 24 women who made major contributions to the life and witness of Baptist churches, and the wider community. Records of the lives and work of women in Queensland are rather scanty for the 19th and much of the 20th century. It was decided to limit the work to women who were no longer living, and our thanks is due to many people who delved into family records to write about their relatives. The book, edited by David Parker, was launched by Mrs Ruth Elvery, the wife of the President, at Brookfield Village on 2 May 2009. The meeting was attended by a number of family members and friends of the women whose stories were told in the book. Some of these spoke briefly, telling stories about the women and the influence they had on Baptist life in Queensland, and in the wider community. It is hoped that further similar books may be produced, as further investigation uncovers more stories of Baptists (not only women) who have "made a difference".

There has been little change in the membership of the Society, but we look forward to further interest, as more and more people realise the importance of discovering and remembering our Baptist heritage. Most of our members are of more mature years, and there is a need to inspire more of our young people to take an interest in our historical roots, as one way of reducing the pressure to follow the latest fads in church life and worship.

We have continued offering a prize for an essay on some topic involving Baptist history. The recipient in 2008 was Faith Giovas. It is expected that this will be an annual event, and the prize essays will be deposited in the Archives as a permanent record of various aspects of the history of Baptists in Queensland.

One important area in which little progress has been made is arrangements for the long-term management and care of Baptist cemeteries. There are a number of these in Queensland, and they form an important part of our heritage.

There are still many areas of Baptist life and work in Queensland where a consolidated work would be helpful. As we have celebrated the lives of those who have gone before us, we hope that more people will be encouraged to look to our heritage and unearth the many treasures which may be lying around in our many Churches, all too often forgotten and unappreciated.

Officers elected at the Annual meeting in November, 2008 were: President: Mr Eric Kopittke; Secretary/Treasurer: Dr Ken Smith; Publications Officer: Mrs Rosemary Kopittke.

As we move forward into a new year, we look forward to continuing the work of recording and analysing our history, so that, aware of what has gone on in the past, we may take note of our errors, and preserve and remember the good things, to the glory of our Lord.

**Ken Smith, Secretary 7 Nov 2009**

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### **Excerpts from Annual Report of Baptist Church Archives, Qld., by David Parker, Archivist**

We have had a mixed year—quite a lot of requests for assistance, recognition of milestones in Baptist work, especially in connection with the Queensland 150<sup>th</sup> and the Baptist 400<sup>th</sup>, but also disappointments—notably in setting up protocols for denominational archiving and some other matters involving the Baptist Union. I am grateful for the assistance of **Bill Hughes**. He has been making great progress in compiling details of the records and basic history of northside churches as well as producing some articles for publication; his book, *HACK*, has been a major achievement this year. Currently he is working on the history of the Edward St church which is fascinating. We can be thankful for excellent **publicity** during the year in QB Magazine and prospects are good for the future. This year we tried to encourage churches to compile and submit details of their **historical records**, with some limited success. I was a speaker at a **Royal Qld Historical Society** function and Bill Hughes has been involved in preparing historical material for the **City Tabernacle**—both of these are Q150 events. There have been some developments with the Baptist **cemeteries** – urgent help is needed with maintaining Coleyville; there are now many homes around Vernor making its future more critical; the Kalbar cemetery is in serious need of care, and Boonah needs some work. Tarampa, Minden and Highfields are in good shape. These places could be presented as a witness to our Baptist faith in a context of increased heritage interests. We await BUQ action on the first two.

**Accessions:** There have been several additions to the collection including material from Enoggera and Ipswich churches, defunct church materials from Douglas District and Boyne Island, and records from Banyo which are associated with help Bill Hughes has given this church in compiling its history. We received other interesting items—an early visitors' book of Sunsetholme (now Hillcrest), and a large set of colour slides from former Home Mission Superintendent, Rev V. Bowring, as well as sermon material from late Rev. C.H. Nicholls.

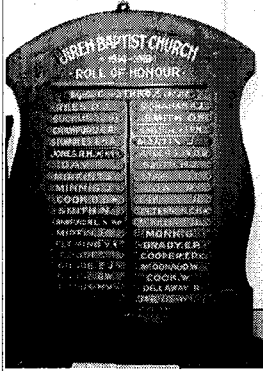
**Wider concerns:** In July I presented a paper at the 5<sup>th</sup> *International Conference on Baptist Studies* in Melbourne, and I also attended the *BWA 2009 meeting* in Ede, Netherlands, and preceding that the *European Baptist Federation* celebration of the Baptist 400<sup>th</sup> in Amsterdam. (see further reports in QB Oct 2009)

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# THE JIREH BAPTIST CHURCH HONOUR BOARD

By Bill Hughes

The Jireh Church in Fortitude Valley closed down in 1978 and the building passed out of Baptist hands in 1980. It subsequently burnt down. Early last year the Baptist Church Archives Queensland (BCAQ) received a telephone call from the Anzac Day Commemoration Committee of Queensland to say that it had an honour board from the Jireh Baptist Church and asked if we wanted it. Although BCAQ is not a museum, it was decided to take the board, which has the significance of being one of the few items from the Jireh church that survived the fire that destroyed the building (some items were transferred to the Centenary Jireh church). Having accepted the board we felt it was incumbent on us to find out what we could of its history—and an interesting story began to unfold. The board is in traditional style with gold lettering, of the type typically seen in schools, universities and clubs, and also in churches around Australia (see photograph).



At a meeting on 25 October 1916 the church decided to erect a suitable honour board in a location to be decided by the deacons. It was eventually purchased and the deacons decided on 25 July 1917 to place it "on the wall on the school side of the church". Arrangements were then made for the board to be unveiled by Dr E N Merrington during the church's anniversary celebrations on 31 July 1917. Dr Merrington was a senior Presbyterian Chaplain from Brisbane who had overseas service during World War I.

At the unveiling ceremony, presided over by the pastor, Rev A C Jarvis, a church member (Mr Hannah) took the microphone under protest by the pastor and gave an emotional address declaring that the honour board was an item of idolatry. Mr Hannah's reasons for this "outlandish statement" are not known. However, his actions were generally deplored by the church. Rev Jarvis later met with him but he resolutely adhered to

his stated views and refused to withdraw them.

The deacons considered the incident at their meeting on 4 August 1917 and drafted a letter to Mr Hannah pointing out that his actions and statement were (1) against the stated wishes of the pastor who was presiding at the meeting, (2) an insult to the church's honoured guest, Dr Merrington, and (3) an insult to the boys whose names were on the honour roll. He was asked to apologise to the pastor, Dr Merrington and the church. Again he refused to do so. To the contrary he called on the pastor and used threatening language which was immediately brought to the notice of the deacons and the church's legal adviser. A meeting of the deacons on 17 August 1917 decided to suspend Mr Hannah from the church.

It is gratifying to report that time heals all wounds and the minutes of the church meeting of 28 May 1919 state that Mr Hannah eventually gave a written apology to the church and was restored to the church fellowship. Much of Mr Hannah's anger appears to have been directed at Rev Jarvis, and it is noted that his apology was made after Mr Jarvis left Jireh and Rev B Hewison had become the pastor.

Controversy over the honour board did not end there however. At a church meeting on 26 February 1919 a second member, Mr Cook, protested against the "placing of the name of Mr T H Dodds with rank and titles at the head of the honour roll and requesting that it be placed in order of the time of overseas service". It was then moved by Mr Fleming and seconded by Mr Goode that Brigadier-General Dodds' name be removed from the roll. This motion was carried with 10 votes for, 7 against and 12 abstentions. A further church meeting on 26 March 1919 decided that the Fleming/Goode motion be rescinded and that all references to Mr Cook's comments and the Fleming/Goode motion be "expunged" from the records. Three men with the surname "Cook" are listed on the honour board. It is not known if they were relatives of Mr Cook, but if there was a personal connection, he may have felt that Dodds was regarded as more important than other men on the roll.

Brigadier-General T H Dodds' name still holds its place at the top of the roll. The church had initially decided (on 25 July 1917) that the board was designed to honour "those associated with any family worshipping at Jireh". Mr and Mrs Dodds were added to the Jireh roll on 15 December 1908 on transfer from the Nundah church. However there was a revision of the church members' roll commencing in 1914. The names of 14 people were placed on a list which were to have been struck off the roll. This list included the following notation: "Mr and Mrs T H Dodds, Melbourne". On 20 April 1915, however, this motion was rescinded and the 14 names, including those of Mr and Mrs Dodds, remained on the church roll.

Brigadier-General Dodds' name had been placed on the honour board with the approval of the church meeting of 29 January 1917 and there was no objection to his inclusion at that time, although the church members may not have been aware of the prominent position and unique citation to be given to his name.

Thomas Henry Dodds was born in Newcastle-on-Tyne, England, on 11 November 1873. He arrived in Australia on 18 May 1883 and initially lived in Brisbane. He fought in the 1899-1902 Boer War. His service included operations in Transvaal, Orange River Colony and Cape Colony in 1901 and 1902. He was Adjutant of the 5<sup>th</sup> Queensland Imperial Bushman Contingent from 20 February 1901 to 5 May 1902. He was first commissioned as a Lieutenant in 1899.

Between the Boer War and World War I he held a number of military positions in Brisbane and Melbourne, and in the war years he was Adjutant General of the Military Forces in Australia from August 1914 to February 1917; Deputy Adjutant of the Australian Infantry Forces in France and Belgium from May 1917 to September 1918; and temporary Commandant of the AIF, Administrative Headquarters in London from October 1918 to February 1919. Dodds was promoted to Colonel in April 1917 and to Brigadier-General on 1 June 1918. His decorations included the CMG, CVO and DSO.

# Baptists Today

## Part II

By Mark Mackay

*Mark Mackay is pastor of Forest Lake Baptist Church. We are pleased to publish his essay (Part I in our previous issue) which was runner-up in the 2008 BHQ Essay Competition. The winning entry by Faith Giovas (North-Shore Baptist Church) was published in our Dec 2008 issue.*

In the Queensland situation, Queensland Baptists also assert the autonomy of the local Church in its own governance and practice, as in paragraph 4.2 of the current Constitution (<http://www.qb.com.au/database/files/admin%20services/Constitution%20and%20By-laws%20adopted%209%20November%202005.pdf>, 2008). However, it should be noted that the Constitution also provides the Union significant oversight power (paragraph 4.3). While some have noted trends toward a centralised Board as a “de-democratisation” of the Union (Ball 2005, 1), one should refer to the principles laid down by the earlier Baptists and particularly that Churches should employ whatever method best promotes the goals, while maintaining the autonomy of local Churches.

A strong and empowered Board does not contradict the Baptist principle of the autonomy of the local Church, as seen in the example of the Southern Baptist Convention in the United States. Indeed, as long as the minimum criteria of a democratically controlled and empowered body are maintained, a strong executive is ideal for the situation in Queensland. For example, a strong, financially viable, centralised executive is best placed to deal with the rapid population growth in South-East and Northern Queensland. However, a return to a system where most decisions have to be made at a General Assembly will hamper any serious attempt to coordinate an adequate response to the challenges of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Queensland.

In short, Baptist history provides the following principles which can be applied to understanding the role and authority of the Baptist Union of Queensland:

- The autonomy of the local Church is a clearly expressed Baptist principle;
- Baptists have historically encouraged local Churches to work together in assembly to achieve agreed objectives;
- The scope and nature of the Assembly is best determined by the goals being pursued. Hence, a centralised executive will be more appropriate in evangelistic and Church-planting goals while an inclusive approach will be more appropriate in matters of doctrine.

Four hundred years on from the first Baptists, this area remains the one that is still most a “work in pro-

gress” as Baptists define how an Assembly of autonomous, yet interdependent, Churches should be shaped. However, these principles can guide the discussion to promote a structure that is true to historical principles yet effective to the contemporary situation. Indeed, these principles form a basis that allows for a changing Union structure that can adapt to the demands of a growing postmodern World, while remaining true to those fundamental Baptist elements (Bebbington 2002, 338)



### Doctrinal Definition

Historically, Baptists have opted away from formal creedal statements at the denominational level. Certainly, in their respective Constitutions most local Churches have statements of belief but denominational confessions or creeds have been avoided as they are seen as a threat to the authority of the autonomous local Church to explore the Bible for themselves. However, as much as defining core beliefs was not desired, it became necessary in the earliest stages of Baptist history in response to charges levelled by other denominations and to exclude more radical elements. This trend has continued throughout history, where Baptists have prescribed doctrinal definition in response to wider threats. In their Position Statement on “Creeds and Confessions,” the Southern Baptist Convention summarised this Baptist tension between an aversion to creeds and a need for definition:

In some groups, statements of belief have the same authority as Scripture. We call this creedalism. Baptists also make statements of belief, but all of them are revisable in light of Scripture. The Bible is the final word.

Because of this distinction, we are generally more comfortable with the word “confession.” Still, we are “creedal” in the sense that we believe certain things,

express those beliefs and order our institutions accordingly. There have always been Baptist limits. And within these limits, there have always been Baptist preferences. (<http://www.sbc.net/aboutus/pscreeds.asp>, 2008).

The real tension lies on where one “draws the line” between those doctrines which are essentially Baptist and those in which there should be liberty.

In the earlier decades of English Baptists, confessions or statements of belief were written to address certain issues. Thus, John Smyth wrote his Statement to clearly outline why he felt it was necessary to separate from both the established Church and the Nonconformists (Brackney 1998, 26). Following his example, a number of others wrote their statements as further justification for separation, such as Thomas Helwys (Underwood 1947, 47). Indeed, as noted above, the Orthodox Creed of 1678 was principally written to combat Hoffmanite Christology while the Second London Confession was based on the Westminster Confession (with obvious ecclesiological changes) in order to demonstrate their desire to have been seen as mainstream, against the background of a surge in more radical Nonconformist denominations.

Accordingly, Baptists have generally held the following theological points as being necessarily Baptist:

- The doctrine of the Trinity;
- The full divinity and humanity of Christ;
- The authority of the Bible;
- Human sinfulness;
- Salvation through faith in Christ alone;
- Final judgment;
- Believers' Baptism & the Lord's Supper as the only ordinances of Christ;
- Regenerate membership;
- Autonomy of the local church;
- The direct Lordship of Christ;
- Congregational church government; and
- Liberty of conscience.

While most of the above points will not be exclusively Baptist in themselves, the particular combination as set out above can be identified in most Baptist denominational Statements of Belief. Accordingly, the historic Baptist principle in this field is to make broad definition of those areas not already agreed upon by evangelical Protestant Christians and then to leave it to the local Church to further define local distinctives.

In a contemporary example, the most precise eschatological position the Baptist Union of Queensland's Constitution requires from a Church is to believe in “The resurrection of the dead and the final judgement of all people by the Lord Jesus

Christ.” (<http://www.qb.com.au/database/files/admin%20services/Constitution%20and%20By-laws%20adopted%209%20November%202005.pdf>, 2008) However, in a recent advertisement in the *Queensland Baptist* magazine, a Church required that a prospective pastor must be “conservative, non-Charismatic and premillennial.” (Queensland Baptist, April 2008) Thus, the doctrinal position of the Union provides some broad guidelines within which local Church can more precisely define their theological system if they require.

While the doctrinal statement of the Baptist Union of Queensland is not in a prominent place on the Queensland Baptist website, it is nevertheless a clear and concise statement of classic Baptist principles that are sufficiently defined to be inherently Baptist, though broad enough to allow for liberty within individual Churches.

### Place within Wider Christendom and Society

One of the key historically distinctive characteristics of early Baptists was their non-establishment, non-Conformist position. Springing out of a volatile social environment where religion and politics were intertwined, Baptists were in the ecclesiastical and social wilderness. This was both intentional and enforced. Baptists initially distanced themselves from other Churches because of the perceived corruption of their ranks through being too involved with political forces. To take one example—Charles I was able to appoint bishops to ensure he could gain the ascendancy in the House of Lord (Latourette 1975, 820).

That an apostate King could so easily manipulate the Church for his own political ends was an abhorrent situation for Baptists. Accordingly, they adopted the principle of separating the Church and State. However, the Baptists' attitude to Episcopal government and the relation between Church and State meant that they were also ostracised by the establishment, leading to persecutions such as under the Clarendon Code (Underwood 1947, 95). A further point of disagreement between Baptists and the established Church was in regard to the State's ability to compel individuals to believe. Thus, in an era where Church and State were inextricably linked, the Baptist principle of Separation of Church and State at the levels of both government and personal faith was a radical platform that would lay a foundation for future Nonconformists and, indeed, would be enshrined in the First Amendment of the United States Constitution.

The basic principle of Separation of Church and State has remained a key issue for Baptists, as noted above in the section of Doctrinal Definition. However, a number of key developments have changed the application of the principle.

First, in the earliest days of English Baptists, it would have been unimaginable that the government would have offered financial support to Baptist

Churches. Rather than support a nonconforming group like the Baptists, the established government and Church would rather plant a new Church of England parish Church in direct competition with Baptists, such as Christ's Church in Spitalfields (<http://www.ccspsitalfields.org/history>, 2008). However, with time, Baptists became more socially and politically acceptable and there was greater opportunity for Baptists to accept state funding. One such example was Bathurst Street Baptist Church in Sydney whose land was granted by the Governor in 1832 (<http://www.congress.baptist-vic.org.au/hc-oznsw.htm>, 2008).

Further examples of Baptist accepting government funding include arms of Baptist work such as Queensland Baptist Care who received more than \$21 million in government funding and subsidies during the 2006 financial year for their social services (<http://www.qb.com.au/database/files/QBC/Financial%20Statements%202007.pdf>, 2008).

These situations, where Churches accept government funding should not be seen as transgressing the principle of Separation of Church and State as it was originally conceived. The original understanding of the principle was that the State should not dictate religious matters and that the Church should not use the State to achieve religious ends. In the above cases, the work between Church and State does not compromise these matters.

Secondly, some have taken the principle of Separation to limit the Church's ability to be involved in the political process. Again, this is a misunderstanding of the doctrine as originally conceived. Baptists have historically been active politically, from Helwys' letter to the King in his *Mystery of Iniquity* (1612) to the Southern Baptist Convention's voice in political matters, such as the Fundamentalist call to Christians to withhold their taxes in areas where evolution was taught in schools (Brackney 1998, 357). The danger is that the political field may again become intertwined with the Church and that corruption may again enter. This fear, though, should not prevent Christians and Baptist Church leaders from entering the political process and giving a "Baptist voice" in social issues, such as the Baptist Union of Australia President Ross Clifford's media release regarding the wrongful imprisonment of David Hicks.

Perhaps a more relevant separation in the modern context would be Separation of Church and Business. Given the plethora of denominations and religious groups in contemporary society, it does not appear likely that government will form an inappropriate partnership with particular Church groups such that government would influence ecclesiastical matters. In a modern economy, the greater danger would appear to be the influence of business interests on Churches with whom they are involved. While it is not inappropriate for Churches to work with businesses on common goals any more than it is for

Churches to work with governments, the same principle of preserving the sanctity and autonomy of the Church must be observed.

In terms of relations with other Christian denominations, as early as 1678, one Baptist messenger, Thomas Grantham, wrote, "When it shall please God to put into the Hearts of the Rulers of the

Nations, to permit a Free and General Assembly, of the differing Professors of Christianity, for the finding out of Truth, we trust that some of the Baptised Churches will (if permitted) readily make their appearance with others to help on that needful work." (Thompson & Cross 2005, 4)

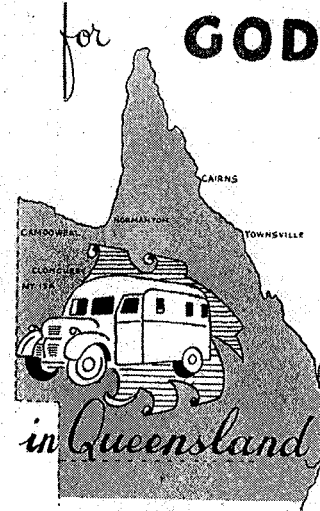
In spite of a history of Nonconformity and separating from other denominations, Baptists have historically been committed to working with other denominations where common ground could be found. William Carey also promoted the concept of various denominations working together for missions. This legacy has continued to see contemporary Baptists involved in ecumenical councils such as the Baptist Union of Great Britain in the World Council of Churches.

#### Outreach and Mission as a key focus

From the outset, outreach and mission were key goals for Baptists. Indeed, these goals were part of the original set of reasons for forming Assemblies, as endeavours that could be best undertaken by churches working together rather than individually (Brackney 1998, 59). This imperative came from the theological view that each person is responsible for their own response to God. As such, Baptists like William Carey and C.H. Spurgeon were among the most enthusiastic advocates for outreach and missions in the modern Church.

A disruption to the imperative of evangelism occurred within Particular Baptists, who took a hyper-Calvinist position that saw that outreach is both dishonouring to God and useless in the scheme of God's preordained plan (McBeth 1987, 171). In the course of time, Particular Baptists withdrew from their extreme position and William Carey is a good example of a Particular Baptist who also saw the imperative for outreach (McBeth 1987, 182).

**BREAKING THROUGH**  
for **GOD**



In the modern Queensland context, missions and outreach continue to be important goals for the denomination. Through organisations such as Global InterAction ("GIA") and Baptist World Aid, Queensland Baptists continue to take up the challenge of promoting the gospel of Christ. Indeed, the Vision Statement of GIA is "Following the unchanging Christ in a changing world, making disciples, building and empowering the church worldwide in holistic mission." To be sure, while this evangelistic drive is not particular to Baptists alone, Baptists have historically been evangelistically focused. Hence, the current General Superintendent's opening message on the Queensland Baptist website is "As Queensland Baptists, we understand the importance of ministry to the lost. We understand it, and we hold the same value and desire to see our nation and the nations of the world come to know Jesus Christ." (<http://www.qb.com.au/page.aspx?id=20>, 2008).

### Conclusion

Contemporary Queensland Baptists stand as the beneficiaries of a privileged heritage of 400 years. Radically biblical and fiercely Gospel-centred, the earliest Baptists were persecuted because of their insistence that the final authority to which the Christian answered was Christ Himself. As a result, they came into direct conflict with the established Church and Government. As one of the earliest Nonconforming groups, Baptists were tested in their resolve to pursue what they understood to be a truly biblical agenda against a powerful State Church. However, with the Toleration Act and subsequent developments, Baptists have been incorporated into mainstream Christian denominations. Consequently, Baptists have been forced to determine those values and principles that are particularly Baptist and those that were born from the necessity of the situation.

Those values which can be seen as inherently Baptist are:

- A commitment to the direct Lordship of Christ Himself;
- A commitment to certain doctrinal essentials but liberty in others;
- The autonomy of the local Church;
- A commitment to Mission; and
- A determination to have the Church remain independent of the influence of any human body, such as the State or business.

While these issues are clearly important to Baptists, the main area that still appears to require further definition from a Baptist point of view is the role and authority of the assembly of Churches. As early as the late Seventeenth Century, the difference between the Orthodox Creed and the Second London Confession demonstrates that Baptists were not united in their understanding that the Assembly should play in

the governance of the local Church. A key component to this has been the expressed goals of any assembly or union as being for specific tasks that cannot be performed by individual Churches on their own or whether the assembly represents a fully formed and centrally organised organisation in the sense of other denominations.

The difference can be put simply this way, "Are the Churches constituent parts of the Union or is the Union a collection of Churches?" Historically, the second alternative was the understood role of the Queensland Baptist Union. However, given the circumstances noted above, it seems appropriate that the Queensland Baptist Union can take a much greater organising role without contradicting the fundamental Baptist principles of democracy and 'every member ministry.'

Hence, while there are clear principles that define Baptists, it still remains that the denomination is continuing to develop and work out the most obvious of questions for a denomination that believes in the Direct Lordship of Christ in each local Church – how does that theology interplay with the practical necessity and expediency of a fully organised, functioning and centralised Union.

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## **Baptist origins linked to early Australian Dutch Explorers?**

### **Celebrations in Holland for 400 years of Baptist life**

One of the most interesting parts of the celebration of the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Baptist origins held in Amsterdam, Netherlands, in 24-26 July 2009 was a visit to the site where the John Smyth, Thomas Helwys and their friends who had fled from England in the early 1600s for religious freedom took their lodgings. It was in Bakkersstraat, beside the Amstel River in the premises of Jan Munter, a baker who supplied the ships of the Dutch East India Company with provisions for the long journeys via South Africa and the Indian Ocean to what is now called Indonesia. Sometimes these vessels ended up on the West Australian shore, and so names such as William Jantzen, Dirk Hartog and Abel Tasman have become part of Australian history. In fact, the continent was once known as New Holland and the island of Tasmania was first referred to as Van Diemen's Land. There was also explorations by Dutch sailors of the Gulf of Carpentaria, leaving the name Arnhem Land (amongst others) as a legacy.

The Baptist pioneers were offered not only accommodation but also work in the Munter bakehouse and perhaps thereby contributed to the exploration of Australia as well as the commercial enterprise of the Dutch. They certainly broke new ground as they discussed their Christian faith and came to the conviction that believers' baptism and the church as a gathering of committed disciples of Christ was the key New Testament teaching that they needed to adopt, thus originating the Baptist movement which today is the largest Protestant church in the world and exists in virtually all countries.

Celebrations in Amsterdam for the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary were sponsored by the European Baptist Federation and featured four days of events attended by more than 800 people from nearly 60 countries. Plenary sessions and seminars focused on the significance of Baptist witness in the past as well as current responsibilities and the future witness of the denomination. Topics covered a range of issues such as mission, theology, education, religious freedom, human trafficking, spirituality, urban ministry and multi-ethnic churches. Guest speakers included Dr David Coffey, President of the Baptist World Alliance, Neville Callam, BWA General Secretary, Teun van der Leer, Rector of the Dutch Baptist Seminary, Toivo Pilli, a pastor from Estonia, Nabeeh Abbassi (Jordan), Raquel Contreras (Chile) and others. A special musical group from Holland led worship at all sessions, while mimist, Carlos Martinez (Spain) provided challenging and creative portrayals of key themes. A children's ministry was conducted throughout the celebration, a prayer room was open continuously, and the displays, book shop and interest-area lounges were well patronised. An important feature of the week was the launch of a book, *Communities of Conviction*, giving the historical development of Baptist work in all countries covered by the EBF (including central Asia and the Middle East as well as Europe) written by Ian Randall. Another major feature was a half-day walking tour of Amsterdam visiting key sites associated with Baptist origins including the street where the Munter bake house was situated, the church used by later Mennonites who were associated with the Baptists, and the burial place of John Smyth. (Details, including maps and photos of this walking tour may be found at <http://www.bwa-baptist-heritage.org/ede2.htm>)

The 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations continued with the annual gathering of the Baptist World Alliance July 27-Aug 1, held at Ede, about an hour from Amsterdam. As well as the normal business sessions of the national delegates, the Commissions and study committees covered a range of themes. The Heritage and Identity Commission listened to presentations on the development of modern Dutch Baptist life ably presented by Teun van der Leer, Rector of the Dutch Baptist Seminary, which showed a denomination which has reflected deeply on its heritage and is well aware of its mission. Ken Edmonds of Australia presented an illustrated discussion of relations between the famous Dutch artist, Rembrandt and the early Anabaptists, some of whom were associated with the pioneer Baptists. Finally, researcher Kirsten Timmer reported on important developments in understanding the origins of Baptists by discussing ground-breaking research she had undertaken at the Amsterdam Archives on letters and other documents associated with Baptist founder, John Smyth and the Mennonites (see picture of one of them—an early statement of faith). A children's colouring book on the Baptist story worldwide was also popular.

Worship sessions at the BWA gathered featured readings of the works of key Baptists from different continents and periods of times, highlighting their convictions and contributions on subjects ranging from evangelism to religious freedom, discipleship and reconciliation. A series of plenary forums enabled participants to reflect on Baptists and transformation, major moments in the Baptist story around the world, and peacemaking. The highlight of the gathering was a pilgrimage made by the entire group, which included more than a dozen Australians, by bus from Ede to Amsterdam for a worship service to commemorate the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Baptist life. It was held in the Mennonite Church associated with the Baptist pioneers and featured appropriate prayers, readings and music in various languages, and a keynote address by former BWA General Secretary, Dr Denton Lotz. Following the service, conference participants visited some of the significant sites including the location of the Munter bakehouse and the Reformed Church associated with some of the early English refugees including the Pilgrim Fathers.

For more information, visit the BWA Heritage Commission website which contains details of the historical sites <http://www.bwa-baptist-heritage.org/>

