



The Queensland Baptist Forum

The Journal of the Baptist Heritage Queensland

No. 85 August 2013

Heritage Developments



Baptist Heritage Qld and the Baptist Church Archives continue to focus on matters of interest and concern. Our **latest development in publication** was the launch of the 3rd edition of our very first book, *Baptists in Queensland* at the recent Convention. It has been revised extensively and now has an attractive colour cover. We were able to present it at the main business session and delegates all received a copy by courtesy of Queensland Baptists. Additional copies were on sale, and later, QB sent free copies to all churches. We hope this will be a useful and informative tool. We have copies available for \$5 each plus postage (discount for bulk orders). Other publications to be updated recently include the *National Guide to Australian Baptist Historical Records and Services*, and as reported on page 8 of this issue, the story of the *United Evangelical Church*. Some of these materials are also available electronically and as e-books.

Another major national publication soon to be released is a centenary history of Australian Baptist missionary work. The draft has received positive reviews and we look forward to reading it and adding copies to our collection.

Digitisation is also high on the agenda. A big project to digitise the entire run of the former national paper, *The Australian Baptist*, is now underway and the first results are expected soon. This is a cooperative effort by all states and will make researching our history a lot easier, as well as more convenient and add to the preservation of this useful resource. It was published from 1913 to 1991 but here in Queensland the only paper copies available date from the 1960s.

Archivists to meet. A meeting of all Baptist archivists will take place in November in conjunction with the regular meeting of national Baptist leaders. This will be the first such meeting, although nearly 15 years ago archivists and historians met at Whitley College for a profitable session. It is hoped that this will become a regular gathering and will assist in the development of archives across the country. As well as the state archives, ABM and GIA will be represented.

Help needed: The Archives also receives a regular flow of enquiries and has other projects in process (see page 8 for the current one!). So there is plenty going on and we are looking for more *BHQ members and volunteers for the Archives*. Please contact us to see how you can be involved.

2013 Meeting Dates — 9 Nov (AGM) 2pm @ Archives—Be Sure to Come (bring a plate)!

<p>Baptist Heritage Queensland <i>The Baptist Historical Society of Queensland</i> (est. 1984)</p> <p>Membership (2013) Individual \$10 p.a. Family \$15 p.a. Corporate \$20 p.a.</p> <p><i>Qld Baptist Forum</i> 3 issues p.a. Free to Members Others \$2 each posted</p> <p>President: Mr Eric W. Kopittke 98 Yallambee Rd., Jindalee 4074 Phone 3376 4339 kopittke@tpg.com.au</p> <p>Secretary: Dr Ken G. Smith, 2301/15 Cansdale Street, Yeronga, Qld 4104 Phone 3892 6337 tizzardsmith@hotmail.com http://home.pacific.net.au/~dparker/bhsq.htm</p> <p>BWA Baptist Heritage & Identity Commission www.bwa-baptist-heritage.org</p>	<p>CONTENTS</p> <p>Qld Baptist Forum No 85 Aug 2013</p> <p>Heritage Developments p 1</p> <p>The Wharf Street Dispute of 1864 by RW (Bill) Hughes p 2</p> <p>Tracing Our First Minister— More Stewart Family Details p 8</p> <p>Baptists in the Golden West— The Darling Downs Project p 8</p>
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The Wharf Street Dispute of 1864

By RW (Bill) Hughes

Disagreements and disputes in churches

It should not be surprising that a group of people who came together from a range of different backgrounds to form a Baptist Church in Brisbane in 1855 would, within a few years, be involved in a major dispute that led to a schism and ultimately the formation of several separate churches. What perhaps is surprising is that within a very few more years those various churches came together to form an Association of Baptist Churches.

Over the years conflict within our churches has not been uncommon and yet very little is ever written on this subject. If very little is written about church disputes very little is learned from them. Those who have researched church records to discover the facts and issues of past disputes often find that there is little recorded about them in official records.

In more recent years there seems to be a tendency to conduct church affairs in a manner which lessens or eradicates the possibility of disagreements being aired or details about them being disclosed. This too can be counter-productive because "real growth demands creativity and risk"¹. One possible outcome of avoiding disputation is that it can result in decision-making power in the church being taken out of the hands of the church membership and placed in the "safer" hands of church leaders. This should ring alarm bells for Baptists in particular.

This paper examines the major dispute and schism that took place in the Wharf Street Baptist Church in 1864 and it attempts to form some conclusions about that particular conflict. There also seem to be some misconceptions about what took place in that dispute and hopefully this paper will clarify the facts and issues involved.

The Wharf Street Church

The Brisbane Baptist Church was constituted on 5 August 1855. Its first pastor, Rev Charles Smith from Sydney, pastored the church for fifteen months and then returned to Sydney. From 1856 to 1858 the church appointed Richard Ash Kingsford acting Pastor, assisted by two experienced lay preachers, William Moore and William Grimes.

The Wharf Street Church Building

Work on the Baptist Church's first building in Brisbane began in 1858 on a block of land at the corner of Wharf and Adelaide Streets, Brisbane. The land was sold to the church at a reduced price by church member, Thomas Blacket Stephens. The Wharf Street building was officially opened on 6 February 1859. Stephens became the church's first Secretary and he, Moore and Kingsford were deacons and trustees of the new building.

Rev Benjamin Gilmore Wilson

The church's second pastor, Rev Benjamin Gilmore Wilson, arrived in Brisbane on Saturday 11 September 1858. The following morning, after only three hours sleep, he delivered a powerful sermon to the church in his "engaging Irish brogue"². At the time of Wilson's arrival in Brisbane the church membership was thirty people. By the end of the following year the number had reached 115. Rev B G Wilson was a tireless worker for,

and a great asset to, the Baptist Church in Queensland in its formative years.

In the years following his arrival in Brisbane Wilson's popularity and status in the colony grew. He was highly respected as a public speaker and the Baptist Church grew dramatically under his leadership. An added reason for his popularity was that he offered his services as a medical practitioner to all who called on him, whether they were church members or not³. He asked for no fee, but there was a box in his home where patients could put a donation if they could afford it.

Wilson had a number of attractive qualities. He was said to be a "warm-hearted and noble-minded man" with "a burning zeal for his great Master"⁴. Brisbane auctioneer, John Cameron, described him as "a warm-hearted Irishman, and possessed of all the impulsiveness, eloquence, wit, courage, variableness, but had no sounding to the depth of his good heartedness"⁵. In his biography on Wilson, Nickerson described him as "an energetic, exuberant extrovert, at once warmly soft hearted and unreasonably obstinate"⁶.

Prior to the 1864 Wharf Street dispute Wilson was alleged to have been involved in three other controversies. Two were outside the Wharf Street church and one was within the church.

The first dispute was with the Wesleyans and related to a mission chapel built by German missionaries to the Aborigines at German Station (Nundah). The Wesleyans accused Wilson of buying the land and chapel while they were negotiating a sale with the Germans. A public interdenominational dispute followed. Press reports and letters to the Editor of the local newspaper followed. Also, the Deacons of the Baptist church published a booklet on the matter⁷, which contained the history of the dispute and copies of letters to the Editor of the *Moreton Bay Courier* from the main participants in the dispute.

The facts, as presented in the Baptist Church booklet, indicate that Wilson waited until after he had received written advice from the Germans dated 25 January 1859 that they had "agreed to trouble the Wesleyans no longer about the chapel...[and] if any other denomination will agree to [their terms] that they may have it". The terms required by the Germans were that the building would be made available to other denominations by the purchaser and it was clear by 12 January 1859 that the Wesleyans could not agree to those terms. The booklet published by the Baptist Church Deacons claims that Wilson made an offer for the chapel building and land after the Germans indicated that the Wesleyans could not agree to their terms.

A little later the same year a second dispute arose in Brisbane about baptism. The origins of this dispute are not clear, although issues surrounding infant baptism and adult baptism were commonly debated at the time and Wilson was very much to the fore in this debate. The dispute may have followed a sermon by Wilson on the Biblical basis of adult baptism by immersion at the public opening of the Wharf Street Baptist Church in February 1859.

Because the church opening was a major public event in the early life of Brisbane, Wilson's sermon was reported by the local press⁸

In any event a dispute on the issue of adult baptism vs. infant baptism was in full swing by June 1859 after Rev James Voller followed up with a paper on baptism. Other churches responded by circulating Rev G Hurst's book on infant baptism. The "battle" continued in the press and then within the community for some time with both sides publishing pamphlets⁹ and statements. On the Baptist's side pamphlets issued by the Baptists during the course of the debate were made, not by Wilson, but by his deacons¹⁰. The published material does not support the conclusion that Wilson was solely responsible for the dispute.

The third dispute was internal to the Wharf Street church and was doctrinal. Wilson was very much involved in this dispute. From the time of its commencement the congregation was made up of people who reflected the diverse Baptist theology that existed in England at the time. Some had a "Particular" Baptist background. At one extreme this group was essentially comprised of Calvinists who believed that salvation through the death of Christ was only for the elect. Others were "General" Baptists who believed that Christ died for the whole world. It is not surprising that these differences emerged among the Baptists in their adopted homeland, but it should be noted that the two groups were not clearly distinguishable and many members of the Wharf Street Church would have held views in between these two extremes.

These doctrinal differences do not seem to have been important to many in the Wharf Street Church, including people who were Particular Baptists in England. However, they led to eight Particular Baptist members (John Kingsford, Thomas Price, John Bale, Thomas Sands and Mrs Sands, Thomas Childs, Thomas Boniface and Ellen Birt) resigning from Wharf Street to establish a Particular Baptist Church. Wilson was "decidedly non-Calvinistic" and he was said to have been glad to see them go.¹¹ He was not concerned about losing a small number of members as the church was always full for its services. A member of the congregation at the time wrote that Wilson actually preached at the Particular Baptists for several months prior to their leaving¹².

T B Stephens, who was very much involved in the 1864 dispute, was the son of a Particular Baptist Minister in England¹³, but it is unclear whether he could be classed as anything other than a General Baptist. It is possible however that his upbringing may have had some relevance in what occurred later.

It might be noted that the Trust Deed of the Wharf Street Church described the church as a "church of Particular Baptists holding communion at Brisbane"¹⁴ (emphasis added).

The dispute of 1864

Within a few years of Wilson taking up his pastorate in Brisbane there were those in the church who objected to what they saw as his increasingly autocratic style, and these included three of the church's seven deacons - T B Stephens, William Moore and R A Kingsford, who were also trustees of the church¹⁵. In fact when the composition of the opposing groups became clear later, only two of the seven deacons were among Wilson's supporters. Stephens and Moore led one group and Daniel Rountree Somerset, a foundation member and deacon, became the

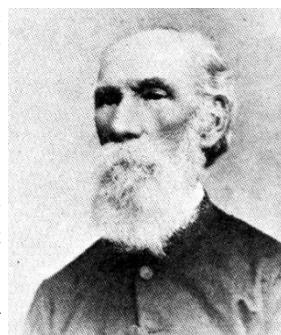
chief spokesman for Wilson's supporters.

The dispute seems to have had its origins within the Diaconate during 1862 and early 1863, although the minutes of deacons' meetings are not available for any period prior to 1868. The Church Members Meeting Minutes¹⁶ are the main source of information.

The initial log of complaints against the Pastor

Initially, there were three issues of concern to a number of members: Wilson's alleged neglect of pastoral visitations, the issue of church discipline and inadequate screening of applicants for church membership.

Pastoral visitations. Wilson was said to have "had little stomach for the sedate daily round of pastoral visitation"¹⁷. This matter was raised at church meetings culminating in a frank discussion at a church meeting on 24 April 1863. In July 1863 the pastor reported that he had commenced visiting the church members as he had promised at an earlier meeting¹⁸. However, this did not continue for very long and by early the following year the issue of pastoral visitations was again a concern to a number of members.



Rev William Moore

Church discipline. This issue had been raised at meetings in late 1862 and a special meeting was held on 19 December 1862. R A Kingsford was one who drew attention to this matter when he was called to his shop door to be shown a church member drunk in the gutter¹⁹.

The minutes of church meetings throughout 1862 and 1863 indicate a number of cases relating to discipline which were dealt with by the church in that time²⁰ and this complaint seems to have been accepted as legitimate and dealt with on an ongoing basis. Also, a Special meeting was held on 2 January 1863 to discuss the question of church discipline.

New members' applications. The processing of new membership applications had been raised by Stephens and William Moore at a church members meeting in 1861 and it was resolved that visitors' reports were to be received at one meeting and the candidate for membership was to appear before the church at the next meeting. Wilson claimed the right to baptise persons on a profession of their faith on his own judgment and responsibility. This reversed the procedures of the church and negated the visitation process and right of the church members to decide membership²¹.

William Moore spoke at a church meeting on 16 May 1862 about the need for "system and order" in reaching people in a rapidly expanding population. Others, including the pastor, spoke on the matter, but precisely what they said is not recorded.

The real issues between the warring factions

Jenyns implies that the way in which new member applications were processed was at the basis of the dispute between Wilson and the deacons²².

It is likely that a combination of issues caused the ultimate schism. R A Kingsford later said that he was of the view that "only persons who by their walk and conversations proved themselves worthy according to the Gospel, should belong to the church", but that Wilson was

admitting those who were not fit to belong to it. This, he said, had been pointed out to Wilson but Wilson had said "let them remain". Kingsford felt that Wilson "had endeavoured to plaster over the sore instead of removing it"²³.

William Moore's position is not clear, but he was a man who wanted things like processing new members' application done in an orderly and systematic way. That this was important to Moore is very evident in the early history of the Petrie Terrace Church, of which he was the first pastor. In the latter stages of the Wharf Street dispute he was personally antagonistic towards, and openly critical of, Wilson.

In a letter of 31 March 1864 to members of the Wharf Street church Stephens said that there was no hope of peace or prosperity in the church while Wilson continued his "arbitrary" course. For him also it seems to have been Wilson's attitude that was at the heart of the problem.

Consideration of the church's ongoing problems

At a church members' meeting on 13 April 1863 a motion moved by Messrs T B Stephens and James Spence was passed. It requested the deacons to prepare a plan of action for the better management of the church to be presented at the next members' meeting. The motion seems to have been aimed at airing the above complaints and getting the pastor to acknowledge the rights of the church membership.

The deacons and the pastor discussed the Stephens/Spence motion and reported back to the church members at their meeting on 26 April 1863. They said it was the duty of the deacons to follow up members who were not subscribing to the church's upkeep or who were in arrears in their payments. They also reported that at a previous meeting the pastor had stated his determination to attend to his duty of pastoral visitation. The deacons further reported that the present state of affairs was due to their own neglect of their duty and also the pastor's neglect of his duty to the members.

Several members, including the pastor, spoke on these matters. The discussion led the pastor to announce that it would be necessary for him to leave as there appeared to be dissatisfaction among the members towards himself. It is clear that even among Wilson's strongest critics there were some who were reluctant to see him go, and ultimately the Stephens group probably lost the battle because of that factor. There were very few Baptist pastors in Australia at the time and a call to England for a pastor involved long delays. Wilson was a valuable commodity!

The concern that the church might lose its pastor unless something was done quickly led Somerset to move that the pastor's salary was too low and that it be raised to £400 per annum and backdated to the previous 1 January. Debate on Somerset's proposal continued into a further meeting by which time the focus had shifted onto retaining the pastor. The pastor's salary was eventually increased to £400 p.a. backdated to 1 January 1863²⁴.

In August and September 1863 an attempt was made to have all deacons resign and to elect seven new deacons. This seems to have been aimed at undermining the standing of the Stephens/Moore group. However, the move failed as some deacons refused to resign and others who had resigned withdrew their resignations. Even-

tually the proposal was abandoned. For a few months the normal business of the church seems to have proceeded without major conflict but by January 1864 hostilities were again out in the open.

The Church Secretary (Stephens) was not present at a church meeting on 15 January 1864 to read the minutes of the previous meeting. The pastor complained of the inconvenience and a motion was passed that Mr Petty should become the Minute Secretary and that he should wait upon Stephens to request him to hand over the church books in his possession. At the same meeting, Somerset stated that the attention of the Pastor and Deacons had been called to the fact that several members were not attending any meetings in connection with the church and proposed that they should be visited by the Deacons to ascertain the cause of their absence.

William Moore objected and said that in pursuance of a resolution passed at the last church meeting he, with Stephens, had visited a number of the members, but he was not prepared to give in any report. It was finally resolved:

That Brothers Spence, Swan and Somerset wait upon Brethren Stephens and Moore to enquire into their neglect of duty and want of sympathy with the church and report to the next meeting of the church [29 January 1864].

Stephens was unable to attend the next meeting on 29 January 1864 due to illness. James Spence read a letter from Stephens in which he claimed that the previous meeting was unconstitutional because it had been arranged at a devotional meeting and he was unaware that it was to occur.

The ultimate breakdown in collaboration and the emergence of antagonism

In February 1864 Moore and Stephens addressed the church and defended themselves against complaints against them²⁵. What they said is not recorded in the minutes. The pastor replied to the charges made against him by Stephens and Moore at a meeting on 16 February 1864, but again what he said is not recorded in the minutes.

At a church meeting on 11 March 1864 Somerset moved:

That this church, seeing with deep regret the continued state of turmoil occasioned by the antagonism of Brethren Stephens and Moore in the meetings for the last two years, feels that the time has fully come to put an end to proceedings which if continued must eventually end in its ruin – Resolves that the said Brethren Stephens and Moore shall be suspended from their office as Deacons and from the communion of the church until they express their willingness to act in harmony with the majority of the members.

After much discussion the minutes of the 11 March meeting record that Somerset's resolution was eventually carried by a majority of 30.

In a letter distributed to all members of the Wharf Street church dated 31 March 1864, B T Stephens wrote:

It is known to all that I have worked well with Mr Wilson till the last few months, and then have opposed only his arbitrary claims to power, and his denial of having any duty to

perform as pastor, although receiving £400 a year to enable him to devote his whole time to pastoral duties. A majority of the members, a majority of the deacons, and a majority of the trustees agree with me in objecting to these pretensions.

Jenyns says something similar in his history of the Baptist Church in Brisbane, where he quotes a statement attributed to Wilson at the church meeting on 16 October 1863, in which Wilson allegedly said that he was the authorised exponent of the opinions of the church and anyone who differs from him must hold his tongue, and if he will not do so he must be put out²⁶.

In his letter Stephens went on to suggest that the solutions to the church's problems were entirely in Mr Wilson's hands. He wrote:

A majority of the members admit that there is no hope of peace or prosperity while Mr Wilson remains and continues his present arbitrary course, and the events of each week are fast increasing this number. Many of them will not face the disgraceful scenes at our meetings, still it was only by active canvassing that the annexed resolutions were carried, and the number voting for them represents the whole of their supporters. A very much larger number have already signed a protest against the former one. Most of those who voted for these resolutions will admit that that they were unjust and harsh towards Mr Moore and myself, but they were so put that it was necessary to pass them in order to keep Mr Wilson.

The protest



Following the motion of 11 March 1864 suspending Stephens and Moore²⁷ a protest signed by eighty-six church members was drawn up and presented to the

church. Notice was given at a church meeting on 25 March 1864 that the protest would be presented at the next church meeting. At that meeting, after a long debate, on 14 April 1864 the church refused to hear the matter by 68 votes to 60.

The schism

By May 1864 it was clear that the two groups would separate and Stephens and Somerset met to discuss the future ownership of the Wharf Street building. Meetings between representatives of the two sides followed and the outcome was that the Stephens group would take over the building on the payment of half the value of the property (£1,500). Payment was to be made within three months of 27 May 1864; that is by 27 August 1864.

The Stephens group proposed to raise the money by mortgaging the building. However, when they tried to do this they found they were prevented from doing so because the provisions of the Trust Deed did not allow it. The negotiations under which the Stephens group

were to receive the building therefore failed and the Wilson group retained possession of the building by default on the expiration of the three months period, and the Stephens group received nothing.

The aftermath

In June 1864, shortly after the two groups reached their agreement on ownership of the building, the dispute descended into unsavoury public bickering (which was widely publicised) over the right of members to use the building. On 14 June 1864 several public notices were placed in *The Brisbane Courier*²⁸ announcing and cancelling a public tea meeting to farewell Mr R A Kingsford who was leaving the colony for a time²⁹. The first notice was placed by Mr Joshua Jenyns, who was appointed to arrange the farewell. The second was anonymous, but was attributed to the Wilson group. The third was authorised by Stephens, Moore and Kingsford.

In his history Joshua Jenyns says that when he arrived at the chapel to set up for the tea meeting he found the doors locked and the doors and windows blockaded with church pews. Two trustees of the building (Stephens and one other, probably William Moore) arrived and confronted with the closure of the advertised venue for their meeting, arranged for a builder to gain access to the building. This was achieved with crowbars and other tools and the tea meeting ultimately proceeded with the two warring parties both present. James Spence was elected to chair the meeting and there were several speakers.

On 15 June *The Brisbane Courier* contained a lengthy page 2 article on what took place at the meeting. It said that:

The Rev B G Wilson rose to address the meeting and his appearance was hailed with cheers, counter-cheers and hissing...he appeared before them to protest in the name of all that was just against the manner in which that meeting had been convened...He maintained that a serious act of injustice had been done.

He went on to say that the church had not been advised of the nature and reason for the meeting contrary to the usual practice. The newspaper article said that Wilson had occupied the building the previous night because he had been informed that it was proposed to break into the building if no other way of gaining entry could be found and he was there to prevent destruction of the building.

It should be noted that this event took place during the three months period allowed to the Stephens group to raise the funds to purchase the building, consequently it might be said that neither side "owned" the building until that period expired on 27 August 1864 and, therefore, the Stevens group had every right to use the building. William Moore said he had approached James Swan to obtain the key to the building but had been refused. He had told Swan that he would get into the building through the roof if he could not get the key to enter via the front door.

There were faults on both sides. The Stephens group should not have announced the tea meeting without first discussing the proposed meeting with the pastor. As Wilson claimed, the key was requested after notice of the function appeared in the press. On the other hand the Wilson group were clearly aware of the proposed function and could have tried to settle the matter before the function rather than take the extreme step of blockading the building. After all, over a number of years Kingsford

had served the church as a deacon, trustee and Interim Pastor. When the attempts of the Stephens group to buy the building fell through the schism between the two groups was complete.

A Bill was introduced into the Colonial Parliament in 1875 titled 'The Riotous Conduct in Public Places of Worship Bill.' In introducing the Bill the Hon H G Simpson referred to a specific case in which a congregation was said to have been "persistently outraged and insulted by a man" over a period of months. The name of the church involved was not given and although the Wharf Street Church dispute some eleven years previously was mentioned in debate on the Bill, there is no evidence to suggest that it was the church in the case mentioned by Simpson. The *Brisbane Courier* of 2 July 1875 reported that the Bill was defeated 17 votes to 11.

Positive developments following the schism

The Stephens group initially formed the Edward Street Baptist Church on 10 April 1865 at a meeting held in a school building in Petrie Terrace. They erected a church building on land owned by the Temperance Society on the corner of Ann and Edward Streets, Brisbane³⁰. Stephens and Moore assisted in the establishment of this church but did not become members for tactical reasons as they were still trustees of the Wharf Street church.

William Moore became the first pastor of the Petrie Terrace Baptist Church which was formed on 8 April 1870 by four members of the Edward Street church. Moore also established the Rosalie Baptist Church in October 1884 and became its first pastor.

Stephens and Kingsford were among the foundation members of the South Brisbane Baptist Church, which began in 1872. Stephens was one of the first three deacons of the church and Kingsford was the church's first Treasurer.

The Edward Street church appeared to be very much an interim arrangement, and when it was sold in December 1868 the Edward Street members began meeting in various places, including the Commercial Room at the Town Hall. Another meeting place was in a building erected on a block of land in Henderson Street, Bulimba that was donated by Mr James Johnson. Bulimba was one of several preaching stations that continued for several years. It merged with the Norman Park Baptist Church in 1935 to become Carey Baptist Church. In 1876 the remnants of the Edwards Street church formed the Fortescue Street Church, which flourished up to 1890 when the City Tabernacle building was opened nearby.

The conflict viewed from a distance of 150 years

A study undertaken at Emory University in the USA by Nancy Ammerman, concluded that every congregation that successfully adapted and flourished in a changing community had a substantial church fight. Those that chose to avoid conflict at all costs failed to flourish. No exceptions were found to this finding³¹.

It is often felt that conflict arises out of sin, and while sin does breed some conflict "others grow out of nothing more sinister than differences in experience or personality or even spiritual gifts"³². What is of pivotal relevance is how the conflict is managed.

From such a long distance in time the Wharf Street church dispute of 1864 it is really only possible to examine the surface dynamics of the dispute. We do not

know enough of the personal characteristics, thoughts and aims of the various participants to make firm judgments about precisely who was responsible for the failures that occurred. But some constructive observations are possible.

Wilson was clearly a key figure in the 1864 dispute. On the one hand, the Stephens group realised that while he remained at Wharf Street his "arbitrary claims to power" would continue to be a problem. In their view, Wilson had to go. On the other hand, the Stephens group underestimated the reluctance of a majority of Wharf Street members to let him go.

The impasse that resulted ultimately led to the downfall of Wilson's opponents. The ongoing bickering at church meetings had to be stopped and the only way to do that, so long as Wilson remained, was for the leaders of the Stephens group to go. When this eventually occurred a large number of Wharf Street members followed them.

Wilson's opponents failed to take into account his enormous workload and to fully appreciate what he was achieving through evangelism and church planting in the new colony. Wilson was an evangelist who travelled around Queensland at every opportunity establishing churches in the larger towns, and his heart was clearly in spreading the good news of the Gospel to all corners in the colony. By 1863 he had been instrumental in setting up Baptist churches in Rockhampton, Maryborough and Ipswich. He and some of his congregation also regularly conducted services at a number of preaching stations in and around Brisbane.

Wilson was a tireless worker and his health suffered because of overwork. He died on 11 February 1878 shortly after the Baptist Association of Queensland was formed.

It is pleasing to note that before his death he had been reconciled with William Moore and R A Kingsford.

In human relationships tension occurs and people have their differences. And many disputes are about personality rather than theology. The Wharf Street dispute seemed to have mainly been about personality.

Perhaps the following quote sums up the whole situation:

Christians are not known for handling disagreement well. Sometimes, to acknowledge that things are difficult or there is real conflict can feel like failure, that we're letting God himself down. It can also be very uncomfortable to face. So the temptation is to deny there is a problem and hope that it'll somehow resolve itself, which usually results in conflict being driven underground and popping up in the most unlikely and destructive ways. Substituting niceness and tolerance for grace and truth and speaking the truth in love doesn't work and isn't the way it's meant to be. Being a disciple of Jesus involves learning how to handle conflict well, and being generous with our forgiveness too³³.

Notes—see next page

Notes:

- 1 Donald E Bossart, "Growing through conflict", <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=297>.
- 2 Dr Les Ball, *Grow the Vision: The Sesqui-Centennial History of the City Tabernacle Baptist Church 1855-2005*, Brisbane 2005, page 6.
- 3 *A Zealous Minister of the Gospel*, Brisbane, MCMXI, page 6 says that while he was Pastor of the Baptist Church at Barnsley, UK, he commenced studying medicine with Dr J Le Gay Brereton MD, a homeopathic practitioner of Bradford, who later came out to Sydney. Wilson devoted himself to medical studies in order to fit himself for work abroad.
- 4 *Rockhampton Bulletin*, 15 February 1862.
- 5 *Notes on the Life of the Late Rev B G and Mrs Wilson*, Unpublished and Undated, Copy held in the Baptist Archives Queensland.
- 6 Dr Stan W Nickerson, *Rev B G Wilson: Queensland Baptist Founding Father*, Baptist Historical Series No 9, 1998, Introduction.
- 7 *To the Christians of Brisbane*, Published by the Baptist Church, I P Pugh, Printer, Brisbane, 1859.
- 8 *The Moreton Bay Courier*, Wednesday 9 February 1859, page 2.
- 9 A pamphlet by the Baptists headed *Believers' Baptism and Infant Baptism Contrasted* was printed by James Swan. It set out two point by point lists contrasting the two types of baptism.
- 10 See *To the Christians of Brisbane*, Published by the Baptist Church, I P Pugh, Printer, Brisbane, 1859 at pages 12, 13 and 15.
- 11 Dr Stan W Nickerson, *Rev B G Wilson: Queensland Baptist Founding Father*, Baptist Historical Series No 9, 1998, page 29.
- 12 See Dr David Parker (Ed.), *The Joshua Jenyns History*, Baptist Historical Society, page 5.
- 13 Dr Stan W Nickerson, *Rev B G Wilson: Queensland Baptist Founding Father*, Baptist Historical Series No 9, 1998, page 49.
- 14 *Trust Deed of the Wharf-street Baptist Chapel, Brisbane*, Numbered 173, Book 4, page 1.
- 15 In addition to these three the other deacons were: James Swan, Daniel Rountree Somerset, James Spence and H Bulgin. The two other trustees were Swan and Somerset.
- 16 The first Members Meeting Minutes available are for the Church Meeting of 11 October 1861.
- 17 Dr Stan W Nickerson, *Rev B G Wilson: Queensland Baptist Founding Father*, Baptist Historical Series No 9, 1998, page 10.
- 18 Wharf Street Minutes of Church Members' Meeting of 17 July 1863
- 19 *The Joshua Jenyns History of the Baptist Church in Brisbane*, David Parker (Ed), Published by the Baptist Historical Society, Brisbane, 1996, page 7.
- 20 Case of John Campbell Minutes of 1/8/1862; Case of Charles Bailiff Minutes of 29/8/1862 and 26/3/1863; Case of Thomas and Mrs Slaughter Minutes of 24/10/1862, 30/1/1863 and 10/4/1863; Case of James Burnett Minutes of 2/1/1863, 16/1/1863 and 10/4/1863; Case of George Robinson Minutes of 30/1/1863 and 10/4/1863; Case of M Rosevear Minutes of 10/4/1863.
- 21 *The Joshua Jenyns History of the Baptist Church in Brisbane*, David Parker (Ed), Published by the Baptist Historical Society, Brisbane, 1996, page 7.
- 22 *The Joshua Jenyns History of the Baptist Church in Brisbane*, David Parker (Ed), Published by the Baptist Historical Society, Brisbane, 1996, page 7.
- 23 *The Brisbane Courier*, Wednesday 15 June 1864, page 2.
- 24 Wharf Street Minutes of Church Members' Meeting of 8 May 1863.
- 25 Moore replied at the Meeting of 5 February 1864 and Stephens at the 12 February 1864 meeting.
- 26 *The Joshua Jenyns History of the Baptist Church in Brisbane*, David Parker (Ed), Published by the Baptist Historical Society, Brisbane, 1996, page 10.
- 27 R A Kingsford was also suspended later for raising the issue of suspension of the two men at a church meeting after the church had voted to suspend anyone who did so.
- 28 It should be noted that T B Stephens bought the *Moreton Bay Courier* from James Swan in 1861, re-named it *The Brisbane Courier* and made it into a daily newspaper (See Mel Williams, *Cameos of Baptist Men in 19th Century Queensland*, Baptist Historical Society of Queensland, Brisbane, 1995, page 13). In the circumstances the 15 June report on the Wharf Street dispute might not be regarded by some as an objective account of that event. However, *The Northern Australian*, of Thursday 16 June 1864 carried an article on the same event which bore a striking resemblance to the article which appeared in *The Brisbane Courier* the day before.
- 29 *The Brisbane Courier*, 14 June 1864, page 1.
- 30 A more detailed history of this church can be found in the article "The Edward Street Church Revisited" in the *Queensland Baptist Forum*, No 75 of April 2010, at pages 3-8.
- 31 Eddy Hall, "Why your church needs conflict", <http://www.living-stones.com/articles/conflict.htm>.
- 32 Eddy Hall, "Why your church needs conflict", <http://www.living-stones.com/articles/conflict.htm>.
- 33 *Encounter with God*, January-March 2013, page 71, "Doing conflict well", by Fran Beckett.

Tracing Our First Minister—More Stewart Family Details



Plaque to Rev Robert Stewart, Tranent, Scotland

Our last item reporting developments in gaining long sought information about the first Baptist minister in Queensland, Rev Charles Stewart, was published in our December 2012 issue. In that article we reported on discoveries made with the help of the internet which gave us helpful information about his siblings, especially his older sister, Anne, which had been a mystery.

We are now pleased to report even more information has come to hand to add to our knowledge of his family. Once again the internet has played a major role. A distant relative living in Melbourne noticed the page about Stewart on our website, and contacted us to advise that she had done extensive research on her family history and could fill us in with lots of information. Her name is Dr Kathleen Le Lievre and she is descended from a brother of Charles Stewart's mother. Dr Le Lievre has traced this family, the MacGregors, back in detail to the early 1600s and more generally much earlier. However, still nothing much is known of the Stewart line.

We knew before that Charles had a brother Robert, who became a Presbyterian minister, and two sisters, the younger one, Elizabeth, and the older one whose name we found out recently was Anna. Thanks to the new information we can fill in all these siblings:

- Anna was the oldest, born in 1815 in Wick, Caithness (d. 1858).
- Robert (named after his maternal grandfather) was born in 1818 also in Wick (d. 1851)
- Then came Charles, now confirmed as being born on 5 Oct 1820 in Cannongate Midlothian (near Edinburgh) (d. 1858, Bermuda)
- Next there was a daughter Penuell, born 1823 in St Cuthbert's Midlothian (Edinburgh) but nothing more is known of this girl (presumably an early death)
- Last came Elizabeth, born Alloa, Clackmannanshire in 1825 (d. 1893).

None of these siblings had any children so the family line died out, but thanks to their 'cousins' including Dr Le Lievre, we are now able to fill in many of the gaps. Charles' father moved around a lot in his work. We know that Charles was living in Glasgow around 1841 with his widowed mother and some of his siblings, which probably accounts for his entry to Glasgow University about that time. There was also the probable membership of himself and Anna in the Hope Street Baptist Church, Glasgow, through which he was later sponsored to theological training in England.

Can we hope that we might be able to find out more about Charles' childhood and teen years, and how he became a Baptist? In the meantime, we are updating our book on Stewart to incorporate this new information.

Baptists in the Golden West—II

In our August 2012 issue, we introduced a new project—charting the history of Baptist work in the Darling Downs and further west. This area, more than 320,000 sq kms, covers the region from Toowoomba and Highfields south and west to the borders of the state. It spans a number of small and scattered local government areas and towns, with an economy based on cattle, cotton, and natural resource extraction. The total population is about 280,000 but the Toowoomba area, the state's largest inland city, accounts for a lot of that. However, the population in much of the rest of the region has been falling significantly in recent decades.

Recent census figures show that there are about 4100 people in this region calling themselves Baptist, which is about 1.5% of the population; for the state as a whole, the percentage is 2.00. This means that there are considerably fewer Census Baptists in this region than average.

Our introductory article stated there are currently 10 Baptist churches in the area, the earliest dating from 1875 (Toowoomba—there are now 4 churches in this city). Warwick was formed next in 1911, but there were no more until the 1950s and later. The most recent ones are at Goondiwindi and suburban Toowoomba. Some churches no longer exist—including Allora (1947-70), Emmanuel in Warwick (late 1980s), a Danish church at Freestone in the late 1800s, Roma (1965-94) and Charleville (1985-90). So Baptist coverage in the south west of the state has declined; there are now no Baptist works west of Chinchilla, meaning places like Roma, Charleville, Cunnamulla, St George, Dirranbandi, Thargomindah and others have no Baptist presence.

In 2012, the reported membership of the 10 current churches is 700 (the 2 largest account for 70% of the total) - which is 17% of Census Baptists—about the same percentage as for Queensland as a whole. So the percentage of Census Baptists for this area is *lower* than average but the outreach by churches to these people is on a *par* with the rest. (Figures for the actual attendance at the churches or for their pool of people are not very reliable but could be estimated as being perhaps 50% greater than reported membership)

This looks like an interesting project, and we invite support and help in the form of information, documents, photographs and assistance in research and writing.
