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Next meeting:

Mr Michael Petras will conclude our series on Second Coming teaching and its influence among NSW Baptists with an exploration of the life, teaching and influence of the Burton Street Baptist Pastor and Dispensational preacher the *Rev William Lamb*.

When: Thursday
7 February 2008

Where:
Faculty Lounge,
Morling College,
120 Herring Rd,
Eastwood

Time: 7.30-9.00 pm

Open to everyone.

Supper follows the presentation.

‘The beating of the Baptist Heart’: Mission and Baptist Identity

Ken Manley

In January 2007 the second Australian Baptist Research Forum explored the theme ‘Mission—Heart of Baptist Identity’. Dr Ken Manley presented three key note addresses, the first of which is reproduced below. The subsequent two addresses will be published in the forthcoming volume of the proceedings of the Forum, along with this address and the seminar papers presented by others present at those meetings.

In November 2007, the President of the Baptist Church of NSW and ACT, June Heinrich called together a representative group of NSW and ACT Baptists to explore the future of NSW and ACT Baptists. One dominant theme for consideration was Baptist Identity. A Taskforce is be-

ing set up to explore what NSW and ACT Baptist Identity might be in the 21st century.

As a preliminary exploration of this theme, Dr Manley’s paper from the second ABR Forum is presented to the members and readers of *The Recorder*, in the hope that it might stimulate discussion among us, and through us to the wider Baptist community.

The issue of identity is a crucial one for any group of people, and for NSW and ACT Baptists who seek to work together cooperatively it is of vital importance for our on going work for the Kingdom of God.

Graeme Chatfield
Editor

'It is in the missionary meeting that you may hear the beating of the Baptist heart'. British Baptist leader H. Wheeler Robinson made this claim in 1927.¹ Baptists, at least in Australia, no longer regularly gather for old-style missionary rallies. But mission is more than 'missions' and certainly more than a 'foreign' missions rally - is it still true that in mission more generally we may hear the beating of the Baptist heart?

In the recent report on Baptist World Alliance (BWA) and Anglican conversations from 2000 to 2005 each denomination included a brief statement of identity. The Baptist summary begins:

Baptists are a missionary people. Since their beginnings 400 years ago, they have spread the good news of Jesus Christ throughout the world, together with their particular way of living out the Christian faith. Baptists brought significant leadership to the modern missionary movement, especially through the pioneering work of William Carey in India, Adoniram Judson in Myanmar, George Lisle in Jamaica, Johann Gerhard Oncken in continental Europe, Alfred Saker in Cameroon, William Buck Bagby in Brazil and George Grenfell in the Democratic Republic of Congo.²

So that is what we tell others we are - 'a missionary people'. Is that true? Is mission still at the heart of Baptist identity? Does mission unite the increasingly diverse Baptists in our country and around the world?

Questions of Identity

Writing and speaking about identity is now a growth industry. To understand the essential identity of an individual or a society or a movement is a persistent quest. Discussion about Australian national identity, for example, has become challenging and divisive as historians, cultural theorists, politicians,

social commentators and, most aggressively of all, advertisers compete to define the quintessential 'Aussie'. But Richard White has warned that national identity is only ever an invention, a mental construct. The crucial questions about ideas of national identity deal with 'what their function is, whose creation they are, and whose interests they serve'.³ Nonetheless, Miriam Dixson has argued in *The Imaginary Australian* that every nation needs to develop forces of cohesion. Diversity is to be valued and welcomed but if there is confusion about integrating factors in civil society social unravelling can result.⁴ The acceptance of core values is the challenge, even if the process of articulating these values is open to manipulation by the powerful in order to marginalise those of different ethnic or religious origins.

There is a parallel with denominational identity discussions. As churches in the developed world enter into an increasingly post-denominational age, paradoxically, debates about denominational self-definition are flourishing. Baptists in Australia welcome and prize diversity. But in a time of fading identity awareness and the possibility of total fragmentation, Baptists need to be clear about their base beliefs and values and to use these as a 'holding' core for maintaining an authentic denominational identity and loyalty. To agree on our base values whilst admitting our diversity seems to be an urgent contemporary challenge for Australian Baptists. We must also recognise that our identity can only be understood within the context of global Baptist and evangelical movements.

Bill Leonard in *Baptist Ways* advances the thesis that 'Baptist identity is configured in a variety of ways by groups, subgroups, and individuals who claim the Baptist name'. Rather than rehearse the typical list of Baptist 'distinctives' he suggests Baptist beliefs are 'dynamics moving in tandem across a wide spectrum of belief and practice'. Diverse Baptist communities give varying emphases. He proposes eight dialectics to outline what Baptists affirm, beliefs such as 'the authority of Scripture and the liberty of conscience' or 'the autonomy of the local church and associational cooperation'.⁵ Surprisingly, and disconcertingly for our present discussion, Leonard doesn't cite mission at all, although a further dialectic

tic with evangelism and social justice could usefully be explored.

If Baptists are so diverse, how then can we test the claim that mission is the heart of Baptist identity? Here I want to introduce the approach of another contemporary American Baptist historian. Bill Brackney in *A Genetic History of Baptist Thought* argues that what he calls ‘genetic theological connections’ can be identified. These enduring ideas are the ‘genes’ of Baptist thought. He detects a number of such genetic traits among Baptists, one of which is what he calls their ‘evangelical nature’:

From their earliest gatherings, Baptists have sensed urgency about their role as God’s people and their obligations under the gospel. For some it has been expressed in the ‘Great Commission’, for others in their witness as the people of God in worship and service. For yet others, the urgency has been translated into social activism or ecumenical relationships.⁶

So, where are we? I do not think that mission was the motivating dynamic for the beginnings of the Baptist movement, nor that all Baptists at all times have demonstrated a heart for mission. We are talking about a matter of passion, of a dynamic spirit. Thus our task is in part historic search: to look at the origins of the Baptist movement and its subsequent developments, to seek something in the Baptist genetic mix and see whether mission can help us understand what has made Baptists a growing force in the modern world. As Australian Baptists we will want to look even more closely at our own story. How central has mission been to our identity as a people? Is it the passion of our life?

But there is a prior question: what are we looking for? What exactly is mission? Understanding of mission has developed across the centuries. We all know the dramatic changes that came to Baptists with William Carey and the beginnings of the modern missionary movement. That is a truly pivotal moment in the Baptist story but what about the previous 180 years of the Baptist movement? What about the

diverse forms of mission since then? Even more fundamentally, going back to the beginnings of the Christian movement when the Great Missionary lived among us – how do we understand mission in the light of Christ’s life and teaching?

What is Mission?

Standing where we are today - more than 200 years after Carey’s missionary beginnings – hopefully we can say precisely what our understanding of mission is. Naturally we will not judge earlier generations for not knowing what we have all too slowly understood. So our agenda is first to outline a theology of mission and then move to an historical overview of Baptists and mission.

Let’s face it: for a long time missions and missionaries have had a bad press, some of it exaggerated and some of it deserved. There is no need to catalogue the tragedies and failures. Certainly, missions were partners in colonial and imperial expansion; they evidenced appalling ignorance about other cultures and shocking things were done in the name of Christian mission.

So, what is mission? Think how widely we use the term ‘mission’ today: a military force announces a ‘mission’; business firms adopt ‘mission statements’ or a government maintains a diplomatic ‘mission’. In the church, mission can mean the sending of missionaries to a particular location; can describe what missionaries do; can refer to the agency which sent them; and we used to refer to a smaller work associated with a larger city church as a ‘mission hall’. A mission can also mean a series of evangelistic meetings. But all of these are of (relatively) recent use, because as David Bosch has stressed, historically for 16 centuries the word ‘mission’ was used only of the Trinity, of the sending of the Son by the Father and of the Holy Spirit by the Father and the Son.⁷ By derivation it came to be used of those sent by God: supremely and uniquely of Jesus Christ. As the Risen Christ said to the disciples: ‘As the Father has sent me, so I send you’; or, ‘As the Father made me a missionary, so I make you missionaries’

(John 20:21). In John's Gospel the word 'send' is a critical one for understanding who Jesus is and what our mission is but the idea of 'sending' is also in all the Gospels, not least in Matthew 28 (but cp Luke 24: 46-49 and Mark 16:15).

This alerts us to a fundamental and literal meaning of mission. Our word derives from the Latin *missio*, a sending. So it involves a sender, a person or persons sent by the sender, those to whom one is sent, and the assignment to be fulfilled. There is a presumption of authority: someone has the authority to send someone else. This gives us a direct link with Matthew 28: 18-20, the 'Great Commission', where authority is indeed linked with sending: 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations'. This text was at the heart of Carey's famous *Inquiry* and is one of the most quoted texts among Baptists, shaping the Baptist understanding of faith and mission. As Thorwald Lorenzen has suggested, this text 'brings together the meaning of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus and as such can serve as a paradigm for a Baptist theology of mission'.⁸

Several general points emerge from this text.

(1) Christianity (like some other world religions) is intrinsically 'missionary'.⁹ Mission is not an optional extra for Christians and the church. All we know about God is that God is a sending God, and supremely and uniquely God sent his Son. So in Matthew it is the crucified and risen Lord who takes the initiative by appearing to the disciples and speaking to them.

(2) This crucified and risen Lord has been given 'all authority in heaven and on earth'. When he was with them before the cross his authority as teacher was astounding, his deeds matched his words; and now he comes as the exalted risen One with an authority that excludes any rival loyalties.

(3) This Lordship of Christ has a universal thrust. 'Foreign' missions is a misnomer. The historical development of 'missions' was necessary and important at a stage in Christian history but the missionary nature of the church does not depend on where we are at any given moment (and others are 'foreign'): it is at home, down the street and around the world. There is no mystical change in mission if we get on a plane

and travel - the 'geographical myth' of mission is destroyed by Christ's commission. It is for 'all people': of all colours, of all socio-economic backgrounds, not just those with whom we are comfortable - it extends even to those dangerous refugees, for example, who cause such threats to our precious Australian national borders.

(4) The call is to 'preach the gospel', to bring good news. The imperative to mission is God's deliverance in Jesus. In other words, evangelism is part of mission and should not be thought of as another definition of mission, but as part of it. Evangelism is the proclamation of salvation in Christ with a view to leading others to turn from sin and their self-centred lives to trust in Christ, to announce the forgiveness of sins offered in Christ and invite those who respond to become members of a community of fellow learners of Christ. That is the point of making disciples by baptising and teaching.

(5) Jesus is both the content and the norm for mission: 'teach them to obey all I have commanded you'. It is a challenge to know what obedience means in different cultures, but an integral dimension of mission is obedience to the Christ whose teaching is relevant for every aspect of our living.

(6) The mission of God is a responsibility of all followers of Jesus and not just of the first apostles, as earlier generations argued - a view which William Carey rejected so simply and forcefully. The Risen Christ has all authority and he sends the church to mission. So it is not that the church **can** be a missionary community but rather it **is** a missionary community. The church is the witness to the coming of the Reign (or Kingdom) of God in Jesus. The mission of the church is part of the mission of Christ in the world.

(7) The means of mission are determined by the fact that the Risen One who sends is the Crucified One. Thorwald Lorenzen has well said: 'In light of the terrible mistakes that the churches have committed when they adopted the means of imperialism and colonialism in their attempts to "save souls", it must be insisted that the means of mission must be consistent with the content of faith. There can be no coercion in the name of Jesus.'¹⁰ We come, in the spirit of the Apostle Paul, 'We beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God' (2 Cor 5:20).

(8) Mission deals with the concrete needs of people.

Christ's mission on earth was to the real needs of people, there was no abstract division of soul and body; it was, as current jargon stresses, a 'holistic' mission.

(9) We are promised a sustaining spirituality for the task: 'Lo, I am with you always.' The risen Christ will be with us in mission. In John's Gospel, Jesus breathes the Spirit upon the disciples as He sends them. William Temple commented: 'This is the primary purpose for which the Spirit is given: that we may bear witness to Christ. We must not expect the gift while we ignore the purpose. A Church which ceases to be missionary will not be, and cannot rightly expect to be, "spiritual"'.¹¹

(10) The goal of missions is the creation of community, the church. Faith is about relationship. The community is grounded in the reality of a Trinitarian God, the basic model of community for all creation. Believers are baptised into the name or the identity of this Triune God as they confess their faith. Individually they may come, but they are committed by faith and baptism to community.

Mission is, then, much more than 'missions' as we traditionally have known it. Mission is more than evangelism, important and basic a dimension of mission as that is. It also means social action, of addressing specific issues of injustice and need. Mission is to cooperate with God's purposes in the world by pointing to the Kingdom of God, the rule of God which extends even to the whole created order.

For we do have an even wider focus: the ecological crisis is also a call for mission. Christ is called in our Bibles the mediator and sustainer of creation. For us as Christians who confess God as creator and redeemer of the world it is not really possible to believe in God and by-pass the suffering of God's creation. We are called to a wider vision of God's Kingdom, extending to the lowly and downtrodden humans of the world and even to the restoration of our abused created order. The ecology crisis is a crisis of humanity: we have made the mess and as Christians we should be seeking to be agents of change.¹²

David Bosch towards the end of his monumental

work *Transforming Mission* offers a comprehensive definition of mission:

... mission is, quite simply, the participation of Christians in the liberating mission of Jesus, wagering on a future that verifiable experience seems to belie. It is the good news of God's love, incarnated in the witness of a community, for the sake of the world.¹³

3. Baptists and Mission

In telling the story of missions Baptists have usually tended to rush through the first 1800 years of Christian history in order to reach William Carey (1761-1834) and then make exaggerated claims for the Baptist contribution to the development of missions. Of course the history of the expansion of the church is important but in our specific focus on Baptist and missions we may be forgiven for jumping straight to the early 17th century and the beginnings of the Baptist movement.

John Smyth (c. 1570-1612), the first Baptist, was a Puritan for a significant stage of his religious quest and so the Reformation in a broad sense is where we begin. Protestants did not undertake the kinds of missionary effort that Roman Catholics had undertaken from the 15th century and generally did not say anything very much about the evangelisation of the world but rather were primarily concerned, it has been claimed, with 'preaching for the renewal of piety' in what was an already 'Christian' Europe.¹⁴ Others argue, however, that the Reformers were fundamentally missional in their theology – an emphasis on the sovereignty of God, the reality of grace and a rediscovery of hope – but were ambiguous when it came to missionary activity for a number of complementary reasons but basically because they saw themselves as having no immediate contact with non-Christian peoples.¹⁵ They were *reformers*, seeking renewal in Christian communities, rather than being *evangelists*.

However, recent study of leading reformers - of Calvin in particular - has modified this understanding. Michael Parsons has concluded that Calvin's practice, as

well as his theology, was more evangelistic than has usually been depicted. According to Calvin the church has an integral role in the *Missio Dei* and ‘all God’s children’ must be involved in this mission.¹⁶ Believers have a sacred responsibility: ‘Is not that the highest honour that God could grant us, that after enabling us to feel his goodness, he should want us to become streams and conduits of his grace, that others might be participants of it?’¹⁷

The Anabaptists insisted that membership of the church belongs only to those who voluntarily are baptised as conscious followers of Christ. Their critics thought of these believers’ baptisms as re-baptisms, hence their generic but often misleading categorisation as ‘Anabaptists’. The groups who have had longest impact, such as the Mennonites, taught that every disciple is a missionary. There was no organised programme but a spontaneous and at times populist movement meant that their ideas spread rapidly, creating crises for the main Reformers who wanted to preserve various forms of Church-State relationships. Unlike the main Reformers who considered that the Great Commission (Matthew 28) had only applied to the apostolic age, the Anabaptists regarded the Commission as mandatory for all believers.¹⁸ The precise links between the Anabaptists and the beginnings of the later Baptists are a matter of debate but clearly Smyth and his group were familiar with the Dutch Waterlander Mennonites in Amsterdam - Smyth and some of his group eventually sought to join them.¹⁹

Calvin’s teaching was of fundamental significance in the development of English Puritan theology. S.H. Rooy, in his study of the theology of missions in the Puritan tradition as traced in five representative figures, argued that the conversionist doctrine of ‘moderate Puritans’ who emphasised human responsibility along with divine sovereignty was the forerunner of a theology of missions.²⁰ This teaching was at the heart of the later debate among 18th century Baptists about human responsibility in which Andrew Fuller was to play such an influential role. Rooy also concludes that the church bears two quite different relations with mission. The church is appointed to channel the truth, to preach the gospel. Secondly, the church must grow by ‘self-establishment’. That is, the

church’s ‘double mission character’ is to be both bearer of the message and to be the goal of mission.²¹

The pioneer Baptists’ main concern, as with all Puritans and Separatists, was ecclesiology. What was the true church? Scripture was the authority for all their understandings. Separatists drew a direct link between ecclesiology and salvation: ‘failure to express the biblical pattern for the church brought one’s eternal salvation into jeopardy’.²² But the theological dynamic of the Separatist movement was the idea that believers constituted the true church by entering into a solemn covenant. This voluntary renewal of the covenant between God and his people after its conditions had been broken by the failure of an apostate church was at the heart of Separatist ecclesiology. Their Christology shaped this ecclesiology for they believed that the Risen Christ ruled in the midst of his people as they gathered together in his name (Matthew 18:20).²³

John Smyth and his followers from the Separatist congregation at Gainsborough fled to Holland in 1607 in order to be free to develop their church life. Here they came to believe that baptism of believers was the only true baptism and that this was the New Testament way to enter the covenant community. ‘The covenant-promise between the Christian and his Lord was now made in baptism’, as Barrie White puts it.²⁴ So the first Baptists began, probably in 1609.

If Scripture, Christology and ecclesiology were major doctrinal contexts for this development, eschatology was another powerful dynamic of the early movement, as it was for all the Puritans and Separatists who believed they were living ‘in a remarkable age, a new age, perhaps the last age’.²⁵ Indeed, eschatology is always an important clue for understanding any theology of mission. A sense of apocalyptic crisis gave the Separatists a strong impetus for reform: the Antichrist was in his last throes; the institutional church was still enveloped in darkness. The challenge was to be obedient, to come out whilst there was still time and before Christ returned to defeat all the forces of evil. Any worship other than that prescribed in the New Testament was idolatry, hence the passionate concern of those early Baptists to worship in every detail according to the true (Scriptural) way; anything else – such as in the Established Church - was idolatry and so broke the covenant.

Smyth came to have doubts about the legitimacy of his self-baptism since, as he came to believe, the Mennonites did constitute a true church and he ought to have sought baptism from them. Thomas Helwys and some others, though retaining respect and affection for Smyth, disagreed. Helwys led a small group back to England in 1611 where the first Baptist church on English soil began to meet. Here we come to a clear sign of a distinct concern for mission among the earliest Baptists. The famous book by Helwys, rightly honoured for its strong emphasis on religious liberty for all - whether they were heretics, Turks (Muslims), Jews 'or whatsoever' - reflects the prevalent apocalyptic atmosphere: *A Short Declaration of the Mystery of iniquity* (1612).²⁶ The first of 'the principal matters' handled in his book is 'A Declaration with proof, that these are the days of great tribulation, spoken of by Christ (Matt 24) wherein the abomination of desolation is seen to be set in the holy place'. The Roman Catholic Church is characterised as the first 'beast' of Revelation 13 and he proceeds to declare that the Church of England is the second beast since the use and abuse of temporal power in the church is the true sign of such iniquity. His closing appendix brings us to his strong vision of a mission to his countrymen. With what Wheeler Robinson has described as 'the ardent spirit of a true evangelist'²⁷, Helwys explained why he and his companions had returned from the safety of Holland to the very real danger for all nonconformists in the England of his days. He condemned the Separatists who had fled to Holland for safety, even though he himself had done so. He claimed that they had been misled in this by 'deceitful hearted leaders, who have and do seek to save their lives and will make sure not to lose them for Christ and therefore they flee into foreign countries and free states'. Some had cited Matthew 10:23 in which Christ had directed disciples if they were persecuted to move to another city but that was for the purpose of preaching in another city.

But these men flee to cities to the which they cannot preach the gospel, being of a strange tongue, neither have they any intent or meaning to preach the gospel to those cities, their fleeing is not

to that end, but to save themselves.²⁸

His *apologia* for his own small group, the first Baptist church, deserves to be better known:

Now as we through the grace of God, and by the warrant of his word (as we have manifested) cast away these perverters of the Holy Scriptures and their doctrines, so we wish all to do that fear God and serve the glory of his name and come and lay down their lives in their own country for Christ and his truth, and let none think that we are altogether ignorant, what building and warfare we take in hand and that we have not sat down and in some measure thoroughly considered what the cost and danger may be; and also let none think that we are without sense and feeling of our own inability to begin and our weakness to endure to the end, the weight and danger of such a work, but in all these things we hope and wait for wisdom and strength and help from the Lord ...²⁹

This was not idle rhetoric. Helwys was soon in prison and was certainly dead by 1616. But the Baptist cause had been commenced and the concern for preaching the gospel to their fellow citizens, no matter what the personal cost, was to remain a feature of Baptist life.

The main features of the remarkable development of the Baptist movement during the 17th century among the General Baptists, as the Arminian groups which grew out of that original London church came to be termed, and among the Particular or Calvinist Baptists who emerged in the succeeding decades, have been carefully traced by various historians.³⁰ Only a few highlights to illustrate the concern for evangelistic mission can be noted here.

Looking first at the General Baptists. John Murton evidently succeeded Helwys as leader of the London group which published a tract in 1620 insisting that 'every disciple that hath ability is authorized, yea commanded to preach, convert and baptize as well as and as much (if not more) than a pastor'.³¹ Helwys and Murton, suggests Tolmie, 'foreshadowed the aggressive lay evangelism of the revolu-

tionary period'.³² During those tumultuous days of the Civil War and its aftermath Baptists and other sectaries flourished. It is quite possible that the Bell Alley, Coleman Street, London congregation which was at the centre of General Baptist activity in the 1640s had developed from the same group that was first led by Helwys and then by Murton.³³ Thomas Edwards in his vitriolic work *Gangraena* (1646) gives vivid details about this congregation and its leader Thomas Lambe, a former soap-boiler.

This man and his Church are very Erroneous, strange Doctrines being vented there continually, both in Preaching and in way of Discoursing and Reasoning, and strange things also done by them both in the time of their Church meetings, and out of them. Many use to resort to this Church and meeting, the house, yards full, especially young youths and wenches flock thither, and all of them Preach universal Redemption. In their Ch. Meetings and Exercises there is such a confusion and noise, as if it were at a Play; and some will be speaking here, some there; young youths and boyes come Thither, and make a noise while they are at their Exercises, and them of the Church will go to make them quiet, and then they fight one with another ... they have many Exercises, in one meeting two or three, when one hath done, there's sometimes difference in the church who shall Exercise next, 'tis put to the Vote, some for one, some for another ... in this Church 'tis usual and lawful, not only for the company to stand up and object against the Doctrine delivered when the Exerciser of his gifts hath made an end, but in the midst of it, so that sometimes upon some standing up and objecting, there's *pro* and *con* for almost an hour, and falling out among themselves before the man can have finished his Discourse.³⁴

Despite the hostility of this account it is evident that evangelism was at the heart of this church's life. Lambe had previously been an itinerant evangelist for which he had been arrested and imprisoned. During 1645-46 he appears to have

had a roving commission from his church and evangelised in Essex, Kent, Surrey, Hampshire and Wiltshire as well as in London.³⁵ Henry Denne at Fenstanton was a vigorous and educated Baptist leader, another former Anglican clergyman, who was appointed a 'messenger' and engaged in personal evangelism in other districts.³⁶ Denne, as Mervyn Himbury has noted, insisted that 'evangelism was of the essence of Baptist churchmanship'.³⁷ The *Fenstanton Records* illustrate how he used the Matthew 28 text to call the church to its responsibility:

I pray you consider whether we are not in great fault in being so negligent in sending forth persons to divulge the gospel in those many places that are ignorant thereof. Truly I conceive that we are much to blame and especially seeing there are many towns hereabouts that have no teachers; and who can tell that the Lord may work in this opportunity.³⁸

The church held a fast day and Denne went out to preach.

General Baptists later jointly appointed many 'messengers' who had evangelistic responsibility. Baptists were active in the Parliamentary Army – Richard Baxter complained there were 'swarms of Anabaptists in our armies' - and in this way many people were won to Baptist beliefs: either soldiers within the Army or people from the districts where Baptist preachers in the Army were located.³⁹

Particular Baptists were also committed to evangelism. By 1644 seven congregations had drawn up a Confession of Faith which was largely devoted to defining Baptist identity especially against false links being made with the extremist Anabaptists. They affirmed: 'That faith is ordinarily begot by the preaching of the Gospel or word of Christ' (article XXIV); and 'That the tenders of the Gospel to the conversion of sinners is absolutely free' (Article XXV).⁴⁰ W.T. Whitley claimed that of the fifteen men who signed this Confession 'every one who can be traced was an ardent evangelist'.⁴¹ The Particulars certainly acted together to despatch preachers such as John Miles and Thomas Proud who were sent from London in 1649 to preach in South Wales and soon gathered five congregations. Thomas Tillam was sent to Northumberland in 1651. The

church at Hexham which he had founded sent a missionary to Scotland.⁴² Thomas Collier was another effective evangelist in the West Country.⁴³

One notable leader among the Calvinists was Hanserd Knollys (1609-91) who signed the revised version of the London Confession in 1646. Unlike many of the ‘mechanic’ preachers, Knollys had been an Anglican clergyman before becoming a Baptist and was one of their more scholarly figures. He reflects as clearly as anyone the impact that the apocalyptic times had upon Baptists.⁴⁴ Deeply involved in the millenarian debates of the period, especially the Fifth Monarchy movement, Knollys was fascinated with apocalyptic writings and his many publications include an exposition of Revelation. But he was also deeply committed to evangelism and although a firm Calvinist made what he called unmistakable ‘Gospel-Conviction’ appeals to his hearers:

Open your heart to Christ when he knocks at the Door of your souls, and calls you to come to him, to receive him, and let him come into your hearts, and dwell in your hearts by his Holy Spirit, and sanctifying Grace ... Let the LORD Jesus Christ have the Throne, and be exalted above ALL in your souls, that every Thought may be brought into Captivity to the Obedience of Christ.⁴⁵

Of course Particular Baptists placed great stress on human inability and depravity and the absolute necessity of God’s grace for conversion. But they also stressed individual responsibility and experiential religion. They believed in divine election but also that the main means of conversion was ‘the Word preached’.

During the troubled days after the Restoration, when Dissenters were frequently persecuted, the Baptists remained diligent in their commitment to evangelism. One unusual illustration of this was the procedure devised by the Broadmead church in Bristol in 1674. Their preachers were constantly being imprisoned and they knew that informers were regularly present in the congregation. But they were also concerned ‘that no strangers or persons we knew not might be hindered from coming into our Meeting, whether good or bad,

to hear the gospel’. They hit upon a scheme so that a curtain was erected in their meeting place so that all could hear but only those known members who were inside the curtain would know who was preaching. If informers or officers stormed into the meeting it was decided that all would begin to sing a pre-arranged Psalm and the preacher could not be identified. Evangelism was maintained, despite the risks.⁴⁶

John Bunyan (1628-88) was the outstanding example of a Baptist ‘mechanic’ (or uneducated) preacher from this era. His career and influence need no summary here but it is worth noting that H.L. Poe has interpreted Bunyan’s famous classic *Pilgrim’s Progress* as having an essentially evangelistic purpose. By presenting the Gospel in the form of an allegory and not by direct preaching Bunyan departed from a firmly held Puritan tradition. He wanted to reach an audience who would never listen to the plain preaching of the typical Puritan.

He wanted to evangelize the sophisticated and carnal Englishman who looked for ‘truth within a fable’ and for those who ‘read riddles’ and ‘love picking meat’, and for those who read in order to find diversion. He hoped that he did not offend any ‘man of God’ with his method, but he did not write primarily for Christians. He wrote evangelistically in *The Pilgrim’s Progress* by demonstrating the life’s journey of one that attains ‘the everlasting prize’.⁴⁷

The last decade of the seventeenth century, as Non-conformists received a measure of toleration, saw something of a decline. As John Owen said of the Dissenters generally, they found it ‘hard to keep up their former pitch’. General Baptists, according to the stereotypical account, gradually slipped into doctrinal heterodoxy and many of them eventually became what would later be termed Unitarians. Particular Baptists were protected from this kind of doctrinal decline because of their strict Calvinism but during the eighteenth century they succumbed to a more rigid form of Calvinism - High Calvinism. Pastor-theologians like John Gill held that to urge sinners to salvation impinged on God’s glory. This pro-

duced what Joseph Ivimey characterized as a ‘non-invitation, non-application’ kind of preaching.⁴⁸

These patterns have rightly been questioned in detail but there is a large measure of truth in the impression they leave. Of course not all Generals succumbed to Socinianism or Arianism and, most emphatically, many Particulars, especially in the Western Districts and under the influence of Bristol Academy, advocated a moderate Calvinism which led to positive evangelistic preaching.⁴⁹ The dominant role of Gill has been questioned, as have interpretations of what he actually taught.⁵⁰

These complex questions will not detain us but they do prepare the way for an appreciation of the impact that the Northampton Association and its leaders, notably that remarkable pastor-theologian Andrew Fuller of Kettering and his younger colleague William Carey, made on the denomination as a whole. Fuller prepared the way by developing a moderate form of Calvinism, influenced by Jonathan Edwards, which insisted that humans could exercise their will in experiencing salvation and it was the duty of Christians to call for repentance and faith from all hearers. In Fuller’s influential book *Gospel Worthy of all Acceptation* (1785) he advocated what was called ‘faith-duty’ and this ‘Fullerism’ was of strategic influence in breaking the hold of the High Calvinists.⁵¹

With William Carey and his supporters a new form of mission in which Baptists were to play a pioneering role was begun. The Baptist Missionary Society, which Carey helped found and of which he became its iconic figure, has been called the denomination’s ‘greatest gift to the church Universal’.⁵² Presuming that the general outlines of Carey’s story are well known, our task is now to place in context several aspects of Carey’s vision and achievements.

The missionary movement was, in Andrew Walls’ phrase, ‘an autumnal child of the Evangelical Revival’ – it was some fifty years after Wesley’s heart-warming experience before serious thought was given to considering the possibility of converting the heathen

who lived outside Christendom. Walls argues that without the Revival the societies would have been inconceivable. The Revival supplied the logistic networks – interregional, international, and interdenominational – that undergirded the movement and also supplied the missionaries.⁵³

Moreover, the Revival provided the theological stimulus that shaped Andrew Fuller’s moderate Calvinism that positively advocated evangelism. Fuller had actually raised questions about the implications of this for world evangelisation before Carey initiated his own passionate advocacy.⁵⁴ These two pastors in a distant regional setting, far from the recognised centres of affluence and influence – and certainly far from London, ‘that vortex of vanity’ as Fuller judged it⁵⁵ – joined with other friends in stimulating each other into initiating what must have seemed an unlikely, even preposterous proposal, to form a society to convert the heathen of the world. But such enthusiasm was precisely what the Evangelical Revival had produced in many a heart. As Carey declared in his ‘deathless sermon’ at Nottingham in May 1792, the challenge was both to believe (‘Expect great things from God’) and to act (‘Attempt great things for God’): faith in God’s sovereignty and an energetic activism were both characteristic evangelical emphases.⁵⁴

Not all, even in Northampton, agreed with Carey’s proposal, of course. There is the oft-cited but undocumented story that John Collett Ryland, the senior and respected pastor at Northampton, rebuked Carey: ‘Young man, sit down. When God pleases to convert the heathen he will do it without your aid or mine!’ Andrew Walls has suggested that this is one of those stories which is probably not true but which *ought* to be true since he was simply expressing a standard form of Protestant doctrine which had been used as an apologetic against Roman Catholics.⁵⁷ When Protestants were asked, ‘Where are your missionaries?’ the accepted response was that the command to go into all the world had been given to the apostles and it was presumptuous to claim the office of apostle in present times.

These and other queries motivated Carey to write what has become a classic in the early history of modern missions: *An Enquiry into the obligations of Christians to*

use means for the Conversion of the Heathens (1792).⁵⁸ This brief work is simple, concise and unsentimental. He insisted that his proposal was biblical by demolishing popular arguments about the contemporary relevance of the Great Commission, noting that if Baptists wanted to practise apostolic baptism they should also appreciate that the command of Christ to go to the world is 'still binding on us'. He then offered a short review of earlier attempts at mission work, beginning from Pentecost, and so made it clear that he did not think he was initiating some new activity for the church. He was himself especially influenced by the example of the Moravians. What Carey wanted was that his own denomination should become involved in what had been happening through European and even North American efforts.⁵⁹

In a third section Carey gave a 'survey of the present state of the world' in which he calculated the size of countries, their populations and their religions. Guesses were inevitable but the cumulative effect was startling in its demonstration that the vast majority of people 'yet remain in the most deplorable state of human darkness'.

The style and argument of his book confirms the way in which the Enlightenment had shaped so much of the evangelical movement. There is in Carey, as there was in Fuller, a conscious sense of using the mind. His book is an '*enquiry*'. He gathered facts, drew conclusions and made connections. All of his contemporaries knew the Scriptures and many knew about the journeys of Captain Cook. But as Max Warren put it, Carey saw the 'interdependence of the Gospels and the voyages of Captain Cook and the obligations of the missionary enterprise, and who not only saw but insisted upon the relevance of this interdependence for Christian practice'.⁶⁰ The Enlightenment also shaped the evangelicals' conception of the millennium as a utopia in which 'benevolence' and 'civilization' were integral facets of the rule of Christ. These eschatological expectations must be linked with a growing conviction of a manifest destiny for Anglo-Saxons in the world and the imperial expansion that provided opportunity for substantial missionary efforts.⁶²

The overpowering conviction of Carey, both in this book and throughout his subsequent career, was that mission

is a duty. This was to be a key evangelical motivation for service. Carey spoke about the *obligation* of Christians to use means. Expressions such as 'we have to obey, 'it becomes us', 'it behoves us' and 'it is incumbent upon us' recur in the *Enquiry*. Obedience and duty were compelling missionary motivations during the nineteenth century. As Wheeler Robinson, in talking about the missionary spirit of Baptists, said: 'The discovery of duty is the salt of religion'.⁶³

But Carey was not canvassing abstract theories and gave himself to realistic considerations of practical logistics: what should be done, who should do it and how it might be done. The purpose was evangelism, though the need to acquire languages – which Carey did in a remarkable way – and an understanding of culture were stressed. Carey presumed that ministers were the most likely in the first instance to be the missionaries. His understanding was that being willing to do this work was precisely what entering the ministry involved:

A Christian minister is a person who in a peculiar sense is *not his own*; he is the *servant* of God ... He engages to go where God pleases and to do, or endure what he sees fit to command, or call him to in the exercise of his function. He virtually bids farewell to friends, pleasures, and comforts. ... I question whether all are justified in staying here, while so many are perishing without means of grace in other lands.⁶⁴

But the majority of Baptist pastors at that time were, like Carey himself, poorly paid artisans with little or no formal education. The famous description of Carey as a 'consecrated cobbler' was long cherished – even if at the centenary of the BMS a rather confused journalist in Nottingham reported it as 'sacred cobra'.⁶⁵ Carey himself was the first to volunteer despite the misgivings of his confused and virtually illiterate wife whose subsequent sad life cast a shadow over the pioneer missionary years in India. Carey proposed, as he himself practised in India, that the missionary should be largely self-supporting. If commercial interests did not let inconvenience, climate, different diet, language or personal

risk deter them from working in 'foreign' locations why should Christian missionaries?

As to methods, Carey's main proposal, which seemed simple and logical, was to have a dramatic impact, not only on the pattern of missionary endeavour but the ethos of Baptist churches at home. Prayer was rightly emphasised. Indeed, the famous *Prayer Call* of 1784 when, in imitation of the scheme advocated by Jonathan Edwards, many Baptists pledged to pray regularly for revival has been judged by some contemporaries to be the major source of renewal and mission among Baptists.⁶⁶ If people were praying for God's Kingdom to come, it seemed only logical - even for Calvinists - to 'use means' to help bring in the Kingdom.

But the heart of Carey's scheme was to establish a society for the purpose of missionary work. It began in a very small way with a total of just over £13 collected by fourteen people. We are so used to missionary societies that we are tempted to miss what Walls has aptly described as societies accomplishing a 'fortunate subversion' of the church. Of course Carey did not invent the society method and consciously imitated what he knew. Innumerable religious and philanthropic societies had already been formed but the significance of using this structure for an essential 'church' task such as mission was immense and became an influential feature of a period of transformation among British Baptists. Church structures could only do what they had always done; a new concept needed a new instrument.

... There never was a *theology* of the voluntary society. The voluntary society is one of God's theological jokes, whereby he makes tender mockery of his people when they take themselves too seriously. The men of high theological and ecclesiastical principle were often the enemies of the missionary movement.⁶⁷

But the voluntary society did have significant

theological and practical implications. As Bill Brackney has argued, voluntarism brought empowerment to individuals, facilitated experiment in doing mission, created new leadership and focussed on specific missional tasks.⁶⁸ None of the classical patterns of church government, including the congregational way, could undertake what the missionary societies envisioned. Indeed, Carey positively invited all Christians to share in the task - he had no theological scruples about that - but for quite pragmatic reasons, 'in the present divided state of Christendom', as he put it, he began a denominational society. The society was national but depended on local support. It gave a special role to lay people. Congregations could support the mission, but so could individuals and many of the most diligent committee workers were lay people. Women acquired an increasingly important role through the work of the society and later formed the Zenana Mission. A new reading public studied the missionary magazines.

This transformation did not just affect the new missionary work. The Revival had ushered in a whole new way of being church. Revival brought large and rapid recruitment from the outside world. The gathered church became a mission agency. When large numbers gathered for worship and fellowship the place of the 'faithful remnant', the covenanted community, was harder to define. As W.R. Ward has well said:

The Sunday School open to all rather than the covenanted meeting of the baptized saints was the sign of the times. Evangelism rather than sanctification was the church's business, and the more the slogan of 'the missionary church' caught on, the more the kingdom of God seemed delivered over to associational principles.⁶⁹

What kind of church would be formed on the mission fields? Was it to be the same as among English Baptists, with a group coming together and then agreeing by covenant together to constitute a church? Fuller argued that in a missionary situation, under God, a missionary (or pastor) establishes the church. Thus a new ecclesiology began to

take shape.⁷⁰

Thus it was not just foreign mission work that was established in the societal structure. Historians have spoken about the ‘reflex action’ of missionary work. Commitment to overseas mission for the heathen did not detract from local mission but rather increased awareness and energy on the home front. As William Brock told one of the BMS Centenary services: ‘God has awakened us to hear the mournful wail of distant heathenism, and we hear, as we never heard before, the cry of the degraded and oppressed at our own door’.⁷¹ Historian W.R. Ward has judged: ‘In the short run the missionary enterprise had a far more powerful impact at home than in the mission field, and it intensified the solvents at work on the old denominational order’. In 1797 the Particular Baptists established their Itinerant Society which promoted village evangelism and was the beginning of what would later be called home missions. The English Baptist Union was first established in 1812 in large part to support mission work. A society for evangelism among the Irish was formed in 1814, a society for evangelism on the European continent in 1831 – and so it went.

Baptists would never be the same again. And here we must leave the English story with the brief observation that developments throughout the 19th century would see revivalism shaping new forms of evangelism and a range of social problems met by various expressions of compassion and working for justice as the church came to grips with a rapidly changing British society. Not that all Baptists everywhere always supported missions. Baptists in the southern states of the United States experienced a bitter controversy in the first half of the 19th century. This anti-mission group opposed the idea of missionary societies since they were not in the Bible - the local church was the sole agent for mission - and also featured an extreme form of Calvinism.⁷³ In 1858 in England a youthful Spurgeon still felt obliged to defend missions:

Do not let it be said that there is a Baptist existing who does not love to send the gospel to the utmost ends of the earth. That maniac nonsense about God doing his own work, and our sitting still and

doing nothing, ought to have been buried long ago. I know not how to characterise it: it has done us immense damage. We know that God has accomplished his own work; but he always has worked and always will work with means.⁷⁴

This concentration on British Baptist development is justified because of the significant influence that these Baptists inevitably had on the formation of Australian Baptists. Indeed, it is apparent that these dramatic changes among British Baptists were unfolding precisely at the time that British settlement began in Australia. At the centenary celebrations of the BMS in Nottingham, T. Vincent Tymms reflected on the times when the infant Baptist mission had begun:

In the same year, 1788, there was a great missionary society formed of another sort. The Botany Bay settlement was founded, and England sent out a great company of criminal missionaries – I was going to call them the Society for the Propagation of Vice in Foreign Parts. It started with larger numbers than ours and I am afraid it has had a greater number of agents ever since.⁷⁵

But Baptists did eventually play their own small role in the new nation that emerged from such an unpromising beginning. Baptist work did not begin here until the 1830s and naturally those who came reflected these new dimensions of British Baptist life and enthusiasms.

But Baptist mission in other places, especially in North America, is of course significant as was the beginning of mission and church planting by Baptists on the continent of Europe. Indeed, about the same time as Baptists began to work in Australia – in a missionary situation and with missionary ideals - J.G. Oncken (1800-84) began Baptist churches in Germany and then in other European countries. He was to have an indirect influence in Australia through a significant group of German Baptists in Queensland. His famous slogan - ‘Every Baptist a missionary’ – was taken up by

many other Baptists in succeeding ages and offers us a suitable conclusion to this survey of Baptists and mission from the beginnings of the Baptist movement until the nineteenth century. Our story confirms the impression that, at least by that time, mission was indeed at the heart of Baptist identity.

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IN THE ARCHIVES

With Ron Robb

New Publications

Two new works have been received over the last period. **Rev. Don Doull** has produced his biography *One Passion*. It covers his many years as an ABMS missionary in PNG; well written and well illustrated it is an important contribution to Baptist history in that island nation of mountains and jungles. This book is available direct from Don – check with the Archivist or the Rev. Dr Graeme Chatfield (Don's son-in-law) if you would like to obtain one.

The **Gosford Baptist Church** (now located at Erina) has just published an excellent detailed history, authored by the **Rev Seton Arndell**. Thoroughly researched and profusely illustrated (the pics alone make the book worth having) the story starts back before there was any Australian history and only the Aborigines lived in the area. The narrative progresses through early European settlement, tentative Baptist 'exploratory' incursions into the district and a chronological survey of early Christian and particularly Baptist growth there. The book is unusual in a particular aspect: unlike many church histories it is not 'hagiographic' but frankly discusses some of the low periods in the church's life and is thus a well balanced history rather than just a 'glowing' account. That said, it also highlights the many good times and eventual triumph of one of the State's most successful and largest Baptist churches. We have very few such well written works and any churches contemplating a history production could not do a lot better than to use this work as a guide. Its balance will serve as a reliable guide for both secular and Baptist future researchers in the development of the Gosford district generally and the Baptist church in particular.

Church Records

The NSW Baptist Archives is becoming more widely known and a steady depositing of church records arrives from time to time. Some add to already held material and two such recently have been Temora and Hornsby. Temora included a **delightful surprise**: our first ever records from the long-gone Mimosa church, for which no records at all were held and which was rapidly fading from corporate memory. Now, however, this early 20th Century little work in the South West has been positively identified with real records and even some old photos. Hornsby records were formerly fairly sparse but

are now extensive and include many photos.

The Wagga Wagga church records have been deposited. Formerly we held nothing on this very important church but it is now secure for many future generations.

Special Interest Records

The Archives has been steadily gathering material on NSW Baptist Women's and Men's work (for example - Members will recall Bess Hayward's recent extensive research project on Deaconesses) and this section is becoming fairly extensive; there is certainly a good deal of research material now available in this field. Men's work is not as extensive as we would like but is slowly increasing; a recent valuable addition has been the **Lay-Preachers Association** records from 1976 to 2006.

Many members will remember Lorna Oliff (whose widower husband attends some meetings). Lorna was an indefatigable and valuable founding member of the Society and a noted Hornsby district historian. She was also a prolific writer on women in the Army during World War Two and by some strange magnetism we have acquired most, if not all, the books she wrote about this subject and for which she was nationally well known.

Our next meeting will feature Michael Petras delivering a paper on the famous **Rev. William Lamb**. We have begun to receive/find some of his writings/publications and now have the basis of a small collection; we would like more so any members who have any of William Lamb's works and would like a good permanent home for them – we'd be glad to receive them.

In years past **District Associations** were an important part of regional Baptist life. Many (but not all) of these Associations don't operate, or even exist now, but most of them kept fairly detailed records. This material has been slowly wending its way to the Archives over the last few years and we now hold a fairly large collection, the most recent to arrive being that from the Riverina District Association.

The late Rev. Alan Prior's preaching robe was recently donated by the Chatswood church (via its Senior minister, the Rev. Phil Calman). We now have a number of 'ecclesiastical clothing' items which illustrate a bygone era for some modes of dress.

Research in the Archives: The Coming Year

The Archives will be busy this year: the Rev. Dr Vic Eldridge is well into the **Morling College history** and has a permanent work station in the Archives. This will be the first ever definitive history of the College and publication will probably be somewhere around 2010-2011 (the College centenary is 1916).

The Baptist Missionary organisation, **Global InterAction** (GIA, formerly the Australian Baptist Foreign Mission –

ABFM – then the Australian Baptist Missionary Society – ABMS) **has commissioned its first major history** since its founding well over one hundred years ago. The Rev. Gerry Ball is the Editor-in-Chief with the Rev. Seton Arndell and the Rev. Dr Roger Kemp researching and writing the PNG and Africa sections respectively. They will be doing most of their research in the Archives and will be part of the Archives life for most of the year. Thanks to the incredible work done so far by Betty Moore, who maintains the mission records, their task will be greatly facilitated.

Professor Bob Linder from the USA (those who attend meetings will know who he is) will be here from June to August this year. Our President, the Rev. Bruce Thornton is often in on one of his four or five major research projects/books and is a prolific publisher.

The National Library is starting to notice us too. Also, the little service we recently began to offer as an encouragement to people to write their church histories and family biographies by arranging ISBN and Legal Deposit is proving popular.

Our invaluable volunteers

Our volunteer staff have plenty to keep them well and truly occupied. We are more and more getting College students, municipal councils, other denominations and overseas people asking for access to the holdings. Jan Plasto has established two invaluable reference lists for our data base: We are beginning to amass a large number of marriage records in which are recorded hundreds of names of ministers, brides and grooms, churches involved and so on. It had been assumed that extracting all this information and cataloguing it would simply be too huge a task and would take forever. However, Jan has started on this mammoth job and in fact has accessed a great amount of it. Such listing will be enormously helpful when wedding detail requests come in (incredibly, we had one recently from the Registrar General!). Also, Jan has established the beginnings of an overall data base. Currently it is only in 'word' format so is not yet accessible electronically but it can now be printed-out and due to the detailed subject breakdown we can now fairly quickly locate much of our holdings where previously any locating depended mainly on the Archivist's knowledge of where it might be stowed. We now hold so much material that this form of search is no longer sensible or reliable, not to say hardly professional!

The Baptist Recorder

*The Journal of the Baptist Historical
Society of New South Wales*

Baptist Historical Society of NSW

**Preserving, promoting and publishing
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COMING EVENTS OF THE SOCIETY

Society Meeting Dates for 2008

7 February — Mr Michael Petras concludes our exploration of Second Coming teaching among NSW Baptists by exploring the teaching and influence of Rev William Lamb, one time pastor of the Burton St Baptist Church.

1 May — Mr Rod Benson will explore the contribution of Rev John Saunders to the establishment of NSW Baptists, with particular reference to his stand on moral and ethical issues of his time.

7 August — Rev Dr Graeme Chatfield will continue to explore the various approaches to theological education among NSW Baptists focusing on the later Morning years.

TUESDAY 11 November— Mr Michael Petras & Professor Robert Linder - Australian Baptists and the End of the Great War. A special meeting to commemorate the 90th Anniversary of the Armistice. (Date to be confirmed).
