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*THE*  
*EVANGELISATION*  
*SOCIETY*  
*Of AUSTRALASIA*

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*THE FIRST THIRTY-FIVE YEARS*

*1883 - 1918.*

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by Robert Evans  
with two extra chapters by Darrell Paproth

Research in Evangelical Revivals  
2010

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# INTRODUCTION

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The story of the Evangelisation Society of Australasia presents us with another interesting aspect of Evangelical history in Australia which has been almost entirely forgotten, but which, nevertheless, played an important role in the development of Australia, and of Christianity in Australia. Not only has its story never been told properly, but the means whereby the story could have been more fully told has largely been lost. The organisation was formed in 1883. It was led by a team, most of whom were laymen. Most members of the staff of evangelists employed by the Society were laymen.

It happened in Victoria. Victoria was the part of Australia where laymen contributed a driving force to the spiritual life of the colony much more strongly than happened in any other part. There were Evangelisation Societies in a few of the other states of Australia as time passed, but the one in Victoria was the first, the strongest and most successful.

The Australian organisation was built upon the very successful precedent of the Evangelization Society, based in London, but with other substantial bases in Liverpool and in Glasgow.

The London Evangelization Society began in a small way in 1864, but grew steadily. Its aim was to send suitable preachers to conduct special evangelistic services in churches or halls wherever the Society was asked. Early preachers who took these services included Lord Radstock, Reginald Radcliffe, Brownlow North, George Williams, Arthur Blackwood (later Sir Arthur), Sir Henry Havelock-Allan V.C. (retired Lieutenant General, British M.P., and son of the famous hero of the Indian Mutiny), and many others.<sup>1</sup> Several wealthy Christians supported it with repeated large gifts. In the 1890s, the Society employed about 80 evangelists full-time, and another 100 part-time, holding meetings around all parts of England, Scotland and Ireland. The laymen came from all denominations.

It began before Higher Criticism or the “New Theology” had appeared, and before the Salvation Army or the Church Army had arrived on the scene.

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<sup>1</sup> John Wood. *The Story of the Evangelization Society*. London. The Society. 1907. page 25.

There were five simple doctrinal foundations. These were:

1. The ruin of mankind through sin, both that of Adam, and our own,
2. There is redemption through the crucifixion of Jesus Christ,
3. This salvation must be received through faith and repentance,
4. This results in the renewal of character and society,
5. All believers have the responsibility to spread and share this Good News.

The single aim was to preach the Gospel in such a way that people would be led to embrace Jesus Christ, and have faith in His salvation. Any benefits, so far as professed conversions were concerned, were to be channelled back through the churches which were involved in the mission, and through the churches chosen by the converts.

When C. H. Spurgeon first heard of this Society which sent out preachers regardless of their denominational affiliation, simply to win souls for Christ, and where converts were sent back to the local churches, he apparently said he did not believe such a thing was possible. It was too good to be true. But that is what was happening, and he became an encourager of the Society.<sup>2</sup>

The Australian Society started successfully in 1883 under the title of the Evangelisation Society of Victoria. Its backers included the Presbyterian politician, the Hon. James Balfour, James Griffiths the tea and coffee businessman, Y.M.C.A. leaders, Anglican clergy such as Archdeacon Langley [later Bishop of Bendigo] and the Rev. H. B. Macartney, Dr. Thomas Porter (Baptist minister), the Rev. A. Yule (Presbyterian minister), and a number of laymen.<sup>3</sup> The first evangelist to be employed was the Rev. A. J. Clarke, who had recently been minister of the Baptist Church at West Melbourne, and who had come to that pastorate several years earlier upon the recommendation of C. H. Spurgeon. He was very soon joined by a layman, Mr. Arthur Eustace.

The Victorian Society had a very interesting career over the next fourteen years. After that, it changed its name several times when it began getting invitations from the other Australian colonies and from New Zealand. For some years after that it was known as the Evangelisation Society of Australasia. Various other name changes

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<sup>2</sup> Wood. Op cit. page 76.

<sup>3</sup> *The Spectator*. July 27. 1883. page 146.

occurred through the Twentieth Century, and today the organisation is known as the E.S.A. Country Ministries.

Around 1983, Donald Prout was asked to assemble the booklet for the Society's centenary. He said that, with the request, he was presented with "a bulky sheaf of papers," to use as resource materials.<sup>4</sup>

This bundle has not survived, but perhaps we can judge what it contained by what we find in Mr. Prout's little centenary book.

There is a reproduction of the advertisement which was published in several church-related papers to announce the formation of the Society in 1883.

Several pages are given to provide information about several of the early missions in 1883 which were conducted by A. J. Clarke. The name of Mr. Eustace, Clarke's colleague, is not mentioned.

The next attention is paid to the visit to Victoria in 1885 by Mr. George Muller, who included Victoria in his tour of the world as a result of a letter written to him by the E.S.V. Secretary, Mr. Theo. Kitchen.<sup>5</sup>

Then, attention is given to the year 1888, when Mr. George Clarke, a world-famous athlete, was invited to Melbourne to speak at a number of missions which were organised to mark the centenary of white settlement in Australia.<sup>6</sup>

Following this, there is almost no information at all about any Society activity until after the First World War. The names of the American evangelists, the Rev. R. A. Torrey and Mr. Charles M. Alexander, who visited Victoria in 1902, and who saw a remarkable revival, are listed only as a heading in a time line list, with no details being given at all. As a result, no indication appears that the Society played an important role in arranging this visit, or in running the resulting Mission. The two main evangelists who were employed by the Society between 1888 and 1902 are mentioned once only in a list of workers, and referring only to 1888. These men were Mr. Robert Robertson and Mr. William H. Scurr, but they were not the only men employed as evangelists by the Society in this period.

From this we must conclude that Mr. Prout knew very few details of the role played by the Society through this period. Clearly, the

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<sup>4</sup> Prout. D., *Going Where The Need Is Greater*. E.S.A. 1983. page 3.

<sup>5</sup> Prout. Op cit. page 9.

<sup>6</sup> Prout. pages 10 – 11.

“sheaf of papers” did not include anything like an archive, nor did it indicate where information might be found. The Society had never succeeded in preserving its important documents or Minute books, and in 1983 nobody had managed to reconstruct an archive from personal papers held by leaders. When the period of 1888 to 1902 is examined more thoroughly, it is not hard to discover that this period was probably the main and best period of the Society’s effectiveness.

Mr. Prout says that the period from 1900 to 1932 was the “silent period” for the E.S.A., because he had found it so difficult to find any information about activities in those years.<sup>7</sup>

The next primary document that is referred to in his book is the annual report of the Society for 1926, which is followed by some Minutes of a meeting of the Society’s Council in 1932. From these, Mr. Prout is able to build a certain amount of detail about some of the activities from those times, but there are really only scattered events to which they refer. The main reference is to one of the workers, Mr. Eric Clarkson, and his entry into the work.<sup>8</sup>

The next section refers to the Australian Christian Colportage Association, which was formed about 1940, by the businessmen, Mr. S. John Bacon, and Mr. Walter J. Beasley. This organisation was boosted for a while by two keen graduates of the Melbourne Bible Institute, Mr. George Fuhrmeister and Mr. Bob Pocklington. After two years, however, the A.C.C.A. decided to merge into the Evangelisation Society. There are interesting descriptions given of some of their activities, and photographs begin to appear featuring some of these people, and what they did.<sup>9</sup>

The years after the Second World War began to introduce some of the workers that Mr. Prout had known personally, and so the information increases in detail. One of the workers in particular, a lady called “Aunty Myrtle,” was featured in a very nice little biography, written by Grace Jobling, well illustrated and attractive.<sup>10</sup>

Apart from a supply of recent photos, Mr. Prout’s book finishes with a time line list of events, which displays the many gaps that I have outlined. This is followed by a list of some of their Council members, and another list of workers in the Society. These two lists, showing

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<sup>7</sup> Prout. page 12.

<sup>8</sup> Prout. page 13.

<sup>9</sup> Prout. pages 14 – 15.

<sup>10</sup> Grace Jobling. *Through Highways and Byways – The Myrtle Payne Story*. E.S.A. Country Ministries. 1996.

names and rough dates, are extremely incomplete before the Second World War.

The only competent historian who has approached the idea of writing a proper history of the Evangelisation Society of Australasia is the Rev. Dr. Darrell Paproth, the well-known historian of Victorian evangelicalism, and lecturer at the Bible College of Victoria. Some years ago, he wrote a paper on the Centennial Mission of 1888, involving Mr. George Clarke, based very largely upon reports about Clarke's missions which appeared in the *Southern Cross*, and other information in that paper about the E.S.V., as it was then called.<sup>11</sup> The *Southern Cross* was a trans-denominational newspaper published in Melbourne from the mid-1870s through to 1926, and edited for most of that time by the Rev. Dr. W. H. Fitchett, Master of the Methodist Ladies College for many years. Fitchett was a noted author, widely famous in his day, whose interests reached many areas, and whose influence was great. Issues of the *Southern Cross* contain an enormous range of information about evangelicalism on a wide front, and it is a pity that no volumes of this paper have yet been microfilmed.

Dr. Paproth intended to extend what he wrote about the Society, but his interests widened, as time passed, and he embarked upon a much more ambitious project of painting Evangelicalism in Victoria on a much wider canvass. He had collected all the materials about the Society that he needed for the 1888 paper, and a little more. But more will be mentioned about him shortly.

In exploring the earlier years of the Evangelisation Society of Victoria (up to 1896, when the name was changed for the first time), and then of the Evangelisation Society of Australasia, up until the First World War, there are almost NO primary documents directly from the Society, but there is a good deal of information available in the Wesleyan Methodist paper, the *Spectator*, and in the *Southern Cross*, upon which quite a reasonable story could be told. These sources are mainly in the form of reports about various missions conducted by the evangelists, a few letters to the editor from the secretary, and reports on a few of their public meetings and Executive meetings. There would probably be some repeats, and some additional information in the

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<sup>11</sup> In *Lucas, An Evangelical History Review*. New Series, No.1. Autumn, 2009. pages 31 – 66, and reproduced in this present book as chapter six. It was written some years before it finally appeared in print.

Victorian Baptist paper of the time. I have not viewed these Baptist papers, or the volumes of *Southern Cross* for 1894 or 1916.

For a few years, a quarterly news sheet was issued to friends and supporters. Copies of this were often sent to the editors of the *Spectator* and the *Southern Cross*. In a few cases the editors quoted extensively from these reports. In some other instances the editors published small parts of the news sheet. After a few years, an annual report was circulated flowing from the annual meetings. No copies of any of these reports appear to have survived, apart from what was published in these newspapers.

Because some of their early supporters were departing from the scene, and the financial backing was drying up, the Society decided to issue a four-page Journal in August, 1896. It was about quarto size, and was edited by Mr. Robert Gillespie, J.P., a member of the Executive. The only issue of this Journal to have survived is number one, but there is evidence that it was produced for some years. This first issue contains great information about activities and financial support for the previous quarter. This survival arose from the fact that copies were included in the copies of the *Spectator* and the *Southern Cross* for the week at the end of August, 1896. It was included, therefore, in the microfilm of the *Spectator* produced by the State Library of Victoria. No other copies have survived, although it would be very nice if some descendent of Mr. Gillespie could find a box of old papers up in the loft.

The period through to 1926 and beyond, up to about 1940, is much more difficult to explore in any satisfactory way, as reports about missions conducted for the Evangelisation Society disappeared completely from the *Spectator* after 1900, and became increasingly rare in the *Southern Cross*.

I became interested in the Evangelisation Society as a result of my other researches into the history of evangelism, revivals, and evangelists in Australia up to the First World War. I came across a great deal of material relevant to the history of the Society. But this did not seem consistent with the great difficulty that Mr. Prout had when he wrote the Centenary book about the Society. I readily accept that Donald Prout was a busy evangelist and worker for the Society, and that he probably had no training as an historian, or time to do any research. No doubt he did the best he could. Because I had already

published a number of books in this area, it seemed to me that it would not be too difficult to produce a book which would present at least a modest attempt at filling in the hole in the history of this Society which had produced such valuable spiritual results over the years.

The purpose of this book, therefore, has been mainly to assemble source materials and historical details about the work of the Evangelisation Society during its first thirty-five years, and to use these in trying to tell its story.

### **Economic, Social and Cultural Factors.**

It has not been the purpose of this book to comment much upon, or to describe in any detail, the social and cultural context of the late Nineteenth Century in Victoria, in so far as these things affected the work of the Evangelisation Society. These factors naturally play an important role in the history of the Society. Readers who want to explore these factors more closely should start by consulting the Bibliography.

The main factor in the first decade of the Society was the economic situation. The 1880s were years when the economy was roaring along at a great rate. It was partly fuelled by land speculation, which is another way of saying that it was driven by greed. And an opposite reaction was probably unavoidable. So many people were affected adversely by the collapse of banks and other financial institutions when things came unstuck. The 1880s in Melbourne became known as the era of “Marvellous Melbourne.” These were boom times. But the situation in 1892 was very different. That was when the “bust” set in, which went on for several years.

As a result, in the 1890s the Society had great trouble raising enough money to pay its costs – which meant that the evangelists often did not get paid properly by the Society. Yet it was a time of spiritual success, even perhaps more than at some other times.

The other major impacting factor was, of course, the First World War, which did not affect the situation covered by this book until near its end.

### **Acknowledgements.**

In any project like this, an author steadily accumulates a list of people and institutions to which he or she is indebted.

I am indebted firstly to Mr. Bruce McIntosh, of E.S.A. Country Ministries, for providing me with an autographed copy of Donald Prout's book, also the Myrtle Payne Story, and for a typed copy of an assignment he had written himself.

I am especially grateful to the Rev. Dr. Darrell Paproth for his materials about the Evangelisation Society that he gave me, and about the Rev. W. Lockhart Morton, and for his willingness in allowing me to reproduce here two of his papers, as chapter one and chapter six, which relate directly to the subject of this book. Chapter one was written especially for this book. It arose naturally from other studies he was already doing for a much wider thesis of his own. The chapter on the 1888 Mission is reproduced here by kind permission of Dr. Paproth, and also of the editor of *Lucas*, Dr. Geoffrey Treloar.

It should be emphasised that **no attempt** has been made by me to edit the two chapters written by Dr. Paproth in order to eliminate repetition at certain points, or to make his formatting of paragraphs and footnotes identical with the rest of the book, or to harmonise his information with mine. The text is as it came from his computer.

The Rev. Dr. Ian Breward and his wife made me very welcome at their home, and at the Uniting Church's Victorian Archives at Elsternwick, in my efforts to unfold the story of William Scurr. Dr. Breward also helped by loaning me microfilm copies of some years of the *Spectator*. I was greatly helped by Mrs. Lee Campbell of the Gateway Baptist Church, Launceston, in my search for materials about Joseph Piercey. She also provided some excellent old photographs belonging to the Church's archives of a number of their ministers, including several reproduced in this book. The office staff members of the City Baptist Church in Launceston were also most helpful in my quest for information about the Rev. A. J. Clarke. Mr. Laurie Rowston of Hobart helped me extensively with materials he had collected for his own researches on several of the Baptist preachers. Miss Sue Carroll of Belgrave was also keenly interested in sharing our mutual research interests about Joseph Piercey. Mr. Travis McHarg, of Boronia, has shared many details of his researching with me over the years. In this case especially his notes about the contents of earlier copies of the *Southern Cross*. Dr. Geoff. Treloar (editor of *Lucas*) helped me by providing a large computer file of materials he had copied from the very dilapidated volume of the *Southern Cross* for 1902 held in the

Mitchell Library, and which I was prevented from using by the Library staff because of its extremely poor condition. Some years ago, Mr. Gordon Griffiths, of the South Seas Evangelical Mission, helped me with photocopies of the early issues of *Not in Vain* – the Annual Reports of the Queensland Kanaka Mission. At that time, a different project was in view. But, his help then has helped me greatly now with this present project. For the friendship and help of all these people I am deeply grateful.

I spent a great deal of time in the Mitchell Library, Sydney, perusing their other copies of the *Southern Cross*. As mentioned elsewhere, these copies belonged to Dr. W. H. Fitchett, who was the editor for many years, or to his brother. But they suffer from having many pages and clippings removed, probably by him. Some volumes are missing. The only complete set is in the State Library of Victoria, used by Travis McHarg, and in one instance by me. I have also some microfilms of the *Spectator* which were purchased from the State Library of Victoria. The State Library of Queensland also helped me with one particular request which they freely supplied. I acknowledge my debt to all these august institutions, and to their staff.

Overall, this whole research and publishing project is dedicated to the glory of God, and to the honour of the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Robert Evans.  
Hazelbrook. N.S.W.

# CHAPTER ONE

## Steps Leading To The Formation of The Society

By the Rev. Dr. Darrell Paproth.

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*Evangelicalism is surely not dying under these skies. And the evangelicalism of the last quarter of the century, if it differs from the evangelicalism of the first quarter of the century, differs only by improvement. It is, we think, not less earnest; and it is certainly wiser and more cultured. It does at least as much for missions as the evangelicals of fifty years ago did, and it does very much more for the social welfare of the masses in Christian lands.<sup>12</sup>*

### 1. introduction

This book describes and explores the contributions of the evangelists of the Evangelisation Society of Australasia during its first 35 years. Throughout its history, including the post 1918 years, the organisation has gone through five changes of name: the United Evangelistic Association, the Evangelisation Society of Victoria, the Evangelisation Society of Australasia, the Evangelisation Society of Australia, and E(quipping)S(erving)A(ssisting) Ministries. And before the United Evangelistic Society phase, there were the United Evangelistic Committee, the Metropolitan Evangelistic Association, and the Metropolitan Gospel Hall.

This chapter describes the contexts and the formation of the first two phases, a defining moment of evangelical activism in late colonial Melbourne. In one sense, this was not a new thing. Victorian

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<sup>12</sup> *Southern Cross*, 7 October 1887, 790f.

## 1. Steps Leading to the Formation of the Society.

evangelicals had been evangelistically active in the preceding decades. The 1860s saw the American evangelist William ‘California’ Taylor spark revival fires among Methodists, who also produced evangelists such as Daniel Draper, Matthew Burnett, and A R Edgar. The Anglican Bishop Charles Perry encouraged Anglicans to follow suit, though with more limited success. The Churches of Christ and the Baptists also made their evangelistic presence felt, though not as much as the larger churches. During the 1970s two Methodists (Revs Matthew Burnett<sup>13</sup> and John Watsford), an Irish Anglican (Rev Hussey Burgh Macartney Jr), and an independent English itinerant (Henry Varley) dominated evangelistic endeavour. ‘Intelligence’ in the form of Macartney’s *The Missionary at Home and Abroad*, and (the Methodist) W H Fitchett’s *Southern Cross* kept the evangelical public informed of evangelical activism, particularly evangelism, and missions. The irrepressible Macartney began the deeper life movement in Melbourne, and the United Evangelistic Association, the forerunner of the Evangelisation Society of Victoria, was founded. It happened like this.

## 2. the cultural context

Colonial Melbourne was unmistakably capitalist, confident in its entrepreneurial boosterism and often referred to as a Yankee city,<sup>14</sup> especially during the 1880s. In 1883 the perceptive journalist R E N Twopeny praised Melbourne as

The metropolis of the Southern Hemisphere. .. it is in the Victorian city that the trade and capital, the business and pleasure of Australia chiefly centre. .. The headquarters of nearly all the large commercial institutions which extend their operations of any colony are to be found there. If you wish to transact business well and quickly, to organize a new enterprise – in short to estimate and understand the trade of Australia, you must go to Melbourne and not Sydney. ..There is a bustle and life about Melbourne which you altogether miss in Sydney. ..<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> See R Evans, *Matthew Burnett. The Yorkshire Evangelist. Australia’s Greatest Evangelist and Social Reformer* (Hazelbrook, NSW: Research in Evangelical Revivals, 2010).

<sup>14</sup> See Don Chambers, ‘Calvinists and Capitalists in Colonial Victoria’, *Melbourne Historical Journal*, vol 4, 1964, 9-16.

<sup>15</sup> Quoted by G Serle, *The Rush to be Rich. A History of the Colony of Victoria 1883-1889* (Melbourne: Melbourne Univ Press, 1971), 45.

## 1. Steps Leading to the Formation of the Society.

In 1885, his visiting fellow journalist G A Sala famously declared it to be ‘marvellous Melbourne’. And in 1888 Melbourne celebrated, in its own style, the centenary of white settlement of Australia, with much imagination and even more money expended on various extravagant public occasions. It was not only the centenary to be celebrated: Melbourne by this stage was no mean city, having become possibly the largest city in the southern hemisphere. It was a great opportunity for marvellous Melbourne to display its growth and sophistication, and was, with a northwards glance at Sydney, also a statement of its vigour. ‘The Victorian Government, knowing that New South Wales lacked an Exhibition Building, and had left it too late to organise an Exhibition as part of its centennial celebrations, brought off a prestige-building coup ...’<sup>16</sup> It was a heady as well as an expensive time.

The madcap development saw some land values in the 1880s rise as high as those in central London. Railway lines snaked out to the burgeoning suburbs (resulting in windfalls for some crafty speculators). Lavish buildings sprang up around the city (building activity increased by 50% when national output rose by only 25%) in grand architectural styles and often in bluestone, which gave Melbourne much of its character. It could not last of course; there was too much speculation based on easy finance and too rapid expansion. The boom burst in the early 1890s and the resultant economic depression bankrupted and devastated individuals, banks and businesses. This too was a symbol of Melbourne capitalism.<sup>17</sup>

Of great interest in all of this is the way that religion was seamlessly part of Melbourne capitalism; the Melbourne burghers bowed their knees to the Lord Yahweh as well as to Mammon. Weber’s Protestant ethic was alive and well, and a number of prominent evangelicals brought their entrepreneurial spirit to their religion. A characteristic of Melbourne evangelicalism was that many of its leaders belonged to the

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<sup>16</sup> Serle, *The Rush to be Rich*, 285. The centrepiece of the Exhibition was the Exhibition Building, built in 1880 for the International Exhibition of 1880-1. See D Dunstan ed, *Victorian Icon. The Royal Exhibition Building. Melbourne* (Melbourne: Exhibition Trustees, 1996); and G Davison, *The Rise and Fall of Marvellous Melbourne* (Melbourne: Melbourne Univ Press, 2004). Before this, Melbourne had staged exhibitions in 1854, 1861, 1866, 1872, and 1875,

<sup>17</sup> In the 1890s especially, the questionable roles of some prominent evangelicals was uncomfortably evident. See M Cannon, *The Land Boomers*, (Melbourne: Melbourne Univ Press, 1995).

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mercantile and business elite.<sup>18</sup> The high point was the 1888 Centennial Exhibition. The exhibition was opened with prayer (by the president, not a clergyman. This was a matter of diplomacy, not secularism; having a clergyman pray might provoke sectarian jealousy.) The Old Hundredth was sung. The proceedings included a cantata by the Rev William Allen, minister of the Carlton Congregational church; the theme was the coming of European civilisation, a civilisation that had brought material benefits to the land. Above the arch of the north transept was the text: *The Earth is the Lord's and the Fullness Thereof*. Handel's Hallelujah Chorus was sung and then the national anthem, a fitting combination of religion and crown.<sup>19</sup> The commissioners behind the 1888 Centennial Exhibition included the evangelical businessman, parliamentarian, and temperance advocate, John Nimmo.

But, as in the northern hemisphere, the challenges posed by science and biblical criticism to faith and orthodoxy were a concern for many, as was the increasingly uncertain status of the church in an increasingly secular society. And there were the predicable lamentations by churchmen of the drift from traditional Judeo-Christian moorings. Thus there were still plenty of sinners to be saved; the malignant forces of secularism and infidelity to be countered; and the unorthodoxy of Rev Charles Strong, prominent minister of Scots Church, to be resisted. The climax came in 1883, when the ESV was founded, with the address by (the Anglican) Justice George Higinbotham on 'Science and Religion', in which he

denounced the clergy for ignorance and dogmatic theology, [and] called on the laity to abandon the churches and the supernatural and to meet on the high central plane of thought ... God, revealed anew to the intellect, and also to the responsive heart, as the Father, Friend, the Guide and also to the Support of our race ... and also in the sublimest life, of Jesus of Nazareth, the Light of the World.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> This may be seen in the leading figures on the UEA/ESV, who formed a focal point of leadership and unity in the evangelical movement.

<sup>19</sup> Prince Albert had chosen the same text as motto for the Great Exhibition in London, when the Hallelujah Chorus was also sung.

<sup>20</sup> Serle, *The Rush to be Rich*, 131f.

## 1. Steps Leading to the Formation of the Society.

Alfred Deakin referred to Higinbotham's 'holiness of purpose', but the conservative churchmen of Melbourne were unhappy with his brand of theological liberalism. It seemed to them that bourgeois Melbourne was developing a new cultural form, a kind of Protestant humanism.

A more threatening counterpart to this was the arrival the following year of Joseph Syme. Syme was a tall, colourful, and dignified ex-Wesleyan minister who had been sent by the militantly atheist MP for Northampton, Charles Bradlaugh, at the request of the Australian Secular Association.<sup>21</sup> With all the enthusiasm and conviction of the convert, Symes held well-attended public lectures and debates in which he excoriated Christianity, and just about everybody who did not see things his way, especially clergy of course, but also conservative politicians. Echoing the Sunday Free Discussion Society, he began a Sunday morning 'service' together with a Secular Sunday School and a mutual improvement society. Emboldened, Symes tried to seek religious status for his efforts in order to circumvent Sabbatarian laws, arguing before the Supreme Court in August 1885 that the Secular Association was a denomination and thus should be allowed to conduct its meetings on Sundays! The case appeared before the grave Higinbotham, who reminded the jury of Syme's vituperative attacks on the faith of most of the community. But two juries could not reach a verdict, and the Attorney General did not pursue the matter further. But atheism did not conquer Melbourne. The failure of the juries to condemn Syme was not an indication of godless secularism or atheism on their part, but of respect for traditional freedom of expression. Syme was jubilant. Invincibly self-righteous at the best of times, his attacks on politicians and Christianity became more aggressive and unbalanced. But for all the attention he attracted, and the size of his audiences, it was curiosity rather than hard-core atheism or agnosticism that swelled audience numbers. Most atheists were inclined to be

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<sup>21</sup> Serle, *The Rush to be Rich*, 144-6, comments:

In the mid-eighties militant atheism made a sustained challenge. Throughout the seventies the Sunday Free Discussion Society ... had nurtured a small group of dissidents of varying viewpoints. .. On 17 July 1882 the 'materialist' section of the society joined with a minority atheist and agnostic group in the Victorian Association of Spiritualists to form the Australasian Secular Association. ...'

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respectable; Syme's radicalism alienated them as well as believers.<sup>22</sup> He did not herald or spark an atheistic movement; his presence and influence in Melbourne were ephemeral, but a challenge to the evangelicals nevertheless.

For if the infidels were enthusiastic at the prospect of the demise of orthodox Christianity, the evangelicals were just as determined to proclaim the gospel. In this decade: the Salvation Army began work in 1882; as well as local evangelists, five overseas evangelists – three men: George Clarke, Henry Varley, and A N Somerville, and two women: Margaret Hampson and Emilia Baeyertz,<sup>23</sup> came to Victoria; in 1888 a state-wide Centennial Mission was held (see following chapter); two Presbyterian evangelists, Revs John MacNeil and W Lockhart Morton, came to Melbourne; and at the end of the decade, in preparation for the next, the (prayer) Band was formed. Just as important was the (re-)formation of an evangelical society focused on evangelism: the Evangelisation Society of Victoria/Australasia.<sup>24</sup>

### 3. the key players

The key players in the formation of this society were Hussey Burgh Macartney Jr and Henry Varley, together with the evangelical leadership of Melbourne – which included lay and clergy, and was denominationally diverse.

*Rev Hussey Burgh Macartney:  
evangelist, deeper life advocate and  
missions facilitator*<sup>25</sup>

Born in 1840, Hussey Burgh Macartney Jr came to Melbourne as a boy, with his parents and Bishop Perry on the *Stag*. In



REV. H. B. MACARTNEY.  
Vicar, 1868-1898.

<sup>22</sup> Serle, *Rush to be Rich*, 145ff. At its peak, membership of his 'cl' of 1000.

<sup>23</sup> See R Evans, *Emilia Baeyertz. Evangelist. Her Career in Australia and Great Britain* (Hazelbrook, NSW: Research in Evangelical Revivals, 2007).

<sup>24</sup> See D Paproth, *Evangelism and Evangelists in Colonial Melbourne* (Macquarie Univ PhD, forthcoming)

<sup>25</sup> For further details on Macartney see my 'Hussey Burgh Macartney: a nineteenth-century missions enthusiast' <http://rspas.anu.edu.au/pah/TransTasman/papers.php>

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1857 he returned to Ireland to his father's *alma mater*, Trinity College Dublin, for his university and theological education (BA 1860 – 1<sup>st</sup> class in divinity, MA 1874). He came home to Melbourne where he was ordained by Perry in 1867, and spent a few years as chaplain to Industrial Schools in Melbourne before becoming vicar of St Mary's, Caulfield (a Melbourne suburb) where he served 1868-98.<sup>26</sup> An eloquent preacher, a fine bible expositor, he spoke regularly at evangelistic rallies and at meetings of Christian workers, led in forming the Melbourne United Evangelistic Association in 1879 (later the Evangelisation Society of Australasia, then Victoria), and also Scripture Union (1880). He was also the leading promoter and facilitator of Protestant missions in colonial Australia, and was the leading evangelical in colonial Melbourne. He resigned from St Mary's in 1898 to become Superintendent, Home Organising Department, British and Foreign Bible Society in London (1898-1900 and in 1906). He died in October 1908 in Darjeeling, North India while visiting mission stations with his daughter Catherine.<sup>27</sup>

What drove Macartney do all this? The following reasons suggest themselves. First, his family background greatly influenced him and prepared him not only for the contribution he made to missions but his whole career. He went back to Ireland to study at his father's university before being ordained, shared his indefatigable activism, his (proto-fundamentalist) theology and pietistic spirituality, and the same evangelical agenda. It was not unnatural for him to enter the ministry. The son differed from the father in being more committed to interdenominational evangelicalism.<sup>28</sup> Some of this was because of the collegiality of the Melbourne evangelical network; some because he was not tied to the establishment of the Church of England as was his father (though he was a loyal Anglican and an active member of the diocese). Combined with his energy and activism it gave him a freer hand to

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<sup>26</sup> Sir George Stephen, brother of James Stephen, member of the Clapham Sect, had settled in Caulfield. He had been the historian of the anti-slavery movement in the UK, and was one of the two instigators in the highly innovative public campaign which led to the 1833 victory in parliament. He donated the first piece of land for St Mary's. His family was a distinguished one in Victoria, with his son James becoming Attorney General. St Mary's was an important parish in the diocese and the Stephen family might well have been instrumental in Macartney being appointed vicar.

<sup>27</sup> See *Victorian Churchman* (13 November 1908), 485-488; (27 November), 508.

<sup>28</sup> See A Porter, 'Late Nineteenth-Century Anglican Missionary Expansion: A Consideration of Some Non-Anglican Sources of Inspiration', and S Piggin, 'Assessing Nineteenth Century Missionary Motivation: Some Considerations of Theory and Method', *Religious Motivation: Biographical and Sociological Problems for the Church Historian*. ed D Baker ((Studies in Church History vol 15) Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978).

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labour outside the boundaries of his parish. Thus his influence was wider and of greater significance than that of his father.

Second, Macartney and his father were two of a number of well-educated, very able Irish who made a great contribution to the life and history of Victoria last century.<sup>29</sup> Patrick O'Farrell has amply demonstrated the influence of Catholic Irish on the Catholic Church in Australia; but a lot of Protestant Irish came out too, and their influence on Protestantism - especially evangelicalism – is similarly significant in the story of Christianity in Australia. Rev Len Abbott notes:

Irish (TCD) clergy are the key to H.T. [Holy Trinity, Adelaide] Nth Terrace's tradition (Howard Farrell). In Sydney from the Irish rebel (the Rev Henry Fulton, convict and chaplain) onwards Irish clergy have given a large part of the Evangelical Cutting Edge. Notable are the Langleys ... who dominated Melbourne & Bendigo as much as Sydney. Mervyn Archdall, pioneer of the Deaconesses was another. The advent of Bp Barker from Irish Church Mission experience in Liverpool (arrived 1856) gave a great stimulus to Irish influence. J.C.McCullagh, later Dean of Bendigo is a typical young Irishman. They were tenacious & adaptable cf the pomposity of many of the U.K. trained clergy. ... It is a very large area of study.<sup>30</sup> In his character and ministry he displayed the vigour, enthusiasm, and independence that so often characterises the Irish.

In this context we should also note the importance of Trinity College, Dublin. E R Sandeen wrote: 'If more were known about early nineteenth century Protestantism and, particularly, the intellectual history of Trinity College, Dublin, a clearer light might be thrown upon these puzzling and difficult points'.<sup>31</sup> We may say this though: in the

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<sup>29</sup> His father, of the same name, was Dean of Melbourne diocese and a leading figure in the diocese and evangelical circles). In 1889 Macartney Jr fondly recalled being taught in Sunday School by Sir William Stawell, Chief Justice and Lieutenant Governor of Victoria who was related to both his parents. *Missionary at Home and Abroad* vol XVII no 4, April 1889. See the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* entries on C J Griffith (Griffith was a cousin of Macartney Senior and wrote to him in 1848 to persuade him to migrate to Victoria), J L F V Foster, W F Stawell, and Redmond Barry.

<sup>30</sup> L Abbott, *Correspondence*, 4 Jan 1995.

<sup>31</sup> E R Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Premillenarianism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978), 90. See too T C F Stunt, 'Evangelical Cross-Currents in the Church of Ireland 1820-1833' in W J Sheils & D Wood ed, *The Churches, Ireland and the Irish* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 215ff.

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nineteenth century, TCD probably had a better reputation than Oxford or Cambridge for both the courses of study and the quality of the graduates it produced. There was a strong evangelical presence and ethos, and many of its graduates went out with the Church Missionary Society to the mission field. The main evangelical influence seems to have been Dr J H Singer, the Regius Professor of Divinity and later Bishop of Meath (1852), who had himself been influenced by Rev W M Mathias.<sup>32</sup>

This was the high point of British imperialism. As A F Walls points out:

Missionary opinion, like most British opinion in the high imperial age, for the most part took the empire for granted, and the question of abdication was never seriously raised. I take the high imperial era to extend from about 1880 to about 1920. This is, of course, also the high missionary era.<sup>33</sup>

An extension of evangelism, and fed by consequent revivals, was the remarkable growth in evangelical missionary endeavour abroad: 'The missionary movement of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was the fruit of the Evangelical Revival'.<sup>34</sup> Indeed the nineteenth century was the great age of missions; and for the pious English evangelical, in the age of British imperialism, the empire was God's means of Christianising the globe.<sup>35</sup> This was echoed by their American co-religionists who, indebted to their Puritan roots, consciously operated with a covenantal understanding of their status and responsibilities. Particularly noticeable was the rise of the 'faith missions', classically J Hudson Taylor and the China Inland Mission, the influence and significance of George Müller, the Cambridge Seven, the contribution of the American faith missions, and the role of the Bible and Missionary Training Institutes.

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<sup>32</sup> H H Rowdon, *The Origins of the Brethren 1825-1850* (London: Pickering and Inglis, 1967), 19.

<sup>33</sup> A F Walls, 'IV. The British', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, vol 6, no 2 (April 1982), 60. For a detailed treatment of the subject see B Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag. Protestant Missions and British Imperialism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Leicester: Apollos, 1990).

<sup>34</sup> D Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain. A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 12. See especially K Fiedler, *The Story of Faith Missions* (Oxford: Regnum/Lynx, 1994).

<sup>35</sup> See Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag*.

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Denominational mission agencies were part of all this, but the greatest growth was in the new ‘faith missions’, of which the CIM was pre-eminent. One of their fundamental principles was voluntarism.<sup>36</sup> This was also true for CMS which, though an Anglican body, and committed to the ‘church principle’, resisted control by the bishops and insisted on retaining its status as a society within the Church of England rather than an official church body. It was the same in Australia. Dean Macartney, though loyal to the Church of England, insisted that the Church Missionary Association should be committed to the voluntary principle, otherwise it would lose its evangelical distinctive and cutting edge. For all their independence though, the faith missions were not simply groups of mavericks. Hudson Taylor was very individual in his methods, but CIM, and its sister missionary organisations, were really expressions of a pan evangelicalism that was more inter-denominational rather than non-denominational. The distinction is important. Those who were members of or supported them had a strong sense of identity as evangelicals and were conscious of being members of an evangelicalism that transcended denominational barriers, as was the Melbourne network of Macartney and his colleagues.

### *Henry Varley: independent itinerant evangelist*

In the late 1870s a number of Melbourne’s leading evangelicals formed the United Evangelistic Committee with the aim of inviting an overseas evangelist to work (primarily) in Melbourne. They set their sights on the Englishman Henry Varley. Varley was a product of the 1858-60 revival, and one of the best-known evangelists in the second half of the nineteenth century. Indeed he may be thought of as a forerunner of Moody, both in England and in America.<sup>37</sup> He was also of significance for the history of evangelism in Australia, especially Melbourne.

Born in Tattershall, Lincolnshire in 1835, Varley moved to London as a young boy and eventually found work as an apprentice butcher. As a result of the prayers of his mother, not long after he arrived in London

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<sup>36</sup> Voluntarism in the present context may be broadly defined as spiritual independence, and independence of denominational control.

<sup>37</sup> W G McLoughlin Jr, *Modern Revivalism. Charles Grandison Finney to Billy Graham* (New York: Ronald Press Co, 1959), 153 and 160, refers to Varley as ‘Among the more prominent of Moody’s immediate predecessors ... He was pointed to as “the John the Baptist” who had prepared the way for the coming of Moody and Sankey’.

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he met his cousin J W Kirton who invited him to go to a bible class at Rev Baptist Noel's Chapel in John Street, Bedford Row. He was converted (in 1851) under Noel's preaching, joined the church, and was baptised by Noel the following year.<sup>38</sup> In 1854 he sailed for the gold-rush colony of Victoria to seek his fortune. He was not successful on the goldfields, but just before his twentieth birthday he opened a butcher's shop in Geelong in partnership with his brother Albert and then a Joseph Frith. Geelong was the bustling, growing second city of the colony, and people were continually passing through to seek their fortunes on the Ballarat goldfields or on the open lands of Australia Felix.<sup>39</sup> It was a promising place to begin a business, and Varley, with his open personality, honesty and energy saw the business flourish. He was encouraged, in February 1856, less than six months after he arrived in Geelong, to write confidently to his sweetheart Sarah Pickworth: 'Now I will tell you what I am sure you will be glad to hear - that in less than twelve months from the receipt of this letter, if God spares us, and all is well, we shall meet again. I intend returning to England.'

Varley had his mind on more than Sarah and the business; he wasted no time in throwing himself into church work. The Methodists had been in Geelong since 1841; the Yarra St circuit began in 1842, and 'In the eighteen-fifties and eighteen-sixties, and later, several Methodist churches were established in the suburbs of Geelong and the neighbouring towns'.<sup>40</sup> On 22 July 1855, under the leadership of Rev M W Bradney, the United Free Methodists opened a church in Preston Street Ashby, not far from Varley's shop.<sup>41</sup> The Methodists appealed to Varley. He joined the Ashby church and was made Sunday School Superintendent. Varley appealed to the Methodists too. They soon noted his energy, personality, and preaching ability, and invited him to

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<sup>38</sup> Noel was an Anglican for 20 years before becoming a Baptist. He was loyal to his chosen denomination, was president of the Baptist Union in 1867, and strongly disagreed with Spurgeon's negative attitude to biblical criticism in the down-grade controversy. See D Bebbington, 'The Life of Baptist Noel: Its Setting and Significance' *Baptist Quarterly* 24 (1972), 389-418. Noel had an important influence on Varley initially but would not have agreed with Varley's later independence. Bebbington notes on page 398: 'There was speculation that Noel might participate in creating a Free Episcopal Church.' He refrained; he was not that independent.

<sup>39</sup> In 1854 Geelong's population was 20 115; its imports rose to £20 044 694 and revenue to £152 111-8-2, 'an increase of nearly 200 fold in seven years'. C P Billot, *The Life of our Years. A Pictorial Chronology of Geelong* (Melbourne: Lothian Publishing Co, 1969), 46.

<sup>40</sup> W R Brownhill, *History of Geelong and Corio Bay* (Melbourne: Wilks & Co, 1955), 169.

<sup>41</sup> So Brownhill, *History of Geelong*, 169; though C I Benson, *A Century of Victorian Methodism* (Melbourne: Spectator Publishing, 1935) does not mention the church or Bradney.

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apply for ordination. Varley demurred on the grounds he could not agree with infant baptism.<sup>42</sup>

There were other reasons though. His business success claimed more and more of his time and energy; he found the Australian summers sapped his spiritual resolve and mental discipline, and he was frustrated by what he called the ‘Laodicean temper’ of the Australians; he missed his Christian friends at the John Street Chapel (he was still only 22); and he missed Sarah. His impatience got the better of him; he dissolved his partnership with Joseph Frith and sailed for home on the *Great Britain* via Cape Horn, arriving in London in August. Sarah was waiting for him and they wasted no time in getting married, and Henry set up business as a butcher. This too prospered and he won a reputation for integrity. However it was not long before he responded to a persistent call to invest himself in full time ministry. He tentatively began with a mission to pig feeders at Notting Hill. At the first service he led, there were only 13 adults and a few children. It was a small beginning in a not very encouraging environment; but the work flourished such that a church, the Free Tabernacle, was founded, and Varley became its minister.<sup>43</sup>

Varley took his ministry very seriously, though in an independent way. As his reputation grew he was at different times invited to seek Baptist and Anglican ordination. The latter invitation included the carrot: ‘there are few positions in the church to which you might not ultimately attain.’ [Varley replied dismissively] ‘... I am greatly obliged to you for your kind words ... but as the servant of the Lord Jesus

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<sup>42</sup> Was that the only reason? In England he later declined Baptist ordination also. One suspects he was not willing to tie himself to one denomination. Was this just a matter of being independent, or was there a streak of separatism lurking behind his independence? Was it that he had difficulty with authority? Interestingly, his son Frank, also an evangelist, says that ‘his name is still to be seen in the roll of the Aberdeen Street [Baptist] Church’. *SC*, 19 April 1912, 494. Frank spoke at Aberdeen Street in January 1895 and presumably saw it then. The *Church Membership Roll* (no 137 Henry Varley, December 18, 1856) says that he was proposed at a church meeting but never received into membership. Did the deacons feel some reserve? The *Minute Book* contains the following notes: 18 December 1856 says that Varley was proposed for membership; 30 Dec 1856 ‘Proposed that the deacons obtain Mr.Varley’s letter from the church where he was baptised in England [ie Baptist Noel’s chapel]. He said that the letter supposed to be in the possession of the Bible Christians in Melbourne’; 27 Jan 1857: ‘The application of Mr.Varley to stand for the present as he contemplates leaving for England.’

<sup>43</sup> The Tabernacle was ‘non-denominational’ because Varley thought the Notting Dale people would not want to associate with a church belonging to one of the mainline denominations. His son insists that this was not done with any ‘schismatic’ intent, and that Varley was sorry that his church, Westbourne Grove Baptist Church, censured him, causing him to resign. H Varley, *Henry Varley’s Life-Story* (London: Alfred Holness, nd), 62 (a hagiographical biography by his son). Perhaps not; but Varley did have an independent streak in his make-up. Many people thought he was a Brethren, but he chose not to wear that label either.

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Christ I would not change places with the Archbishop of Canterbury.<sup>44</sup> From 1870 he was increasingly engaged in evangelism in Britain and then overseas, initially in Canada and America. The Notting Hill church was a home base, but the world was more and more his parish, and it was as an itinerant evangelist that Varley made his greatest contribution. F B Meyer named him as one of the great evangelists of the Victorian era.<sup>45</sup> He died in Brighton, England in 1912.<sup>46</sup>

His international career included two lengthy stays in Australia, 1877-79 and 1888-96, and a shorter visit near the end of his career.

### **4. the Melbourne United Evangelistic Association**

In 1877 Varley received a 'pressing and repeated invitation to spend some time in evangelistic work in Australia' from Brethren leader Theo Kitchen on behalf of the United Evangelistic Committee.<sup>47</sup> There were a number of Brethren evangelists who made their way to the Australian colonies after the 1859 revival, some making Victoria their home.<sup>48</sup> But the UEC was more interested in Varley's ability as an evangelist than his being Brethren, and Varley was happy with the interdenominational character of the Committee.<sup>49</sup> He readily worked with others of all denominations; though his independence sometimes caused him trouble. 1878 was a critical year for the evangelical

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<sup>44</sup> Varley, *Henry Varley's Life Story*, 75f.

<sup>45</sup> Varley, *Henry Varley's Life Story*, 260.

<sup>46</sup> Fuller details of Varley's efforts in Australia may be seen in my 'Henry Varley Down Under' (*Lucas. An Evangelical History Review no 30, December 2001; nos 33-34, June and December 2003*). There, as well as the narrative of his endeavours in Australia and the content of his preaching and writing, the main themes and contexts of his contribution are spelt out: his itinerancy, his theology and preaching, his lay status, his independence, his relationship to the Melbourne evangelical movement, and the connection between Australia and Britain. See too *WW*, 16 January 1880, 284.

<sup>47</sup> Varley, *Henry Varley's Life-Story*, 121. At the conclusion of the visit, at the farewell service for Varley in the Melbourne Town Hall on 7 April 1879, Kitchen recounted how he called on Varley three years before at his Notting Hill, London, church and suggested he come to Australia. (Kitchen was a Brethren and so would have been aware of Varley through the Brethren network as well as his reputation.) However, a little later at that same meeting Varley insisted that 'he had come uninvited by any ministers, neither had he been responsible to any committee'. Cf *Willing Work*, 18 April 1978: at a 'Conference of Christians' held in Melbourne 22 May 1878, Varley said that 'He came to these colonies, not at the invitation of anyone, but to fulfil a longstanding promise to the Lord ...' Why this distancing from the UEC? Varley tips his hand: his independence masked a separatist streak.

<sup>48</sup> See I McDowell, *Harrison Ord* (unpublished paper, nd); K Newton, *A History of the Brethren in Australia with Particular Reference to the Open Brethren* (Pasadena, Cal: Fuller Theological Seminary PhD 1990).

<sup>49</sup> The adjective 'United' in the title was deliberate and important: it was characteristic of the evangelical movement in Victoria in the nineteenth century (and of the first half of the twentieth century). Among the leaders were Macartney (Anglican), Hon James Balfour MLC and Rev Adam Cairns (Presbyterian), Kitchen and C Edwin Good (Brethren - Good was editor of *WW*), and Rev A Bird (Baptist).

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movement. Varley's presence and evangelism prompted proposals for a new (non- not inter-denominational) organisation, and tabernacle. These in turn prompted an evangelical response that was characteristic of the nature of the Melbourne leadership, the formation of a United Evangelistic Association. This succeeded the UEC which, as the name suggests, was more *ad hoc* in nature; the UEA put things on a more permanent footing.

On 5 May 1877 Varley, with Sarah and two of their children, and a purse of sovereigns and good wishes from the Tabernacle, sailed on the *Collingwood* for Melbourne, arriving at the end of July. For the next five months Varley did the work of an evangelist in Victoria. There followed campaigns of varying length in Tasmania, Adelaide, Sydney and New Zealand, but Melbourne was his base. The year culminated in a moving watch night service in the Temperance Hall on the last night of 1877, and more meetings in January. He spoke again in the Temperance Hall to 4-500 young converts and enquirers, at Pentridge again, and at the Melbourne Town Hall. He crowned his Melbourne ministry with a Monday evening service on at St Kilda beach when he baptised 120 before a crowd of 700. This was ill advised; there was a warm collegiality among Victorian evangelicals, but people were cautious of anything that might be construed as being too independent or smacked of sheep stealing. He was accused of advising new converts at the Albert Street Baptist church in the city to become Baptist, and of being a Brethren! In his defence, a letter to *Willing Work* (15 February 1878, 60) pointed out that the loyal churchman Rev H B Macartney was his friend, and that he had refused the use of a Baptist baptistry lest he be accused of favouring one denomination.

By this time Varley was exhausted, and on Tuesday 22 January he and Sarah and their son Thomas (born 1866) boarded the *SS Derwent* and sailed to Tasmania to escape the Melbourne summer, to recover his strength, and to engage in ministry in the island colony. Their sojourn lasted from February to April. Then, after being farewelled at Kings Wharf, Launceston, by a crowd singing some of Sankey's songs, the Varleys sailed back to Melbourne on the *Mangana* with the converted Jewess evangelist, Emilia Baeyertz, arriving on Saturday 4 May.

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Varley was not sure whether to stay in Melbourne or go to Adelaide. His Melbourne supporters wanted him to stay of course, appreciating his expression of the gospel; *WW* (26 April 1878, 139) said that ‘Melbourne with its more than 200 000 souls, its vice and its iniquity, its various forms of erroneous teaching ... needs the vigorous proclamation of that gospel’. So he did both, staying in Melbourne until Thursday 23 May. He picked up his previous ministry in the suburbs, Pentridge, and the Melbourne Town Hall, continuing to draw large crowds. But his success was not unalloyed. There were three problems, each stemming from the (militant) separatist streak in his personality: the issue of baptism, the fact that he wanted his own tabernacle, and his own evangelistic association.

*Baptism.* He responded to concerns about his independence in a letter to *WW*: ‘... I am free and unsectarian; I came out to Melbourne under responsibility to none save to Him whose servant I am ...’ In the preceding sentences he defended his baptism of converts:

In reference to my testimony concerning this subject, I may say that during five months’ labour in Melbourne I only alluded to Baptism six times in 250 addresses; I never referred to the subject as a denominational one, and my references have always grown out of my subject. I was requested by many to baptise them. I took care to point out that I did not regard this as a church question but simply as one of personal obedience to Christ. To my judgement this is as far above denominationalism as heaven is as high above the earth. After due consideration, and finding so many desired to confess their death, burial and resurrection through faith in Christ by this act I thought it best to secure a quite neutral position. The presence and help of two valued brethren arose from no prearrangement, but from my inability to baptise 120 believers without assistance. ... Not one of these had reference to joining any church by this act. They are as free to attend the ministry of any godly pastor in the city as they were before. I have laboured for all, and all sections of the church can testify that they have reaped the fruit, if they will. I am free and

unsectarian; I came out to Melbourne under responsibility to none save Him whose servant I am. ...<sup>50</sup>

This is the pompous righteousness of an independent: baptism cannot be separated so blithely from ecclesiology.

*The Tabernacle*. In the 8 March edition (page 84) in his own defence he described the founding of his Free Tabernacle in London, his association with Christians of all denominations, that he was not a Plymouth Brethren, and that he did not intend to start a new denomination.

The day before he left for ministry in Adelaide he spoke at a Conference for Christians in the Temperance Hall. The purpose of this meeting was not evangelistic but ‘the edification of believers through their growth in the Lord Jesus Christ’.<sup>51</sup> As with his final Launceston meetings, it was meant to be an expression of grass roots evangelical ecumenism. However it did not fulfil the hopes of the organisers. Most of Melbourne’s Protestant ministers had been invited but very few came; it seems that reports of Varley’s ecclesiology caused misgivings. He recognised this when he referred to a minister who drew back from fellowship because he had heard that when Varley returned from Adelaide he intended to build a non-denominational church, a ‘Metropolitan Gospel Hall’, along the lines of his London church.<sup>52</sup>

It was the Scottish evangelist, Rev A N Somerville, who was in Melbourne at the time, who made this suggestion to Varley, and there was a meeting to discuss the proposal in a lower room of the Melbourne Town Hall. It was a tempting suggestion: ‘Tabernacles were the evangelists’ dream. Baptist Charles H. Spurgeon built Metropolitan Tabernacle in South London, and Congregationalists John Campbell and Joseph Parker built Moorfields Tabernacle and City Temple to draw crowds of working class Londoners.’<sup>53</sup> It was proposed to call it the Metropolitan Tabernacle, obviously in imitation of

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<sup>50</sup> WW, 8 March 1878, 65. This was ‘safe’. WW was staunchly pro-Varley.

<sup>51</sup> The idea probably came from the Conference of Christian Workers which met quarterly in London, which was really an association of evangelists, and in which Varley and Harry Moorhouse were prominent

<sup>52</sup> WW, 28 June 1878, 215.

<sup>53</sup> N H Murdoch, *Origins of the Salvation Army* (Knoxville, Tenn: Univ of Tennessee Press, 1994), 59.

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Spurgeon's church. Did Varley or his supporters see him as an antipodean Spurgeon? Did he encourage this idea in any way? In any case it never really looked like getting off the ground. The loyally supportive *WW* (25 October 1878, 349) commented: 'We have noticed with regret a desire to depreciate the reality and permanency of the good effects of Mr. Varley's ministry.' Varley did little to help such reports when he declined to give an undertaking that he would not do this. 'Speaking of the proposed Gospel Tabernacle, and after referring to his thankfulness for the interest taken in it, he says, "I do not believe our Lord needs buildings so much as living men and women whose hearts are full of goodness and love. ..."'<sup>54</sup> This is true enough; but Varley had not hesitated to build and delight in his London tabernacle. His words were an exercise in self justification, as well as a typical independent criticism of denominationalism.

*The Metropolitan Evangelistic Association.* In counterpart with this was the formation of the Metropolitan Evangelistic Association in March 1878 by those supportive of Varley; a crack in evangelical ranks.

Of these proposals, two things stand out: (1) 'Metropolitan' carried echoes of his friend Spurgeon's church, appealed to those believers who revered the London preacher, and implied, if not gave, credence to Varley's Melbourne effort. (2) It was an attempt to institutionalise Varley's activism. He was probably thinking of making Melbourne his home base rather than London and his Tabernacle there. Varley and his friends did not immediately drop the tabernacle idea. In August the MEA announced that it proposed to build a(n unsectarian) hall capable of holding 3-4000. The leadership included the Hon R S Anderson MLC (Presbyterian) as president and the activist Dr John Singleton (Anglican) treasurer *pro tem*. But missing were the other evangelical leaders.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> *WW*, 5 July 1878, 222. But the churches were wary, and his words were to haunt him.

<sup>55</sup> *SC*, 27 July 1878, 2; 3 August 1878, 2.

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Their ('official') response was twofold. First, reserve and criticism. Fitchett's *SC*, representing 'mainstream' evangelicalism, expressed concern that this expression of Varley's independence also threatened evangelical unity. Singleton wrote chiding the *SC* for criticising the Metropolitan Gospel Hall and unfairly linking Varley's name with it. The *SC* replied that, though it respected Singleton, it had problems with the ostentatious exclusion of ministers from the management of the MEA! Second, action. On 3 July the United Evangelistic Association was formed at a meeting in the Assembly Hall at which Dr Somerville presided.<sup>56</sup> The first act was to hold a United Communion Service on 1 August in the Town Hall at which the prominent Presbyterian Dr Adam Cairns presided and 3-4000 were present. The use of the word 'united' was deliberate, as was the fact of evangelicals of all hues partaking of the sacrament of unity, a churchly act.

Miffed, Varley responded. At another Conference for Christians on 10 September 1878 at the Temperance Hall, in his closing address, Varley deplored the number of different denominations. But this was more than just a motherhood statement; Varley had his own agenda, as the evangelical leadership recognised. They did not have too much trouble with denominational differences, and their growing ambivalence spilled over into disquiet.<sup>57</sup> The London Brethren publication *Missionary Echo* (1878) 80, added a reference to the clerical hesitation in supporting him and bad reports in newspapers:

Even when, in consequence of his outspokenness about the truth, most of the ministers had deserted him, God still stood by His servant, and the hall was crammed, mostly by non-churchgoers. The number really converted we cannot estimate. One meeting sometimes a hundred professed Christ, and the influence of the work is felt over all the city in the changed life of many citizens.

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<sup>56</sup> *SC* 12 July 1879, 3. In the 20 July edition (page 2), Fitchett asked his readers to support the UEA. A two page supplement in the 10 August edition carried a full report of the beginning of the organisation, and an editorial on Somerville. Despite his support and friendship, Somerville realised that Varley was inevitably distancing himself from the evangelical leadership.

<sup>57</sup> Varley's intemperateness also provoked caution. Eg *SC* 23 March 1878, 1, carried an editorial on Varley's false accusation against a Mr Fawns, a respected citizen of Launceston and chief elder in Presbyterian church, that he gained a lot of his wealth from public houses, which were a source of immorality. The 18 April 1878 edition carried an editorial on Varley as a fighter, and pointing out that the *SC* did not endorse everything he said or did.

## 1. Steps Leading to the Formation of the Society.

In 1879 Varley returned to London. There had been criticism from some, non-support from some clergy, and the proposed Metropolitan Tabernacle did not get off the ground. But he could return confident that his stay had been more than moderately successful. It is difficult to quantify the outcome as few statistics are given, the language is always flowery and positive, and the evidence buoyantly impressionistic. For example:

If anyone had ventured to prophesy six months ago that in the heart of the city of Melbourne, a vast concourse of people would gather week after week for prayer and praise, no one would have believed it. And yet so it has been. And these gatherings in the Assembly Hall, in the Collins-street Independent Church, in the Baptist Church, and in the Athenaeum, bear witness to the fact that a great quickening of spiritual life has taken place ... we refer to the crowds gathered in the Town Hall night after night ... Think of the Temperance Hall filled every Saturday with children and young people; think of the numbers, many hundreds, in fact, who have stood up at these meetings to testify their reception of Christ; think of the vast audiences that thronged the Town Hall ... and of the hundreds here also, who by rising to their feet signified their faith in Jesus as their own Saviour ...<sup>58</sup>

## 5. the Evangelisation Society of Victoria<sup>59</sup>

H B Macartney was absent during the momentous 1878. In 1877 he and his wife Emily visited New Zealand, and then spent most of 1878 in England where (in the wake of the Moody and Sankey campaign) he visited the Keswick, Dublin, and Mildmay Conventions,<sup>60</sup> and prominent Brethren and Anglican churchmen and evangelical personalities of the day. When visiting the leading Brethren Sir Edward Denny (with whom Moody, George Müller and others stayed), he saw ‘a drawing room evangelistic service held for over 200 aristocratic

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<sup>58</sup> WW, 27 October 1877, 9.

<sup>59</sup> In 1897 ESV changed its name to the Evangelization Society of Australasia, and expanded its ministry to include NSW, SA and NZ.

<sup>60</sup> WW, 18 April 1879, 158.

young men'. Before the trip, as well as deeper life meetings and missions, Macartney had been deeply involved in evangelistic endeavours. The trip 'home' vitalised Macartney; and on his return, in February 1879, aware of the disunity while he was away, he was ready to pour his energy and enthusiasm into the two strenuous decades that remained to his Melbourne ministry.

Evangelism does not just happen. It is voluntaristic; and feeds on encouragement, exhortation, and continual public relations exercise by its leaders. Thus on 20-22 July 1880 Macartney presided over a UEA Christian Conference to lift the spirits of evangelicals.<sup>61</sup> He especially had in mind his fellow evangelical Anglicans. In September 1880, they had proposed an Eight Days' Mission to the diocese to be held mid-1881 following the Exhibition. *The Church of England Messenger* commented:

.. a strong committee representing the church in its comprehensiveness and catholicity, [has been formed] who will see that the necessary preparations are pressed on with zeal and judgment.

Powerful and earnest preaching that confines itself to a simple setting forth of a crucified Saviour, is the only means to this day of winning back the masses from the materialism and sensuality into which ignorance and neglect have brought them ... There is a spiritual malady that preys like a canker on the strength of the church, the chief symptoms of which are a fixed aversion to sound doctrine and a continual demand for spiritual excitement.<sup>62</sup>

The language is deliberate, enthusiastic, and in-tune with evangelical sentiment of the day. And English evangelists Messrs Aitken, Boddy and Knox-Little had been invited. But it did not happen. And the SC,

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<sup>61</sup> See SC, 31 July 1880, 1, for a long report on the conference.

<sup>62</sup> *Messenger*, 7 September 1880, 1.

## 1. Steps Leading to the Formation of the Society.

16 July 1881, 1, announced its cancellation because of ‘conflict in the diocese’, a not-uncommon experience among Anglicans.<sup>63</sup>

But not all churches thought this way. With the Exhibition in mind, in an editorial in the *SC* (30 April 1881, 2), W H Fitchett drew attention to the importance of Special Religious Services, and the methods and theology of revivalism, reminding his readers: ‘A very large percentage of those who fill the pulpits of the Methodist church in these colonies today are the direct fruits of the services conducted by the Rev William Taylor 17 years ago.’ He included a positive reference to Dr A N Somerville – ‘the old man eloquent’; a hope that Moody and Sankey might visit Melbourne; and encouraged churches to be evangelistic.

Alas, it was a fond hope; not all evangelicals were as united as they might be. Varley, and his MEA and MGH, had disclosed the vulnerability of evangelical voluntarism. And the *SC* (25 June 1881, 2) included a long letter from the Melbourne City Mission in which the secretary, H N Wollaston, argued that it was no good waiting for ‘the consummation [*sic*] of an evangelical voice of all the churches in Melbourne’; there were too many differences. It would be better to support the MCM, the ‘best agency that the Christians in this colony can organize to procure the evangelization of the lapsed masses of the people’. Wollaston reminded *SC* readers that its ‘managing committee consists of clergymen and laymen of all its evangelical denominations’, but it lacked sufficient funds. This is noteworthy; in spite of the MCM’s evangelical credentials it had not managed to capture the evangelical movement’s imagination. Perhaps there was a perception that it was not focused enough on evangelism. Whatever the reason, the letter indicated disunity in evangelical ranks.

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<sup>63</sup> The main stumbling block was Bishop Moorhouse, whose provisos were difficult for the evangelicals. (November 1880, Speech to the Church Assembly, columns 2 and 3). Perhaps the evangelicals were reserved about the evangelists: Robert Aitken initiated the 8-days parish mission strategy - a Roman Catholic idea, and G Boddy was a high churchman.

## 1. Steps Leading to the Formation of the Society.

Partly in response to this, the UEA sent an invitation to C H Spurgeon, hoping that his fame and presence might be a unifying factor. But he declined.<sup>64</sup> Also, about the same time, James Balfour MLC suggested at a Christian Conference that a month's evangelistic work be held in a specially chosen part of Melbourne, with ministers and laymen of all churches to participate.<sup>65</sup> This venture would be under the sanction and management of UEA. Balfour included a reference to the dark side of Melbourne (an acknowledgement of MCM's work?), and, of course, a request for prayer. He added: 'MUEA is really an alliance of the Protestant churches of the city ..' (a riposte to the MCM letter?). This proposal was a prelude to the much larger, more ambitious Centennial Mission: see following chapter.<sup>66</sup>

Even apart from UEA endeavours, evangelism had not ground to a halt. The Methodist Holiness Association sponsored the well-known American holiness preachers Revs John Inskip and W B Osborne, who held evangelistic rallies in Melbourne during 1881, Inskip at Wesley Church, as well as Ballarat, Geelong, and then Sydney.<sup>67</sup> Evans, points out: 'The visit to Australia lasted for eight weeks only, and Inskip preached eighty sermons in that time. About 2,500 responded to his appeals, of whom about two-thirds were converts, and the others were seeking entire sanctification.'<sup>68</sup> The Baptists were also busy. In particular, Rev W C Bunning reported on the second visit by Baptist evangelists Revs J S Harrison and Edward Isaacs to Brunswick in June-July. This included packed daily noon prayer meetings in the YMCA

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<sup>64</sup> SC, 27 August 1881, 1.

<sup>65</sup> Balfour was a wealthy merchant and Presbyterian elder; indeed he was probably the leading Presbyterian in the colony. See A Lemon, *The Young Man from Home: James Balfour, 1830-1913* (Melbourne: Melbourne Univ Press, 1992). His leadership was not confined to the Presbyterian Church. For example, in 1888 when it was proposed to run trains on Sunday to Dandenong, Frankston and Lilydale, it was he who 'led a deputation of churchmen, including Bishop Goe, to Premier Gillies and threatened to deploy all their political influence'. Serle, *The Rush to be Rich*, 160.

<sup>66</sup> SC, 1 October 1881, 2.

<sup>67</sup> SC, 9 & 16 April 1881. See too SC, 15 October 1881, 1, re evangelistic work in the Wesleyan church in Franklyn Street, West Melbourne.

<sup>68</sup> Evans, *Evangelism and Revivals*, 75, 127-30..

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rooms, and three weeks of crowded meetings in the Mechanics Hall, which seated 1000.<sup>69</sup>

Then, early in 1883, a group of evangelical leaders, both lay and clerical - their names were almost a Who's Who of evangelicalism in Melbourne, - met in the parliamentary offices of James Balfour. They were the same men who founded and ran UEA. They decided to re-invent their organisation which showed signs of faltering. They recognised the challenge and had enthusiasm, unity, ability, and leadership; but they lacked evangelists and finance. Partly to meet this need, they soon amalgamated with the Mission and Devotion Committee of the YMCA. At a public breakfast for the Rev Joseph Cook of the YMCA, the committee made known its aims and need. To set the ball rolling, Balfour promised £500 if another £500 were subscribed. At the first quarterly meeting (in April 1883) the name of the association was changed to the Evangelisation Society of Victoria. An advertisement publicising the society appeared in the Wesleyan Methodist *Spectator* (27 July 1883) and other religious newspapers of the time. It listed the committee, which included well-known local evangelical worthies:<sup>70</sup>

Rev W Allen	Rev G W	Philip Kitchen	Andrew Scott
James Balfour	Gillings	Theo Kitchen	Robert Scott
MLC	R Gillespie	Rev H A	Thomas Scott
Edward Baines	James	Langley	Rev W P
David Beath	Griffiths	Rev H B	Wells
A J Clarke	F Haller	Macartney	James White
(evangelist)	J H Hill	Rev Dr Porter	Dr W Warren
J H Davies	W Howat	Rev B Rodda	Rev A Youl
W George	A B G	J W Rosier	
	Johnston		

<sup>69</sup> SC, 23 July 1881, 1. and SC, 22 October, 1, re Baptist involvement with Macartney preaching in a tent seating 7-800.

<sup>70</sup> In Britain an Evangelization Society was begun in 1864. One of its members was a Charles Carter, 'who in the Providence of God, was sent to that Continent [ie Australia] more than twenty years ago. He has since organized work on similar lines to our own throughout the Australian colonies, ...'. J Wood, *The Story of the Evangelization Society* (London: Evangelization Society, nd), 74. Unfortunately Wood does not indicate when this Carter came to Australia or where he worked in Australia, nor does he give any biographical information. A Charles Carter was a member of the original council of the UEA. If he is the same Carter, then he had evidently settled in Australia and thrown in his lot with the ESV. I have not been able to discover any biographical details about the ESV Carter.

## 1. Steps Leading to the Formation of the Society.

The executive committee was J Balfour, R Gillespie and Theo Kitchen.

The Council set to work with a will, stating the aims of the society in the advertisement they placed in the Melbourne religious press:

The society has been formed with the view of reaching the non-church-going population of Victoria. It is well known that many will go to special meetings held in a hall or tent who will not attend the usual religious services. The work is conducted on strictly undenominational grounds, the Evangelists going out not as members of any particular Church, but to preach Jesus to the unconverted. The Society is now prepared to send Evangelists to any place in Victoria ...<sup>71</sup>

The first two evangelists were Rev Alfred J Clarke (Baptist), and Arthur E Eustace, both of whom resigned in 1887; Clarke to take up a Sydney pastorate and Eustace moved to Queensland for health reasons.<sup>72</sup> Others followed, some on a casual basis. The following chapters tell their stories; with chapters on the 1888 Centennial Mission and the 1902 Torrey-Alexander Campaign.

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<sup>71</sup> *The Victorian Freeman* (September 1883).

<sup>72</sup> K Manley, *From Woolloomooloo to Eternity. A History of the Australian Baptists* Carlisle: Paternoster, 2006), vol one, 147 & 157. Also, see *SC*, 18 March 1887, 203; and 8 July 1887, 535. See following chapters.

## CHAPTER TWO.

### The Rev. Alfred James Clarke – the First Full-time Evangelist.

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The Evangelisation Society of Victoria began its work in the first half of 1883, and appointed its first full-time evangelist, who began his work within a few months. He was very quickly joined by a layman, and by several part-time evangelists. The aim of the Society was to send an evangelist to conduct special meetings wherever they were requested, especially in more remote areas of Victoria, and in places where the financial support of the churches might not be sufficient to pay the normal costs for such visitors. It was fourteen years later that the Society changed its name to the Evangelisation Society of Australasia, when it began to get requests from the other Australian colonies and from New Zealand.

This first full-time evangelist was the Rev. Alfred J. Clarke. (1848 – 1916.)

#### **Early Years and Ministry.**

Alfred James Clarke was born in England in 1848, and in his later teenage years became involved in the Metropolitan Tabernacle at Elephant and Castle in London, where the Pastor was the Rev. Charles Haddon Spurgeon. In 1875 he entered the Pastor's College, and studied there for two years. In 1877, he was appointed as a kind of "evangelist-at-large" linked to the College. He worked with another student named J. Manton Smith. It seems that these were the first such appointments of Pastor's College Evangelists. They went to conduct evangelistic missions together, preaching the Calvinistic theology for which their Pastor was famous. They enjoyed some wonderful successes.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> *Sword and Trowel*. Page 334, 1877.

“Messrs. Clarke and Smith, two worthy students of our college, will commence evangelistic work next August. We have engaged to find them a maintenance, that they may go through the length and breadth of the land and preach Christ. They are very lively and able speakers. Mr. Smith is a singer, and also plays upon a cornet, by which means he not only fetches in the people to the services, but interests them when they are gathered together. We have made him a present of a new silver trumpet, upon which is engraved a verse from the Psalms, ‘with trumpet and sound of cornet, make a joyful noise before the Lord the King.’ Both Mr. Clarke and Mr. Smith have been greatly used in conversions, and we send them forth in the name of the Lord, with high hopes of blessing. They go first, we believe, to Hartlepool and the northern towns.”<sup>74</sup>

During 1877, a special evangelistic hymn book was assembled for Clarke and Smith to use, with a Preface written by C. H. Spurgeon.

The evangelists worked steadily in a number of places. They spent three weeks in Reading, and in the surrounding areas, in January, 1878.<sup>75</sup>

One report of their work which was sent in to Spurgeon came from the Rev. T. Kench, who was the United Free Methodist minister at Redruth, Cornwall. It was the Baptists who arranged the mission, but they asked for the use of the Free Methodist Church, probably because their own building was too small.

“Rev. and Dear Sir, You will, I am sure, pardon me for troubling you with this letter, but I feel that you should be informed of the good work doing in this town and district by means of your evangelists, as they are called, Messrs. Smith and Clarke. From Falmouth I hear of glorious things being accomplished in the name of Jesus, but I wish to say a word with reference to this town and their work in it. Before they came your minister, the Rev. Mr. Abraham, applied to me for the use of our chapel, which will hold near 2000 persons, and our trustees in the most cheerful manner said Yes, and on Friday evening they began their labours, when, notwithstanding it being market day, some seven or eight hundred persons came together. On Saturday the number was increased, but on Sunday afternoon Mr. Smith conducted a children’s

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<sup>74</sup> *Sword and Trowel*. July, 1877.

<sup>75</sup> *Sword and Trowel*. January, 1878.

service when some 2,500 children and adults filled the chapel in every part. The address was most interesting and powerful. Last evening the chapel was filled again, and at the prayer meeting several persons sought and found Christ. Throughout the whole of the services held in our chapel (all of which I have attended) there has been a most powerful influence pervading the meetings. We are greatly cursed in this town by what is called 'modern thought,' and this makes us the more grateful for your evangelists, who stand boldly in 'the old paths,' and with great faithfulness and power 'warn every man' of the danger to which sin has exposed him."<sup>76</sup>

At some stage during 1878, Clarke's health collapsed sufficiently so that he could not continue in the team with Smith, and had to take a pastorate at Bacup, in eastern Lancashire, for several months. His health recovered, and he began the evangelistic work again, but this did not continue for very long. Again his health failed, and he was medically advised to migrate to Australia. A replacement had to be found to work with Manton Smith.

It was at this point that the West Melbourne Baptist Church applied to Charles Spurgeon asking him to recommend someone to them to be their pastor. Spurgeon recommended A. J. Clarke, and he sailed for Australia in 1879.

The West Melbourne Baptist Church had been begun and fostered with strong evangelism in the 1860s. In 1866, after the first church building had been opened, an evangelist, Walter Douglas, worked in the church for six months, and there were many conversions. After several changes, the request was made to C. H. Spurgeon for a pastor, and Alfred J. Clarke arrived. The historian says, "He was an earnest evangelist, the congregations increased, and a transept was added to the building."<sup>77</sup>

By the end of 1883, Clarke's place at West Melbourne Baptist Church had been taken by the Rev. W. C. Bunning, who moved there after a successful pastorate of some years at the Aberdeen Street Baptist Church in Geelong.

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<sup>76</sup> *Sword and Trowel*. November, 1878.

<sup>77</sup> Wilkin. F. J., *Baptists in Victoria: Our First Century*. Melbourne. Baptist Union of Victoria. 1939. page 76.

### **Work for the Evangelisation Society.**

But Clarke was an evangelist at heart, and his efforts at being a pastor in these early years of his life did not last very long. He soon became restless. Late in 1882 and early in 1883, he heard about plans to found an Evangelisation Society in Melbourne, and this kind of work appealed to him. So, before long, he resigned from his congregation, and signed up to work for the new Society.

There was considerable concern that the first mission should be a great success, as a failure would reflect badly upon the whole project.

The first mission was held at Castlemaine, commencing on Sunday, 23rd July, and the Society leaders were both relieved, and full of praise to God, that the mission was a resounding success.

“The series of services held here in connection with the Evangelisation Society by Mr. A. J. Clarke has been attended with great success. The town has been stirred to its very depths, and a considerable number have testified to having received spiritual blessing, the names of nearly two hundred professed converts having been taken. The meetings were held in the Congregational Church, but the converts are divided as follows:- 54 Wesleyans, 50 Congregationalists, 38 Primitive Methodists, 19 Baptists, 4 Church of England, and 10 Presbyterians. The afternoon Bible-readings were well attended, and have proved helpful to Christians. This was the first mission of the new Evangelisation Society [and] much interest has been taken in it, and considerable satisfaction and thanksgiving expressed at these happy results, and it is hoped that by God’s blessing the succeeding missions may prove equally successful.”<sup>78</sup>

Within a few weeks, Mr. Arthur Eustace, the other full-time evangelist, started meetings at the Mission Hall, Burnley Street, but no report was published about this.

Next, Clarke went to Richmond, accompanied by a part-time evangelist newly arrived from England, Mr. J. S. Harrison. “The meetings, which were held in various parts of the town, were very well attended, and we trust the result will be a large ingathering to the churches. Three interesting meetings were held for children, and the Bible readings in the afternoons were appreciated, being fairly

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<sup>78</sup> *Spectator*. 17 August, 1883. page 188.

attended, and have led to the establishment of a weekly afternoon prayer-meeting for women.”<sup>79</sup>

Almost from the beginning Clarke held temperance meetings on Saturday evenings. At Chewton, “some of the most confirmed drunkards of the place are coming out. On Monday at a Bible reading a woman burst into tears, and told of her husband’s conversion on Sunday. He had been the most notorious drunkard of the district. His son followed on Tuesday, and, falling on his father’s neck, they wept out their joy together. An avowed infidel is also saved.” Several backsliders were reclaimed, and many of the older Sunday school children were converted.<sup>80</sup>

A series of missions followed through the rest of 1883. A special meeting of the Society was held late in January, 1884. It marked six months of evangelism, although it was called the First Annual Meeting in the *Spectator*. By that time, five hundred meetings had been held in various parts of Victoria, led by the two full-time evangelists, and by several other people working part time. The Hon. James Balfour, M.L.C., president of the Society, chaired the meeting, and, after a number of speakers had taken part, the Rev. H. B. Macartney closed the meeting with the benediction.<sup>81</sup>

Alfred Clarke led more missions in **1884**, which was his first full year of work for the Society.

Lengthy reports appeared about Clarke’s two weeks’ tour of the hop gardens near Bairnsdale in early March, and about a mission at Dunolly which followed the Bairnsdale trip.<sup>82</sup>

Another of his earlier missions in 1884 was at the country centre of Wandiligong, which started on 4th May. The Anglican, Wesleyan and Presbyterian churches combined in at least some of the meetings. “At the beginning of the work the weather was very severe, wind and rain, and pitch darkness seemed to unite their influence against us, but the people came pouring in each night, until Mr. Clarke himself said he never saw anything like it, and then for an hour, and sometimes even for two hours, the people listened to his appeals with rapt attention, and

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<sup>79</sup> *Spectator*. 31 August, 1883. page 213.

<sup>80</sup> *Southern Cross*. 13 October, 1883. page 7. Also 27 October, supplement page 1. This Supplement was the “Occasional Report No. 1.” of the Society. It was a four page leaflet printed only on pages one and three, but the pages were not numbered. It was included with this issue of the *Southern Cross*.

<sup>81</sup> *Spectator*. 22 February, 1884, page 507.

<sup>82</sup> For the Bairnsdale trip, see chapter sixteen. For the Dunolly mission see *Southern Cross*. 19 April, 1884. page 13, and 3 May, 1884, page 7.

at 10 and even at 11 o'clock seemed unwilling to leave the room. The last evening was the crowning service of the whole. There must have been quite 500 people in the Hall, and I should say more than 100 outside. The new converts were arranged in front of the platform. The Episcopal Church have added 15 to their number, the Presbyterian Church 5, and the Wesleyan Church 62. Mr. Clarke having given them sound advice, urging them at once to unite with some church, took up a thank-offering on behalf of the Society. The three collections made, will enable us to pay all expenses, amounting to seven pounds odd, and send a donation of ten pounds to the Society. In addition to these services, Mr. Clarke held afternoon Bible readings, and one solemn midnight holiness meeting, that will not soon be forgotten."<sup>83</sup>

This was followed by a mission in the Melbourne suburb of Kensington. This was also a combined effort, involving the Wesleyans, Presbyterians and Congregationalists. At first, they found it was very hard to get suburban people to attend regularly week-night meetings. Inquirers after salvation appeared very soon, and good success followed. At the concluding testimony meeting, many people testified "to the good they had received." Between 20 and 30 people "professed to experience the great change of heart." This mission was followed by one in Wangaratta.<sup>84</sup>

By the half way mark in 1884, a Society report covering the previous three months said that between 600 and 700 persons had been conversed with as religious inquirers, and between 900 and 1,000 had taken the blue ribbon. Over 2,000 enquirers had been spoken to in the previous 12 months.<sup>85</sup>

A little later, Clarke led a mission in Heathcote for the Heathcote Christian Workers' Union. The original plan was for it to last for a week, but it was extended for another week, after they wrote to the Wesleyan minister at Beechworth, asking them to put off their mission for a week. "Some 130 souls have professed faith in Christ." The Anglicans, Presbyterians and Methodists combined their efforts here.<sup>86</sup>

The Beechworth mission also lasted for two weeks. The other denominations were involved, except for the Baptists in this case. The first day of the mission was a Sunday, and Clarke preached in the

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<sup>83</sup> *Southern Cross*. 24 May, 1884. page 13.

<sup>84</sup> *Spectator*. 18 July, 1884. page 130.

<sup>85</sup> *Methodist Journal*. 18 July, 1884. page 5.

<sup>86</sup> *Methodist Journal*. 12 September, 1884. page 5.

Wesleyan Church on 2 Kings iii.16-18. In the afternoon he addressed a large gathering of young people, and in the evening he preached to a full church. Bible-readings were given in the week afternoons, and mission services were held every evening except Tuesday and Saturday, when Blue Ribbon meetings were held. The first of these was preceded by a torchlight procession, when several hundred people marched through the streets led by a fife and drum band, and with the use of fireworks. The church was crammed, and many could not get in. Henry Glenny from Ballarat spoke at the meeting, as well as the Wesleyan minister (the Rev. J. deQ. Robin) and A. J. Clarke. A petition to Parliament in favour of local option was passed unanimously, and about eighty persons donned the blue.

At the end of the mission, about forty names of converts were listed. Of these, 20 were Wesleyans, 2 were Congregationalists, 8 were Presbyterians and 10 were Anglicans. In addition, "20 or 30 children" professed their determination to serve Christ, and were gathered into catechumen classes.<sup>87</sup>

This mission was followed others in Wodonga, Yackandandah, and Bright.

Clarke's missions in **1885** are not so well reported upon. One of his missions was in the Bendigo district, at Eaglehawk. "The Rev. A. J. Clarke, of the Evangelisation Society of Victoria, has just concluded a mission, extending over a fortnight, in Eaglehawk. The meetings have been held in the Wesleyan, Primitive Methodist, and Presbyterian Churches. The services were exceedingly well attended, notwithstanding the inclemency of the weather. About fifty persons were led to seek the Lord in the old-fashioned way – at the penitent form. This, however, does not represent the full benefit received by the churches. Believers have been greatly blessed. The love and zeal of the most earnest has been intensified, while many backsliders in heart have been restored to their former position and experience.

We can confidently recommend the services of Bro. Clarke to the members and adherents of the Wesleyan churches everywhere. In the evangelistic meetings the truths of salvation are proclaimed with the utmost clearness, and at the same time with tremendous power. The daily Bible readings have been services of rich blessing to believers. Such of the Lord's people as cannot attend both meetings we would

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<sup>87</sup> *Spectator*. 10 October. 1884. page 275.

strongly urge to give the preference to the Bible readings. The blue ribbon meeting also should by no means be overlooked.

We are so satisfied with the results of the mission that we are anxious for another visit as soon as possible. That our people appreciate the work and the worker is evidenced by the fact that after paying local expenses the committee will be able to forward about fifteen pounds to Melbourne as a thank-offering.”<sup>88</sup>

Clarke had another period of working in suburban Melbourne again early in September. He conducted a one week mission in the Primitive Methodist Church in Miller Street, West Melbourne. Mrs. Varcoe, a Bible woman from Wesley Church, along with a Wesleyan mission band, came to help them, and then the mission continued for a second week in the Wesleyan Church in Franklin Street, West Melbourne.<sup>89</sup>

A little later, Clarke teamed up with the English evangelist, Dr. Harry Grattan Guinness, in a mission in Hotham. Clarke also led the afternoon Bible studies. The meetings during the first week were held in the Wesleyan Church, and through the second week were held in the Presbyterian Church. Dr. Guinness followed this up with mission meetings for men at Prahran.<sup>90</sup>

## 1886.

A. J. Clarke began this year in the Gippsland town of Walhalla, with a two weeks’ mission starting on 10 January. The blue ribbon meeting on Saturday went especially well, with the help of the Blue Ribbon Choir, and a large number signed the pledge at the end of the meeting.<sup>91</sup>

A little later, he led two weeks of mission in the little villages of Scott’s Marsh and Clarendon (for one week), and Durham Lead for the second week.<sup>92</sup>

He then travelled to the Bairnsdale area, to help in conducting evangelistic meetings amongst the hop-pickers, which had been a regular E.S.V activity since its beginning. He found that the hop

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<sup>88</sup> *Spectator*. 26 June, 1885. page 314.

<sup>89</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 18 September, 1885. page 16.

<sup>90</sup> *Spectator*. 16 October, 1885. page 506, and 13 November, 1885. page 552.

<sup>91</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 22nd January, 1886, page 17.

<sup>92</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 26 March, 1886. page 4.

harvest had failed that year, so he turned to do some work amongst the fishermen in Paynesville.<sup>93</sup>

Again, a little later, Clarke was in the Geelong area, leading missions at Portarlington, where the Wesleyans and Presbyterians combined their efforts, and also at Anatuie.<sup>94</sup>

The winter of 1886, however, saw Clarke spending longer periods in bigger towns well away from the capital city. In June, he led a mission in Belfast, and saw a good response amongst the young people associated with those churches.<sup>95</sup>

### **A Powerful Series of Missions in Sandhurst – reminiscent of Cornwall.**

This was followed by a series of missions in the various suburbs of Bendigo. The first of these was in Long Gully, which lasted for three weeks. Meetings were shared amongst the various Methodist churches – Primitive Methodist, Wesleyan and Bible Christian. This mission started on Saturday with a meeting in the Bible Christian school. Here Clarke addressed the Christian workers on the subject of “the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.” The Sunday service in the morning [400 present] and afternoon were held in the Bible Christian Church, and the evening service moved to the Wesleyan Church. At night, there was “a splendid congregation, and at the close of the address anxious ones came forward to seek for mercy. The joy of God’s people was manifest as the enquirers found peace. The whole congregations sang –

My God is reconciled;  
His pardoning voice I hear;  
He owns me for His child,  
I can no longer fear.  
With confidence I now draw nigh,  
And Father, Abba Father, cry.

The following Friday was also a time for the congregation to sing songs of praise when people found peace with God, and rose to testify.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> *Southern Cross*. 9 April, 1886. page 4.

<sup>94</sup> *Southern Cross*. 30 April, 1886. page 17, and 7 May, 1886. page 17.

<sup>95</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 25 June, 1886. page 17.

<sup>96</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 9 July, 1886. page 17, and 16 July, 1886. page 12.

Figures were published for the first two weeks, with forty-four professions of conversion, plus about thirty-six children responded in the meetings which were planned for them.<sup>97</sup>

This was followed by a series of meetings at California Hill. The published descriptions of these meetings remind us that there were still many people in this mining area who had their roots in Cornwall, and who expected a revival to follow the pattern which such things had followed in Cornwall.

“From the first night blessing attended the mission. [On the last Sunday] we had a good day. The morning service was held in the Bible Christian Church. In the afternoon the Wesleyan Church was crowded. After the address on ‘Who is willing this day to consecrate himself unto the Lord?’ over fifty inquirers went into the class rooms, where the workers pointed them to Christ. There was intense joy among the Christian workers at such an ingathering of soul. In the evening we met at six o’clock for prayer, and continued the service on for five hours. It was a blessed time. The first man who came out as an enquirer was an old man, who had been under conviction all the week. He at once began to speak to others about their salvation. He went and put his hands on the shoulder of a man he knew, and most earnestly preached with him to accept Christ as his Saviour. Soon after another man came fairly running up the aisle, and flung himself upon his knees, and cried for mercy. One and another came forward and accepted Christ. Nearly ten o’clock, as a man came back who had left the meeting to go home. He took off his coat and his hat and threw them into a seat, and up he came amongst the anxious ones. He groaned and wrestled and prayed. A band of men and women gathered around him, and prayed for him. The service had now gone on for four hours, but the interest had not flagged even for a moment. The congregation sang, and shouted, and praised God as they saw the anxious ones come into the light. After about half an hour the last man that came forward sprang to his feet and began to praise God for his salvation. A daughter of one of the men who had found peace came up and pleaded for mercy. Presently she trusted, and her father ran forward and threw his arms around his daughter’s neck and kissed her. Then one after another of her friends came up and grasped her hand and kissed, and sang for joy, another soul born for glory. Another

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<sup>97</sup> *Spectator*. 16 July, 1886. page 334.

eleven o'clock we sang 'Praise God from whom all blessings flow,' and the people went to their homes regretting that Mr. Clarke's visit to California Hill was so short."<sup>98</sup>

A mission at Eaglehawk commenced the next day – Monday 23 August, with meetings every morning held in the Bible Christian Church, and in the Primitive Methodist Church in the evenings.

“Wednesday evening we had a time of great power; the attention deepened as the meeting went on. At the close of the address anxious ones came forward to seek for mercy. God's people were full of faith and expectancy. They prayed most earnestly for the perishing, and many of the workers went around among the people pleading with them to decide. At nearly nine o'clock there was a tremendous shout of joy – an old grey-headed man was coming up amongst the enquirers. Peel after peel of praise went up to God for the blessing that was descending upon us. For nearly an hour the meeting was turned from prayer to praise. It was the joy of harvest after the soul-saving. Hundreds of men and women shouted 'Glory to God! Glory to God!' Amidst the joy of the believers, and the songs of the new-born souls, the sorrow-stricken ones kept coming forward until after ten o'clock. It was nearly half past ten before we could rejoice over the last seeker who had found peace. For four hours the meeting went on with increasing interest. Friday we again had a blessed time. One man came out for salvation who only came out of prison that day. He had given way to drink for a long time, and again there was rejoicing over the lost coming home.”

The following Monday, “the first enquirer who came forward was the wife of one of the men who found peace last week. She soon found peace and rose praising God. The Christian women came around and grasped her hand, and praised god with her for His saving grace. Soon another came up – there were a number of others smitten all about the room. Soon after nine o'clock the meeting was closed, but the people lingered around, and soon the meeting was on again in full swing. There was still one woman seeking, who had been anxious for many, many months. At times she was nearly despairing. Again and again she came out with the anxious, but it still was all dark as midnight, but now, at last, light broke upon her soul and turned her night to day. It

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<sup>98</sup> *Southern Cross*. 27 August, 1886. page 14.

was difficult to describe the outburst of praise. In a moment the whole congregation rose to their feet and sang:

Sing, sing, sing hallelujah!  
Shout, shout glory I'm saved!  
I am redeemed, washed in the blood,  
Now I am happy all the day.  
We are hoping for greater than these.”<sup>99</sup>

A concluding report said that a striking work had been going on in these three centres. “A very large number of young people have been brought to decision and Christ, as many as fifty young people professed salvation one Sunday afternoon at California Hill.”<sup>100</sup>

A much briefer mission was held at Raywood and Yallock. A temperance meeting was held at Raywood on Saturday 17 July. “On Sunday he preached at Yallock to an overflowing congregation; the building was packed. Many wept as Mr. Clarke delivered his powerful message.” There was a “breaking-down time” in the evening service. “Weeping could be heard all over the building as Mr. Clarke so earnestly spoke of Jesus’ wonderful love for the lost. At his after meeting he tenderly urged immediate decision, and spoke in sweet pathetic strains. Many were deeply moved. On Monday night he conducted another faithful soul-stirring service. We are anxious looking for his speedy return; he worked intensely hard during his brief three days’ mission. Very many prayers follow Mr. Clarke and his work.”<sup>101</sup>

Early in August, the Evangelisation Society held one of their regular quarterly meetings, to keep their subscribers well acquainted with Society activities. Clarke happened to be present. He said that in the previous 12 months he had conducted 400 meetings in twenty different places, and the result had been that between 600 to 700 people had been added to church membership rolls. He also illustrated the great ignorance which existed in some places about Bible knowledge. “In one Sabbath-school a teacher was telling the scholars the story of David and Goliath, and in the confusion said, ‘Can you tell me where I got this story from?’ One boy said, ‘Yes, I know; from Byron.’ Clarke

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<sup>99</sup> *Southern Cross*. 3 September, 1886. page 14.

<sup>100</sup> *Southern Cross*. 10 September, 1886. page 15.

<sup>101</sup> *Southern Cross*. 30 July, 1886. page 16.

supported the drive for Scripture lessons to be given in State schools, and the meeting strongly supported him.<sup>102</sup>

Later in the year, Clarke conducted another mission in Heathcote. He found that fruit from the previous mission still stood well. “Our correspondent poetically says that though the sudden and loud report of the blossoming aloe had not been heard, nor the sudden uprush of the tropical day-dawn been seen just now in Heathcote, yet he believes some hearts will prove to have been gently awakened to life by Caesar Malan.”<sup>103</sup>

### **His Ministries in Sydney and Launceston.**

Early in 1887, Clarke resigned from his work with the Evangelisation Society, and this was followed in mid-1887 by the resignation of Arthur Eustace.

Clarke moved to Sydney, where he became the pastor of the Burton Street Baptist Church. This was a strategically situated congregation at that time, and was strongly evangelistic. During his time in this pastorate, he also helped to be the editor of *The Baptist* newspaper in Sydney, but only held the position for about a year.

For a few years, Clark was an outstanding leader in evangelism in Sydney.<sup>104</sup>

Apart from his crowded congregations at Burton Street, Clarke also commenced an evangelistic outreach in the new Masonic Hall in Castlereagh Street, in the City. This effort was supported by a huge choir and orchestra. The Burton Street building also had to be extended as the congregation mushroomed. The Castlereagh Street meetings developed well, and when Clarke left, these meetings were carried on by his successor, the Rev. W. R. Hiddlestone, who was also a strong evangelist. It was after Hiddlestone’s time that these Castlereagh Street meetings declined, and were eventually terminated.<sup>105</sup>

Clarke resigned from this position in Sydney late in 1890 in order to become pastor of the Baptist Tabernacle in Launceston. There was a rumour that he left under some kind of a cloud, or that he was running

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<sup>102</sup> *Southern Cross*. 6 August. 1886. page 13.

<sup>103</sup> *Southern Cross*. 22 October, 1886. page 14.

<sup>104</sup> A. C. Prior. *Some Fell on Good Ground. A History of the Baptist Church in New South Wales*. Sydney. Baptist Union of New South Wales. 1966. page 124.

<sup>105</sup> K. R. Manley, *From Woolloomooloo to ‘Eternity’: A History of Australian Baptists*. Volume 1: Growing an Australian Church (1831 – 1914.). Milton Keynes. Paternoster. 2006. pages 147 - 148.

away from a situation. However, the Hobart Baptist paper said, “There has been in some quarters a feeling that Mr. Clarke was running away from the post of duty in Sydney. Mr. Soper’s testimony, however, in another column, makes it clear that our brother has left with the full confidence of the brethren in New South Wales, and is in high standing there, as he is also in Victoria.”<sup>106</sup> Mr. Soper had been co-editor of the Sydney Baptist paper with Clarke.

The Baptist Union in Tasmania was still in the process of maturing itself in 1890, and the calling of Clarke occurred without the sanction of the Union. In one sense this probably did not matter, as Clarke was able to make a strong evangelistic impact in Launceston, and he succeeded in filling the large building better than others had been able to do in its short history. It seems that the Union took a dim view of the actions of the Launceston deacons. This resulted in supporters of the Union describing Clarke’s period in Launceston as a disastrous period which brought ruin to the congregation, causing people to leave in droves, and that he crippled the work generally. This seems to have been the official version of the history of the Launceston Baptist Tabernacle for some years, and still persists today.<sup>107</sup>

My research of early copies of the *Launceston Examiner*, and of copies of the *Baptist Day-Star*, kindly provided to me by Mr. Laurie Rowston, do not seem to support this negative view of Clarke’s work in Launceston.

Clarke took over the pastorate in December, 1890, with a welcome tea on Wednesday, 17 December.<sup>108</sup>

Reports which appeared in the *Baptist Day-Star* showed that he had some good success at winning converts, baptising them, and in welcoming them as new members. An early report said “We have had much for which to thank our God during the past month. There have been, and are still, evident signs of coming blessing in increased congregations, rapt attention to the Word, and the testimony of much individual blessing received.”<sup>109</sup>

At the half-year, the annual report showed a membership of 147, which represented an increase of 14.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> *Baptist Day-Star*. December, 1890.

<sup>107</sup> For example, K. R. Manley, *ibid.* page 116. Manley says Clarke’s ministry in Launceston ended in “total disarray.” Some earlier documents support this, but not others.

<sup>108</sup> *Launceston Examiner*. Saturday, 13 December, 1890. page 6.

<sup>109</sup> *Baptist Day-Star*. May, 1891.

<sup>110</sup> *Baptist Day-Star*. July 1891.

The members' roll was re-written at the end of 1891, and seventeen names were removed. At the next annual meeting in June, 1892, 31 names had been added to the membership, of which 13 were by baptism. 28 names had been removed, which included the 17 already mentioned.

By August, 1892, apart from there being a strong church, with many forms of useful activity, "we thank God for forty-nine brethren and sisters received into fellowship during the year, while about the same number have been baptised in our midst, amongst them being many bright trophies of the Master's love." "The week evening services are also well attended; the pulse of the church, viz.:- the prayer meetings, still a matter for great thankfulness. The Christian Endeavour Society has enjoyable and profitable meetings, with increasing interest and attention, and additions to membership. Our cottage meeting brigade [members] are also doing good work. The *Tabernacle Evangel* has had a successful year, and been productive of much good in the homes of the people. About 1,500 copies are distributed each month by an organised party of workers, and thus many are attracted to our services." There were some signs of revival in the church.<sup>111</sup> This happy situation seems to have continued for the rest of the year.

Early next year, the report claimed that "In looking up our record of [Clarke's] labours for the two years we find, after allowing for transfers, erasures and old names removed from the church-roll, there is an increase of 28 members. We have received 88 into fellowship, 59 by baptism, and thus we feel that, in the midst of depressing circumstances, we must praise the Lord."<sup>112</sup>

There were, however, some difficult people to cope with, which became more apparent as 1893 progressed. In August, the report listed many things about which praise could be offered to God. Then it said, "With all the good things we have had, we believe much more is in store for us. Our Pastor seems to be having a harvest of Christian love from hearts that have for some time been severed from their fellowship, but we praise God we are looking for both hand and heart to be re-united, pastor and people alike, that finally such a blessing will be poured out in our midst there will not be room to contain it, and then

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<sup>111</sup> *Baptist Day-Star*. August, 1892.

<sup>112</sup> *Baptist Day-Star*. February, 1893.

the overflow shall reach the sinner, and we shall rejoice with them in victory through the blood of the Lamb.”<sup>113</sup>

Within a month, several newly elected church officers who had been causing much trouble had been asked to resign, and new ones had been elected. The resignations also included the superintendent and secretary of the Sunday School. Despite this, the school was flourishing. The reporter knew that such dissension damaged the witness of the church. “If all were accepted that emanates from the unruly member no man can tame, an unfavourable impression might be made upon the minds of some, but we are confident that truth must prevail, and while we are badly reported the Lord is dealing with us in a marked manner, both wounding and binding up. The Church officers recently elected have handed in their resignation, which have been accepted, and three brethren have been appointed as acting deacons to carry out needful work until wisdom is given to permanently elect brethren to fill the vacancies.”<sup>114</sup>

Clarke handed his resignation from the pastorate to the acting church secretary on 16 October, 1893. Perhaps a week later, the special church anniversary services marked his last regular Sunday preaching in Launceston. He announced that he would take several weeks off, and then he would return to Launceston, and would then conduct farewell services. He had received a call from some of his old friends to plant a Baptist church in the Sydney suburb of Burwood.<sup>115</sup>

“At the close of the evening service a number of the congregation met the pastor and expressed sincere regret that he was going to leave the city, and all wished him every happiness in his new sphere of work.”<sup>116</sup>

A members’ meeting was called to consider his resignation. Clarke had declared that he could not stay any longer, because he had made a decision to move after much prayer. So he would not consider any plea for him to remain. The meeting accepted the resignation “with great reluctance and regret, and expressed the same sentiments as our daily papers, namely, that we are losing a faithful worker, whose place will be hard to fill; but we are persuaded that God will soon open

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<sup>113</sup> *Baptist Day-Star*. August, 1893.

<sup>114</sup> *Baptist Day-Star*. September, 1893.

<sup>115</sup> *Baptist Day-Star*. November, 1893.

<sup>116</sup> *Launceston Examiner*. Monday, 28 October, 1893. page 5.

a door for him.” The anniversary, they said, had been as successful as ever.<sup>117</sup>

The actual farewell services took place on Sunday, 26 November, with a farewell evening gathering organised for the following Tuesday, 28 November, 1893.

The church people decided to ask the Baptist Union to appoint a committee to take temporary control of the church until a new pastor could be found. The new pastor was the Rev. Edward Harris, who arrived about the middle of 1894, and spiritual life picked up well after his arrival. There are no signs of “total disarray” in the reports in the *Baptist Day-Star* or the *Launceston Examiner*. The difficulties seem to me to be much the same as one might find in many churches of any denomination, but which are not uncommon in Baptist churches because of the structures within local churches.

### **His Later Ministry in Outline.**

The Rev. A. J. Clarke stayed in Burwood for a few years. Meetings were held in a local hall, as the first church building was not built for several more years. Clarke’s work was much more “missionary” in character in seeking to plant a church.

In 1896 he accepted a call to become pastor of the Carrondown Baptist Church in Hindmarsh, South Australia, and he continued in this position through to 1908.<sup>118</sup>

For a period he helped the Rev. W. L. Morton staff his missionary training college in Adelaide whilst working in this church.

While A. J. Clarke was very used to conducting special evangelistic meetings in other ministers’ churches, and knew well the value of having a visiting preacher to conduct these meetings, he did not always insist upon conducting the special meetings himself in his own church. He knew that congregations get used to hearing their own minister, and that a visiting preacher can make an impact, even if the visitor might not be as powerful a preacher as the local minister.

At that time, there were a number of lady evangelists who toured the country holding modest but successful local campaigns. Clark supported a campaign conducted in his church by a team of two lady evangelists from the Y.W.C.A.

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<sup>117</sup> *Baptist Day-Star*. November 1893.

<sup>118</sup> H. Estcourt Hughes. *Our First Hundred Years*. The Baptist Church in South Australia. Adelaide. South Australia Baptist Union. 1937. page 313.

“The mission of Sisters Miriam and Winnie has been continued during the past week at the Carrondown Baptist Church, Hindmarsh, at the invitation of the pastor, the Rev. A. J. Clarke, and, as the services have become more widely known, better attendances have resulted. The meetings have been largely attended by young men and women, and it is with much thankfulness that we have to report the entreaties of the sisters have not been in vain. Many young men and women have been won for the church, and the ranks of the Sunday school have been considerably augmented by a number of boys and girls as the result of the sisters’ influence.”<sup>119</sup>

Evangelists from the Evangelisation Society also conducted several missions in Clarke’s church, as time passed.

In August, 1908, Clarke came to Bendigo in order to supply the pulpit, and to conduct a series of special services, at the Baptist Church, Bendigo, which was then situated in Hargreaves Street. “Mr. Clarke deals largely in his addresses with the social side of Christianity, and urges the application of Christianity to all social and industrial questions. On Sunday evening he quoted and emphasized facts and figures as to the social conditions in England. There were there, he said, 120,000 children who went breakfastless to school. There were a million mothers, working in factories for less than living wages, who were always underfed, while there were ten to eleven millions of people on the verge of starvation. These special services will continue for four or five weeks, Mr. Clarke preaching twice each Sunday, and delivering addresses nightly during the week.”<sup>120</sup>

After these weeks were over, Clarke was called by the Bendigo Church to become its pastor, and he accepted.<sup>121</sup>

In 1909, Clarke became involved with the arrangements for the Simultaneous Mission in different suburbs of Melbourne as part of the major evangelistic mission being led by the Rev. Dr. J. Wilbur Chapman and by Mr. Charles M. Alexander. Clarke was appointed to lead the mission being held in the suburb of Collingwood.

On Sunday, 4 September, 1910, Clarke announced to the Bendigo congregation that he was resigning from the pastorate, and planned to

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<sup>119</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 16 November, 1900. page 1279.

<sup>120</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 14 August, 1908. page 787.

<sup>121</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 4 September, 1908. page 859.

move back to Adelaide. By this time, Clarke was no longer a young man.<sup>122</sup>

An announcement appeared that the Rev. A. J. Clarke had returned to South Australia after some years of work in Bendigo. “The Baptist Council commends Mr. Clarke to the churches who may need a pastor or supply.”<sup>123</sup>

His name does not appear on the list of simultaneous missionaries in 1912, when Chapman’s second mission was held in Melbourne. This was probably because Clarke no longer lived in Victoria. Perhaps he was no longer enjoying sufficient good health for such work?

The Rev. Alfred J. Clarke died in South Australia in 1916.

### **Sources of Information.**

The main person to whom I am indebted for information about the first period of Clarke’s ministry before he joined the Society is Mr. Laurie Rowston, the Baptist historian from Hobart. Information about his work for the Evangelisation Society has come from the *Wesleyan Spectator*, and from the *Southern Cross*. Mr. Rowston, the office staff at Christ Church Baptist Church, Launceston, and the State Library of Tasmania, helped me to research Clarke’s pastorate in Launceston. Information about his ministry in New South Wales, South Australia and Victoria has not been covered in detail here, but could be explored in Baptist newspapers from that time.

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<sup>122</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 9 September, 1910. page 1142.

<sup>123</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 4 November, 1910. page 1397.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Arthur E. Eustace, The First Lay Evangelist.

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When the Evangelisation Society of Victoria began its operations in 1883, the first full-time evangelists were a Baptist minister, the Rev. Alfred J. Clarke, and a layman, Mr. Arthur E. Eustace. They were also joined by several part-time evangelists.

Arthur Edwin Eustace was born in Kingsbury, near London, in 1851. We know nothing of his parents or of any other family members. At about the age of 23 years he was converted to Jesus Christ in a tent mission being held in Canada Town. This mission was part of the evangelistic and social operations under the direction of Mr. Charles R. Hurditch.<sup>124</sup>

Hurditch was one of a long list of talented and enthusiastic people in the early “Plymouth” Brethren movement. He had been secretary of the Y.M.C.A. centre in Edgware Road, London, but left that position to embark upon a range of evangelistic works. He married into a well-to-do family also linked to the Brethren. His daughter said:- “He published in succession five magazines, changing their character and style according to the needs of the day. Thirteen million Gospel papers and tracts, of which he was the editor, had been issued from his office in sixteen years. He compiled two hymn-books – and was himself the composer of thirty of the hymns – which reached a circulation of over half a million. Then there were his constant preaching tours throughout England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Keen young men and women started night-schools where working people were taught to read and write, where factory girls learned to sew and cook, street urchins and hooligans were gathered into clubs where they were given free instructions in trades and hobbies. And all this ten years before

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<sup>124</sup> The basic material about his life is mainly dependent upon the Obituary Notice. *The Queensland Baptist*. May 1st, 1903. page 66.

the first Education Act, with its ultimate train of technical schools and evening-classes.”<sup>125</sup>

Three months after his conversion, Eustace was baptised at Maldon Hall, also linked to the Hurditch operation. Very quickly he became involved in evangelistic work, firstly in connection with the Congregational Church in Guildford. In 1880 he joined the Country Towns Mission, and was given charge of an “Iron Church” in Tilehurst, near the city of Reading, where he enjoyed much success. This work brought him into touch with soldiers from a barracks about two miles away. This work continued for two years until his health failed. The problem was described as “haemorrhage of the lungs.” The Mission committee sent him on a voyage to the Mediterranean for the sake of his health. Because of his contact with the soldiers at Tilehurst, he sought to minister to soldiers at both Gibraltar and Malta during this trip. When he returned to England, he appeared to be fully restored in health, and he plunged back into his work with even greater vigour, but this did not last. Another breakdown occurred and, under medical advice, he sailed for Australia in October, 1882.<sup>126</sup>

The Evangelisation Society of Victoria began operations in mid-1883, and Arthur Eustace was appointed as a full-time evangelist. The purpose of the Society was to provide an evangelist to conduct special meetings wherever requested, and to channel the converts back into the churches involved, or to the church nominated by the convert. Many of these missions were in remote areas. It seems that the missions conducted by Eustace were not reported upon so often as those conducted by Clarke, possibly because Clarke was already a well-known figure in Melbourne Baptist circles. Also Eustace seems to have been given more of the requests for missions in remote places than were allotted to Clarke.

The first of Eustace’s missions to be reported upon extensively was at Dromana, and at Bones, from September 9 to 16, 1883. “A remarkable blessing has attended these meetings; the numbers who came to them night after night surprised the most sanguine.” Because of the kind of country in which these localities existed, many people had to walk seven or eight miles “over steep and rugged mountain tracks.” It was believed that some of those who came to the meetings

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<sup>125</sup> Quoted from F. Roy Coad. *A History of the Brethren Movement*. Exeter. Paternoster Press. 1968. pages 178 – 179. See also, S. Hurditch. *Peculiar People. An Account of the Religious Experiences of C. R. Hurditch*. 1935

<sup>126</sup> *The Queensland Baptist*. Ibid.

had not attended a place of worship for many years. Members of the Bible Class were among the first to profess conversion. “Prominent and respected members of the community declared their decision for Christ and realisation of His love. Neighbours who had been at variance made peace with one another while seeking peace with God. Family worship has been begun where it was neglected.” The number of professed conversions was “highly gratifying.”<sup>127</sup>

One of his “upcountry” missions in 1884 was at Inglewood. This lasted for two weeks, ending on 3 May. There were many conversions, and here we see the first signs of Eustace’s tactic of speaking about the typology which many Christians saw in the Tabernacle in the Wilderness. The series was used during the afternoon series of Bible Readings.<sup>128</sup>

This was followed immediately by a mission at Wedderburn, but the longest and most interesting description we have of the one of Eustace’s country missions comes from the one which followed that, and which was written by Eustace himself. It occurred at Menzies’ Creek, in the Dandenongs, which was then very much in the country, with all the difficulties of travel which that implied.

“on Wednesday 21st May [1884] I left Melbourne... As the road to Fern-tree Gully is fairly well known, nothing need be said concerning it, save to mention the need that exists of a better conveyance than that which is now in use from Oakleigh station. The horses are old and worn out – quite unfit for the work – while the driver on this occasion was a boy who used both his whip and his oaths with great freedom. On arriving at Fern-tree Gully a saddle horse awaited me as arranged, and here the journey really commenced. My guide, who carried my luggage strapped on his horse’s back, told me he had nine miles to go, and we started up the steep mountain track rising range upon range in front of us, the scenery around being really grand.

After some three hours travelling we arrived in sight of the place where the meetings were to be held, a State School house, which after a considerable amount of trouble the Board of Advice consented to let us use at a small charge per night. Another half-hour and we were at the summit of the highest peak, 2000 feet above the sea, and at the house

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<sup>127</sup> *Southern Cross*. Saturday, 6 October, 1883 page 6, and *Spectator*. 28 September, 1883. page 260.

<sup>128</sup> *Southern Cross*. Saturday, 24 May, 1884. page 13.

of the lady who had sent in the application, the journey having taken eight hours, and here I was to stay during my visit. I found the state of the district truly pitiful; no church nearer than Fern-tree Gully, nine miles off, and during the past six years three religious services of any description had been held. This, with a population of one hundred people, and within thirty miles of the great city of Melbourne! One old gentleman said, 'We are almost savages up here; we were beginning to forget there was either a God or devil.'

The school is about two miles from where I stayed, and each night this two miles each way had to be travelled over a track very steep, rough and muddy, and being wet and no moon, it was intensely dark; so that it was quite impossible to find our way without a light of some sort. Under these circumstances, our only recourse was the bush lantern (a bottle with the bottom knocked out and a candle dropped in). The wind being up, this light kept blowing out, and every few steps it was necessary to stop and light it again; and even with a light it was impossible to keep out of the mud-holes, which are in many cases knee deep. Considering that the roads were all alike, fearfully bad, and many of the houses four, five and six miles away, it was a pleasing sight, on arriving at the place of the meeting to find it half full and others coming in. The attention given to the address amply repaid one for the trouble taken to get there.

The following evening people had arrived from four and five miles distance at six o'clock, though the meeting was not advertised to commence till half past seven. The people said they wanted to be in time to get a seat. During the service many could be seen listening to the 'old, old story' with the tears coursing down their cheeks, and at the close, on my asking any anxious ones to remain behind for private conversation, ten stayed, and ere they left, accepted Christ as their Saviour, of whom in some cases that night they had heard it for the first time. Each night the interest increased, until everyone within a radius of seven miles had attended the meetings, and some of the oldest inhabitants said they had no idea so many people could be found on the mountain.

On Sunday, notwithstanding it was both wet and cold, the afternoon meeting was packed, and most of the people stayed to the evening meeting. From 2.30 to 9 o'clock we had indeed one continual meeting, the school being so crowded that there was not standing room.

Many attended who had not been to a church for many years, and some who had been enemies now had become reconciled. On Saturday we had a blue ribbon meeting, which was also crowded, and some seventy signed the pledge and donned the blue, among them some both men and women whose great curse had been strong drink.

Without any exaggeration it may be said this mission has been one of the greatest successes of the Society, for it has placed the gospel before a people, who were in almost total ignorance of spiritual things, and also left many who were in darkness, rejoicing in the Light of God's countenance, and looking forward with joy to another mission, which I have been invited to conduct in September next. To God be all the glory!"<sup>129</sup>

The coming return mission in Menzies' Creek that he mentions actually commenced on 23 November.

This first Menzies' Creek mission was followed by a mission of one week in Rutherglen, starting on 1 June, where, it was believed, that "fully 50 or 60 were truly converted." Short missions were also held at Wahgunyah and Corowa.<sup>130</sup>

A little later, Eustace visited Port Campbell for a week. A great deal of interest was awakened, "a good number" of enquirers were dealt with, and more conversions occurred after Eustace left. They wanted him to come back after Christmas, when the roads would be in better condition.<sup>131</sup>

An eight days' mission at Yandoit started on Sunday 13 July, when Eustace preached in the afternoon at Clydesdale, and at the evening at the Wesleyan Church, Yandoit. The Sunday services were crowded, and the week evening meetings were "well attended." Many people had to travel five or six miles in "dark nights," which meant there was no moon, and probably no stars. Again there were complaints that the mission was too short. They wanted him to come back as soon as the proposed new Public Hall was available.

A mission at Prahran commenced on Sunday, 27 July, for eight days. This venture into suburban Melbourne must have seemed strange to Eustace, after being given so many country missions, and visits to isolated places. Eustace and his wife were entertained for tea by the local workers on the Saturday evening, before he held a Blue Ribbon

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<sup>129</sup> *Southern Cross*. 7 June, 1884. pages 12 – 13.

<sup>130</sup> *Southern Cross*. Saturday, 28 June, 1884. page 12.

<sup>131</sup> *Southern Cross*. Saturday, 19 July, 1884, page 12.

meeting. Holding a temperance meeting on the Saturday evening had become almost standard practice for him.<sup>132</sup>

One of the return missions occurred in the later part of October. This was in Wedderburn. The meetings this time were held in the Miners' Institute. As usual, the numbers attending increased during the mission. This time, more than 300 attended the closing service. Eustace had initiated the Blue Ribbon Army during his first visit. After the Saturday night Temperance meeting on this occasion, the total number of people wearing the Blue Ribbon rose to 300. From Wedderburn, Eustace and his wife left for a series of missions in the Echuca area, including Patho, Gisborne and Riddell's Creek, where his efforts were very much appreciated.<sup>133</sup>

Through 1885 Arthur Eustace worked steadily for the Society. Although only a few reports of his activities appeared in print.

He commenced a short mission at Pirron Yaloak on 6 September, 1885. A brief report on this mission says that Arthur Eustace "possesses uncommon power for applying the truth. His addresses are of such a nature as are calculated to awaken the 'dead in trespasses and sins' to a sense of their guilt, and also to establish believers. Moreover, because of their argumentative force, they are especially adapted to disarm sceptical minds, and in them the plan of salvation is so simply, and yet so powerfully displayed, that a child may comprehend it; and its claims and benefits appear irresistible." He commenced a mission in Camperdown on 13 Sept.<sup>134</sup>

On 11 October, he commenced a two weeks' mission in the Pornborneit church, as part of a series of missions he held through the district. The Holy "Spirit's power was manifestly seen and felt – slumbering sinners were aroused – believers were refreshed, and we trust and believe that the result of Mr. Eustace's mission to the above-named districts will be a rich harvest of souls." The locals were very impressed, and immediately invited him to extend his work in a nearby area called Irrewillipe East, which was only a few miles away. Here also the results were good. "Some who have not been in the habit of attending any church, have listened night after night to the evangelist's

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<sup>132</sup> *Southern Cross*. 2 August, 1884. page 12.

<sup>133</sup> *Southern Cross*. 1 November, 1884, page 13; 15 November, page 12; 6 December, page 13, and 20 December, 1884, page 13.

<sup>134</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 18 September, 1885. page 16.

message. A number have professed to accept Christ as their Saviour, whilst others we believe are anxious.<sup>135</sup>

Eustace commenced a mission in Bambra on Sunday, 5 December, 1885, lasting for nearly two weeks. “Not only were souls born again, but believers have been strengthened and the whole district generally blessed, some of whom have walked eight miles to the services.” But there were so many who still were undecided, and “halting between two opinions,” that they required him to return again soon for another fortnight of meetings.<sup>136</sup>

During March, 1886, there was a return visit paid to Yandoit. In these meetings, several people professed conversion, “and also God’s people have been stirred up to greater devotedness and earnestness in Christian work.”<sup>137</sup>

On Sunday, 11 April, he commenced a mission at Anakie. A few weeks later, in the report on this mission, the name of the place appeared differently. At Anatuie, the State school room was used for the mission. In this one week mission, Eustace used pictures and diagrams of the Tabernacle in the Wilderness in the evening meetings on Thursday and Friday, to a crowded room of people.<sup>138</sup>

These meetings were followed by a mission in the villages of Bolac and Wickcliffe, starting on 9 May. One week was spent in each place. The weather was very rough, but the attendances were exceptionally good and improved each night, and there was good local enthusiasm and support. A number remained each night for the counselling session after the service. Many of the Bolac people travelled across to Wickcliffe to support the later meetings. “The mission throughout was a decided success. Mr. Eustace’s method of presenting truth was much appreciated, and many will not easily forget his pointed illustrations and practical remarks.” The reporter expected to make another report in six months time to speak about the lasting results of the mission.<sup>139</sup>

The Church leaders in those days did not see any problem in having evangelistic missions one after the other within a district, although, some decades later it was viewed as a disincentive. The

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<sup>135</sup> *Southern Cross*. 6 November, 1885. page 16, and 27 November, 1885. page 16.

<sup>136</sup> *Southern Cross*. January 1, 1886. page 16.

<sup>137</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 2 April, 1886, page 17, and 16 April, page 17.

<sup>138</sup> *Southern Cross*. 30 April, 1886. page 17.

<sup>139</sup> *Southern Cross*. 28 May, 1886. page 12.

township of Hamilton saw three missions occur within its boundaries during 1886. Late in April, Edward Isaac, the young Baptist evangelist, led a mission there. The E.S.V. is not mentioned in connection with this mission, so it may not have been held under the auspices of the Evangelisation Society. Mr. Isaac had led missions for the E.S.V. a few years beforehand. This was followed almost immediately by another mission led by Mr. A. C. M'Donald, which lasted for four weeks, which may have been more linked to the Presbyterians<sup>140</sup>

Arthur Eustace went to Hamilton for a mission which started on Sunday, 19 September. The mission started on Sunday afternoon with a Sunday school children's meeting in the Town Hall. It was "literally packed," and the children listened "with great attention." While the Sunday evening meeting was also held in the Town Hall, the week-day evening meetings, and afternoon Bible readings, were all held in the Temperance Hall. "At the close of each service many anxious souls came forward to seek mercy, and were enabled to go away rejoicing in the happy assurance that they had found Christ. The majority of the new converts are Church-going people, which should materially add to the memberships of the various churches. Again, on Saturday evening, Eustace held a Temperance meeting, resulting in a number of pledges being signed."<sup>141</sup>

After conducting a few missions in 1887, Arthur Eustace developed a re-occurrence of his health problem, and he had to retire from his evangelistic work with the Evangelisation Society.<sup>142</sup>

### **The Queensland Kanaka Mission.**

The Kanakas were indentured labourers who came from various Pacific Islands to work in the sugar cane fields of northern Queensland in the later decades of the Nineteenth Century. The islanders were considered to be able to work hard and to withstand the heat and humidity of tropical sugar cane plantations better than white people. In some instances, the sailors who went to get them kidnapped them, and this practice was called "blackbirding." In some instances the farmers abused them, and treated them like slaves. But many other sailors and farmers were more responsible and honest in their treatment of the

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<sup>140</sup> *Southern Cross*. 7 May, 1886, page 17, and

<sup>141</sup> *Southern Cross*. 8 October, 1886. page 15.

<sup>142</sup> *Southern Cross*. 8 July, 1887. page 535.

Kanakas. They were contracted to work in Queensland for three years, were paid in some adequate way, and then were returned to their island home. A good many came back for a second three years.

In the year 1886 Miss Florence Young, of Bundaberg, Queensland, founded the Queensland Kanaka Mission in order to bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ to as many of the Kanakas as possible. Florence later went to China as a missionary, but is looked upon as the founder of the Kanaka Mission, and of the South Seas Evangelical Mission, which flowed from it later on, when the Kanakas were repatriated, and the indentured labour programme was finally closed down in 1905.<sup>143</sup>

The first donation of money to help kick off the Mission was given by George Muller of Bristol, when he was visiting Sydney in 1886.

The Kanaka Mission published Annual Reports containing details of their activities, and reports from missionaries. The Financial Statements ran from 1st October to 30th September, with the First Annual Statement closing on 30th September, 1887.

The first missionary employed by the Kanaka Mission was Mr. C. F. Johnson, who had been a missionary in Africa for some years, but who had come to Sydney through Harley House in London. He and his wife started work in January, 1887, visiting some farms in North Bundaberg. The tropical wet season through January to March made work very difficult, but he was well received by farmers and by the Kanakas. Many Kanakas attended his evening classes, although for some time he had trouble making himself understood, because the Kanakas had developed a kind of "Pigeon-English" language of their own.

Arthur Eustace and his wife and family joined this mission in October, 1887. They commenced work just in time for their names to be mentioned at the end of the First Annual Report, but details of their salaries do not begin to appear until the following year.<sup>144</sup>

Each missionary conducted nine or ten classes per week. Some "boys" walked several miles to attend them. These classes were for both religious and evangelistic purposes, but were also classes for reading and writing.

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<sup>143</sup> She tells her story in Florence S. H. Young. *Pearls from the Pacific*. London. Marshall, Morgan and Scott. About 1924.

<sup>144</sup> Queensland Kanaka Mission. First Annual Report. Page 3.

Upon the arrival of the Eustace family, the area which Johnson covered was divided, and Eustace took over an area around a place called Kalkie, where the Eustace home was situated.

Almost from the beginning there were professions of conversion. On New Year's Day, 1888, 30 new converts from Johnson's class were baptised by the local Anglican minister. On 10 June, 1888, Eustace baptised 63 people from Johnson's classes, and on 24 June, Johnson baptised 16 from Eustace's classes. Candidates for baptism were well instructed, and evidence of the new birth was watched for. Both Eustace and Johnson covered a large area and held classes. In his first full year, Eustace led 444 classes, and Mrs. Eustace led two weekly classes in her home.. The average attendance at each class varied from place to place. In Hummock, for example, Eustace conducted 84 classes through the year, at which the average attendance was 68. Johnson covered slightly more locations, and had higher average attendances.<sup>145</sup>

Soon, Eustace was leading Gospel services on Sunday evening for the white population of East Bundaberg, but apparently he was not paid for this work.

Funds for the Mission came in very slowly during the first half of 1889. Mr. Johnson agreed to accept a lower wage. At the end of June, however, Eustace left Bundaberg looking for another job, but leaving his wife and family at Kalkie, where she continued the work she had been doing. It seems, however, that Mrs. Eustace must also have left at some stage. Mr. A. A. Martin took Eustace's place, starting in September, and leading the Kanaka classes up until 16 March, 1890, when he left.

Eustace spent a little over a year in Victoria, and returned by 11 September, 1890. An arrangement was then made so that an increased income for the Eustace family could be achieved. The family was still growing in number. Mr. and Mrs Eustace were blessed with six daughters. The arrangement was that Mrs. Eustace would conduct the classes on Sunday, which allowed Arthur to be free to take on pastoral work and preaching around Bundaberg, and thus earn some more money. Also "...for months the Christian boys at Kalkie were, of their own accord, praying that Mr. and Mrs. Eustace might return."<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> Queensland Kanaka Mission. Second Annual Report (ending Sept. 1888). pages 1 – 2, and 8.

<sup>146</sup> Third Annual Report. (ending 30 September, 1890.) pages 6 – 7, and Fourth Annual Report (ending 30 Sept. 1891.), pages 3 – 4.

During the year covered by the Fifth Annual Report, 110 men and 14 women were baptised. The capacity of the Mission school room at Kalkie had to be enlarged, and soon would seat 350, but even that was not enough. During this year, the Mission finances must have improved, because Arthur Eustace gave up the Sunday work outside the Mission, and gave his full time to the Kanakas. At this stage the number of Kanakas who worked in the Bundaberg area had grown slowly to 3,000. Classes were also being led by converted Kanakas, as well as by the missionaries.<sup>147</sup>

In the following year, 139 men and 16 women were baptised. Eustace provided extensive reports upon the maturity of some of the Kanaka Christians, and on their ability as teachers.<sup>148</sup>

On 12 May, 1893, Eustace saw 73 of the Kalkie men and women baptised in the Burnett River, and by September 45 others were attending classes in preparation for baptism. He also reported about several of the Christian Kanakas who bore their triumphant Christian testimony as they lay dying in the Bundaberg Hospital. Towards the end of the year, Arthur was seriously ill, and had to go to Sydney in search of his health. The number of Kanakas who had been baptised since the start of the Mission in 1886 had now reached the total number of 852.<sup>149</sup>

The Eighth Annual Report reproduced a short history of the events which led up to the beginnings of the Mission. Florence Young arrived in Bundaberg in 1882 to live with her brothers, and soon became challenged to do something for the Kanakas. Missionaries struggled to enter overseas countries to evangelise the people, often facing health problems and logistical issues of enormous proportions. But, here, the Islanders had come to Queensland. Thousands of them worked in a variety of cane growing areas along the coast. And there was not one missionary seeking to teach them. So, a start was made, and within a few years, there had been several conversions. One man in particular, named Jimmie Aoba, was converted and became deeply concerned for the conversion of his countrymen. His name signified that in Queensland he was called Jimmie, and that he came from the island of Aoba in the New Hebrides – now known as Vanuatu. Jimmie died in 1885, but his prayers led to the conversions of twelve Aoba

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<sup>147</sup> Queensland Kanaka Mission. Fifth Annual Report (ending 30 Sept. 1891). pages 4 – 6.

<sup>148</sup> Queensland Kanaka Mission. Sixth Annual Report (ending 30 Sept. 1892.), pages 8 – 10.

<sup>149</sup> Queensland Kanaka Mission. Seventh Annual Report. (ending September, 1893). pages 6 – 9.

boys, and five from other islands. This is what led to the effort to employ missionaries to teach the New Testament to those Kanakas who wished to learn about it, and, therefore, the establishment of the Q. K. M.

By September, 1894, when this Eighth Report was published, the average attendance each week at classes run by the Mission was between 1,500 and 2,000, and 902 men and women had been baptised. There were also good signs of increasing concern by some of the Christian Kanakas to evangelise their own people, upon their return to their island homes.<sup>150</sup>

The mid-1890s saw a significant enlargement in the number of missionaries working with this Mission amongst the Kanakas. The Ninth Annual Report proved to be the last Report to which Arthur Eustace would contribute, although he did not know it at the time. It is an enthusiastic report by him. He was very keen about the teachers he had trained. They had a prayer meeting and Christian fellowship every Saturday evening. Eustace began a special series of Bible Studies for them as well. "Early in the year I was led to commence an advanced class for these teachers on Sunday mornings, to give them a deeper knowledge of the word of God. As the first object of our teaching is that these Boys may be truly converted to God, and the second to fit them to become missionaries, we do not always choose the most intelligent of them for this class, but those whose consistent lives prove their Christianity. Only those in whom we are confident, and who have passed through the reading class led by Mrs. Eustace, are allowed to attend."

These were the men who provided the best examples of Christian leadership amongst the Kanakas. Eustace knew and saw the results of the prayers of these men, and the Christian graciousness of their characters, and their gentlemanly behaviour.<sup>151</sup>

The Tenth Annual Report said fairly briefly that early in November, 1895, Eustace's health failed. Through the kindness of a ship owner, Eustace went on a sea trip to the New Hebrides, returning by February. In his absence, Mrs. Eustace helped a substitute missionary. The classes were so well attended that the Kalkie classroom had to be enlarged again, now seating over 400. Although

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<sup>150</sup> Queensland Kanaka Mission. Eighth Annual Report. pages 3 – 10.

<sup>151</sup> Queensland Kanaka Mission. Ninth Annual Report. pages 7 - 9.

his health was greatly benefited by this sea trip, Eustace and his wife retired from the mission.

“We are deeply thankful for all that God has done through them in the past, and now that He has seen fit to remove them, we rejoice that he has in His faithfulness sent forth other servants to carry on His work.”<sup>152</sup>

### **Final Years of Ministry.**

Arthur Eustace wanted to go to live on the island of Malaita as a missionary, but medical advice prevented it. His health was becoming an increasing problem, restricting him in a number of ways.

In January, 1897, he was settled as the Pastor of the Baptist Church at Hendra in Queensland, and he became a Baptist minister. He worked in this position for two years. After that he moved to be Pastor at Rosewood, but he was only able to hold that position for a few weeks, when he suddenly accepted an invitation to return to the work that he loved most – working amongst the Kanakas. This appointment was under the direction of the Presbyterian Church in the town of Mackay. The Rev. J. M. McIntyre had been forced to take an extended holiday, and Eustace was asked to fill in for him. Because of his Baptist views, it was agreed that Eustace would not be required to do anything with which he did not agree. Two more years were spent at Mackay and at Ayr. In March, 1901, he returned to Brisbane, and after supplying at the Tiaro Church for three months, he accepted a plan to return to Bundaberg, but this time under the auspices of the Baptist Home Mission Committee. But his health was steadily declining. And after twelve months, the Committee closed the Station.

By the end of September, 1902, Arthur Eustace was no longer able to preach, and had very great difficulty in getting around at all. He was suffering from “locomotor ataxia.” After six months of suffering, he passed away on 6 April, 1903, and was buried in the Nundah Cemetery.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Queensland Kanaka Mission. Tenth Annual Report. (ending 30 September, 1896). pages 28 – 29.

<sup>153</sup> *The Queensland Baptist*. May 1st, 1903. page 66.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Early Part Time Evangelists.

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**James Samuel Harrison** was one of the first part time evangelists to work for the Evangelisation Society of Victoria, starting in 1883, and for two years following.

The information presented here about J. S. Harrison is almost entirely dependent upon research carried out by Mr. Laurie Rowston, the Baptist historian in Hobart. His research is more detailed and complete than what I have used here. It is presented here with his permission.

James S. Harrison was born in Marylebone, London, in 1851. By his nineteenth year he lived in Swansea, and was nominally an Anglican. He was invited to attend a mission service in the old theatre, where the preacher was Oscar T. Snelling. He embraced the evangelical Christian faith, and sought adult baptism.

He moved to Bristol, and joined the assembly where George Muller was a pastor. At age 22 years, he became aware of a calling to devote his life to declaring the Gospel. For three years he preached in churches in the surrounding English counties. For two of these years he travelled with H. K. Moore. Together they saw many hundreds of conversions. He entered Spurgeon's College in 1877, and after two years study he accepted a temporary pastorate in Blackburn.

He was invited to travel to Australia with the young Thomas Spurgeon and with his College friend, R. McCullough. He arrived in Tasmania in January, 1880, and began preaching in the Town Hall in Deloraine, with such results that a Baptist Church was soon formed, and a church built. He decided, however, that his calling was to do evangelistic work, and not to be a pastor.

He asked his friend, Edward Isaac, to join him in evangelistic work in Australia, including some work they did together in Queensland. He returned briefly to England in 1882, but the English climate did not suit him. He soon returned to Australia in 1883, firstly to conduct a mission with Thomas Spurgeon in Auckland, but then

returning to Victoria. He did mission work in various parts of Australia. This period of a few years was the time when he worked on a part time or casual basis for the Evangelisation Society in Victoria, but he also conducted other missions in other parts of the country.

In 1885 he married Anna, who was a few years older than he. They were married in the Launceston Baptist Tabernacle. Then in 1885 he became pastor of the Aberdeen Street Baptist Church in Geelong for two years, but his health did not remain good. The couple returned to England in 1887, where he did more evangelistic work, until his health collapsed in 1891, and he had to rest for a year. He continued evangelistic work in England through to 1903 at least. It is not clear to me exactly what he did after this period, but he eventually returned to Victoria. He accepted the pastorate of the Baptist Church at West Hawthorn in 1927, and held that until he died there on 30 November, 1935. His wife had already died in 1921, perhaps while he still lived in London.<sup>154</sup>

**Edward Isaac** was born in Bristol on 29 August, 1856. He was educated at Bristol Grammar School. His father was for many years a deacon at Bethesda Chapel where George Muller ministered for over half a century. Edward made a commitment of his life to Christ at the age of fifteen years. He moved to London in order to work, and in due course entered the Pastor's College linked to the Metropolitan Tabernacle. He left the College in 1881, and came to Australia to work with J. S. Harrison.

In the years from his arrival through to 1885, Harrison and Isaac led missions in many places, mainly in Baptist churches or proto-Baptist gatherings. The first was at West Melbourne Baptist church, and then at Collingwood. The next mission, at Aberdeen Street Church in Geelong resulted in a minor revival, wherein about 300 people professed conversion, including many from outside the churches. The tour in parts of Queensland lasted for three months. It was during this general period that Isaac was involved in several missions under the auspices of the Evangelisation Society of Victoria.

Edward Isaac became pastor at the Brunswick Baptist Church in Melbourne, which lasted for ten years. He married in 1885 at the

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<sup>154</sup> All from Mr. Laurie Rowston's material. Personal communication, except for the date of his starting the West Hawthorn pastorate, which is from F. J. Wilkin, *Baptists in Victoria*. page 131.

Brunswick Church. This pastorate was followed by a period at Fitzroy Baptist Church. The Fitzroy pastorate began in January, 1895, and lasted for about nine years. Following this, he went on a long trip to Palestine, Great Britain and Europe. He returned to Tasmania to be the pastor of the Reed Memorial Church in Launceston. This pastorate lasted from 1905 to 1910. The Reed Memorial Church was completely independent, and did not join the Baptist Union until 1935. From there he returned to Melbourne to be pastor of the Williamstown Baptist Church, and then for the last few years of his active ministry, he was pastor of the Baptist Church in Albert Street, Melbourne. He was no longer able to preach after about August, 1918, as a result of the illness which led to his death some months later.<sup>155</sup>

During the 1890s Edward Isaac was a member of the Melbourne Ministers' Prayer Band, praying for a "great" revival. He was secretary of the Band after the death of John MacNeil in 1896. He was also heavily involved in the founding and running of the Geelong Convention for the Deepening of the Christian life, and spoke at it many times.

### **Their Work for the Evangelisation Society.**

Information about the missions which Harrison and/or Isaac led for the Evangelisation Society of Victoria is quite limited.

For example, "The agents of the Evangelisation Society have been actively employed during the month. The Rev. J. H. Mitchell... conducted a week's mission at Horsham. This was continued by Messrs Harrison and Isaac on Mr. Mitchell's departure to open his [pastoral] ministry at Williamstown. Mr. Harrison has conducted a mission in Portland."<sup>156</sup>

Harrison went to lead a mission at Newstead. The response was very good, and about eighty people made professions of conversions to Christ.<sup>157</sup> The Newstead people wanted to continue the mission, but Harrison had another commitment. Instead, Edward Isaac went to conduct another mission for them, as a continuation.

"Mr. Edward Isaac has now finished a mission following the one commenced by Mr. J. S. Harrison in Newstead. The Lord has continued to make His power manifested in the salvation of souls more

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<sup>155</sup> All the biographical information about Edward Isaac was supplied by Mr. Laurie Rowston.

<sup>156</sup> *Southern Cross*, 24 November, 1883. page 6.

<sup>157</sup> *Southern Cross*, Saturday, 3 May, 1884. page 13.

#### 4. Early Part-time Evangelists.

or less during the whole mission. During the first week in the Mechanic's Hall a large number professed to receive Christ. The second week, owing to the hall being occupied, we were obliged to repair to the Baptist Church, which was not well accommodated for inquirers, as it has no vestry, but even then on the second Sunday about eleven came out on the Lord's side. Although very wet towards the close of the mission the services were well attended. Some walked three, four, and five miles, all through mud and rain. Mr. Isaac's labors have been very much appreciated, both in the gathering in of the unsaved, and in establishing and strengthening of the converts. Before the mission there was not a professedly Christian young man living here, whereas now there are quite a number who have vacated the billiard and drinking places, and are directing all their energies to save their remaining unsaved companions. The outcome of the work has been a Blue Ribbon mission. The effect is seen by the publicans looking exceedingly dejected. Some confirmed drunkards have signed, and some have been saved. The Blue Ribbon mission here has been a great aid to the Gospel work, the first decision for the right being to wear the blue. We would also state, as an encouragement to pray, that no good results appeared until the friends met and prayed from 10 to 12.30 on Good Friday evening, and prayed till they obtained the answer that God would save them.”<sup>158</sup>

“A most successful six days' mission has just closed at Heyfield. In answer to a request, the Evangelisation Society sent Bro. J. S. Harrison, and God blessed his work. On the first evening (Sunday, April 17th) ten came forward to the penitent form, and before closing the meeting all professed to find peace; and every evening except one, sinners were found at the penitent form, seeking salvation through Christ.”<sup>159</sup>

“A new mission hall at Kew was opened on the 18th inst. [May, 1884], by the Rev. A. J. Clarke, of the Evangelisation Society. Services were continued each evening during the week. Mr. Clarke conducted the services on Monday and Tuesday, Major Barker on Wednesday, and Rev. J. H. Mitchell on Thursday and Friday. The services are to be continued another week. Mrs. A. J. Clarke or Mr. J.

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<sup>158</sup> *Southern Cross*, Saturday, 17 May, page 13.

<sup>159</sup> *Southern Cross*, Saturday, 10 May, 1884. page 12.

S. Harrison will give addresses each night. Several have decided for Christ, but we are expecting greater things.”<sup>160</sup>

“A correspondent thus writes:- From May 25th to June 1st, special evangelistic services have been held in the Oddfellows’ Hall, Strangeways near Castlemaine, by Mr. E. Isaac of the Evangelisation Society. The glorious work done a few weeks ago by Messrs. Harrison and Isaac raised our expectations high, but they were far exceeded by the success which followed. Night after night the people poured in for miles around. The interest and power deepened with every service. At the farewell service on Sunday night the Hall was crammed. About thirty came forward as enquirers and professed to accept Christ as their saviour, making the total for the week up to between 70 and 80 precious souls, we trust won for the Master. On Saturday evening 77 took the Blue Ribbon. The feeling with many on Sunday night was, that the mission ought to have continued longer, as the neighbourhood has never been so stirred before. Owing to the failure of the Oriental Bank, (branch of which was at Newstead) it has considerably crippled the pecuniary resources of the people, but nevertheless, we shall be able to send about eight pounds to the Society.”<sup>161</sup>

One of the missions conducted for the Evangelisation Society by J. S. Harrison was held in the country town of Talbot. It was most successful, with about 120 people professing to find Christ during the fortnight of the mission.<sup>162</sup>

“Mr. J. S. Harrison, evangelist, has just concluded a most successful mission at Talbot, where he has been for a fortnight. The power of the Holy Ghost was strongly manifested throughout, and at the close upwards of 120 souls professed to have received Christ. Moreover, the Christians have been so stirred that a united prayer meeting has been begun, and is well attended. This mission will be remembered with pleasure and thankfulness to God for having so abundantly blessed the evangelist’s preaching. The committee will be enabled to forward fifteen pounds to the Evangelisation Society, retaining five pounds to continue the work, for which an evangelist will be required. We may add that this Society is doing incalculable good, and should be liberally supported by all who desire to see Christ’s

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<sup>160</sup> *Southern Cross*, Saturday, 31 May, 1884. page 12.

<sup>161</sup> *Southern Cross*, Saturday, 7 June, 1884. page 12.

<sup>162</sup> *Methodist Journal*. 18 July, 1884. page 5.

kingdom advanced. We commend it to our wealthy friends in Christ.”<sup>163</sup>

“Mr. E. Isaac has conducted a series of very successful evangelistic services at Talbot. Though the nights have been stormy and moonless, the people have shown their deep earnestness and genuine practical sympathy by turning out in large numbers, and the hearts of God’s people have been gladdened by seeing enquirers coming forward to confess Christ.”<sup>164</sup>

This second mission in Talbot seems to have followed Harrison’s mission by a month or so.

The quarterly report of the Evangelisation Society for September, 1884, said that of the twelve missions which had been held during the previous three months, only one was led by Mr. Harrison (the Talbot mission). The other eleven were led by the permanently employed evangelists, Clarke and Eustace.<sup>165</sup>

## 1902.

As mentioned, the Rev. Edward Isaac took three pastorates in Melbourne over the following years, which contained a good sprinkling of efforts at mass evangelism. After that time, regarding his links with the Evangelisation Society, we find that he was involved in the 1902 Simultaneous Mission in the suburbs of Melbourne, which constituted the first half of the big campaign led by the American evangelists, R. A. Torrey and Charles M. Alexander. Isaac was allocated to lead the mission in the suburb of Preston.

He also took a share in the country missions which came in the second half of 1902. He led the missions in Beechworth, Echuca, and Tatura. There may have been other missions as well, but towards the end of the year he led a united mission in Ararat.

The Methodist minister at Ararat, the Rev. Percy Bladen, provided a report.

“The Rev. E. Isaac was the missionary, and the service of Mr. Hosking as solo singer and conductor of the choir proved a very attractive feature. The Churches which united in the mission were the Methodist, Presbyterian and Salvation Army. The services were held in the Protestant Hall, and were well attended. The interest in them

<sup>163</sup> *Southern Cross*, 12 July, 1884. page 13

<sup>164</sup> *Southern Cross*, 30 August, 1884. page 12.

<sup>165</sup> *Spectator*, 31 October, 1884. page 310.

#### 4. Early Part-time Evangelists.

deepened as the time went on, Mr. Isaac's addresses were characterised by intense earnestness, and the message as sung by Mr. Hosking, formed a fitting accompaniment.

There was no great and general breakdown, but a steady work went on, and no meeting was held which did not see decisions for Christ. In all, some sixty persons definitely yielded to Christ, and signified their determination to live and work in the Sunday-schools. The work of God here has received a stimulus and an inspiration as the result of the mission, and we praise God for it."<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> *Southern Cross*, 5 December, 1902. page 1358.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Mr. Robert Robertson – the Longest-serving Lay Evangelist.

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Mr. Robert Robertson's career working for the Evangelisation Society of Victoria began in 1885 as a part-time preacher, a little before the second annual meeting. He came on to the full time staff probably in 1886. When the Rev. A. J. Clarke resigned in March, 1887, and Mr. Arthur Eustace resigned in July, 1887, Robertson was suddenly the senior evangelist for the Society. He worked steadily for the Society until the end of 1901, when he resigned from the staff of the Society in order to work for Mr. Ebenezer Vickery's committee conducting tent missions in the country towns of New South Wales. Following the end of this arrangement at the end of 1903, he spent a year visiting some of the towns in New South Wales where he had worked, and other towns which had missed out on Vickery's plan. After about 1905 he worked as a freelance evangelist, often visiting remote farms and stations.

#### **His Early Years with the Society – 1885 to 1891.**

As mentioned, his name appears first as a part time evangelist in the Second Annual Report of the Society in **1885**, but no details are given.<sup>167</sup>

Perhaps because of the fact that he was a little known lay preacher, the first published record of his work in **1886** contains a mistake in the way his name is written – Mr. Robert Robinson. Already he had learned to work hard, visit the homes of the people, and seek to win converts to Christ through personal conversation as a method undergirding his preaching. The mission was held at Warrion, near Colac. The meetings were held in the local school room. The ministerial staff seems to have been one home missionary, with lay help. "Much enthusiasm and religious fervour prevailed. Brother

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<sup>167</sup> *Spectator*. 11 September, 1885. page 446.

Robinson left no stone unturned by way of visiting the outlying places during the day, Bible in hand. Several station employees have been brought in during the mission. We had a capital Blue Ribbon meeting on Saturday evening, the 1st, the chair being taken by W. Reid, Esq., Melrose, who donned the blue for the first time, and also made an effective speech in favour of total abstinence.” Fourteen pledge were taken. It was very much a combined effort. “Brother Robinson made his way into the local grog shanty, Bible in hand, and had prayer therein. This place has been one of the worst in the whole district. Two of the inmates were converted under Mr. Robinson.” Eighteen people professed conversion, which included Presbyterians, Church of Englanders, Wesleyans, and one Catholic. From Warrion he went to Ondit for a few days, and to Beeac for eight days.<sup>168</sup> The report from Beeac showed that people were convinced that Robertson was called by God to this work, and had suitable gifts for this work as well.

Robertson went to Lower Tambo to conduct a mission, but became ill.

“The committee of the Evangelisation Society of Victoria has just received the following interesting report of the labours of one of their evangelists in the Lakes districts:- ‘Mr. R. Robertson began a mission on the Lower Tambo on Wednesday, the 2<sup>nd</sup> of February [1887]. It was not until the Sunday night following that any results were seen; eleven inquirers then came forward, some of whom went away rejoicing in Jesus. Mr. R. Robertson was taken ill, and was unable to attend the meetings on Monday and Tuesday. The Monday meeting was conducted by the Rev. Mr. Gunson, with the result that seven fresh inquirers came out, the greater part professing to venture themselves for time and for eternity upon the living Jesus. Tuesday’s meeting was led by Mr. Hallier, who was teacher on the Lake Tyers Mission Station some years ago. Two seekers came forward at the close of this service.’”<sup>169</sup>

Around the middle of the year he led a mission in Cavendish, from which there came a “glowing report.”

“A gracious work of God is going on in the Cavendish charge. We have been favoured by the Evangelisation Society, by the presence of one of their agents, Mr. Robertson, who has been, and is yet,

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<sup>168</sup> *Spectator*. 22 May, 1886. page 238. Also, *Southern Cross*. 11 June, 1886. page 12. The wrong spelling of his name appeared only in the *Spectator* version of the report.

<sup>169</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 4 March, 1887. page 175.

labouring amongst us with marked success. Since it was known amongst us that the society had acceded to my request, and had promised to send one of their agents, the members of my weekly class, that meet together for Scriptural instruction and prayer, have earnestly pleaded that the Great Head of the Church would send us a man of the Barnabas stamp – ‘full of faith and of the Holy Ghost,’ and our prayers have been answered – ah, and beyond our expectations. The presence and power of the Holy Spirit have been manifest in every meeting. Strong men, who have long lived in sin and in utter disregard of God, have bowed themselves humbly before Him. I have sought His mercy. Many of the self-righteous have been stripped of their boasted covering, and have humbly sought the righteousness which is obtained by faith in Christ Jesus; and, at a testimony meeting in the Cavendish Church, oh, how refreshing it was to hear what the Lord had done for them. And the Sabbath-school children have been influenced by the spiritual wave sweeping over us. Addressing them last Sabbath afternoon, oh, how delightful it was and cheering – not only to see their earnest attention, but to hear their intelligent replies to questions relative to the ‘new heart,’ which God has promised; and then, when asked, has the Lord Jesus given any of you ‘new hearts?’ to see quite a number of them rising with bright and beaming faces to indicate that He had given them the great blessing. One of these, a clear, intelligent girl, of ten summers, slipped a paper into her mamma’s hand a few days ago, upon which was written the day and the month and the year on which she had taken the Lord Jesus as her Saviour, and had given herself to Him. Thus, is the Lord showing us that ‘His ear is not heavy, nor His arm shortened,’ and that the Gospel is yet, as of old, ‘the power of God unto salvation.’”<sup>170</sup>

Later that year he led a mission at Warracknabeal. “During the past fortnight Mr. Robertson, of the Evangelisation Society, has been holding special meetings in the Wesleyan Church at Warracknabeal, at the invitation of the Wesleyan and Presbyterian Churches. The building has been crowded nightly. Believers have been much blessed, and about twenty have professed conversion to God. Mr. Robertson continues his labours in the surrounding places for the next fortnight. ‘The best of all, God is with us.’”

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<sup>170</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 19 June, 1887. page 454.

Altogether, four weeks were spent in the district, with two at Warracknabeal, and the other two were spent between Areegra, Bangerang and Sheep Hills.<sup>171</sup>

Early in 1888, Robert Robertson was seen in the Allendale district for a mission, followed by one in Linton. It seemed that he stayed in the Scarsdale and Linton area for some time because he led several other missions in that district. Reports upon two of these missions appeared together.

**Scarsdale:-** “Mr. R. Robertson’s mission at Newtown, I am thankful to say, resulted in the quickening of believers and in the conversion of at least twelve precious souls. To God be all the praise. We would bear our willing testimony to the faithful and earnest labours of His servant whom he hath thus honoured. The Bible readings were seasons of profit and deep instruction. Altogether, we consider Mr. Robertson has been made a blessing to the whole neighbourhood, and we are truly thankful to the Great Disposer of all things in having fostered in the minds of His zealous followers the desire to select and send forth earnest and devoted ambassadors, to preach the Gospel of the free grace of God, and the unsearchable riches of Christ.”

**Smythesdale.-** “The services conducted by Mr. R. Robertson, at the Mechanics’ Institute, were crowded every night, and I am happy to say were remarkably successful, numbers of persons being brought to God through the powerful and searching preaching of the evangelist. The friends here are so delighted with Mr. Robertson that I am instructed to cordially invite that gentleman to again visit this part of the district, and carry on the good work of God when most convenient to you and him.” The reporter spoke on behalf of the Wesleyans.

About the same time, his brother, Mr. W. Robertson, was conducting mission work amongst the hop growers. Then he went to a mission at Healesville, in which he worked hard, visited from house to house, and developed a good relationship with the people. There were six or seven conversions, but he didn’t stay long enough, according to some. “We would much desire another mission from about August to December, which I believe would result in much good. Mr. W. Robertson is well adapted to the work, and has won his way to the hearts of many at Healesville.”<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> *Spectator*. 28 October, 1887. page 518, and *Southern Cross*, 18 November, 1887. page 915.

<sup>172</sup> *Methodist Journal*, 24 February, 1888, page 4, and *Southern Cross*, 8 June, 1888, page 455.

A great deal of the Society's attention in 1888 was taken up with the Centennial Mission, lasting six months, led by the famous athlete, George Clarke. Clarke had been specially brought out from England for the occasion. These missions were held in a number of Melbourne suburbs and central locations, as well as in major country centres.<sup>173</sup>

In **1889**, some more reports appeared about Robertson's work. For example, he led a series of missions around Kerang. In particular, he preached in Koondrook and Cohuna, where there were good results. Robertson began to experience what the other evangelists also discovered, that when they made good friends in a certain district they were often invited back again. We will see this is what happened to Robertson in these centres in the Kerang district.

Also, these centres did not yet have dedicated church buildings in which to hold their meetings. They used school buildings and other halls instead.

One report on these meetings was provided by the Baptist minister in Kerang, the Rev. F. J. Wilkin, who later became the historian of the Baptist denomination in Victoria. Another report said: "The work at Koondrook increased in interest up to the very last. After the first week some found peace almost every day, upwards of thirty professing their faith in Christ. The schoolroom was filled every night, sometimes crowded uncomfortably, in spite of the almost untravellable state of the roads owing to the heavy rains prior to and during the mission."<sup>174</sup>

Some months later, Robertson was in the very small Wimmera town of Dooen for a ten days' mission in the Presbyterian Church. "Through his plain talking and earnest appeals to the hearts of the people, by the power of the Holy Ghost, seventeen souls have been brought to the feet of Jesus, and many others are still anxious."<sup>175</sup>

The same pattern followed through **1890**. The very few published reports showed that Robert Robertson worked steadily through the year as one of the two regular employees of the Society, along with W. H. Scurr. The missions he led included Black Flat, near Oakleigh, Carngham and Mortchup. Regarding Black Flat, the Rev James Trathan wrote:- "His addresses were clear, terse, and pointed, and eminently adapted to arrest the attention and engage the heart. His

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<sup>173</sup> For the tour by George Clarke in 1888, see chapter six.

<sup>174</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 17 May, 1889. page 395.

<sup>175</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 25 October, 1889. page 855.

style is quaint without vulgarity, and he has a remarkable aptitude for bringing home the truths to the hearts and consciences of his hearers.” There were fourteen professed conversions.<sup>176</sup>

Regarding Carngham and Mortchup, the Rev. J. S. Drummond said:- “The blessing of God in a very special manner has rested on the mission. Over thirty people have remained to be spoken to as enquirers. Of course, time only can show the real results, but a large proportion of these seem to have found peace, and already show very gratifying proofs of real change of heart. Several of these are decided instances of those who rarely or never attended any church. We can only be thankful and glad in the Lord.”<sup>177</sup>

In **1891**, again a few reports appeared about Robertson’s work, but, as in most years, not nearly enough to paint a whole picture for the year. In mid-May he was in Casterton, and the mission there was followed by one in Coleraine. In October he was in Newlyn Hall in the Ballarat area.

### **His Last Ten Years with the Society – up to 1901.**

**1892** was the year when a severe economic depression came upon much of Australia. The Evangelisation Society began having great difficulties paying their staff, and several of the evangelists went out trusting God for their livelihood, because the Society could not pay them. After the passing of a few years in this way, all of the evangelists had to operate in this way. Yet, it seemed that God was blessing the work of the evangelists to a greater degree than ever before.

Early in 1892, Robert Robertson was back in the Koondrook, Cohuna and Murrabit area. The local people said “God has blessed us. Mr. Robertson was just a month with us, and during that time 37 persons professed to accept the Saviour.” He was pressed to continue these meetings, but had to travel a long way to get to his next mission centre in Koroit. After this he went to Port Fairy.<sup>178</sup>

A little later he was again in Casterton to conduct a ten days’ mission. This effort was supported by all the Protestant churches. Again, there were “some interesting cases of conversion.”<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 11 July, 1890. page 555.

<sup>177</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 8 August, 1890. page 635.

<sup>178</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 18 March, 1892. page 238.

<sup>179</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 27 May, 1892. page 435.

Soon after that he was back in Creswick. His intense zeal and earnestness made him very popular with the Christians, and there were “a number” of conversions. The report was signed by three ministers and five leading laymen. This was followed by a mission in Hamilton, with extensions into the surrounding districts, such as in Macarthur.<sup>180</sup>

Late in the year there was another mission at Oakleigh. “The telling, racy, earnest addresses of the evangelist were effective in stirring the hearts of the Christians who attended, and were the means used by God in bringing over twenty to decision for Christ.”<sup>181</sup>

In **1893**, Robertson went back to the Hamilton district, but this time he paid more attention to the outlying districts of Macarthur and Broadwater.<sup>182</sup>

Early in **1894**, Robertson went to Trentham to preach three Church Anniversary sermons, and followed this event on Monday, 26 February, by leading a sixteen days’ mission. The annual tea meeting had been held the previous Wednesday.

“We had some splendid times, and grand refreshing showers fell all round us and upon us, to the delight of many that were present during the mission. Mr. Robertson hits straight out; he calls a spade a spade, not an oblong instrument. We had the meetings in the Mechanics’ Hall well attended night after night, people coming for miles and miles to hear the “precious truth” told in such a manner by Mr. Robertson that will live long in the memory of the hearers. The last Sunday night of the mission many were unable to get in the Hall; there must have been upwards of four hundred who heard the Word that night. Previous to the meetings, open-air meetings were held, and the people invited to the mission. Many precious souls were led to the Saviour. Mr. and Mrs. Beckman, from Yandoit, were present for a few nights, and rendered us excellent help by their singing. Mrs. Beckman’s beautiful contralto voice proved very attractive, and her songs were given in a style that proves her to be a singer far above the average. Mr. Beckman also is the happy possessor of a clear tenor voice. We rather envy the people of Yandoit. We wish they were here. Never mind, they are in the Master’s service in our Church there. A strong choir led the singing, under the conductorship of Mr. T. A. Rogers, with Miss Chamberlain at the organ. The Rev. A. Brian

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<sup>180</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 9 September, 1892. page 725.

<sup>181</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 16 December, 1892. page 1015.

<sup>182</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 21 April, 1893. page 315.

(Church of England) rendered all the help in his power; he led some of the outside meetings. Mr. Robertson commenced his mission at Blackwood on March 14th and finished on the 18th.”<sup>183</sup>

Around mid-year, Robertson was in Nullawarre. They used the State school building for the meetings because there were no others to use. “There were thirty-four professed cases of conversion. A Christian Endeavour Society has been started with the object of keeping the younger members together.”<sup>184</sup>

Later again, Robertson was at Arundel. The mission only lasted a week. The weather was very unsettled, but there were fifteen conversions reported, and the churches were “much refreshed by his powerful addresses.”<sup>185</sup>

This was soon followed by missions in Yarram and some nearby places, Box Hill, and in Bellarine Wesleyan Church. In Box Hill, there were 19 conversions, and at Bellarine 45 people professed conversion, mainly adults.<sup>186</sup>

During the twelve months up to November, 1894, the Annual Meeting reported that the evangelists had visited 74 places, had conducted 51 missions and had held about 540 meetings.<sup>187</sup>

Fairly early in **1895**, Robertson held a series of missions in Brentwood, Brim, East Galaquil, Kyneton and Beulah, and in each place there were some fruitful results. This was soon followed by a prolonged visit to the Ballarat district. There he spoke at a meeting of the Ballarat Women’s Prayer Union. There were a number of big prayer unions around Ballarat. He led a mission at Brown Hill, which was not far away, and a number of conversions were reported.

He then led missions in the Neil Street Wesleyan Church in Ballarat, followed a little later by another mission in the Scots Church in Ballarat.<sup>188</sup>

The only other mission of his which was reported upon in 1895 was at Creswick, where, for the first time, he was accompanied by the soloist, Mr. James H. Stephens, and the mission lasted for two weeks.<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> *Spectator*. Friday, 23 March, 1894. page 192.

<sup>184</sup> *Spectator*. Friday, 6 July, 1894. page 444.

<sup>185</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 10 August, 1894. page 633.

<sup>186</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 5 October, 1894, page 811, and 19 October, page 894.

<sup>187</sup> *Spectator*. Friday, 16 November, 1894. page 746.

<sup>188</sup> *Southern Cross*. 12 April, 1895, page 353, 10 May, page 454, 19 July, page 689, and 2 August, 1895, page 737.

<sup>189</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 11 October, 1895. page 977.

At this Annual Meeting, Charles Carter said that the evangelists had visited 82 places during the year, had conducted 55 missions in various churches, and had held 636 meetings. The aggregate attendance had been about 70,000. “The reports received as to the results of these meetings were most encouraging, and many of the congregations had been revived and blessed.”<sup>190</sup>

The year **1896** saw Robertson and Stephens work together on many occasions, although these efforts were not reported upon in most cases. Several reports appeared in the first issue of the *Victorian Evangelist*. The first issue was the only issue to survive. In this paper good reports appear about their work in Wandin Yallock, Collingwood and in Healesville. Robertson seems to have been by himself for the mission at Rupanyup.

Concerning the Rupanyup mission, Mr. John Chapple wrote: “The Mission conducted by Mr. Robertson has resulted in much blessing, between 30 and 40 enquirers seeking salvation, and about 17 professing to find peace in Christ. God’s people have been greatly blessed, and will renew their work with fresh courage. God’s Spirit has striven mightily with many people who have not yielded to him, but we do pray that God’s work may still go on and many more be added to His followers.”<sup>191</sup>

Amongst their activities in **1897**, Robertson and Stephens went on tour in South Australia. The first mission was held in the Carrondown Baptist Church, Hindmarsh, where the Rev. A. J. Clarke was the minister. The second was held in the St. Giles’ Presbyterian Church, Norwood, and another at North Adelaide Baptist Church. A little later they were in the country town of Mount Barker, followed by meetings in central Adelaide, partly supported by the Y.M.C.A., and its enthusiastic secretary, Mr. J. J. Virgo, with meetings in the Bijou Theatre, and in the Theatre Royal.<sup>192</sup> A well-known atheist, Donald McFarlane, was converted during the Adelaide meetings, and he testified at the 14th Annual Meeting of the Society which was held in Melbourne several months later, in October.<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 25 October, 1895. page 1024.

<sup>191</sup> Insertion in *Spectator*. 27 August, 1896. pages not numbered.

<sup>192</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 4 June, 1897, page 547; and 11 June, page 571; 9 July, page 675; 16 July, page 699, and 13 August, page 795.

<sup>193</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 22 October, 1897. page 1035.

Late in August, the two evangelists led a mission in South Melbourne. Several denominations combined for the mission. It was largely based in the Cecil Street Wesleyan Church, with the concluding nights in the Baptist Church, and the mission lasted for three weeks.<sup>194</sup>

In the second half of September the duo were in the western town of Ararat. About thirty conversions were recorded through the two weeks of the mission. Stephens had already introduced his special service of song based upon the life of the singing evangelist Phillip Phillips back in Adelaide. It was greatly enjoyed here in Ararat.<sup>195</sup>

Late in 1897, Robertson and Stephens paid their first visit to New Zealand. Their first mission was in Milburn, and the second was in Kaikorai Valley. It was here that we first hear reports about a children's address which Robertson used called "The Magnet," in which he used a magnet to impress children with the drawing power and attractiveness of Jesus Christ. It was a very successful mission. He was introduced to the Presbytery of Otago, and missions were arranged for them in Queenstown, Cromwell, Invercargill, Anderson's Bay, N. E. Valley, and South Dunedin.<sup>196</sup>

This series of missions occupied them almost through the first half of **1898**, and several reports were published about them, showing how much their work was appreciated by the Presbyterian ministers around Dunedin, in such places as Caversham and Green Island. Robertson also gave addresses on the Christian life at a large Convention in Dunedin. A united mission was organised in Port Chalmers involving the Presbyterian, Wesleyan and Congregational churches, and then a mission at Waitola.<sup>197</sup>

The impact of these missions was such that there was a move to organise a large central mission in Dunedin. The local Presbyterian evangelist, Duncan Wright, was elected as organising secretary. A large choir was assembled to strengthen Stephens's work. This mission included two Sundays, and evening meetings were held on those Sundays in the giant Garrison Hall, which seated around 2,000 people. As a finale, a praise and testimony meeting was held in Knox Church. Many testimonies were given, and a satisfactory financial

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<sup>194</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 22 October, 1897. page 1027.

<sup>195</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 1 October, 1897, page 963, and 8 October, 1897. page 987.

<sup>196</sup> *Southern Cross*. 24 December, 1897. page 1251.

<sup>197</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 18 March, 1898. page 259.

statement was read. Duncan Wright had prepared a statement of thanks to the evangelists, which read as follows:-

“On behalf of the committee who have charge of the arrangements for the Central Evangelistic meetings in Dunedin conducted by Messrs. Robertson and Stephens, of the Evangelisation Society of Australasia, and also in the name of this large and enthusiastic praise farewell meeting, held in Knox Church, Dunedin (which meeting closes their ten days’ mission), we desire publicly and heartily to thank God for the visit of these brethren to our city. We feel assured that the pastors, office-bearers, and people of several of the suburban churches would gladly concur with us in this note of praise. It is no exaggeration on our part to affirm that by God’s blessing on the strong, clear messages spoken by Mr. Robertson, and the sweet Gospel songs sung by Mr. Stephens, very many Christian hearts have been stirred and stimulated, and that not a few have professed conversion to God. When the time comes for these esteemed labourers to leave our shores, they may rest assured that kindly hearts will follow them wherever in the good providence of God they may go, and that prayer will rise on their behalf for continued strength and blessing. If in this changing fleeting life we do not meet again, we trust in Christ that we shall meet in the morning beyond the clouds and shadows. In saying farewell to the evangelists who soon will join their loved ones, from whom for a little season they have been parted, we sincerely repeat the words of the grand old Book, “The Lord bless thee, and keep thee; the Lord make His face to shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up His countenance upon thee and give thee peace.” They all sang the doxology, and gave praise to God.<sup>198</sup>

Robertson and Stephens were back in Victoria by mid-June, and led two missions in two of the main Baptist churches in Melbourne. The first was a ten days’ mission in the West Melbourne Baptist Church, ending on 29 June. Amongst the younger people everyone in the Young Men’s Bible Class, plus scores of children in the Sunday School, professed conversion. The Christian Endeavour Society doubled in size. There were also a number of conversions among the older folk, and there was “quite a revival” of the church.<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 27 May, 1898, page 499.

<sup>199</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 8 July, 1898. page 643.

The second was in Auburn Baptist Church, formerly in Hawthorn, but the report only referred to the first Sunday evening.

Another mission was at Williamstown, and this was followed by another held in St. George's Hall, Bourke Street, in the city.<sup>200</sup>

Robertson then took Stephens back with him to the Warrions, Beeac and Colac areas, where he had conducted missions some years earlier. It was said that "a very blessed work has been going on."<sup>201</sup>

The partnership broke up after this, and James Stephens went to spend some time working for the Society in Tasmania. Robert Robertson went back to New Zealand with one of his sons [possibly Joshua], going to the North Island this time. The first mission was in Auckland. There were about one hundred professed conversions.

Over Christmas and the New Year, two missions were organised in the Mission Hall, seating about 600, and in a tent, seating about 300. Father Robertson led the first, and his son the second. But a special meeting was held on Christmas Day in one of the parks, with the combined help of three bands. Robert Robertson was to conduct the service, supported by "some of the best speakers from the ministerial ranks of the city pulpits." They expected between five and six thousand people to be present.<sup>202</sup>

In **1899**, Robert Robertson and his son continued their work in New Zealand. After the Auckland meetings, there was a united mission in Coromandel, and these were followed by others at Mercury Bay, Kuaotuna and Tairua, with "much blessing." Then, a mission was held in the Baptist Tabernacle, Auckland, and then at the Thames.<sup>203</sup> The New Zealand tour was eventually cut short by Mrs. Robertson becoming ill.

By July, Robertson was back in Victoria, and led a mission in the Baptist Church, St. George Street, Fitzroy, and then one in the Wesleyan Church in Golden Square, Bendigo.<sup>204</sup>

From there he went to Terang, two hundred kilometres west of Melbourne, from August 12 to 28. "Mr. Robertson's unconventional manner and his forcible way of putting the old Gospel truths drew people to hear him who had not been near a church for years. There

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<sup>200</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 22 July, 1898, page 690, and 5 August, 1898, page 739.

<sup>201</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 7 October, 1898. page 927.

<sup>202</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday 16 December, 1898. page 1243.

<sup>203</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 31 March, 1899. page 307.

<sup>204</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 21 July, 1899. page 695.

was an absence of all sensationalism, [on the other hand] earnest, faithful, heart-searching appeals broke down all opposition. The district was never visited by such a religious movement before. All the churches shared in the blessing.” This was followed by a short visit to Mount Noorat, before he returned to Bendigo to lead a mission in the Forest Street Wesleyan Church. From there he went to Kangaroo Flat.<sup>205</sup> This whole period of 1899 was a very fruitful time in soul-winning for both Robert Robertson and William H. Scurr.

This summer, as they entered **1900**, both of the senior evangelists, Robert Robertson and William H. Scurr, went to conduct missions in New Zealand, but they headed in different directions. They did not work together on the same campaigns. Sadly, no progress reports about these missions appeared in the Melbourne papers, except for one about Scurr. They were back in Victoria by the end of May, but after a month or so, Robertson went north to lead missions in Queensland. On his way through New South Wales, he led a mission in the Burton Street Baptist Church, in eastern Sydney. This was from 22 to 31 July.<sup>206</sup>

After arriving in Brisbane, he led a week’s mission in the Wharf Street Congregational Church, starting on 10 August, followed by another week’s mission in the Baptist Tabernacle. Then there was a mission in the Jireh Baptist Church in Brisbane, and then another in the Brunswick Methodist Church, which started on 26 August.

A central mission was then organised in the Centennial Hall which seemed to last for several weeks. After this, there was a farewell function, and he left for Sydney.<sup>207</sup>

On his way back to Victoria he led a mission in the Baptist Church, Petersham where the minister was the old friend of evangelism, the Rev. Dr. Thomas Porter. Once he got back home he returned to the task of leading a mission at Cape Clear, and then revisited his friends in Terang, commencing a mission on 21 November.<sup>208</sup>

The Terang mission was held in the local public hall, and it was not a good time of the year for such an activity in this dairying district.

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<sup>205</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 22 September, 1899, page 934; also *ibid.*, page 942, and 6 October, 1899, page 979.

<sup>206</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 11 May, 1900. page 521, and 24 August, 1900. page 941.

<sup>207</sup> *Southern Cross*, 31 August, 1900. page 974, and 12 October, 1900. page 1139.

<sup>208</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 2 November, 1900. pages 1222-3; also 23 November, page 1307, and 30 November, 1900. page 1335.

Results were not as numerous as the leaders had hoped, and they wanted Robertson to return in the autumn when he could also visit the outlying districts, “where he was well known and beloved.”<sup>209</sup>

In **1901**, the first of Robertson’s missions about which there is a report took place in the Bible Christian Church in Skipton Street, Ballarat, starting on 21 April and lasting for two weeks. But the report said that he had been having a good deal of rest in the early part of the year, and had only conducted a few missions. These few had been at Bowea, Thoona, Pitfield Plains, Illabarook, Essendon and Ballarat. After the Ballarat mission he headed for Queensland again.<sup>210</sup>

Two reports came from Queensland over the next few months. One mission was conducted in a church at Albion. This was followed by a united mission in Rockhampton for two weeks. Then he went to Bundaberg for a one week united mission, followed by one in Fairfield, near Brisbane, after which he was expected back in Bundaberg for a larger-scale effort.. He was expected back in Melbourne by October.<sup>211</sup>

In October he led a mission in the English Baptist Church in Maldon, from where he branched out to hold “some meetings among the farmers in the neighbourhood, which were most helpful, and will be long remembered by them.”<sup>212</sup>

### **The Revivals in New South Wales Country Towns.**

Very soon after these events, Robert Robertson resigned from the Evangelisation Society in order to take up work with a Committee in New South Wales which was organising missions in country towns. This Committee largely rotated around the Rev. W. G. Taylor, the superintendent of the Central Methodist Mission in Sydney, and the whole operation was financed by Mr. Ebenezer Vickery, who insisted that his connection with the work should be kept completely anonymous.

There had been a large-scale Simultaneous Mission in and around Sydney in the last few months of 1901, which many of those involved believed had been especially successful. Vickery was challenged by the idea that something of similar effect should be done for the country

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<sup>209</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 21 December, 1900. page 1419.

<sup>210</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 3 May, 1901. page 495.

<sup>211</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 19 July, 1901. page 802; 23 August, page 931, and 4 October, 1901. page 1111.

<sup>212</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 25 October, 1901. page 1197, and 15 November, 1901. page 1279.

towns. He discussed his thoughts with W. G. Taylor, who never missed a good opportunity to launch a soul-winning enterprise.

A Committee was drawn together, and plans were made. They were already aware of the need to keep next April, 1902, free, for missions in Victoria, because the visit of R. A. Torrey was already expected. But they wanted to start immediately, so they planned to start holding missions on the south coast of New South Wales, covering an area which could be handled effectively in the three months before April. They started in Nowra at the beginning of January, and worked north towards the southern edge of Sydney. A tent was secured, and the Nowra mission was led by Robert Robertson. Over 200 people professed conversion in this mission, and similar success followed the other missions which followed. The Rev. David O'Donnell joined Robertson in the work, and two campaigns were being held in neighbouring towns. In Wollongong there were 357 conversions, and 292 in Bulli. At Mt. Keira the number of conversions rapidly passed the 250 mark. At Albion Park there were 198 converts. The tents proved to be too small. "Crowded congregations, monster prayer-meetings, open-air services, etc., are now the order of the day. The work has been remarkably free from hysterics. A quiet solemnity has been the chief feature of it, and the Spirit of God has been manifested with abundant power. The best feature of all, perhaps, is the splendid unity of the Churches. In one or two instances the Anglican clergymen did not see their way to recognise the movement, but they were powerless to prevent their people coming in. With these exceptions, the whole of the Churches, with the Salvation Army, have worked as one body. And, as a result of this, all the Churches have benefited alike. As an illustration of this, the following analysis of the Wollongong figures is instructive:- Church of England, 88; Presbyterian, 82; Wesleyan, 79; Congregational, 60; Primitive Methodist, 22; Salvation Army, 21."<sup>213</sup>

As these meetings proceeded, more wonders appeared. At Balgownie, 220 enquirers were dealt with, and at Unanderra there were 120. The total of 2,000 conversions was rapidly passed.

The Corrimal mission produced 313 converts. The tent seated 1,000, but held 1,400 one Sunday evening. These towns were coal mining areas. The mines happened to be owned by Mr. Vickery. But

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<sup>213</sup> *Methodist*. 29 March, 1902. page 4.

astonishing things happened, similar to what happened in the Welsh Revival a few years later. The last mission in this series was held in Helensburgh, where 234 converts were listed, making a total of 2,635 for the three months to the end of March. Extensive reports of some of these missions were published. One of the later events in these months was a Convention on the Christian Life which was held for a few days in Wollongong.

Robertson and O'Donnell went to Victoria for the month of April. Robertson conducted a mission in West Melbourne between April 13 and 25, as part of the Simultaneous Missions programme. But they soon returned to New South Wales, and took up the work again for the remainder of 1902, and for all of 1903.

These missions in country towns are described more fully in another of my books.<sup>214</sup> Here we are concentrating more on the work of Robert Robertson, and mainly on his work for the Evangelisation Society. Despite this, his work in New South Wales in these two years probably represented the most fruitful period of his evangelistic ministry. They were years of scattered but wonderful revivals.

Robertson worked at all times during 1902 and 1903 in a team with a tent manager, Mr. S. E. Vickery, and often with the help of another preacher to handle the open air meetings and some other such details. The first of these was Mr. Jonas Allison.

When he returned after April, his team took their tent to Gunnedah. The first day of meetings produced 44 enquirers. The week-night meetings produced only a few each night. The eleven days produced 102. From there, the tent was moved to Inverell, which seems to have been a little shorter in the number of days. The number of professed converts in Inverell was 94. Then they moved to Narrabri, opening on Sunday, 18 May. The mission closed on Thursday, 29 May, with 126 enquirers.

The Moree mission started the next day. Some of these towns seemed very difficult. They had an irreligious atmosphere with godless patterns of behaviour and lifestyle being often apparent. It was hard to create any impression. Forty-seven people professed conversion, although many others showed some spiritual concern. One of the local ministers confessed that no prayer meetings existed in his church.

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<sup>214</sup> Robert Evans. *Evangelism and Revival in Australia. 1880 – 1914.* (First Volume). Hazelbrook. The Author. 2005. chapters 11 and 12.

At Glen Innes the response was better. As the mission reached towards its conclusion, 111 enquirers had been counted. Tenterfield came after that. Robertson then descended the mountain passes and began work on the north coastal strip. Casino was first, then Coraki and Woodburn. The coast was reached at last, with a mission in Ballina. Another local preacher, Mr. James Graham, was helping in these missions. The Casino mission was the most fruitful so far since April, with over 300 enquirers, but other converts also appeared after the main meetings were over. All of these missions were well reported upon.<sup>215</sup>

There were 105 professed converts at Coraki, although the population of the town was only 700. The converts at Woodburn numbered nearly 100. The mission in Lismore began on Sunday, 31 August. On the first afternoon of that day, 127 young people make a commitment to Christ out of a gathering of about 1,000. There had been 310 decisions during the first week. The township of Clunes was in a dairying area, and a mission of eight days was held there, with 166 enquirers. Missions were also held in Murwillumbah, and shorter ones in Alstonville and Newrybar.

The year was rapidly approaching its end, but Robertson and Vickery pulled up their stakes and took the tent to the South Coast instead. Their first mission there was in the township of Milton. They had some very good meetings, as certain points in the mission, and finished up with 138 people professing conversion to Christ. They also led a mission in Nelligen, which was described as a village with thirty or forty houses and a population of 200. Five days were spent there. Then they spent four days in Bateman's Bay, followed by a mission in Braidwood, starting on 10 December.

Braidwood impressed Robertson and Vickery as almost completely Godless. Robertson called for an additional helper, and Mr. Walter Arnold came. It was a united mission. Arnold did a great deal of home visitation and personal evangelism. One convert gained in this way was a man ninety years of age. Teams of local church people visited the business houses. This mission ended on 21 December, and the tent was packed away for a month. Robertson and Vickery went to their homes for a rest, and to rejoice because more than 4,000 people

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<sup>215</sup> For example, *Methodist*. 20 September, 1902. page 7.

had been dealt with in the enquiry tent. In the twelve months they had travelled 2,000 miles.<sup>216</sup>

The first mission for **1903** was held in Araluen, not far from Braidwood. During the peak of the gold rush, Araluen had a population of 10,000. In 1903 there were 500 people in the town – mainly Roman Catholics. There were good results every night of the ten days' campaign, and Arnold and James Graham led a children's mission in the Union Church at the same time.

The mission in Moruya was held in the Centennial Hall, with Presbyterians and Methodists combining. It lasted for eleven days. Arnold and Graham conducted a four days' mission in the village of Mogo. These were followed by short missions in Central Tilba, Tilba Tilba, Carunna and Narooma. Sixty-five persons passed through the enquiry room at Cobargo.

At Bermagui, Robertson preached the first night, but Arnold and Graham led the rest of the six days' mission, while Robertson returned to Cobargo. A Mission began in Bega on 8 March. They not only worked in the town, but also in several surrounding villages, and 255 enquirers were dealt with. Arthur Robertson (son of Robert) was also helping with the musical side of the work.<sup>217</sup>

During the next few months, Robertson and Vickery were involved in an extensive mission in an inner city tent mission in the suburb of Waterloo. After that, we find them in Bathurst during the month of June. "From the beginning of the mission the 'power of the Lord was present to save.' The attendance, in the earlier stages of the mission, were rather weak, due to cold weather and colder hearts, but as the work progressed the numbers increased, till the glow radiated and the scene was changed. As is often the case, the children led the way into the kingdom, and at the special service for them a gracious result followed." 130 people professed conversion.<sup>218</sup>

There was great success in Millthorpe, but no details were available. In Orange, 109 young people passed through the enquiry tent after the special young people's gathering, and 145 young people made decisions during the mission, as well as 140 adults.

In the town of Wellington, the mission started on 2 August. James Graham led the open-air meetings, and in this mission it seemed

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<sup>216</sup> *Methodist*. 7 March, 1903. page 11.

<sup>217</sup> *Methodist*. 11 April, 1903. page 4.

<sup>218</sup> *Methodist*. 29 August, 1903, pages 3 – 4.

that the open-air preaching made a special impact. There 245 people responded to the appeals to come to Christ.

Bodangora was at that time a mining town nine miles from Wellington. A tent mission was held there, and over 1090 responded to the message of salvation as a result of eight meetings.<sup>219</sup>

In Dubbo, Mrs. Robertson conducted a ladies' meeting at the same time as Robert Robertson conducted the usual "purity" meeting for men. James Graham and Arthur Robertson led afternoon meetings in the tent, while Mr. Arnold preached in outlying locations. Robertson led the meetings at night. 260 people were dealt with in the enquiry rooms.<sup>220</sup>

There is little doubt that the team worked on through the rest of the year, but no other reports were published about their work. The tent mission campaign being organised from Sydney, and being financed by Mr. Ebenezer Vickery, officially came to an end at the end of 1904. His aim had been to bring about 25,000 conversions in these missions. In fact the tally reached over 17,000 in those two years.

Since the end of 1904, I have not been able to find much information about Robertson's activities. Here are the only bits of information that I could find.

During **1904**, Robertson travelled with his wife and son, Arthur, in western New South Wales, visiting some places which had missed out in the previous two years, and re-visiting other places where missions had been held. For part of this time at least, he travelled with Mr. James Graham. This group, for example, led a mission in the mining village of Hillgrove, east of Armidale, after which they led a mission in Tamworth, followed by one in Tingha.

The Tingha mission was described as follows:- "A very gracious revival has occurred at the Tingha end of the Inverell Circuit in connection with a visit of Mr. R. Robertson, the well-known tent missionary, who was accompanied by his son and Mr. James Graham. The party drove through from Tamworth, where they had been holding a series of tent missions, opening in Tingha on Sunday, June 5th. From the outset great blessing attended the meetings, the church being crowded at night on the first Sunday, and a number of people indicating their desire to become converted, several of whom were

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<sup>219</sup> *Methodist*. 29 August, 1903. page 11.

<sup>220</sup> *Methodist*. 26 September, 1903. page 4.

found kneeling at the form cleared for that purpose in the after-meeting. It was delightful to see this old-fashioned method of dealing with anxious souls in free and successful exercise. The plan was followed throughout the mission. When the church was crowded out the missionary took the local hall, which was furnished with additional seats from the church and S. A. Barracks. The officer in charge of the S. A. work in Tingha gave hearty co-operation throughout. Every night numbers of folks stood up to signify their anxiety for salvation, and each night a number of those so indicating their desire to be saved found their way to the front and were dealt with. In all fifty-seven persons professed conversion, and numbers of others stood up at the final meeting of the mission to signify their intention of giving themselves to the Lord. We have felt that much blessing has been received by all through the advent of this mission at Tingha, and all who participated in the blessing wish the brethren God-speed in their further travels.”<sup>221</sup>

Robert Robertson arrived back in Melbourne early in **1905**, and began life in the suburb of Belmont. He asked the editor of the *Southern Cross* to let his friends know where he could be contacted. He was still available to lead missions, but would need to be approached privately, as he was no longer linked to the Evangelisation Society. He announced that he was to conduct a mission in Warrnambool starting 26 February, and wanted as much prayer support as possible. “I feel the Holy Ghost is brooding over Australia, and that a great revival only needs praying down. The Lord’s flocks in some quarters have become quite emaciated on the dry tussocks of the Higher Criticism, and there is a great bleating for the green pastures and the still waters.”<sup>222</sup>

The mission in the Warrnambool Baptist Church was well reported upon, closing on 12 March. This report was one in which a few indications appeared of Robertson’s sermon subjects. The first Sunday morning the topic was on Job 1;10. The afternoon meeting was for the children, and featured an object lesson based on the words “I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me.” A large and powerful magnet, used by the missionary, served to impress the words on the children, several of whom professed conversion. At the evening

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<sup>221</sup> *Methodist*. 25 June, 1904. page 4.

<sup>222</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 10 March, 1905. page 221.

service a large crowd gathered; this was followed by an after-meeting, and many testimonies were given by Christians present. All during the week there were signs of increasing interest, till, by the second Sunday, the church was packed. That discourse seemed to impress the people more than any other. The subject was “Lot’s separation from Abram.” “Mr. Robertson’s word pictures are vivid and telling, and his inferences plain and simple. The work was rather hindered during the second week by the Fire Brigade’s Demonstration, held at Warrnambool this year. We had the pleasure of having some of the visiting firemen with us one evening, several of whom testified to God’s love and faithfulness. The mission was brought to a close on Sunday March 12. At the after-meeting prayer, praise and testimony poured from all lips, the enthusiasm was intense as hymn after hymn was sung – “When we all get to heaven,” with a double repeated chorus, and the “Glory Song,” sung again and again. On the Tuesday evening following Mr. Robertson gave his illustrated lecture on “The Great Revival in South Wales.” Mr. G. P. Barber was in the chair, and at the close moved a hearty vote of thanks to Mr. Robertson for his excellent lecture. The keen appreciation of all present was very evident. Two special features of the mission were – (1) The requests for prayer sent in each evening, and the prayers sent up to God for each case. (2) The singing of Mr. Arthur Robertson was appreciated every night. His solos were enjoyed by everyone, and his leading of the choir made the singing go pleasantly and well. Miss Fanny Tyers presided at the organ each evening. Mr. Robertson’s visit here will long be remembered, and we pray for God’s blessing on him in his next place of labour.<sup>223</sup>

Several months later, Robertson and his son led a mission for two weeks at the Sackville Street Methodist Church, Collingwood, which was reported as “highly successful.”<sup>224</sup>

Robert Robertson also went on some tours of remote properties in this period. He, along with many of the other E.S.A. evangelists, had good experience in doing evangelistic work in farming areas, and amongst shearers and hop-pickers. He wrote a letter to the editor describing a visit to the Upper Buffalo in **1906**.

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<sup>223</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 24 March, 1905. page 281.

<sup>224</sup> *Southern Cross*. 21 July, 1905. page 691.

“We had come up to hold three meetings among the ‘way-backs,’ and there are only three holdings behind our host’s residence. The furthest back is thirty miles off. The people settled there come down twice a year, with pack-horses, for their supplies. There are twenty-five horses in the caravan, and all the horses wear bells.

When we crossed the river, coming up – which we had to do twice – the water was up to the floor of the buggy, and much higher it would be unsafe to cross. The second night of the meetings it rained heavily all the night, and was still raining in the morning. The river was then rising rapidly, thus threatening to cut off our escape, so there was nothing for it but to have a hasty breakfast and face the stormy day and swollen river.

The two meetings were held in a little school-building, built by the settlers for a half-time school. The people brought lamps and candles, and some brought their own seats as well. It was out of the line of ordinary church-going to see a man walk in, carrying a stool, and putting it down and taking his seat on it. Some potato diggers had no horses handy, so they stripped and forded the river, waist-high, and carried over their clothes. ‘Where there’s a will there’s a way,’ even in going to an evangelistic meeting. Some of our friends followed us down to the river, and saw us ford its rushing water in safety; and then a hurried good-bye, and we lost sight of each other, and our hearts were sad, for we wanted to stay a wee bit longer.”<sup>225</sup>

Late in 1906 he also joined in making an appeal in memory of the Hon. Ebenezer Vickery, M.L.C., who had financed the Tent Missions of 1902 and 1903. The appeal was especially to all those who had received spiritual benefit from those missions. The aim was to try to establish a Boys’ Institute in memory of Mr. Vickery. Robertson had been the first evangelist to lead some of these mission meetings in New South Wales, which had been so richly blessed by God.<sup>226</sup>

Early the following year he was evangelising in the Gippsland area, and wrote describing some of the difficulties which the pioneers experienced in that part, including the continual threat to life from such things as poisonous snakes.

“Settlers in a new district have to face many dangers, and overcome many difficulties, before the waste, howling wilderness can

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<sup>225</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 22 June, 1906. page 581.

<sup>226</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 7 December, 1906. page 1170.

be transformed into a rich pastoral district. I stayed at Riverview, in the house of a dairyman who had lost a daughter through snake-bite; and one of his neighbours heard the cry of one of his own children, one night, and went into the room where two of his family slept, and found a large snake hanging on to the toe of the child's foot. The father had to knock the snake off with a boot. Sad to say, there was no hope for the child's life as the teeth of the reptile had entered the artery, and the child was almost dead when discovered by the father. I stayed at Dumbalk, with a household who had lost a daughter through a tree falling on her while coming home from school. But these brave people seem to take these sad things as quite in the ordinary experiences of a selector's life, and in these rough forests, quite inseparable from pioneering. I had come up to hold a few evangelistic meetings among these sturdy, brave farmers, and I had come at the invitation of a family who had been led to the Saviour in a former mission, some eleven years ago, in another part of Gippsland. It was nine o'clock, or after, before we could begin the meeting, as Her Royal Highness Queen Cow cannot spare her maids of honour and her grooms and household servants till all her wants have been first attended to. There is something that touches one's heart to see those tired people sitting till ten o'clock at night, listening to the old, old story of the Cross; and when the service and the inquiry-meeting had been got through, these folk would ride over the hills to their homes, which some would not reach till near midnight. We had a number of fine conversions among these noble sons and daughters of toil, who will be true Empire-builders in the future, as their fathers and mothers have been in the past. These are real subduers of the earth, warriors of the wilderness."<sup>227</sup>

These are the last published references that I have been able to find, so far, concerning the evangelistic work of Robert Robertson. He was probably already a family man before he started working for the Evangelisation Society of Victoria in 1883. This latest reference to his work in 1907 must therefore have referred to a senior and much experienced evangelist, twenty-four years older. He was still very active, and not afraid to venture out into remote places, where the results might not have been so great. His career as an evangelist for the

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<sup>227</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 1 February, 1907. page 109.

Evangelisation Society covered more years than that of anyone else in this period of the first 35 years of history of the Society.

**Sources of Information.**

A good deal of information exists about his work for the Society in the Victorian Wesleyan paper, *the Spectator*, and in the non-denominational paper, *the Southern Cross*. I have not managed to find out anything about his personal life, his parents, or anything about his home life, apart from the fact that one of his sons [Joshua] became a Baptist minister, and also worked for the Society. Another son [Arthur] worked with his father as a song leader in 1903 at least. He also had brothers, Mr. W. Robertson, who worked for the Society on casual occasions, and Mr. James Robertson, who worked for the Society for several years full time. In a sense, although I found many details about his work, I still do not really know who he is.

## CHAPTER SIX

### The 1888 Centennial Mission in Victoria

By the Rev. Dr. Darrell Paproth.

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#### 1. introduction

In 1888 Melbourne celebrated, in its own style, the centenary of white settlement of Australia, with much imagination and even more money expended on various extravagant public occasions. It was not only the centenary to be celebrated: Melbourne by this stage was no mean city, having become possibly the largest city in the southern hemisphere. It was a great opportunity for marvellous Melbourne to display its growth and sophistication, and was, with a northwards glance at Sydney, also a statement of its vigour and boosterism. 'The Victorian Government, knowing that New South Wales lacked an Exhibition Building, and had left it too late to organise an Exhibition as part of its centennial celebrations, brought off a prestige-building coup ..'<sup>228</sup> It was a heady as well as an expensive time.

The Melbourne evangelicals were also conscious of the challenge and opportunity this occasion posed for the churches; were they a significant part of this buoyant culture and society, or had they been marginalised? They decided that it would be a good time to hold an evangelistic mission. There had been plenty of evangelistic activity before in Melbourne, with local and overseas evangelists plying their trade. But this was to be bigger, a united effort, and extended over some months. In one sense the mission was part of, and a continuation of, contemporary Protestant church life; for Christianity was vigorously

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<sup>228</sup> G Serle, *The Rush to be Rich. A History of the Colony of Victoria 1883-1889* (Melbourne: Melbourne Univ Press, 1971), 285. The centrepiece of the Exhibition was the Exhibition Building, built in 1880 for the International Exhibition of 1880-1. See D Dunstan ed, *Victorian Icon. The Royal Exhibition Building. Melbourne* (Melbourne: Exhibition Trustees, 1996); and G Davison, *The Rise and Fall of Marvellous Melbourne* (Melbourne: Melbourne Univ Press, 2004).

part of colonial Melbourne's culture and society.<sup>229</sup> In particular it was a window into the nature and vitality of the Melbourne evangelicals. In another sense it was an expression of the half-century of evangelical liveliness and energy before the watershed of World War I, and a prelude to the developing deeper-life movement in the 1890s and the Torrey-Alexander Simultaneous Mission of 1902.

This paper evaluates that response of the evangelicals to the perceived challenge that faced them in marvellous Melbourne, their leadership (they were men of ability and enthusiasm), their network, their vision, and the results of their efforts. The aim is to tell the story (it has not been told before) and to explore its significance.

## **2. prelude to the mission**

In colonial Melbourne the evangelicals were a forceful and significant part of the Protestant churches, and even those churches whose denominational distinctives outweighed any evangelical emphases were generally true to their Reformation heritage. Moreover, there was a vigorous church life as the churches claimed their part in the public square.

In the 1860s and 1870s there was almost a craze for building churches, and soon spires and steeples occupied most of the highest points on the skyline of Melbourne. ...From the late 1850s to perhaps 1890 the churches in Victoria increased their influence to a remarkable degree. This was the age of the pulpit. Only in South Australia was its influence comparable to that in Victoria.<sup>230</sup>

Evangelism was not neglected as local (eg the Presbyterian Rev John MacNeil) and overseas evangelists (eg the independent Henry Varley) robustly proclaimed the gospel, often with considerable effect.

In the 1860s Victoria went through a religious awakening. This wild, rush-about, brawling society of the 1850s almost knelt in the aisles in the 1860s. The most effective evangelist to preach in Australia, a man who made Billy Graham seem like a mere usher

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<sup>229</sup> See G Blainey, *Our Side of the Country. The Story of Victoria* (Hawthorn: Methuen Haynes, 1984), 112-8, and Serle, *The Rush to be Rich*, 153-79.

<sup>230</sup> Blainey, *Our Side of the Country*, 112-3.

in the temple, won converts for the Wesleyans by the hundred. His name was 'California' Taylor.<sup>231</sup>

With the development of steam power and the telegraph, communication improved dramatically and Melbourne evangelicals eagerly read the sermons of C H Spurgeon, reports of the revivalism of D L Moody, and news of the mission field. It was all heart-warming stuff; and Melbourne culture was, in many ways, noticeably Christian.

Christianity [...] flavoured the views of those who rarely attended church. .. In the 1870s in many homes, a grace was said before each meal. The baptism of children was a widespread custom. When couples married, they were married in a church: civil marriages performed in a registry office were uncommon. .. Almost everybody was buried with a religious ceremony. ... There was a deep belief in a busy, all-seeing God who determined what happened in each life and town. ..<sup>232</sup>

But there were still plenty of sinners to be saved, the malignant forces of secularism and infidelity to be countered, and the heterodoxy of Rev Charles Strong to be resisted.<sup>233</sup> The climax came in 1883 with the address by Justice George Higinbotham on 'Science and Religion', in which he

denounced the clergy for ignorance and dogmatic theology, [and] called on the laity to abandon the churches and the supernatural and to meet on the high central plane of thought - .. God, revealed anew to the intellect, and also to the responsive heart, as the Father, Friend, the Guide and also to the Support of our race ... and also in the sublimest life, of Jesus of Nazareth, the Light of the World.<sup>234</sup>

Alfred Deakin referred to the 'holiness of purpose' of Higinbotham, but the conservative churchmen of Melbourne were unhappy with his brand of theological liberalism. It seemed to them that bourgeois Melbourne was developing a new cultural form, a kind of Protestant humanism.

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<sup>231</sup> Blainey, *Our Side of the Country*, 112.

<sup>232</sup> Blainey, *Our Side of the Country*, 113-5.

<sup>233</sup> See C R Badger, *The Reverend Charles Strong and the Australian Church* (Melbourne: Abacada Press, 1971).

<sup>234</sup> Serle, *The Rush to be Rich*, 131f.

## 6. The 1888 Centennial Mission.

The very able Bishop James Moorhouse presented a scholarly and reasoned apologia in St Paul's Cathedral to Melbourne's cultured despisers of religion, but the evangelicals were reserved about the effectiveness of this kind of approach.<sup>235</sup> Their preferred message was the standard and simple statement that Christ died for sins, and called all to repent and turn to him for forgiveness and eternal life. There was also a predilection for understanding evangelism in the context of premillennialism, and annual 'prophetic conferences' featured the leading evangelical clergy among their speakers. In 1883 the Second Advent Prayer Union was founded, and in 1885 the Victorian Prophetic Conference; their meetings fuelled the sense of urgency and expectation.

Chief among the evangelicals was the Anglican Rev H B Macartney Jr, vicar of St Mary's, Caulfield and son of the venerable Dean H B Macartney.<sup>236</sup> In 1878-9 Macartney and his wife took 12 months leave of absence and travelled to England where he visited the Keswick, Dublin and Mildmay Conventions. In particular he visited prominent Brethren and Anglican churchmen and evangelical personalities of the day. When visiting the leading Brethren Sir Edward Denny (with whom Moody stayed) he saw 'a drawing room evangelistic service held for over 200 aristocratic young men'. Before the trip Macartney had been deeply involved in evangelistic endeavours, speaking regularly at evangelistic rallies and at meetings of Christian workers in Victoria and other colonies; he introduced deeper-life conventions to Victoria in 1874; and was the leading facilitator of missions in colonial Australia.<sup>237</sup> The trip 'home' inspired him further, and on his return, in

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<sup>235</sup> But there was vigorous social and political agitation over issues such as secular education, Sabbatarianism, temperance, and social purity. See Serle, *The Rush to be Rich*, 153-78. The colonial evangelicals may be criticised for not having a creative engagement with an increasingly secular culture, but their vision was not entirely blinkered, cf the 'rescue work' of W Lockhart Morton – see footnote 36 below and my 'Faith Missions, Personality, and Leadership: W Lockhart Morton and Angas College', *Lucas: An Evangelical History Review* (2000). On Moorhouse see M Sturrock, *Bishop James Moorhouse: The Melbourne Years 1876-1886* (Monash University PhD, 2004).

but cf Brian Fletcher's comment in [Cable lecture](#)

<sup>236</sup> At the Presbyterian Conference held in the Alfred Hall, Ballarat 6-8 December 1887, Macartney spoke on 'The state of the world at the coming of Christ'. Other papers given included 'How the hope of the Lord's return should influence effort for the evangelisation of the world', and 'The practical influence of the blessed hope upon the character and conduct of Christians'. At the 1888 Victorian Prophetic Conference held in the Freemasons Hall, Melbourne, Macartney presided and spoke on 'The Practical Relation of Prophetic Truth to Evangelistic Work'. He was possibly influenced by Tasmanian Brethren with whom he was in contact.

<sup>237</sup> For further details on Macartney see my 'Hussey Burgh Macartney: a nineteenth century missions enthusiast' <http://rspas.anu.edu.au/pah/TransTasman/papers.php>

1879, he led in forming the United Evangelisation Association (UEA).<sup>238</sup> The word ‘United’ was intentional; this was no casual association of like-minded men.

In 1883 the UEA changed its name to the Evangelisation Society of Victoria (ESV) and an advertisement publicising the association appeared in the Wesleyan Methodist *Spectator* (27 July 1883) and other religious newspapers of the time. It listed the committee, which included well-known local evangelical worthies:

Rev W Allen	Rev G W	Philip Kitchen	Andrew Scott
Hon James	Gillings	Theo Kitchen	Robert Scott
Balfour MLC	R Gillespie	Rev H A	Thomas Scott
Edward Baines	James	Langley	Rev W P
David Beath	Griffiths	Rev H B	Wells
A J Clarke	F Haller	Macartney	James White
(evangelist)	J H Hill	Rev Dr Porter	Dr W Warren
J H Davies	W Howat	Rev B Rodda	Rev A Youl
W George	A B G	J W Rosier	
	Johnston		

The executive committee was J Balfour, R Gillespie and Theo Kitchen. Its purpose:

This society has been formed with a view of reaching the non-church-going population of Victoria. It is well-known that many will go to special meetings in a hall or tent who will not attend the usual religious services. The work is conducted on strictly undenominational grounds, the Evangelists going out not as members of any particular Church, but to preach Jesus to the unconverted. The Society is now prepared to send Evangelists to any place in Victoria, applications to be sent to the Hon. Sec [Theo Kitchen]. Funds are required for the work, and an appeal is made to all who love the Lord Jesus Christ for help in the matter; also in establishing and carrying on the services. ...

At the October 1887 meeting it was decided that something evangelistic should be done with regard to the proposed International

<sup>238</sup> During its history the organisation has gone through five changes of name: United Evangelisation Association, Evangelisation Society of Victoria, Evangelisation Society of Australasia, Evangelisation Society of Australia, and Equipping, Serving, Assisting Ministries. In 1880 Macartney introduced Scripture Union to Victoria.

Centennial Exhibition the following year. So the ESV leadership advertised a meeting of clergy and laymen of all the Protestant denominations to be held on 24 October in the YMCA rooms in Collins Street to broaden the discussion.<sup>239</sup> At that meeting Rev A J Campbell, minister of St George's Presbyterian Church, Geelong, suggested a Centennial Mission (CM), and that it be 'carried out by all the churches'.<sup>240</sup> This met with serious approval; the meeting declared itself to be a General Committee, and appointed an Executive Committee which included Rev L D Bevan (Congregationalist), W L Blamires (Methodist – President of the Victoria and Tasmania Conference in 1886),<sup>241</sup> S Bracewell, H Herlitz, W H Hoskin, Canon H A Langley (Anglican), Rev D S McEachran (Presbyterian), J G Ruddock, J Balfour MLC (Presbyterian), W H George, W Oakey, W A Southwell (secretary), and F When, with Campbell as chairman.

At a follow-up meeting on 14 November it was decided:

This movement will embrace the four following objects:-

- i. To engage the people of God in earnest, unceasing, believing prayer, for a gracious outpouring of the Holy Ghost during the coming year.
- ii. To draw the attention of this community to the many and great mercies which Australia has enjoyed at the hands of Almighty God during the first century of her existence as a British possession; and to press upon our people - in view of the approaching Centennial celebration on the 26th January - the duty of our meeting in a public act of national thanksgiving.<sup>242</sup>
- iii. To arrange for Mission Services in town and country with the Christian Churches with all other Christian agencies, and with the help of all Christian men and women, shall endeavour to secure that the whole population of Victoria shall have the offer

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<sup>239</sup> *Southern Cross* 6 January 1888, 13.

<sup>240</sup> *Argus* 28 June 1889, 5. See A H Campbell, *Campbell 1815-1909* (Richmond: Spectrum, 1995); and R Ward, *The Bush Still Burns. The Presbyterian and Reformed Faith in Australia 1788-1988* (St Kilda, Vic: Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia, 1989). No narrow denominationalist, Campbell was an enthusiast who cooperated easily with members of other churches. He was the first president of the Victorian Council of Churches.

<sup>241</sup> The Methodists were buoyant, having recently (in May 1886) celebrated their golden jubilee with a series of crowded, fervent celebrations at Wesley Church in Lonsdale Street and the Exhibition Buildings. See W L Blamires & J B Smith, *The Early Story of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Victoria* (Melbourne: Wesleyan Book Depot, 1886), 311 – 'mighty Methodism' was the term used.

<sup>242</sup> A significant statement. The leadership regarded Australia as a Christian country. This aim was realised: there were united thanksgiving services, including one in the Town Hall, and the Exhibition was opened with prayer by the Hon James McBain, President of the Exhibition.

of salvation through the blood of the Cross, brought within reach during the coming twelvemonth.

- iv. To promote the increased circulation of the Holy Scriptures and the reading of them in private, in the families of the people; to encourage family religion and the more careful training of the young; and to urge upon the whole community a deeper argument for, and a more earnest observance of, the Lord's Day.

A plan of the proposed mission was submitted to the assemblies of the main Protestant churches, which 'received a general and cordial approval', and a letter sent to every Protestant minister in Victoria ('with three or four obvious exceptions'), and 40 000 copies of an invitation to prayer sent out to individuals and churches. This was not to be a short, sharp campaign, but one spread over half the year. Efforts were concentrated on Melbourne during May, the suburbs during June-July, and suburbs and country centres (such as Geelong and Ballarat) July to November, with closing meetings in Melbourne early December. What follows is based mainly on reports in the *Southern Cross*, the interdenominational weekly newspaper of the time, beginning with the events leading up to the mission proper.<sup>243</sup>

### 3. the mission

The initial planning meetings were followed by weekly prayer meetings held in the YMCA building throughout December 1887 and January 1888, including a United Week of Prayer, which the *SC* declared to be a great success. There were also reports of evangelistic endeavours of ESV in country areas; the CM was part of an ongoing evangelical endeavour.<sup>244</sup> But at the March committee meeting, it was

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<sup>243</sup> *SC* was edited (for more than 40 years) by the vigorous Methodist Rev W H Fitchett, founding president of Methodist Ladies College, Kew. 'Known in private life for an affable manner and a chuckling sense of humour, in public affairs, he could be a great hater, with a fighting instinct and a love of unblunted truth which sprang from his conviction that he was always right.' B Dickey ed, *The Australian Dictionary of Evangelical Biography* (Sydney: Evangelical History Association, 1994), 114. Serle, *The Rush to be Rich*, 175: '... The *Southern Cross* habitually sneered at "persons of culchah [*sic*] and advanced opinions"'. For a fuller and balanced appreciation of Fitchett see R D Linder, 'William Henry Fitchett (1841-1928): Forgotten Methodist "Tall Poppy"' in G R Treloar & R D Linder ed, *Making History for God. Essays on Evangelicalism, Revival and Mission* (Sydney: Robert Menzies College, 2004), 197-238. Though a committed Methodist, Fitchett had a comfortable regard for other churches and evangelicals of every hue, and the *SC* carried regular reports of different churches.

<sup>244</sup> *SC* 13 January 1888, 13. Cf a note in the journal of Spurgeon's College, *Sword and Trowel* 1884, 560 (a number of Spurgeon's disciples found their way to the Australian colonies):

Mr A.J. Clarke [a member of the ESV committee] ... sends us a most cheering report of his work in connection with the Evangelization Society of Victoria, an undenominational society which sends its agents free to all parts of that colony. During the year which ended on June 30<sup>th</sup>, Mr Clarke conducted

noted that the Anglicans were officially hesitant: Bp F F Goe thought 'the plan of holding a Centennial Mission seemed to him an excellent one in which the clergy of his diocese were at liberty to co-operate *as far as church order will allow*'. (emphasis added; the cautious Goe had to live with a mixed diocese. Anglican ministers were permitted to attend meetings in other churches but not to open their own churches. See below) At the same meeting, H B Macartney advocated meetings for women conducted by women. This was in keeping with his support for women missionaries.<sup>245</sup> It was also a precaution against another occurrence of the silly behaviour twelve years before of the visiting Scottish evangelist Dr A N Somerville who, according to the *Argus*, in an evangelistic meeting harangued a number of young women, causing them great distress. The *Argus* journalist was incensed:

Everyone knows them for exemplars of all that is innocent and pure in girlhood, and a sentiment of deep indignation pervaded all but the fatuous circles of evangelicalism at the cruel torture arising from the conceited assumption of infallible insight by a sensational travelling preacher. ...<sup>246</sup>

Then, in April, at an important meeting in James Balfour's Toorak home to hear the quarterly report of ESV, committee members D Beath and Dr W Warren<sup>247</sup> were commissioned to go to London with letters of introduction to seek out an evangelist to lead the mission. Significantly, the committee did not invite the well-known Henry

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373 meetings, at which it was estimated that between eighty and ninety thousand persons were present, of whom over 900 have united with the churches as a result of the services.

Cf also *SC* 18 May 1888, 391, 395, which printed a letter from the ESV endorsing the work of evangelist W H Scurr and the 'excellent results' of the R Robertson mission at Smythesdale: 'No such religious revival has taken place in the district since Mr Matthew Burnett's visit, some twenty, years ago'.

<sup>245</sup> See my 'Hussey Burgh Macartney'. G Blainey, *Black Kettle and Full Moon. Daily Life in a Vanished Australia* (Camberwell, Vic: Viking, 2003), 146, notes:

More and more women spoke in public, from the 1880s onwards. .. The first woman to address large Australian audiences was probably the British evangelist, Margaret Hampson, who made a national tour in 1883. Her eloquence and demeanour helped halt the tide of disfavour towards female orators. A Melbourne religious weekly that announced magisterially 'we do not view with favour the spectacle of a woman addressing an audience of both sexes', conceded that Mrs Hampson was so impressive that an exception could be made just for her.

<sup>246</sup> *Argus* 7 December 1877. As well as its unflattering remarks about Somerville, the *Argus* made denigratory comments about revivalism and the well-known evangelist Henry Varley, who was in Melbourne in 1888. The committee was naturally sensitive; and at another March committee meeting Campbell defended himself 'stoutly' against the complaint that there was not enough publicity about the aims and methods of the mission. *SC*, 30 March, 248.

<sup>247</sup> In 1902 ESV again sent Warren, this time with fellow Baptist G P Barber, to England to seek an evangelist to come to Victoria. Not finding the man they wanted, they returned home via the United States where they met R A Torrey, then president of the Moody Bible Institute. They persuaded him to come to Melbourne to lead an evangelistic mission, which he did with C M Alexander as song-leader. This mission resulted in the 1902 revival.

Varley, who had worked and lived in Melbourne at different times for a number of years. One suspects that Varley's independence/separatism was uncongenial to the collegial unity of the Melbourne evangelical leadership. The same meeting referred to the Church of England Mission Week, to be held 15-22 July. The committee, diplomatically, stated that it did not see this as being divisive, and would support it as best it could (though they, especially the Anglicans among them, must have been disappointed). The members were naturally glad the Anglicans were so disposed, and noted the comment in a paper given by Canon H A Langley of St Matthew's, Prahran, that the mission would annoy only those who wanted quiet; and Campbell testily expressed frustration at those who were concerned only about theological niceties. A similar theme surfaced at the next meeting, also in April, when the committee answered forthrightly the lament of a minister who complained that he did not have time for mission. More positively, it added that a Miss Faulkner from London would hold bible readings in the Assembly Hall in Collins Street. The converted Jewish evangelist Mrs Emilia Baeyertz would also speak. Over the following months the SC carried regular reports of Mrs Baeyertz's evangelistic meetings, including a YWCA mission in July that targeted women.<sup>248</sup>

Meanwhile, in London, Beath and Warren invited George Clarke, a well-known lay Anglican evangelist, to come to Melbourne to lead the mission. The son of a Church of England vicar, Clarke enjoyed a reputation as a 'great athlete and footballer' and was known as 'the Christian athlete' (an example of evangelical 'muscular Christianity'? would this give him additional appeal to young men?). Converted in 1878 by D L Moody during the latter's ministry in England, he very soon began working as an evangelist, both in England and America. Thus his conversion experience, spirituality, and a decade of work as an evangelist appealed. His being an Anglican was no disadvantage either, especially as he intended eventually to seek ordination (was this a factor in his invitation, to appeal to the Melbourne Anglicans?) The

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<sup>248</sup> Baeyertz was significant, both as an evangelist and a woman in pre-feminist Australia. See E Wilson, "'Totally Devoid of Sensationalism": Mrs Baeyertz, the Jewish 'Lady Evangelist' from Melbourne", *Tasmanian Historical Research Association Papers and Proceedings*, vol 49 no 2 September 2002; S Swain, 'In These Days of Hallelujah Lasses: Women Preachers and the Redefinition of Gender Roles in the Churches in Late Nineteenth-Century Australia', *Journal of Religious History* vol 26 no 1, February 2002, 65-77.

SC enthused: he ‘seems to possess in a remarkable degree all the qualities which go to make a signally successful evangelist’.<sup>249</sup>

*Melbourne meetings (May)*

Clarke wasted no time in accepting the invitation and sailed on the *Britannia*, arriving early May. His first public occasion was an informal meeting at the Grand (later, Windsor) Hotel with clergy and leading laymen. The following evening he addressed ‘a largely attended meeting’ of university students in the Assembly Hall, organised by the University Christian Alliance. There he gave ‘an eloquent and impressive address, in which he sketched his plan for action, and exhorted his hearers to do their utmost to bring other young men to a knowledge of grace. His remarks were listened to with marked attention’.<sup>250</sup>

At his third meeting Clarke addressed Christian workers in the Assembly Hall where he ‘gave an interesting address to a crowded meeting ..’. These were the frontline troops of the mission, looking for inspiration and leadership, and Clarke indicated the tone and style for his ministry as well as the agenda.

.. already his utterances are arousing wide interest. Mr Clarke has all the elements of a successful evangelist. His note is a certain calm impressiveness of style - a quality in him quite unlike that of any other notable preacher who has visited us. Mr Clarke’s sentences have the calmness and dignity, and the yet the impact, of the charge of some great judge in some case of world-wide interest. The secret of Mr Clarke’s curious impressiveness is of the business order, and goes with practical directness straight to its end; he has a certain transparent sincerity which discerns

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<sup>249</sup> SC 4 May 1888, 343. The English evangelical newspaper *The Christian* regularly carried appreciative accounts of Clarke’s evangelistic endeavours throughout Britain and Ireland. Reporting on a successful campaign in Kirkcaldy, *The Christian* (23 September 1886, 713) mused that it was not easy to say what the basis of his power was: he did not have the charisma of Moody nor the ‘accurate culture and thoughtful originality’ of Henry Drummond. But he was ‘bold and manly’ and preached ‘the marrow of the Gospel with intense earnestness, and the power of God rests upon him’. On his way to Melbourne Clarke met Varley at Brindisi who wrote: ‘I trust he may be used abundantly’. *Christian* 15 June 1888, 551.

<sup>250</sup> In an earlier edition, the SC (20 April 1888, 315), reported on the first meeting of the fourth year of the Melbourne University Christian Alliance. There was enthusiasm for the well-known apologist and evangelist Prof Henry Drummond to be invited. But because of the ESV’s Centennial Mission and the work of George Clarke, ‘it was resolved to await his arrival, ask him to preside at a meeting, and then decide as to the proposal’. The next significant gatherings of university Christian groups were the visits by the American missionary statesman J R Mott in 1896, 1903 and 1926. The story of Melbourne student Christian groups has yet to be told.

prejudice; his own faith is of an unique calmness and certainty, and the contagion of it lays hold of perplexed intellects and wavering hearts, and lifts it up to the clear air where it dwells. ..

This was pleasing to the evangelical leadership, fitting their preference of method, and probably because he was different to Varley. To disarm any possible criticism or hesitation, Clarke stated:

‘My plan is first and foremost to work with the Churches, and if I am not going to carry on my mission with them and their aid, I am not going to have any mission at all. Some evangelists, as you are probably aware, act independently. Perhaps they have good reasons for doing so, but then that is not my way. Even though I hold meetings on Sunday, I take care never to speak in church hours.’<sup>251</sup>

The *SC* purred with satisfaction, and he was invited to speak in Dr L D Bevan’s Independent Church in Collins Street, one of the main city pulpits.<sup>252</sup> Other invitations followed and Clarke spent most of May speaking in Melbourne city churches and halls. The *SC* confidently informed its readers: ‘Mr Clarke’s mission work in Melbourne may be already pronounced a great success ...’ and that he was about to begin ‘his first suburban mission at St Kilda [and] ... thence to South Melbourne, Kew, Hawthorn, etc’.<sup>253</sup>

#### *suburban meetings (June-July)*

During the winter months from June to September, Clarke spoke in different suburbs. The first two weeks of June were spent in St Kilda. It was a ‘simply wonderful success’, and in laudatory remarks Rev E Handel Jones, the then minister of the St Kilda Congregationalist Church, referred to Clarke’s simplicity of style, tender sympathy, and freedom from cant and sensationalism. There was unity among the clergy, and (the editor added pointedly) ‘The unanimity of action on

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<sup>251</sup> Was he being polite, or politic? Probably both, but he was not insincere. Did he have anyone particular in mind? Probably. We may assume the leadership had informed him of recent evangelistic endeavours. Cf my ‘Henry Varley and the Melbourne Evangelicals’, *Journal of Religious History*, February 2001. 173-87. Clarke’s words certainly underscore the ecumenical spirit of the Melbourne evangelicals.

<sup>252</sup> This was an encouraging start to the mission. See L D Bevan, *The Life and Reminiscences of Llewelyn David Bevan* (Melbourne: Wyatt & Wyatt, 1920). Bevan was a member of the ESV committee, but his evangelicalism did not blind him to social issues. He represented the Congregational Union when speaking at a meeting at the Trades Hall Council, and appealed for aid for the London Dockers in their 1889 strike.

<sup>253</sup> *SC* 25 May 1888, 411.

the part of the churches needed only the co-operation of Episcopacy to render it perfect'.<sup>254</sup> At the close of the mission a thank-offering at the afternoon and evening meetings resulted in £449-19-3. Clarke invited the people to indicate where they wanted money to go to, resulting in £128-5-3 to the general fund and £273-14-0 to the YWCA.<sup>255</sup> At the end of June, H B Macartney chaired and gave the closing address at a YWCA meeting. A few weeks later Clarke gave a 'splendid address' on the occasion of the YWCA's 17<sup>th</sup> anniversary, endorsing the organisation and its world-wide significance.<sup>256</sup> There followed missions in Camberwell and Kew where Clarke spoke to overflowing crowds in the Presbyterian, Wesleyan and Congregational churches, and a fortnight of special united prayer for churches of East Melbourne, Footscray and Collingwood.

*suburban and country (July to November)*

Clarke's suburban efforts included being seconded to Melbourne Anglican diocese for the Anglican Centennial Mission week, 15-22 July – see below. Following this he made his first foray into country Victoria to lead the Ballarat United Town Mission. During this mission he returned to Melbourne, where the end of July and beginning of August saw him speaking at the Prahran United Mission (ie including St Matthew's, Prahran, whose vicar, Rev W W Clarke, took part<sup>257</sup>), which used St Matthew's as a base. This lasted a fortnight, and was deemed a marked success.<sup>258</sup>

He then returned to Ballarat to conclude the mission there. This was not only successful evangelistically but was a significant social and ecumenical occasion, with the Mayor of Ballarat (Cr M McDonald) presiding, and assisted by Rev W Lockhart Morton (minister of

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<sup>254</sup> SC, 8 June 1888, 443 (see too page 435); 29 June, 511.

<sup>255</sup> SC, 15 June 1888, 471, carefully pointed out that no special appeal was made for gifts; the giving was 'absolutely spontaneous', and the large sum received was made up mainly of small donations. A few years later a similar thing was said about the collection at the first Geelong Convention, even though the collection was announced beforehand, and so was not spontaneous. Was this part of evangelical mythology and piety?

<sup>256</sup> In September, Clarke was invited back, with Mrs Faulkner, to speak on behalf of the projected YWCA hall. He reiterated his endorsement of the YWCA and its work overseas.

<sup>257</sup> Bishop J Grant, *Correspondence*, 28 December 2006, points out that 'Langley was at Prahran till 1890. He had leave of absence to organise the Anglican Centennial Mission so W W Clarke may have been his locum'.

<sup>258</sup> Clarke also preached again at Christ Church, South Yarra, 'to a large crowd'. During these Anglican meetings Clarke opened with prayer a combined meeting of the churches involved in the mission at the Exhibition Building. SC, 3 August, 603.

Ebenezer Presbyterian Church) and Archdeacon Julius.<sup>259</sup> Clarke returned a week later and spoke at the Ballarat Academy of Music. The local evangelicals were buoyed, and the Ballarat Evangelical Alliance saw a large attendance at their half-yearly united service at which Lockhart Morton led the prayers and Rev A Bird (Dawson Street Baptist Church) preached. Around the same time, other ESV evangelists conducted services at Newtown, Scarsdale, Ross Creek, Haddon, and Arundel.

From Ballarat Clarke went to Geelong where he led a week-long mission which saw 'good crowds'. The latter part of August saw a brief return to Melbourne to lead a mission at the Cairns Memorial Church (Presbyterian) in East Melbourne, where the energetic and popular Rev G D Buchanan exercised an evangelical ministry. September saw him conduct a very successful mission in Richmond, where the unity of the local clergy was 'impressive',<sup>260</sup> before sallying again to the Ballarat area to lead and speak at a crowded meeting of the united mission service at Buninyong. October saw further missions in the suburbs, including one at Toorak Presbyterian Church (6-14 October), where the highly regarded and well-liked Rev J F Ewing was delighted to see his church 'crowded to excess'. This fittingly completed his work in the suburbs:

His work in Victoria has been growing steadily in intensity and power, and, perhaps, the most striking of all Mr Clarke's meetings was the closing service at Toorak Presbyterian Church. The church was packed, an overflow meeting was held in the school hall, and in both meetings the spiritual results were of a very striking character. The thank offering yielded a sum of no less than £1078-11-6. [An impressive sum which indicated the satisfaction of the Toorak Presbyterians.]

The *Daily Telegraph* noted that a number of young men of good social standing were converted. This completed, for the moment, his mission to Victoria. After a few days rest he travelled to Sydney for a 'series of services' before returning to Melbourne for five days of mission at the Town Hall. It was also triumphantly announced that the YWCA had

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<sup>259</sup> SC 17 August 1888, 654.

<sup>260</sup> September saw the preliminary meeting of the Victorian Railways Christian Union. Clarke spoke to the railway men on a Saturday in the Assembly Hall. SC, 14 September 1888, 735.

## 6. The 1888 Centennial Mission.

taken possession of the Secularist Hall of Science in Bourke Street as part of their new site, and that more than £8000 had been given or promised towards the £15 000 target. 'It is gratifying to know that Mr Joseph Syme and Company will vanish from at least this particular locality; and where Christianity and the Bible have been so persistently dishonoured the Gospel will now be systematically proclaimed.'<sup>261</sup>

November saw Clarke make another quick trip to Sydney where the venerable Dean W M Cowper of St Andrews Cathedral chaired the meetings, and which Clarke described as 'large scale and highly successful in character'. Back in Melbourne he led a mission at Campbelltown in cooperation with the local clergy. Then followed a further three-day mission at Ballarat that saw 4000 crowd into the Albert Hall. Finally, in Melbourne again, the fatigued but satisfied Clarke attended an appreciative, and extensive, three days of farewell services in the Melbourne Town Hall. He shared the platform with evangelical leaders including Bp F F Goe,<sup>262</sup> Rev L D Bevan, Rev A J Campbell, and Rev A Webb (Baptist - who presided).<sup>263</sup>

But still Clarke's departure was delayed. The end of November saw him speak at special children's services in South Melbourne, and travel to Geelong for farewell ceremonies on 19 November in a packed Exhibition Theatre. As with the other farewells, this was a statement of evangelical unity and cooperation as much as appreciation of Clarke's ministry; with him on the platform were Lockhart Morton (who had travelled from Ballarat for the occasion) and Canon Charles Goodman

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<sup>261</sup> SC, 19 October 1888, 823, 835). Syme was an atheist and a republican, but offended like-minded people with his intemperate personality and style. He did, though, have the satisfaction of seeing some evangelical land-boomers exposed in the early 1890s. See Serle, *The Rush to be Rich*, 145-7, 284.

<sup>262</sup> Goe's presence was significant. Though recognised as an evangelical, in those pre-ecumenical days a bishop was always a bishop, regardless of his evangelical sympathies, and had to be cautious of identifying too publicly with non-Anglican interdenominational groups such as ESV.

<sup>263</sup> The presence of Webb, editor of the *Victorian Freeman* and leading Baptist minister is noteworthy. The report of the meetings of the General and Local Committee of 28 February 1888 noted:

Some encouraging statements were made by Messrs Allan Webb and W C Bunning, especially with regard to open-air preaching on Sunday evenings, when they had extra-church, but orderly and attentive, congregations. They earnestly recommended the brethren to betake themselves to that apostolic method of preaching.

*Spectator*, 16 March 1888, 125. But during the mission the *VF* was sparing in its references to the CM, and almost damned Clarke with faint praise.

Mr George Clarke, the Evangelist, whose labours amongst young men, have been specially used of God in Scotland and elsewhere, is holding mission services in the suburbs of Melbourne. Without joining the chorus of extravagant laudation which has been raised by certain portions of the press, we are rejoiced to recognise in him a devoted worker for souls, whom God has used, and whose earnest appeals will, we trust, issue in the religious decision of large numbers.

*VF* June 1888, 99. See below page 14.

of Christ Church, Geelong, one of the oldest and leading Anglican ministers of the colony, who noted: 'Mr Clarke has done an immense amount of good in Geelong, and is greatly beloved by all classes'.

From Geelong Clarke returned to Melbourne to speak at a crowded Assembly Hall meeting, presumably at the behest of Lockhart Morton, as the topic was Hope Lodge, a major part of Morton's ministry in Ballarat. For all of Ballarat's recent boom time and Victoria's present prosperity there were a lot of social problems, among them the many young men, often from 'good' backgrounds, who slept out under trees or in sheds. Noticing this, and with energy left over from his normal parish duties, Morton began 'rescue work' of these men, many of whom had alcohol problems, by renting a small cottage for the men to stay in. The work soon grew and houses were rented (the money came from voluntary contributions) to accommodate some 40 inmates. Appropriately named Hope Lodge, many of those who passed through it later testified to its helpfulness to them at a difficult time in their life. Morton explained its need, beginning, aims, and work.<sup>264</sup> Clarke's presence and endorsement saw a collection of over £100 given. The same report noted that the YWCA building appeal now had £11 500.

*excursus: the churches – the Church of England mission and other churches*

Well aware of the plans for the ESV Centennial Mission, at a clergy meeting in the Diocesan Registry on 13 March, Canon H A Langley (member of the ESV executive, and later Bishop of Bendigo) suggested holding a simultaneous parochial mission (that is, evangelistic missions held in a number of parishes at the same time) 15-22 July. This met with episcopal and wider approval and the following months saw

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<sup>264</sup> Morton, being part of the evangelical network, encouraged many of the men he helped to ask the generous James Balfour for employment in his firms. For instance James Scott Charles wrote 5 July 1888 to Balfour:

... Mr Millar, who was the means of lifting [me] out of the slough of despond & trusting to set my feet on the Rock Jesus Christ - the Revd. W L Morton (under whose care and spiritual guidance I am at the present) has been the means of bringing me to the foot of [the] cross, whose besetting sin has been drink - I am resolved by God's Almighty [power] to lead a new life from henceforth ... I am selling religious works at present for Mr Morton.

Morton's rescue work not only met a need, it was a significant strand in nineteenth century evangelicalism. It was not a temporary thing for Morton who saw it as being part of his ministry and continued it when he moved to Malvern and then Adelaide. Balfour's biographer A Lemon (*The Young Man From Home. James Balfour 1830-1913* (Melbourne: Melbourne Univ Press, 1982), 97) mentions that 'He handled the business dealings of clergymen and kept visiting evangelist George Clarke from ever-threatening bankruptcy.', though this is probably a reference to the financial viability of the mission.

careful preparation with weekly prayer meetings, parishes advised of aims, and visitation. 'The real success of the work depends not so much on organisation, as upon the organisation being used to seek and obtain an outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the whole work, and on each particular parish engaged.'<sup>265</sup> On 11 June Bishop F F Goe hosted a quiet day at Bishops court for clergy and mission workers when encouraging reports were heard of preparations for the mission. Before it began there was a dedicatory communion service at St James' Cathedral on Friday 13 July which was attended by 40 to 50 clergy, including many of the missionaries. On Sunday the preaching began.

Seconded by the ESV, and licensed by Goe, George Clarke spoke to packed Anglican churches, including St Columb's, Hawthorn and Christ Church, South Yarra, where the Governor Sir Henry Loch was present. This was reckoned rather daring: 'A layman in a Church of England pulpit preaching a discourse of his own is a sufficiently strange phenomenon'.<sup>266</sup> But the numbers and excitement outweighed tradition, and it was regretted that Clarke's stay in Victoria would not be longer (even though the ESV CM was planned to last until December). By now Clarke was feeling the strain and took a brief holiday mid-July before going to North Melbourne and Essendon where he preached in St James, Moonee Ponds (a branch church of St Thomas', Essendon, where the uncompromising evangelical Digby Berry was vicar), and St Thomas', Essendon. The mission was deemed to be 'a distinct and great success, and will set a happy precedent for future years. Mr George Clarke, who conducted the Mission at Essendon, has had a most successful week, and the thank-offering at the close amounted to £478-14-3.'<sup>267</sup>

In its response the *Messenger* initially expressed a mixture of caution and appreciation. 'We cannot pretend to give any account of the mission other than in the most general terms. We have not the official statistics necessary for a complete report, and a partial one, based on hearsay and impressions would be unsatisfactory and unfair.' But it

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<sup>265</sup> *Church of England Messenger*, April 1888.

<sup>266</sup> Non-Anglicans though saw it as more than strange, not understanding the need for Clarke to be so licensed. The *SC* praised Goe for his 'wise and careful organisation' – he was a good administrator. 'But for missions purposes the Church of England has, in a sense, to work in fetters.'

<sup>267</sup> *SC*, 20 July 1888, 563; 27 July, 583.

also noted Clarke's 'stirring addresses in connection with the Evangelisation Society's mission [which] had made a deep impression on people of all classes..', and the worthy efforts of the other missionaries. Then appreciation gave way to jubilation. A month later, on 21 August, there was 'an enormous attendance at the final thanksgiving service at the Melbourne Town Hall in connection with the Centennial Mission of the Church of England'. The doors had to be closed earlier than the advertised time of the start of the service and the overflow crowd directed to St Paul's one block away. The attendees heard reports of the gratifying results of the preparations and prayers and efforts, and the need to engage in similar missions in country centres the next year.<sup>268</sup>

In his address to the Church Assembly in October an enthusiastic Goe said:

The most interesting and important event in the annals of our diocese for the year 1888 was the Centennial Mission ...George Clarke, a lay evangelist, from England, greatly strengthened the mission by his indefatigable and successful labours – (hear, hear) – and the church is greatly indebted to the Rev Canon Langley ... whose arrangements left nothing to be desired. (Cheers.) .. in some parishes the Church's work needs to be supplemented by mission halls (hear, hear) – in which evangelistic services of a popular kind may be held to attract those who are not yet prepared for the regular service of the parish church. (Cheers.) [had Goe read the *SC* comments?] .. next year the benefits of a mission should be extended to the country districts ..<sup>269</sup>

There was a similar reserve among the Baptists. The editor of the *Victorian Freeman*, Rev Allan Webb, mentioned and endorsed the mission, though perhaps not with the kind of enthusiasm one might have expected, especially as Webb was an uncompromising evangelical who supported evangelism. Webb's official reticence was because 1888 was a very busy year for Baptists and distracted what otherwise would have been wholehearted endorsement. It was their jubilee; £25 000 had been anonymously promised if the churches could

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<sup>268</sup> *Messenger*, 14 August 1888, 1, 5.

<sup>269</sup> *Messenger*, 16 October 1888, 13.

raise a similar amount; Webb and other leading ministers were busy encouraging Baptists to be proud of their tradition and identity, and to give to the appeal; and editions of the *VF* regularly carried editorials and articles on Baptist history and identity: cf the title of an address by Webb to the Baptist Association - 'Our Denominational Faith', *VF* April 1888, 74. As well, jubilee celebrations were due to begin in November. Thus the Centennial Mission did not receive the amount of endorsement it might have otherwise received.<sup>270</sup>

Similarly, the Methodist *Spectator* (March 1888) carried an informative and positive editorial, but did not bother to report anything about the mission for the rest of the year. The Conference Minutes for January 1888 included a motion endorsing the mission, but there was no report in the 1889 minutes. It was not that the *Spectator* was not interested in evangelism – it regularly carried reports of the activities of the official Conference Evangelist, but denominational concerns overrode non-denominational.

Thus there was a certain official ambivalence among the churches. The Anglicans were happy to use George Clarke in their mission – he was, after all, one of them - but could not officially cooperate with the ESV, even though the initiative for a centennial mission came from them, and the diocese unblushingly also called their own evangelistic effort a Centennial Mission. Evangelical ecumenism was an individual thing, and the churches were not yet ready for joint ecumenical ventures. It is not without interest that three decades earlier (on 7 July 1857) an Evangelical Alliance of Victoria held its first meeting.<sup>271</sup> But that organisation did not last, probably because it involved churches rather than individuals, and was perceived as a threat to denominational loyalty, even by so resolute an evangelical as Bishop Charles Perry.

It is not my wish to justify my further connection with the Evangelical Alliance, but to say that the offset in this city has long since died a natural death, and that, if it were revived I should not rejoin it, because, I agree that on account of the

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<sup>270</sup> However *VF* August 1889, 113-4, contained an editorial on revival, noting the need for it and the qualities for preparation. Did Webb see in his lack of endorsement of and involvement in the CM an opportunity lost? It should be added that he was an enthusiastic participant in the 1902 Torrey-Alexander mission. See my *Rev Allan Webb* (Sydney: EHA, forthcoming)

<sup>271</sup> See *Argus*, 9 July 1857, 5.

offence occasioned thereby its effect would be to divide the Church, not to unite it.<sup>272</sup>

A United Evangelical Alliance was formed in 1878, but it did not last either.<sup>273</sup> By contrast the UEA/ESV was composed of a network of individuals. Evangelical unity works best on such a basis, however inherently fragile it might be.

#### 4. conclusion

The 1888 Centennial Mission was notable for two reasons. First, it was part of the ongoing evangelical and evangelistic church culture that was characteristic of late colonial Melbourne, and was an important episode in the history of evangelism in Victoria. This was the age of marvellous Melbourne, and believers enjoyed a lively and robust church life. Their evangelism was an expression not of desperation but of determination, and confidence. Second, it was the first of the four largest evangelistic missions in Victoria's history – the 1888 CM, the 1902 Torrey-Alexander Simultaneous Mission, and the 1959 and 1969 Billy Graham Crusades. These missions are distinguished from other, and ongoing, evangelistic undertakings by the extent of their preparation, the use of a prominent overseas evangelist, the size of the mission, and, in each case, the significant results.<sup>274</sup> In each case the

<sup>272</sup> A De Q Robin, *Charles Perry. Bishop of Melbourne. The Challenges of a Colonial Episcopate 1847-76* (Nedlands, WA: Univ of Western Australia, 1967), 139.

<sup>273</sup> See *Supplement of SC*, 13 July 1878.

<sup>274</sup> As well as ongoing evangelism by, mainly, local evangelists, the outstanding evangelistic endeavours were:

1860s	the American Methodist William 'California' Taylor ignited revival fires among the Methodists
1870s to 1890s	Englishman Henry Varley lived for some years in Melbourne and worked in the eastern states. See my 'Henry Varley Down Under', <i>Lucas</i> 2001/2.
<b>1888</b>	George Clarke (UK) and the CM
1890s	local Presbyterian evangelist Rev John MacNeil
<b>1902</b>	the Torrey-Alexander Simultaneous Campaign. Alexander returned again in 1909 and 1912 with Wilbur Chapman, but these were not as significant as the 1902 effort which overseas was referred to as 'the great Australian revival'. See my 'Revivalism in Melbourne from Federation to World War I: the Torrey-Alexander-Chapman Campaigns', M Hutchinson <i>et al</i> ed, <i>Reviving Australia</i> (Sydney: CSAC, 1994), 143-69.
1920s	from the UK, W P Nicholson ('full of the Holy Ghost and vulgarity') and Gipsy Smith worked the revival circuit but were not as successful as Clarke or Torrey and Alexander. Nicholson also took a prominent part in the 1909 Chapman-Alexander campaign.
1930s	the NSW Baptist Rev J G Ridley, possibly Australia's most outstanding evangelist, did great work, but, again, did not lead an outstanding large campaign.
<b>1959</b>	the first Billy Graham Crusade significantly impacted the nation: see S Piggan, 'Billy Graham in Australia, 1959 – was it revival?' <i>Lucas</i> (6) October 1989: 2-33.
<b>1969</b>	Graham returned for another (not quite as) successful campaign.

aims stated in the November 1887 meeting (see above) were achieved.<sup>275</sup>

First, there was the preparation. As indicated above, this was distinguished by the unity and denominational diversity of the individuals who planned and ran the campaign (contra the separatist early Pentecostal efforts). It was careful, thorough, and state-wide in organisation: Melbourne city centre, select suburbs, and country centres, especially Ballarat and Geelong, were specifically targeted. The mission was a lively expression of the evangelical flavour of most of the Protestant churches of the colony.

Second, the evangelists, both local and overseas, plied their trade to good effect.<sup>276</sup> The *SC* regularly reported on the efforts of long-forgotten local evangelists such as R Robertson at Allandale, Smythesdale,<sup>277</sup> Ross Creek near Ballarat, and Healesville, W H Scurr at Burnley, Scarsdale and Telangatuk. Clarke and the *ESV* were very aware of them, and endorsed their work and importance, especially at meetings for ‘Christian workers’; the campaign was a collaborative effort. Also mentioned were local clergy who heeded Paul’s injunction to Timothy to do the work of an evangelist, eg Rev J F Ewing (Presbyterian), Rev J Watsford (Methodist), Rev A Bird (Baptist), Rev H B Macartney (Anglican), and Rev W Lockhart Morton (Presbyterian). At Stawell in the Western District the local ministers themselves led a mission. Other more professional evangelists such as the local Presbyterian Rev John MacNeil,<sup>278</sup> the independent Henry Varley, a sometime resident of Melbourne who ran evangelistic meetings in the Theatre Royal for some weeks during November,<sup>279</sup> and the Brethren George Müller who toured the eastern states,

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<sup>275</sup> See Campbell’s heartfelt editorial, *SC* 28 December 1888, 1031, where he recounts the story of the CM.

<sup>276</sup> Cf the obituary for Wilmot Oakey and an appeal to help his family in *SC*, 24 February 1888, 143. Rev P J Murdoch commented: ‘During the past two years I have known Mr Oakey’s work in the Victoria Hall, Bourke-street, where he has been able to assemble and hold 600 to 800 young men every Sunday evening. He has very generally spoken on the wharves on the Sunday afternoon also’.

<sup>277</sup> See footnote 17 above.

<sup>278</sup> See my ‘John MacNeil (1854-1896): “Australia for Christ”’ in R Ward ed, *Presbyterian Leaders in Nineteenth Century Australia* (Melbourne: R Ward, 1993), 150-64.

<sup>279</sup> It is noteworthy that Varley did not hold city-wide crusades in Melbourne, probably an indication of his lack of stature or lack of support. Cf *Willing Work*, 18 April 1978: at a ‘Conference of Christians’ held in Melbourne 22 May 1878, Varley said that ‘He came to these colonies, not at the invitation of anyone, but to fulfil a longstanding promise to the Lord ...’ Varley tips his hand: his independence masked a separatist streak. And he roused the ire of the pugnacious denominational loyalist Allan Webb; see *Victorian Baptist* July 1890, 107.

Tasmania and New Zealand, and who visited Melbourne in August, were also prominent.

Outstanding though was the overseas import, George Clarke. He did not have the charisma of Moody, or the oratorical ability of Spurgeon, or the forcefulness of Varley, and was not as well known as any of them. But the ESV committee had done their homework, and his personality and style met with approval.<sup>280</sup> He brought a dignity and hard-working earnestness to the task, and soon stamped his leadership on the mission. The Melbourne evangelicals considered he added lustre to the mission, and he achieved a celebratory status. Fitchett's *SC* gave him important and unstinting support, and he received favourable mention in the denominational papers.

Evangelistic effort was complemented and stimulated by the deeper-life movement, begun in Melbourne in 1874 by H B Macartney, and the 'Conferences for Christians'. The idea for the latter probably came from the Conference of Christian Workers that met quarterly in London, which was really an association of evangelists, in which Varley and Harry Moorhouse were prominent. Varley had held one of these in Melbourne in 1878, and since then in Tasmania, Melbourne (again) and Adelaide. Their purpose was not evangelistic but for 'the edification of believers through their growth in the Lord Jesus Christ'.

Third, mention should be made of the role of women evangelists such as Emilia Baeyertz. There were no women on the ESV or CM councils but, in a patriarchal society, such awareness and endorsement is noteworthy. The initiative came from Macartney. At the meeting of the General and Local Committees on 28 February Rev A J Campbell

stated that he had been requested by the Rev Mr Macartney to bring before the meeting the exceeding desirableness of embracing in their mission work special meetings for women – rich and poor [note the class consciousness] – to be held in the afternoons, and to be chiefly in the hands of ladies. Such meetings, he knew, had been the means of much blessing. Ladies

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<sup>280</sup> Because of empire ties, visiting overseas evangelists generally came from Britain rather than America. After World War II, most came from America. Clarke's Englishness, and Anglican-ness, counted.

willing to assist in that work, and well qualified for it, would be found.<sup>281</sup>

Fourth, the size and comprehensiveness set the CM apart from previous campaigns, and it is to be compared with the 1902 Torrey and Alexander campaign. The ESV committee's aim was that (as much as reasonably possible) every Victorian man and woman should hear the gospel. Thus the energetic Clarke covered, at least representatively, Melbourne and suburbs, and the main country centres. And where he could not be, local evangelists and clergy filled in, eg Ewing in Warrnambool, Langley in Camperdown, Rolland in Ararat, and Howard, Ewing and Campbell in Castlemaine, and in many other places. The proclamation of the gospel was impressively widespread, and did not escape the later notice of the historian of colonial Victoria, Geoffrey Serle, who commented:

The Evangelistic Association, formed in 1883, was yet another interdenominational body, in which Balfour again was prominent; after its first conference, members dispersed into the streets and induced passers-by into the Temperance Hall for a service. Six years later, its annual meeting was told that in the previous year sixty-two missions had been undertaken - to shearers in the Western District, navvies on the waterworks and the Healesville railway, and many more.<sup>282</sup>

The contribution of women evangelists Baeyertz and Faulkner was noteworthy. It was a counterpart to the enabling of (single) women to be missionaries in their own right by Hudson Taylor and H B Macartney, and a significant part of first wave feminism.

As with 1902, 1959, and 1969, there was impressive cooperation by (many of) the churches: the cautious collaboration with the Church of England mission, and Goe's endorsement, managed to sidestep traditional sectarian division; there were united prayer meetings, and several instances of clergy crossing denominational barriers; leading individual churchmen such as the Presbyterian parliamentarian J Balfour and the Baptist Rev A Bird were happily involved (in July Bird took special CM services in the Prahran Presbyterian church); church

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<sup>281</sup> *Spectator*, 16 March 1888, 125.

<sup>282</sup> Serle, *The Rush to be Rich*, 174.

leaders such as Bp F F Goe (cf Goe's remarks on church union in *SC*, 28 September, 767) endorsed the mission; and Clarke's public support of the Presbyterian Rev W Lockhart Morton's Hope Lodge work gave significant approval to an important evangelical social work.

Apart from the lengthy preparation, the CM was spread over the second half of the year, which made it the longest evangelistic mission in Melbourne's history. Some of this was because it was before radio and television, and the comparative slowness of communication and travel. Torrey and Alexander ventured to Ballarat, Geelong, Bendigo, Warrnambool, Maryborough and Kerang, but did not cover as many country centres as Clarke did. Billy Graham travelled more and spoke to more people than Clarke did, but his stay in Australia was much shorter.

Fifth, the results gladdened the hearts of the ESV and clergy and laymen throughout the colony. Unfortunately there is little in the way of statistics. Apart from figures quoted above at different points, impressionistic expressions such as 'crowded meetings', 'successful mission', etc substituted for accurate statistics. But, as the following quotations indicate, the CM may be reckoned as significantly successful. The *Argus* reported on the fifth annual meeting of the ESV held 25 June 1889 in the Melbourne Coffee Palace: 'Special reference was made to the fact of the Society having secured during the year a visit from Mr. George Clarke, who had fully justified the expectations of his spirit and power in evangelistic work.' It added that, thanks to large thank offerings, costs were covered and the balance sheet for the year showed a credit of £37.<sup>283</sup> The *SC* quoted a *Daily Telegraph* interview with Clarke in which he expressed his satisfaction of the success of the mission. He thought the best results were at St Kilda and Prahran, and outside of Melbourne, at Geelong and Ballarat:

'I had to go to Ballarat and Geelong to get the experience of the old country again. At the former place we had over 2500 men in the hall, and I do not know how many more outside. The people there seemed to go into it with a real vigour, so to speak. The whole town was stirred with the revival, and a similar state of affairs prevailed at Geelong. But then, Melbourne is larger, and it

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<sup>283</sup> *Argus*, 28 June 1889, 5.

is not so easy to get the people together.’ Mr Clarke proposes to leave behind a permanent memorial of his visit to Victoria in the shape of a Young Women’s Christian Institute, upon which some £15 000 is to be expended. ‘If I can see’, he says, ‘before I leave Melbourne, that such an institute is to be founded, believe me I will be more than gratified far more than I can express at the result of my visit to Victoria.’

He added the observation that the main social defect of the colony was ‘a lack of stability in the younger generation’.<sup>284</sup>

Finally, attention should be paid to the evangelical men of Melbourne, the ESV committee, and their supporters. A number of them were clergy (such as H B Macartney, W Lockhart Morton *et al*) but many (most?) were laymen (Balfour, Theo Kitchen, C Carter *et al*) who, as well as being loyal churchmen, were clearly men of ability and with a seriousness of purpose. Half way through the campaign George Clarke enthused about the success of the mission, and underlined his

high estimate of the colony especially ‘*the stability of your great men*’. ‘As you know I have spent a good deal of time in America, and one feels that the men around him are sharp and cute, and up to everything, but with this feeling comes the conviction that unless he looks after himself these men will get the best of him. Now, ever since I have been in Melbourne I have found men not a bit less sharp, or a degree less cute, but, at the same time, I have known at once they were men who would act fairly, squarely, honestly, and uprightly in all their transactions. ... *It is only necessary to know these men briefly to understand the greatness of Melbourne.*’ (emphasis added)<sup>285</sup>

The Melbourne evangelical leadership were also men of vision. At the end of the CM, A J Campbell wrote ‘... we must look at the CM as the first only of a series that are to go through this century with ever-growing volume and gathering force, until they sweep over the land like a great river, and cover it with the knowledge of the Lord.’<sup>286</sup> It was these men who a few years later formed the Band in the 1890s,

<sup>284</sup> SC, 21 September 1888, 743. Two years before, the Methodist church had noted the loss of young men, and to special difficulties which arose from the rapid growth of suburban Melbourne which saw many lose contact with their churches.

<sup>285</sup> SC, 21 September 1888, 743: quoting a *Daily Telegraph* interview. Clarke, in responding to a question, concluded with: ‘My work! Satisfied with the results? I am more. I am astounded. ...’

<sup>286</sup> SC, 28 December 1888, 1031.

6. The 1888 Centennial Mission.

invited the Keswick missionary Rev George Grubb who inspired the deeper-life movement, and then at the start of the new millennium, the Americans Reuben A Torrey and Charles M Alexander.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### William Henry Scurr - Lay Evangelist and Methodist Minister in Victoria.

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William Henry Scurr was a noted lay evangelist for fifteen years with the Evangelisation Society of Victoria, which became the Evangelisation Society of Australasia about 1897. He also exercised an important evangelistic ministry in New South Wales in 1902 and 1903 in connection with the Tent Missions, with other visits through to 1905. After 1906, he became a Methodist minister in Victoria.

I am not aware of any unpublished personal or family documents about Mr. Scurr. To tell the story of W. H. Scurr, we are dependent upon limited information in the religious press of the time, and upon what information exists in the *Minutes* of the Victorian and Tasmanian Methodist Conference.

According to his Obituary notice, William Henry Scurr was the first white child born in what we now know as the city of Canberra. At that time the area was known as part of the Yass Valley. The birth occurred on 15th April, 1861.<sup>287</sup>

On his father's side of the family, the grandfather was a Baptist preacher and local doctor in Buckingham, England. His father was born at sea, presumably coming to Australia with the family, and at the time of William Henry's birth, the father was a general storekeeper. His mother was born in Northern Ireland, being the daughter of a barrister in Belfast. She came to Tasmania when she was in her early twenties. William Henry was their second son.<sup>288</sup>

When he was still quite young, the family moved to Albury, New South Wales. His education occurred mainly at the Albury Grammar School. In his teenage years in Albury he was converted to Christ during a visit to the town made by the famous Yorkshire evangelist, Matthew Burnett. Burnett's main visit to Albury occurred around the

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<sup>287</sup> *Spectator*. May 8th, 1946, page 294. Also, Obituary notice. *Minutes of the Victorian and Tasmanian Conference*. 1952. page 50.

<sup>288</sup> Notice of his retirement. *Conference Minutes*. 1936. page 17.

end of August, 1876, when he was touring the north of Victoria for the Home Missions Committee of the Wesleyan Conference in Victoria. It was Burnett's first visit to New South Wales. The Wesleyan minister caring for both Albury and Wodonga was the Rev. J. W. Crisp, who was later a President of the Conference. Burnett's visit to Albury lasted for four weeks, and four weeks were given to Wodonga as well. The Albury meetings were also supported by the Anglican minister, the Independent minister, and the bush missionary.

Burnett's Saturday night meetings, and the Monday afternoon meetings for women, were strongly supported by the local temperance organisations, which included the Rechabites and the Good Templars. In these meetings 314 people signed the pledge. In the evangelistic meetings, a good many people decided for Christ, although the total number of professed conversions was not published.<sup>289</sup>

While at the Grammar School, Scurr formed a life-long friendship with another student who later became Governor-General of Australia, Sir Isaac Isaacs.

After leaving the Grammar School, Scurr went to Melbourne and studied Medicine for four years, and later transferred to Law. It was the Rev. Dr. E. I. Watkin who enticed him to start preaching, and Scurr felt a calling from God to be a preacher of the Gospel.<sup>290</sup>

Partly in order to test this sense of calling, W. H. Scurr's introduction to the Christian ministry came in 1883, when he did a short period of relief work at Warragul. At the Conference, the Rev. A. J. Wade was appointed to the Warragul Circuit. He was supposed to start on 6th April, and his name appears on the preaching list to that effect. However, he was not able to take up the appointment immediately, and W. H. Scurr was appointed to fill in for him for a couple of months until Mr. Wade was ready.<sup>291</sup>

It is also possible that he did a similar relief period in Shepparton for the Rev. John Nall, who was injured in an accident, although this is not mentioned in the *Spectator* at the time.<sup>292</sup>

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<sup>289</sup> *Spectator*. September 2, 1876, page 836, and September 16th, 1876. page 860. See also my book, *Matthew Burnett - the Yorkshire Evangelist. Australia's Greatest Evangelist and Social Reformer: a Basic Biography*. Chapter 3. Published by the author. 2010.

<sup>290</sup> *Victoria and Tasmania Methodist Conference Minutes*. 1952. page 50.

<sup>291</sup> *Spectator*. See the list of preachers at Warragul for April and May, 1883, on pages 611, 623, 23, 35, 59, 71, and 143.

<sup>292</sup> Minutes of V and T Conference, 1936. page 17.

In 1884, he was appointed as a hired local preacher in the Fernhill and Poowong Circuit, near Warragul, for twelve months. Two reports appeared in the *Spectator* about his work there. The first related to the Sunday School anniversary meetings. The second was a report upon a Quarterly Meeting on 30th December, 1884, of which Scurr was the chairman.<sup>293</sup>

1885 saw him transferred to the Lillimur Circuit for one year. That year, Lillimur was the centre of a circuit, and included a number of smaller centres, one of which was Nhill. The Rev. S. C. Flockhart was a probationary minister in charge of the circuit that year, with Scurr as his helper. Lillimur is a settlement some miles west of Horsham toward the border with South Australia, and that year was head of the circuit. Two reports about this period of Scurr's ministry were also published in the *Spectator*.

The first of these related to special evangelistic meetings which Flockhart and Scurr conducted at various centres around the circuit. They shared the preaching, and had the support of a local choir. Two of these centres were Ni Ni and Kiata. About twenty conversions were reported from those meetings. At Kaniva there were signs of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. "The earnest prayers of all were answered in an outpouring of the Holy Spirit; conviction was wrought in many hearts." The Kaniva meetings lasted for a week, and were followed by another week of meetings at Lillimur.<sup>294</sup>

The other report was about a Quarterly Meeting held at Kaniva on 22nd September, 1885. The meeting was chaired by the President of the Conference. The President that year was the Rev. Robert Flockhart, father of the probationer. At this meeting, W. H. Scurr offered as a candidate for the Wesleyan ministry. This offer was unanimously supported by the Meeting, and the young Rev. S. C. Flockhart was invited to remain as minister of the circuit for another year. After the Meeting was over, the President gave a public lecture in the Institute Hall about the Reformer, Martin Luther. The lecture was well supported with a musical programme, using a grand piano, which was said to be the best piano in the Wimmera District.<sup>295</sup>

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<sup>293</sup> *Spectator*. January 9, 1885. page 22. (both references).

<sup>294</sup> *Spectator*. August 28, 1885. page 421.

<sup>295</sup> *Spectator*. October 16, 1885. page 506. Many years later, Scurr said this meeting took place at Nhill. *Spectator*. March 14th, 1945. page 165.

As it turned out at the ensuing Conference, young Flockhart was moved to the St. Arnaud circuit. Scurr's offer as a candidate for the ministry was refused because he failed at preaching the trial sermon for the District Meeting in November.

For 1886 and 1887 William H. Scurr is listed as the Wesleyan Home Missionary at Port Campbell. Apart from that, there is no other information published at the time about his activities during those two years.<sup>296</sup> Many years later, from comments that Scurr made, it seems that he applied to candidate for the Wesleyan ministry three more times, which would probably have included the two years he was at Port Campbell, but each time he was failed at preaching the trial sermon for the District Meeting.<sup>297</sup>

How do we explain these failures? Even in 1888, the supporters of the Evangelisation Society quickly recognised him as a very acceptable preacher and evangelist. At the time of his retirement he was widely recognised as one of the most brilliant preachers in the Methodist Conference. We do not know the reason for the failures, and Scurr does not tell us. But there are stories floating around of students failing at preaching tests because their ministerial hearers thought some feature of the sermon was undesirable, including that it was too evangelistic. I have even seen one or two instances of it. One story I heard concerned the Rev. Dr. A. Harold Wood, one of the great luminaries of Victorian Methodism, and an ardent evangelical, who called for decisions at the end of his trial sermon when he was a student, but was told by his ministerial hearers he should not have done that.

It was probably after his years as an evangelist, Scurr said that he had the Rev. Dr. Edwin I. Watkin and others as his hearers at the trial sermon, "who thought that they knew good preaching when they heard it, and recommended 100 marks." However, Scurr said that the failures at trial sermons resulted in him doing all those years as an evangelist, travelling Australia, and seeing many thousands of people converted to Christ through his preaching.<sup>298</sup> So, God had over-ruled the failures.

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<sup>296</sup> *Spectator*. February 18, 1887. page 80, and March 16th, 1888. page 129.

<sup>297</sup> *Spectator*. March 14th, 1945. page 165.

<sup>298</sup> *Ibid*.

### **Fifteen Years with the Evangelisation Society.**

The Evangelisation Society of Victoria had two evangelists working for the Executive from 1883, and there were some wonderful results. These two were the Baptist minister, the Rev. Alfred J. Clarke, and the layman, Mr. Arthur E. Eustace. Even from the beginning, there were others who conducted missions for the Society on a casual basis, when available and when required. One of these men, Mr. Robert Robertson, came on to the full-time staff around 1886, and quickly became the senior evangelist. This was because in 1887 Clarke resigned to become the Baptist minister at the Burton Street Baptist Church in Sydney. Eustace also resigned in 1887 for health reasons, but he went north to Queensland and joined the Mission to the Kanakas. Later he held Baptist pastorates in that area.<sup>299</sup>

Early in 1888 the Society asked William Scurr to come on to their full-time staff as well. Scurr was confident of his calling from God to be a preacher, and the opportunity to join the Wesleyan ministry seemed to have closed for him. So he accepted the call from the Evangelisation Society.<sup>300</sup>

A letter was issued by the Evangelisation Society in May, 1888, to introduce Scurr to the congregations and circuits which might call upon the Society's services

The first missions that he conducted for the Evangelisation Society took place in Burnley and Telangatuk. Someone in Burnley reported very quickly to the secretary of the Society – “We had a splendid gospel address last night from Mr. W. H. Scurr. If I am to judge from this discourse and his manner of conducting the service, I must say “*first-class man.*” I think him admirably adapted for the work of an evangelist. I have never heard a man representing the Society that I like better. He is being taught of the Spirit, and Christ is undoubtedly with him. Sincerely yours, J. Bamber.”<sup>301</sup>

The Telangatuk mission was in a remote spot where services had been held only once in six weeks, but the effects of the mission strengthened the work, making it much more regular.

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<sup>299</sup> Manley. K., *From Woolloomooloo to Eternity. A History of the Australian Baptists.* Paternoster. 2006. Vol. one, page 147, and 157. Also, *Southern Cross.* 18th March, 1887. page 203, and 8th July, 1887, page 535.

<sup>300</sup> *Methodist Journal.* February 24th, 1888. page 4, and *Spectator.* February 24, 1888. page 94.

<sup>301</sup> *Southern Cross.* Friday, 8th June, 1888. page 455. J. Bamber may possibly be the Baptist pastor of that name.

1888 also saw the holding of the Centennial Mission which marked one hundred years of white settlement in Australia. The Society was heavily involved, along with a multi-church committee, in inviting the well-known athlete George Clarke to visit Australia, and in holding missions in a list of places around Melbourne, and in larger country towns. Dr. Darrell Paproth's paper about this Mission appears as a chapter in this book.<sup>302</sup>

It was a major policy of the Society to hold missions in remote areas, and in places where the Christians were not wealthy enough to pay proper prices for visiting preachers. The Victorian economy was roaring along in the 1880s, and there was enough income in the way of donations and thank-offerings for the Society to pay its staff, and thus to subsidise the weaker and more remote areas. In the 1890s the economic situation was very different. Some of their supporters had died by then, and the financial support fell off dramatically. Even when the support did fall off in this way, the Society continued its policy of working in remote areas, even when most of the evangelists had to be content with receiving no regular pay.<sup>303</sup>

Whether William Scurr could really afford it or not, he contracted marriage to a very young lady, Emmeline, barely out of her teen years. The dates of her birth, and of the marriage, and of her age at the time of her death, are all problematical. Her obituary says that she was born in Stawell in July 1869. She had been brought up in a Christian home, and was converted to Christ through the man who became her husband, at some stage in her teenage years. The inference is that she was twenty years of age when she married. The Scurr children seem to have been born in rapid succession. There were four daughters, and then a son was born, and then two more girls. Only one daughter (the fourth) did not survive childhood. The problem is that the son, Rayson, enlisted in the A.I.F., and was wounded in France in the middle of 1916.<sup>304</sup> Quite possibly he fudged his age when he enlisted, as many others did, but there still seems to be hardly enough time for the family to be born so that he would have been old enough to go to France in time to be wounded in 1916.

There is also a problem about her age at the time of her death. Emmeline Miriam Scurr died on 28th May, 1919, in the Methodist

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<sup>302</sup> Paproth. D., *The 1888 Centennial Mission*. See chapter six.

<sup>303</sup> See the issue of "The Victorian Evangelist", in *Spectator*, August 14th, 1896. after page 603.

<sup>304</sup> *Spectator*. September 1st, 1916. page 1120.

Parsonage, North Melbourne, where the Rev. W. H. Scurr was stationed at the time. According to the Obituary, she was 48 years of age at the time of her death, which seems clearly to be wrong, if she was born in 1869.<sup>305</sup>

Whatever problems we might have like that, the family thought she was a “perfect” wife and mother, and so she must have been a great partner for Mr. Scurr. Especially this would be evident when we remember that Scurr would have been away from home for long periods doing his evangelistic work.

At some unknown later date, W. H. Scurr married again. His second wife’s name was Lottie, and in this way W. H. Scurr also acquired for himself a step-daughter. His second wife survived him.

To return to the career of the evangelist, in some cases, an evangelist would go to an area or district, and hold missions in a list of places around the district or circuit, lasting for perhaps a week in each place. So the mission as a whole might last for two months. In other instances, an evangelist might visit a place for a week only, or even less, before moving on somewhere else.

In this way, William H. Scurr, and his fellow evangelists, worked for the Evangelisation Society steadily for about ten years before the pattern began to change.

It was certainly not the easiest job in the world seeking to find people in remote areas who would respond to a message calling people to surrender their lives to Jesus Christ. In such places the population was thin, and the meetings were not large, especially on week nights. As a result, in some cases, there might not appear to be any response to the call for decision, even after a week of meetings, although in almost every case the believers and church members would have their faith and dedication strengthened and refined, and the spiritual level of the congregations would be deepened and enriched.

In addition to that, the mission might occur at a time of the year when the farmers were heavily committed to necessary work schedules, such as sowing, shearing or harvesting. Such conflicts would be avoided, if at all possible, but sometimes this was not possible, and the evangelists had to make the best of the situation as it existed. Another problem often enough was the weather, especially in winter. Also, if there was no moonlight, it could be very dark at night,

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<sup>305</sup> *Spectator*. August 20th, 1919. page 671.

and lighting was not so easy to get for travelling through the bush in the intense darkness.

Despite all that, there were some occasions when local revivals seem to have occurred, by means of the work of these evangelists.

In October, 1893, the Society's Annual Meetings reported that in the previous six months the evangelists had visited 127 places, and had conducted 57 missions, consisting of 738 meetings. Usually they would also report the aggregate attendances at all of these meetings, but not on this occasion. Mr. W. H. Scurr had just completed a mission in several of the churches in the Wesleyan Circuit based at Scarsdale, where the minister was the Rev. Samuel Cuthbert, who was himself an experienced evangelist. Cuthbert had spent twelve months as Wesleyan Conference Evangelist in 1884, and had since conducted a number of missions in other places.

“The Rev. S. Cuthbert reported a revival in the Scarsdale Circuit, characterised by great depth of feeling and other marks of genuineness. He greatly commended the character of the work done by Mr. Scurr, of the Evangelisation Society. A great number had been brought into the church. He attributed the depth of the work to a general absence of effort of this kind for some years past.”<sup>306</sup>

The last comment in this quotation reflects that special evangelistic efforts had not occurred in those parts of the Scarsdale circuit since the halcyon days twenty years earlier when Matthew Burnett had worked in the area for some months.

At the Quarterly Meeting which followed, Cuthbert reported that the missions had occurred at Linton and Newtown. Fifty-six people were on trial for membership, and sixteen were in catechumen classes. This did not include, of course, any benefits that might have flowed to other denominations. “We heartily recommend him to any of the brethren who desire the assistance of an evangelist, as a splendid expositor of the Word, and a most discreet worker in the inquiry room. The work done by the Master through this honoured servant bids fair to remain.”<sup>307</sup>

By early February, 1894, Scurr was conducting a mission in the Egerton circuit. “Mr. W. H. Scurr, of the Evangelisation Society, has been conducting a mission in our church here during the past fortnight

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<sup>306</sup> *Spectator*. November 24th, 1893. page 820.

<sup>307</sup> *Spectator*. January 19th, 1894. page 36.

with very gratifying results. Many of the members have been led to a fuller consecration of themselves to God's service, and some eighteen or twenty persons have come forward seeking the Saviour. Mr. Scurr is prolonging the mission for another week, as many others are under deep conviction, and seem desirous of turning to the Lord."<sup>308</sup>

It was often enough the case, when an evangelist conducted a mission in a certain place, that the people got to like him, and he would be invited back to conduct missions a year or two later. So it was that, in 1896, Scurr was listed to conduct missions through July and August in Scarsdale, Newtown, Linton, Elmore and Rochester.

In August, 1896, the Society began publishing a quarterly Journal, to make its work better known, and hopefully to draw more support and prayer. It was a four-page sheet of about quarto size. It continued being published for several years. However, only one issue has survived – namely the first issue, because copies were given away freely to all readers of the *Spectator* and of the *Southern Cross*. So, a copy appears in the State Library's microfilm of the *Spectator* for August 14th, 1896. Otherwise we would hardly know that it ever existed.

As mentioned, the Evangelisation Society of Victoria changed its name around 1897 to the Evangelisation Society of Australasia, because they began to get invitations for their evangelists to work in other colonies of Australia, and then in New Zealand as well. In 1899, two evangelists went to New Zealand. These were the senior (by a small margin) evangelist, Robert Robertson, and a singing evangelist, Mr. James H. Stephens. These New Zealand missions were organised in the first few months of the year, because Victoria was too hot to arrange missions to any great extent in those summer months. In 1900, W. H. Scurr went also, and Robertson and Scurr went to different parts. A report was published about one of Scurr's missions in New Zealand, which took place in one of the Wesleyan churches in Dunedin.<sup>309</sup>

Through the last years of the 1890s, it seems that W. H. Scurr did not always have good health, and there were times when he could not carry out his normal work. Occasionally health problems, and "overwork," had cropped up beforehand, requiring him to take a rest.

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<sup>308</sup> *Spectator*. February 23rd, 1894. page 116.

<sup>309</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, August 10th, 1900. page 883.

A classic example of this occurred in 1898. W. H. Scurr had gone to South Australia to conduct several missions. More than one mission would be arranged in order to make the time and expense of the trip more worth while. Also, the Society had adopted the policy of sending out two men together, when possible, with one being a song leader and soloist. On this trip to South Australia, Scurr was accompanied by Mr. William Toshack as soloist. One place to be visited was the township of Jamestown. The report said that there had been considerable expectation for some months before the missionaries arrived, and three churches were taking part. These were the Baptist church (minister – Rev. H. E. Hughes), Presbyterian (Rev. W. Gray), and Wesleyan (Rev. W. F. Hiatt). United prayer meetings had been well attended for some weeks. Handbills had been spread far and wide. Just before the mission was due to start, the news arrived that Mr. Scurr's health had broken down.

“This was a severe blow, and the faith of some wavered. It was decided, however, to ask Mr. Toshack to come along and conduct the services. Mr. Toshack came, and from the start it was evident that God was with him, and intended to do mighty things through him. The attendance on the first night was beyond the expectation of the most sanguine; it increased as the days followed, until the largest building in the town, capable of seating 500, was all too small to accommodate those who gathered. On the second night, several declared their surrender to the Lord Christ, and with the exception of one night afterwards, at every meeting many gathered at the penitent form and in the enquiry room, seeking salvation. At the close of the mission on the fifteenth night, the record of cases reported, showed upwards of 100 names. This - in a town of 750 inhabitants. The meetings were simply wonderful, and thrill after thrill ran through them, as one person after another declared their acceptance of the Son of God as their Saviour. There was an absence of wild excitement. The quiet power was felt by all, and proved irresistible. Mr. Toshack won the hearts of all. All are perfectly convinced of his sincerity, his sterling genuineness, his whole-heartedness, and his passionate love for precious souls, but over and above all his other gifts and usefulness, must be placed his power of song. This was the great attraction. He sang many into the kingdom whom preaching would never have touched. On the last evening of the mission a great crush gathered in the Hall and a thank-offering was

taken up which amounted to 16 pounds 6 shillings, and was subsequently raised to 20 pounds, and presented as an expression of the gratitude of the people. The special feature of the mission was the ten o'clock and seven o'clock prayer meetings. The answers to prayer received were often startling. How wondrously God is still willing to honour the faith of His people. The Jamestown revival was a mighty triumph. The God of Pentecost still lives. All praise be to Him! The influence will be felt for many a day."<sup>310</sup>

The people had hoped that William Scurr would recover quickly enough to take the later services of the Jamestown mission, but this did not happen. However, he did recover sufficiently to take later missions on this tour, and other missions later in the year. For example, around the end of September he was preaching in Long Gully, Bendigo, where there were great results. It was planned as a relatively short mission. Scurr preached for eight days, with people professing conversion every night except one. The local people continued the meetings after he left, with the Rev. T.S.B. Woodfull preaching the following Sunday. Forty-two people professed conversion during the two weeks.<sup>311</sup>

But Scurr's health was still under a cloud. On Sunday, 8 January, 1899, he took both of the normal Sunday services for the Auburn Baptist Church. The people reported: "Mr. Scurr's health for some time has been such that he has been unable to carry on his customary work. We hope to hear him again on the 22<sup>nd</sup> inst."<sup>312</sup>

The Auburn Baptist Church had originally met in the Hawthorn Town Hall, but in 1888 had moved into an older church building in Auburn which had been nominated for both the Congregationalists and Baptists, but had previously been used for Congregationalists only. After 1921, the Baptists moved into their own church at Hawthorn. Preaching in this church by men who were associated with the Evangelisation Society, or who had been, took place between pastorates.<sup>313</sup>

In September the following year, William Scurr was again in Bendigo, conducting a mission in California Hill Wesleyan Church,

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<sup>310</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, August 12th, 1898. page 763. The Rev. H. Estcourt Hughes was the official historian of the Baptist denomination in South Australia.

<sup>311</sup> *Spectator*. October 14th, 1898. page 958.

<sup>312</sup> *Southern Cross*. January 20th, 1899. page 67.

<sup>313</sup> Wilkin. F. J. *Baptists in Victoria: Our First Century*. Baptist Union, 1939. pages 129 – 130.

Ex-ESA evangelist, James Hood, supplied this pulpit early in 1898, when recovering his health. See *Southern Cross*, March 25th, 1898. page 283.

this time accompanied by James H. Stephens, the singing evangelist. “The visible results of the mission total upwards of sixty souls in the church and school deciding for Christ. In addition to this the revival has worked its way to the very heart of the church, and filled its channels of service with a more abundant life.”<sup>314</sup>

Within a few weeks, Robert Robertson completed a mission in the Forest Street Wesleyan Church, Bendigo, and went on to conduct another mission in Kangaroo Flat.

The following year William Scurr was in Bendigo again. The thirteenth anniversary of the Eaglehawk Women’s Prayer Union was celebrated on Thursday, 27 September in the Town Hall. There was a short list of speakers morning and afternoon, and Scurr seems to have been the main invited speaker, because he spoke in both sessions.<sup>315</sup>

One of the missions William Scurr led in his last year with the Evangelisation Society took place in February, 1901. It was at the South Buchan Wesleyan Home Mission Station, which was then in a very sparsely populated area. The people had requested that Scurr be sent to work with them, and the mission began on February 3, for nine days. There were thirteen professions of conversion, which, “considering the comparative smallness of the place, and the distances people had to travel to the place of meeting, was a very good result. The power and presence of Jesus was felt in all the meetings, and God’s people were much helped, strengthened and blessed.”<sup>316</sup>

William Scurr’s last act of services with the Evangelisation Society occurred in April, 1902, when he took part in the Simultaneous Mission in and around Melbourne, as a lead-up to the meetings led by the American evangelists, Rev. R. A. Torrey, and Mr. Charles M. Alexander.

### **The Melbourne Simultaneous Mission, 1902.**

Members of the Executive of the Evangelisation Society of Australasia were the main instigators in the process of inviting the American evangelist, the Rev. Reuben A. Torrey, to come to Melbourne to be the main preacher in a massive evangelistic campaign in 1902. It was Torrey himself who invited Mr. Charles M. Alexander to come as his soloist and song-leader. The Melbourne people knew

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<sup>314</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 22 September, 1899. page 934.

<sup>315</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, October 5th, 1900. page 1110.

<sup>316</sup> *Spectator*. February 22, 1901. page 273.

nothing about that before Alexander walked into the Melbourne office and introduced himself. On top of that, the secretary of the Evangelisation Society, Mr. Charles Carter, was one of the main organising persons on the Local Organising Committee which did all the work putting the campaign together. Apart from Torrey and Alexander, William Edgar Geil, another American evangelist, was included in the plan.

The plan was to have a series of about thirty missions being conducted around Melbourne during the first two weeks of the Mission, led by local ministers who had special gifts for evangelistic work. These men were drawn from all of the co-operating denominations. The list of evangelists, however, did include three or four laymen.

Robertson resigned from the Society at the beginning of the year, in order to be fully involved in the Tent Missions in New South Wales from January to March, 1902. He was listed amongst the evangelists who represented the Presbyterian denomination. William Scurr was not listed as one of the Methodists, perhaps because it had been many years since he had any official links with the Methodist Church. He was listed simply as an evangelist working for the Society, along with the two American preachers, R. A. Torrey and W. Edgar Geil.<sup>317</sup>

Each of the local evangelists was briefly introduced to the Melbourne evangelical public in the *Southern Cross*, along with information about the locality where they would be conducting a mission as part of the overall plan. Scurr was chosen to lead the mission in the Port Melbourne Town Hall.

His introduction said, "Mr. Will H. Scurr (Port Melbourne) is another graduate of the Evangelisation Society. He has a knack of reaching the young people, and will doubtless achieve good results at the Port."<sup>318</sup>

Because so much attention was being given to the American visitors, only very brief reports appeared about the locality-based missions. After describing how drab and unsightly the inside of the Port Melbourne Town Hall had become, the report said "Mr. Scurr is – a man in the early prime, presentable to the eye, a fair amount of whipcord in his constitution, fluent beyond many of his brethren, yet

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<sup>317</sup> *Southern Cross*. April 11th, 1902. Page 409.

<sup>318</sup> *Southern Cross*. April 11th, 1902. page 408.

orderly in argument, seldom, if ever, using the wrong word, unless it be occasionally missing the terse Anglo-Saxon for some ‘Mesopotamia,’ which plain hearers (as hearers mostly are) have to skip. Still, thank God for such a man, true to Scriptural theology, powerful in delineation, intelligent, devout, urgent, a spiritual lawyer, thoroughly trained for his business, ever in charge of a worthy cause, and ready to spend... the last ounce of power in order that men may be brought to God. As we listen to Mr. Scurr on the central truths of Christianity we cease to think of the Atonement as a ‘dry’ subject. We are made to feel the reality of it, the necessity of it, and the attractiveness of it, and as it is set before us with wise illustration, sound exposition, and impassioned appeal, our hearts say, ‘This is indeed the Word of God; if this Gospel fails there is no hope for the world.’ But fail it cannot, and God will surely honour the earnest work of such devoted men as the Port Melbourne missionary.”<sup>319</sup>

### **The Tent Missions. 1902 and After.**

Following the Simultaneous Mission in Sydney late in 1901, Mr. Ebenezer Vickery was challenged by the thought that something should be done for country towns around New South Wales. He discussed his thoughts with the Rev. W. G. Taylor, superintendent of the Central Methodist Mission in Sydney, and other Mission leaders. He conceived the plan of having a committee of his friends organise tent mission teams to evangelise in all the towns of New South Wales with a population larger than 400 people. He decided to bankroll this venture, although insisting that his role in financing this venture should be withheld from public knowledge. He hoped to achieve the winning of 25,000 conversions to Christ by this means.

These plans were put into operation immediately, and the first missions were conducted on the South Coast of New South Wales in the area 150 miles and less south of Sydney. The leaders of the first two teams were the Rev. David O’Donnell, well known Wesleyan evangelist, and Mr. Robert Robertson, who resigned from the Evangelisation Society to take on this new work. Apart from the evangelist, each team had a co-ordinator, or tent manager, to help lead the mission.

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<sup>319</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, April 25th, 1902. page 468.

These missions were outstandingly successful, and marked a period of local revivals in relation to those missions. The South Coast within 150 miles of Sydney was covered within the first three months of 1902, so that O'Donnell and Robertson would be free to take part in the Simultaneous Mission being organised in Melbourne.

After the Melbourne meetings were concluded, the two teams formed again, and started campaigning in other parts of New South Wales. But Vickery was not satisfied with having only two teams. He realised that the task would drag on for too long unless other teams were also formed. So he dug deeper into his pocket.

One of the new teams was to be led by William H. Scurr. This team formed up in June, 1902, in Sydney, and its first mission was held in the Sydney suburb of Tempe Park, starting on June 29, partly in order to make sure that all of the needed materials and personnel were assembled properly. Mr. R. S. Sandon was the tent manager who travelled with Scurr. At that time Tempe Park was described as "a growing suburb of Sydney," vastly different from what we would call it today. "At the commencement the people were hard to move, but faith in God and earnest prayer prevailed. During the last four meetings the power of the Holy Ghost was blessedly manifest, and in all, nearly 100 persons, including children, were led to decision, and the conviction in the minds of the people was that if the Mission could have been continued, a great work would have been done; but the programme for the north necessitated a move on."<sup>320</sup>

At that stage, a provisional list of missions was drawn up. This list had to be revised as the missions proceeded, but the list provided the foundation for the work for the rest of 1902. The list after Tempe Park was:- July 13, Taree, on the Manning River; July 27, Jones' Island; August 3, Port Macquarie; August 17, Kempsey; August 31, Gladstone; September 7, Bellinger; September 21, Grafton; October 5, Ulmarra and Brushgrove; October 19, Maclean; November 2, return to Sydney. These lists for each team represented the efforts of the Committee in charge to cover the whole State within a certain time, and to prevent overlapping.<sup>321</sup>

The first mission to provide a report for publication was the mission on Jones's Island. This mission lasted from Sunday, 13th July,

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<sup>320</sup> *Torrey – Alexander Souvenir*. T. Shaw Fitchett. 1903. page 96.

<sup>321</sup> *Methodist*. June 14th, 1902. page 8.

and concluded on the following Friday. The tent could not be moved to Wingham for some reason, so W. H. Scurr travelled to Wingham to conduct a short mission in the Wingham Town Hall, supported by the Anglican and Presbyterian ministers. The tent was used at Jones's Island by Mr. Sandon and the various local ministers, who continued the mission meetings until Wednesday, 23rd July. The total of people who entered the enquiry tent in the first and second parts of the mission in Jones' Island was 80 adults and 45 children.<sup>322</sup>

After that, the tent was immediately moved to the Taree Showground. Scurr said, "This was in many respects the most wonderful work I have seen, and, personally, I am most thankful to God for having been led into it."<sup>323</sup>

Wauchope is described as a "small town, and widely scattered." The local people were not hopeful of any success, and this forced the mission leaders to rely more upon God's promises. There were some encouraging conversions, but they thought better results would have flowed if the mission had been longer. They moved to Port Macquarie on August 18.<sup>324</sup>

The Kempsey mission was perhaps the most successful of all those led by W. H. Scurr. A little time had to be used after they arrived in Kempsey for the mission team to recover from the earlier meetings.

The mission preparations in Kempsey were led by the Rev. William Pearson, Wesleyan, but there was "wonderful unity among Christian ministers and workers." There was a choir of about 60 voices, cottage prayer meetings were held for some time before the mission, and united prayer meetings were held the week before the meetings began. These meetings were "largely attended," and a feeling of expectancy was raised. Every house in the town and outskirts was visited.

The Kempsey mission started on Sunday, August 31, so the schedule was out already. Apparently Scurr did not make an appeal for decisions on the first few nights, but the number of enquirers mushroomed after that, so that by the first Sunday night, 92 enquirers had been dealt with.

"The Presbyterian Church, the largest available in the town, was used for afternoon Bible readings which increased in number daily,

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<sup>322</sup> *Methodist*. August 2, 1902. page 4.

<sup>323</sup> *Torrey – Alexander Souvenir*. Page 96.

<sup>324</sup> *Ibid*.

also for the meeting for men only on Sunday afternoon (300 present).” 138 men took the purity pledge. The tent was packed every night, with about 1,000 people flocking around, and peering under the flaps, on the final nights.<sup>325</sup>

The Kempsey mission had formally closed on September 15, but Scurr did not feel well enough to start the mission at Gladstone immediately, so he stayed in Kempsey for a week longer, and preached several times. “The total number of enquirers for the Mission is three hundred and seventy-nine, composed of adults and 120 young people.” Of these, 61 said they were “English Church,” 184 Methodists, 24 Salvation Army, 4 Roman Catholics, and 2 “No church.”<sup>326</sup>

The Gladstone people had to wait for another occasion, and the tent was moved to Bellingen.

The township of Bellingen then had a population of 250, but with 2,000 people living in the valley, and the more distant people could only attend church occasionally. So they decided to erect the small tent only, which seated 350. In this case, the Presbyterians and Methodists supported the mission, but not the Anglicans. The organisers were very impressed with Scurr’s abilities as a speaker, especially with his addresses on Simeon, the just and devout man who waited for the consolation of Israel, the address on the love of Christ constraining us, and Scurr’s lecture on “Why I am a Christian.” Converts came from all the denominations. There were 63, of whom 44 were adults. The Wesleyans added 35 names to their roll of members on trial, most of whom were converts of the mission.<sup>327</sup>

The Grafton mission started on November 9th, and closed on 27th. The Presbyterians, Methodists and Baptists supported the mission. Extensive preparations were made with cottage and united prayer meetings, and visitation efforts. Attendances at the meetings were good throughout, with nearly 1000 crowding into the tent, and with another 300 or 400 milling around outside. The first three addresses of the mission were directed to Christians, culminating on Tuesday 11th, when 20 people went into the enquiry tent to make new dedications to God. The children’s meeting saw 140 of them go in the enquiry tent, and 47 men signed the purity pledge. Open air meetings were held on Saturday evenings where the Gospel was declared in

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<sup>325</sup> *Methodist*. September 27th, 1902. page 2.

<sup>326</sup> *Methodist*. October 11, 1902. pages 2 – 3.

<sup>327</sup> *Methodist*. October 25th, 1902. page 8.

song, story, testimony and addresses, so there was a good degree of success in reaching some of those outside the churches. 317 enquirers were finally listed, which included Anglicans (59), Presbyterian (107), Methodist (69), Baptist (56), Salvation Army (17), unattached 9. On Tuesday and Wednesday, 25 – 26 November, all day conventions were held on the deepening of the Christian Life.

One of the most noted converts in Grafton was a local drunkard. The Mayor of Grafton said “If this man stands, his conversion is worth the whole cost of the mission.” The local committee was very pleased with the results of the mission.<sup>328</sup>

As events transpired, the Maclean mission was held before the one in Grafton. It began on 22nd October and finished on 5th November. Again, preparations were well done. The first week of meetings were conducted by the Rev. John Mitchell, with W. H. Scurr taking over on 30th October. “Among the inquirers was a good number of young men and women who made up their minds to follow the Lord. Several of the cases are very interesting indeed, and I trust that the impressions and influence of the Mission have not been limited to the ten days. Indeed, it seems to have stirred a good many to think of those things which are for their eternal peace.”<sup>329</sup>

The mission at Ulmarra, and at Brushgrove was held even before the Maclean mission. It opened on October 12. The Rev. John Mitchell acted as assistant missionary during these meetings as well. At Ulmarra ninety persons entered the enquiry tent, of whom 50 were under fifteen years.

Mitchell conducted most of the meetings at Brushgrove, lasting for eight days, where, for some reason, no tent was available, and no apparent response occurred to the preaching until the last night. Scurr delivered the address on the final night. This address lasted for one and a half hours, and produced about 20 enquirers, making a total for the mission of 110 for both Ulmarra and Brushgrove.<sup>330</sup>

The Gladstone mission had been dropped from Scurr’s schedule because of his health problems. The mission in Gladstone was eventually conducted by another evangelist from Vickery’s list of preachers, an American preacher named the Rev. E. H. Shanks. Expectations had been raised because of the wonderful results in

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<sup>328</sup> *Methodist*. December 20th, 1902. page 14.

<sup>329</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>330</sup> *Methodist*. November 22nd, 1902. page 4.

Kempsey, which is only eight miles away, down and across the river. In due course, the Gladstone mission was also very successful. The Church of England and Methodist Churches worked together. The effects were widespread in this scattered district, with 261 people registering as enquirers, of whom fifty percent were men.<sup>331</sup> The Anglican and Methodist ministers continued the special meetings in the more remote parts of the district. There was a supplementary mission, for example, in Kinchela, which resulted in fourteen more converts.

In 1903, William H. Scurr led an evangelistic team in the southern parts of New South Wales, with Mr. Sandon and Mr. Crew as his helpers. The first of these missions was in the city of Goulburn. The report upon these meetings showed great enthusiasm about the open air meetings, the early morning meetings for prayer, and the Bible Readings in the afternoon.

“The mass meetings at night were simply wonderful, not only for the extraordinary crowds and the extraordinary and manifold powers of the preacher, but also for the intensity of interest in the message, the spirit of conviction resting upon the people, and, best of all, for the glorious ingathering of souls. We cannot give numbers. But we cannot forget the sight of souls under conviction, of broken down penitents, and of those rejoicing in new-found pardon. From the beginning, when hundreds of young people sought Jesus, the Children’s Friend, all through God has been with us of a truth. To Him be everlasting praise!”<sup>332</sup>

There was also a published report upon the mission at Gundagai. This town had a population of 1,400 at that time. Here Mr. Sandon is listed as the tent manager, and Mr. Crew as the open air preacher. The Church of England, Presbyterian and Methodist ministers and the Salvation Army Ensign supported the mission. The reporter was very impressed with the impact of the address on purity at the men’s meeting, and on Scurr’s address based upon Psalm 27, which, he said, “created a profound impression.”<sup>333</sup>

When Scurr arrived in Murrumburrah and Harden a few months later, an additional helper was listed named Albert E. Putland, who soon afterwards became a young Methodist minister. Methodist and Presbyterian ministers supported this mission. The total number of

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<sup>331</sup> *Methodist*. November 1st, 1902. page 2.

<sup>332</sup> *Methodist*. March 28th, 1903. page 8.

<sup>333</sup> *Ibid*.

enquirers was 145, probably including a large number of the senior Sunday school scholars.<sup>334</sup>

Very little other information appeared about the rest of Scurr's work in 1903, but it seems he conducted Tent Missions in a list of places, such as Cootamundra, Young, Wagga Wagga, Tumut, Corowa and Albury, as well as spending some time helping in a major mission that was conducted in the Sydney suburb of Balmain, along with several other evangelists.

In 1904 and 1905, William Scurr became an evangelist working under the umbrella of the Young Men's Christian Association, in Melbourne, although a great deal of his time in these two years was spent in New South Wales.

Since its foundation in 1844, the Y.M.C.A., and later the Y.W.C.A., had been strongly evangelistic organisations, and they continued this emphasis through until the decades between the First and Second World Wars. After that time they steadily became more secular in content.

In 1901 and 1902 Mr. J. J. Virgo had been travelling secretary of the Y.M.C.A. work. He had good experience in evangelism in Adelaide, and had been Secretary in Melbourne for a few years. He had been heavily involved in the organisation and running of the Torrey - Alexander mission in Melbourne, and was a competent evangelist himself, so he would have known William Scurr very well.

The Young Women's Christian Association already had evangelists travelling around Victoria. Two ladies known as Sister Miriam and Sister Winnie travelled together and conducted evangelistic missions wherever they could. For example, early in 1901, "Sisters Miriam and Winnie have, during the past week, conducted mission services at Outtrim [a village in Gippsland]. The services have been well attended throughout, and on Sunday evening the church was crowded in every part, many not obtaining seats. The residents have asked the Sisters to prolong their stay, and they will continue their services during this week."<sup>335</sup> They also held a mission in Korrumburra.

Some months later they were working in New Zealand, and they had conducted missions in "the leading towns, including Dunedin,

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<sup>334</sup> *Methodist*. June 20th, 1903. pages 9 – 10.

<sup>335</sup> *Southern Cross*. February 15th, 1901. page 187.

Nelson, Christchurch, Wellington, Invercargill.” A Nelson daily paper described them – “The Sisters are both sympathetic and telling speakers, free from all unnatural excitement and sensation, while their singing surpasses even that of the renown Sankey himself. Many souls have been led to definitely accept Christ as their Saviour.” By October there was a report that over 500 had signed the “Covenant Card” during their missions in 1901 up to that point.<sup>336</sup> They were just starting their work in Auckland.

So it was not surprising that the Young Men’s organisation should promote the idea of having an itinerant evangelist as well.

As Scurr travelled north into New South Wales, early in 1904, accompanied by Mr. Crew, they were pressed into service by the people in Wagga Wagga, and a very fruitful mission followed. Indeed, many of his friends in Wagga pressed him to settle permanently in the town.<sup>337</sup>

Upon reaching Harden, a similar reaction occurred. “We have just had another visit from Rev. W. H. Scurr and Mr. Crew who conducted a successful tent mission last May. Though the stay was short it was productive of much good.

The mission opened with a welcome meeting to the missionary in the Presbyterian Church on Friday, February 5th. “On Sunday, the 7th instant, the Rev. W. H. Scurr preached a powerful sermon on 1 Peter to a crowded congregation in the Mechanics’ Institute. The meetings on Monday and Tuesday evening following were largely attended. We feel much revived through the visit, and our earnest prayer is that they (the missionaries) may be used still to carry the good work through the land.”<sup>338</sup>

Upon arriving at the Y.M.C.A. rooms in Sydney, Scurr wrote an open letter to the Editor of *The Methodist*, expressing his concern, and that of other Tent Mission leaders, regarding the spiritual quality of life in the circuits he had visited, and his concern for the life of the Church generally. The letter is very revealing about spiritual life in the Churches. It deserves to be quoted in full.

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<sup>336</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, August 9th, 1901. page 887, and 25th October, 1901. page 1195.

<sup>337</sup> Evans. *Evangelism and Revivals in Australia, 1880 – 1914*. page 300.

<sup>338</sup> *Methodist*. February 20th, 1904. page 9.

## AN OPEN LETTER.

**To the Ministers, Christian Workers, and Believers in N. S. Wales.**

Dear Brethren, - May I enlist your earnest practical attention in a matter of gravest import? For nearly two years, in common with other missionaries, I have been travelling this State in connection with the United Tent Mission, which has touched all its cities and principal towns and villages. We have been brought into closest touch with the spiritual life of all the branches of the Christian Church in N. S. W., and what has impressed me has also weighed heavily upon the hearts of my brother missionaries and their assistants – *the nearest need lies in the Christian Church*. From this quarter, so far as the pressure of an awful *need* constitutes a “cry,” comes with steady persistence and growing volume a strenuous call to our hearts that is not second (in importance and pressing claim upon our attention) even to the crying need of unregenerate sinners of the Saviour. As we have passed in our ministry from town to town it has been simply appalling and humiliating to find the scanty percentage of real interest among God’s own people in His work. I do not hint that we have not met with a great many professing Christians who are regular in their Church attendance and contributions, and living consistent, moral lives; I do not even imply that we have not also found a respectable percentage who are glad in a comfortable way to see the Kingdom of God spread in the acceptance by large numbers of the sinners’ Saviour; but if we are to take New testament precept and example as our standard, the percentage among those of us who profess allegiance to the Saviour that really labour with constant, self-sacrificing zeal for Christ, and practically put him and the claims of the Kingdom, and the needs of the teeming crowds “outside” of Blood-bought souls *first*, is injuriously small. Let us not ask, “Is this not a hard thing to say?” but, Brethren, let us rather face the facts and their issue and ask, “Are these things *true*, and is not the situation serious?” At least we missionaries are so impressed – and by anxious interest and constant practice we grow sensitive to the spiritual pulse – which I have also personally noted the great number of resident ministers who feel with us in this matter, and their knowledge of local conditions is generally better than ours. Believe me, this is not a mere querulous complaint, but an honest,

earnest cry on their part and ours, forced by the painful pressure of an unspeakably sad and injurious state of things in the Church of our Lord. "How long, O Lord, how long?" From the foregoing there are three considerations which I would press.

1. If these things are so, as so many of us feel, is it not a shameful and injurious state of affairs? Shameful that the Church of our glorious Lord, which is made up of saved and happy believers, should be so little stirred by the remembrance and love of Him who died for us and by concern for others who so sorely need what we enjoy; injurious, inasmuch as not from the attacks of unbelief and hate from without, but from lukewarmness or unfaithfulness within her ranks, the Church has most to fear from herself, and only her own ill condition can paralyse her effective power with the world. Oh! for the spirit that prays and denies oneself for God and man to be common among us to-day. "This sort goeth not out but by prayer and fasting," said our Lord to His ineffective disciples.

2. Are we not *ourselves* bound to rectify this shameful and injurious condition? And is not this the awfully necessary work that we ought not first to attempt? It seems that much of our work begins at the wrong end. The conviction grows monthly with me during recent years that, did I follow the pressure of my own heart's feeling, I should devote most, if not all, my public ministrations to my brethren and sisters in the Church in doing my little to obey what I feel as the call of the Church's need, and to remedy the alarming condition. For again, *the nearest need lies in the Christian Church.*

Cannot a combined effort be made *in* the Church *by* the Church *for* the Church? Picture the entire Christian Church in N. S. Wales low before God in penitent confession and persistent prayer, crying, "Wilt thou not, O Lord, revive *us* again, that Thy people may rejoice in Thee," and then imagine any branch of the work of God languishing if you can. Aye! Picture even one branch of His Church – the Anglican or Presbyterian or Methodist or Congregational, or any other – thus *entirely* bowed before God, and what mighty possibilities such a condition would hold! And is it not practicable, as it is needful, to bring about such a united movement in our ranks, and to do it *soon*? The entire Church, or even, say, the Methodist branch of it, in N. S. Wales engaged in a simultaneous mission of penitence and prayer! Think of it, brethren beloved! Picture it; BEGIN it. Why! To hint at

such a movement being impracticable in any branch of the Christian Church is in itself a horrible indictment. Shall we not at once inaugurate such a needful and such a potential work? Will ministers and leaders speak to their helpers and congregations about it, and for the sake of the Church and her individual members, for the sake of the perishing ones, with whom she would be effective if clean, united, and strong, and for our Lord's honour gather together to the place of power, which is the place of penitence and prayer. I know a number of earnest, concerned ministers and leaders who will at once fall in line if such a desperately needed simultaneous Church mission starts, and I am personally willing to take any part in my power in a work that has been long calling to my heart. Brethren, shall we, His children, fall *en masse* at the feet of Zion's king for Zion's sake? Shall we do it *at once*? Shall we gather a meeting in Sydney to consider a practicable scheme for a "protracted prayer meeting" throughout N. S. Wales for God's healing touch to come upon His Church? ***The nearest need lies in the Christian Church.*** Let us pray.

In Royal service,

His and Yours,

Will. H. Scurr,

Missioner.

Y.M.C.A. Rooms,  
Sydney, 20/2/'04.<sup>339</sup>

Many Christians lacked enough enthusiasm in doing things to win souls for Christ which would cause any great cost to them. People did not want to get directly involved in "aggressive" evangelism because it took them beyond their comfort zone, and disturbed their peaceful, secular relationships with their neighbours. People did not like being thought of as an enthusiast, or as a fool for Christ's sake.

The pressures of middle-class living which most Christians enjoy in Australia, with its comfort and security, and the distractions of the secular world, are even greater factors today than they were in Scurr's time. These things so easily destroy the quality of our spiritual lives and dilute our effectiveness for God.

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<sup>339</sup> *Methodist*. February 27th, 1904. page 13.

Commencing in August, 1904, he returned to the Manning, Hastings and Macleay Rivers, on the mid-North Coast of New South Wales, where he had conducted missions in 1902.

“Two years ago, in 11 different missions on these rivers, God privileged him to lead 2,000 souls to the Saviour, and now, after two years, it is found that more than ninety percent of the converts are standing and working well. God be praised! Indeed, the best workers in his recent missions have been the converts of the previous visit. His tent, though accommodating 1200, has often proved too small. Great blessing has attended the missions throughout, not only in the large attendances, the interest taken in God’s work, and the many who have taken the great step, but in the confirmation of the ‘children’ of previous missions, and the deepening and clarifying all round of Christian life.”<sup>340</sup>

At the beginning of 1905, Scurr was back in Melbourne again, at the Y.M.C.A. rooms, for several months at least. I do not know where he carried out his commission for the Y.M.C.A. during 1905.

### **The Methodist Ministry at Last.**

We are not told the reasons for the change which Scurr made early in 1906. But in this year he moved aside from his work as an itinerant evangelist, and took up again the work of a Methodist Home Missionary. From April, 1906, he was stationed by the Home Missions Committee in the town of Egerton.

Scurr had conducted missions there on previous occasions, as well as in nearby towns, so some of the older people in the Egerton Circuit would have known him, and many of them would have been very pleased to have him stationed in their midst with some degree of permanency. No news was published about any of the events in the Egerton Circuit during 1906.

At the following Conference, early in 1907, he again offered himself as a candidate for the Methodist ministry, and this time was accepted. The Conference raised the status of the Egerton Circuit, so that he could remain there for another year.

During 1907 an issue arose in the local community concerning doing harvesting work on the Sabbath, and Scurr approached the Ballan Shire Council, asking them to take actions against a certain

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<sup>340</sup> *Spectator*. December 16th, 1904. page 2043.

group of farmers who did this work. The Council declined to act, saying that the crop was over-ripe and the work was essential. The Editor of the *Spectator* backed William Scurr, saying that in most cases the difficult situation that these farmers faced was created by the farmers themselves, and ought not to be compared with the essential work of nurses or doctors. "...if men are to be allowed to use the Sabbath for harvesting merely in order to suit their convenience, then we may have the harvesters of the whole countryside at work. Plenty of people could arrange for over ripe crops on Sunday if that afforded a pretext for adding another working day to the week. Already the city and the holiday resorts have had the calmness of their Sabbaths destroyed. We trust it will never come to pass that our country districts also shall lose the solemnity of the Lord's Day."<sup>341</sup>

This little incident gives us an insight into the changing role of the Lord's Day, and of Sunday as a day of rest, in Victorian society in the days after the death of Queen Victoria, and in the reign of King Edward VII. It also perhaps shows us something about the role of the unions in some work situations.

Soon after this incident the Conference met, early in 1908, and Scurr was transferred to be the assistant in the Rupanyup Circuit, where he stayed for two years.

### **The Chapman – Alexander Campaign in 1909.**

During 1909, the American evangelists, the Rev. Dr. J. Wilbur Chapman, and Mr. Charles M. Alexander, visited Victoria, and several other States. Again, a Simultaneous Mission was organised, with strong contributions being made by the Evangelisation Society. William Scurr was drafted into the list of local ministers and lay preachers who led local missions, before the main meetings were held. On this occasion, he was initially listed for the mission at Port Melbourne again, because he had done so well there in 1902. But, in fact, he led the mission at North Richmond, and wrote the report about it, which was duly published.

This mission, he said, was adversely affected by the nearness of several other missions being held roughly at the same time. Also, most of the local churches were only nominally supporters of the Mission, and scattered individuals only from these churches attended. Most of

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<sup>341</sup> *Spectator*. January 17th, 1908. pages 95 – 96.

the work had to be done by the local Methodist Church and the Salvation Army Corps. “Non-Church-goers and Roman Catholics were among those who found their way to the meetings. An encouraging number of anxious inquirers were dealt with in the inquiry-room, and ere the close of the Mission fully three-fourths of the audience stood in acknowledgement of having received blessing at the evening meetings or afternoon Bible talks. I believe the spiritual currents in this Mission ran deep and strong, and flushed many channels that had ‘silted up’ and needed cleansing.”<sup>342</sup>

### **His Ordination.**

At the end of 1909, following the Conference, Scurr was moved to be the superintendent minister in the Laanecoorie Circuit. During that time, at the Conference early in 1911, he was ordained, in the fiftieth year of his life. This was rather late in life to be ordained, and would have affected Scurr’s ability to pay into the superannuation fund of the Church. In such a case, he would not have been able to draw anything much from the fund when he retired.

After two years in the Laanecoorie Circuit (1910 and 1911) he was transferred to the Castlemaine Circuit as the colleague, but that appointment lasted for only one year (1912). The move after only one year may well have been prompted by some trouble in which Scurr was involved, along with the District Chairman, which will be mentioned shortly.

### **The Second Chapman – Alexander Simultaneous Mission.**

The year 1912 also saw the second visit to New Zealand and Australia of the American evangelists, the Rev. Dr. J. Wilbur Chapman, and Mr. Charles M. Alexander, leading a substantial team. Again a major Simultaneous Mission was arranged in about forty locations around Melbourne for missions led by local evangelists from the various denominations through the second half of April, 1912.

William Scurr was chosen to lead a tent mission in Kensington, serving the Flemington area as well. The tent seated about 1,000 people, and was situated on land in Parson Street, Kensington. Seven churches combined their efforts in running this mission. These were the Baptist, Church of England (Royal Park), Church of Christ,

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<sup>342</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, May 21st, 1909. page 534.

Presbyterian, Salvation Army, and the two Methodist churches at Flemington and Kensington.

Meetings to organise the mission started before Christmas, and were strongly supported by the local people, with a good unified spirit. Thirteen cottage prayer meetings were held in preparation, although this was not as many as the local committee desired. There would also have been a strong visitation effort to invite the people to the meetings, and good teams of ushers, counsellors, and choir members. The only published comments about the mission itself were that the size of the congregation grew rapidly, and very soon crowded the tent, and that a number of conversions occurred.<sup>343</sup>

At the last meeting, Scurr “gave an inspiring address to the converts, workers, and members of the choir. Representatives of the various Churches testified to the uplift of the mission, and to the splendid work of the missionary.” Scurr was presented with a cheque for three guineas, which was composed of donations from a wide range of the people. Deliberately, no donation was larger than sixpence. He was asked to buy with this money a memento of the mission for himself. This was the only recorded instance of such a gift.<sup>344</sup> Almost all of the missionaries had regular income from their normal jobs, and they would not have been paid by the organising committee of the Simultaneous Mission, or by the local committee.

### **His Subsequent Ministry.**

After his arrival in the Castlemaine Circuit, Scurr took some simple steps to remove from the members’ roll the names of several people who no longer attended church. The normal procedure in the book of rules was for Scurr to visit the people first, to encourage them to return to the church, and then to alert them that a special meeting was to be held at which their names would be formally removed from the church roll. The people to be removed would be entitled to be present at the meeting, and to speak, and there was a course of appeal open to them afterwards.

In this case, the people to be removed from the church roll had let it be known through a third party that they did not want to be visited by Scurr, in order to be brought back to the church, but wanted to be left

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<sup>343</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, April 19th 1912. pages 486 – 487.

<sup>344</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, June 28th 1912. pages 836 – 838.

alone as they were. So, Scurr did not visit them, and removed their names from the church roll. He had the backing of the District Chairman in this action. However, somebody complained. So, a Minor Synod was called to look into the matter, as a matter of church discipline. The Minor Synod found that, although the two ministers had acted sincerely, they nevertheless had not followed the church's procedures, and ordered that the names be restored to the church roll.<sup>345</sup>

Within a few weeks of the findings of the Minor Synod being published Scurr was moved at the 1913 Conference to the Traralgon Circuit, where he remained happily for three years as the superintendent minister. Before the 1916 Conference the Traralgon Quarterly Meeting unanimously called for him to stay for a fourth year, but the Conference moved him to the North Melbourne Church.

During his four years at North Melbourne several land-mark events occurred in the Scurr family circle. Around the middle of 1916 notice arrived from the military authorities to say that their only son, Rayson, had been wounded in France. It was not a serious wound, but he was recovering in a London hospital, and was expected to be returned home in due course. He had been a signaller working close to the Front.

Around the middle of 1917, Mrs. Scurr, and one of the daughters, were run down by a motor-cyclist as they were walking down the street, and Mrs. Scurr especially was seriously injured. She recovered well, over a period.<sup>346</sup>

About the same time as this accident, a piece written by William Scurr, about a page long, was published in the *Spectator*. It was an article about a Local Preachers' Convention at which he had agreed to act as secretary. It provides us with a very interesting example of his style, and of the humour for which he was well known.<sup>347</sup>

### **The Death of His First Wife.**

On 28th May, 1919, however, a much more serious event occurred, because, after a brief illness, Mrs. Emmeline Scurr died, in the North Melbourne Parsonage.<sup>348</sup>

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<sup>345</sup> *Spectator*. January, 10th, 1913. pages 51 – 52.

<sup>346</sup> *Spectator*. July 11th, 1917. page 746.

<sup>347</sup> *Spectator*. June 27th, 1917. page 690.

<sup>348</sup> *Spectator*. June 4th, 1919. page 448.

The family received a great deal of support from their many friends, and especially from other members of the Methodist ministerial fraternity. This was all greatly appreciated.

After the four years at North Melbourne the Scurr family moved a short distance across to the Footscray Circuit for three years. Here his colleagues were George Tregear (superintendent), and Paul Mallalieu. Scurr lived at Yarraville.

During his time in this circuit another article was published written by William Scurr, entitled "Manhood's Commission." It was an edited version of a sermon on the first chapter of the Book of Joshua, particularly on Joshua's commission from God.<sup>349</sup>

At the Conference of 1923 the Scurr family was moved to the Maryborough Circuit for three years, and in 1926 he was chosen to be Chairman of the North-East District, and was stationed at Beechworth. He held this position for three years also. By the time he finished this appointment he was past the age when many others had retired. But, as mentioned, he did not have enough resources in the church's superannuation fund, and consequently he had to keep working as best he could.

### **"The Eucharistic Congress."**

Scurr was heavily involved in the Protestant Federation, and led the move in the Conference of 1928 to protest against the elevation of the Host in the streets of Sydney during the Eucharistic Congress held that year. The report on what happened at the Conference revealed something of Scurr's speaking abilities, for which he was very well known.

"The Rev. W. H. Scurr, who as a champion of Protestantism has taken a prominent part in the affairs of the Protestant Federation, introduced the question of the forth-coming Eucharistic Congress. Considerable discussion ensued as to the exact terminology to be used in protesting against the elevation of the Host in the streets of Sydney. There was no room for doubt as to where the Conference stood on the matter of protest. It was only the matter of finding terms which would express accurately the mind of Conference in a dignified yet emphatic manner. Finally the following resolution was unanimously carried: 'That this Conference expresses its very earnest protest against the

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<sup>349</sup> *Spectator*. February 9th, 1921. page 102.

proposed activities of the forthcoming Eucharistic Congress in Sydney in so far as those activities include a religious procession, the principal features of which is the elevation of the Host in the streets of that city, holding it to be a direct challenge to the faith of Protestantism.’ In speaking to the resolution of protest, the Rev. W. H. Scurr treated the Conference to a vigorous, eloquent and at times impassioned address. He was supported by the Rev. R. Ditterich, who though a very sick man at the moment, displayed all his wonted closeness of argument, accuracy of statement as to facts and lucidity of speech. The Conference closely followed every word of these addresses, and thrilled to the call to stand fast in defence of our Protestant liberty and faith.”<sup>350</sup>

At the Conference early in 1929, Scurr was moved to be the colleague in the Yarra-Street Circuit in Geelong. He lived for three years in South Geelong. The South Geelong people were very sorry to see Scurr and his second wife depart in April of 1928. They moved across to the Elsternwick – St. Kilda Circuit, where for four years Scurr was pastor at St. Kilda and at Elwood.

But the years were telling against them both. Mrs. Scurr’s health was in question as well as that of her husband. For her health, the couple secured leave of absence from St. Kilda for seven months while they went on a voyage to England. The Rev. Paul E. Mallalieu stood in for him in his absence.<sup>351</sup>

### **Retirement, in Name Only.**

Following his return from overseas, however, Scurr’s health was “indifferent,” and he was not always able to fill his appointments. But the people loved him, and when he retired from the so-called active ministry in 1936, the Elsternwick – St. Kilda Quarterly Meeting placed on record their appreciation of his efforts. “A brilliant preacher, whose messages were always thoughtful and delivered with such convincing reality, combined with a charming personality and a keen sense of humour, made Mr. Scurr a much loved man throughout the Circuit. A generous friend to the poor and needy, a constant visitor to the sick, especially at the Alfred Hospital, a learned and capable administrator, Mr. Scurr’s ministry has been one of great blessing and spiritual

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<sup>350</sup> *Spectator*. March 21st, 1928. page 273.

<sup>351</sup> *Spectator*. April 5th, 1933. page 268.

benefit, and we knew that wherever Mr. Scurr was ministering either in the pulpit or out, he was always striving to reflect Christ.”<sup>352</sup>

Although he was now a supernumerary, we must remember that he probably could not afford to retire, and his love for people probably would not allow it anyway. He immediately agreed to take pastoral charge of the congregation of Murrumbeena, in the Oakleigh Circuit. He had a period of serious illness in 1938. He retired from the Murrumbeena arrangement after four years, in 1940. After all, he was nearly eighty years of age.

“On 17<sup>th</sup> April [1940] a large and representative gathering assembled in the Murrumbeena school hall to bid farewell to the Rev. W. H. Scurr and Mrs. Scurr as they concluded four years of service. The chairman, Rev. J. H. Langdon, invited representatives to speak on behalf of their respective activities. The church steward, Mr. A. Hind, spoke on behalf of the leaders and stewards; Mr. Northcott for the trustees; Mr. A. Reid for the school and kindred activities; Mr. W. Gunn for the Christian Endeavour Society; Mr. Fielding for the church at Oakleigh, and also for the local preachers of the Circuit; and Mr. Pattinson on behalf of the Ormond Church and the Oakleigh Circuit. In every department regret was expressed at the removal of one of the circuit’s most engaging personalities and spirited preachers. Sympathy and admiration were expressed for the fortitude with which Mr. and Mrs. Scurr met with a number of trying experiences; also sincere well wishes for God’s continued care of them and their efforts to extend the Kingdom. Mrs. Scurr was then presented with a large spray of pink gladioli, and Mr. Scurr with a wallet of notes on behalf of the Murrumbeena Church and the circuit. After a typically cheerful response by Mr. Scurr, a dainty supper was served by Mr. A. Reid and Misses Barley.”<sup>353</sup>

The last years of his life were spent in his own home, firstly in Middle Park, and then in East St. Kilda. He received many letters, telegrams, and other communications and visits, on his eighty-fifth birthday, for which the Scurrs were very grateful. The same congratulations were shared on his ninetieth birthday, but within six months he had died at his home, with his family around him, on 20th September, 1951.

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<sup>352</sup> *Spectator*. April 22nd, 1936. page 315.

<sup>353</sup> *Spectator*. May 22nd, 1940. page 416

The service was held at St. Kilda Church, and was led by the President of the Conference (Rev. B. L. Semmens), as such services were almost always done in those days. The tribute was given by the St. Kilda minister, the Rev. L. I. Perkins. In his tribute, Perkins said that, when Scurr had visited England, he carried in his pocket a letter of introduction from Dr. A. T. Holden, which described him as one of the leading expository preachers of the Victorian and Tasmanian Conference.<sup>354</sup>

Scurr had always viewed his years as an evangelist as “Pentecostal days and spoke of thousands of conversions.” In one instance he said that there had been “between eighty and ninety thousand conversions.”<sup>355</sup>

There are two possible reactions to any claim like this – of Pentecostal days that had produced between eighty thousand and ninety thousand conversions.

The first is that when an old man is reminiscing about golden days in the distant past it is easy for him to exaggerate. It does seem rather a high estimate for his “personal tally”, when we consider all of the reports about his work that we can assemble, and try to envisage what else happened that was not included in the published reports. But, he was the man on the spot. Perhaps his estimate was correct.

The second reaction is more generous. Perhaps the 80,000 or 90,000 conversions refers to the combined number of conversions seen by all the evangelists in the years from about 1901 to 1905. In that case, the estimate is probably correct, and the description of “Pentecostal days” is also correct, whereas these words would not accurately describe William Scurr’s entire career.

Scurr’s published comment does not tell us which of these two options he intended when he made that comment.

Despite this, his career as an evangelist, and later as a Methodist minister, gives us a glimpse into the type of aggressive evangelism which occurred in those days, which in many ways represent the hey-day of evangelicalism in Australia. It also emphasises for us the great importance which was then placed upon the quest for souls, as opposed to fighting ideas or cultural forces to which we are more accustomed today. The salvation of the soul, and the evangelistic quest which

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<sup>354</sup> *Spectator*. September 25th, 1951. page 602.

<sup>355</sup> *Spectator*. March 14th, 1945. page 165.

embodied that, was the driving force behind these people. The love of Christ constrained them. The soul-winner's fire burned in their bones. They believed that there was more joy in heaven over one sinner who repented than over ninety-nine others, and they shared in that joy.

I acknowledge my indebtedness to several people and several libraries for their help in preparing this article. Mr. Travis McHarg helped me collect materials. The Rev. Dr. Ian Breward, Archivist for the Victorian and Tasmanian Uniting Church Synod, loaned me some duplicate microfilms of the *Spectator*, and kindly entertained me in his home when I visited the Victorian Uniting Church archives looking for material. I have also been substantially helped by the New South Wales Uniting Church Archives and by the Mitchell Library in Sydney.

## **CHAPTER EIGHT**

### **DUNCAN WRIGHT the Evangelist from NEW ZEALAND.**

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Duncan Wright was an evangelist who spent most of his active life in New Zealand, but who spent some time in Australia, mainly in 1892 and 1893. For some of this time he worked for the Evangelisation Society.

Some years previously, Mr. C. H. Street had requested the deacon's meeting of the Knox Church in Dunedin, and they had decided, to appoint an evangelist for the congregation who would mainly be responsible for the Sunday School. The deacons had approached the Rev. Dr. Howie, of the Wynd Churches in Glasgow, to suggest someone for this work. And he has suggested Duncan Wright, who was at that time the evangelist employed by the Crieff Church in the Perthshire Highlands.

In response to this invitation, Duncan Wright had arrived in Dunedin more than seventeen years prior to 1892 – let us say, 1874. As time passed he gained a very good reputation amongst the Presbyterian Churches of Otago as an effective evangelist. It is not clear whether Wright worked for some years as a city evangelist and Sunday School superintendent for the Knox Church, and then after some years he became an evangelist on a wider sphere. But this may be so.

He was not only a good singer himself, but his family included daughters who also could sing. In his evangelistic work he used the ministry of song as one of the main techniques and methods of his work.

Very little information appeared in the Australian papers about his work during that time. But one example appeared in April, 1889.

“Mr. Duncan Wright, of Dunedin, who has for nearly seven years acted as an evangelist in New Zealand, has been, and is now, holding special missions in the North Island of that colony. His tour includes

Palmerston North, Feilding, Bulls, Martow, Turakina, Patea, New Plymouth and Hawera, and extends over two months. Mr. Wright hopes to resume work in Otago in June.”<sup>356</sup>

In 1892, the Evangelisation Society of Victoria invited him to move to southern Australia to work for them. In good faith, Wright moved his family across the Tasman to Victoria in order to carry out this work.

But 1892 was the year when the bottom fell out of the economy, and no sooner had Wright gone to all the trouble of moving his family across the ocean than the Society told him they could not afford to employ him full-time or permanently. So, he worked for the Society full-time for several months, and then became freelance. In this later role, he worked in Victoria for a while, and then travelled to New South Wales, before he eventually went back to New Zealand.

The following is the letter which introduced Duncan Wright to Australian readers.

“To the Editor of the *Southern Cross*.

Dear Sir, - Doubtless you will give me a little space in your paper to bear my word of testimony to the value of the work of the above evangelist, or rather, the work of the Lord through him during his residence in New Zealand.

The steamer that brings this letter carries Mr. Wright (and family) to your city. Hundreds of Christians of every name in New Zealand regret the departure of our brother. But I trust it is the right way, and in the plan of the Lord.

I understand Mr. Wright has accepted an invitation with one of your evangelistic associations. I feel persuaded the Lord will own this work through His servant, as He has often abundantly done throughout New Zealand.

I have known Mr. Wright ever since he landed in this colony – over seventeen years ago. Just shortly after he landed he came down to Port Chalmers, with another well-known evangelist, and conducted a mission in the Presbyterian Church there. I can speak from a very large acquaintance with the people of that place, having resided there for twenty years, and I can testify to the genuineness and extensiveness of the awakening and work of grace as the result of the labours of these two evangelists. At the close of the meetings 150 of us signed a letter

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<sup>356</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 26 April, 1889. page 335.

of thanks to those who had sent our friends, and the late Rev. William Johnstone, the saintly pastor of the Presbyterian Church at that time, stated at a public meeting that “He found in visiting amongst the families of the place many happy traces of the results. Many of the cases were well known, and he could name fifty persons who were believed to have been changed. He expected to add about thirty members to his church at the approaching communion. He used to have the greatest difficulty in getting teachers for the Sunday-school; now he had none.”

The Rev. James Maxwell, Congregational minister, followed with a similar testimony, stating that “He had added about twenty members to his church, whose decision for Christ had been directly or indirectly the result of the late meetings.” Captain Thomson, harbour master, and Mr. Andrew Thomson, J.P., also bore decided testimony to this work of grace. Besides, many were seamen, who soon were scattered to other parts, but some of whom I still know and correspond with. I think this was one of the first missions of Mr. Wright’s after his arrival in this colony. Since that time Mr. Wright has been in this city, and in fact all over New Zealand, engaged in evangelistic work. I have myself been almost from one end of the colony to the other, and I think I can with truth say that almost everywhere I have gone I have met with souls who have been led to Jesus through the labours of our brother.

Personally, I am indebted to Mr. Wright for frequent and willing aid to our work amongst the seamen, and as the spiritual father of one of my own dear sons, for which I feel grateful to God, and, under Him, to dear brother Wright. I regret exceedingly that one so fitted for faithful, pointed service should be leaving our shores.

His singing is an attractive feature in his meetings, and his speaking free from formality, earnest and full of glow. I write this note not to praise our brother, but more with the desire to commend him and the work given him to do to the hearty sympathy and cordial co-operation of the children of God in your colony, so that even more abundant blessing may follow the labours of our brother Duncan Wright.

Yours in the Lord,

Dunedin Sailors’ Rest.

A. R. Falconer.

Sailors’ Missionary.

3<sup>rd</sup> March, 1892.<sup>357</sup>

“**Mr. Duncan Wright**, who recently left Dunedin, gave a final lecture in Old Knox Church, on which occasion the building was crowded with a large assemblage of friends. The Rev. Dr. Stuart presided. He said it had been decided, on the repeated advice of the late Mr. C. H. Street, by the deacon’s court, to appoint a congregational missionary, whose specialty would be the superintendence of the main Sunday school. Having put themselves in communication with the Rev. Mr. Howie, of the Wynd Churches, Glasgow, he directed them to Mr. Wright, at the time the city missionary at Crieff, the gate of the Perthshire Highlands. He arrived in Dunedin seventeen years ago. The rev, gentleman proceeded to speak in eulogistic terms of Mr. Wright, setting forth his eagerness for the extension of the Gospel, and referring to the good work done by him as an evangelist. The doctor was sure they would join him in wishing Mr. Wright God-speed in his work in Victoria. Mr. Wright then delivered a lecture on “The Ministry of Song,” his remarks being interspersed with a number of well-known hymns and sacred selections, some of which were sung by himself, some by the Knox Church Choir and others. During the evening Mr. A. J. Barth, on behalf of the Knox Church choir, presented Miss Wright with a gold bracelet, in which was set a handsome diamond, and Miss Jessie Wright with a brooch.”<sup>358</sup>

**Letter to the Editor.**

Dear Sir, - Mr. Duncan Wright, whose labours are so well known, having returned from New Zealand resumes work immediately in connection with this Society.

The Executive, in the present trying circumstances, regret they could not offer Mr. Wright a permanent engagement as was expected.

Application for his services should be made at once, and we bespeak the earnest prayers of all who love aggressive work, that his labours in this colony, as in New Zealand, may be abundantly blessed.

C. CARTER.<sup>359</sup>

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<sup>357</sup> Southern Cross, Friday, 18 March, 1892. page 238.

<sup>358</sup> Ibid.

<sup>359</sup> Southern Cross, Friday, 8 April, 1892. page 287.

### **The Ministry of Song.**

“On Friday last Mr. Duncan Wright concluded a successful series of special meetings at Beaufort by giving his popular musical lecture on “The Ministry of Song,” which was largely illustrated by duets, choruses, solos, and sacred songs. Although the evening was wet, there was an excellent and deeply interested audience. Dr. Adam, of Beaufort, presided, and was supported on the platform by Revs. Hosken (Church of England), Adam (Presbyterian), and Jackson (Primitive Methodist). Miss Wright, the evangelist’s daughter, accompanied on the piano, and sang, with good taste, Longfellow’s “The Bridge,” “Ora Pro Nobis,” “The Last Muster,” and “The Better Land.” The usual votes of thanks to the lecturer and to the chairman concluded the gathering.”<sup>360</sup>

### **Letter to the Editor.**

Dear Sir,- Mr. D. Wright, evangelist, who recently arrived from New Zealand, has just finished his temporary engagement with the Evangelisation Society, and will in future continue to conduct such work independently of the Association.

Mr. Wright’s work in connection with the Society has been very satisfactory, good work having been done in all the places where he has held missions.

The funds of the Society are at present very low, and the committee are unable to add to their staff permanently. The treasurer, Mr. E. Baines, will be glad to receive donations or subscriptions from friends of the Society. C. CARTER.<sup>361</sup>

### **Mission at Queenscliff.**

Mr. Duncan Wright conducted a very successful mission at Queenscliff last week. The meetings were largely attended by persons belonging to all churches, and were pervaded by earnest and solemn feeling. Believers have been stimulated and helped, some have been brought out of the twilight into the sunshine, some have professed decision for Christ, and it is hoped that precious fruit will hereafter be gathered. Mr. Wright possesses in a high degree the qualities of a successful evangelist. He has good sense, kindly tact, geniality,

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<sup>360</sup> Southern Cross, Friday, 29 July, 1892. page 615.

<sup>361</sup> Southern Cross, Friday, 19 August, 1892. page 666.

humour, and a fine gift of song; above all he is genuinely in earnest about the salvation of his hearers, and his addresses are characterized by clear, full, lively and forcible statements of Gospel truths and pointed, telling appeals. He begins this week a mission in Ebenezer Church, Ballarat, and proceeds afterwards to Ashfield, Sydney. He intends to leave Australia in October, to resume his labours in New Zealand.<sup>362</sup>

### **Mission in Ebenezer Church, Ballarat.**

The mission services conducted by Mr. Duncan Wright at Ebenezer Church, Ballarat, were continued on Sunday to large congregations. In the afternoon a thorough practical and interesting address was given to the children, who enjoyed the simple queries and telling anecdotes related by the missionary. The subject of the evening discourse was "Names in the Book of Life" (Philippians iv.3), and most impressive appeals to prepare for the great hereafter and meet the redeemed gone before were made, illustrated with anecdotes and incidents from the preacher's experiences. The mission continued by afternoon Bible readings, and meetings each evening this week.<sup>363</sup>

### **Mission at Burwood, N.S.W.**

At the Burwood Congregational Church, N.S.W., throughout the past week special mission services have been conducted by Mr. Duncan Wright, assisted by the pastor, the Rev. G. Campbell, and a good choir, which materially added to the interest of the meetings, the solos and choruses rendered being both appropriate and effective. At the different services held special addresses were delivered by Mr. Wright. On three afternoons interesting Bible readings were held, at which the attendances averaged considerably over 100. On Friday night a special subject, entitled "Save the Boy," there being upwards of 500 persons present. The whole of the services were well attended, and Mr. Wright looks upon the mission as one of the most successful he has conducted. On Sunday special services were held, the mission closing last evening. The missionary leaves for Forbes, Dubbo and Parkes during the week, for the purpose of holding a series of missions

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<sup>362</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 4 August, 1893. page 615.

<sup>363</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 11 August, 1893. page 634.

in those places, after which he returns for a final mission in Sydney, and on 17<sup>th</sup> October leaves Melbourne for New Zealand.<sup>364</sup>

### **Some of Duncan Wright's Other Missions in N.S.W.**

During the last twelve months Mr. Duncan Wright, from New Zealand, with a very long experience in evangelistic work, has been conducting, in conjunction with the ministers and office-bearers of the churches visited, services of an evangelistic character in many parts of New South Wales. Crowds of men and women have attended with deepening interest the evangelistic Bible readings and evening gatherings. During the last few weeks Mr. Wright has held large meetings in Burwood, Summer Hill, and Bourke-street Congregational Churches, and in every case there have been manifest tokens of real power and blessing. At Bourke-street Church, Sydney, there is a mission band who have for years held open-air services of an interesting character, and from these services a large number of persons have found their way not only to the church, but, it is to be believed, to the Saviour's feet. The closing service, which was largely attended, was for praise, thanksgiving, and testimony, and was thoroughly hearty and enthusiastic. During the evangelist's address on one of the evenings on "The Perils of City Life," the audience, which was largely composed of men, broke out in spontaneous applause. The congregation was pleased to learn that, although he was going back to New Zealand, the evangelist hopes to return for more work in Sydney and suburbs.<sup>365</sup>

**1898.**

### **Robertson and Stephens at Work in Dunedin.**

For several months past Messrs. Robertson and Stephens, of the Evangelisation Society, have been doing good work in the southern parts of New Zealand. Some weeks ago a meeting of Christian workers was held to consider the question of a central mission in Dunedin before these brethren returned to Victoria, and although not largely attended, it was resolved unanimously that such an effort

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<sup>364</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 15 September, 1893. page 735.

<sup>365</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 20 October, 1893. page 838.

should in God's name be undertaken. A large committee of representative workers was chosen; Mr. Duncan Wright was elected to act as Hon. Secretary, and Mr. John Wilkinson, a well-known solicitor, as hon. Treasurer. From the start the meetings were encouraging, and bravely the evangelists and committee went forward with faith and hope. A large number of singers strengthened Mr. Stephens' hands all through the mission. The crowning meetings were those held on the two Sunday evenings in our large Garrison Hall, when probably 2,000 persons were crowded into all parts of the building. A meeting for praise and testimony was held on Monday, 9<sup>th</sup> May, in the large and beautiful edifice known as Knox Church, where the Rev. William Hewitson B.A., is the honoured and loved pastor. After a large number of testimonies had been given, and a satisfactory statement of finance made by Mr. Wilkinson, the following resolution was read by Mr. Duncan Wright, and supported by the Rev. W. Hewitson:- On behalf of the committee who have charge of the arrangements for the Central Evangelistic meetings in Dunedin conducted by Messrs. Robertson and Stephens, of the Evangelisation Society of Australasia, and also in the name of this large and enthusiastic praise farewell meeting, held in Knox Church, Dunedin (which meeting closes their ten days' mission), we desire publicly and heartily to thank God for the visit of these brethren to our city. We feel assured that the pastors, office-bearers, and people of several of the suburban churches would gladly concur with us in this note of praise. It is no exaggeration on our part to affirm that by God's blessing on the strong, clear messages spoken by Mr. Robertson, and the sweet Gospel songs sung by Mr. Stephens, very many Christian hearts have been stirred and stimulated, and that not a few have professed conversion to God. When the time comes for these esteemed labourers to leave our shores, they may rest assured that kindly hearts will follow them wherever in the good providence of God they may go, and that prayer will rise on their behalf for continued strength and blessing. If in this changing fleeting life we do not meet again, we trust in Christ that we shall meet in the morning beyond the clouds and shadows. In saying farewell to the evangelists who soon will join their loved ones, from whom for a little season they have been parted, we sincerely repeat the words of the grand old Book, "The Lord bless thee, and keep thee; the Lord make His face to shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up His countenance upon thee

and give thee peace.” On Mr. Hewitson’s suggestion the audience rose and sang the words of the Doxology in token of their approval. Whatever good has come, to God be all the praise. Both of the workers replied in feeling terms as to all the kindness they had experienced in Otago and Dunedin.<sup>366</sup>

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<sup>366</sup> Southern Cross, Friday, 27 May, 1898. page 499.

## CHAPTER NINE

### Mr. James Hood - Evangelist between 1895 and 1898.

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James Hood seems to have been a highly successful evangelist for the Society for several years, commencing in 1895.

We first hear of him in 1893, when he lived in Macarthur, in Western Victoria. Robert Robertson conducted a mission in Hamilton during March or early April, and preached in a number of other centres in the general district, including some meetings in Macarthur and Broadwater, both some miles to the south-east of Hamilton. Hood sent in a report about Robertson's meetings in that place which were very positive.

#### **“EVANGELISATION SOCIETY OF VICTORIA.**

I am very pleased to be able to report that Mr. R. Robertson's mission here has been very successful. We were somewhat unfortunate as regards the time, most of the men being away in search of work; but we succeeded in filling our church, and a good work has been done. We had several meetings here, and also a few at a place called Broadwater, about eight miles away. At both places souls have been saved and Christians revived and blessed. At our last meeting the church was crowded. Praise and testimony was the programme, and it was very cheering to hear the hearty testimonies of old and young. When Mr. Robertson had his mission at Hamilton we had two or three meetings from him, and many of his converts are still with us. I hope the same may be said of the more recent ones. I cannot help bearing my humble testimony to the sterling worth of the evangelist, and I thank God for having been brought into contact with him. His name will soon not be forgotten in Macarthur, and we thank the Evangelisation Society for sending him to work amongst us.

Macarthur.

James Hood.”<sup>367</sup>

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<sup>367</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 21 April, 1893. page 315.

It is not clear what kind of work he did in the area, but he was certainly involved in at least one of the churches in the town, and also it is fairly obvious that he must have had some good talent, and gained some good preaching experience in that time.

As a preacher for the Evangelisation Society, James Hood's name does not appear amongst the evangelists at the Annual Meeting in 1894, but it does appear later in 1895.

The first published reports about missions conducted by him related to a mission held in the Wesleyan Church at Kyneton, probably early in September, 1895, where there was "marked success."

The Annual Meeting for 1895 was held a bit later in September. When a report appeared about the Annual Meeting, it included something about Hood's next mission in Healesville. A certain Mr. J. Montgomery wrote to say:- "I am thankful I can write such an encouraging report of the mission conducted by your evangelist, Mr. Jas. Hood. About forty-five persons, young and old, have professed to having accepted Christ as their Saviour during the mission, and the number who publicly testified in the praise and testimony meeting last night is a strong evidence of the genuine work done, and that God has indeed been in our midst."<sup>368</sup>

He was expected to commence a mission at Box Hill on 20 October, 1895.<sup>369</sup>

Again, despite the lack of published reports, there is no reason to doubt that he worked steadily from his starting point in 1895, through the following twelve months.

In 1896, James Hood, conducted missions in remote areas, such as a five weeks' mission, which included two weeks at Lower Homebush, two weeks at Avoca and nearly a week at Natte Yallock. This mission, however, did not produce any obvious results so far as the number of conversions was concerned. "The result of the mission has been the quickening of believers, and although we cannot report of any who have directly decided for Christ, yet there has been a concern manifested by some for salvation, and already the fruit is appearing."<sup>370</sup>

This seems to have been followed by a mission in Wesley Church, in Lonsdale Street, Central Melbourne. The report was

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<sup>368</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 27 September, 1895, page 929. Also 4 October, 1895, page 952, and 11 October, 1895, page 967

<sup>369</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 18 October, 1895, page 1006.

<sup>370</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 22 May, 1896, page 367.

provided by the superintendent minister, the Rev. A. R. Edgar, who had an outstanding record as an evangelist in his own right.

“Mr. Hood threw himself with all his heart into the movement, and his soul-stirring addresses night after night drew increasing audiences. Mr. Hood is an evangelist. He grips the conscience and the heart. His sermons are models of straightforward, strong, Scriptural teaching, well-delivered, and up-to-date.” There were quite a number of conversions which the Wesley Church staff members were working to gather in. Mr. Henry Varley also preached for them on several occasions.<sup>371</sup>

Soon after that, James Hood was involved in a series of missions in scattered parts of the Maryborough Wesleyan circuit. The first week was given to the Craigie church, and the second to the Carisbrook congregation. The third and fourth weeks were then spent in Maryborough itself. It was at this point that the report was written.

“Mr. Hood preached twice on each Sabbath, as well as addressing the Sunday-school. On the second Sabbath many of the children remained at an after-meeting, and a goodly number were converted. Mr. Hood conducted Bible readings in the afternoons of the last week, which were very profitable and much appreciated by the large number who attended. Every night Mr. Hood preached to large congregations, and after meetings were held at which the Divine presence was felt, and in answer to the prayers of God’s people very many were convinced of sin, came in penitence to the foot of the Cross, and there and then experienced forgiveness. Friday night’s service will be long remembered. Mr. Hood’s earnest address on the parable of the sower was listened to with most devout attention, after which was to be a testimony meeting, but that could not be yet, for nine persons came forward at once seeking salvation; so, spontaneously, the meeting resolved itself into a prayer-meeting, characterised by the deepest devotion, and while Mr. Hood and the Rev. H. Greenwood pointed the seekers to Calvary, God’s people, baptised with the Holy Spirit, were besieging the Throne of Grace. After a while the testimony meeting began, and truly it was good to be there; for, as Mr. Hood said, we had as much as we could carry, for so eager were many to testify of blessing received, that often two persons rose at the same time, and the people, when closing time came, after having been together for three

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<sup>371</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 29 May, 1896. page 393.

and a half hours, seemed quite unwilling to retire. Altogether, between thirty and forty persons found the Saviour.

On the following Sabbath the Rev. H. Greenwood conducted evangelistic services, and another young man gave himself to Christ. On Tuesday evening God's presence was felt at the Christian Endeavour meeting, and everybody's heart was full when thirteen of the converts were received into active membership. Praise God! Even greater things will be seen in answer to believing prayer. Mr. Hood's mission is now opened at Timor<sup>372</sup>

During August, a quarterly meeting of the Society was held at which was launched a quarterly paper called the *Victorian Evangelist*. This first issue is the only issue to have survived, although it was probably published for several years more. It contains a letter from the Rev A. R. Edgar in appreciation of James Hood's efforts during the mission at Wesley Church, and which Edgar had published originally in the *Southern Cross*. This letter to the Editor went as follows:-

Sir, - I desire through the medium of the *Southern Cross*, to thank most heartily the committee of the Evangelization Society for the services of Mr. James Hood – one of their agents – in connection with special services recently held in Wesley Church, Lonsdale-street. Mr. Hood has been made a blessing to very many in this mission. His word was with power, a living message to weary men and women. Mr. Hood is an evangelist! Thank God for such men.

I have had considerable experience of the work done by the Evangelization Society for a number of years, and can bear testimony to the efficiency of the evangelists by them. The Church of Christ in this colony is under obligation to those brethren. In town and country God has set his seal upon their labours. They are men full of faith and of the Holy Ghost and have the further possession of sanctified common-sense. Just now, when so many are rejoicing in the seasons of refreshing, coming from the presence of the Lord, I know of no better qualified, extra harvest hands than R. Robertson, W. H. Scurr and James Hood; and I commend the Society under whose direction those men labour to the generous confidence and support of the Lord's stewards. – Truly yours,

A. R. Edgar,

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<sup>372</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 24 July, 1896. page 535.

Central Mission, 6th July, 1896.<sup>373</sup>

This was followed by a mission in Epsom, which was one of the lesser centres in the Bendigo Circuit. The evenings were very cold, and very dark. Many of the people had long distances to walk, yet the meetings were declared to have been well attended. Seven people declared themselves publicly for Christ, and the church was greatly blessed.<sup>374</sup>

Alexander R. Edgar also attended the Society's Annual General Meeting on 13th October, in the Collins Street Baptist Church. Four evangelists were listed as working for the Society at this time – Robert Robertson, William Scurr, James Hood and Thomas Chuck. The Secretary reported that over the previous twelve months these evangelists had conducted 92 missions, had visited 118 places, held 1072 meetings, with an aggregate attendance of 117,000, and having seen “a very large in-gathering of souls to the Lord's Kingdom.”

It was at this meeting that the first move was made to change the name of the Society from the Evangelisation Society of Victoria to its new name of the Evangelisation Society of Australasia, which it continued to use for about six decades.<sup>375</sup>

The Annual Report emphasized that serious problems existed in paying the evangelists properly. The 1890s had seen serious economic problems for Victoria, and this has affected badly the income of the Society. During the 1880s the economic situation had been much better, and the Society had managed to pay its way reasonably well. Now, in 1896, the evangelists had agreed to be content with the pay which came in, which was admitted by all concerned to be seriously inadequate. This option had been chosen rather than closing the work down, in part or in total. The success in soul-winning that the evangelists had been enjoying was greater than previously, and this was one of the main attractions in continuing their work for God, regardless of the personal cost.<sup>376</sup>

Very quickly after that, James Hood was involved in a mission in Sale. Three weeks were given to the town, and nineteen adults professed conversion, along with a larger number of children. “Many

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<sup>373</sup> *Spectator* inclusion. 14th August, 1896. page 603.

<sup>374</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 18 September, 1896. page 706.

<sup>375</sup> *Spectator*. 23 October, 1896. page 817.

<sup>376</sup> *Spectator*. 30 October, 1896. page 827.

lukewarm Christians have been aroused, and the spiritual life of the Church has been deepened.” The Wesleyan minister, the Rev. William Allen, provided the report.<sup>377</sup>

A few weeks later, Hood led a ten days’ mission in Stratford, and another in Briagolong. In this latter place, “there are about thirty of forty atheists and spiritualists in this town, and Mr. Hood preached the truth straight and strong, and it went home with great power. The Sunday night was a time to be long remembered. The Mechanic’s Institute was engaged, and about two hundred people were present, many of whom had never been to a service for many years. The ‘enemy’ came in force, but Mr. Hood stood his ground, and in his own fearless and forcible way proclaiming the everlasting Gospel, and atheism received a shock that it will never get over in this place. The way the mission ‘caught on’ with all classes was marvellous. A great many were stricken of the Spirit on account of their sins, and though the number who yielded during the mission was small, yet others have since bowed the knee to Jesus, and many more have been brought near the kingdom.”<sup>378</sup>

In the first quarter of 1897, the *Southern Cross* quoted from “the *Victorian Evangelist*, the quarterly journal of the Victorian Evangelisation Society, reports for the months of January, February, and March, that the agents of the Society have visited fifty places, and held 220 meetings, with an aggregate attendance of 15,000.”

These included a six week’s mission in the Koroit district which closed on 18<sup>th</sup> March. A fortnight was given to Rosebrook, Koroit, and Grasmere. All the meetings were well attended, and the mission, especially at Rosebrook and Grasmere, was crowned with success. “Mr. Hood’s addresses were very practical and pointed, and brightened with plenty of wit. Those who heard him once, as a rule, came again, and kept to the meetings all through. Without any frothy excitement, a deep interest was taken in the meetings throughout, and all would like to see Mr. Hood back again for another mission next year.”<sup>379</sup>

These meetings were followed by three weeks of work at the Bible Christian Church, Daylesford. “The mission has been productive of much good – Christians have been quickened and strengthened, and a few persons have been led to decide for Christ. And we believe that

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<sup>377</sup> Ibid. page 830.

<sup>378</sup> *Spectator*. 20 November, 1896. page 904.

<sup>379</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 2 April, 1897. page 331.

the good achieved will prove to be of a permanent character. Mr. Hood's addresses were plain, pithy, pointed, educational and inspirational, and although there was not a great deal of excitement, the Holy Spirit's unction was blessedly realized."<sup>380</sup>

At the beginning of May, the first steps were made by the Society to send its agents to conduct missions outside of Victoria. Robertson and Stephens left to conduct a mission in Hindmarsh, South Australia, alongside of the Rev. A. J. Clarke, who had recently become the Baptist minister there.

Also James Hood began to prepare for a visit to New South Wales and Queensland in the coming August and September. W. H. Scurr was to leave for Tasmania near the end of the year. The Society pleaded for prayer support for all these new efforts, and also for the needed financial support.

Before he left, one of Hood's missions was at the Heywood Wesleyan Church. Here James Hood ran into a health problem which was to come against him in the future. It was the early depths of winter. After two weeks at Heywood, he had to decline the idea of spending more time in the area, visiting Drik Drik and Bridgewater because he could not stand the damp climate. The two later missions would have to be postponed to the summer time.<sup>381</sup>

Several reports came from his time in Queensland. He finished a mission in the Windsor Road Baptist Church on 16th July. The results seemed to be very satisfactory. Fifteen people were dealt with in the enquiry room. Open air meetings brought them into contact with many people who had not attended a church for a very long time. This was followed by a mission at the Brighton Road Congregational Church, and then at the Sandgate Baptist Church. This was followed by a mission at the Presbyterian Church at Thompson's Estate. Several other missions were also booked.

Late in August, he was invited to be the Pastor at the Broadway Congregational Church for six months. But he had to decline this invitation because the humid climate did not suit his health.<sup>382</sup>

It is not clear how well he got on when he got back to Victoria. His health problems seemed to be developing.

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<sup>380</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 23 April, 1897. page 403.

<sup>381</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 11 June, 1897. page 571.

<sup>382</sup> *Southern Cross*, 30 July, 1897, page 747, and 13 August, page 795, and 3 September, page 866.

Early the following year, the report appeared that he had been supplying the pulpit of the Hawthorn Baptist Church for a considerable time, and with great acceptance. The congregations were growing.<sup>383</sup>

By the middle of the year, his health situation had compelled him to resign from the Evangelisation Society. He could no longer carry out the strenuous routines of a travelling evangelist.

“Mr. James Hood, who for a long time has laboured with much acceptance and blessing, has, through continued ill-health, been compelled to tender his resignation in connection with the Evangelisation Society. The Committee deeply regrets the loss of his valued services, and hopes his health may yet be restored, to enable him to resume the work for which he is so well fitted.”<sup>384</sup>

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<sup>383</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 25 March, 1898. page 283, and 6 May, 1898, page 427.

<sup>384</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 24 June, page 595.

## CHAPTER TEN

### Mr. James H. Stephens - the Singing Evangelist.

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Mr. James H. Stephens began his work for the Evangelisation Society around April or May of 1896, and seems to have worked under the auspices of the Society for over ten years.

Regarding sources of information, I have had to rely upon what could be found about him in the *Spectator* and in the *Southern Cross*. I have not been able to access Tasmanian or New Zealand religious or local newspapers about his work, although these may well contain some more information.

Around 1896, the Society adopted the policy of sending out two evangelists together, one as the preacher and the other as the song leader and musician. This policy was clearly an improvement because it reduced the strain upon the unaccompanied preacher in having to conduct the service and lead the singing, especially in some areas where the force of laymen was not strong, or was not talented in the right direction. It was as a musician, soloist and song-leader that Stephens first got involved in the work.

Stephens went out with Robert Robertson to lead a mission in Collingwood, probably during June, 1896. The report about it appeared in the first issue of the *Victorian Evangelist*, in August, 1896. This paper also refers to another mission they conducted in Wandin Yallock. It also lists the missions in which they were involved through July and August. These were in Richmond, St. Arnaud, Stawell, Castlemaine and North Melbourne.<sup>385</sup>

Near the end of 1896, an appeal was made for money to buy a small portable organ which Stephens was able to take with him on tour. This was successful.<sup>386</sup>

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<sup>385</sup> The first issue of the *Victorian Evangelist* was a free insertion in the *Spectator*, 14 August, 1896. Pages were not numbered. This quarterly newspaper was issued by the E.S.V. for a few years, and the first issue is the only issue that seems to have survived.

<sup>386</sup> *Southern Cross*. 11 January, 1897. page 59.

For the autumn season of 1897, Robertson and Stephens went to South Australia, and a number of reports appeared about their meetings, including some which were reprinted in Melbourne papers, quoting from what had appeared in the *South Australian Register*. The first mission in South Australia took place in Hindmarsh, commencing on 2 May. These were followed by missions at Norwood, North Adelaide, Mount Barker, and would conclude with a Central Mission in the Adelaide Y.M.C.A.

The Rev. A. J. Clarke provided a report about the mission at Hindmarsh. “Our brethren Robertson and Stephens have come and gone. For many weeks we looked for the mission, and prayed. Now we are filled with praise. We held meetings for prayer during the week before our brethren came, and on the Friday night about 100 workers welcomed them. It was a time of blessing; the evangelists took charge, and the people at once drew to them.” On the Saturday there apparently was a much wider welcome in Adelaide, attended by Christians from many churches in and around the city. “We prepared a plan for visiting the district, and the Rev. W. L. Morton, of Belair, kindly sent three of the students to help in the visiting, and at the after-meetings. We visited 1200 homes, which brought many to the meetings, who do not usually hear the Gospel. Mr. Robertson spoke earnest words to the Christians, and much blessing came which will long abide; many have been quickened and led to closer communion with Jesus. ...the congregation numbered over 500 on week nights, and over 700 on Sundays.” There were over seventy people who responded to the appeal and came out as inquirers. “If we had continued a few days longer the crowds would have been larger than we could have got into the largest buildings in the district.”

“Mr. Stephens was greatly blessed as he sang; at times hundreds were moved to tears. God owned the ministry of song. He won all our hearts; he had a band of singers from the various churches, delighted to sing for Christ.”<sup>387</sup>

The Norwood mission was held in St. Giles’ Presbyterian Church, ending on 2 June, which was a Wednesday evening, and had lasted for ten days. “The meeting consisted principally of testifying and thanksgiving, and some sixty persons gave testimony to the blessings received. Earnest addresses were given by the evangelists,

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<sup>387</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 4 June, 1897. page 547.

Mr. Stephens singing several solos.”<sup>388</sup> The mission in the North Adelaide Baptist Church started the next night, on 3 June.

The mission at Mount Barker also lasted for ten days, and closed on Monday, 5 July. The meetings had been held in the Public Hall. “The visit of our brethren has communicated quite an interest in the ‘deep things of God’ throughout the district.”<sup>389</sup>

The mission in Adelaide being organised through the Y.M.C.A. was launched at a large gathering on Saturday, 10 July, at the Y.M.C.A. The secretary, Mr. J. J. Virgo, announced that the meetings for the following week would be held in the Bijou Theatre every night until Friday, led by Robertson and Stephens. Also a Christian Convention would be held in the Y.M.C.A. Hall daily, commencing on Sunday, with meetings at 7 am, 10.30 am, and 3 pm. The speakers would include the Rev. Allan Webb, of Geelong, and Mr. F. Pratt, secretary of the Australasian Students’ Union. They hoped that Mr. Charles F. Reeve would be available – he was director of the Poona Mission. Others expected to assist would include the Revs. J. Lyall, W. L. Morton, A. J. Clarke, F. Webb, and Messrs. Robertson, Stephens and J. H. Sinclair.<sup>390</sup>

On Thursday, 5 August, Stephens produced his first reported instance of a service in song, entitled “Phillip Phillips – the singing pilgrim.” About 500 were present in the Y.M.C.A. Hall, with the Rev. W. G. Marsh [Anglican] as chairman. J. J. Virgo used the occasion to thank the visiting evangelists for their work in South Australia. Mr. Robertson, having spoken a few words of farewell, the meeting closed with the singing of ‘God be with you till we meet again.’ A great number of people were at the railway station to say good-bye. One of the results of the mission has been the formation of an Evangelisation Society in South Australia on the lines of the Victorian Society.”<sup>391</sup>

After their return from South Australia, Robertson and Stephens held a longer mission which started in the Cecil Street Wesleyan Church, South Melbourne, on 22 August, but ended in the Baptist Church. “The meetings were unflagging in interest for three weeks, results cheering, and Mr. Robertson’s methods commending themselves to the judgment of the people. The financial results were

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<sup>388</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 11 June, 1897. page 571. This was reprinted from the *Adelaide Advertiser*.

<sup>389</sup> *Southern Cross*, 9 July, 1897. page 675.

<sup>390</sup> *Southern Cross*, 16 July, 1897. page 699. This was reprinted from the *Register*.

<sup>391</sup> *Southern Cross*, 13 August, 1897. page 795.

also good all round. The report was provided by the Rev. Samuel Knight, a widely experienced Wesleyan minister, but was published later, following the annual meeting.<sup>392</sup>

A little later, they held a mission in the Protestant Hall at Ararat, which started on Sunday, 19 September, and ended on Monday evening, 4 October. That night Stephens again rendered his service in song on the life and ministry of Phillip Phillips. “As a praise meeting this was a fitting termination to a fortnight’s work, which has resulted in much blessing.” Both the Wesleyans and the Presbyterians had supported this effort. “Mr. Robertson’s addresses have been very effective; in them pathos and humour are blended with words that are earnest and telling. His setting forth of Gospel truths is clear and pronounced. The singing of Mr. Stephens has been a great attraction and blessing to the meetings. Up till Monday evening, 27th September, eleven persons professed to find peace in Christ, but in addition to this, Christians of all shades of thought have received much blessing from attendance at the meetings. The final tally of professed conversions was “twenty-eight or thirty,” apart from the results from a special young people’s service (which would mean children under 14 years of age.)<sup>393</sup>

Robertson and Stephens returned to Melbourne just in time to take part in the Society’s annual meeting, on Tuesday 19 October. “We hope a large number of those who are interested in evangelistic work of all denominations, will gather together on this occasion to join with the Committee in praise and thanksgiving to God for the marvellous blessing He has given to the work of the Society in this and other Colonies during the past year. The Rev. Samuel Knight and four of our evangelists will address the meeting, and Mr. J. H. Stephens, and Mr., J. C. Langley will sing. Rev. S. C. Kent will preside.”<sup>394</sup>

When the report from the annual meeting was published, in the next issue of the *Southern Cross*, it said that an address was also given at the meeting by a “once well-known atheist (Mr. Donald McFarlane), who was converted to God in one of Mr. Robertson’s meetings in Adelaide.” The four evangelists who spoke were R. Robertson, W. H. Scurr, J. Hood and T. Chuck.<sup>395</sup>

<sup>392</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 22 October, 1897. page 1027.

<sup>393</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday 1 October, 1897. page 963, and 8 October, 1897. page 987.

<sup>394</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 15 October, 1897. page 990.

<sup>395</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 22 October, 1897. page 1035.

In November, 1897, Robertson and Stephens headed off for New Zealand. Their first mission was at Milburn, for six days, starting on Sunday, 28 November. The second mission was at the Presbyterian Church in Kaikorai Valley. Robertson was introduced to the local Presbytery during the week, and missions were arranged at Queenstown, Cromwell, Invercargill, Anderson's Bay, N.E. Valley, and South Dunedin.<sup>396</sup>

The Invercargill mission report said that the meetings had started small at first, but had grown until many had to be turned away, with the theatre seating 1,000 or more. "The striking originality, humour, and pathos of Mr. Robertson's preaching, and the sweetness of Mr. Stephens' singing, made wide and deep impressions. On the closing nights of the mission a solemn awe pervaded the assembly, and it seemed as if God was speaking, as indeed He was. About 500 acknowledged blessings received, and about fifty or sixty made profession of conversion."<sup>397</sup>

On several occasions, Robertson had used a strong magnet as an object lesson through which to preach the Gospel to children, with good effect, using it to illustrate the drawing power of Christ. He used it here on Sunday, 6 February, during the N.E. Valley mission. His sermon on Lamentations i.12 was based on the words "Is it nothing to you?" This sermon contained an appeal to people to respond to Christ, in view of His sufferings for us. "The audience was deeply moved as the speaker spoke to them of the sufferings of Jesus on their behalf, and pleaded with them to accept Christ. Mr. Stephens sang with telling effect several solos, which were listened to with breathless attention."<sup>398</sup>

On 22 February, they completed a week-long mission in the Caversham Presbyterian Church, near Dunedin. The next day there was a non-denominational Christian Convention in Dunedin, when Robertson spoke on "Walking with God," and "Working with God." "The spiritual songs sung by Mr. Stephens reached many a heart." On the 24th, they started a mission at Green Island. About thirty professed conversion on the Friday night, and fourteen more on the Sunday. Thirty children made a response after Robertson's "Magnet" address. The minister of the Green Island Church, Dr. Watts, remarked that "he

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<sup>396</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday 24 December, 1897. page 1251.

<sup>397</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 11 February, 1898. page 139.

<sup>398</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 18 February, 1898. page 163. – from the *Otago daily Times*.

would be glad to recommend the agents of the mission wherever he could.” This was followed by a united mission (Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational) in Port Chalmers, and then a mission in Waitola.<sup>399</sup>

The general response to the work of these men in New Zealand was that, late in April, a large public gathering met in Dunedin to organise a mission in a large central hall, and an organising committee was elected. The local evangelist, Duncan Wright, was chosen as secretary, and a local solicitor as the treasurer. A large choir was organised to help Stephens. In due course, when the mission took place, a few weeks later, the largest meetings were those which took place on the Sunday evenings. They were held in the Garrison Hall, which seats about 2,000 people.

A meeting of praise and thanksgiving was held on Monday, 9 May, in the Knox Church, chaired by the pastor. A long statement of appreciation was drawn up, and adopted by the meeting.<sup>400</sup>

Upon their return to Victoria, Robertson and Stephens were involved in missions at the West Melbourne Baptist Church ending on 29 June, and then at the Auburn Baptist Church. This was followed again by a mission in St. George’s Hall, Williamstown.<sup>401</sup>

Later on in the year, James Stephens began to work in Tasmania, and he seems to have remained working there for a year or more. In some instances he led missions by himself, in ways which relied upon the ministry of music more than had happened in the previous pattern which Robertson had used. In other instances he worked with another preacher. But he was still operating as an agent of the Evangelisation Society.

For example, he was involved with the Rev. Matthew G. Hart in a united mission organised by various of the churches of Launceston.<sup>402</sup>

Hart was at that time the minister of the Chalmers Presbyterian Church in Launceston, but he was an experienced and capable evangelist.

“Mr. Hart’s messages were marked by very great tenderness and pathos and winning power, and also by profound solemnity. They were backed up with peculiar appropriateness by the exquisite solo-

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<sup>399</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 18 March, 1898. page 259.

<sup>400</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 22 April, 1898. page 379, and 27 May, 1898. page 499.

<sup>401</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 8 July, 1898. page 643, 22 July. Page 690, and 5 August, 1898. page 739.

<sup>402</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 4 November, 1898. page 1067.

singing of Mr. Stephens. The power of the Holy Ghost was very plainly present both in the preaching and the singing of the gospel.” Visits were also made to some of the nearby mining locations, such as Mathinna.<sup>403</sup>

This was followed by a mission at the Launceston Baptist Tabernacle, lasting two weeks. The report is not clear as to whether Stephens did both the preaching and the singing in this case, but he worked in conjunction with the pastor – the Rev. G. Wainwright. This again was followed by a united mission in the town of Longford.<sup>404</sup>

During this time, Robert Robertson had gone back to New Zealand, but taking his son with him to contribute musically, and he was centring his activities around Auckland.

Stephens continued working in northern Tasmania through most of 1899. In these missions he was both the preacher and the singer. It began to become clear that missions which emphasised the musical side of the work had a better impact with some of the people more than happened in those missions where the preaching was the main emphasis. However, Stephens worked with the local pastors, and did not try to run the meetings by himself.

The Baptist, Wesleyan and Presbyterian churches in Deloraine ran a mission with James Stephens. Thirty-five made open professions of responding to Christ. “The singing of the Gospel by our brother went home to hearts of saved and unsaved, and was with power.” Stephens adapted Robertson’s “Magnet” address for his children’s meetings, with good effect.<sup>405</sup>

Another report said that, although the time of the year was not suitable (mid-January), still, “a number of our youths and maidens surrendered their lives to God. The singing of the Gospel formed the chief attraction, and proved very effective. The mission concluded with a sacred song service on ‘Phillip Phillips’”<sup>406</sup>

A mission in Latrobe followed the one in Deloraine, and this was followed again by meetings in Burnie, held in the United Free Methodist Church. After one week, the meetings were extended to seventeen days in all. “At all the meetings the Presence of the Holy Spirit was manifest in bringing souls to the Saviour, and Christians all

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<sup>403</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 25 November, 1898. page 1124.

<sup>404</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 16 December, 1898. page 1218.

<sup>405</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 3 February, 1899. page 114.

<sup>406</sup> *Spectator*, 10 February, 1899. page 153.

round have been quickened and richly blessed in the practical examples and evidences of the Master's love in the conversion of about twenty-five adults, as well as thirty of the scholars from the Sabbath-school professing Christ." The concluding "Phillip Phillips" song service was held in the Town Hall with a very large audience present. "Although the singer may be forgotten, many will long remember the song."<sup>407</sup>

After this, Stephens went to the Mount Bischoff mine (Waratah) for ten days, and then to Wynyard, Penguin and Sheffield. The Waratah mission produced twenty conversions amongst the children and a number of adults.<sup>408</sup>

Much later in the year, Stephens was preaching in the town of Perth for twelve days. The minister involved, the Rev. Henry Clark, reported on the number of conversions, and the blessing to Christians, and then said, "I desire also to state that personally I received much help and blessing as the result of the mission, with much gratitude to God, and to the Evangelisation Society for the help we have received."<sup>409</sup>

I could find no record of his activities through the year 1900, but it would seem that he probably began his work in New Zealand somewhere around that time. He worked in New Zealand for all the rest of the time he was working for the Society, so far as I have been able to find out.

In 1901, the only reference to his work that I could find was in a notice about the forthcoming annual meeting of the Society, which mentions in passing that Mr. J. H. Stephens was working in New Zealand.<sup>410</sup>

In 1902, the only information mentioned about the work of Stephens was that he was working in New Zealand, and that for some of the time he worked with Dr. Harry Grattan Guinness.<sup>411</sup>

Regarding 1903, a report of a mission at Warepa, New Zealand, was published. Led by Mr. J. H. Stephens, the mission was held from 8 February to 19 inclusive. "About twenty professed decision for Christ, and God's people were very much blessed." The Presbyterian

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<sup>407</sup> *Southern Cross*, 24 March, 1899. page 283, and 7 April, 1899. page 331.

<sup>408</sup> *Southern Cross*, 21 April, 1899. page 378.

<sup>409</sup> *Southern Cross*, 27 October, 1899. page 1075.

<sup>410</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 4 October, 1901. page 1111.

<sup>411</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 10 October, 1902. pages 1156 – 1158.

minister thought the Evangelisation Society was worthy of the sympathy and support of all branches of the Christian Church.<sup>412</sup>

A little later, Stephens led a ten days' mission in the village of Knapdale. "Every night but one there were decisions for Christ, and now that three months have elapsed we have had time to look into the results more carefully. I am pleased to say all but one seem hearty and true; that one is not so much a backslider as one who did not understand quite what she was doing in taking the step she took, and I have good hope of her yet. Over a score confessed Christ, and our C. E. has benefited largely. The church life has been deeply touched. We have great pleasure in looking back upon the meetings; they were conducted very wisely, and with great power. God was indeed with us every night."<sup>413</sup>

Later in the year, a passing reference is made to the fact that Stephens was conducting a mission in Dunedin.<sup>414</sup>

*The Southern Cross* in 1904 also contains a similar passing reference to Stephens being in New Zealand, doing mission work in the name of the Society.<sup>415</sup>

In 1905, *Southern Cross* reprinted a long and most interesting report from the New Zealand paper, *Outlook*, about a mission at Kaikorai, New Zealand. It was provided by the Rev. M. J. B. Bennett, B.A. "The mission has been a great revival. The mission services were held in the large Wakarai Hall, which seats about 600 people, and were well attended, large congregations assembling even on wet nights. The services, which were, throughout, under the direction of Mr. Stephens, were bright and hearty. A large united choir led the singing, which was always spirited and rousing. Mr. Stephens' solos were very effective, and his addresses were stirring and earnest appeals both to Christians and to the unsaved. The meetings were full of power, and the presence of the Spirit was often consciously felt throughout.

The results were remarkable. At every service there were conversions. Some notable scenes were witnessed. When the addresses commenced, the young men of the choir left the platform, and retired to pray. When it concluded, and the time for working came, they and others came forward to deal with the inquirers and the

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<sup>412</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 22 May, 1903. page 497.

<sup>413</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 11 September, 1903. page 888.

<sup>414</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 11 December, 1903. page 1191.

<sup>415</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 5 September, 1904. page 845.

unsaved. When the congregation had to be dismissed, the workers remained behind with those who were undecided. One night they continued until midnight, and had the reward of many converts. A young man left the hall one night without making a decision. The next night at eleven o'clock, his sister went in haste for the worker who had been dealing with him. He went and found him in great anxiety, and at midnight led him into peace.

The whole neighbourhood has felt the influence of the mission. This has been particularly noticeable at the Roslyn Woollen Mills. A noon-day prayer meeting was held at the mill for over twelve months, since the mission of last summer. The attendance at this meeting has been multiplied, and now numbers more than fifty daily. Visitors speak of the wonderful enthusiasm manifested at it. We learn that the whole mill has been influenced. Expected conversions have occurred. A young man, who one day had no thought of coming to Christ, found himself constrained the next day to tell his mates that he had yielded to Him. He did so, and was surprised to receive a word of cheer and encouragement from one he had thought most unlikely to give it.

Other places than Kaikorai have shared in the blessing, and the converts roll included names from the North-East Valley, Knox Church, Hanover Street Baptist Church, and elsewhere.

The cause of the great success of this mission is to be found in the prayer which has characterized both the mission and the preparation for it. The mission itself was an outcome of prayer and work for God. For more than a year, classes for the training of personal workers have been meeting for prayer and Bible study, and have been privately seeking to win souls, with much success. Out of these and other prayer meetings the present mission has sprung. Before the mission, special prayer meetings were held for several weeks, to wait upon God for the filling of the Spirit, and for some time one has been held daily at seven o'clock in the morning, to seek definite blessings. The workers were, in consequence, able to commence the mission full of faith and of the Holy Ghost.

Another cause of success has been the spirit of union. The various churches have co-operated in the work most cordially. Yet another cause has been the excellent organization and discipline. This has been chiefly effected by Mr. Stephens. The variety which his resourcefulness introduced into the meetings must also be recognised

as a factor in promoting success, as it added much to their interest. Noir must we omit the personality and earnestness of Mr. Stephens, and his faith and zeal and sound Scriptural teaching.

The good work is continuing. The various prayer meetings are still being held – the early morning prayer meeting, the one at the mill at midday, and others. Personal work is maintained. There is every reason to expect a constant stream of blessing. We believe that a real revival has commenced, and that if we respond to the call God is making to us, we shall witness many great victories gained by the Gospel in our midst.”<sup>416</sup>

The copies I searched for the year 1906 contained only a passing reference to the work of James H. Stephens. He was working in New Zealand, as was also the Rev. W. L. Morton, representing the Society.<sup>417</sup> Morton would only have been there for a relatively brief visit. Stephens had been there for four or five years, and stayed longer.

In 1907, there was a report about a mission conducted by Stephens at Wendon Valley, and in the little village of Waikaka. “Numbers came out on the Lord’s side for the first time, and the Lord’s people were quickened, and received much blessing. The addresses given by Mr. Stephens were powerful, and the interest deepened as the meetings went on.” This seems to apply to the Wendon Valley meetings.

“Also a very good mission was held at the Waikaka Town Hall. The hall was full each night, many coming from long distances. All said they were never in such meetings before in Waikaka. Three came out for Christ the first night, and several afterwards. The addresses were very faithful and very searching. The spiritual life has been very much deepened throughout the whole parish.”<sup>418</sup>

There had been a remarkable revival in Waikaka about 25 years previously, but it is not clear how many of the Waikaka people in 1907 would have been able to remember that time.<sup>419</sup>

In the literature I researched regarding 1908, there was a passing reference to the work of James H. Stephens in New Zealand. In this case it mentions that he worked at some stage of the year with an

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<sup>416</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 14 April, 1905. page 354.

<sup>417</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 10 August, 1906. page 755.

<sup>418</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 7 June, 1907. page 547.

<sup>419</sup> R. Evans and R. McKenzie. *Evangelical Revivals in New Zealand*. Paihia, BOI. Colcom Press and the authors. 1999. pages 58 – 62.

10. James H. Stephens.

evangelist named James Flanagan, and also with the touring Keswick preacher/teacher, the Rev. Charles Inwood when he was visiting New Zealand.<sup>420</sup>

I have no other information about the life or ministry of Mr. James H. Stephens, the evangelist who worked as a singing evangelist for more years than anyone else in the early years of the Evangelisation Society of Australasia.

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<sup>420</sup> *Southern Cross*, Part of the Comment on the E.S.A annual report. Page 1150.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### Mr. James Robertson - an Older Full Time Evangelist.

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James Robertson joined the permanent staff of the Evangelisation Society as a man in his senior years, and worked as an evangelist from July, 1897 through to 1905, when he died fairly suddenly during the conducting of a mission. So far as I can gather, he seems likely to have been an older brother to Robert Robertson.

Because some of the better known evangelists were being sent to other Australian colonies and to New Zealand, other men had to be introduced to the work.

The first mission conducted by James Robertson about which I have found any report or reference was conducted by him in the town of Nhill for two weeks. There was one profession of conversion during the mission, but several people professed to be stirred, or greatly helped, in their Christian lives through these meetings.

For example, "One Christian in particular, who has been instrumental in the conversion of scores during his ministerial labours in the adjoining district, and who, for three weeks, had been through the most despondent period of his ministry, acknowledged that God had spoken to him in an unmistakable manner during the services, and dispersed the cloud of despondency that had filled him with unrest for so long. Another stated that he had been induced four years previously, through the earnest appeals of the brother of the present missionary, to take up the Master's work again after a season of inaction, and had been greatly cheered, helped, and encouraged during the present mission."<sup>421</sup>

From 20 to 27 August Robertson held a mission in the Wesleyan Church, Morwell. Early in October he was preaching at a mission in the Cavendish Presbyterian Church. These missions do not seem to have been very fruitful so far as conversions were concerned, similar to

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<sup>421</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 2 July, 1897. page 651.

the mission at Nhill, but they brought good comfort and encouragement to many Christians.<sup>422</sup> The report expressed appreciation that Robertson emphasised the quality of conversion, and proper consecration, and that he did not present superficial messages.

From these glimpses we can see that James Robertson was being given the work in the more remote areas, where less response might occur, while the better known evangelists led the missions in other colonies or other countries, or in larger Victorian centres. Robert Robertson and James Stephens were in New Zealand. James Hood was preaching in suburban areas.

In 1898, the first mission about which we have any report, and which was led by James Robertson, lasted for six weeks at various places through the Cobram district. Again, there was not much evidence of conversions, but many Christians testified to the blessings they had received through the meetings.

Later in the year he was working through the Wimmera district, spending five weeks preaching at the various Baptist Mission stations. "At Willenabrina North, the first place visited by Mr. Robertson, there were splendid meetings, with five decisions for Christ, and three more in an additional afternoon meeting a few weeks later. At Galaquil East Christians were blessed and there were fifteen professed conversions. At Warracknabeal, the mission was a failure through lack of advertising, so far as conversions were concerned, but Christians were blessed. At Pepper Plains, "there was a week of glorious success." God's people were filled, and there were fourteen decisions for Christ. At Beulah, the Wesleyans, Presbyterians and Baptists combined, anticipations were exceeded, and thirteen decided for Christ. In the five weeks there had been fifty decisions. But he still had four other places to visit.<sup>423</sup>

There was an additional report about Beulah. The meetings were extended for a week, and five more conversions were listed. Robertson was to be at Hopetoun West for a week, starting on 23 October, and then go to Crymelon.<sup>424</sup>

Later again, Robertson led a mission of three days in the Langwarrin Wesleyan Church, and then for ten days at the Wesleyan Church at Hastings. Twenty-four of the Sunday school children made

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<sup>422</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 15 October, 1897. pages 990 and 1011.

<sup>423</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 21 October, 1898. page 1019.

<sup>424</sup> *Southern Cross*, 4 November, 1898. page 1087.

a profession for Christ, and the reporter was confident that most of them understood what they were doing.<sup>425</sup>

In 1899, no reports appeared until the middle of the year. The first was about a two weeks' mission at Waggarandall. The roads were bad and the evenings were cold, but the meetings were well attended. "During Mr. Robertson's mission much good was done, many souls were brought to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Lord's people have been greatly blessed."<sup>426</sup>

In August, he led a mission at the Stewarton Wesleyan Church for ten days. "The mission was a success. Several souls were led to trust Christ as their Saviour, while others were greatly blessed by Mr. Roberson's earnest preaching of the Gospel. The Sunday school has been re-opened since the mission."<sup>427</sup>

In October, James Robertson accompanied William H. Scurr to conduct missions in the Swan Hill district. Scurr would have led the missions in the main centres, while Robertson went to the smaller places. The Swan Hill people were very pleased that the Society was covering the wages of the mission preachers because, if the local people had been required to cover the costs, then only the financially better parts of the district could have been missioned. On this occasion, the poorer parts of the Mallee had also been covered. "The work, especially of Mr. Robertson, has been arduous. He has learned to live with a 'bacher,' drive miles after meetings in a stump-bumping buggy – for only the ploughs are stump jumpers – and in many ways to 'endure hardness.' The work has been splendidly successful, and is thorough. The influence of the evangelists in the homes where they stayed remains. The people have given what they can, and hope to give more; but after they have given their best, they cannot repay what the mission has cost in hard cash. The fact that the mission work is undenominational has been the means of attracting some outside the sphere of influence of our church, while at the same time one or two 'causes' have been practically made for our church, through the agency of the workers sent to us." The report had been written by the Wesleyan minister, the Rev. A. E. Gifford.<sup>428</sup>

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<sup>425</sup> *Southern Cross*, 16 December, 1898. page 1218.

<sup>426</sup> *Southern Cross*, 21 July, 1899. page 695.

<sup>427</sup> *Southern Cross*, 8 September, 1899. page 878.

<sup>428</sup> *Southern Cross*, 20 October, 1899. page 1043.

At the annual meeting of the Evangelisation Society, it was reported that sixty-seven missions had been conducted by the evangelists during the previous twelve months. Of these, 42 missions had been held in colonies other than Victoria. The 67 missions included 1,274 meetings, and the aggregate attendance was not less than 172,000.<sup>429</sup>

Despite reports about James Robertson's work being few and scattered, and that many of his missions were never covered in publications, there seems no reason to doubt that he was working full time for the Society.

The following winter, James Robertson conducted missions in Inverleigh, Teesdale, and Portland. Then came a mission at Newstead, after which he went to Yandoit, Chiltern and Rutherglen.

The mission at Yandoit was held under the auspices of the Yandoit branch of the Ballarat Women's Prayer Union. Prayer Unions exercised a powerful influence for the kingdom of God in the larger towns. The mission started on Monday, 21 May. Several young people were converted on the Friday evening. A gathering of Sunday school children on the Sunday afternoon saw a dozen of the senior children make a response. There were some interruptions on the following Tuesday evening which made the praying people redouble their efforts in prayer. The victory came on the last day. "...some forty or fifty standing up, testifying that they had received a blessing."<sup>430</sup>

The two weeks' mission in Rutherglen also provided us with a report. "He came to us somewhat unexpectedly, as far as the general public was concerned, and I am afraid that the due preparation work for his mission had not been carried out as fully as it should have been; but notwithstanding all these serious drawbacks, the mission has proved a great blessing to many. Mr. Robertson has given us each evening, earnest, faithful, and intelligent addresses, stimulating and convincing for the Christian and the unconverted alike. Mr. Robertson does not adopt the extravagant methods of some evangelists for exciting the emotional side of his hearers, and which too often leaves but a shallow impression behind, and dies away without much real results, but for deep, honest, faithful, and convincing home thrusts, his methods cannot be well surpassed. He has a splendid grip of the truth; or, as he prefers

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<sup>429</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 10 November, 1899. page 1135.

<sup>430</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 15 June, 1900. page 667.

to put it, “the truth has a grip of him.” And no one can listen without receiving much good. The result of such a mission cannot be easily tabulated, but each evening there were seekers, some for pardon, and others for consecration. Mr. Robertson’s method grows on one in its influence for good, and a gracious power is always present in his meetings; and I feel sure much lasting good has been accomplished, and many a Christian has been made to feel the need of being more out-and-out for Christ, and both saint and sinner have been brought under the powerful influence of the truth, for Mr. Robertson is no faddist, but a sound, earnest, exponent of the Gospel, and we will be very glad to see him this way again.”<sup>431</sup>

A little later Robertson visited the sparsely populated district of Mitiamo. “The Rev. H. M. C. Fowler writes:- ‘Pine Grove – The evangelist, Mr. James Robertson, commenced a mission here on Sunday, July 22<sup>nd</sup>, and it was a time of great spiritual power and blessing. Believers were wonderfully quickened, and sixteen souls were born into the kingdom of Jesus Christ during the fortnight. Terricks East – A week’s mission was held at this place, and a good work done, through Bro. Robertson, thirteen of our young people giving their hearts to the Lord Jesus Christ. Mitiamo – We had a glorious work here. Though the weather was cold, wet and dark, our people attended well, and received a great blessing. Bro. Robertson had a good story to tell, and he told it faithfully and well. Nine souls were converted during the week. Mologa West. – At this place the evangelist did not seem to be at one with the people, and no results were seen. Mologa East. – A week’s mission here closed the series. Glad to report that about seven new cases seems to have been the result. We are devoutly thankful for Mr. Robertson’s visit, and the good work done.’”<sup>432</sup>

November saw Robertson conducting missions at a series of places in the Raywood district, which included Summerfield, Yallock, Neilborough and Raywood. In this district missions had been held by James Robertson just a short time beforehand at Drummartin and Kamarooka.

“We have great cause for devout gratitude to God, on account of the results of these missions. Between forty and fifty adults professed

<sup>431</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 29 June, 1900. page 726.

<sup>432</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 21 September, 1900. page 1055.

conversion, besides about the same number of the scholars in our Sabbath-schools. In every place the power of God was manifest; but at Drummartin and Neilborough especially the Holy Spirit worked in a wonderful way, and many were led to the Saviour. At Neilborough we have a new church, opened last March, but without a single member. During the mission the church was filled night after night, and, as the old, old story was told out by the preacher, the hearts of the people were melted, and it was clear that many were brought under conviction of sin. Some resisted the Holy Ghost, and stubbornly refused to yield; but at the close of the mission we were able to rejoice over twenty-three, the majority of whom were young men, who had definitely accepted and confessed the Saviour. For all this we thank God and take courage. At our circuit quarterly meeting, which was held while the missions were in progress, a resolution was unanimously carried, placing on record our appreciation of the labours of Mr. Robertson, and of the good work done for the churches through your Society. Mr. Robertson has made a host of friends in this circuit, and wherever he goes he will be followed by the prayers of those who have learned to love him for his work's sake, and to admire him for the plain and faithful way in which he declares the whole council of God."<sup>433</sup>

During January, 1901, James Robertson worked with the Victorian Open-Air Mission conducting a mission in a tent which had been pitched at the South Melbourne tram terminus. The campaign started on Boxing Day and went on for three weeks. James was appointed leader, and was "assisted by W. H. Scurr, the Rev. Mr. Eager, members of the V.A.O.M., and others." I suspect that the so-called "Rev. Mr. Eager" was really the Rev. Alexander R. Edgar, a noted evangelist, who was at that time the minister in charge of the Wesleyan Central Methodist Mission at Wesley Church. The number of professed conversions was modest.<sup>434</sup>

Men like James Robertson were often asked to come back to places they had visited beforehand. In the winter of 1901 he went back to Kelly's Plains, about sixteen miles east of Beulah. "Mr. A. J. Billings, Baptist missionary at Beulah, writes:- 'Mr. Jas. Robertson, of the Evangelisation Society, held a ten days' mission at Kelly's Plains, sixteen miles east of Beulah. Although the nights were moonless and

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<sup>433</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 30 November, 1900. page 1335.

<sup>434</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 8 February, 1901. page 162.

wet, the people attended splendidly from within a radius of six miles round. God's Spirit worked quietly, yet wonderfully. Ten men and seven women confessed acceptance of Christ. We pray that the great Keeper of souls may guard and keep these souls, and continue to bless and assist their spiritual growth, and that he may continue to bless Mr. Robertson in his faithful, earnest proclamation of the glorious Gospel.'"<sup>435</sup>

Soon after that he was at Brentwood, and then held missions at Caniambo, and at Mary Hill, near Bendigo, which commenced on 29th September.<sup>436</sup>

In 1902 James Robertson worked hard through the year. His brother, Robert Robertson, resigned from the Society at the beginning of the year in order to work in New South Wales in the Tent Missions effort. Half way through 1902, W. H. Scurr also resigned, for the same reason.

The big Torrey – Alexander campaign occurred through April, 1902, and missions were conducted simultaneously in a wide range of suburban places for two weeks between 13th and 25th. James Robertson was involved leading the mission at Fairfield Park in those weeks. He conducted a string of missions in country areas after that. One of these was in the town of Wychitella.<sup>437</sup>

Later in the year, he led a mission in Pitfield Plains, and his daughter provided the solos, accompanying herself on an auto-harp.

“Mr. James Robertson, of the Evangelisaton Society, assisted by his daughter, has concluded a successful and soul-stirring mission at Pitfield Plains for three weeks. Mr. Robertson, in his plain and forcible manner, made it very plain to his varied audiences what our relationship should be, and from the first it was very evident that the Holy Spirit was working mightily in the hearts of the people, and, in answer to the prayers of God's people, over 100 professed conversion, nearly half that number being young men and women of the place, besides rousing the Christians to new life and energy. We are thankful to God for what has been accomplished, and sincerely pray His blessing may still rest upon us, and that the good work begun in our midst may continue to spread to those around us.

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<sup>435</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 9 August, 1901. page 887.

<sup>436</sup> *Southern Cross*, 27 September, 1901. page 1081, and 4 October, 1901. page 1111.

<sup>437</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 8 August, 1902. page 950.

Miss Robertson, accompanied by her auto-harp, with her sweet and appropriate singing reached the hearts of the people, and on Sunday afternoons, in her addresses to the children, which were listened to by all with very marked attention, her tact and simplicity were very attractive to the little ones.”<sup>438</sup> Another of his missions was in Wedderburn.

In 1903 there is no reason to believe that Robertson was not fully employed through the year. The only published report of his work in 1903 appeared right at the end of the year. “Mr. James Robertson has just concluded a most successful series of missions at Chiltern, Barnawartha, Cookinburra, and Valley No. 2. From first to last the interest was well sustained, and at each centre souls were brought out of darkness into God’s marvellous light. One especially gratifying characteristic of the services was the absence of sensationalism. The missionary’s appeals were powerful because based on the Word and winged by the Spirit of God. The effect of solid work like this is likely to be permanent.”<sup>439</sup>

The first report about James Robertson’s work in 1904 referred to the Beaufort Presbyterian Church. “A most successful series of mission meetings has just been held by Mr. Jas. Robertson, a sturdy ‘man of God’ and evangelist of the Evangelisation Society, in the Beaufort district, in connection with the Beaufort Presbyterian Church. Earnestness, fearlessness, and fidelity to the Gospel message, combined with a splendid self-sacrifice, marked Mr. Robertson’s work, and he and local workers were rejoiced to see an ingathering of some thirty souls for Jesus as a result; whilst Christian workers will long remember the inspiring impetus received as a result of Mr. Robertson’s visit.”<sup>440</sup>

There were passing references only to the missions he led in Waterloo and Nurrabiel, and a slightly longer note about his mission at Groke.

“Mr. George Bothwell writes: ‘Mr. Jas. Robertson has concluded his mission here. He has proved to be the right man. His straight putting of Bible truth before Christians has made them lay hold of their opportunities and responsibilities; whilst his plain and pointed preaching of repentance has convinced a number, and has led them to

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<sup>438</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 28 November, 1902. page 1331.

<sup>439</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 25 December, 1903. page 1241.

<sup>440</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 22 April, 1904. page 404.

Christ. Backsliders, also, have returned and many have been saved in the Sunday school. Mr. Robertson's work was thorough and sincere, and we shall be glad to have him again."<sup>441</sup>

Early in 1905 there was another reference to his visit to Goroke. "Some weeks ago successful evangelistic missions were reported in these columns as having been held by Mr. James Robertson, of the Evangelisation Society, in several parts of the Noradjuna Methodist Circuit. Mr. Robertson has since been labouring with his wonted energy, and with cheering results, in the north-west part of the same circuit, spending six weeks at Minimay, Lemon Springs, Goroke, Gymbowen, Neuarpur, and Grass Flat."<sup>442</sup>

In July, a letter was published from the Laanecoorie district in appreciation of Robertson's work.

To the Editor of the *Southern Cross*,

Sir, - We in the Laanecoorie district have been favoured with the services of Mr. James Robertson, one of the Evangelisation Society's agents, and it is only justice to say that never have we had the "old, old story" of Jesus and His love declared with more simplicity, fervour, fullness, and power, than by Mr. Robertson. Real, solid good has been done, that cannot be valued in terms of money; but I am sorry to say the Society will not benefit to the extent it should from the collections taken up here. These are "perilous times," times when worldly sports, gambling, racing, dancing, euchre-playing, and all such devices are rampant, and eating out the life of the Commonwealth; and it is just at such a time that the value of an outspoken and faithful declaration of the "whole counsel of God" ought to be realized by those who have escaped the "corruptions of the present evil world."

I understand that the Society's funds are by no means in a flourishing state, and that the "need" is causing considerable anxiety to the committee and secretary. I hope, therefore, if this should reach the eye of such well-wishers of Zion as have been blessed with a fair share of this world's goods, that the claims of this most valuable Society will not be overlooked. No money could be better spent; and it may be well to remember that "he gives twice who gives quickly." Yours,  
etc.,

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<sup>441</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 5 September, 1904. page 845.

<sup>442</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 3 February, 1905. page 113.

Laanecoorie, June 14.

H. Richardson.<sup>443</sup>

He also paid a winter visit to Ararat, and a brief account of it appeared in print, to say that several people had been converted, and much good was done amongst the Christians as well. Also there was a note that he was going to Nathalia to conduct a united mission.<sup>444</sup>

Soon after that he went to Avoca on mission work, but there was an entirely different report from that destination.

“All interested in evangelistic work will regret to hear of the somewhat sudden death of Mr. James Robertson, of the Evangelisation Society.

### **The Death of James Robertson.**

He was conducting a mission at Avoca, and was attacked on Tuesday, 17<sup>th</sup> inst.[October], by acute influenza, and confined to bed at the residence of the Rev. W. H. Holtham, with whom he was staying. In spite of the assiduous attention of his medical attendant, Mr. Robertson's time of rest and reward had come, and he passed the returnless portals on Monday last, at the age of sixty-three years. He was widely known and as widely respected and beloved. His remains were followed to their last resting place in the Melbourne General Cemetery, on Tuesday afternoon. “They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.”<sup>445</sup>

Mr. Charles Carter, the long-standing secretary of the Evangelisation Society, wrote to the editor of the *Southern Cross* on this sad matter.

### **An Evangelist Called Home.**

To the Editor of the Southern Cross.

Sir,- Whilst the committee were sitting this afternoon, the sad news reached us of the death of our beloved evangelist, Mr. Jas. Robertson, at Avoca. Mr. Robertson was conducting a mission at Natte Yallock, he caught a cold, pneumonia followed, and although every possible care and attention was given, he passed away this (Monday) morning into the presence of the King. We cannot speak too highly of the

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<sup>443</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 7 July, 1905. page 643.

<sup>444</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 18 August, 1905.

<sup>445</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 27 October, 1905. page 931.

loving-kindness of the Rev. W. H. Holtham, who had Mr. Robertson taken to his own house, and did all he possibly could for him. He was to have commenced a united mission at Avoca yesterday (Sunday). Mr. Owen C. Thomas has kindly taken his place. Mr. James Robertson has been engaged in the work of the Society during the past nine years – with the ever-increasing approval of the Committee. Very great blessing attended his labours, and the loss to the Society will be much felt. We bespeak the prayers of the readers of the “Southern Cross” for the bereaved wife and sorrowing family.

Yours sincerely, C. Carter.  
Secretary, Evangelisation Society of Australasia.<sup>446</sup>

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<sup>446</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday 27 October, 1905. page 1031.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

### **The Evangelisation Society and the 1902 Revival in Victoria**

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The Evangelisation Society of Victoria, and its descendent organisation, the Evangelisation Society of Australasia, seem to have inherited the benefit of the many prayers for revival which had ascended to heaven in the last two decades of the Nineteenth Century in Australia. It seems that the Lord used this organisation in bringing forth the central feature of the answer to these many prayers.

#### **Sources of Information.**

The main source of information about the relationship between the Evangelisation Society and the great 1902 evangelistic campaign in Victoria is from the copies of the *Southern Cross*. This paper deliberately made itself into the channel through which everyone could know what was happening. No doubt other sources of information exist, such as the normal Victorian newspapers. Several books were also written about the revival, based upon the experiences of those who were present.

The copy of the 1902 volume of *Southern Cross* in the Mitchell Library, Sydney, was not available to me, because its binding has disintegrated entirely, and a pile of loose pages is all that exists. No doubt many pages are missing from this pile, as all of the volumes in the Mitchell Library suffer from this defect. In my opinion, this is because the Sydney volumes were the editor's copies, and Dr. Fitchett seems to have made scrap books for himself by cutting and tearing pages from these volumes. The volumes in the State Library of Victoria are the only complete set, and these were not available to me, because Melbourne is a long way from Sydney.

I was kindly given a large computer file of materials from the 1902 volume which had been prepared by Dr. Geoffrey Treloar from the Mitchell Library pages. As a research professional historian, he was given access to these pages in a way that I was not. I am indebted

to him for this kindness. Much of the information in this paper comes from this material.

### **Attempts by the Evangelisation Society to Get Major Overseas Evangelists.**

The first signs of this appeared in 1892, when the President of the Evangelisation Society, the Hon. James Balfour, M.L.C., was travelling in England. He dined with Moody and Sankey, and urged upon them the desirability of an Australian visit. A petition to that effect had been organised amongst Australian Christians, which had been signed by 1,384 persons, and in the name of 229 churches in different parts of the country.<sup>447</sup> Sankey was happy to come with Moody.

Some months later, the Society had a letter from Moody explaining why he could not come. He had many pressing commitments which already filled his diary. He had invitations from many parts of the world, far more than he would ever be able to fulfil. Some of these were very pressing, such as visits to Canada, which could be fulfilled without having to travel long distances. Travelling to Australia would require some weeks lost in travelling. His health also was not the best.<sup>448</sup>

A second attempt was made to invite Moody to Australia in 1898. Again, the Secretary of the Evangelisation Society spread petition papers to churches and Christian leaders all around Australia, and these were in the process of being returned in the spring months. The proposed letter was published as part of the preparations, and read as follows:-

“Dear Sir,- On behalf of many evangelical Christians in Australasia and New Zealand, we address you, with the request that you will come to these lands also with the Gospel message which you have been enabled to publish in so many other places with demonstration of the Spirit and with power.

There are nearly four millions of people speaking the English tongue, and almost all of them of the Anglo-Saxon race; our largest cities containing from 3,000 to 400,000 inhabitants. Christian ordinances are widely established among us, and the outward observances of religion are well attended to; but it is felt by us that the

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<sup>447</sup> *Southern Cross*. 8 January, 1892. page 35, and 19 February, 1892.

<sup>448</sup> *Southern Cross*. 13 May, 1892. page 375.

ordinary means of grace would have increased influence if the stimulus of a fresh statement of the glorious Gospel were made to multitudes who have already heard it preached, without as yet having felt its power.

The necessary expenses attending such a visit have been virtually arranged for, and if you see your way to comply with our request the cost of your passage will be at once remitted.

We are aware that this is not the first similar request that you have had from Australia, and that you have not hitherto been led to comply; but we would point out to you that the present invitation comes with a united voice from all the colonies, and from all evangelical denominations, and would assure you that it is accompanied by many prayers to God, that His Spirit may lead you here, and make your coming the means of widespread blessing.”

The signature would have been that of Charles Carter, the Secretary of the Evangelisation Society of Australasia.<sup>449</sup>

Eventually the letter was posted, accompanied by 454 petition papers signed by 15,831 people, who were chiefly Christian workers – summarised as follows:-

Victoria.	196 churches.	6.538 signatures.
New South Wales.	40 churches.	1,038 signatures.
South Australia.	26 churches.	1,159 signatures.
Queensland.	52 churches.	1,178 signatures.
West Australia.	25 churches.	579 signatures.
New Zealand.	87 churches.	3.979 signatures.
Tasmania.	28 churches.	697 signatures. <sup>450</sup>

Moody's reply arrived in due course, and was published. It indicated that the reason for his refusal to come to Australia was mainly due to his poor health. He had been advised by his doctor not to consider such a strenuous activity.<sup>451</sup> Indeed, Moody died before the end of that year.

The third and successful attempt to arrange the visit of an overseas evangelist came in 1901, when two members of the Executive of the Society went to England in order to find and invite a suitable evangelist to visit Melbourne. These two men were Mr. G. P. Barber and Dr. William Warren. Dr. Warren had been a medical practitioner

<sup>449</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 16 September, 1898. page 894.

<sup>450</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 30 December, 1898. page 1255.

<sup>451</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday 21 April, 1899. page 374.

in Melbourne for some years, but was in the process of moving his practice to London. After not being successful in finding an evangelist in England about whom they felt the calling of God, they travelled across to the United States. They visited Chicago, and came to the Moody Bible Institute, and to Moody's Church. Here they heard and met Moody's chosen successor, the Rev. R. A. Torrey, a Congregational minister, who was both Principal of the Bible Institute, and pastor of the Church.

Apparently, when Moody received the second invitation to visit Australia, he had made the comment to Torrey, "If I were you, I should take a preaching tour through Japan, China and Australia."<sup>452</sup>

Very soon after Moody's death, on 22 December, 1899, steps were taken amongst the staff and students of the Moody Church and Bible Institute to have a weekly prayer meeting for world-wide revival. The prayer was answered to some degree through 1900 in the evangelistic outreach at the Moody Church itself, and also news came of a modest movement in Japan, but it was not as extensive as they had hoped to see.

"The prayer meetings had continued for about a year when at one of the smaller gatherings after the regular meeting Torrey was led to utter spontaneously the strangest and most remarkable prayer of his life. 'I was led to ask God that He would send me around the world preaching the Gospel, and give me to see thousands saved in China, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Tasmania, India, England, Scotland, Ireland, Germany, France and Switzerland.'"

Those who heard this prayer were astonished at it, wondering how Torrey could manage to do such a thing when he was so heavily committed in Chicago.

It was shortly after this that Torrey was approached by Barber and Warren, who were very confident that God had led them in their choice of whom to ask.<sup>453</sup>

A few months later, during October, 1901, Torrey was attending a Bible Conference in St. Louis, "a cable arrived from Melbourne asking him to reply at once whether he could begin meetings in the [northern] spring of the following year. Torrey withdrew from the conference for a time of prayer and, having received clear guidance in

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<sup>452</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 20 December, 1901. page 1410.

<sup>453</sup> Roger Martin. *R. A. Torrey: Apostle of Certainty*. Murfreesboro, TN. Sword of the Lord Publishers. 1976. page 132.

the matter, cabled the one-word reply ‘Yes.’ How quickly the mantle fell from Elijah to Elisha!”<sup>454</sup>

In due course, Charles Carter received a letter from Torrey, which said in part, “Now about the meetings in Australia. It is impossible to move a great city in a week or two, and produce satisfactory results. If we can stir one city, the fire will spread to smaller ones. As a general plan of campaign, I should expect to preach in the evening to the unsaved; in the afternoon to have a systematic course of Bible teaching on the great fundamental doctrines, including such subjects as prayer, the present work of the Holy Spirit, the Atonement, etc. I think it would be well also to have meetings for the children. I do not know that I should be able to conduct very many of these personally; but Mrs. Torrey would help in them, and could conduct wherever it was necessary. I wish we also might have a prayer-meeting every day. We can expect no satisfactory or permanent results unless there is a great deal of prayer among the people. We are praying and expecting that the whole country will be moved.

God is wonderfully blessing us at the church at this present time and in the Institute. Last Sunday was a day of great power. Many Christians came out into a deeper experience of God’s grace, and many unsaved ones were brought to Christ.

I will let you know as soon as possible the exact date of my arrival in Melbourne. Of course, we shall want to begin at once.”<sup>455</sup>

Soon after receiving the cable reply from Torrey, the Evangelisation Society held its annual meeting in the Baptist Church, Collins Street, Melbourne, with the Rev. Canon Digby Berry in the chair. Charles Carter had, himself, only just returned from a trip to England, and had much to say about his journey. The financial statement for the previous year showed a deficit of 82 pounds 15 shillings, and paying the Rev. R. A. Torrey’s fare to Australia would cost another one hundred pounds. One of the Society’s Executive members, James Griffiths, gave 25 pounds towards the funds, and a Christmas box gift of five pounds each to the Society’s evangelists.

The arrangement between R. A. Torrey and the Evangelisation Society was that he would conduct missions for them for a period of five months.

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<sup>454</sup> Ibid. page 133.

<sup>455</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 20 December, 1901. page 1410.

**Mr. William Edgar Geil.**

About the same time as these Evangelisation Society activities, a wealthy American layman, Mr. W. Edgar Geil, very keen on evangelism and missionary work, was in Melbourne, and had an interview with the Rev. S. Pearce Carey. A meeting of the interdenominational societies was arranged and met with him, and he addressed them about the possibilities of a large-scale mission. It was after this point that they heard of the activities of the Evangelisation Society, and the two sources then combined their efforts.<sup>456</sup>

In order to lay the basis for the organisational structure for the coming mission, the Evangelisation Society joined forces with the Council of Churches and the Evangelical Church Association. The Council of Churches included representatives of all the Protestant denominations, as well as the Anglicans. The Evangelical Church Association was an Anglican missionary organisation, which later became the Church Missionary Society in Australia. This combined body was later joined by the Y.M.C.A., the Salvation Army, the Y.P.S. Christian Endeavour Union, the Open-Air mission, the City Mission, and the Sunday-school Union. This organisation chose four secretaries to do all the basic work. These were the Rev. Edward Harris, a Churches of Christ minister; Mr. Charles Carter, secretary of the Evangelisation Society; Mr J.J. Virgo, travelling secretary of the Australasian Y.M.C.A., and Mr. J.C. Langley, secretary of the Evangelical Church Association.

The Rev. S. Pearce Carey, of the Collins Street Baptist Church, was elected as chairman, but after the first meeting his health was so poor that he could do nothing until the mission was over.

A public meeting of interested people was called late in January, 1902, with about 100 people present, where all the denominations were liberally represented. The secretaries presented reports to this meeting.

Each participating congregation was asked to form a prayer band with a good captain, and a series of house prayer meetings were to be arranged for seven weeks before the mission began. This plan arose from a suggestion made by Edgar Geil.

Two weeks of missions were to be arranged in localities around Melbourne, followed by larger central meetings. So a list of centres

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<sup>456</sup> *Southern Cross*. 28 March, 1902. page 353.

was presented where these local missions might be held during the first two weeks.

The cost of the whole mission would be great, “but a number of Christian gentlemen had already promised help, and it was hoped that sufficient funds would be forthcoming before the Mission, to avoid the necessity of taking up collections at the meetings.”<sup>457</sup> Also, free will offerings were to be taken at each house meeting towards the costs of the mission.

The number of churches around suburban Melbourne which became involved in this campaign were 27 Anglican churches, 59 Methodist churches, 40 Presbyterian churches, 37 Baptist churches, 26 Congregational churches, 24 divisions in the Salvation Army, and one Lutheran church.<sup>458</sup>

The house meetings proceeded, and from 2,000 to 2,500 separate meetings were being held each week, with from six to twenty people at each meeting. By the middle of April it was estimated that an aggregate of 117,000 people had attended 16,800 home prayer meetings. Simply the magnitude of this achievement helped to create an optimistic feeling in many people that the Lord would strongly answer these prayers.<sup>459</sup>

The secretary of the Y.M.C.A., Mr. J. J. Virgo, was chosen to lead the musical aspect of the mission meetings in Melbourne, and to train and lead the choir. He was a talented musician and soloist. Early in April, 1902, however, Charles M. Alexander arrived in Melbourne unaccompanied and unexpected. Torrey had invited him to come as soloist and song-leader, but had not passed on this information to the organisers in Melbourne. Alexander met two of the secretaries and explained why he had come. He also described his long experience as song leader in evangelistic work. The conflict was quickly resolved by Virgo volunteering to step aside from his appointment.

As it happened, Alexander was also very talented. After events seemed to show that he was at the point in his career where an opening such as this would bring out his full usefulness in the work of God.

By March, 1902, a list of the places where suburban missions were to be held was published, along with the names of the evangelists who were to lead these missions. Finally, the dates were published

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<sup>457</sup> *Australian Christian World*, 13 December, 1901. page 3.

<sup>458</sup> *Southern Cross*. 28 March, 1902. page 353.

<sup>459</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 18 April, 1902. page 423.

when the suburban missions would be held. The missions were to start on Sunday, 13th April, and generally they were to end on 25th April.

### **The Evangelists of the Society.**

As the end of 1901 approached, the Evangelisation Society employed four evangelists on a regular basis. These were Robert Robertson, William H. Scurr, James Robertson, and James H. Stephens. Stephens spent all of his time working in New Zealand.

At the end of the year, Robert Robertson resigned from the Society, in order to take up work in New South Wales for the Committee in Sydney which was organising and running the Tent Missions in the N.S.W. country towns. His work in this new sphere began immediately in January, 1902, although it was always understood that he would be available to preach in the Melbourne missions in April.

As the Simultaneous Missions approached, in April, 1902, a list of Australian preachers was published which showed who would conduct the various missions in suburban Melbourne. This list showed that both Robert Robertson and James Robertson were listed to lead missions, but their names were listed as Presbyterian preachers. W. H. Scurr was listed simply as an evangelist, along with the visiting American preachers from overseas, Torrey and Geil.

The list of preachers also included a former Society evangelist, in the person of the Rev. A. J. Clarke, who had been the Society's first full time evangelist. It also included another preacher, the Rev. W. Lockhart Morton, who began to lead missions for the Society after April, 1902. Both of these men lived in South Australia.

Bearing in mind these peculiarities, 13 of the evangelists for April were Baptists, 11 were Methodists, 9 were Presbyterians, 9 were Anglicans, 2 were Congregationalists, and one each came from Brethren assemblies and the Salvation Army. Torrey, Geil and Scurr were simply "evangelists."<sup>460</sup>

### **The Melbourne Mission.**

The mission followed the pattern suggested by Torrey. A city could not be moved in a week or two. So the mission consisted of four weeks of concentrated activity. The two weeks of suburban meetings

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<sup>460</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 11 April, 1902. page 409.

were followed by two more weeks in a central location. The main meetings attempting to reach the unsaved were held in the evenings, in the huge Exhibition Building, which seated around 8,000 people, but which had much poorer acoustic qualities. There were also midday meetings in the Melbourne Town Hall and other places, which were also crowded to excess. The meetings created an impact which created a spreading wave of influence affecting the following meetings in the countryside. This impact seemed to extend well into the coming weeks and months, and was the main reason why the whole exercise was classed as a revival. Of course, the praying people expected there to be a revival flowing from the meetings, because there was a strong sense expectation coming through the prayer meetings.

It is not my purpose here to describe the mission meetings in detail. A separate and much longer paper would be required to do this. Here we are concerned more simply with the relationship between the coming of the revival and the workings of the Evangelisation Society.

Alexander's personality and his ability as a song writer and publisher seemed to blossom in this situation. He made an enormous contribution to evangelicalism in Australia over the next five decades and more.

### **The Country Missions.**

Over the next few months, Torrey and Alexander conducted missions in Victorian country towns. The first of these was held in Warrnambool, starting on 11 May. Then there followed missions in Geelong, starting on 24 May, Ballarat on 1 June, Bendigo on 8 June, then Maryborough, and finally Terang. In many cases, other evangelists led preliminary meetings before the Americans arrived. But many satellite missions in smaller places were also held. The great team of ministers who were involved in the preaching work for the simultaneous missions around Melbourne could not be maintained for the country missions, so most of the work had to be shouldered by the Evangelisation Society, with the help of a small number of country ministers.

People travelled from far and near to attend some of these meetings, and many hundreds of conversions were reported. Each of these missions was interesting in its own way. For example,

Maryborough was not such a large place, but people came from all around, and 600 conversions were recorded.

By the time the Melbourne mission concluded, the Society had applications for missions from 117 country places. By the Society's Annual Meeting in October, "over seventy places have been supplied; these include Horsham, Echuca, Numurkah, Kyneton, Kerang, and other important towns, besides small centres of population." James Robertson worked hard at this, as did the Rev. W. Lockhart Morton, and the Rev. Edward Isaac.<sup>461</sup>

A new staff evangelist arrived from England. This was Mr. Julian Neale, who was also quickly involved, and also Mr. R. Thompson. Mr. Alex. Black, who had been an evangelist linked to the Victorian Open-air Mission, joined the Society's staff in November. A. J. Black's first mission for the Society was at Swan Hill.

William H. Scurr had gone to New South Wales by the middle of 1902, and had severed his links with the Society after thirteen years.

So, with the loss of Robertson and Scurr, and the arrival of Black, Thompson and Neale, to join James Robertson, a radical change took place in the staff of the Society, and these workers allowed the Society's activities to continue through the remainder of 1902, and into the next few years.

After leading the country missions, Torrey and Alexander visited Hobart and Launceston. They then returned for another brief visit to Ballarat. Then came their visit to New South Wales. They arrived in Sydney on 5 August. This was followed by a visit of one month only to New Zealand. Because so little time was available for work in New Zealand, missions were held in only three places – Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin. After this, Torrey and Alexander left for India, which was the next place to be mentioned in Torrey's remarkable prayer.

The Annual General Meeting of the Evangelisation Society, in October, 1902, was a combined meeting wherein the results of the mission were evaluated by the Secretary of the Society, and it also served as a valedictory meeting to Reuben Torrey and Charles Alexander, at which they were both present, and spoke (or sang) to both the main meeting, and the overflow meeting.

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<sup>461</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 10 October, 1902. pages 1156 – 8.

Charles Carter, the E.S.A. secretary, said:- “Your Committee rejoices in being able to report that the year which has just concluded has been the most successful one in the history of the Society. It began in a time of general depression: all the churches had the same experience; conversions were few, worldly conformity among church members was increasingly manifest, and the features which marked the Church in Laodicea were only too plainly the features which marked the Churches in Victoria. Faithful men in different parts of the State were deeply impressed with the need for revival of spiritual life, and unknown to each other they made it a subject of earnest prayer. These prayers were answered, and today we give thanks to God for multitudes who have been led to listen and to embrace the Gospel of His grace.

The general consciousness of the need of revival had led other organisations to move in a similar direction to ourselves; Mr. Geil was invited to undertake a Mission among us, and ultimately the council of Churches and the Evangelical Church Association joined with our Society in forming a three-fold cord to carry out the work.”

After the secretary had finished, the Rev. R. A. Torrey gave his valedictory address, which was on the advantages of personal work. It began:- “It gives me wonderful pleasure to have this opportunity of speaking at the annual meeting of the Evangelisation Society of Australasia, and I want to tell you tonight how to turn this whole audience into one great Evangelisation Society. I want to tell you how to evangelise Melbourne, and every city and village in Australasia. You will find the secret in John i: 41, 42: ‘He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, “We have found the Messiah,” and he brought him to Jesus.’”

Following this address, compliments were paid to the *Southern Cross* and its editor, the Rev. Dr. W. H. Fitchett, for the major role this paper had played in promoting the Mission, and in spreading news of it far and wide. Then there was a series of votes of thanks. The first was to Torrey and Alexander for their unselfish and tireless energy and zeal, and dedicated services through the mission, moved by Dr. Fitchett, and seconded by Brigadier Hendry of the Salvation Army. The second vote of thanks was to the Avenue Church in Chicago, for releasing Mr. Torrey from his work as pastor of this large church, so that he could come to Australia for such a period of time. This motion

was moved by the Rev. C. H. Nash, and was seconded by Mr. G. P. Barber, who had first given the invitation to Torrey in mid- 1901.<sup>462</sup>

Overall, the evening was a very happy and eventful one.

As the preparations were being made for the first Chapman – Alexander Campaign in 1909, the Evangelisation Society was not directly involved in the same way as in 1902. There was a much more widely based organisation behind every stage of the setting up and running the mission. The individuals who composed the Executive of the Evangelisation Society were again heavily involved. Charles Carter was again one of the main secretaries, James Balfour was again heavily involved, and a collage of the portraits of the Executive members of the Evangelisation Society appeared in the *Southern Cross*.<sup>463</sup>

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<sup>462</sup> Ibid.

<sup>463</sup> *Southern Cross*. 1909. page 919.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

### The Rev. William Lockhart Morton - a Remarkable Ministry with Many Facets.

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The Rev. W. Lockhart Morton was a Presbyterian minister, whose early years of ministry were spent in Victoria, but who moved to South Australia from 1893 to 1920. He figures in the history of the Evangelisation Society because he conducted a number of missions under the auspices of the Society, especially in the first decade of the Twentieth Century, although he was never employed by the Society.

#### Sources of Information.

Originally I became interested in W. Lockhart Morton because of the missions he conducted for the Society. But some of his other interests and activities soon became apparent as the search for information proceeded. I then discovered that Morton had written a book about two of these other interests, which were very important to him.<sup>464</sup>

Then I stumbled across the fact that Dr. Darrell Paproth had written two substantial historical articles about Morton, and had made some preparations for writing a biography about him. The first article had been published in 2001, whereas the other article had not been published. The project for which it was prepared did not eventuate.<sup>465</sup> The two articles have a good degree of similarity. Dr. Paproth very kindly made these articles available to me, along with some other materials he had prepared for the possible biography. Clearly, I am indebted to him for this wealth of information. Dr. Paproth's work did not include any details about the work Morton did for the Evangelisation Society. My work, as a result, was largely reduced to

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<sup>464</sup> W. Lockhart Morton, *Drifting Wreckage*. A Story of Rescue in Two Parts. London. Hodder and Stoughton. Date probably 1913.

<sup>465</sup> Darrell Paproth. "Faith Missions, Personality and Leadership: William Lockhart Morton and Angas College." In *Lucas: An Evangelical History Review*. Sydney. Evangelical History Association of Australia. Nos 27 & 28, June and December 2000, pages 64 – 89. (2001.)

Darrell Paproth. *W. Lockhart Morton: Parish Ministry, Rescue Work, and Missions*. (unpublished.)

digging for more material about Morton's links to the Evangelisation Society, which was almost a mere detail in Morton's life, when we consider all the other areas that Dr. Paproth had explored, or had listed to be explored.

While some attention will be given in this article to the other aspects of Morton's life, our main interest will centre around his work for the Society, as far as this can be discovered. The reader is recommended to consult Dr. Paproth's articles to learn much more about Lockhart Morton's personality and ministry than what has been set out here.

### **Early Years and Early Ministry.**

Morton was born in the Loddon River area of Northern Victoria in 1851, which coincided with the beginnings of the Gold Rush.

His father, also William Lockhart Morton, was born in Scotland in 1820, and studied engineering in Glasgow. In 1842 there was a severe depression in Scotland, and like many others, he quit his studies, and migrated to the Antipodes, looking for new opportunities. In 1849 he married Mary Ann Stone, and in 1851 their first son was born on the Loddon River. There were three other sons born later.<sup>466</sup>

Despite having an early interest in becoming wealthy by practicing law, William Lockhart Morton Junior entered the Presbyterian Theological Hall at Ormond College in Melbourne, and studied for three years, being ordained in 1875. Also in 1875 he married Elizabeth Atchison Elder. They were to be blessed with five daughters. These were Mary Nairne Morton, born in Dandenong, 1876; Elizabeth Aitcheson Morton, born in Camperdown, 1879; Margaret Scott Morton, born in 1882, while the family was still living at Camperdown; Lilian Lockhart Morton, born in Ballarat, 1884; Agnes Jessie Morton, also born in Ballarat, 1887.

His first settlement was at Berwick. The Dandenong area had been associated at first with the Presbyterian work at Brighton, and then with Cranbourne. But when the charge became vacant in 1876, a new charge was created combining Berwick and Dandenong, and Morton was offered a call to this charge. He may perhaps have done some supply work there in the previous several months. He was inducted on 5 July, 1876, and lived at Berwick. These places are now

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<sup>466</sup> Paproth cites Morton Senior's autobiography, *Adventures of a Pioneer*. Queensbury Hill Press. 1978.

well established and busy suburbs of Melbourne, but at that time they were small country villages with very bad roads.

In 1878, he received and accepted a call to the Camperdown charge, in the Western District of Victoria, where he stayed for five years. The first instance where the Morton family provided prolonged help to a man in need occurred around the time when the Mortons left Berwick. They invited this man to move to Camperdown with them as an odd-job helper around the house. He eventually declared himself for Christ. When Morton moved away from Camperdown, this man stayed in the country town as the helper with the minister who had come as Morton's assistant.

### **His Years in Ballarat.**

In 1883 Morton was invited to move to the Ebenezer Presbyterian Church in Ballarat. Thus he was introduced to the range of activities and personal problems which were peculiar to this bustling commercial metropolis which arose following major discoveries of gold 30 years beforehand.<sup>467</sup>

Ballarat at that time had a population of about 40,000, and was a strong centre of fervid evangelicalism. There had been a history of revivals in Ballarat which went back to the very early days of white settlement. Revivals had occurred in Ballarat under the preaching of the Rev. Joseph Dare, and as part of the widespread revival in 1859. The American evangelist, "California" Taylor visited Ballarat in 1863, and again six years later. In 1867, another revival had occurred under the ministry of the famous Yorkshire evangelist, Matthew Burnett, which included (amongst many others) the conversions of a number of noted drunkards. In 1881, there had been a major revival, with the arrival of the Rev. A. R. Edgar as the assistant Wesleyan minister, and with the visit of the American Methodist holiness preacher, the Rev. John S. Inskip, which would have affected all the churches.<sup>468</sup> This list of revivals in Ballarat is by no means complete. Because of the emphasis on mining, many of the local people had come from Cornwall, and had brought their own enthusiastic form of Methodism with them, because of the many revivals which had occurred there

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<sup>467</sup> Morton. *Drifting Wreckage*. pages xxiii to xxviii.

<sup>468</sup> See relevant sections of my books *Early Evangelical Revivals in Australia* (2000); *Evangelism and Revival in Australia, 1880-1914* (2005), and my biography of *Matthew Burnett, the Yorkshire Evangelist* (2010).

earlier in the century. Cornish revivals tended to have certain features which characterised them, as opposed to others.

Morton came into this heritage in 1883, and then had direct experience of some of it. 1884 was noted for the visit to Ballarat of the lady evangelist, Mrs. Margaret Hampson, whose meetings attracted great attention, and were very surprisingly successful. The Rev. John MacNeil was another visitor, and being a Presbyterian, he probably conducted evangelistic meetings in the Ebenezer Church. In 1886, the famous German/English Brethren leader, Mr. George Muller, also visited Ballarat, and his visit and example of faith had a major affect on Morton. Morton also became involved in some evangelistic meetings with Dr. Harry Grattan Guinness in the Alfred Hall.

Amongst all the prosperity, however, there were many people who lost their way, lost whatever riches they might have had, became captives of the “demon drink,” and became derelicts. Some of these people were well educated, or might have had upper class connections in England, and still had signs of a more genteel lifestyle underneath their rags. There were already a number of organisations and institutions in Ballarat to cater for people like this, but Morton met certain examples of this kind of broken life which affected him much more closely, and which came to him like a calling from God.

It was during the meetings in Ballarat led by Dr. Guinness that, one night, a man followed Morton home, in need of help, food and accommodation. The usual response to such people was to give them a note to the proprietor of a local boarding house, to indicate that the Church would pay the bill for this man to stay for a certain time. In this case, the help did not succeed, because the conviviality at the boarding house only led him further into drink. So, it was arranged for this man to move into a room at the Manse, in order to keep him away from the company which would cause his further downfall. The house-rules were explained, and this situation provided the help that the man needed.

Other men in similar need were met in fairly quick succession, and before long, Morton rented a house for these men to live in, under his direct supervision. He called the cottage “Hope Lodge.” This kind of ministry expanded steadily in Ballarat, and went with Morton on his future moves, until it quietly died about twenty years later, when Morton’s main interest had changed to that of training missionaries for

foreign missionary service. One peculiarity of the men who usually came under Morton's influence in this way was that they were generally better educated, or had useful qualifications or experience.<sup>469</sup>

It was not long before more than one cottage was required. Morton's book *Drifting Wreckage*, gives many pen portraits of the men who were helped in this way. The expenses for this work were received in answer to prayer, similar to the "faith principle" that was used for many years by George Muller, and by Hudson Taylor.

Perhaps his first contact with the Evangelisation Society occurred in August and September, 1886, when the Rev. A. J. Clarke conducted missions in several locations around Ballarat. Both John MacNeil and Dr. Guinness were in town around this time, as well.<sup>470</sup> The various Prayer Unions in Ballarat were very strong, and were active in support of these missions.

Near the end of 1886, Ebenezer Presbyterian Church was reported as having 260 members, of whom 66 had been added during the year. There were 300 children in the Sunday School, with an average attendance of 270, and 28 teachers.<sup>471</sup>

The following year, Edward Hurditch conducted a mission in the Ebenezer Church. This began on 13 April, 1887. Hurditch worked for the Evangelisation Society for a relatively short time through 1887, whilst on leave from the London Evangelization Society for health reasons. The mission lasted for ten days, with the evening services in the church, afternoon Bible readings being held in the Welsh Church.<sup>472</sup>

Later in 1887, the famous lady evangelist, Mrs. Emilia Baeyertz, led a mission in the Ebenezer Church. This commenced on Sunday, 18th September, and continued for two weeks. Over 250 people were dealt with in the inquiry room, which would have benefited a number of the churches.<sup>473</sup>

By August, 1888, the Hope Lodge buildings contained 25 rooms with 27 lodgers. Since the operation had started in June, 1886, 134 men had been helped, and a leaflet was published describing the work and some of their successes.<sup>474</sup>

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<sup>469</sup> *Southern Cross*. 2 July, 1886, page 16. Also W. L. Morton. *Drifting Wreckage*. pages 6 – 11.

<sup>470</sup> *Southern Cross*. 13 August, 1886. page 14, and 3 September, 1886. page 14.

<sup>471</sup> *Southern Cross*. 22 October, 1886. page 14.

<sup>472</sup> *Southern Cross*. 29 April, 1887. page 335.

<sup>473</sup> *Southern Cross*. 11 November, 1887. page 895. Also my book on Emilia Baeyertz, page 203.

<sup>474</sup> *Southern Cross*. 10 August, 1888. page 635.

Morton continued his ministry in the Ebenezer Church, Ballarat, until 1889.

George Clarke, the famous athlete, who was preaching in various parts of Victoria for the Centennial Mission, was in Ballarat for his main mission in August, 1888, but he visited again for several days in the later part of November. On 28th November, Morton organised a special gathering in support of Hope Lodge, in the Assembly Hall, at which George Clarke spoke. Morton described what he was doing, and a collection amounted to one hundred pounds.<sup>475</sup>

December, 1888, saw also the third annual session of the Victorian Prophetic Conference in the Freemasons' Hall. It included the theme of "The Practical Relation of Prophetic Truth to Evangelistic Work." Dean Macartney was unable to be present, but the day was chaired by his son, the Rev. H. B. Macartney, and speakers included Canon Langley, Digby Berry, Henry Varley, Alfred Bird and W. L. Morton. This emphasises the wide spread influence of Dispensational teaching amongst the various denominations at that time.<sup>476</sup>

### **Malvern.**

In 1889, Morton was invited to move to the Malvern Presbyterian Church. Although he had previously been asked to move to Melbourne to be involved in "rescue work," and had declined, on this occasion he moved to the city where greater opportunities existed. The Malvern people were happy for him to continue with his rescue activities, so "Hope Lodge" was slowly transferred to several locations around the larger city.

In Malvern, Morton's friendship with H. B. Macartney developed further. This had the effect of increasing his interest in foreign missions. In 1889, four men met to pray about missionary work in China. These four were the Rev. H. B. Macartney, his curate, the Rev. C. H. Parsons, also a Baptist minister, the Rev. Alfred Bird, and W. L. Morton. The missionary needs of China had been introduced to people in Melbourne by Miss Mary Reed of Tasmania, who went to China in 1888, but had to return the next year for health reasons, and by the Rev. George Nicholls, a missionary to China who was sent to Australia to recover after an illness. "On 21 May, 1890, Macartney received a

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<sup>475</sup> *Southern Cross*. 7 December, 1888. page 975.

<sup>476</sup> *Southern Cross*. 21 December, 1888. page 1015.

cablegram from Hudson Taylor asking him to form an Australian Council for the China Inland Mission in Australia.”<sup>477</sup>

The Council was formed the next day, and soon had eight people ready to be missionary candidates. The Council invited Taylor to visit Australia. “In October, in what was a watershed event in the history of Australian missions, Taylor spoke to a crowd of 3,000 at the Melbourne Town Hall; and on 20 November 1890 eight women and four men sailed from Sydney with him.”<sup>478</sup>

Morton offered himself to go as a missionary to China, but Taylor told him to stay at home and train younger people for missionary work. But, before he could do anything about this, Dr. William Warren and his wife started a Missionary Training Home in Kew in 1891. So, Morton was not able to follow this line immediately.

Another prayer meeting in which he was involved whilst he lived in Malvern was the Melbourne Ministers Prayer Group, centring around the Rev. John MacNeil, which formed in August, 1889, to pray for a great revival. For a year or so, Morton was the secretary of this group.<sup>479</sup>

Some years later, the following record was published about his early links with this prayer group.

“The Rev. Lockhart Morton, of Adelaide, spoke for the Presbyterian missionaries. ‘Thirteen years ago,’ he said, ‘dear John MacNeil, of sainted memory, Mr. Macartney, of Caulfield, Mr. Harris, one of our secretaries, and Mr. Bird, met in my house in Melbourne for the special purpose of praying for a blessing on Melbourne, and in one of those meetings was evolved the phrase, ‘Lord, send the big revival.’ That prayer is about to be answered abundantly. In the train last night some of us were reading the Word of God together, and the question was asked, ‘What do you think is the highest thing in the Christian life, what is the very best work in the Christian life?’ One man said, ‘Gathering in souls,’ and a second replied, ‘To do the will of God,’ and the will of God means the ingathering and uplifting of men and women! Then one brother read from the Word of God that portion where the man came to Jesus and said, referring to his son, ‘If Thou canst heal him,’ and Jesus said, ‘All is possible to him that believeth.’ That is the power of individual faith. Then he also read the portion

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<sup>477</sup> D. Paproth. *W. Lockhart Morton: Parish Ministry, Rescue Work, and Missions*. page 7. unpublished.

<sup>478</sup> Paproth. *Ibid*.

<sup>479</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 16 May, 1890. page 398.

where the disciples met Jesus coming down from the Mount of Transfiguration, and he said to them, ‘This kind cometh forth by nothing but by prayer.’ That is, communion in supplication. There have been ascending to God, for the past weeks, the believing prayers of thousands of His people. Let us each have the individual faith and look for great things. Let this prayer be ours, ‘God, send the big revival.’”<sup>480</sup>

In 1892, Morton was elected Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Victoria. As Moderator, he had to attend the Federal Assembly that year, which was to be held in Adelaide. While he was in Adelaide, he met John H. Angas, a wealthy evangelical businessman, who was keenly interested in the temperance movement and in rescue work. Angas was a Congregationalist, but had common interests with evangelicals from the other denominations. He had already been in correspondence with Morton. During a break in the Assembly meetings, Angas took Morton to see a Retreat for Inebriates at Belair. Angas said, “Were you here I would place this property at your disposal free of cost, and see what you could do with it.”<sup>481</sup>

Morton jumped at this opportunity, although he was wary of a law in South Australia which said that this Retreat had to be run by a Committee. Morton operated best as an autocrat, and did not want to be restricted by committee members who might have ideas which varied from his own. After some reassurance on this matter, Morton returned to Victoria, and, after the end of his Moderatorial year, he resigned from the Malvern Church, and moved to South Australia.

### **South Australia.**

Whether by accident or design, the Moderator in South Australia invited Morton to take a supply situation at the Goodwood Presbyterian Church for a period, which was accepted. So, for two and a half years, Morton worked part-time as the pastor at Goodwood, and also worked the Retreat at Belair, before he resigned from the pastoral situation.

When Morton took over the Inebriates’ Retreat in 1893, he did two things. He changed the name of the building to “Hope Lodge,” to emphasise that it was a continuation of the rescue work he had been doing for eighteen years. Also, because these buildings were more

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<sup>480</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 18 April, 1902. pages 443 – 445.

<sup>481</sup> Paproth. Op cit. Page 8. Also Morton. *Drifting Wreckage*, pages 128 – 129.

commodious, he also founded in Belair a Training Home for young men for Home and Foreign Missions. This also operated under the "Faith Principle," as did all of Morton's work outside of the official Presbyterian system.

Dr. Warren had opened his Training Home two years before, but this effort did not last a decade. So, Morton's effort in this regard provided an important early part of the whole history of missionary training in Australia. The training institute started being for men only. In 1895, Morton accepted two persistent lady candidates for missionary service also, in one of the Belair buildings, and this blossomed to such a degree that the accommodation was soon inadequate. In 1898, the ladies activities were transferred to a mansion at 16 Toowong Avenue, Kensington Park, in Adelaide. However, J. H. Angas bought another property for the use of the ladies, on the corner of Ward and Jeffcott Streets, North Adelaide. It had previously been a boys' grammar school. This property became known as Angas College, named after the wealthy businessman who had bought the property, and all of the missionary training work was transferred there.

In 1907, the Belair property was sold to the Adelaide politician, Alexander Downer, although the Downers left it vacant for another thirty years. The "rescue work" side of Morton's work, by that time, had fallen off to zero. He had lost interest in it, leaving it to others, being consumed with his new interest in missionary training, and evangelistic work.

Practical experience was always an important part of the training.

### **His Work for the Evangelisation Society.**

Because of his interest in evangelistic work, Morton would have come to be well known by the leaders of the Evangelisation Society at least from his time in Ballarat. The President of the Society for many years was the Hon. James Balfour, M.L.A., who was a very well known Presbyterian layman, and a wealthy businessman. Another well known Presbyterian who was on the Executive of the Society for many years was Mr. Robert Gillespie. No doubt Morton would have approached Balfour on behalf of some of the men in Hope Lodge, looking for jobs for them.

After he went to South Australia, Morton was approached by the secretary of the Evangelisation Society for help in getting signatures in

support of the Society's effort to invite the American evangelist, D. L. Moody, to come to Australia. The signatures began to be collected at the Geelong Convention that year, in September, with the first signature being that of the Baptist minister, the Rev. Allan Webb, who was the chairman of the Convention Committee, on behalf of 1,400 Christians who were present at the gathering. The signatures were collected Australia-wide during the first half of October, 1898. Naturally, with relative slowness of communications in those days, this process took a little time, and the collection was not complete until the end of the year.<sup>482</sup>

In the end, they accumulated 454 pages of signatures, totalling 15,831 persons, chiefly Christian workers. These divided up as follows:

Victoria.	196 churches.	6,538 signatures.
New South Wales.	40 churches.	1,038 signatures.
South Australia.	26 churches.	1,159 signatures.
Queensland.	52 churches.	1,1781 signatures.
West Australia.	25 churches.	579 signatures.
New Zealand.	87 churches.	3,979 signatures.
Tasmania.	28 churches.	697 signatures.

The letter also included a breakdown of the signatures according to denomination in the different colonies.

Moody declined the invitation, and within twelve months he had died. Eventually, Society members personally approached R. A. Torrey to visit Melbourne, and this invitation was accepted.

Morton conducted a mission in the suburb of Malvern in April, 1902, as one of the simultaneous missions which formed the prelude to the meetings in the Exhibition Building led by Torrey and Alexander. Malvern was the place where he had been minister some years beforehand. This was the first full-scale evangelistic mission that he had ever conducted.

The Evangelisation Society had to shoulder the burden of supplying preachers to a number of country missions as soon as the big mission in Melbourne was over, by mid-May. Morton took part in this work, and thus began his main work for the Evangelisation Society,

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<sup>482</sup> *Southern Cross*. September 16, 1898. page 894, and 30 December, 1898. page 1255.

which he continued until about 1908. His first mission was in Mooroopna, closely followed by another in Numurkah.<sup>483</sup>

In October he led a mission in Camperdown. A long report about this mission was published. In part, it said, "The results of the mission have been most gratifying. Christians have been roused and renewed and drawn closer to God and to one another, as heirs of salvation and brethren in Christ; backsliders have been reclaimed and restored, sinners have been awakened, convicted, and led to the Saviour, and many are desirous of being Christians who, it is expected, will soon step into the Kingdom. Mr. Morton and his helpers have left Camperdown, to carry on their mission in Pomborneit, with the warm affection of the Christian people of the town and district, and with their earnest prayers for their continued and ever-increasing success in the work of God in its evangelising and missionary departments."<sup>484</sup>

Forty-three young people volunteered for missionary service, if the way were opened for them, "most of whom had decided for Christ at the mission services, and had been seen privately, and dealt with as inquirers by Mr. Morton, and by the ministers assisting in the mission.

A nine days' mission was held in Corindhap, and another mission in Dandenong. By this time, he had largely withdrawn from the rescue work, and he was instead involved in missionary training. The missions he conducted for the Evangelisation Society took place in several of the Australian States, and not simply in South Australia or Victoria. Often he would take some of the students with him, or one of his daughters.

For example, in December, 1902, he led a mission for a week in the Congregational Church in the small village of Bruthen, some kilometres north-east of Bairnsdale. The final meeting was held in the Mechanics' Institute. His second oldest daughter, Elizabeth, sang and accompanied herself on a guitar. This was followed by a larger mission in Bairnsdale, in Payne's Hall, which accommodated about 1,000 people. At one stage, Morton gave a lantern lecture on his rescue work, and on some of the resulting conversions. He was helped by a Mr. Tarnagno, who was training to go as a missionary to Korea. Elizabeth Morton was helped in the solo department by a lady from Dandenong. It was a united mission, supported by the Anglican,

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<sup>483</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 18 July, and 8 August, 1902. pages 871 and 950.

<sup>484</sup> *Southern Cross*, Friday, 24 October, 1902. page 1218.

Wesleyan and Presbyterian ministers, and the Salvation Army Ensign.<sup>485</sup>

He conducted several other missions for the Society through 1903 for which reports were published. In a mission at Casterton, over sixty enquirers were dealt with in the enquiry room, most of whom professed conversion. Missions were also held at Merino, Digby and at Portland.<sup>486</sup>

At the Society's Annual Meeting, it was stated that, between October, 1902 and September, 1903, 131 missions had been conducted by its evangelists, to aggregate audiences of over a quarter of a million people.<sup>487</sup>

In March, 1904, Morton led a tent mission in the Melbourne suburb of Brighton. He preached for two weeks, and the Rev. David O'Donnell preached for the third week. The tent held about 800 people. There were said to be many conversions as a result.<sup>488</sup>

Later in 1904, he conducted several missions in South Australia, including one in Yorketown. But near the end of the year he was back in Victoria, leading a united mission in Beechworth (Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist and Congregational), and also a mission for the Presbyterians in Brunswick. Morton had a good basis of experience for his addresses at meetings for men only, from his rescue work, and they could be powerful meetings. The closing address at Brunswick was about his Training Home for missionaries, and the way this large institution was run based upon prayer and faith, after the fashion of George Muller and Hudson Taylor.

“How can anyone doubt, after listening to such a recital, that God answers the cry of His servants? Altogether the mission has given us an uplift, and we are grateful, indeed, to the missionary for his visit. Special mention should be made of Miss Morton's singing, which was a marked feature of the gatherings. Her sweet, expressive rendering of the hymns held the people spellbound, and added much to the power of the services.”<sup>489</sup>

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<sup>485</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 9 January, 1903, page 48.

<sup>486</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 16 October, 1903, page 1008, 23 October, 1903, page 1025, and 11 December, 1903. page 1191.

<sup>487</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 30 October, 1903. page 1036.

<sup>488</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 8 April, 1904. page 348.

<sup>489</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 26 August, 1904. page 845, 9 December, 1904, page 1189, and 16 December, 1904. page 1217.

In April, 1905, Morton led a tent mission for the Williamstown Ministers' Association, assisted by his daughter, and by the Rev. Stewart Byron (of Heidelberg), who had acted as a soloist for the Society at times in the past.<sup>490</sup> During the winter Morton led united missions at Warracknabeal, and at Stawell. The first of these two missions was supported by the Anglican, Baptist, Methodist and Presbyterian churches. Attendances were large and enthusiastic. Apart from the conversions, several people offered themselves for missionary work. Again, Elizabeth Morton's singing was greatly appreciated.<sup>491</sup>

The only information about Morton's work in 1906 which was published was that he visited New Zealand, and conducted some missions there.<sup>492</sup>

During 1907, Morton visited the Ebenezer Church in Ballarat for their Jubilee celebrations. Some information about the progress of the Missionary Training College was also published. In mid-1907, a special ceremony took place for the official opening of the College premises in North Kensington. It was announced that, at present, thirty men were in residence, and 188 had passed through. Of the 188, 33 had gone to China, 14 to India, 12 to Africa, 8 to South America, 1 to Japan, 1 to Burma, and 1 to New Guinea, while 33 had engaged in mission work within Australia and New Zealand.<sup>493</sup>

In 1908, amongst other things, Morton visited Western Australia, and conducted a mission for the Society in Perth.<sup>494</sup>

In 1909, Melbourne celebrated the return visit of the charismatic song-leader, Charles M. Alexander, with a new evangelist-preacher, the Rev. Dr. J. Wilbur Chapman. Again, a series of suburban missions were arranged for the weeks before the huge meetings in the Exhibition Building led by the Americans. As a part of this arrangement, Lockhart Morton led a tent mission in South Carlton. The published report of this mission contains no details, except for accounts of three of the reported conversions.<sup>495</sup>

When Chapman and Alexander returned to Australia for a much longer mission in 1912 and 1913, Morton was again involved in the suburban "Simultaneous Mission" in Melbourne. On this occasion he

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<sup>490</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 25 April, 1905. page 388.

<sup>491</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 18 August, 1905.

<sup>492</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 10 August, 1906. page 755.

<sup>493</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 5 July, 1907. page 631.

<sup>494</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 25 September, 1908. page 930.

<sup>495</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 18 June, 1909. page 667.

preached in a tent, seating 1,500 people, which had been pitched in Williamstown, and was supported by eleven of the local churches altogether.<sup>496</sup>

The Americans visited South Australia, and took a much greater interest in Morton's work. Chapman wrote the Preface for Morton's book, *Drifting Wreckage*. However, Morton's great work in support of overseas missions was soon to grind to a halt, and be replaced by the work of others.

Morton's book contained a section in the back which lists the names and numbers of the people who had been through the Missionary College by 1912 and had gone to their destination in missionary work. 57 had gone to China. 32 went to India. 23 went to Africa. 19 went to South America. Two went to Burma, two to Japan, four to New Guinea and six to the South Sea Islands. Within Australia and New Zealand, 21 were involved in Christian work in Victoria, 34 in South Australia, six in New South Wales, fourteen in New Zealand, three in Queensland, four in West Australia and three in Tasmania. Thirteen were working amongst aborigines in one of the three States of New South Wales, Western Australia or Queensland. Morton's book was paid for by subscription, and the subscribers are also listed.<sup>497</sup>

Morton moved back to Melbourne in 1920, and took Angas College with him. By 1920, the Melbourne Bible Institute had been founded by the Rev. C. H. Nash, and this began to fill the role which Morton had been trying to carry out. Finally, he allowed his work to become a part of the M.B.I. arrangement, which emphasised foreign missions. William Lockhart Morton died on 19 August, 1928, as a result of acute enteritis, and was buried the next day in St. Kilda Cemetery.

Darrell Paproth believes that Lockhart Morton's work was finally undermined by several factors. The first was that another Bible College was started in Adelaide following the South Australian campaign of Chapman and Alexander in 1912. This was called the Chapman-Alexander Bible College, which started finally in 1914. It opened with much fanfare, and produced mainly people equipped for work on the Home Front, rather than for foreign missions. This new College did not last long, either. Mr. J. H. Angas, the patron who had

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<sup>496</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 19 April, 1912. pages 486-7, and 3 May, 1912, page 555.

<sup>497</sup> Morton. *Drifting Wreckage*. pages 313 – 321.

financed the properties which had been used by Morton, died in 1904, and there was no one to take his place. The First World War also interfered greatly, and the Angas College buildings were taken over by the Army, and were not returned until after 1918. The number of students trained by Morton at the College declined seriously during the War, and did not recover.

Morton's personality would also have worked against the continuation of his work, because he was autocratic, and found it hard to work yoked with others.

Paproth says that in those days a grass roots ecumenism operated among evangelicals. They happily made common cause with other evangelicals in interdenominational efforts while remaining loyal to their own churches. Morton was very much a part of this scene.

The theology of popular evangelicalism was also widely followed, despite the more singular peculiar beliefs that might have been found in any one of the denominations. Morton followed this common theology even more than anything which was peculiarly Presbyterian.

Paproth's conclusion includes the statement that "Morton was an intelligent and, in the Presbyterian tradition, a well-educated man; though he was not a profound or creative thinker. Rather, he was an activist who had energy and initiative, and who picked up ideas from others. With these traits went a forceful personality and autocratic style that characterised his ministry and leadership."

"Hope Lodge and Angas College were the first missionary training institutions of significance in Australia; they trained missionaries, including women, and provide a window through which to view evangelical vitality and its contribution to missions."

Paproth believes that there were three outstanding figures involved in the early history of missionary training in Australia, between 1870 and the Second World War. These were H. B. Macartney, Lockhart Morton and C. H. Nash.<sup>498</sup> New South Wales people might want to include the Rev. C. Benson Barnett also, who helped found the S.M.B.C. at Croydon. But Barnett got his first experience in running a missionary College at Angas College in Adelaide.

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<sup>498</sup> Paproth. *W. Lockhart Morton: Parish Ministry, Rescue Work, and Missions*. Unpublished. page 18.

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

### The Life and Work of the Rev. JOSEPH TANNER PIERCEY

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The Evangelisation Society of Victoria, which in due course became known as the Evangelisation Society of Australasia, employed a fairly long list of different evangelists over the years from 1883 to the end of the First World War. Three of these men each worked for the Society for well over ten years. These three men were Robert Robertson, William H. Scurr and Joseph T. Piercey.

The Rev. Joseph Tanner Piercey worked as an evangelist for the Society for over twelve years, from 1906 until he retired in 1918.

He was born in Geelong on 24th April, 1856. His father, also Joseph Tanner Piercey, had been an officer in India, but was employed in Australia as a mounted policeman. His mother's maiden name was Jessie [Janet] Birrell.<sup>499</sup>

During his early childhood the family moved to northern Tasmania. At the age of eighteen, Joseph Piercey was converted to Christ amongst the Primitive Methodists. He immediately commenced to work for Christ, gathering children of the district to teach them to read and to give them Bible lessons. He also worked amongst the poor in Launceston, seeing a good number of people surrendering their lives to God. Thus he gained a hunger and thirst to see results in evangelistic work.

#### **He Becomes a Primitive Methodist Minister**

He joined the Primitive Methodist Church in 1877, and was soon being pressed to become a minister in that denomination. He refused for some time, but in 1879, he agreed to become a probationer, and was sent to the Ballarat Circuit. He saw a number of conversions as the result of his work, especially at Sebastopol. On one occasion, "as

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<sup>499</sup> Spelled "Birrell" on her birth entry, but "Berrell" on J.T. Piercey's death entry.

many as twenty” professed conversion in only three meetings.<sup>500</sup> We should remember that the Primitive Methodists were never one of the larger denominations in Victoria or Tasmania, so evangelistic meetings that they held were usually not large either, and twenty converts within three meetings would be very unusual. However, during that year, five of the churches in the Ballarat circuit were detached, and put into another circuit, and this reduced the membership considerably. The appointment in Ballarat lasted for two years.

In 1881, Joseph Piercey was moved back to Tasmania, and began work for the Primitive Methodists in the town of Penguin, along with another preacher. He worked in this circuit also for two years. After he had been there for about six months the circuit Quarterly Meeting decided to try to establish Primitive Methodist work at the Mount Bischoff Mine, and Piercey was given this job. So, for some months Piercey went to live at the Mine. It would have been impossible to evangelise in the area whilst living in Penguin or some other town. The travelling would have been too difficult.

The Mount Bischoff Mining Company established the township of Waratah as their centre of operations. As soon as this happened, the Wesleyans opened a work in 1880, led by the Rev. D. A. Gilsenan. The Rev. J. T. Piercey arrived in 1881, looking for anyone in the district who still identified themselves with Primitive Methodism.<sup>501</sup>

He found a small group, and for a few shillings he secured the use of a billiard hall for the meetings. After clearing out the bottles, glasses and cards, and cleaning the room, he posted notices announcing services there on Sunday. “A tolerable congregation gathered in the morning, and in the evening the place was crowded, and two young men came out on the Lord’s side.”<sup>502</sup>

After a few months, the man who had discovered the mineral deposit promised to give land for a church if 150 pounds could be raised for it. Piercey and one of the ladies canvassed the area, but could not raise the money needed. One of the members then gave a block of land, and a church was built at a cost of 280 pounds and ten shillings. It was opened on 1st May, 1882. The discoverer of the lode

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<sup>500</sup> Clarke. M., *History of Primitive Methodism in Victoria and Tasmania*. no publishing details. [probably 1886.] page 56.

<sup>501</sup> C. C. Dugan. *A Century of Tasmanian Methodism. 1820 – 1920*. Hobart. The Tasmanian Methodist Assembly. 1920. page 74.

<sup>502</sup> Clarke. Op cit. page 70.

made a good contribution. A fund raising tea meeting raised 130 pounds, and the debt was steadily reduced. "Several persons have been brought to Christ in this place, and a Sabbath school established." The Mount Bischoff church was later formed into a new arrangement with some other churches, and was called the Waratah Circuit.

In 1883 Joseph Piercey married Sarah Jane Dally in Launceston. Very soon after the wedding he was ordained, and was sent to the Benalla Circuit. The previous minister had not had good health, and the circuit suffered. When Piercey arrived he found the circuit, about fifty miles wide, with 12 preaching places, and the parsonage and furniture in a dilapidated condition. A newly built church at South Hansen had a large debt. Not only that, but Piercey himself got typhoid fever and was laid aside for ten weeks. A helper was sent in 1884, and the helper was replaced with another in 1885. These men worked hard and saw some good success. Church debts were reduced, other buildings were improved, the residence was upgraded, and conversions occurred.<sup>503</sup> He ministered in the Benalla Circuit for three years [1883 – 1885]. The first two children in the Piercey family were born in Benalla. These children were Hubert Charles and Ethel Beatrice.

Charles Carter said that Piercey's next appointment was in Maryborough.<sup>504</sup> However, I have not found any other evidence to support this suggestion. Piercey seems to have next spent three years in the Talbot Circuit [1886 to 1888].<sup>505</sup> The third Piercey child (Annie Lavinia) was born in Talbot in 1888.<sup>506</sup>

Joseph Piercey's next appointment was to the Tasmanian town of Longford from 1889 to 1891, and two more children were born to Joseph and Sarah in Longford in 1889 and 1891. These children were Stanley Raymond and Muriel Frances.

The Longford Circuit in the Primitive Methodist Connexion would have included several of the little towns in the surrounding district, and calls for Joseph Piercey to preach at special services would have taken him even further afield.

The village of Bracknell had been missioned in 1864 by the Primitives, with the Longford minister, the Rev. W. H. Walton,

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<sup>503</sup> Clarke. Op cit. page 59.

<sup>504</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 16 March, 1906. page 245.

<sup>505</sup> *Launceston Examiner*. 6 April, 1889. page 2, col.6. and 17th April, page 3, col.6.

<sup>506</sup> Private communication from Laurie Rowston.

preaching in a barn. Shortly after, Mr. James Green of Mountain Vale promised the minister some land for a church if he would visit them. “Mr. Green regularly attended our services in the church, which he assisted to erect at Mountain Vale, but not until eight weeks before his death, which occurred on the 7th April, 1883, aged 81, did he make any profession of experimental religion, telling Mr. Walton that God for Christ’s sake had pardoned his sins, and that he was a new creature in Christ Jesus.”<sup>507</sup>

In 1881, there were 50 members in the Longford circuit, but this increased to 103 after three years. There had not been a “great revival”, but the minister at that time preached with God’s power, and many conversions occurred in the ordinary church services. In 1882, the Longford appointment was raised from a Mission station to a full circuit. By 1886 there were 100 members, 6 local preachers, 5 class leaders, 3 churches, 3 Sabbath schools, 19 teachers and 149 scholars.

In April, 1892, Piercey began what was to be his last appointment within the Primitive Methodist ministry, this time in Hobart, going through to January, 1896.

A gentleman named Mr. William McKenzie had been holding special services each Sunday evening in the Town Hall, after the time of the normal church services. McKenzie had developed a good choir to sing at these services, and could sing well himself. Addresses might be given by Mr. G. S. Crouch, who was soon afterwards Mayor of Hobart. It probably was an evangelistic activity of the Y.M.C.A., and so was a drive to reach younger people with the Gospel.<sup>508</sup>

Piercey had normal Sunday services to cater for in his church building in Collins Street. But he quickly became involved in this additional evening service, soon becoming the regular preacher in the Town Hall. Before very long, the time of the service was brought forward to an earlier time, so it became Piercey’s regular evening meeting, and was held in the Town Hall rather than at Collins Street. This did not necessarily conflict with all of the other evening services, because in winter some churches had their evening services before the evening meal.

Soon, also, Piercey was called upon to preach for special services in some of the other Hobart churches.<sup>509</sup>

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<sup>507</sup> Clarke. Op cit. page 67.

<sup>508</sup> *Hobart Mercury*. Saturday, 28 May, 1892. page 3.

<sup>509</sup> *Hobart Mercury*. Saturday, 4 June, 1892. page 3.

Joseph Piercey was also a keen amateur photographer, and joined the local Photo and Art Association. He attended the meetings and displayed some of his photographs at their exhibitions. He also met men who were capable exponents of showing lantern slides by limelight. Later in his life he used this technology as an aid in presenting his own Gospel message.<sup>510</sup>

Naturally, he joined in with the Hobart Ministers' Association. The Fraternal sometimes held joint public meetings on week evenings. For example, a series of meetings occurred soon after Piercey arrived in town. It started on Tuesday evening, and continued each night of the week until Friday, and moved from one church to another each night. He spoke at the third meeting in the series, on the subject of "Unwholesome Literature" which took place in the Congregational Church in Davey Street. The Rev. G. W. Sharp also gave a talk on "The Bible." The next two addresses on the following night were to be given by the Rev. I. K. McIntyre on the subject of "Absorption in Business and Amusements," and the final address was on the subject of "The Growing Missionary Spirit," given by the Rev. Dr. Scott. They were given in the New Town Wesleyan Church.

Piercey's talk on this subject included reference to the extent "to which bad literature prevailed among all classes, and pointed out the evil effect upon the reading public which resulted from the perusal of light, sensational, impure, and criminal literature, and especially mentioned the great prominence given and accounts of prize fights, and similar exhibitions in the daily papers. He censured the glaring and suggestive points freely scattered about large towns by theatrical companies, and also the loud character of show cards, etc., in tobacconists' shops."<sup>511</sup>

Two more children were born to Joseph and Sarah Jane while they lived in Hobart. These were two more boys, Hedley Tanner and Roy Lyndon, born in 1892 and 1894 respectively.

Amongst his activities, however, was a short tour of New Zealand, probably to conduct evangelistic meetings. The tour lasted through October and November 1894. "It is announced that anniversary services will be held tomorrow, when the Rev. J. T. Piercey, who has just returned from a successful tour through New

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<sup>510</sup> *Hobart Mercury*. Saturday, 18 February, 1893. page 3.

<sup>511</sup> *Hobart Mercury*. Friday, 24 June, 1892. page 3.

Zealand, will preach from special subjects, with a hearty welcome to all. The corner-stone of the Sandy Bay Primitive Hall will be laid on Wednesday afternoon next. On Thursday evening a welcome home tea will be given to the Rev. J. T. Piercey in the schoolroom, Collins Street.”<sup>512</sup>

We are not told what the problems were that Piercey had with the church polity of the Primitive Methodist denomination, which came to a head early in 1896. Perhaps he wanted to stay in Tasmania, or in Hobart, and the rules by which ministers were appointed in his denomination would not necessarily allow for it. Perhaps there were personality conflicts somewhere within the leadership of his church. Perhaps he had become Baptist in his beliefs. Perhaps the pay which Primitive Methodist ministers received was not sufficient to support his newly enlarged family, and he needed additional income. The Primitive Methodists were known for paying their ministers poorly, compared with most other denominations. This last reason figured importantly for quite a few other preachers in those days.

There is another reason, which may well have been closer to the mark. He had already been approached by the Christian Mission Church in Launceston, which was an independent church, asking him to become Pastor of that church for twelve months.<sup>513</sup> Perhaps he wanted to accept this offer, and also to retain his ordination as a Primitive Methodist minister. He probably knew that the rules of the Primitive Methodist ministry were such that he could not retain his ordination whilst being pastor of a church outside of the denomination. So he had to resign from the Primitive Methodist ministry in order to take up this new job. But, we do not really know the details.

We are simply told – “The Rev. J. T. Piercey will conduct farewell services tomorrow in the Primitive Methodist Church in the morning, taking for his subject ‘What Jesus Christ does for the Church.’ In the evening in Town Hall the subject will be ‘Deep-sea Fishing.’ Mr. Piercey, after nearly four years of faithful service in church and city has been led to resign his position in the above Church upon points of truth and Christian liberty.”<sup>514</sup> The subject of the morning sermon might have been chosen in order to give him a chance

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<sup>512</sup> *Hobart Mercury*. Saturday, 8 December, 1894. page 3.

<sup>513</sup> Secretary’s Annual Report ending 31 January, 1896. Reed Memorial Church. [The report mistakenly gives the date as 1895.]

<sup>514</sup> *Hobart Mercury*. Saturday, 11 January, 1896. page 3.

of explaining why he had made such a decision. The normal time for Primitive Methodist ministers to move from one appointment to another was in April. So he was in fact resigning from the denomination on some matter of principle.

Whatever may have been the explanation about his leaving Hobart, a little later that year we find that Joseph Piercey became the Pastor of the Christian Mission Church in Wellington Street, Launceston, and thus began what I think must be viewed as the highlight of his career – the eight and a half years that he spent in Launceston. This appointment was both a serious challenge and a great opportunity.

### **The Christian Mission Church, Launceston.**

The Mission had been founded by Mr. Henry Reed. Around 1870 he became dissatisfied with the way the Wesleyans were reaching out to poor people in the town, and Reed was considering doing something on his own account.

On a certain day, Reed was away in Victoria on business, and his coachman was exercising the horse in a trap down Westbury Road. Launceston, when a pig wandered out onto the road. The horse took fright and bolted, throwing the coachman out of the trap. The horse careered down the road towards the town, and finally collapsed exhausted in front of Parr's Royal Hotel, between York and Brisbane Streets. Mr. Parr was a noted horse doctor, and he took the horse into his stable. When Reed returned from Victoria, he went looking for his coachman and horse. He met Mr. Parr, and found that there was a long hall at the back of the hotel being used for skittles, as well as some stables where the horse had been kept. This property was situated then in the most heavily populated part of the town. Realising its potential, Reed bought the whole property, and converted the skittles hall into a meeting room, opening his mission in July, 1876. The work grew steadily. By early 1880 the open space at the back of the hotel was covered over, and the covered area seated about 1,000 people. This simple structure was called The Pavilion. Reed died in mid-1880, but already there was a Pastor to help in the work – the Rev. J. H. Shallberg. Within a few years after Henry Reed's death, Mrs. Reed began building an enormous church on the land next door in memory of her husband. This is what we now know as the Reed Memorial

Church, seating 1,200 people, officially opened in April, 1884, and paid for by Mrs. Reed herself.<sup>515</sup> Eventually The Pavilion was demolished. The hotel building, the stables and the converted skittles hall still exist.

A Constitution governing the running of the Mission appeared in 1891. Although the Mission was operated by a number of Elders, Mrs. Reed exerted a very strong, almost dominating influence over everything at the Mission, in these early years. Any Pastor of the Church, in that kind of a situation, could easily have a very difficult time. No doubt Mrs. Reed was held in very high regard, and was a very strong personality.

The Christian Mission Church probably had a strong congregation during the years of Pastor George Soltau (1886 – 1893), but it seems that the congregation had declined during 1894 and 1895, when two shorter pastorates occurred. But the building had an enormous capacity, and had a good population around.

In this Church, the Pastor's main job was to fill the Church, and attract a large congregation. However, there developed also a wide range of associated activities, as one would expect. Piercey's own description of the work included that:- "After much prayer and hard work, the congregation began to increase, and in two years we had the joy of preaching the old, old story to 1,000 every Sunday evening." The report also said that "In connection with this large sphere of work there was the oversight of a large Sunday-school [300 scholars], young men and young women's Bible classes, with Chinese classes, open-air services with early morning and evening prayer-meetings every Sabbath. The week-night services were numerous – prayer meetings, Christian Endeavour (senior and junior) [120 in each], Chinese classes for reading and writing, brass band, sewing meetings, Bible and local preachers' classes, with Saturday open-air services. Besides these, there were four outstations at which the Gospel was preached every Sabbath, with mid-week services. A students' class for candidates for foreign missionary work was also conducted by the pastor, some of whom are now in preparation for the field." During the eight and a half years of his pastorate, Piercey "had the joy of dealing with some

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<sup>515</sup> *Launceston Examiner*, July 1976. Centenary news notice.

hundreds of anxious inquirers, also giving the hand of fellowship to a very large number of members.”<sup>516</sup>

The Christian Endeavour movement had come to this Church in 1890, and gained a strong following. For example, when the tenth anniversary was held, there were 95 members in the senior C.E., and 36 in the juniors. The senior C.E. had ten committees which were quite busy with outreach activities, and they supported strongly two missionaries in Pondoland, Africa.<sup>517</sup>

Generally speaking, the Launceston churches advertised their services in the *Launceston Examiner* each week, and often enough included the subjects of their sermons. A large congregation such as this would also tend to attract visiting speakers. For example, on Sunday 26th April, 1903, Piercey preached on “God’s Gift of Holiness” at the morning service, but at the evening service there were two visitors from India. These were Miss Manoramabai and Miss Abrams, in Indian costume.<sup>518</sup> Pandita Ramabai had sent her daughter, and Miss Abrams, to Australia in order to see the great revival which she had heard about in Australia in 1902. This was a world-wide report that had resulted from the missions in Australia by Torrey and Alexander that year, and other evangelistic efforts at that time. These two ladies eventually reported back to Pandita Ramabai, who was both a strong leader and a lady of much prayer, and a few years later a revival movement occurred in their work in India – part of a much wider movement in southern Asia.<sup>519</sup>

Also during his time in Launceston he conducted evangelistic missions in several Tasmanian towns. These included Hobart, Scottsdale, Perth, Chudleigh and Hagley, and also in the Victorian city of Geelong.<sup>520</sup>

To have been the successful pastor of such a church for such a period of time can only be described as a major achievement. The strain upon him must have been considerable. No doubt his fortunes in this regard fluctuated from time to time.

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<sup>516</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 16 March, 1906. page 245.

<sup>517</sup> *Launceston Examiner*. Tuesday, 27 February, 1900. page 5.

<sup>518</sup> *Launceston Examiner*. Saturday, 25 April, 1903. page 6.

<sup>519</sup> Helen S. Dyer. *Pandita Ramabai*. A Great life in Indian Missions. Pickering & Inglis. Chapter 12.

J. Edwin Orr. *Evangelical Awakenings in Southern Asia*. Bethany Fellowship. 1975. pages 142 – 146.

Helen S. Dyer (Compiler). *Revival in India*. (1st ed. New York. 1907.) Maharashtra. Alliance Publications. 1987. page 31.

<sup>520</sup> *Southern Cross*. 16 March, 1906. page 245.

For example, on Monday, 25th September, 1899, he was presented with two pieces of silver plate by the congregation, “in acknowledgement of his labours amongst them”<sup>521</sup>

Piercey also continued to develop his interest in photography. He joined the local Northern Tasmanian Camera Club, and was President for a time. He helped to introduced “modern technology” to the congregation. He had a serious accident in the process. He was experimenting with a magic lantern when the gas exploded. He “received severe injuries, including a broken arm and painful contusions to face and head.”<sup>522</sup>

We begin to see signs of declining health during the last year that he was working in Launceston. Piercey resigned from the pastorate in June, 1904, finally leaving at the end of September, and he received a generous parting farewell. He told the E. S. V. leaders that the doctor had ordered him to work in a quieter place, on account of his heart.<sup>523</sup>

There is, however, usually more than one side to these situations. When he sent in his resignation, a special church meeting was held to consider the matter. There had, apparently, been some difficulties with some of the members, which would not be hard in a church so large. Piercey’s health had been declining. The discussion, as shown by the record of the meeting which has survived, revealed that Piercey did enjoy the confidence of most of the people.

One member, Bro Foot, said that “it had come to his knowledge that some had stated he had influenced many of the members in asking the Pastor to resign. He wished to give an emphatic denial. What he had done was to ask those who were dissatisfied to call a meeting and see if matters could not be righted.” Another said that “the management was a great deal to blame. He would be in favour of retaining Mr. Piercey under a new management.” After much discussion, it was resolved by a small majority to ask the Pastor to reconsider his resignation, and that the church meeting would reconvene in a month.

The most revealing comment in this record came from Mrs. Reed. She said, “Mr. Piercey’s health was much impaired and he was

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<sup>521</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 6 October, 1899. page 979.

<sup>522</sup> *Launceston Examiner*. Friday, 18 May, 1900. page 4, and *Southern Cross*. Friday, 29 June, 1900. page 747.

<sup>523</sup> *Southern Cross*. 16 March, 1906. page 245.

not fit to carry it on without someone to assist him and she was not led to engage another assistant.”<sup>524</sup>

Here we see that there was already an assistant. This was Pastor George Craike, who had recently come to the Mission Church from Hobart. Here is also revealed Mrs. Reed’s power in the situation. In her view, her considerable wealth, and having paid for building the church, seems to have given her the right to decide whether extra staff would be employed. Perhaps she would also have to provide the wages for a helper, although such a large and strong church should have had no trouble getting the money, if such was necessary. She apparently considered that she had this right, and the people seemed to accept this, although no other Protestant church would ever allow itself to operate under such dictatorial restrictions. It seems that she had already decided Piercey’s fate, by saying that he was no longer fit for the work.

At the July meeting, it was stated that Mrs. Reed had contacted her daughter to look out for a suitable new pastor. Her daughter was married to Dr. Harry Grattan Guinness. The Rev. Edward Isaac had been suggested. He was suitable, available, and willing to come. The Guinnesses and Mr. Isaac were then in England. But the Rev. Edward Isaac was well known in Australia, having been a Baptist pastor in Melbourne for some years. A decision was made at that meeting to invite Isaac to be the new pastor. He duly arrived the following year.

The secretary composed a wise appreciation of Piercey’s work and time as their pastor. “It is with great regret we have received the resignation of our Pastor who has so long occupied the pastorate of this church. He during his ministry has been the means in God’s hands of leading many souls into the kingdom, and has done a noble work for his Master. We feel that to many his worth and value will be the more apparent and the more appreciated when they no longer have the means of enjoying them. May the prayers of God’s people follow him and bring blessing on him and his through all the future years.”<sup>525</sup>

Joseph Piercey finished at the Mission Church in October, 1904, and moved to become the pastor of the Baptist Church in the town of Burnie. The church meeting in Burnie at which the call to Piercey had been issued was held in August. The suggestion of inviting Piercey possibly arose after a preaching visit to Burnie early in June made by

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<sup>524</sup> Elder’s Minutes Book, June, 1904.

<sup>525</sup> Extract from Elders’ Minutes, July 1905.

“Pastor Craike, of the Memorial Church, Launceston.” Possibly Craike knew about the difficulties Piercey was having, and agreed with him that a move was needed.<sup>526</sup>

### **Burnie Baptist Church.**

Piercey opened his commission in Burnie on Sunday, 9th October, 1904. At the morning service his text was from Genesis xv.11, “And Abraham drove away the birds.” The evening sermon was on John iii.17, “the preacher holding the riveted attention of his hearers throughout.” The official welcome to Joseph, Mrs. Piercey, and the children, was on the following Wednesday. All the other local ministers were present, and spoke in support of the new minister. The Sunday school was represented by Mr. H. Dowling, who referred to “Mr. Piercey as his ‘spiritual father,’ having been led to Christ years ago by him.” He had first met Mr. Piercey at Waratah.<sup>527</sup>

A big day for the Baptists occurred in January, 1905, when the evangelist, Henry Varley visited. He gave a lecture in the morning on “Billy Bray,” and in the evening spoke on the second coming of Christ. Proceeds of the lecture went to their fund to purchase an organ for open-air meetings.<sup>528</sup>

In this church also, the Christian Endeavour movement found a welcome home, and it played a major role in the lives of many of these people. On February 20th, 1906, a social was held to promote interest in Christian Endeavour, and a worthy programme unfolded.<sup>529</sup>

However, the following month announced that, after only sixteen months, Mr. Piercey was leaving Burnie in order to carry out evangelistic work under the auspices of the Evangelisation Society of Australasia, based in Melbourne. His last Sunday in Burnie was on April 1st, 1906, with a public farewell being arranged for the next evening. Piercey said that his return to evangelistic work was an answer to prayer, and he hoped that he would enjoy the prayers of his friends in Burnie in the future. There was a Mr. A. Sidwell who sang a solo during this farewell service – apparently from Hobart.<sup>530</sup>

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<sup>526</sup> *Baptist Day-Star*. 26 June, 1904, and 30 August, 1904.

<sup>527</sup> *Baptist Day-Star*. 1 November, 1904.

<sup>528</sup> *Baptist Day-Star*. January, 1905.

<sup>529</sup> *Baptist Day-Star*. March 1906.

<sup>530</sup> *Baptist Day-Star*. April 1906.

So it was that Joseph Piercey began his work as a full time evangelist in **April, 1906**. As we have already seen, a substantial article about him was provided to the *Southern Cross* by the indefatigable secretary of the Society, Mr. Charles Carter, in order to introduce Piercey favourably to church people who were considering having evangelistic missions that winter.<sup>531</sup> Without doubt, he was a well experienced, trustworthy and capable evangelist, and had been used by God on many occasions.

### **The Evangelisation Society of Australasia**

In describing Joseph Piercey's work for the Evangelisation Society we need to remember that many of his missions were never reported upon in a published form. We can only comment upon a mission when a report about it did appear in print.

The first mission conducted by Mr. Piercey was held at St. John's Presbyterian Church, Ballarat East, where the minister was the Rev. Matthew G. Hart, who was an experienced mission preacher in his own right. Mr. Amos Sidwell arrived from Tasmania to sing solos at this mission, and the name of Mr. Stewart Byron was also mentioned. Mr. Hart said that "I have not heard a more effective Australian evangelist since the death of the late lamented John MacNeil. He is an evangelist of no mean order."<sup>532</sup>

This mission was followed immediately by one held in the Town Mission Hall at Ballarat East, for the Rev. J. West Lau. It was expected that another mission would follow in the Eaglehawk West Methodist Church. During these days in Ballarat, Piercey addressed a meeting of the Women's Prayer Union, with about 100 present. The Prayer Union met once a week.<sup>533</sup>

By the end of June, Piercey and Sidwell were leading a mission in the Burnbank Street Methodist Church in Ballarat. "There were converts every night. Not only prodigal sons, but fathers and mothers up to seventy and eighty years of age, decided for Christ during the fortnight." The Rev. J. Thomas continued the special meetings during the third week.<sup>534</sup>

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<sup>531</sup> *Southern Cross*. 16 March, 1906. page 245.

<sup>532</sup> *Southern Cross*. 18 May 1906. page 472.

<sup>533</sup> *Southern Cross*. 25 May, 1906. page 499.

<sup>534</sup> *Southern Cross*. 20 July, 1906. page 694.

Soon after that, they were involved in a mission in Williamstown. At the end of August, after five months of mission work, Piercey had a break for a week in Tasmania. In this way he progressed through his first year as full time evangelist. One of the last missions for the year, late in December, was held at the Baptist Church, Footscray.

“Notwithstanding that the time chosen was most inconvenient to many people, the workers rallied round the missionaries, and did all they could by prayer, open-air meetings, house-to-house visitation, and individual effort to strengthen their hands. The afternoon Bible readings and week evening services were well attended, while the church was crowded on Sundays. Mr. Sidwell’s singing was very much appreciated. He has a rich, sympathetic voice, and his gospel in song touches many hearts, and was a distinctive feature of the mission. He was ably supported by a large choir, with whom he soon established himself as an enthusiastic and inspiring leader. Mr. Piercey’s faithful and earnest preaching was deserving of all praise. His Bible readings were instructive and helpful. On hundred and twenty-five made profession of their faith in Christ, but as no one must presume to limit the blessing to the number of decision cards signed, there can be no doubt that the Holy Spirit’s work has been effectual, seeing that God’s promises cannot fail.”<sup>535</sup>

At the end of February, **1907**, Piercey conducted two missions in Tasmania, after which he went to Traralgon. This last was a ten days’ mission, finishing on 28th March. Amos Sidwell was sick. “As a missionary, Mr. Piercey is forceful, eloquent, and deeply impressive; with words that burn and thoughts that inspire; his every discourse was aflame with the Spirit.”<sup>536</sup>

A mission at Dundonnell and Darlington ran from April 28 to May 14. The next report said that he was conducting missions in Elmore and Runnymede East Methodist Churches. There were about thirty conversions. This was followed by a mission at Diggora, starting on June 23, but lasting only a few days. Despite that, a long report was published.<sup>537</sup>

Around the end of the year, Piercey led a mission in the Hoddle Street Baptist Church. The first week was mainly directed to the

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<sup>535</sup> *Southern Cross*. 4 January, 1907. page 19.

<sup>536</sup> *Southern Cross*. 5 April, 1907. page 334.

<sup>537</sup> *Southern Cross*. 21 June, page 595, and July 12th, 1907. page 662.

members, and helped to reinvigorate the spiritual lives of many of them. Overall, forty-one decisions for Christ were listed.<sup>538</sup>

In April, **1908**, he led a ten days' mission in the Commercial Road Methodist Church, South Yarra. Again, benefit came to the members, and about thirty-six conversions were listed, mainly amongst people aged from fourteen to twenty-two years of age.<sup>539</sup>

This was quickly followed by missions at Coburg and Brunswick. At Coburg there were some conversions of "outsiders," and at Brunswick many young people from the Sunday school made decisions for Christ.<sup>540</sup>

From there, Piercey went to Ararat, where about ninety people professed conversion, and many believers were strengthened. The mission centred around the Methodist Church, but was well supported by the Presbyterians and the Salvation Army.<sup>541</sup>

The only other reference to his work during the remainder of the year was to mention that he held a mission at Port Fairey near the end of the year. However, he wrote a letter to the editor of the *Southern Cross* conveying his end-of-year best wishes to all the workers and converts with whom he had been privileged to work through the year, hoping that they would enjoy a rest with their loved one, and turning their eyes towards God who rested on the seventh day, and who tells people to "be of good cheer" as they face the future. There had been twenty missions during 1908.<sup>542</sup>

Early in **1909**, preparations were made to organise "simultaneous missions" in a number of locations around Melbourne as a precursor to meetings in the Exhibition Building, led by the American evangelists, Dr. J. Wilbur Chapman and Mr. Charles M. Alexander. Joseph Piercey was chosen to lead the mission in Prahran – South Yarra. The meetings were held around the end of April. A large tent was used which seated about 1,200 people. The tent was packed every night, except for one, when rain prevented most people from attending. The two Town Halls were used also, probably at week-ends. There were many conversions, and also many backsliders returning to God. "Many testimonies and letters have been received. Dear little children

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<sup>538</sup> *Southern Cross*. 10 January, 1908. page 47.

<sup>539</sup> *Southern Cross*. 1 May, 1908. page 427.

<sup>540</sup> *Southern Cross*. 19 June, 1908. page 597.

<sup>541</sup> *Southern Cross*. 3 July, 1908. page 643.

<sup>542</sup> *Southern Cross*. 8 January, 1909, page 33. (Port Fairey – SC 1908, page 1173.)

would come and ask to be prayed for. One little girl touched the missionary's heart (she was about five years old); her request was, 'Please pray that my father may get work.'" Piercey wrote the report himself.<sup>543</sup>

A little later a twelve days' mission was held at St. Arnaud. The first week was spent in the Silver Mines Road Chapel, and the response was modest. The other meetings, in the parent church, were much more fruitful. In these later meetings, forty-two professed conversion, apart from Sunday school children.<sup>544</sup>

In **1910**, Joseph Piercey began the practice of taking his daughter, Muriel, with him as soloist. The first report was about a mission at the Chiltern Methodist Church. The atmosphere in the town was depressing. "This town, like many other mining places when in a declining condition, has a tendency to give the same impress to church life; hence the regular ministry find it very hard to maintain the interest of a healthy and robust Christianity in their different spheres of service." Again, the first messages were directed mainly to the church members. "When the Church began to respond to the Holy Spirit's call, then the undecided began to attend in larger numbers, and also to inquire for the new life which came by conversion." A good response began on the second Sunday, when a meeting was held in the Star Theatre, probably after an open-air meeting of singing Alexander's hymns. The final nights also saw very good responses. The number of professed conversions was not given, but seems to have been around fifty.<sup>545</sup>

This mission was followed by a mission at Byaduk, and united missions at Lilydale, and then at Heathcote and at Kilmore, which also enjoyed good success.

The Heathcote ministers, Presbyterian and Methodist, were especially enthusiastic about both the conduct and the results of the mission in that area. Sixty names were handed in as converts during an eleven days' mission.

"At the final meeting in the Shire Hall, remarkable enthusiasm prevailed. On a resolution, conveying the thanks of the community to the evangelist and his daughter, the whole audience rose en masse and carried the resolution by waving handkerchiefs and continued rounds

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<sup>543</sup> *Southern Cross*. 14 May, 1909. page 498.

<sup>544</sup> *Southern Cross*. 18 June, 1909. page 674.

<sup>545</sup> *Southern Cross*. 20 May, 1910. page 625.

of applause. The thank-offering resulted in a further demonstration of zeal. Several ladies gave their gold brooches, and envelopes containing money were placed in the offertory plates. ‘Hysteria,’ remarked a local businessman to the writer. ‘Hysteria’ may be; but an hysteria that makes for more righteous living and a happier home life is surely to be commended.

Full reports of the meetings appeared daily in the *Bendigo Advertiser*; and the *McIvor Times*, the local newspaper, in a special edition, gave a succinct account of all the addresses. These materially helped to spread the influence of the mission. Portraits also of the missionary and his daughter appeared in the *Bendigonian*. A glorious work has been accomplished. And above all and through all the meetings there moved the spirit of Divine love.”<sup>546</sup>

During the later part of August, a mission was held in Dunkeld, although no details were given.<sup>547</sup> There were no other published reports of their work in 1910.

In **1911**, during January, Joseph and Muriel Piercey held a tent mission at Queenscliff, which included some children’s meetings on the sands. This was followed by a visit to Tasmania for some weeks.<sup>548</sup> No other reports appeared until July. This next report said that Piercey had been to the Granite Flat Methodist Church, which was in the Charlton Circuit. “In spite of the bitterly cold weather and rain and wet roads, a good number turned out to hear the Gospel. A deep spiritual work of grace is being accomplished in the hearts of God’s people, while fourteen of our people were led of the Spirit to acknowledge faith in Jesus Christ as their Saviour.”<sup>549</sup>

A few weeks later, Joseph Piercey was conducting a three weeks’ mission in the Graham Street Methodist Mission, in Port Melbourne. This was thought to be a much more difficult work, but the Christians were urged with “the necessity of being possessed by the Holy Spirit that they may be used to the glory of the Father.” Mr. Piercey was highly commended for his “personal dealings with the converts.” Muriel is not mentioned here. The Communion service which was held at the end of the mission was the largest the minister had seen in

<sup>546</sup> *Southern Cross*. 9 September, 1910. page 1134.

<sup>547</sup> *Southern Cross*. 16 September, 1910. page 1174.

<sup>548</sup> *Southern Cross*. 3 February, 1911. page 150. and March 3rd, 1911. page 278.

<sup>549</sup> *Southern Cross*. 14 July, 1911. page 886.

Graham Street, and included many who took the communion for the first time.<sup>550</sup>

During the month of September, he led two missions at Kamarooka and Raywood, with the Rev. John Leslie. "Believers have been quickened and souls have been saved. The Methodist Quarterly Meeting at Raywood passed a hearty resolution of appreciation of the labours of Mr. Piercey, and requested to have his services for other parts of the circuit for the month of March next year. Mr. Piercey is an evangelist of exceptional ability and power, and we can commend him to any church wanting to have the services of an evangelist."<sup>551</sup>

In October, one of the places where he worked was the Ormond Presbyterian Church, in a ten days' mission. There was a good response.<sup>552</sup>

The last report for the year concerned a twelve days' mission at Mount Jeffcott. This was another place in the Charlton Circuit. After getting a good response there he went across to Granite Flat, where he had worked six months earlier. "It has been a time of searching and blessing, but it was a time in which precious souls came into the joy of salvation. The missionary's methods as a soul-winner are so sane and Scriptural that we have no dread of the aftermath, which is often so heart-breaking."<sup>553</sup>

Early in **1912**, the Pierceys were again in Tasmania, and he conducted special mission services in the Sheffield district. 'Notwithstanding it is the busy season, the meetings are crowded, and great interest is being shown.'<sup>554</sup>

Piercey then went to preach in the Yallock Methodist Church, from March 17 to 29. Believers were built up, and sinners were saved. But the organisers felt that, while many people had been awakened to their need, many also had resisted the call of the Spirit. The missionary spoke very well, and visited many people in their homes, in search of souls. So the reporter was not satisfied with the response. "Speaking personally, I have never heard a man better fitted for the work; a man mighty in the Scriptures, bringing forth from its treasury things old and

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<sup>550</sup> *Southern Cross*. 8 August, 1911. page 1046.

<sup>551</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 6 October, 1911. page 1270.

<sup>552</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 3 November, 1911. page 1397.

<sup>553</sup> *Southern Cross*. 24 November, 1911. page 1494

<sup>554</sup> *Southern Cross*. 9 February, 1912. page 182.

new. We commend Brother Piercey to any church desiring a missionary, assured that the work will be faithfully carried out.”<sup>555</sup>

This was followed by a ten days’ mission in the country town of Milloo. The reporter was excited about this mission because he thought that spiritual life in Milloo was extremely low. When Piercey arrived, no preparations had been made for his visit. But he set to work, visiting during the day, and preaching in the evenings, full of faith that God’s promises would be fulfilled. “The result was that, before the close of the first week, he had the great joy of pointing souls to Christ, and, before the close of the mission, people came from far and near, with intense eagerness, to hear the sweet old story of a full and free salvation. Altogether, over twenty souls decided for the Master, many being adults. We all felt, at the close of the mission that, had Mr. Piercey been spared to Milloo for a little longer, there would have been many more decisions.”<sup>556</sup>

For several months before April, 1912, preparations were again being made for another set of “simultaneous missions” around Melbourne, to be followed by special meetings in the Exhibition Building under the leadership once more of Dr. J. Wilbur Chapman and Mr. Charles M. Alexander. The American evangelists had returned with a large team of helpers, and were to spend a much longer period in Australia than happened in 1909, visiting additional locations in Australia, and visiting New Zealand, as well. On this occasion, Joseph Piercey was listed to conduct the mission based in the Collingwood Town Hall, Hoddle Street. In this instance, Chapman and Alexander themselves conducted the service on the first Tuesday evening. The place was packed that night at least. There were professed conversions at each meeting.<sup>557</sup>

Later in the year, Joseph Piercey conducted a mission in Summerfield. This town was a part of one of the circuits where he had worked in the previous year. Some of the local people became converts, as did also people who travelled across from Kamarooka and Neilborough.<sup>558</sup>

The last published report for the year was about a ten days’ mission which Piercey led in the Karramomus Baptist Church, “and we

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<sup>555</sup> *Southern Cross*. 26 April, 1912. page 526.

<sup>556</sup> *Southern Cross*. 3 May, 1912. page 555.

<sup>557</sup> *Southern Cross*. 19 April, 1912. pages 486 – 487. Also 3 May, 1912. page 555.

<sup>558</sup> *Southern Cross*. 20 September, 1912. page 1198.

are thankful to be able to report that fifteen adults handed in their names as having decided for Christ.”<sup>559</sup>

### **A Touch of Revival in the Kaniva Circuit, 1913**

Joseph Piercey returned from a series of missions in Tasmania in the later part of April. He had spent nine weeks in Tasmania. “At the different places of mission, many of God’s people were encouraged and blessed, also many of the undecided were led into the assurance of salvation.” After a few days’ rest he commenced a united mission at Kaniva, which commenced on Sunday, 4th May, 1913. The meetings were held in the public hall, and three people professed conversion on the first evening.

The meetings were scheduled for three weeks, and then he was expected to preach at Broughton for a second period of three weeks. The meetings were such a blessing that it was speedily arranged for Piercey to return for another series of meetings in other churches in the circuit. After the six weeks, the report said;- “Many have been brought to know Jesus Christ as their personal saviour, and Christians have been helped in a wonderful way.” The series was then broken so that Piercey could fulfil another commitment at Williamstown.<sup>560</sup>

The Williamstown mission was held in the Cecil Street Baptist Church for sixteen days. This mission gave the church a good spiritual uplift, and there were conversions amongst people who had been the objects of many prayers for a long time. “Members of the Victorian Open Air Mission Saxophone Band, together with the choir of the Sunday evening service Olympia Theatre services, came to Williamstown for several nights, and both in the open air and in the church rendered valuable help.”<sup>561</sup>

In August, Piercey completed the second series of meetings in the Kaniva Circuit. The first of these two weeks was given to Diapur, and the second week to a place called Bleak House. Then, “the evangelist was asked to give a week to Broughton, where his labours had been so much blessed two months ago. We are pleased to say many were confirmed in their faith, and others confessed Christ.”

A ten days’ mission was then held at Boyeo in the Nhill Circuit. It took several days before the church was crowded, but overall many

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<sup>559</sup> *Southern Cross*. 29 November, 1912. page 1518.

<sup>560</sup> *Southern Cross*. 16 May, 1913. page 629, and 27 June, 1913. page 812.

<sup>561</sup> *Southern Cross*. 25 July, 1913. page 946.

Christians were revived in their faith and commitment, and seventeen people professed conversion to Christ.<sup>562</sup>

Piercey then went to the Dimboola Circuit. There had been a drought for some time. “Crops everywhere were languishing. Deep depression hung pall-like over all.” Apparently Piercey’s visit coincided with drought breaking rains. But there were spiritual rains as well.

At two centres in particular, Pimpinio and Sailors’ Home, “the spiritual deeps were broken up, and grace divine came down as rain upon the mown grass in the conversion of many. At Pimpinio we had some fine cases – in all eleven adults and fifteen young people. Sailors’ Home mission, conducted under many adverse circumstances, was, notwithstanding, in every way successful. No fewer than fourteen young men and women intelligently and definitely surrendered their lives to God and entered into glad fellowship with Christ.”<sup>563</sup>

By the time of the First World War, the lay-out and contents of the *Southern Cross* had changed so that there was less news and more articles on various matters of interest. This had the result that slowly the bits of news of such activities as the Evangelisation Society became less frequent.

In **1914**, the first report about Joseph Piercey’s missions shows that he conducted a twelve days’ mission at the Baptist Church, Ross Street, South Melbourne. Apparently, the church people had not been able to prepare properly for the mission, especially they had not mounted efforts to reach people from outside the church. When they got the notice that Piercey was coming, they did the best they could. “When between sixty-five and seventy declared definitely their decision for Christ, something of the power of Mr. Piercey’s appeal through the Holy Spirit can be estimated. We thank God for his visit.”<sup>564</sup>

Following that, Piercey visited the area covered by the Presbyterian Home Mission Station at Whitfield and Myrree. The Home Missionary was Mr. E. B Dalziel. He started preaching at Whitfield on May 17, having arrived the day before, and he preached there for ten days. There were over forty decisions for Christ. The final meeting was for testimonies. “Rather shyly at first, the young

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<sup>562</sup> *Southern Cross*. 29 August, 1913. page 1102.

<sup>563</sup> *Southern Cross*. 24 October, 1913. page 1342.

<sup>564</sup> *Southern Cross*. 8 May, 1914. page 560.

converts began to rise one by one; then, gaining confidence, others began to rise, until at least two or three would rise together, all eager to tell what God had done for them. The writer saw one lady (who was converted during the mission) rise three times before she got an opportunity to speak. The Home Missionary was so full of joy at the good work that he could only utter a few words, and at his request the large congregation rose and sang ‘Praise God from Whom all blessings flow.’”

At Myrree, the congregation had previously been quite small. They were strengthened and quickened. “By the time the mission closed, forty souls had publicly confessed Christ. Quite a number of these were grown men and women, and some remarkable cases of conversion took place. In the two places in the short time of four weeks, over eighty souls came forward and sought salvation. The Rev. J. T. Piercey is a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and wherever the way has been prepared by the prayers of God’s people, the Holy Spirit, in answer to prayer, convicts many of sin, and thus many souls are won for our Lord and Saviour.”<sup>565</sup>

For some weeks after that, Piercey continued preaching in the district surrounding Whitfield.<sup>566</sup> No other reports were published that year.

Only two reports appeared in the issues of the *Southern Cross* for **1915** about Joseph Piercey’s work.

During the middle of the year Piercey conducted a series of evangelistic missions throughout the districts of Ruffy, Terip, Strathbogie and Gooram. Despite many wet days, the meetings were very well attended.<sup>567</sup>

The other report said he had just concluded a mission of three weeks in length in the Greta Methodist Church, with two weeks given to Greta, and the third week spent at Molyullah. Several young people were converted at Greta, and “a very gracious work” took place at Molyullah, where fifteen people (mostly young people) took their stand for Jesus Christ.<sup>568</sup>

There are also indications that Piercey preached to the soldiers at various military training places, as opportunity arose.

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<sup>565</sup> *Southern Cross*. 26 June, 1914. page 782.

<sup>566</sup> *Southern Cross*. 17 July, 1914. page 879.

<sup>567</sup> *Southern Cross*. 25 June, 1915. page 616.

<sup>568</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 20 August, 1915. page 799.

In 1917, only one report was published about Joseph Piercey's work. This described three missions he conducted, in Mitcham, Box Hill, and Blackburn. The mission at Mitcham was based in Methodist work. "The joy of seeing so many, night after night, seeking salvation, gave [God's people] a new desire to enter into the work of the Lord." The last night was for testimonies. More conversions occurred after the mission was over.

At the Box Hill Methodist Church there was a great response in the Sunday school. The week night meetings, however, were not attended as well as they should have been. There were several conversions, but a large patriotic carnival, in support of the War effort, interfered substantially with the mission meetings.

At Blackburn, "many were led into the joy of forgiving love. Quite a number of the young people were led to Christ." Piercey stayed for the Church Anniversary services, and for the unveiling of an Honour Roll.<sup>569</sup>

A few pages later, a letter from J. T. Piercey was published in the *Southern Cross*. It concerned his eldest son who had been severely wounded in France.

"I suppose you know that my eldest son, Captain Hubert, fell shot through the brain on July 19, 1916, at Pozieres, in France. After the bullet went through his helmet and brain, it passed out the other side, causing a compound fracture of the skull. After he fell, he lay for forty-eight hours in a shell-pit, hit with our own shrapnel. He waked up and walked back to what turned out to be his own trenches. He met a gunner who informed him that his name was posted as dead and missing. He remembered no more for three weeks. The greatest doctor in London said his was a marvellous recovery, and was the only case in medical annals that had been known to recover from gangrene of the brain. The Duke of Connaught had him for a week as a guest in his lovely home. He showed him all over Windsor, and twice took him to see our King and Queen, and, when leaving, the Duke and Duchess presented him with a silver ash-tray. He returned last April, and is in his surgery again. [He was a dentist]. Roy, my youngest son, who won his rank as a lieutenant in Gallipoli, and was temporary captain at Weymouth with 1500 wounded under his care is now fighting again, and was in that big push a fortnight ago. Stanley, my second son, has

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<sup>569</sup> *Southern Cross*. 26 October, 1917. page 676.

received another stripe and crown in the field ambulance, and has been in action since last November. He has been in many of the big attacks.”<sup>570</sup>

The three sons who enlisted all eventually returned home safely.

The Rev. Joseph T. Piercey retired from evangelistic work early next year, and went to live with his other son, Hedley, who had taken up farming in the Whitfield area of Victoria. He preached from time to time in the local Presbyterian Church.

He died there suddenly on 14th March, 1921, and was buried in the Whitfield Cemetery at the age of 65 years. His widow lived to a great age. Because of his link with the Whitfield Presbyterian Church as his place of worship, and as an occasional preacher, the death certificate lists him as a Presbyterian minister. The funeral service at Whitfield was conducted by the Rev. Sam. Harrison, minister of the Wangaratta Baptist Church. Harrison had also been a pastor at the Christian Mission Church for several years, some years after Piercey had left Launceston, and was an experienced evangelist in his own right.

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<sup>570</sup> *Southern Cross*. 26 October, 1917. page 685.

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

### Basic Time Line of Events, Preachers and Officials for the First Thirty-Five Years, 1883 - 1918.

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#### 1883.

The first thirty-five years of the history of the Evangelisation Society constitutes its first period, and is the subject of study in this book. The names provided here are complete to the best of my knowledge, but some sources of information were not available to me.

Preparatory meetings for the starting of the Evangelisation Society of Victoria occurred early in 1883, and operations began with the first mission conducted by the Rev. A. J. Clarke in Castlemaine, probably in early August.

The advertisement which officially announced to the world the existence of the Evangelisation Society of Victoria appeared in the *Spectator and Wesleyan Chronicle* for 27 July, 1883, and probably in certain other papers as well.

Full-time preachers: The Rev. Alfred J. Clarke, and Mr. Arthur E. Eustace. Part-time preachers: Mr. J. S. Harrison and Mr. Edward Isaac. The Rev. J. H. Mitchell conducted one mission.

Public business meetings were held quarterly, at this stage, although the Executive would have met more frequently – probably monthly. The *Occasional Report Number One*, which flowed from the first of these meetings, appeared in the *Spectator*, 31 August, 1883, page 213.

#### 1884.

The fourth quarterly meeting was held on 11 July, 1884, and this would have corresponded to the first annual meeting, although the “Annual Meeting” name was not used.

Full-time preachers: The Rev. A. J. Clarke and Mr. Arthur E. Eustace. Part-time or associated preachers: Messrs. J. S. Harrison and Edward Isaac.

Mr. H. W. Axthelme was a German evangelist working amongst his own people. Mr. George Williams arrived from England in December, 1884, and led some missions for the Society over the next six months in 1885 before he moved on.

The Rev. Henry A. Langley (later Bishop of Bendigo) also conducted a mission or two for the Society in 1884.

### **1885.**

The Second Annual Report, flowing from the Second Annual Meeting, was circulated probably in late August, and is referred to in the *Spectator* for 11 September, 1885. page 446. Annual Reports were issued after this date, although that does not mean that they were all published, were even referred to in print, or that copies survived at all.

Full-time preachers: The Rev. A. J. Clarke and Mr. Arthur E. Eustace. Part-time and associated preachers: Mr. J. S. Harrison.

Mr. Robert Robertson became a part-time preacher during the year. Mr. H. W. Axthelme continued occasional joint work with the Society. Mr. George Williams worked for the first half of the year in Victoria before going to New South Wales, and then back to England.

Some work was also done in association with Dr. Harry Grattan Guinness.

### **1886.**

Full-time preachers: The Rev. A. J. Clarke, Mr. Arthur Eustace and Mr. Robert Robertson. Mr. George Muller of Bristol visited Victoria at the invitation of Mr. Charles Carter, secretary of the Society. Muller spoke at a special meeting of the Society, as reported in the *Southern Cross*, 19 March, 1886, and also at a number of other locations in Victoria.

**1887.**

The Rev. A. J. Clarke resigned from the Society very early in the year in order to take a pastorate in Sydney. Mr. Arthur E. Eustace resigned from the society in July, for health reasons. Mr. Robert Robertson was the only continuing full time evangelist.

Mr. Edward Hurditch from London led missions for the Society for at least six months through the middle part of the year, before going on to other parts, and then going back to London. Mr. Jesse Mayo also led a number of missions for the Society. Mr. W. A. Southwell did so as well.

**1888.**

The main feature in 1888 for the Society was that the world-famous athlete, Mr. George Clark, visited Victoria and worked for the Society for six months.

Full-time evangelists: Mr. Robert Robertson for the whole year, and Mr. William H. Scurr after April/May.

Mr. W. Robertson also led a number of mission activities for the Society.

**1889.**

Full-time evangelists: Mr. Robert Robertson and Mr. William H. Scurr. Associated evangelists: Mr. A. Robertson, Mr. R. Majilton.

The Rev. Dr. Thomas Porter, Baptist minister, led some missions for the Society. Mr. G. Lake, English evangelist, worked for the Society in the last few months of the year.

**1890.**

Full-time evangelists: Mr. Robert Robertson and Mr. William H. Scurr. Mr. G. Lake worked for the Society for the first three months of this year. Mr. A. Robertson and Mr. G. Majilton also did some mission work for the Society.

In October, Mr. John Carson, Scottish evangelist, arrived, and worked for the Society through until March, 1891.

**1891.**

Full-time evangelists: Mr. Robert Robertson and Mr. William H. Scurr.

Mr. Duncan Wright, Presbyterian evangelist from New Zealand, visited in the mid-year. He arrived to work for the Society, starting in October. Pastor H. G. Blaikie, Baptist minister, led some missions. Mr. A. E. West joined the team to work especially in frontier areas.

**1892.**

Full-time evangelists: Messrs. Robert Robertson, Duncan Wright, William H. Scurr, and A. E. West. However, after Duncan Wright had brought his family to Victoria, the E.S.V. decided they could not afford to offer him a permanent position. After some months as a temporary evangelist for the E.S.V., he became freelance in August. A deep economic depression had an effect.

**1893.**

Full-time evangelists: Messrs. Robert Robertson and William H. Scurr. Mr. Duncan Wright worked in Victoria until August, when he left for New South Wales, and returned to New Zealand in October.

**1894.**

Full-time evangelists: Messrs. R. Robertson and W. H. Scurr. I was not able to view the copies of the Southern Cross for this year.

**1895.**

Full-time evangelists: Messrs. R. Robertson and W. H. Scurr. Mr. Duncan Wright returned from New Zealand in June to work for the Society again.

Mr. James Hood began work for the Society in October.

**1896.**

It was in 1896 that the policy slowly began of sending the evangelists out in pairs, a preacher and a singer/musician. The first team of this kind was R. Robertson and James H. Stephens.

Full-time evangelists: Robert Robertson, James H. Stephens, William H. Scurr and James Hood. Mr. Thomas Chuck joined the team in August.

**1897.**

The Evangelisation Society of Victoria changed its name to the Evangelisation Society of Australasia.

Full-time evangelists: Messrs. Robert Robertson and James Stephens, James Hood and Thomas Chuck. Mr. James Robertson joined the full-time team in July.

**1898.**

Robert Robertson and James Stephens worked together for part of the year. Later in the year, James Stephens started to work in Tasmania. Several of his missions occurred in conjunction with the Presbyterian minister, the Rev. Matthew Hart. Other missions he led on his own.

William Scurr went to South Australia with Mr. William Toshack as singer/musician. Scurr was ill for part of this time. The name of William Toshack appears later as a Baptist minister, and as a Congregational minister, but it is not clear if this is in fact the same person, or if there are in fact three people by that name. Messrs. James Hood and James Robertson continued as full-time preachers.

**1899.**

James H. Stephens again spent part of his time in Tasmania, and again worked at times with the Rev. Matthew Hart. At other times he worked in Victoria with W. H. Scurr.

Robert Robertson went to New Zealand with his son as musician. This son may (but not certainly) have been Joshua, who appears again

later in the story. William H. Scurr and James Robertson continued as full-time evangelists.

**1900.**

Full-time evangelists: Robert Robertson, William H. Scurr, James H. Stephens and James Robertson. R. Rendall led a mission.

**1901.**

Full-time evangelists: Robert Robertson, William H. Scurr, James Robertson and James H. Stephens, the last-named working in New Zealand all year. Robert Robertson resigned at the end of the year.

**1902.**

This was the year of the famous Mission and revival.

The Rev. Reuben A. Torrey and Mr. Charles M. Alexander, American evangelists, worked for the Evangelisation Society for five months, from April to August.

Mr. William H. Scurr resigned from the Society in May/June, to work for another organisation in New South Wales. Mr. James Robertson worked for the Society for the whole year. Mr. James H. Stephens worked in New Zealand all year. Part of this time he worked with Dr. Harry Grattan Guinness.

After the big mission in April, several new people worked for the Society. These were Mr. Julian Neale, Mr. R. Thompson, the Rev. W. Lockhart Morton and his daughter, and the Rev. Edward Isaac. Mr. Alex. J. Black joined the team later in the year. It is not always easy to know whether other names should also have been included.

**1903.**

Full-time evangelists: Mr. Julian Neale, Mr. A. J. Black and Mr. James Robertson. Mr. James H. Stephens continued full time in New Zealand. The Rev. W. Lockhart Morton served the Society, but not full time.

**1904.**

Full-time evangelists: Messrs. Julian Neale, Alex. J. Black, James Robertson and James H. Stephens – the last-named working in New Zealand. The Rev. W. L. Morton also conducted some missions for the Society.

**1905.**

Full-time evangelists: Messrs Alex J. Black and James Robertson. Mr. James H. Stephens worked in New Zealand. The Rev. W. L. Morton also led some missions for the Society. James Robertson died fairly suddenly near the end of the year.

**1906.**

The Rev. Joshua Robertson (Baptist) joined the Society early in the year.

Mr. James H. Stephens continued full time in New Zealand. The Rev. Joseph T. Piercey joined the Society full-time in April. Messrs. Stewart Byron and Amos Sidwell joined as soloists. Stewart Byron later became a Baptist minister. The Rev. W. L. Morton also led some missions for the Society.

Much later in the year, Mr. William Watson and the Rev. William T. Williams (briefly) joined the Society's staff.

**1907.**

Full-time evangelists: The Rev. Joseph T. Piercey and Mr. Amos Sidwell, the Rev. Joshua Robertson and Mr. W. Watson. Mr. James H. Stephens worked in New Zealand. The Rev. W. L. Morton also led some missions for the Society.

**1908.**

Full-time evangelists: The Rev. J. T. Piercey and Mr. Amos Sidwell, and the Rev. Joshua Robertson. Mr. James H. Stephens

worked in New Zealand. The Rev. Jesse Mayo also led some missions for the Society this year.

### **1909.**

The Rev. J. T. Piercey continued full time, as did Amos Sidwell.

Part-time workers included Mr. Donald McClean, Mr. James McKendrick from Scotland, and the Rev. W. L. Morton.

After the Chapman – Alexander Mission in Victoria, two of the workers from this Mission team worked for the Evangelisation Society for a period. These were the Irish evangelist, the Rev. William P. Nicholson, and the American singer, Mr. Raymond Hemminger.

### **1910.**

Full-time evangelist: The Rev. Joseph T. Piercey, often working with his daughter, Muriel, as soloist.

For part of the year, the Rev. W. P. Nicholson and Mr. Raymond Hemminger continued working for the Society, but spreading out into other states of Australia. In due course, they left Australia, and did not return until the second Chapman – Alexander Campaign occurred in 1912 and 1913.

### **1911.**

Full-time evangelist: The Rev. Joseph T. Piercey, often aided by his daughter, Muriel. A Scottish evangelist, Mr. James Macfarlane, also worked for the Society for a period.

### **1912 through to 1918.**

In these years, so far as I can tell, the Rev. Joseph T. Piercey was the only full-time evangelist, at times working with the help of his daughter, Muriel Piercey. In August, 1917, Mr. John Robinson B.A., was asked to become one of the evangelists. In 1918, Mr. Piercey retired from the active ministry. In these war years, and immediately afterwards, it is probable that other people took on the evangelistic work of the Society whose names do not appear in published reports.

In these years also, separate Evangelisation Societies had sprung up in New South Wales and Queensland, with their own staff and operational procedures.

This ended the first period of the history of the Evangelisation Society in Victoria. After the First World War, the Society's work was eventually re-built in other forms. For information about this second period of the Society's history, the reader is referred to Mr. Donald Prout's book.

## **THE OFFICIALS OF THE SOCIETY.**

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In one sense it is not easy to reconstruct a complete and chronological list of the officials of the Society, although it would be a simple matter to reproduce the advertisements which appeared regularly through each year, and which always gave the names of the members of the Executive Committee.

There were a small number of outstanding leaders amongst the Executive members who held offices for a long time. However, they had periods of sickness, and they made trips to England for shorter or longer times. So, there were many "Acting" office-bearers, and others who served for short periods, and then left the Executive, and perhaps returned later. Here we will look in a little more detail at the Executive Committee as it existed at certain stages of its history through this period.

For some of the time, the Executive of the Society had the policy of including on the Executive ordained ministers from the main denominations that the Society served. However, these ministers also tended to come and go as their parish appointments and other movements varied from time to time.

The Hon. James Balfour, M.L.C., was President of the Evangelisation Society and Chairman of the Executive Committee more or less from the beginning of the Society in 1883 until his death

on 24 August, 1913. Balfour was an outstanding Presbyterian layman and leader who supported many very worthy causes throughout his long life, including many evangelistic causes.<sup>571</sup> Balfour was a wealthy businessman and politician, who was involved in so many good things that Harper managed to fill his book with information about Balfour's many activities, and yet hardly mentioned the Evangelisation Society at all.

The indefatigable honorary secretary and workhorse of the Society throughout this period was Mr. Charles Carter. Before coming to Australia he "was well known on almost every racecourse in England – as an evangelistic preacher. He was one of the principal workers of the London Open-air Mission." Upon coming to Australia, he was a business man, and was secretary of the Evangelisation Society from its beginning, or from very soon afterwards. At the time of the 1902 mission he was president of the Victorian Open-air Mission and the Baptist Preacher's Society. During the mission he was one of the secretaries, and conducted several of the meetings, including the overflow meetings at the Exhibition Building.<sup>572</sup> He was a leading Baptist layman, and ultimately became President of the Baptist Union in Victoria.

Indeed, all of the laymen who served on the Society's Committees were men of this stamp, and their names appear in the records of a wide range of other organisations involved in Church, evangelistic and missionary life.

In 1883, the basic organisation consisted of a large Committee, and a very small Executive Committee. This was shown in the advertisement which announced the beginning of the Society.

The Executive Committee consisted of three people, and these were the Hon. James Balfour, Mr. R. Gillespie and Mr. Theo. Kitchen.

The large Committee consisted of the following ministers:- W. Allen, G. W. Gillings, Henry Langley, H. B. Macartney, Dr. Thomas Porter, B. Rodda, W. F. Wells and A. Youl, and the following laymen:- Edward Baines, James Balfour, David Beath, J. H. Davies, W. George, R. Gillespie, James Griffiths, F. Haller, J. H. Hill, W. Howat, A. B. G. Johnston, Philip Kitchen, Theo. Kitchen, J. W. Rosier, Andrew Scott,

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<sup>571</sup> Andrew Harper, *The Honourable James Balfour M.L.C. A Memoir*. Critchley Parker. 1918.

<sup>572</sup> *Southern Cross*. Torrey – Alexander Souvenir. Page 10.

Robert Scott, Thomas Scott, James White and Dr. William Warren. Mr. A. J. Clarke, the first evangelist, was included as a “Mr.,” possibly because he had resigned from the pastorate at West Melbourne Baptist Church in order to be the evangelist, and the clergy who were more accustomed to proper protocol would perhaps have taken the view that Clarke was no longer a Baptist minister, and had therefore lost his entitlement to be called a “Reverend”.<sup>573</sup>

In 1890, at the end of January, the advertisements which appeared each week in the *Southern Cross* indicated that the Society was run by a larger Executive Committee only, although there may have been other committees existing to offer needed support. James Balfour was the President. There were two ministers – H. B. Macartney (Anglican), and Henry Howard (Wesleyan). The laymen were David Beath, Robert Gillespie, James Griffiths, G. T. Johnson and Theo. Kitchen, with Edward Baines as treasurer, Charles Carter as secretary, and W. A. Southwell as “Hon. Sec.,” probably meaning that he helped Carter, or was acting secretary while Carter was ill or overseas.<sup>574</sup>

When the first issue of the *Victorian Evangelist* was published in August, 1896, the basic organisation was described as being composed of an Executive Committee, and also a Committee of Reference.

The Executive Committee consisted entirely of laymen. These were James Balfour, Theo. Kitchen, Philip Kitchen, R. Gillespie, James Griffiths, C. M. Holmes, along with the treasurer and secretary, Baines and Carter.

The Committee of Reference consisted of three ministers:– Archdeacon Langley, H. B. Macartney and A. Yule, and the following laymen:– David Beath, H. Berry, J. L. Currie, James Griffiths, G. M. Hitchcock, W. Howat, R. Gillespie and Dr. W. Warren.<sup>575</sup>

Just to emphasise the changing nature of the membership of these committees, less than twelve months later, the advertisement said that the Executive Committee consisted of James Balfour, Robert Gillespie, James Griffiths, Theo Kitchen, C. M. Holmes, Philip Kitchen, James Lewis and C. Fullwood, plus Carter and Baines.<sup>576</sup>

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<sup>573</sup> *Spectator*. 27 July, 1883. page 213.

<sup>574</sup> *Southern Cross*. 31 January, 1890. page 90.

<sup>575</sup> Insertion in *Spectator*, 27 August, 1896. pages not numbered.

<sup>576</sup> *Southern Cross*. April, 1897.

The advertisements appearing in January 1900 showed that the Executive Committee consisted of one minister:- the Rev. Charles Tregear (Wesleyan). The Rev. H. B. Macartney had left for a job in England several years beforehand. There were also ten laymen on the Committee:- James Balfour, Robert Gillespie, James Griffiths, Theo. Kitchen, C. M. Holmes, James Lewis, C. Fullwood, J. C. Langley, plus the secretary and treasurer, Carter and Baines.<sup>577</sup>

Late in 1905, the advertisement showed that the Executive Committee consisted of a list of laymen again, without the presence of a minister. These men were James Balfour, James Griffiths, Theo. Kitchen, C. M. Holmes, James Lewis, W. Howat, J. C. Langley, T. C. Camm, W. H. Calder, and G. P. Barber, plus the inevitable Carter and Baines.<sup>578</sup>

At the beginning of 1911, the Executive Committee consisted of five ministers, and ten laymen. The ministers were J. Barton, F. C. Spurr (Baptist), W. Thompson, D. M. Deasey (Anglican), and D. Ross. The laymen were James Balfour, G. P. Barber, T. C. Camm, W. H. Calder, James Griffiths, C. M. Holmes, W. Howat, James Lewis, and Carter and Baines.

After the death of James Balfour in 1913, the Presidency was taken by the Anglican layman, Mr. James Griffiths. Griffiths was the owner of the famous tea and coffee empire, of that name. He was the generous supporter of many worthy causes, both religious and cultural, and was for many years a member of the Anglican Synod.<sup>579</sup>

For example, in April, 1915, as mentioned, the President was James Griffiths, and there was a vice-president also. This was Dr. J. J. Kitchen. There were four ministers on the Committee. These were J. Barton, D. M. Deasey, R. W. Thompson and Joshua Robertson. Apart from Griffiths and Kitchen, the laymen on the Committee were T. C. Camm, C. Fullwood, C. M. Holmes, W. Howat, James Lewis and the indestructible Carter and Baines.

After being honorary treasurer for over thirty years, Mr. Edward Baines died in 1916.

As we approach the end of our period of study, in July, 1917, we find that James Griffiths is still President, but there are two vice-

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<sup>577</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 5 January, 1900. page 12, and on other occasions.

<sup>578</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday., 3 November. 1905.

<sup>579</sup> V. Wehner. *Tea and Charity. The Life and Times of James Griffiths, Tea Merchant and Philanthropist*. Ferntree Gully, Knox Historical Society. 2009.

presidents – Dr. J. J. Kitchen and Mr. W. Howat. The ministers on the Committee are now J. Barton, W. Borland, H. Gainford, Joshua Robertson and William H. Scurr. Apart from Griffiths, Kitchen and Howat, the laymen are T. C. Camm, James Lewis, W. T. Wallis and J. Birtchnell. The secretary is still Mr. Charles Carter, but there is now an acting treasurer – Mr. H. Webster, and a Collector – Miss Tait, of 39 Walpole Street, Kew. There is also a Committee of Reference, consisting of James Griffiths, David Beath and H. Berry.<sup>580</sup>

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<sup>580</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 6 July, 1917. page 432.

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

### SOME INTERESTING CLIPPINGS.

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#### A FORERUNNER OF THE SOCIETY

##### **The Melbourne United Evangelistic Association. [1879.]**

At a meeting of the board of the above association, held on the 10th March, it was resolved that a conference should be held for the promotion of scriptural holiness. A committee was appointed to consider the matter, to fix the time of holding the conference, and to make all the necessary arrangements. This committee has frequently met, and the members of it now think that the time has come when the proposed conference should be brought prominently before the minds of God's people in the various sections of His Church. The committee is profoundly impressed with the conviction that every step taken in this matter should be sanctified with the Word of God and with prayer; and that all who take part in the preparatory work necessary, and also those who may resolve to attend, should carefully examine themselves, and in solemn humility before God should "cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and Spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Let there be much heart-searching and sincere but secret confession of sin before God; then let us meet together, with large expectations, holy desires and purposes, and with hearts prepared for all the "fullness of God." It is proposed to hold this conference in the Temperance Hall during the last week in May, on the 27th, 28th and 29th; the sessions of the conference to be held during the afternoon and evening. Provision will be made for the friends coming from a distance, and for those resident out of Melbourne lodgings will be found if they communicate sufficiently early with Mr. C. E. Good, the secretary of the association. Ministers and laymen of repute will preside over the sessions, and will introduce the successive subjects or meditation. Briefly outlined and subject to modification, the programme of the conference will be somewhat as follows:- The chairman will prepare the conference for solemn public and secret

confession of sin by an address on Aaron's confession on the day of atonement. If we are to be lifted up, we must lie very low; if we are to be "cleansed from all unrighteousness," we must "confess our sin." Much will depend on this. Brethren in Christ, let us be faithful! National sins, sins of the home, sins of the church, sins in the business, sins of the life, secret sins, and sins of the heart – let us solemnly lay them before God; for "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sin, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Then from these depths will we contemplate the holy character of our God, note God's requirements in reference to holiness, study His standard from His word, and look up to the Perfect Pattern. This will lead us to understand "God's will concerning us" – what He would have us do. Then will we consecrate ourselves unto the Lord. First will we note what Christ did; then by the mercies of God will we present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, and acceptable unto God. In the following session we purpose meditating upon God's covenant with the consecrated, and from His own Word see how willing He is to accept us in the beloved, how efficacious is the precious blood of Christ to cleanse, and how able is our God to keep that which we have committed unto him. On the third day we propose that this Christian life of holiness should be further considered in the light of the blessing it brings to the experience of the believer. What *rest* from sin! What *liberty* in the Gospel! And the realisation of Paul's incomparable prayer for the Ephesians in being "filled with all the fullness of God!" The final session of the conference will be occupied by considering this life of holiness in its bearing upon the church and the world. If we are thus quickened into newness of life, how earnest, how effectual will be our prayers; how blessed will be the Christian fellowship; how definite and certain will be the guidance in all the churches' action! No doubts then about the pillar of cloud or of fire, and no hesitancy in following. Then, finally, shall we rise "full of faith and power" to witness for Christ; and, considering what our privilege and duty are, and being richly baptised with the Holy Ghost, each member, as well as minister, will go everywhere preaching the Word; and much people will be added unto the Lord.

The committee desire that both in town and suburbs, and, in fact, wherever interest is taken in this matter, preparatory prayer-meetings will be organised. Let there be much prayer, strong faith; then shall we have the rich blessings of His grace resting upon us.

A preparatory prayer-meeting is held in the hall of the Y. M. C. A. every Friday evening, at half-past seven o'clock. Information about the conference can be had on application to the secretary, Mr. C. E. Good, 87 Russell-street, Melbourne, to whom any communications should be made, and suggestions sent.

Friends from the country, or from other colonies, are requested to communicate with the secretary if they desire to have accommodation provided for them during the conference.

James Balfour, President of the association

John F. Horsley,

Henry A. Langley,

H. B. Macartney

Richard V, Danne. (sub-committee.)

C. Edwin Good, Secretary.<sup>581</sup>

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**The Rev. A. J. CLARKE WRITES  
ABOUT HIS WORK AMONGST THE HOP-PICKERS  
IN BAIRNSDALE.**

Some time ago the Rev. H. B. Macartney, of Caulfield, received a letter from a Christian lady, asking him if anything could be done to take the Gospel to the hop-pickers in Gippsland. He forwarded the letter to the Hon. Secretary of the Evangelisation Society, who at once began to make preparations for a fortnight's mission. An appeal was made to the readers of the "Southern Cross" for tracts and books. In a few days we received enough to distribute during our stay. We left Melbourne by the morning train on Tuesday morning, March 18th. The trip to Sale is a very pleasant one. The country about Warragul is very beautiful. The fern-tree gullies on each side of the railway are very fine; while the tall gum trees look stately far up to the heavens. Many are straight as a ship's mast, and not a bow or a limb for two hundred feet.

We left the main line at Traralgon, and steamed on the Heyfield, where we were met by Mr. Buntine, of Denison. After some enquiries

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<sup>581</sup> *Spectator*. 11 April, 1879. page 595.

about the need for evangelistic work, we drove on to Meddow Bank [sic], where we collected the neighbours together for a service about eight o'clock in the evening. Wednesday morning we started to catch the Dargo<sup>582</sup> at Latrobe Bridge, and by half-past one we were on board and on our way to Bairnsdale. Soon after we started down the river the dinner bell rang, and we were all soon seated at the table and enjoying the capital lunch provided. Lunch over we were in good trim to enjoy the scenery. The banks of the Latrobe are fringed with acacia and blackwood trees. We were soon into Lake Wellington, which is from ten to twelve miles long. As we near the eastern side of the lake we were all wondering how we were to get out of it. One of the passengers thought if left to ourselves we should be some days on the lake. But soon the Dargo was steaming through M'Clellan's Straits. Here for five miles the scene is lovely. Hundreds of waterfowl was swimming on the still waters. As we passed Seacombe, an old cattle station on the south bank of the Straits, an old Gippslander pointed out a spot where one of the early settlers names Ewen lost his life trying to swim across the Straits on horseback. After passing through Lake Victoria the next lake we steam through is Lake King; this is said to be the most beautiful of the Gippsland lakes. Mount Taylor, Baw Baw, and the range of Australian Alps are seen in the distance. At the entrance of this lake is the little fishing village Paynesville. We enquired of the people on the jetty if there was any church there. One of the men told us they had plenty of public houses but no churches. After sailing across Lake King we entered the Mitchell River. For six miles we steam up a narrow peninsula, with the bay lying east and west. We were soon in our mission field. The hop gardens are scattered all up the banks of the river. It was now getting quite dark, and all along the banks of the river were the camp fires of the hop pickers. They were just cooking their suppers. As we passed each garden a crowd of children came down to the bank and cheered. At half past seven we drew into the wharf. We were soon recognised by an old Melbourne friend, who told us that all the hotels were full, and that we might possibly secure a bed at Petersen's Club Hotel if we lost no time in getting up. In about ten minutes we were at the hotel, and had secured our beds. We found Petersen's Hotel a very quiet comfortable home.

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<sup>582</sup> A river steamer.

After ten we started out to survey our field of labour. After an hour's stroll through the town and delivering a few tracts, we retired to rest, to be early in the field on Thursday morning.

We found a great variety of people in the hop gardens. Nearly all the townspeople in Bairnsdale go to picking. Whole families go away to the gardens every morning. Here and there you see an invalid, who has come among the hops hoping to get restored to health. But most of the pickers come from nearly every part of Victoria. Most of them live in the gardens where they are working. There are rude huts built for them of bark off the trees. One thing surprised us in going round the gardens. There are numbers of young people, some of them mere children, and yet they are away here entirely unprotected. There are numbers of young girls from 14 to 20 years of age, in some cases three or four belonging to one family. You wonder what the fathers and mothers of such girls expect their futures to be, after working alongside some of the worst larrikins from Melbourne all day, and then in some of the gardens they clear one of the huts, and dance up to ten o'clock or later. It is quite time something was done to send the Gospel among them.

We decided to take the gardens below the bridge first. Some idea may be gained of the extent of our work if we give but a list of the gardens we have to visit on the east side of the river. There are ten grounds – Taylor's, Cochrane's, Rawlin's, Greenwood's, Hoddinott's, Laird's, Poulson and Co's, Redenbach's, Hoskin's and Mill's. On the west side of the river there is Hoddinott's, Ashton's, Oliver's, Sickelson's, Sorman's, Kerwin's, Winter's, Hayward's, Florence's, Joritson's, Taylor's and Macleod's gardens. Some of these are at least half a mile apart. There are a good number of pickers in some of them. Redenbach's has sixty-eight, Poulson and co. has one hundred and twenty, and Taylor about three hundred. The above is an outline of part of our field. I hope to be able to give some reports of our work next week.<sup>583</sup>

### **Second Installment.**

We began our work on Thursday morning. Mr. Buntine, of Denison (who came up to help us), and Mrs. Clarke started for McLeod's garden. The pickers gladly received the tracts and books.

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<sup>583</sup> *Southern Cross*. Saturday, 29 March, 1884. page 11.

Only one woman refused. She said, "I am not of your religion, so I cannot read your tracts." While they were visiting the garden, we called upon the Rev. J. Kane [Wesleyan], who kindly offered us his church for some meetings. In about an hour we had collected some of the officers of the Presbyterian and Wesleyan Churches, and it was decided to hold three services on the Sunday, and a service on Monday and Tuesday nights.

On Friday we prepared for a long day's work. Having secured a horse to carry our bags, we started for the gardens. After travelling down the river side about five miles we came to Mr. Redenback's garden. We arranged to hold a service there in the evening; and after a short rest we took our bundles of tracts and began our visit through the gardens. We went through Mr. Redenback's first. The first lot of pickers we came to was a man, and his wife, and little adopted daughter. His name is Spicer. They have come up from the Western Port for the hop season. He is a real earnest Christian. We had heard a report of his work before we met with him. When he and his wife came up they brought a supply of cards and blue ribbon, and had succeeded in getting some notorious drunkards to take the blue ribbon, and better still, there are undoubted conversions as the result of his work. We were well received all through this garden. We met with one old man who has only recently come from London. He has been engaged there for years as a horse dealer. He told us he had been a heavy drinker. We sat by his bin and helped him to pick his hops. He readily entered into conversation about his soul. We told him of Christ and salvation. He has now trusted in Christ, and taken the blue ribbon. The other night he said, "What a wonder that I should come so many thousand miles to get my soul saved. Now Christ is precious to me." Presently we came to a German, who at once refused the book we offered him. He said, "I am not your Church." "But the book tells about the Blood, and not about a Church." "Do you belong to the Salvation Army?" "No." "What do you wear the blue ribbon for?" "Because I have given up taking intoxicating drink." "Vell, I cannot take your book, I am not of your religion; I do not believe in your religion. There is a man of your religion in the next garden, and he will not let his daughters dance at night. Vat do you think of that? – that is not religion. I know vot the Bible says; it says that Moses and the people of Israel danced for a week when they came out of Egypt, and

that man will not allow his daughters to dance in the hop gardens for one hour each night.” After leaving our German friend, we soon came to a young man from Sandhurst, in Kent. We soon found out that he had a Christian father and mother. “But,” he said, “I took up with Godless companions, and against my father’s wish I went to sea. But I found it a rough life, drinking and swearing. I got tired of the life on board ship, and when she came into port I left her.” He seemed glad for someone to speak to him of Christ. After explaining to him the plan of salvation, and with the hope that he would accept it, we left him. We distributed tracts among the gardens on the east side of the river until about four in the afternoon; then we went over to the west side and distributed our books to the pickers in Mr. Hoddinott’s garden, and invited them over to our meeting at night. We then took the boat and pulled over to Mr. Redenback’s to prepare for services. It was now getting dark, and the scene about the huts was a lively one. Three or four large fires were blazing away in this yard, and the people were getting ready for supper. Each party was engaged with its own cooking. There are numbers of billies and kettles all hanging over the fires, and numbers of frying pans all frizzling and hissing. Some had steaks or chops, others indulge in sausages. In a very short time they had tea ready, and we gladly accept Mr. Redenback’s invitation to share a cup of tea with them. The day among the hops had sufficiently sharpened our appetites that we were not particular about a grand room or a polished table; a hot cup of tea in a bark hut was very welcome.

We were ordered to lose no time, as the meeting was to begin at half-past seven. Soon after seven our congregation began to assemble. They were a motley group, English, Irish, Germans, Swedes, and Victorians. There were well-to-do families, who had come for a holiday and were picking hops to meet the expenses of the journey. There are some old men, whose trembling limbs tell a story of hard drinking. They are earning another cheque for some publican to bank. Among the crowd there are a number of larrikins from Hotham and Collingwood, and beside those there are a number of Gippsland people from miles around, who have left their homes for a month for the hop fields. As we look at them, we feel it is a grand opportunity to preach the gospel, there are people there from outlying districts, who scarcely ever get to any service. Perhaps they get at most four services a year. Sharp at half-past seven we begin our meeting. Mr. Buntine and Mr.

Spicer stand with us. After singing a few hymns from Sankey's and two short prayers, we gave an address. They are as attentive as an audience would be in a Melbourne Church. The power of the Lord was present. Many wept as they listened to the word. It was a joy to point three enquiring ones to Christ. After the meeting was over, tired but happy we mounted our horses and started for Bairnsdale. As we rode along the river side, mile after mile it was dotted with tents and camp fires. In one large hut there are perhaps fifty or sixty young men and girls, from about fourteen to twenty years of age dancing. It is evident that the free life of the hop gardens is not the least of the inducements that brings so many young people from Melbourne to Bairnsdale during the hop picking. The owners of the hop-gardens prefer local pickers to the Melbourne ones, as the Melbourne ones are too rowdy. It is only [in] the larger gardens where they are employed. Tomorrow we intend to visit Mr. Howitt's garden, where the blacks are picking. If we get time we will send a report of our visit to the other gardens, next week.<sup>584</sup>

### **Third Installment.**

We went to distribute some books and tracts among the blacks in Mr. Howitt's garden on Saturday morning. All the blacks work in this garden during the hop picking, as they look upon Mr. Howitt as their friend. They eagerly took the picture books. We spent about two hours among them telling them of Jesus, the sinner's friend. At three in the afternoon we started for Paynesville, where we had arranged to hold a gospel temperance meeting at night. Paynesville is a small fishing village at the entrance to Lake King. There are about a hundred people living there. There is no place of worship, but four hotels. For a long time the fishermen's wives fought hard against any licensed public house being planted in their midst; yet against the wish of the people four licences have been granted – one for every twenty-five of the population. But we are delighted to learn that the publicans are getting uneasy. The bit of blue is rapidly reducing the number of their customers. One of the fishermen who had the blue ribbon on his coat said, "We shall shut up three of the houses out of the four. I expect there will be visitors enough to keep one open, and if not, that will have to go." We devoutly hope that his prophesy will speedily come

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<sup>584</sup> *Southern Cross*. Saturday, 5 April, 1884. page 13.

true. It is a pity that the blighting influence of the drink traffic should rest upon such a fair spot.

At half-past seven we met for our meeting in the State School. We mustered some sixty strong, or a little over half the population. We had a real lively time. Some of the fishermen prayed with an earnestness and liberty that told they were no strangers at the throne of grace. One man said, "I am glad to bear my testimony for Christ. It is a month since I gave up the drink. Now I am trusting in Christ. It has been the happiest month of my life. I can recommend you a Christian life. Trust Christ, and give up drink, and you will never regret it; and you will keep your pledge if you ask for grace to help you." Mr. Spicer spoke to them next. He could put the subject right home, as he is one of the Hastings fishermen. We followed with an appeal to the [unsaved] to accept of Christ. We asked the anxious to remain, but no one left, so we had a good after-meeting. After speaking to the anxious, several came forward and put on the blue. One old man was sent up to the meeting by his companions at the hotel. Just for a joke they said, "Mr. Spicer wants to see you up at the State school." He came up to know what he was wanted for. Mr. Spicer told him it was a lark on the part of his companions; but, said he, "Never mind; now you are here you better put on the blue ribbon." He consented, and went away bearing the blue. Now the poor old man who had been drinking for three years is wearing the blue. His wife also has signed the pledge, and on Saturday night they were both on their knees seeking salvation.

On Sunday we drove back to Bairnsdale for our work there. Morning and evening we held a service in the Wesleyan Church, and at three in the afternoon we had a meeting for the united Sunday Schools. The church was filled with young people. We had a full congregation again in the evening. Many appeared impressed, and all the congregation remained to the prayer meeting. Monday and Tuesday evenings we continued the meetings in Bairnsdale. Tuesday night we sang around the town, and gathered a large crowd into the church. It was evident we had secured the class of people we were anxious to reach. Some came without a coat on their backs, and others were black and dirty just as they left their work. Most of them stayed until the after meeting was over. Several anxious enquirers were spoken with, and some professed to find peace through believing in Christ.

Wednesday we started for Sale. We went to the prayer meeting at the Presbyterian Church in the evening, and on Thursday evening we held a united evangelistic service in the Wesleyan Church. At the close of the service the ministers and office bearers of the various churches met to decide about the possibility of a united mission for Sale. It was generally agreed that it was advisable to hold a mission, but the matter was left undecided until the Rev. J. S. H. Royce, the Wesleyan minister, has entered upon his work there.

The best time for another mission among the hop pickers will be about November next. Are there not some of the Lord's people who may be taking a change about that time? If there are, and they would be willing to help to form a band of workers to conduct services and visit the gardens, would they kindly send their names to the hon. secretary of the Evangelisation Society, 28 Flinders Lane west, Melbourne. The harvest is great, but the labourers are few. The work is far too great to be done by the Christians in the neighbourhood. Souls are dying for lack of knowledge. Who can help to go among them, and tell them of Jesus the Mighty to save.

Alfred J. Clarke.<sup>585</sup>

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## **THE VISIT OF MR. GEORGE MULLER OF BRISTOL.**

After he retired from running the Bristol orphanages, George Muller made a number of preaching tours to a surprising number of different parts of the world. After all, he did not leave home on these tours until he was more than seventy years of age, and he kept up the touring, on and off, until he was around ninety.<sup>586</sup>

He spent quite some time in Australia, overall, but this was the only visit he made to Victoria. He came to Victoria at the invitation of the Evangelisation Society, and as their guest. A special gathering of the friends of the Evangelisation Society was arranged in Melbourne in order to meet and hear Muller, and it is about this meeting that the report was published.

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<sup>585</sup> *Southern Cross*. Saturday, 12 April, 1884. page 11.

<sup>586</sup> Mrs. Muller. *The Preaching Tours and Missionary Labours of George Muller (of Bristol)*. London. James Nisbet and Co. Second edition. 1889.

Muller was not a really good public speaker. He had a harsh voice, and spoke with a strong German accent. The thing I find most surprising about the following article is that it says much more about what the local people said and did than it says about the contents of Muller's address.

**“The Evangelisation Society of Victoria.**

The half-yearly meeting of the Evangelisation Society of Victoria was held on the 16<sup>th</sup> inst., in Collins Street Baptist Church, when the opportunity was taken advantage of to give a welcome to Mr. George Muller of Bristol. Mrs. Muller also occupied a seat on the platform. The Hon. C. J. Ham presided, in the absence of the Hon. J. Balfour, who was absent through ill-health, and there was a very large attendance.

The chairman said that this was the half-yearly meeting of the Evangelisation Society of Victoria, which was of an entirely undenominational character, and simply sent missionaries into the bush or up-country, or anywhere where they might be needed. Their object was to bring the truths of Christianity before the people, and then allow them to join whatever sect they wished. The arrival of Mr. Muller amongst them was very opportune, and as the meeting would, doubtless, be glad to hear him, he would not himself make any extended remarks.

Mr. R. Gillespie, (secretary) said that he had no formal report to bring up, but he might be permitted to make a verbal statement. The Evangelisation Society, as the chairman had told them, was of a purely undenominational character. To show this he might mention that during the year there had been visited – eleven Presbyterian churches, ten Wesleyan churches, seven Bible Christian churches, four Baptist churches, nine State-schools, one Church of England, one Congregational church, fourteen public halls, two Primitive Methodists, one Bethel, and one private house. They had visited altogether forty-two places, conducted twenty-one missions, and held 473 meetings, with estimated attendance of 95,000. The evangelists had gone back to the places they had previously visited, and found that many of their converts were now prominent members of churches. It was through the agency of this society that Mr. Muller was personally invited to come to Australia. This one thing constituted a great claim

by the society on the Churches of Victoria. But the society could not be carried on without means, and 300 pounds would be required to meet the ordinary expenditure. Only 40 pounds remained on hand, leaving 260 pounds to be made up. Besides this, the society had in view extraordinary expenditure, as they contemplated bringing out one or two additional evangelists to this Colony. But he would not detain them, preferring to leave the matter in their hands, and believing that they would do all that was necessary. (Applause.)

The Rev. A. Hardie gave a warm welcome to Mr. Muller in the name of the Presbyterian Church. They welcomed him as one of God's heroes – they were men who had first won the victory with themselves, and afterwards with others, Mr. Muller he regarded as the hero of faith. With none but the Living God to trust in, he had nourished up to virtuous manhood and womanhood thousands of little ones. They could but honour a brother whose life had been consecrated to such a work; they welcomed Mr. and Mrs. Muller to their midst, and wished him God speed. (Applause.)

The chairman said it was a peculiar pleasure to him to welcome, in their name, and in the name of the Christian people of the Colony, their revered friend, Mr. Muller, and his kindly wife. (Applause.)

Mr. Muller, who was received with loud cheers, in the first place returned thanks for the hearty and loving welcome given to himself and wife. He then gave an interesting account of his preaching work in various places.<sup>587</sup>

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### **MR. A. E. WEST IN GIPPSLAND - 1891.**

Here are three reports about his work.

#### **“The Evangelisation Society of Victoria in Gippsland.**

Mr. A. E. West has been engaged by the Executive Committee to visit the hop gardens and saw mills in Gippsland this year, and some very interesting reports have come to hand of the work he has been

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<sup>587</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 19 March, 1886. page 17.

enabled to do during the past month. The last one received we give below. The Committee has instructed him to remain a few weeks longer.

“How faithfully the Lord looks after *His own work*. He knew of the needs of other districts besides those already visited during my mission. In none of my previous letters did I mention requests for mission work made to me, as I felt sure that if the Lord wanted me to remain longer He would into your hearts to extend my time in Gippsland; but residents at Johnsonville, Swan Reach, Cole’s Creek, and Bairnsdale have been desirous to know if meetings could not be held in these localities. This extension is the very thing, and I believe the additional three weeks will prove a profitable season.

I was at Johnsonville when your letter was placed in my hand. I could not but help realizing, ‘Well, the Lord truly is in this Gippsland mission.’

And now about our mission on the Upper Tambo. It is still ‘Victory through our Lord and Saviour.’

I opened the Mission on Sunday week, and then our dear brother Rev. D. Gunson, came along from Bruthen every night but Saturday.

Results were evident from the beginning. Conviction seemed to deepen night after night until last Sunday, when a glorious climax was reached.

Although the night was dark and threatening, the people hastened from far and near, and the State School was literally crammed. The porch was packed too, and men stood around the window listening. Brother Hallier, a good German, from Johnsonville, led off with an address, and then I followed.

It was then about nine, but not a soul seemed anxious to go; we therefore had over half an hour of *splendid testimony*. First I asked the Nicholson converts present (you remember I said in a former letter a number were picking in Mr. Knight’s hop garden here) to stand up and show they were on the Lord’s side, and ten then rose at the word.

Those who have come to the Saviour during our Tambo mission were then requested to rise, when no less than sixteen stood up. Oh pray for these sixteen dear young converts at the Upper Tambo, that they, ‘having put their hands to the plough, may never look back.’

The Nicholson and Tambo converts having shown they were not ashamed of the Sinless Martyr of Calvary, every Christian in the house

was called upon to stand. It would have done your heart good to see the number that rose. Then followed personal testimonies from old as well as young Christians. We had nine from the latter. Truly the Spirit was present with power. Dredge men, saw-mills hands, farmers, hop-pickers, and others, who have not yet come to the Jesus of Nazareth, listened with all their ears. Methinks that not one unsaved one that Easter Sabbath eve but must have admitted there is a grand reality in the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ.

We could not separate without a prayer meeting. [We] had a blessed time of communion with the Master. One good soul said, 'Why I could have stayed all night.'

One striking feature of the Tambo mission is the way the children of tender years (five to ten) roll up. They come night after night, and their mothers say, if they do not go themselves, they have to send the fathers along.

On starting the mission the Lord seemed to say to me, 'Give the children a special address of say ten minutes each night, and this I have done, and now they wont' stop at home on any account. Nearly forty listened to an address on the creation yesterday afternoon. Pray for the children, and now for the present 'Farewell.'"<sup>588</sup>

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Mr. A. E. West, who went to Gippsland towards the close of February, under the auspices of the Evangelisation Society of Victoria, is still actively engaged in this promising portion of the Lord's vineyard. The young evangelist's first week was spent in conjunction with a brother agent of the society, Robert Robertson, in a mission to the Lower Nicholson. This was followed by a month among the hop-pickers. Thirteen fields in all were visited, upwards of 1000 Gospel tracts distributed and twenty-three meetings held in or near to the fields. Since the end of the hop season, missions have been held at Johnsonville, Forge Creek, Coongulmerang, Wy Yang, River Bank, Lindenow railway station, and Nindoo. These have proved times of much refreshing, and many a young life has found renewal at the Fountain. Mr. West holds a flower service during each mission, and this, with a sermonette each evening, has brought the little boys and

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<sup>588</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 10 April, 1891. page 287.

girls of Gippsland to the meetings in excellent numbers. In all, during the three months the Gospel message has been proclaimed on seventy-four occasions. O for a rich outpouring of the Spirit on Sunny Gippsland!<sup>589</sup>

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Since his return to Gippsland at the beginning of July, Mr. A. E. West has held some 80 meetings in connection with the Evangelisation Society of Victoria at Pakenham, Wuk Wuk, Forge Creek, Paynesville, Lucknow, and Lower Tambo, with very encouraging results, especially at Lucknow. In this district 20 meetings in all were held, nine special afternoon for the young, and 11 general in evenings; the attendances throughout were excellent, one day in particular when there were 90 at afternoon service and 120 at evening. The "Farewell" on Sunday night, 30th August, was a long to be remembered time, nearly 20 acknowledged having accepted Christ as their Saviour, among them a number of the youth of Lucknow. Weekly Sunday services are to be conducted by lay friends from Bairnsdale, and a branch of the Victorian Scripture Union has been formed; for these the prayers of God's people are asked. In two other districts Bible classes have been opened under the head of local residents. Much blessing has accompanied the addresses to the young who attend most regularly at the four o'clock meetings. Thank God for the increasing band of youthful Gippsland soldiers for the army of our King. That the grand old Gospel may flourish more and more in this extensive Province of Victoria is our earnest prayer.<sup>590</sup>

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### **A LETTER FROM MR. THOMAS CHUCK. 1897.**

#### **The Evangelisation Society of Victoria.**

(A sample of work done through the agency of the Evangelisation Society of Australasia.)

"To the Editor of the *Southern Cross*.

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<sup>589</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 29 May, 1891. page 435.

<sup>590</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 11 September, 1891. page 735.

Sir, - In the month of March, my duties, at the instance of the Evangelisation Society were required at a remote 'village.' It was hardly a 'village,' for there was not a church or chapel, store nor blacksmith's shed, nor even a public house there. This village was very prettily situated, nestling beneath the shade of a range of virgin-clad hills some forty miles from the River Murray. About twenty cottages of pure Australian character could be counted within a radius of five or six miles, constructed of logs and broad sheets of bark, with their quaint chimneys. The occupants appeared to me in primitive innocence of what was going on in the – to them – outer world of humanity, for in my visitation from home to home, with but one or two exceptions, the newspaper was not seen. The feature of this little place was a State School, built of wood, not very stately in appearance. Part of the school teacher's duty is that of Post Master, so that State School and Post Office form the one and only building in this spot without a name. The children's merry voices can be heard daily singing along the winding tracks to and from school. One 'pater-familias' stated that 'his boys did close upon fifty miles a week going to and from school.' Think of it! How can these children grow up prepared to meet the dangers which will beset them in life? Echo says, 'How?' In mercy give the children the Bible. It will naturally be asked, 'How do the people in this secluded place live?' I found that they did live, and without complaint, too. Cultivation on a small scale, with small orchards, and a few cows, kept them fully and profitably occupied. The cows' product seemed most general, for the milk was conveyed to 'the factory,' where it was converted into butter. A few hands were there employed making the population to about two-score adults – and it is of one of this small community I desire to tell what I am sure will interest those who love to trace the Providence which 'wings an angel and guides a sparrow.'

Our first meeting was held in the schoolroom aforesaid, the teacher kindly placing the desks and forms so as to accommodate the good folks attending. Every one of the two-score 'rolled-up,' as they expressed it. It was a bright Sunday morning, and as the simple service proceeded, one of the congregation – a woman, I should say about twenty-five years of age, with a very sad face, sat with uncommon interest, drinking all that was said. Her face seemed too deeply marked by trouble to be revived by ordinary means – though so young, the

light of her life seemed extinguished. At each of the subsequent meetings during the week, she was there with the same gloom on her kind, intelligent countenance, causing her to lift up my heart in prayer on her behalf. The last of the five nights of the mission being over, among others who waited 'to shake hands and thank you,' was this poor, broken-hearted woman. While others had been cheered on their way, she appeared as sorrowful as ever – her grasp of my hand told me there was something which ought to be inquired into. So, on the following morning I resolved to write to her, offering any help I could render.

Late that evening she called at the cottage where I was staying, a long distance from her home, desiring to see me. Scarce were we seated than the long pent-up sorrow burst the barrier, and a time of weeping followed. She expressed the desire to be saved. The plan of salvation was correctly understood; but the great burden of her life – the greatest, I think, a woman can bear, 'desertion,' seemed to prevent instead of incline her to accept the Gospel. Hope had almost, if not altogether, died out. Was there deliverance? The Lord specially comforted that troubled soul; for on rising from her knees, it was very evident that the struggle was over. Deliverance had come! A rainbow of hope shone upon her hitherto dejected countenance.

The long secret of her sorrow is as follows:- About four years ago she came to the colony from Scotland; an acquaintance was made on board ship with a fellow passenger; on arrival in Melbourne they were married. The little money she had was spent on furnishing a home; before twelve months passed her husband's work became irregular – at last he left the colony. For a few months he forwarded a little money to support her and her child – at last supply discontinued altogether. He is now known to be in business in a neighbouring colony. Thus deserted this poor woman has been driven almost to desperation. Somebody has said, 'Don't slander Nature in the breast of such rendered desperate:' her life would, doubtless, have been brief from excessive grief – a grief worse than bereavement. But the Blessed Saviour has undertaken for her now; has become her Burden-bearer (Psa. lxxviii:19. R.V.). Any Christian heart would have 'danced for very joy,' as Dr. Porter used to say, to have seen that dear sister a few days before I left the adjoining district – she came miles to the meeting – a happier face could not be conceived. The creature who so basely

deserted her, she has – by a power not her own – forgiven, and to the praise of God, she has found Him on whom she can rely, and who has said, ‘I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.’ - Yours in the service,  
THOMAS CHUCK.”<sup>591</sup>

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## TWO INTERESTING MISSIONS IN 1910.

### **A Revival in the Country.**

“The Rev. J. T. Piercey, of the Evangelisation Society, and his daughter Muriel, who helps in the services by her message of song, has just concluded a ten days’ mission at Chiltern, in the Methodist chapel. This town, like many other mining places when in a declining condition, has a tendency to give the same impress to church life; hence the regular ministry find it very hard to maintain the interest of a healthy and robust Christianity in their different spheres of service.

A correspondent writes: ‘For the first week the missionary wisely sought to lift and encourage the Church by his searching messages and Bible readings. And when the Church began to respond to the Holy Spirit’s call, then the undecided began to attend in larger numbers, and also to inquire for the new life which came by conversion. During the first week several cases of decision for Christ took place. On the second Sunday, at the close of the morning’s service, Mr. Piercey made an appeal, and in response a commercial traveller rose to his feet, and by that act made his life’s decision for Christ. In the evening, at the close of the regular church services, the missionary conducted a Gospel service in the Star Theatre to a large gathering; many, who are not in the habit of attending God’s house, came in at the invitation that came through the singing of Alexander’s hymns. Results followed this service, for on the following Monday a large company attended the Methodist chapel, and at the close ten persons came forward seeking Jesus, as also during the closing nights. The Rev. J. Hill was encouraged and he, with the missionary, spent some time in visiting in the different homes. No.2 Valley was also missioned for four

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<sup>591</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 2 July, 1897. page 652.

evenings, and at these services several young people decided for Christ. We pray for brighter days for the town and people.”<sup>592</sup>

### **The Rev. Joseph Piercey Visits Heathcote.**

“**The Rev. J. T. Piercey**, of the Evangelisation Society, commenced a united mission in connection with the Presbyterian and Methodist churches in the shire of Heathcote, on the 10<sup>th</sup> inst. The hall was crowded with an appreciative audience, and everything points to a soul-saving mission.”<sup>593</sup>

### **“A Successful United Mission [Heathcote].**

One of the most successful sections of the Simultaneous Mission conducted in Melbourne and suburbs as part of the Chapman – Alexander campaign last year was that at Prahran, under the Rev. J. T. Piercey, of the Evangelisation Society of Australasia. Since then Mr. Piercey has conducted many missions throughout Victoria, and none more successful than that which was held at Heathcote during the early part of July. It is a common charge against visiting missionaries that they create a little temporary fervour and leave the place no better than they found it. This is one of those general accusations that in ninety-nine cases out of every hundred has no foundation in fact, and in the case of Heathcote is certainly not true; for the Rev. D. Bruce has waited for some weeks after the close of the visit to test the feeling, and he writes:

‘There is no doubt that the united evangelistic mission conducted by the Rev. J. T. Piercey has resulted in a manifest quickening of the spiritual life. The local Presbyterian and Methodist congregations, headed by their respective ministers and office-bearers, threw themselves heartily into the movement. Preparatory meetings were held weekly and much prayer resorted to. Mr. Piercey came in the fullness of the Holy Spirit and with power. In simple yet eloquent language he told the story of the Cross. He reasoned, he persuaded, and by his quiet earnestness won his way into the hearts of the people. Miss Muriel Piercey voiced the Gospel message very sweetly in song. The possessor of a sympathetic voice, her gift of music is being used for the service of the Master. Three meetings were held daily. A

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<sup>592</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 20 May, 1910. page 625.

<sup>593</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 15 July, 1910. page 886.

midday prayer meeting took place in the Presbyterian Church; a class for Bible study in the Methodist Church in the afternoons, and the evening meetings in the Shire Hall. An open-air song service preceded the evening meetings, and after-meetings followed at the close. The attendances were good, despite rough weather, the Shire Hall on several occasions being crowded. Sixty names of converts were given in, but this by no means completes the results.

At the final meeting in the Shire Hall, remarkable enthusiasm prevailed. On a resolution, conveying the thanks of the community to the evangelist and his daughter, moved by the Rev. D. Bruce (Presbyterian), and seconded by the Rev. W. Robinson (Methodist), being put, the whole audience rose en masse and carried the resolution by waving handkerchiefs and continued rounds of applause. The thank-offering resulted in a further demonstration of zeal. Several ladies gave their gold brooches, and envelopes containing money were placed in the offertory plates. "Hysteria," remarked a local businessman to the writer. "Hysteria" may be; but an hysteria that makes for more righteous living and a happier home life is surely to be commended. One is reminded of Carlyle or John n ox, when he says: "There will never be wanting Regent Murrays enough (and others besides) to shrug their shoulders, and say, 'A devout imagination.'"

Full reports of the meetings appeared daily in the *Bendigo Advertiser*; and the *McIvor Times*, the local newspaper, in a special edition, gave a succinct account of all the addresses. These materially helped to spread the influence of the mission. Portraits also of the missionary and his daughter appeared in the *Bendigonian*. The members of the local Shire Council unanimously agreed to give the use of the Shire Hall for a nominal sum. The mission, which lasted eleven days, has brought wonderful blessing to the town and district. A glorious work has been accomplished. And above all and through all the meetings there moved the spirit of Divine love."<sup>594</sup>

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<sup>594</sup> *Southern Cross*. Friday, 9 September, 1910. page 1134.

## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN.

### SOME CONCLUDING THOUGHTS.

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1. Bearing in mind the increasing momentum of evangelistic activity which flourished in Australia following the events of the 1859 Revival in Australia, the visit of the American Methodist evangelist, the Rev. William “California” Taylor, plus the arrival of Matthew Burnett, in the 1860s, the period from 1883 to the beginning of the First World War represented the hey-day of Evangelicalism in Australia, and this reached a peak in the decade from 1902 to 1912.

2. There was an extensive prayer movement which developed from about 1883 to 1912 associated with the Prayer Unions, and similar Prayer Bands.<sup>595</sup>

3. The Evangelisation Society of Victoria, and later, the Evangelisation Society of Australasia, enjoyed the leadership of several outstanding men during the first thirty-five years of its history. These men included James Balfour, James Griffiths, Charles Carter and Edward Baines. With the passing of this generation, there would naturally be the problem of filling an enormous gap left by the passing of this generation of leaders, and ANY organisation would have a problem rebuilding itself after a situation of this kind without loss of impact. Mr. James Griffiths died in 1925.

4. Following the 1875 revival in England, under the ministry of Moody and Sankey, evangelistic campaigns enjoyed a strong period of popularity and success for several decades. It was relatively easy to get unconverted people to attend such meetings as these in the 1880s and 90s. This kind of thing went through a cycle, and by the end of the First World War the situation was changing.

5. The first decade of the Twentieth Century saw the appearance of the Welsh Revival in December, 1904, and, as Dr. Edwin Orr has shown, related revival movements spread to many parts of the world

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<sup>595</sup> Evans. *Evangelism and Revivals in Australia. 1880 – 1914.* chapters one, two and fourteen.

before 1910. In Australia, the years from 1902 to 1904 especially were years of revival in many places, before the Welsh Revival began.

6. Church leaders generally were enthusiastic supporters of mass evangelism through the period from 1860 to 1910. This enthusiastic support tapered off slowly after about 1890, and the decline was encouraged by the rise of Higher Criticism and so-called Modern Theology. By 1912, many church leaders were taking the view that mass evangelism had passed its “use-by” date, and that some other method of evangelism should now be found.

7. There seems to be evidence that the strength of the Prayer Union movement was dissipating by 1912. The prayer backbone of spiritual revival was slowly disappearing.

8. While Professor Robert Linder has brought some balance in showing the strength of evangelical religion amongst Australian soldiers in the First World War, events such as this War are shattering experiences for individuals as well as for nations. Patterns of behaviour and the “flavour” of society will almost inevitably be changed by such powerful events. So, the feeling which commonly exists in any society about things such as evangelistic activities will probably be changed by events of this kind.

9. The First World War also would have affected the ability of many Christians to provide the necessary funds to pay for non-denominational activities such as the work of the Evangelisation Society, and other “faith” mission organisations.

10. Like many other institutions of society, the Evangelisation Society had problems re-establishing successful patterns of life for itself after 1918.

11. Despite all the qualifying factors, this period from 1883 to 1918 represents a very effective period of service for God by the Evangelisation Society, its leaders, preachers, and supporters. Altogether a very significant contribution was made to evangelicalism in this country, as well as in the more eternal and spiritual sphere of the salvation of souls, and the seeking of the Glory of God.

12. The story of the Evangelisation Society in Australia provides also an illustration of the peculiar nature of Evangelicalism at that time, especially in its overwhelming emphasis on personal conversion, the experience of the New Birth, and on the soul-saving ministry of the Church. Preachers of this kind believed that winning souls for Christ

was the highest form of Christian service, and the greatest act of love they could bestow upon a fellow human being. They believed in, and built for Eternity. Winning souls for Christ brought more glory to the Lord Jesus Christ than anything else they could do. The soul-winner's fire burned in their bones, and the joy of seeing one sinner repent gave them a share with the heavenly joy of the angels that Jesus spoke of in Luke 15.

But success in this area, and also the development of converts to a better degree of Christian maturity, always demanded a heavy emphasis upon the teaching and experience of holiness, and upon the fullness of the Holy Spirit, which they preached about and practised extensively. This all occurred before the rise of Pentecostalism to any degree of prominence. Speaking in tongues did not feature in the Christian experiences of these evangelicals.

With this emphasis on individual Christian experience, they did not thereby want to deny other important aspects of the life of the Church, where the Church is viewed as a Body rather than as a collection of individuals. But it was a matter of emphasis for them in their particular interest and calling.

There was a common evangelical theology at the time, shared by many people from all Protestant and Anglican denominations. They practised this common theology, but also strongly supported their own church affiliations. Pre-millennial expectations of the Second Coming had also become surprisingly common by 1900, considering that such views had been very uncommon a century earlier. Previously, post-millennial theories had been followed almost universally amongst evangelicals since the times of the Puritans.

The work of the Society has continued to the present day, and there is no reason why its later history should not be greater than was its early history described here, although circumstances and methods are now so different. The message and purpose have not changed.

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## BACK COVER.

The Evangelisation Society of Victoria commenced its operations in Melbourne in 1883. It was led by several outstanding laymen and ministers, including several wealthy supporters. In 1892, the economic situation declined badly, and in the several years following. In 1897 the Society's name was changed to the Evangelisation Society of Australasia because the Society was receiving invitations to send its preachers to other Australian colonies and states, and to New Zealand.

The Society was heavily involved in the visit in 1902 by the American evangelists, the Rev. R. A. Torrey and Mr. Charles M. Alexander, which was associated with a period of revival in many parts of Australia in the years 1902 to 1905.

The story of the Society through until 1918 is told here mainly in terms of the lives and activities of the evangelists who worked for the Society through this period. It tells a remarkable story of an important aspect of the soul-saving work of the Australian Protestant Churches.

The Rev. Robert Evans is a Uniting Church minister, retired from parish work after more than thirty years. He is President of the denomination's Historical Society in NSW, and has written a number of other books on the history of evangelism in Australia in the Nineteenth Century. Details of his life and work can be found at [www.revivals.arkangles.com](http://www.revivals.arkangles.com)

The Rev. Dr. Darrell Paproth was ordained in the Anglican Church, and served in parishes for 12 years. Until recently he lectured in church history, culture and worship at the Bible College of Victoria. His PhD. is from Deakin University. He has published a great range of historical articles and chapters of books, and a book on C.H. Nash. He is currently working on another thesis about evangelism in colonial Melbourne. He has special interests in Geelong and in the influence of social theory and architecture on history.

