



The Queensland Baptist Forum

The Journal of Baptist Heritage Queensland

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Baptist Heritage Plaques—project developments

One of the aims of Baptist Heritage Qld is to identify and mark places of significance in the story of Baptists in Queensland. We are taking another step in this program soon by marking the oldest existing church building still in use as a place of Baptist worship and fellowship.

We have already marked two other places. One was where the first Baptists in Queensland met with other Christians to worship in William Street (1851). The second one was in the country at Vernor, near Lowood, where the first German Baptists in Queensland erected a church to the glory of God. There are other places are in mind to mark as well. For example, the location of first baptisms in Queensland, the locations of the first 3 Baptist churches and other later ones. The Baptist Union has operated from some different sites as well, and there are churches and other places of interest in the suburbs. Then there are many places that could be marked in regional towns and cities. (Ask about our guide to important Baptist places in Rockhampton, and our tour guide to early Baptist Brisbane.)

There are many sites of public and community interest now marked by heritage plaques in our community – eg, around Rosalie and Milton. Some other denominations have taken the trouble to mark theirs, but there are only a few heritage listed Baptist sites identified. We would like to change this!

So we welcome Toowong Baptist Church as they celebrate their 135th anniversary later this year. They have enthusiastically taken up the idea so they will install a large plaque on the front of their church to announce to



BAPTIST CHURCH, TOOWONG.

passers-by that this is the old Baptist church building still in use. The building was opened on 4 September 1881, seating 100 people at a cost of £250. The architect and builder was Mr William Richer who was also pastor and founder of the church. The main part was enlarged and vestries added in 1884, doubling its size. It is recognized as a modest example of a timber framed church in the Federation Carpenter Gothic style; these beautiful features are on view inside the main sanctuary.

We encourage Baptists throughout Queensland to identify significant places and buildings in their areas. We hope they will take steps to have them marked as a means of witness and thanksgiving to God for his grace and faithfulness. We invite help with this project, so please contact us if you are interested.

BHQ—Meetings 2016: 11 June (NB change of date); 29 October (AGM) all 2pm @The Baptist Archives

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President: Mr Eric W. Kopittke 98 Yallambee Rd.,
Jindalee 4074 Ph 3376 4339 kopittke@tpg.com.au

Secretary: Bill Hughes, 7 Dalziel St.,
Nundah 4012 Ph 3256 8897 Mob 0409 915 685
roslynbill@bigpond.com

Website: <http://dparker.net.au/bhsq.htm>

Archives contact: archives@qb.com.au

Ph 3354 5642

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Toowoomba Baptist Church—the Foundations

By David Parker

This is another part of our 'Baptist Witness on the Darling Downs' project. See earlier issues for some of the others. More will follow as the project progresses. Interest and assistance is welcome.

Background

There had been settlement in Toowoomba for thirty years before the Baptists organised a church in what is now Queensland's largest inland city (population 110,000). The first settlement, in the early 1840s, was at Drayton, and it was not until about 10 years later that the current city site, 6km to the north east, up till then a swamp, began to be developed. By 1860, the area achieved municipal status, and had Anglican and Presbyterian churches, as well as many other buildings and organisations. By the mid 1870's when Baptist work began, the town, sitting on the edge of the main range 700 m above sea level 160 km west of Brisbane, was becoming recognised as the centre for the rich pastoral and agricultural districts of the Darling Downs; it supported a wide range of businesses, hotels and community organisations.

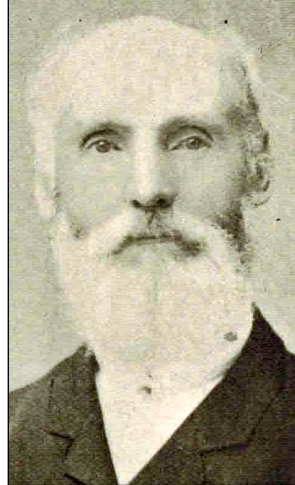
Some Baptists had found their way to Toowoomba, including William Broadfoot who had come on one of Dr John Dunmore Lang's ships in 1849, was converted in Brisbane under the ministry of Rev BG Wilson and had moved around the country a lot before finally settling in Toowoomba. With no Baptist church closer than Ipswich, 90 kms away, these people, under 50 in number according to census figures, were worshipping with other denominations, or not at all.

Rev William Moore of the Petrie Terrace church in Brisbane was aware of at least some of these people, having conducted weddings in the area from about 1870. In true apostolic style, he wanted to see a Baptist church in the rising town, so he convened a meeting on 4 Feb 1875, in the Herries Street home of David Broadfoot to encourage the people to act on their beliefs and form a church based personal faith, baptism by immersion and recognition of the authority of Scripture for all matters of faith and practice. He said that even if they could not meet every week at first, he was confident that a church would prosper. William Broadfoot and others supported the idea and so the church was formed

After meeting in private homes for a short time, the first public service, conducted by Moore, was held in the Oddfellows Hall on 21 March 1875 with 12 people observing Communion; a Sunday School was commenced on 4 April with 20 scholars (including on William Broadfoot's daughter who lived to see the 75th anniversary of the church) and 6 teachers. Most impressive of all, was a baptism conducted by Moore in a quarry waterhole in Queen's Park on 16 May when four members of the Broadfoot family made a profession of their faith. This was the first such baptism held in Toowoomba and attracted a crowd of more than 300, including people from several different churches. The newspapers reported that Moore's sermon was given a 'patient and attentive hearing' and that 'order and propriety were strictly observed.' (But this civility did not last!)

John Macpherson 1875-1880

With a steady flow of people applying for church membership, Moore's prophecy about the church's suc-



Rev John Macpherson in his senior years

cess seemed to be a reality. It was apparent that a pastor would soon be needed. A recommendation was received from the minister of Jireh Baptist Church in Brisbane about a man who had recently arrived and would be suitable. He was John Macpherson, a Scot in his middle 30s, who had wide experience as an evangelist in his home country and in Ireland, and also for a few years in Peru. Macpherson, who was single, travelled to Toowoomba and began preaching on 1 August 1875.

He also covered nearby areas, including Highfields, where outstations were es-

tablished.

Rapid growth continued, and the church began looking for a building of their own. Early in 1876, land in Neil Street was purchased from the Good Templars Lodge, and plans were being made to erect a chapel. However, after short time, it was found that the block was not located on a corner as the church had believed, so this land was sold and a new location soon found, about a kilometre away, on the corner of Herries and Hume Street. This parcel was purchased for £70. A cottage on it was also bought for a further £30, which from April 1877 was modified for use as a church. Macpherson's skills, and his contacts with people in Brisbane, resulted in considerable success in raising funds for this project. These links also meant that Toowoomba was aware of developments leading to the formation of the Baptist Association (later Union) of Queensland (BAQ) in 1877, of which it became a foundation member.

The steady growth continued, both in the town area and the country, although sometimes there was opposition. There were reports of trouble at baptisms (held in public until a baptistry was installed), while some members of other churches showed strong sectarian opposition and the 'larrikins' of the town occasionally made a nuisance of themselves, such as breaking church windows. There was a boost to the church's position from the visit in 1878 of the Thomas Spurgeon, the son of the famous London Baptist preacher, Charles Haddon Spurgeon; he addressed a crowd of more than 800 at the Royal Assembly Rooms, with many conversions. There was a follow up visit two years later.

In all this, the growth was strong, some of the trouble makers were converted and in 1879 several members were transferred to form the new church fellowship at Highfields. However, people who applied for membership were not automatically accepted; after carefully enquiry, some were considered not yet ready or not sufficiently dedicated. From time to time there were cases

of discipline and one of the original leaders resigned because he felt he was not worthy enough. A lot was expected of members, especially financially. With minimal organisation, when there was a project that required funds, such as building maintenance, the members were canvassed personally to secure their financial and practical support. The church mostly managed to pay its way, although usually the financial reports showed it is just kept ahead – on one occasion the treasurer said they were just four pence and one halfpenny in surplus.

But Macpherson was a strong minded leader. Just a few weeks after arriving, he had the church adopt 'close communion' practice (only members could participate), and disband a committee that ran the church in favour of governance by deacons only. This all came to head early in 1879 when there was a vigorous discussion at a church meeting in which some of the members expressed their complete lack of confidence in him as their pastor. After some agonising interchanges and a polling of the church members, it was decided that the church should pull together in love and unity for a year and then make a decision. When that time came, the vote was against Macpherson and on 3 May 1880, the Minutes of the church meeting declared that the pastorate was 'vackent'!

Unfortunately, as Macpherson concluded his pioneer ministry, several people followed him out of the church. He began preaching immediately at a public hall in Ruthven Street, establishing a second Baptist church in the town, which the Baptist Association quickly recognised.

This created tension, requiring the BAQ to take steps to reconcile the two groups. There was some misunderstanding about the aim of these efforts – whether merely to have friendly relationships between the two churches (as Macpherson thought), or to reunite the groups into one again. By early 1881, as the talks continued, the majority were in favour of reuniting. By the middle of the year, Macpherson had accepted an appointment in Brisbane as a city missionary, commencing in November 1881.

In time he became a chaplain to various institutions such as hospitals and prisons, a role in which he thrived for the rest of his pastoral career. He died in 1910, a respected and well-loved minister.

Vacancy and T Robey as interim

The division did not seem to dampen prospects of the Herries Street fellowship too much although they did not have a regular pastor, except for a few months in late 1880 and early 1881 when Rev T Robey occupied the position. He had already been in Toowoomba for a short time and was known to the people. He had had a varied career in several states, but was best known to the public for his extended lectures on the end of the world given at various churches and public venues around the area. These led to him being described by one newspaper columnist as an 'itinerant soothsayer'. Other services were taken by visiting preachers from Brisbane and by locals, although one of latter was asked not to preach anymore because 'the majority of the congregation' did not appreciate his efforts.

The biggest development during this time was the erection of a new church building to replace the old cottage. The old building had a baptistry installed in 1877 to avoid having to use the Council gravel pit or the local baths. But the structure was inadequate for the growing

church, so from about late 1878, ideas were raised for a replacement – even a large brick building (modelled on the Lutheran church) was suggested, and special prayer meetings held to support the venture.

The project was finally put in motion in late 1880, when it was found that timber was in plentiful supply and the terms of purchase were good. The new building was opened on 13 March 1881, with Robey as one of the preachers. It was 45 x 29 feet in size, with 12.5ft walls, seating 400 people, and cost nearly £300.

There was a steady stream of additions to the church membership through local evangelism and baptisms; there were also many transfers, some of whom were new arrivals from British churches, while others came from interstate or from churches in Brisbane. There were also some transfers away and occasional removals because of discipline and inactivity. But despite these positive developments, there was still the question of the leadership of the church. Efforts were made to contact potential pastors and to seek the assistance of BAQ, all to no avail. Then there was a surprising breakthrough.

During the latter part of 1881, two evangelists from CH Spurgeon's church in London were travelling through Australia and one of them, Rev E Isaac visited Toowoomba for a series of successful meetings. Learning of the church's situation, he suggested that they should write to Spurgeon himself and ask if he could send one of his students to be their pastor.

Spurgeon was well known throughout Australia for his ministry and the many pastors who had been trained in his college now serving in the colonies. He was even more familiar to the Baptists of Toowoomba because of the visits of his son to the town in 1878 and 1880. So after prayer and discussion, a letter was posted on 27 Feb 1882, making that request and forwarding £30 for travelling expenses.

When Spurgeon received the letter, he thought immediately of William Higlett, but Higlett had at the same time written to Spurgeon offering himself to serve in Australia. With these providential developments, the appointment was made. Higlett sailed on 1 June and arrived at Toowoomba on 26 July, ready to take over the leadership of the church. The next year, he was joined by his fiancé, Alice Emptage, and they were married at Vulture Street Baptist Church, Brisbane on 18 April 1883.

William Higlett 1882-90

Higlett turned 25 years of age only a few days after his official welcome on 10 August 1882, but despite his youth, he had considerable experience and had been well trained for pastoral work. However, he knew the task was daunting, and that, stationed at Toowoomba, he was on edge of a vast interior. As he wrote later, 'Westward, for over 2,000 miles extends the vast "never, never" country, without any Baptist church, and but few ministers of any denomination. True, the population grows "small by degrees and beautifully less"; but their spiritual destitution is even greater than that of the spot we have mentioned'.

There had been no time to discuss the terms of his pastorate before he left England, so the members of the church were called upon at the first meeting to commit themselves to his spiritual and financial support. He did not let them down. His first sermon was warmly welcomed as 'unpretentious but earnest, his language copious and good' – in the style of his teacher, Spurgeon.

He soon put his talents to work with various public lectures, using his photographic interests with lantern slide presentations, many of which were angled towards raising funds for the church's needs. Later a grant from the BAQ helped with his support, but the church continually made adjustments to its arrangements to keep the books balanced – sometimes using an envelope system for offerings, other times a collection box after the services and many special efforts.

Building and services

The building debt weighed heavily on the church. It stood at £240 in 1882, but thanks to the efforts of Higlett and especially one of the ladies who organised the members to give a few pennies a week on a regular basis, it was extinguished in 4 years. But the building needed regular maintenance, and improvements were required - better lighting, a fence around the property, a porch and a notice board; Higlett's brother in law donated funds for a Bible text to be painted inside. But the biggest problem was the original cottage, which was used as a vestry. By 1886 it was found to be eaten out by white ants, so it was sold for removal, and a new structure was erected adjoining the church in its place at a cost of around £110. However, one project that did not succeed was the acquisition of the land next door for a manse.

Music was another issue – different hymn books had been used from time to time, but there was no instrument – only a song leader, David Broadfoot, with his excellent musical skills, taking this role for a long time. Then in 1884 the Sunday School bought an organ. Soon the church was using it for services.

Outreach

But it was outreach that concerned Higlett the most. He promoted the church as much as he could in the community, using the press to good advantage, and took a particular interest in temperance work.

The outstations were a high priority, but had first to learn to ride a horse to visit these areas. He wanted to centralise the membership and funds of 'the bush work' but this idea was not supported by the people. He arranged to visit them on one Sunday a month, although services at Toowoomba suffered on account of his absence. In 1886 he managed to engage George Anderson, recently arrived from Dumferline, Scotland, with experience in YMCA work, to assist him. Although his ministry was effective, there were some tensions and he only stayed in the post for six months and was not replaced.

Higlett's interests extended ever further than the local districts. He had some contact with far away Roma, baptising a few people from that area during the years of his pastorate. Southward, he became aware of some Danish settlers close to Warwick at Freestone. He had baptised one of their number early in his ministry. Three years later he visited them and formed them into a church, which survived for about ten years.

Outreach in the town area was another concern. Higlett noticed that there was no church on the west side beyond 'The Swamp', which was known as Newtown. So services were begun there in mid-1866, which proved to be so successful that early the next year a small weatherboard chapel, 28 x 16 feet was erected on land facing Russell Street at a total cost of £160. However, this work did not grow as expected and after about three years, it was abandoned.

Controversy

All this activity led to many additions to the church, but there were also departures as people moved away, or in some cases, lost their enthusiasm. A few switched to the Brethren, but one cause of loss was more critical. Early in 1884, William Broadfoot engaged in a public debate with the newly formed Churches of Christ (also known as the Campbellites or Disciples). A few years before an adherent of the Disciples from Melbourne had attended the Toowoomba Baptist church and had influenced some of its members; one of these (who had been rejected as a ministerial candidate by the BAQ in 1882) had gone to the south and returned with one of the Disciples' most effective evangelists, who spread their message in southern Queensland and especially across the Downs. This former member and others of his family had moved to Brisbane where, in August 1882, they had taken over a small Baptist church at Zillmere to create the first church of their denomination in Queensland, which was followed soon after by one in Toowoomba.

The issue at stake was the biblical teaching on baptism, which this group aggressively taught was essential for salvation. Higlett also joined in the discussion begun by his deacon Broadfoot, with a pamphlet and lecture and sermons, evoking the praise of his mentor, CH Spurgeon, who said, 'We thought very highly of your sermon on the Campbellites. I only wish there was any chance of quieting those troublesome people'. The controversy was left unresolved but the membership of the Toowoomba Baptist Church was affected when more than a dozen people left to join the Disciples. Other churches in southern Queensland, especially in the German churches of the west Moreton area, were also affected by the efforts of the Disciples and their teaching about baptism. The Toowoomba Baptist church was therefore wary about applications for membership from some who had been influenced by the Disciples.

Conclusion

After about seven years of intensive ministry, including a year, 1885-86, as President of the Baptist Association, during which the church prospered, conditions began to change. The growing economic depression in the country was impacting the district, and affected the financial strength of the church. There was still a big loan on the Newtown property, Higlett's stipend was in arrears and he was physically exhausted.

He succumbed to a bout of typhoid fever which meant he was off work for almost four months in early 1890. When he returned in mid-year, he decided to accept a call to the Jireh Baptist Church with special responsibility for a new work at Albion.

On his last Sunday, he collapsed in the pulpit and injured his head as he fell, and was barely able to participate in his official farewell on 23 September. There was standing room only for this event, showing the esteem which he had gained not only from the church but from the community. He had contributed a lot to the church during his 8 year pastorate, the membership was still over 70, although with quite a number non-resident, attendance at meetings had declined.

After 15 years of operation, Toowoomba Baptist Church was now facing a completely different situation as the colony faced intensifying economic depression, political and industrial unrest and devastating floods in the decade now dawning.

Rev Dr SW Nickerson **Principal Malyon College 1983-2001**

by John Mayne

An edited version of a paper prepared for a Malyon College study program

The Journey to the Principalship

Stanley Walter Nickerson, born 1939, was the second son of Bert and Pat of Sandgate, Brisbane. Hailing from a 'vague Anglican/Roman Catholic background' (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 54), he was converted through Sandgate Baptist. Beginning as a teacher, Stan completed bachelor degrees in Arts and Education through The University of Queensland. Commencing at QBCM in 1966 as student pastor, he married Rockhampton's Mary Guy in 1963. His ordination studies, along with a Bachelor of Divinity (BD) through Melbourne College of Divinity (MCD), were completed while pastoring Baptist churches in Tarragindi, Sunnybank and Stafford North. Joining the faculty of the Bible College of South Australia in 1975, Nickerson returned to teach Old Testament (OT) at QBCM in 1978, conducting part-time ministry at Rosalie Baptist and beginning post-graduate studies in OT at The University of Queensland.

A lecturing vacancy led to Nickerson's QBCM faculty appointment in 1979, being later that year installed as Vice Principal on the proviso it not be regarded as a step to Principalship (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 50). Made Principal Elect in 1981, he succeeded Dr E G Gibson in 1983, a tenure continuing until his retirement in 2001, with Rev Dr John Sweetman installed as successor. Nickerson, apart from periodic part-time lecturing, has been largely uninvolved with QBCM since his retirement. As at time of writing, he continues to be warmly involved in Queensland Baptist circles, particularly via preaching at Moore Park Baptist and itinerant ministry elsewhere.

Development of QBCM Educational Standards under Nickerson as Principal

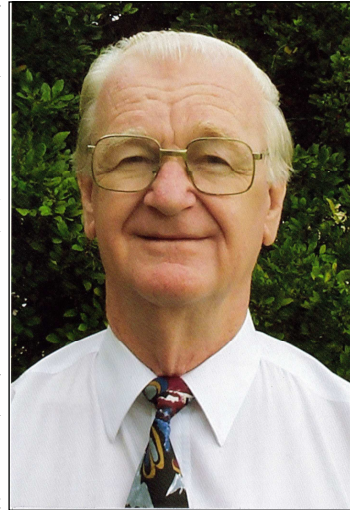
Restoring Educational Credibility

Nickerson inherited a College lacking somewhat in credibility throughout 'the wider theological and education spheres' (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 54). QBCM's awards had no recognition beyond Queensland Baptists, with students desiring traditional recognition required to study with the MCD or ACT (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 54). The situation reached its nadir in 1982 with the ACT revoking QBCM's BTh accreditation. Broader societal expectations of higher educational qualifications had been unfolding, evidenced by the 1988 Dawkins Reforms of Higher Education, 'making tertiary education more an expectation than a rarity' (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 54). This evolving milieu prompted Nickerson and QBCM to 'stabilize the educational standing of the college' (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 56), lest they

become a 'backwater institution' (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 54).

Nickerson understood degrees had to be reinstalled (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 56). The Brisbane College of Theology was not a viable option, for the prospect of ministry candidates influenced by non-Baptist lecturers was unappealing to the Baptist hierarchy (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 51, 57). Combined with the 'incompatibility of MCD awards' and withdrawal of ACT accreditation, QBCM's most academically capable ministry candidates were bereft of a degree (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 56). Further dialogue with the ACT aimed to redress QBCM's 'previously noted shortcomings' (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 56), made difficult while QBCM lacked the necessary teaching expertise and library volumes. Local discussion led to a renewed BTh accreditation with the ACT as part of a consortium involving the Bible College of Queensland and Kenmore Christian College. Previous suspicions of consortia led to defensive conditions imposed by the Baptist Assembly, such as the need for QBCM BTh students to complete Bible and Theology subjects at QBCM itself (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 57). This led to duplication of classes and a chaotic schedule for faculty, sacrifices tolerated as means to a greater end (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 57). These burdens evaporated when the ACT introduced more flexible Bachelor of Ministries (BMin) conditions in 1992 (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 57). Beginning modestly, this 1986 ACT arrangement marked 'a new phase' educationally (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 56).

The ACT BTh was academically rigorous yet somewhat insufficient for ministry development (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 57). Several unaccredited, in-house Baptist subjects were then required for ordination, whether by BTh or internal Diploma candidates. Those completing the in-house Graduate of Theology (later Graduate in Ministry) invested in a five year program opening no academic doors (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 58), a source of ongoing dissatisfaction (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 58). QBCM continued to walk a tightrope at the dawn of the 1990s, offering a BTh to more competent stu-



dents, 'yet retaining its own ethos of practical training as determined by ... denominational clientele' (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 58). Though not ideal (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 58), it represented an educational footprint growing incrementally.

Faculty Development

Nickerson's commitment to higher education led the way for faculty. He completed a Master of Arts (MA) in OT in 1987 and a 1995 Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) on QBCM history, the latter not the typical 'academic progression of an Old Testament lecturer' (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 55). However, it demonstrated commitment to the intrinsic worth of education itself rather than simply as a 'pragmatic tool' for career advancement (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 55). Nickerson inherited a QBCM faculty of Rev Geoffrey Sunstrom (BSc, DipEd, BD (Hons)), Rev Max Davidson (BSc, DipEd, BD (Hons)) and Rev David Swincer (BA, BD, DipRE). With no 'room for new appointments,' he encouraged each towards post-graduate studies in their respective fields (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 56).

Sunstrom commenced a Master of Theology (MTh), Swincer enrolled in an MA, whilst Davidson soon upgraded his MA to a PhD. Later in the 1990s, a similar encouragement to upskill was extended to valued faculty members Stephen Ball (BA, DipEd, GradDipRE, BTh), Rev John Sweetman (BSc, DipEd, GradTheol, BD) and Rev Jeff Pugh (BEcon, DipEd, BTh, MATheol). Ball completed a Master of Education and commenced a PhD in Education (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 64), Sweetman completed a 1999 Doctor of Ministry (DMin), while Pugh upgraded to a research MTh (Nickerson 2004, 64, 67). With the ongoing fruition of these awards came the enhancement of QBCM's educational credibility (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 56).

Aftermath of a Crisis

The 1990s witnessed further educational development, though momentum was severely curtailed by a 'remarkable crisis' almost crippling QBCM and instigating broader ramifications for the denomination (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 58-59). Whilst an exhaustive account of proceedings is unnecessary, the context and outcomes were not wholly divorced from educational considerations, and justify some treatment.

The notion that QBCM faculty were weighted towards academic rather than ministry expertise (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 58-59) led to a failed 1989 scheme proposing partial remuneration for lecturers through increased pastoral load (Parker 2005, 161). Suggested on behalf of a financially constrained Union and mooted to fund a Dean of Practical Studies (Parker 2005, 161), its suggestions elicited general faculty discontent (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 59). The proposal remained burdensome until its 1991 withdrawal (Parker 2005, 161), later overshadowed by the 'very emotive, litigious, and vexatious issue' it triggered concerning Union relations with David Swincer. It was a deteriora-

tion leading to QBCM and Union leadership terminating the College employment of Swincer in 1992 (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 59).

These events served as a background to 'scholarly' Davidson's departure in 1991 soon after completing his doctorate (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 59), a blow to QBCM's educational aspirations. Enrolments fell, morale was low (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 60). The educational resurgence could have been stymied, yet Nickerson held firm and QBCM's vision 'was not totally obscured by matters of politics' (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 60-61).

Three positives arose inadvertently as a result of the 'Swincer affair' (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 61).

(1) Though the Swincer dismissal was independent from educational criticisms, in having 'little time for higher critical scholarship' (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 58), his educational suitability for QBCM may have waned (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 58).

(2) The Baptist Union increased their scrutiny of QBCM, becoming positive and proactive in curriculum suggestions (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 61).

(3) Finally, the staff turnover, also involving Sunstrom for family reasons in 1995, led to 'virtually an entirely new faculty' in the mid-1990s (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 62). Removed from previous tensions (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 62), they projected a 'freshness of perspective' (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 62) and reinvigorated morale. Items (2) and (3) warrant further elaboration.

Highly proficient in educational curriculum development, Bill Gynther was tasked by QBCM with producing 'a coherent program of practical training' (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 62). His resulting Field Education Manual bridged the gap between theory and practice, and between QBCM and the ministry context (Ball 1999, 2-9). Field Education Director Stephen Ball was hired in 1996 to conduct it locally, a 'tangible expression of the denomination's commitment' to practical training (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 63). Ball's advocacy of education principles propelled QBCM 'towards the creation of an adult ethos' in educational operations (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 63), from 'pedagogy to andragogy' (Ball 1999, 4). These factors contributed to an exciting sense that QBCM was finally training leaders for 'real ministry' (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 62-63).

Rev Jim Gibson (BA, BD, MA, STM) became theology lecturer in 1993. He was ordained in evangelistic ministry (Parker 2005, 150) and enhanced QBCM's status among conservative evangelicals (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 63). The 1997 appointment of Rev Jeff Pugh also contributed warmly to the equipping of pastoral candidates. Dr Les Ball (BAHons, DipEd, BEdSt, BD, PhD) was hired as Academic Dean in 1996, a particularly significant appointment, being unique among faculty for his 'considerable experience in teaching at degree level' (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 64). Previously serving the ACT as examiner and curriculum developer, Les Ball's appointment added a depth of academic credibil-

ity at QBCM.

During the ongoing difficulties with Swincer, Nickerson resolved 'to ensure the educational agenda was not compromised' (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 60). When the Federal Government announced in the early 1990s that Certificate, Diploma and Bachelor nomenclature required accreditation, QBCM moved rapidly to accredit their Diplomas (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 60). This pleased Diploma students, along with BTh students, whose additional study year would permit them a supplementary award, remedying past frustrations (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 60). The ACT introduced a BMin in 1992, catering for evolving practical needs, and being immediately offered by QBCM as its main training program (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 60-61). Government provision of student financial assistance for private providers played a role in theological enrolments nationally in the mid 1990s (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 61). These multiple considerations, particularly staffing and practical ministry developments, each converged to create somewhat of a golden era educationally throughout 1997-2001 (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 64).

Educational Coming of Age

Building on structures implemented by Nickerson and Sunstrom, and bolstered by the oversight of Les Ball, QBCM developed 'a suite of courses' accredited by Queensland Department of Education for 1998 (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 64). This bold venture brought QBCM's awards into parity with university courses, contributing to watershed enrolments (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 64). The BMin continued in popularity, and the GradDipMin superseded the previously unaccredited Graduate of Theology.

A final chapter of educational progress under Nickerson's tenure involved further equipping post-graduate students, motivated by a growing Australian appreciation of professional development, as well as increasing complexity surrounding contemporary ministry (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 65). QBCM students commenced the MA (Theology) class in 1997, bringing credit to all parties by their academic performance. The ACT permitted QBCM in 2002 to accredit individually specialist Graduate Diplomas, a Master of Divinity (MDiv), course work Master's awards, research MTh and Master of Ministry (MMin) (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 65-66). Several faculty served as ACT external examiners, on Advisory Committees of various denominational colleges, and QBCM hosted the South Pacific Association of Bible Colleges 2001 Biennial Conference (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 66).

Interaction with Theological Developments at QBCM and Beyond

Nickerson held to a theological conservatism, his position undoubtedly influenced somewhat by Gibson's tutelage (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 55). This appeased the stance of the denomination, and though some thought him too conservative, his commitment to education developed his profile as 'theologically conservative

yet educationally progressive' (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 55).

Nickerson, Davidson and Sunstrom, at the request of the Union, co-authored a biblical paper on ordination, as well as women's ordination (QB Annual Report 1985-86). The prevailing practice of not ordaining women remained, yet the Executive drew on their recommendation to allow female accreditation providing they functioned under a senior male pastor (QB Annual Reports 1986-87). It was also proposed that general ordination categories broaden and the title 'Reverend' be dropped (QB Annual Reports 1986-87, 39), the latter amendment provoking considerable dissension (QB Annual Reports 1987-88, 108). It is difficult to conclude anything definitive about Nickerson from this episode, particularly given the complexity of factors at play; suffice to say that the terms 'balanced,' 'moderate' and 'cautious' seem apt.

One significant theological issue affecting Queensland Baptists during Nickerson's tenure was the Charismatic movement, which though documented extensively, does not mention Nickerson or QBCM as part of the discourse (Parker 2005, 114-115, 141). Gibson was often requested to speak into the issue, even after his retirement (Parker 2005, 114-115, 141), perhaps largely due to his pneumatological expertise. Nickerson was undoubtedly aware of Sweetman's tendency towards 'renewalist ecclesiology' (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 69) when appointing him as successor, hinting at Nickerson not being antagonistic towards Charismatic sympathizers.

Defining 'theological' in its broader sense, Nickerson appreciated history, completing a PhD analysing QBCM with the aim to bolster an 'understanding of theological education, Queensland Baptist history, and Australian evangelicalism' (Nickerson 1996, 3). The comprehensive nature and objectivity were hallmarks of the thesis, lauding the influence of his predecessor Gibson on the College, whilst at the same time not abstaining from tactful critique. He described the theological climate of the denomination at the outset of his own tenure as containing a measure of 'reactionary evangelicalism' (Nickerson 1996, 317), language hinting at Nickerson's mild dissatisfaction here.

Nickerson authored a portrait of B. G. Wilson, convinced this colonial Queensland Baptist giant had something to teach the contemporary church (Nickerson 1998, 5). Nickerson also clarified major tenets of Baptist doctrines in a local context, via his 'Baptist Beliefs' article for *Baptists in Queensland: A Guide to Their Life and Faith* (1994, 2000). These considerations portray Nickerson as not necessarily the most prolific or industrious of theologians or academic contributors, but as someone generously impacting local denominational discourse.

Criticisms of Nickerson's Principalsip

In the absence of explicit criticisms of Nickerson in the literature, we must instead explore the criticisms of QBCM during Nickerson's tenure. During a major de-

nominal review in the late 1990s, it was observed that many churches looked beyond QBCM for pastors (Parker 2005, 153). Lack of evangelistic emphasis was cited, along with sentiment that QBCM was 'not producing pastors' churches wanted (Parker 2005, 153). Nickerson and Ball (2004, 65) mention this criticism also. It is feedback that seems somewhat contradictory considering that peak enrolments, a revitalized Field Education curriculum and palpable spiritual anticipation also marked that QBCM period (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 64).



Influence on Graduates & Denomination

Despite the risk of becoming a 'backwater institution' and a potentially debilitating personnel crisis in the 1990s (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 66), Nickerson's 'perseverance ... was largely responsible for the continuing viability and eventual resurgence of the college' (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 60). During denominational unsettledness in the late 1980s, Nickerson's stability as Principal was viewed favourably (Parker 2005, 144). Further denominational influence involved Union presidency in 2000-2001, serving on Executive Council and Ministerial Committee, as well as guest speaking at numerous interstate and intrastate Baptist Assemblies and evangelistic conventions (QB Annual Report 2000, 59).

Nickerson departed QBCM while enrolments were peaking (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 69). There is evidence that his success and popularity inadvertently contributed to an early lukewarm response towards Sweetman's appointment (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 67-70), one possible factor in a smaller 2003 student intake (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 69). However, with present enrolments at upwards of 250 and the increasing growth of facilities, faculty and awards (Malyon College Guide 2016), both Nickerson and Sweetman should be mutually encouraged. Nickerson has probably been vindicated in his endorsement of Sweetman as one exhibiting the vision and creative energy 'needed to lead the college further' (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 68).

A survey of graduates from Nickerson's tenure reveals many who have excelled in further ministry, such as Dr Michael Bird, Peter Sweetman and Dr Andrew Brown (QBCM Roll Call 2003, 12-26), though we must be cautious attributing too much influence to Nickerson based

solely on this. What proves weightier is the 90% placement rate of QBCM graduates seeking vocational ministry, and long-term ministry retention rates, a 2004 snapshot completed only shortly after Nickerson retired (Nickerson and Ball 2004, 73).

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