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## **THE RISE AND FALL OF THE SABBATH IN NEW ZEALAND 1860-2000**

### **ABSTRACT**

This article focuses on church voices striving in the public arena to preserve a weekly 'holy day'. However, by 2000 Sunday was simply part of a weekend 'holiday'. The first part of the article highlights the ongoing strength of church voices on the sabbath issue in the earlier part of the twentieth century even as the sabbath concept was slowly eroding. The second part of the article notes an accelerating secularisation of Sunday in the later part of the twentieth century and the gradual disappearance of sabbatarian voices in public debate.

### **An overview of the sabbath in early settler New Zealand:**

New Zealand settler society significantly operated on a six-plus-one (or five-plus-one-plus-one) weekly rhythm for at least its first century. Certain activities on Sunday faced legal restraint up into the 1960s and beyond. Builders could not undertake construction work on Sundays – working at one's trade in view of a public place was a breach of the Police Offences Act 1927. Parliament did not sit on Sundays and a parliamentary standing order of 1930 required the adjournment of parliamentary sittings at midnight on Saturdays. Shopping was largely off-limits. The Licensing Act 1908 required the closing of licensed premises on Sundays. Court procedures were largely prohibited on Sundays, such that the service or execution of a legal writ on a Sunday was invalid under the Judicature Act 1908. Numerous other seemingly petty prohibitions persisted, signs either that society wanted one quiet or sacred day in seven or that the prohibitions were left-over regulations from a former era when society really did have such a sabbatarian desire.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I.L.M. Richardson, *Religion and the Law*, Wellington: Sweet & Maxwell, 1962, 17-18.

In our more recent 24/7 world, the notion that people would give one day in seven essentially over to God and/or to rest may seem astonishing and archaic. Particularly astonishing is the fact that proponents of sabbath observance might even attack the practice of Christians visiting friends or of farmers delivering milk to customers on that holy day.<sup>2</sup> A century ago, even people who were not particularly religious commonly valued Sunday as ‘the quiet day’. No wonder that many children of that era later reacted strongly against a Sunday that they had experienced as extremely drab and colourless.<sup>3</sup>

### **The immediate roots of New Zealand sabbatarianism**

New Zealand sabbatarianism had its roots in Britain, the place of origin of most of the colonial settlers. The Lord’s Day Observance Society (an Anglican-promoted body) had formed in England in 1831. England subsequently experienced an intensification of sabbatarian struggle to proscribe Sunday amusements and recreation. Sabbatarian victories in the mid-nineteenth century included the Post Office ceasing all Sunday labour for a time in 1849, and the stopping of the opening of both the Crystal Palace on Sundays in 1852 and the British Museum on Sundays in the 1850s. Around this time, pious members of the upper classes ate cold meat on Sundays to give their servants a rest; took their families to church on foot; and banished secular reading, drawing, needlework, riding and driving from their household for the rest of the day.<sup>4</sup>

Scotland was even more sabbatarian in outlook than England at this time. Strict observance of the Sabbath was seen as a fundamental bulwark of the faith. Sunday travellers were regarded as shameless violators of the Divine Law. Public pressure led to the stopping of Sunday trains between Edinburgh and Glasgow for a period of twenty years from 1846. Public houses were closed on Sundays from 1853. A

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<sup>2</sup> For denunciation of pleasure-seeking on the Lord’s Day, in particular of ‘driving, riding, shooting, Sabbath visiting, train and ’bus travelling’, see Report of the Committee on the State of Religion and Morals (Appendix VII) in *General Proceedings of the [Northern] Presbyterian Church of New Zealand*, 1892, 64. For controversy over milk deliveries see *Outlook* [publication of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand], 21 November 1903, 33.

<sup>3</sup> Letter of ‘Farri’ in *Auckland Star*, 25 September 1903, 3; letter of William Cooper in *Auckland Star*, 29 September 1903, 2; also Paul Hawker, *Secret Affairs of the Soul*, Kelowna, B.C: Northstone, 2000, 16-17.

<sup>4</sup> J. Wigley, *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Sunday*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980, 83.

proposal in 1863 to open the Edinburgh Botanic Gardens on Sundays produced a hue and cry, with 14,000 petitioning for opening and 36,000 against. Parliament kept the gates closed.<sup>5</sup>

## **Part One: Keeping the sabbath quiet: voices of the churches in New Zealand, 1860-1930**

### **The early New Zealand sabbath**

Sabbatarian issues in Britain spilled over into New Zealand. Because struggles over sabbatarianism were at their peak in mid-to-late nineteenth century Britain, especially with the emergence in that period of the concept of a pleasurable and potentially sabbath-challenging ‘weekend’,<sup>6</sup> it was inevitable that early settlers to New Zealand brought Sunday observance issues with them. While around half of that early population were not regular church-goers, society in general had a significant degree of sympathy with the notion that Sunday was a different day from the rest of the week and that Sunday worship was an important part of that day. Such a view was reflected in the Masters and Apprentices Act, 1865, section 8 specifying that there be a covenant between masters and apprentices which, *inter alia*, would require that the apprentice ‘shall attend divine service when practicable at least once on every Sunday’. In addition to societal support for public worship, there was also strong societal support for a non-working Sunday. Thus the Police Offences Act, 1884 (section 16) and its successor Acts criminalised working at one’s trade, transacting business, or exposing goods for sale on a Sunday.

Late-nineteenth-century New Zealand society had a strong sense that it was building a new and purer nation, a ‘better Britain’.<sup>7</sup> ‘Better Britain’ sentiment commonly meant that while Britain was good, it could be better – in New Zealand. For sabbatarians that included the implementation of a purer (stricter) sabbath. The sabbath practices of good Britain were often contrasted with the evils of other countries. Thus residual sabbatarianism in Britain contrasted favourably with the dreaded ‘continental Sunday’ of countries such as France and Germany.

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<sup>5</sup> J.R. Fleming, *A History of the Church in Scotland 1843-1874*, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1927, 5, 155.

<sup>6</sup> The term ‘weekend’, reflecting a week of five days plus two instead of the Old Testament week of six days plus one, emerged in the late 1870s: H.R. Jackson, *Churches and People in Australia and New Zealand 1860-1930*, Wellington: Allen & Unwin, 1987, 114.

<sup>7</sup> On this concept see James Belich, *Paradise Reforged: A History of the New Zealanders from the 1880s to the Year 2000*, Auckland, 2001, Part 1.

Those ‘wicked’ nations held to a perspective that encouraged people to attend Sunday worship but left the rest of the day free for their own pleasures. The outcome (viewed through the lens of strict sabbatarianism) was a day of noise, stress and hedonism: ‘cars rushing at full speed, bells clanging, dust flying, men swearing, and all a perfect pandemonium’.<sup>8</sup>

Major sabbatarian measures deeply affected both society and church in nineteenth-century New Zealand. There was no public transport on Sundays in Auckland in 1880 and the museum, art gallery and library were all closed.<sup>9</sup> New Zealand Baptist attitudes expressed in their fledgling newspaper reflected their intense concern to maintain sabbatarian principle and practice. A *New Zealand Baptist* article of 1882 listed sabbath breaking as a major sin alongside riotous living, drunkenness and licentiousness.<sup>10</sup> That same year an article pitched to ‘our young folk’ moralised in relation to a girl in London: ‘She had a wicked father – a Sabbath-breaker, a swearer, and a drunkard.’<sup>11</sup>

### **Sabbath issues in early Dunedin**

Sabbatarian issues were markedly to the fore in Dunedin which had begun as a Free-Church, Presbyterian-associated, settlement in 1848. Sabbath-keeping was part of the initial vision to plant a ‘well-ordered, God-fearing community’.<sup>12</sup> However, the colony proved not to be exclusively Free Church or godly. This was particularly the case with the onset of the gold rushes of the 1860s. As many as 50,000 footloose young men swarmed into Central Otago in the period 1861-1863. Otago’s population swelled from about 12,600 in 1860 to over 67,000 in 1864. One by-product was a flood of prostitutes into Dunedin – 200 in 1864 according to one contemporary source.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, church

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<sup>8</sup> ‘B.L.’ in letter to the editor, *Auckland Star*, 29 September 1903, 2.

<sup>9</sup> Michael J. Powell, ‘The Church in Auckland Society, 1880-1886’, MA thesis, University of Auckland, 1970, 123-24.

<sup>10</sup> *New Zealand Baptist* (NZB), March 1882, 45.

<sup>11</sup> NZB, December, 1882, 190.

<sup>12</sup> Letter, Thomas Burns to William Cargill, dated 28 December 1844, in *Outlook*, 6 March 1940, 36. Burns and Cargill were co-leaders of the colony-planting venture.

<sup>13</sup> Erik Olssen, ‘Families and the Gendering of New Zealand in the Colonial Period, 1840-1880’, in Carolyn Daley & Deborah Montgomerie (eds), *Auckland: Auckland University Press*, 1999, 37-62 at 44, 48.

influence remained strong. In 1866 Thomas Burns could still rejoice in the wonderful Otago sabbath, when addressing the Presbyterian Synod:

The stillness of our Sabbath and the crowded state of our churches, and the highly respectable and becoming appearance of our congregations, I have been told by visitors (strangers from the neighbouring colonies) are not to be paralleled anywhere out of Scotland, more especially in our country congregations. But even in Dunedin itself, with its large amount of irreligion and ungodliness, with which we of late have been flooded, it is impossible to walk our streets at the time when our forenoon congregations of all denominations are coming out of Church without being struck with a very agreeable kind of surprise at the appearance of the very large proportion of the inhabitants who have just been paying their Sabbath homage to the God of the Sabbath.<sup>14</sup>

In that era it was common for devout families to attend two services a Sunday and to devote the balance of the day to such things as rest, family relationships and wholesome reading. Such families avoided all work, apart from works of 'necessity' and 'mercy'. Thus Sunday food was often prepared as much as possible on Saturday, firewood likewise, and shoes were cleaned on Saturday. Sunday's dirty dishes might well be left over for washing until Monday.<sup>15</sup> In the words of historian Hugh Jackson, 'For those in the Puritan tradition Sunday observance was a test of vital religion, almost a sacrament.'<sup>16</sup>

A major question for Christians was the extent to which sabbatarian principles should be imposed on society as a whole. Although both society and churches were diverse and not of one mind in relation to the sabbath, pious Christians, commonly led by their church ministers, sought to implement and/or enforce a strict Sabbath for society as a whole. This was particularly the case within Presbyterianism. We need to remember Dunedin's Free-Church-related beginnings and the fact that the Free Church had split off from the more 'lax' Church of Scotland only five years prior to the Dunedin colonisation and that the

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<sup>14</sup> Alison Clarke, 'A Godly Rhythm: Keeping the Sabbath in Otago 1870-1890', in John Stenhouse & Jane Thomson (eds), *Building God's Own Country: Historical Essays on Religions in New Zealand*, Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2004, 46-59 at 47-48.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 50-51.

<sup>16</sup> H.R. Jackson, *Churches & People in Australia and New Zealand 1860-1930*, Wellington: Allen & Unwin, 1987, 109.

over-arching Free Church vision was that society, itself, and not merely the church, should be godly.<sup>17</sup>

Churches commonly argued for a sabbath throughout society on bases such as:

- The sabbath was perpetually binding, either as a biblical injunction or as a natural law
- Sabbath observance was a foundational principle of society
- Sabbath observance brought blessing to a people, but sabbath desecration brought divine judgment
- A laxly-observed sabbath resulted in others being forced to work and not getting their day of worship and rest
- If people made Sunday a day for pleasure, this would weaken church attendance (and the influence of the church)

On the other hand, should the views of some be forced on all in society? Wasn't the strict view a kill-joy view? Where did individual conscience and individual liberty come into all of this? Rev. George Sutherland, while minister of First (Free Presbyterian) Church, Dunedin, complained in 1871 of Sunday steamer excursions, other travel, and mail sorting, warning that Sabbath breakers were 'an element of danger to our city' because history had shown the Sabbath to be a 'bulwark of public morality and practical religion'.<sup>18</sup> In response, one 'N' vehemently protested against the minister's attempt to 'lay down the law' for the whole community.<sup>19</sup> The issue of whether the church should dictate to society was heightened in Dunedin because of its origins as a church-related settlement.

An additional complication in relation to the enforcement of the observance of religious holy days was that while the Presbyterians (and, to a great extent, the other evangelical churches) held to strict sabbatarian views, they commonly ignored or treated lightly Christmas and Easter, viewing them as man-made inventions, not as sacred days. In contrast, Catholics and many Anglicans might well have a looser attitude towards Sunday observance, coupled with a deeper reverence for the

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<sup>17</sup> John McKean, *The Road to Secularisation in Presbyterian Dunedin: The First Fifty Years of the Otago Settlement*, Dunedin: Presbyterian Historical Society, 1993, 2.

<sup>18</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 16 May 1871, 3.

<sup>19</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 23 May 1871, 3.

holiness of Christmas and Easter.<sup>20</sup> At times Christians from one side or the other of this divide ignored or even undermined what the other side counted as sacred.

Perhaps the most striking sabbath-related issue in nineteenth-century Otago was the Athenaeum dispute of 1874. This involved the question of the Dunedin Athenaeum and Mechanics' Institute (a type of mutual improvement society) opening its reading room on Sunday afternoons. Its library was important in a city that did not have its own public library until 1908. Heated debate over a proposal to open the reading room took place at the Athenaeum's annual meeting on 30 January 1874. The proposal was carried by 91 votes to 83. The sabbatarians protested that due process had not been followed. The outcome was a further fiery meeting a fortnight later with 500 of the 800 Athenaeum members present. At the second meeting a letter was quoted from the Superintendent of the province, that 'the maintenance of the Sabbath in its integrity [is] one of the bulwarks of civil and religious liberty'. A major expressed concern of the sabbatarians was that opening the Athenaeum library on the sabbath would force an employee to work on that day – opening and manning the reading room. The 'liberals' circumvented this stated difficulty by indicating that the reading room would be staffed by volunteers on Sundays. The sabbatarians lost again at this second meeting – 252 votes to 242.<sup>21</sup> The narrowness of the loss indicates the residual strength of sabbatarian influence in nineteenth century Otago society. A year later, a report indicated that Sunday was the most patronised day for the reading room and that a paid employee was in attendance. Society had spoken – strict sabbatarianism was weakening.

A major sabbatarian issue in late-nineteenth-century New Zealand was that of public transport. The annual Baptist assembly expressed concern at the 'grievous extent of Sabbath desecration' in 1890, an example of which was the running of excursion steamers on Sunday mornings to visit men-of-war when they were in port.<sup>22</sup> A difficulty that churches faced was that their own members were significant users of Sunday public transport. The Dunedin Ministers' Association, made up of the evangelical (non-Anglican) ministers, including the Baptists, sent

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<sup>20</sup> Alison Jane Clarke, 'Feasts and Fasts: Holidays, Religion and Ethnicity in Nineteenth-Century Otago', PhD thesis, University of Otago, 2003, 74-75, 98, 109 *et passim*.

<sup>21</sup> For a full report on the debate, see *Otago Daily Times*, 12 February 1874, 2-3.

<sup>22</sup> NZB, December 1890, 187.

the following circular to its ministers in 1898 with the request that the issue be brought before each congregation:

Our attention has been called to the fact that there is a very large amount of Sunday-travelling in Dunedin and the suburbs, especially by the trams and drags. Inquiry from authoritative sources reveals the fact, also that these conveyances are largely used by the Church-going public and that were the Church-going community to abstain from using the conveyances, the evil would be greatly minimised. As this Sunday-travelling constitutes a breach of the Divine Law, and as it deprives the men employed on the vehicles of their day of rest and their opportunity of Christian worship, the Dunedin Ministers' Association would ask the Christian community to seriously consider these facts, and whether it be not their duty to abstain from the use of these vehicles on the Lord's Day.<sup>23</sup>

Early twentieth-century New Zealand society was rapidly being confronted with the benefits and threats of numerous new inventions and developments. Notwithstanding the patent advantages of progress, arch-conservatives saw many of the developments as threats, challenging old patterns and values. One challenge was to the sacred and quiet Sunday. From a twentieth-first century perspective, we may deride such viscerally-held views as a 'hissy fit', as much ado about nothing. This, however, is to fail to consider the values that shaped that mindset and to realise that the debate about apparently small things was in fact a debate about the sort of society that New Zealand should be.<sup>24</sup> In historian James Belich's terminology, was it to be a 'tighter' or a 'looser' society?<sup>25</sup>

### **The Auckland Sunday trams issue**

The 1903 debate over the running of electric trams in Auckland on Sundays is helpfully understood within this societal, tighter/looser, conceptual framework. The Sunday tram issue was already longstanding in 1903. In 1887 the Auckland Tramway Company sought permission from the Auckland Council to run trams on Sundays. Although the *NZ Herald* strongly opposed the application, this was not on the basis that it

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<sup>23</sup> NZB, October 1898, 156.

<sup>24</sup> For similar comment in relation to later debates over sexuality, see Jeffrey Weeks, 'Sexuality and History Revisited: A Reader', in Kim M. Phillips & Barry Reay (eds), *Sexualities in History: A Reader*, New York, 2002, 27-41 at 34.

<sup>25</sup> For Belich on 'tight' New Zealand society, see his *Paradise Reforged*, 121ff.

was a religious or theological issue, but the newspaper's concern was rather over the well-being of workers who would be forced to work on Sunday if the application succeeded. The work-free-Sunday principle was 'an unspeakable boon' to workers that should be carefully guarded. Thus the work-free-Sunday principle should not be compromised unless 'absolutely necessary'.<sup>26</sup>

By way of context we should note that a feature of New Zealand at this time was widespread concern for fairness and justice for workers, exemplified in the heroic stature given to Samuel Parnell who successfully fought for an eight-hour working day in the early 1840s. The importance of this matter was evident in the large Labour Day parades, celebrating the eight-hour day and workers' rights, that began to be held in New Zealand from 1890, and which then led on to making Labour Day a statutory public holiday from 1899. We should not underestimate the strength of feeling over work on Sunday that surrounded the 1903 debate – nor should we view it simply as a narrow religious issue.

In addition to the labour issue, the 1887 *NZ Herald* article highlighted the lifestyle issue. Sunday was a different day, a quiet day. Let the Sunday trams begin, and that quiet would be replaced by a 'bustle and hurrying to and fro in our streets'. Arguments of labour and lifestyle were against the trams.<sup>27</sup>

While the Sunday tram application failed in 1887, the matter resurfaced in 1903. This time the matter was to be settled by a referendum of Auckland ratepayers and householders. And this time the *NZ Herald* stance was different – because the world was now different. New Zealand's other major cities had Sunday trams.<sup>28</sup> Auckland itself had some Sunday transport, with Sunday ferries and a Sunday suburban train service from Onehunga. Moreover, modern city life was a different life. Walking was becoming a lost art. The 'pleasures of contemplation' had given way to a 'strange restlessness that marks the city dweller'. The different world meant that there was now rising public demand for public transport. This mood was unstoppable. Thus 'the referendum is not really whether we shall or shall not have Sunday trams in Auckland, but . . . whether we will let them run at once or will delay them for a little longer'.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> *NZ Herald* (NZH), 26 April 1887, 4.

<sup>27</sup> NZH, 26 April 1887, 4.

<sup>28</sup> Noted by 'Advance Auckland' letter in NZH, 16 September 1903, 7.

<sup>29</sup> NZH, 28 September 1903, 4.

Notwithstanding the calmness and clarity expressed in the *NZ Herald*, the issue aroused passionate debate. A number of large public meetings, mainly in opposition to the proposal, were held.<sup>30</sup> Scores of letters were written to the newspapers. On the day before the poll the *Auckland Star* had an entire page of letters, another column and a half of editorial, and a further half column of more general comment, all on the imminent poll.<sup>31</sup>

The fact that there was markedly a religious dimension to the poll is indicated in the content of the *Auckland Star's* full page on Monday 28 September on the imminent poll. Most of that page consisted of excerpts from sermons on the topic preached at ten services around the city (Anglican, Presbyterian, Baptist, Congregational, Churches of Christ, Unitarian and Roman Catholic). There were also comments from four public anti-tram meetings which seem to have been dominated by clergy. The non-Anglican evangelical churches were adamantly against Sunday trams. The two reported Anglican speakers were also against the idea. One, Archdeacon Calder, articulated his concern in terms of the need to protect workers. The other, Canon MacMurray, clearly took a moderate stance: running trams on Sunday should not be seen as a sin, but it would put a strain on tramway workers who needed a regular day of rest. It is striking that all four reported Catholic clergy were strongly in favour of Sunday trams. The duty of Christians on that day was simply to attend church. What they did in terms of relaxation and innocent pleasure after church was their business. Rev. Fr. Benedict could not resist having a crack at sourpuss Protestantism:

The people on the continent went to early mass, and for the remainder of the day they enjoyed themselves, and the superb happiness portrayed on their faces who [sic, probably 'was'] in marked contrast to the sanctimonious Englishmen who went to service late, and searched the streets for material to talk about and scandalise.<sup>32</sup>

The Rev. Joseph Clark, minister of the Auckland Baptist Tabernacle (the central Baptist church of Auckland) was in the centre of the fray. At an anti-Sunday tram meeting attended by 'thousands', he was mover of a motion urging voters to vote against trams in order to 'conserve the weekly rest day'. The newspaper summary of his speech in support of his motion included the following:

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<sup>30</sup> See, for example, NZH, 14 September 1903, 7.

<sup>31</sup> *Auckland Star*, 29 September 1903, 2, 5.

<sup>32</sup> *Auckland Star*, 28 September 1903, 3.

Writers in the newspapers had charged the opponents of the Sunday running of the trams with Puritanism. Well, they were right, and he for one was proud to be so called. (Applause.) The people of New Zealand would be the better for a little more of the Puritan spirit. (A voice: 'Amen! Amen!'). . . . He gave a description of the Continental Sunday, and said that something had been said about the trams bringing people from the suburbs into the city to the churches. Well, he supposed his church would benefit by such an arrangement, so many of his people living at a distance, but better the churches be empty, he said, than that the trams run to fill them. As the citizens loved their homes and their children, let them vote against the running of the trams on Sunday.<sup>33</sup>

Clark preached an impassioned sermon to his congregation the following day. Denouncing the 'commercial tyranny' of the profit-seeking tramway company, he asserted:

If Continental people were not contented with the quiet Auckland Sabbath let them go home and not come to ruin the Church of Christ and blast and ruin the homes of the people. Motormen had nerves, and six days a week was sufficient for them to be at their post. 'We have been given six days in which to work,' he concluded, 'and they want to rob us of the seventh. Determine before high Heaven that this war shall bring defeat upon the enemies of God.'<sup>34</sup>

The actual referendum language was expressed in terms of whether to approve trams running 'on the Lord's Day' [not 'Sunday']. Thus it is hardly surprising that the anti-tram people commonly couched their opposition in religious terms.<sup>35</sup> The fourth commandment of the Decalogue ('remember the sabbath day to keep it holy') was enough reason for some: 'the Creator ordained a seventh day of rest, which has never been abrogated'.<sup>36</sup> At the same time much of the case for having a tram-free Sunday was expressed in terms of worker concern. An extreme statement of this point was that if the tramways men finished up working seven days a week, 'the deprivation of their most needful rest would

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<sup>33</sup> NZH, 28 September 1903, 6.

<sup>34</sup> *Auckland Star*, 28 September 1903, 3.

<sup>35</sup> *Auckland Star*, 29 September 1903, 5.

<sup>36</sup> 'Veritas' letter in NZH, 22 September 1903, 3; 'Common Sense', letter in NZH, 25 September 1903, 6; 'Southern Cross', letter in *Auckland Star*, 25 September 1903, 3.

undoubtedly, sooner or later, end in both mental and bodily collapse, and are not our asylums already overcrowded?<sup>37</sup> It was a form of selfishness not to forego one's desire for fresh air and pleasure in order to ensure tramways workers had their day of rest.<sup>38</sup>

Supporters of trams queried the motivation of those who said they cared for the workers and opposed unnecessary work on the sabbath. If they really had compassion, why did these 'psalm-singers' not have cold food on Sundays instead of making some poor servant girl cook a roast dinner?<sup>39</sup> And where was their care for the 'long-suffering' horses that currently pulled 'buses' seven days a week and which would gradually be spelled by Sunday trams?<sup>40</sup> Displacement of horse-drawn transport on Sundays with trams would in fact lead to reduced numbers of men working on Sundays, fewer men being needed for trams than for horse-drawn transport.<sup>41</sup> It was the middle class and the rich who opposed the Sunday trams – well they could, with their ability to afford their own horses and traps.<sup>42</sup>

Similar comments were made about anti-tram concern for a 'quiet Sunday' and 'nonsense' about the noise and dust of trams.<sup>43</sup> Tram noise was as nothing 'compared to the fiendish din made on Sundays by the religious communities in Cathedral Square, Christchurch – the band of the Salvation Army, the harmonium of some sect, the choir of another, and the frenzied speakers of all (who, by the way, preach only death, never life)'.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> 'Diogenes', letter in *Auckland Star*, 23 September 1903, 3.

<sup>38</sup> 'Veritas', letter in NZH, 22 September 1903, 3.

<sup>39</sup> 'Common-Sense', letter in *Auckland Star*, 25 September 1903, 53.

<sup>40</sup> A. Seaton, letter in *Auckland Star*, 29 September 1903, 5; 'Farri', letter in *Auckland Star*, 25 September 1903, 3.

<sup>41</sup> 'Reformer', letter in *Auckland Star*, 25 September 1903, 3.

<sup>42</sup> 'Grey Lynn', letter in *Auckland Star*, 29 September 1903, 2.

<sup>43</sup> For advocacy of a quiet Sunday, see 'Consistent', letter in NZH, 30 September 1932, 7; William Rattray and 'A Visitor', letters in NZH, 30 September 1932, 6. For argued concern about noise and dust, see 'Common sense', letter in NZH, 25 September 1932, 6; 'Diogenes', letter in *Auckland Star*, 23 September 1903, 3; 'Colorado', letter in *Auckland Star*, 25 September 1903, 3.

<sup>44</sup> 'Fresh Air', letter in *Auckland Star*, 22 September 1903, 2.

A lot of fear language was used by anti-tram people: fear of a 'continental Sunday',<sup>45</sup> fear of Sunday sport,<sup>46</sup> fear of increased drinking,<sup>47</sup> fear of national decay.<sup>48</sup> It was all too much for some of the pro-tram people. Significant anti-church feeling surfaced. Those who did not wish to use trams on Sunday had no right to stop others who took a contrary view.<sup>49</sup> The religious objectors were 'narrow-minded' people who sought to put others under the bondage of their church-driven laws.<sup>50</sup> William Cooper bitterly attacked sabbatarians for the recent past when they criticised people who kissed their spouse, cut their finger nails, or read Shakespeare on Sunday. Cooper himself had been reprovved as a child for whistling on Sunday, noting though that such whistling was treated as a less serious matter if the music was of a sacred nature.<sup>51</sup> Opponents of sabbatarianism in 1903 depicted the anti-tram people as the 'Pharisaical party', with a negative and hair-splitting approach to life:

The issue is one of narrower religious sentiment *versus* public convenience. . . . The stricter sabbatarians . . . have been equally narrow and vindictive in the past against the proposals to open the museums, public libraries and parks to the people, and they would allow no music to be played on the sacred day except that furnished in the churches. . . . To them, Sunday must always be a dismal day of gloom and wretchedness, instead of being what the Almighty intended, the happiest day of the week.<sup>52</sup>

The anti-tram people needed to become progressive, move with the times and stop delaying 'Auckland's progress and modernisation'.<sup>53</sup> Sunday trams would be good for outings and innocent recreation.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> NZH, 14 September 1903, 7; 16 September 1903, 7; 22 September 1903, 2; 28 September 1903, 6; 29 September 1903, 3; *Auckland Star*, 29 September 1903, 2.

<sup>46</sup> NZH, 29 September 1903, 3;

<sup>47</sup> NZH, 14 September 1903, 7; A. Daldy, letter in NZH, 29 September 1932, 3.

<sup>48</sup> NZH, 25 September 1903, 6.

<sup>49</sup> James Salinger, letter in NZH 22 September 1903, 3.

<sup>50</sup> 'Fresh Air', letter in *Auckland Star*, 22 September 1903, 2; John C. Earl, letter in *Auckland Star*, 22 September 1903, 3.

<sup>51</sup> *Auckland Star*, 29 September 1903, 2.

<sup>52</sup> Editorial in the *Observer*, 26 September 1903, 2.

<sup>53</sup> 'Anti-Sanctimony', letter in NZH, 28 September 1903, 6.

<sup>54</sup> James Salinger, letter in NZH, 22 September 1903, 3; 'A Visitor', letter in NZH, 30 September 1903, 6.

Much of the anti-tram fear was not simply what the Sunday trams themselves would do, but rather the precedent that they would set. They would become the thin edge of the wedge that would progressively secularise the sabbath. Subsequent activities would include Sunday sport (football and horse racing),<sup>55</sup> Sunday shopping<sup>56</sup> and Sunday work.<sup>57</sup> It was the threat to the six-day working week that particularly bothered an editorial writer in the *Auckland Star*: 'One kind of work leads rapidly and inevitably to another. . . . We prefer to think not only of to-day, but of the future in the distance'. This was not a religious argument: 'Entirely apart from its religious significance, the observance of Sunday as a day of rest from work and exciting amusement is of grave importance to every man and woman in Auckland'. In our 24/7 world we are likely to snort at the making of a mountain out of a molehill. From the point of view of 1903, however, there was a fear that the 24/7 world would emerge, a world that would need to invent a hitherto unknown term – 'burn-out'. Did they get that aspect wrong?

The 1903 referendum climax proved to be a cliff-hanger:

12,301 eligible voters  
 8,024 voted  
 136 informal votes were cast  
 3,955 voted for the Sunday trams  
 3,933 voted against the Sunday tram<sup>58</sup>

It was a victory for the trams. What is remarkable is the closeness of the result, a majority of only twenty-two for the Sunday trams out of 8000 odd votes. It suggests that the church argument had major support in the community, even amongst many who were not churchgoers. Perhaps it was also the result of a coalescing of church and worker interests. Either way it does indicate remarkable church influence in the affairs of that era.

One sabbatarian concern was that the tram issue would be a precursor to increasing erosion of the sabbath. Although the tramways

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<sup>55</sup> A. Daldy, letter in NZH, 29 September 1903, 3; W. Barraclough, letter in *Auckland Star*, 25 September 1903, 3.

<sup>56</sup> 'N.Z.', letter in NZH, 29 September 1903, 3.

<sup>57</sup> Fred A. G. Cotterell, letter in *Auckland Star*, 22 September 1903, 2; 'Sunday Rest', letter in *Auckland Star*, 29 September 1903, 2; editorial in *Auckland Star*, 1 October 1903, 4.

<sup>58</sup> NZH, 1 October 1903, 5.

company had given an assurance that the apparently noisy trams would not run during church service times, subsequent demand for a full Sunday service led to a further referendum (for a continuous Sunday service) in February 1916. This time there was relatively little heat in the arguments.<sup>59</sup> Because the focus this time was not one of sabbatarianism, but rather of noise interference with church services, this time all ministers (even including the Roman Catholic bishop) opposed the extension.<sup>60</sup> However, as 'F.H.W.' pointed out, places of entertainment (theatres, concert halls etc) seemed not to be troubled by tram noise. So the simple test should be 'the convenience of the majority'.<sup>61</sup> The result was hardly in doubt:

31,183 eligible voters  
 10,306 votes  
 6,581 votes for continuous service  
 3,595 votes against the proposal<sup>62</sup>

Clearly, future Sunday public transport would be determined by public demand, not by religious opposition.

### **Churches fighting a losing battle**

For at least the first three decades of the twentieth century, the Presbyterian Church (supported by other evangelical allies) was probably the doughty fighter *par excellence* on the sabbath issue. Its General Assembly resolved in 1907 'that the Assembly earnestly take up the question of Sabbath desecration in the Dominion; that they endeavour to obtain legislation in the subject, and that a Standing Committee . . . be appointed and report each year.'<sup>63</sup> There was a lot to be concerned about: Sunday movies, Sunday transport, Sunday sport, Sunday pleasure generally. The committee's 1911 report, for example, articulated Westland presbytery concern at Sunday evening picture shows and Waikato presbytery concern at Sunday picnics.

In 1911 the convenor of the Sabbath Day Observance Committee of the Presbyterian Church called together a meeting of concern relating

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<sup>59</sup> NZH, 16 February 1916, 6.

<sup>60</sup> NZH, 10 February 1916, 9; 12 February 1916, 9; 16 February 1916, 4.

<sup>61</sup> NZH, 15 February 1916, 9.

<sup>62</sup> NZH, 17 February 1916, 9.

<sup>63</sup> *Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand*, 1907, 55.

to the use of Sunday. Representatives of all the main Protestant churches (including the Church of England) were present. An outcome of the meeting was the formation of a Lord's Day Alliance of New Zealand, having the object: 'to promote a better religious observance of the Lord's Day, and to secure it as a Day of Rest for the whole community'.<sup>64</sup> This quickly catalysed the formation of an opposing 'Sports Defence League' with a primary object 'to oppose any restriction of the enjoyment by individuals of reasonable recreation on the Sunday'. The seriousness with which the League viewed the church threat can be seen in its employing a full-time secretary at £500 per annum plus travelling expenses to organise branches throughout the country.<sup>65</sup>

The Presbyterian Sabbath Observance Committee had to report in 1913 that the vision of a national Lord's Day Alliance was largely a failure. Its strength was limited to the Auckland branch, which was headed by the bishop of Auckland and had wide church support. Beyond Auckland there was little support, though a few branches were set up elsewhere.<sup>66</sup> All was not bad news for the Sabbath Observance Committee in 1913. It is true that it did have to back away from putting pressure on the Police Department where some police were receiving only one Sunday in thirteen off duty. But its backing away was only because it was temporarily inadvisable to proceed further, 'in view . . . of certain circumstances existing at the time' [namely the major industrial unrest]. However, the committee was able to report the defeat of a proposal to play Sunday tennis at a club, the defeat of an attempt to open a bowling green on Sundays 'largely through the strength of the Presbyterian element', and an assurance that Sunday working of an oil-bore at New Plymouth would cease. One gains the impression that the committee saw itself as a perpetual watchdog, seeking to turn back the waves of Sunday erosion. But are tides stoppable?

The tides were within the church as well as without. As early as 1902 the Presbyterian Church was shocked to find that the heavy demand for Dunedin's Sunday trams was largely church-going demand. How dare Christians deprive the tramways workers of their Sunday rest

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<sup>64</sup> *Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand*, 1911, 156. The 1911 New Zealand Baptist assembly passed a motion in support of the proposed Lord's Day Alliance: *New Zealand Baptist Union Handbook* 1912, 23.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 158.

<sup>66</sup> *Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand*, 1913, 124-26.

and foster the 'sin of Sabbath-breaking'? Christians should refrain from using the Sunday trams.<sup>67</sup>

Two prominent Baptist families in Auckland shared this view. The Turners and Penmans, living at Mount Albert, walked to and from the Mount Eden Baptist church (a distance of around eight kilometres each way) twice a Sunday because they declined to use public transport. Eventually wearying of this, they started a fellowship at Mount Albert in 1913 which grew into the thriving Mount Albert Baptist Church.<sup>68</sup>

The usefulness of Sunday transport meant that the Presbyterian sabbatarian view was increasingly eroding, even within the church. To Presbyterian chagrin, Scots College, a Presbyterian-sponsored school, was bussing its boarders to church parades on Sundays in 1919. The General Assembly was forced to recognise that the school had a free hand on such matters, but it did urge that 'care be taken to impose no unnecessary Sunday work'.<sup>69</sup> Such sentiment was whistling in the wind. Three years later the Presbyterian Church had to recognise that Sundays were increasingly becoming devoted to activities such as picnics, games, sport, concerts, entertainments and political meetings. The rot was in church as well as society: church young people 'think it no derogation to their religion to spend the hours of Sunday afternoon in playing tennis or other games'. What could be done?

The Assembly calls upon its faithful people to remember the Lord's Day to keep it holy, and enjoins upon its ministers the duty of frequently impressing upon their congregations the sacredness and obligations of the day which is at once the charter of man's freedom and, next to the Gospel, the Church's chief instrument for the salvation of the world.<sup>70</sup>

The following year, 1923, saw the Presbyterian Church plugging away again at its losing internal struggle. Its solution was greater discipline and education, a calling on its members to 'uphold the Lord's

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<sup>67</sup> 'The Sunday Train Scandal', *Outlook*, 13 September 1902, 21.

<sup>68</sup> J. Ayson Clifford, *A Handful of Grain: The Centenary History of the Baptist Union of N.Z.: Volume 2 – 1882-1914*, Wellington: New Zealand Baptist Historical Society, 1992, 78; W.H. Edgar, *Auckland Baptist Association: One Hundred Years 1892-1992*, Auckland: New Zealand Baptist Historical Society, 1993, 27.

<sup>69</sup> *Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand*, 1919, 41.

<sup>70</sup> *Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand*, 1922, 168-69.

Day as a day of rest and worship' and an enjoining of its ministers to 'read this resolution to their congregations on the first Lord's Day of October and to preach on the subject of Lord's Day observance'.<sup>71</sup> This proved, however, to be inadequate sandbagging against the eroding leisure tides that were continuing to creep across the sabbath sands.

Did the matter need a rethink? The Anglican Church, which had never been fully convinced anyway about the need for a strict sabbath, certainly thought so. Its Sessional Committee on Social Service, in calling for higher standards in society in 1922, was wary about being negative and attempting to solve problems by repressive rules and legislation:

Your Committee believes that, while repressive measures are necessary, and to some extent effective, the ultimate cure of these evils is of a totally different kind. The only way to get the darkness out of a room is to let in the light. Evil must be overcome with good. . . . Your Committee feels that in many ways there is need for a reform in the presentation of Christianity. We need, for example, an enlightened view of Sunday observance which, while emphasizing the duty and worth of worship, will recognise reasonable demands for recreation on this weekly day of rest.<sup>72</sup>

Where the Anglican Church went on this point, other churches were later to follow – but not immediately. Residual sabbatarianism remained strong in the interwar era.<sup>73</sup> We close this part of the article in 1930. Two contrasting incidents in 1930 show that sabbatarianism was still significant in society. In 1930 the Protestant ministers of Thames called on the Borough Council to lock up swings and other equipment in the children's playground on Sundays. The 'sanctity of the day' was more important than the 'playthings' of the children. Fortunately for bored children, the council saw things differently.<sup>74</sup> However, the Auckland City councillors of the same time period declined a Rationalist Association petition to make council play apparatus available to children on Sundays. One of the stated reasons in declining the petition was that it would have involved further Sunday work. However, another influencing factor was that some councillors viewed the Rationalists as

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<sup>71</sup> *Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand*, 1923, 40.

<sup>72</sup> *Proceedings of the General Synod of the Church of the Province of New Zealand*, 1922, 62.

<sup>73</sup> See, for example, minutes of the Annual Conference of the Methodist Church of New Zealand, 1929, 65, referring to 'the evil of Sunday railway excursions'.

<sup>74</sup> NZH, 24 January 1930, 12.

an anti-religious organisation. The two councillors who supported the petition saw the council decision as ‘narrow and puritanical’.<sup>75</sup> Right or wrong, the churches’ sabbatarian stance was still influencing society.

New Zealand Baptists may not have been as prominent as the Presbyterians in the public arena in urging sabbatarian views on society – probably because they had less of a tradition generally in so speaking and because they lacked much of the strong Presbyterian national committees that fostered Presbyterian speaking out on public issues. Yet early-twentieth-century Baptist sermons and writings indicate a deeply embedded sabbatarian perspective. This raises two questions that are particularly pertinent to core Baptist perspectives. The first question is whether it was ‘Baptist’ to seek to impose their sabbatarian views on society on a whole, especially given Baptist emphasis on liberty of conscience. The second question is whether it was wise to arouse the ire of non-sabbatarians and create a perception of Christianity being a kill-joy religion, when a primary driver of the early Baptists was evangelism. Irrespective of whether sabbatarianism was right or wrong, the early-twentieth-century Baptist anti-sabbatarian public stance seems opposed to Baptist principles and to Baptist evangelistic objectives.

## **Part Two: Sunday or fun-day? The voices of the churches in New Zealand, 1931-2000**

Early twentieth-century threat to the sabbath related significantly to transport and to private amusement. Increasingly from the 1930s the issue related to public pleasure. It might be becoming rather less of a sin for a father and son to kick a ball together on a Sunday? But what of thirty players (and a referee) in a Sunday rugby match? Was the first day of the week to remain Sunday or was it to become fun-day?<sup>76</sup>

### **The mystery train saga, 1932**

Debate over Sunday transport and the use of Sunday broke out with renewed vigour at the height of the great depression in September 1932. This was a time when many people were in desperate need of hope and cheer in their lives. The railways sought to provide this hope and cheer

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<sup>75</sup> *Sun*, 29 August 1930, 13.

<sup>76</sup> I remember this catchy slogan, printed in a Baptist Bible Class booklet in the early 1960s, being the basis of argument for a non-sport Sunday.

(and add another profitable string to their bow) by initiating the use of Sunday 'mystery trains'. These would take people out of Auckland to some recreational but unannounced destination. Effectively such trains would become hikers' trains. Immediately, public controversy erupted. During September 1932 the *NZ Herald* published 52 letters on the topic. Why the fuss when, as we have seen, Sunday trams had now been around for almost thirty years? The difference likely lay in the purpose of the travel. For many of the earlier Sunday users, trams provided transport to church. Obviously many used them for other reasons as well, but the linkage of the trams with an arguably legitimate sabbath purpose took some of the sting out of their operation. This was not the case with the new innovation. The mystery trains were not taking people to church. Just the opposite, they were taking them away from it. It was creating a counter-attraction to church. The mystery trains did not facilitate worship. Their clear purpose was rather to contribute to pleasure.

Thus to strict sabbatarians the new practice of mystery trains was an unequivocal breaking of the sabbath. It was a patent violation of one of the Ten Commandments: 'the Sunday pleasure seeker has no right . . . to tamper with God's law to suit his own sordid ends any more than the thief or the murderer has'.<sup>77</sup> In such a worldview, widespread breaking the Sabbath would bring God's judgment on the nation as a whole.<sup>78</sup> 'H.T.' thundered in the vein of an Old Testament prophet:

God who made this world and created us, has given us certain laws to keep, which, if we break we must bear the punishment. And one law is 'that we should remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy.' We have a right to protest against any who break the laws of this country, and so we have equal right to protest against any who break the law of the Sabbath, lest the wrath of God come upon us also.<sup>79</sup>

'Churchman' went so far as to attribute the current depression to this type of breach of God's laws: 'Without much doubt, our troubles today in New Zealand are largely attributable to the fact that for 50 years we have been sowing the seeds of a Godless nation, and to-day we are reaping.'<sup>80</sup> If on the other hand, according to some sabbatarians, our

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<sup>77</sup> *NZ Herald* (NZH), 10 September 1932, 14.

<sup>78</sup> NZH, 10 September 1932, 14; 15 September 1932, 13; NZH, 16 September 1932, 15; NZH, 17 September 1932, 15.

<sup>79</sup> NZH, 15 September 1932, 13.

<sup>80</sup> NZH, 17 September 1932, 15.

behaviour was different and we kept the Sabbath more faithfully, this would bring great benefit and blessing to the nation. In fact it might even solve the depression crisis. 'A.M.G.' boldly asserted, 'I believe the surest way of ending the present depression is to get back to God by obedience to His Commandments.'<sup>81</sup> If pleasure was not a legitimate usage of Sunday, there was no need for Sunday hikers' trains. Pleasure trains should rather run on Saturday afternoons (the appropriate time for leisure).<sup>82</sup>

One of the arguments of sabbatarians was that developments such as Sunday trains created pressures on railway workers who could not enjoy a regular day of rest and refreshment each week. The question remained, however, whether that concern lay at the heart of the church objection or whether it was an argument from expediency designed to attract wider support to the churches' sabbatarian cause. One correspondent seemed to sense a lack of real care towards workers. So he laid down a challenge: if the churches really cared that workers got sunshine and refreshment, then let them show it by providing support for a five-day working week, thus creating opportunity for Saturday hiking instead.<sup>83</sup>

Many citizens opposed the sabbatarian stance of the mystery train opponents. Some of the anti-sabbatarians retained sympathy for the fostering of worship on Sunday. However it was possible both to go on a mystery train excursion and also to worship – trains returned to the departure point in time for those inclined to worship to attend an evening service.<sup>84</sup>

Moreover, ministers should start to think laterally. Rather than expect to have everybody come to them, why not go to the people? In particular, they could easily join the hikers with their train and take a religious service along the way.<sup>85</sup> One surprising aspect of this suggestion is that it assumed that hikers would not find such a service obtrusive. 'Non-hiker' was sure that such a service 'would be participated in and appreciated by all'.<sup>86</sup> E.H. Batchelar, in speaking of his resentment at attempted interference with his hiking freedom, encouraged ministers to come along with them and hold an outdoor service: 'there will be many

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<sup>81</sup> NZH, 14 September 1932, 13.

<sup>82</sup> NZH, 12 September 1932, 13.

<sup>83</sup> NZH, 7 September 1932, 12; 14 September 1932, 13.

<sup>84</sup> NZH, 12 September 1932, 13; 15 September 1932, 13.

<sup>85</sup> NZH, 10 September 1932, 14; 13 September 1932, 13; 16 September 1932, 15; NZH, 17 September 1932, 15.

<sup>86</sup> NZH, 10 September 1932, 14.

among our thousands or so who never darken the doors of a place of worship, but who would enjoy an open-air service'.<sup>87</sup>

Some of the opponents of sabbatarianism were themselves church people. A major concern of such people was the effect on the image of the church – attacking people's pleasures and freedoms risked needlessly alienating the sympathy of good citizens.<sup>88</sup> The church's sabbatarian stance was far too oppositional and negative: 'Let us rather appeal to the best in our hiking friends than to aggravate the worst.'<sup>89</sup>

Perhaps, too, the church's stance was too narrow, in insisting on consecrated buildings as being the only place for worship on Sundays. A better response was to love both God and nature, and to value the worship of God in nature as well as in church.<sup>90</sup> There was a wonderful goodness in nature, and to spend time there was conducive to worship of God. 'H.R.' asserted: 'I have yet to learn that an occasional Sunday morning's country walk, enjoying and contemplating the wonderful works of God, can be regarded as a desecration of the Sabbath.'<sup>91</sup> In fact, to one church-goer, 'a man-made church is a very trivial thing [compared] to our beautifully-clad ranges'.<sup>92</sup>

One significant feature of the debate was the restrained nature of the challenge to religious opposition to the development. A few critics did query any church attempt to get people to church by cutting off counter-attractions. 'Shellback', for example, noted that 'intolerance of those who do not [go to church] has in the past caused much pain and suffering'.<sup>93</sup> 'True Sport' was quite blunt: 'When . . . people . . . start to interfere with what other people care to do on the Sunday I feel constrained to point out to them that they would be doing more good to mind their own business'.<sup>94</sup> On the whole, however, there was little anti-clerical mood to tell the church to 'get lost' in its attempt to prescribe for all citizens. The tenor of the debate rather assumed that the church remained a significant institution and that it was a good thing to go to church (even though the correspondent might personally not do so). Further, while it was obtrusive of the church to shut down the hikers' trains, it would not be obtrusive for clergy to come along and hold a

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<sup>87</sup> NZH, 17 September 1932, 15.

<sup>88</sup> NZH, 16 September 1932, 15; 17 September 1932, 15.

<sup>89</sup> NZH, 13 September 1932, 13.

<sup>90</sup> NZH, 16 September 1932, 15.

<sup>91</sup> NZH, 12 September 1932, 13; also NZH, 15 September 1932, 13.

<sup>92</sup> NZH, 17 September 1932, 15.

<sup>93</sup> NZH, 7 September 1932, 12.

<sup>94</sup> NZH, 8 September 1932, 13.

service either on the train or somewhere along the trail. The seriousness of the debate and the restrained expression of the anti-sabbatarians both point both to the continuing influence of the sabbatarian argument and to the continuing influence of the church in society.

While sabbatarians might continue to fulminate against Sunday transport they could not do anything about it. The signs were clear in the mystery trains debate that the battle was lost. Another indicator of this was the failed prosecution in 1932 of officials of the Auckland Aero Club for flying for hire on Sundays under section 18 of the Police Offences Act 1927, which banned business transactions on that day. The magistrate saw the prosecution as ‘absurd’ and dismissed the case. If a taxicab could legitimately be hired to drive around the waterfront, then it would be absurd not to be allowed to fly over it.<sup>95</sup> Society was increasingly unwilling to put up with hair-splitting ‘nonsense’.

New Zealand Baptists, however, maintained their rearguard attempt to preserve the sabbath in society. A resolution was passed at their 1932 annual national gathering:

The Conference is gravely concerned with the attack on the quiet Sunday by the Railway Department. Their deliberate encouragement of Sunday travel for holiday purposes is, in the opinion of the Conference a menace to the most precious of the possessions of the Nation, to wit, the quiet Sunday. Conference calls on the nation to maintain that priceless legacy from the past.<sup>96</sup>

In the course of the debate, Dr J.J. North, principal of the denomination’s theological college and then president of the Baptist Union, weighed in:

The unprincipled action of the Railway Department, not in meeting a demand, but deliberately creating one, is an attempt—I might almost say a dastardly attempt—to infringe on the day of rest of working people. . . . No one desires to force people to go to church, but the quiet Sunday, at least, is the happy heritage of the British people. This is an attempt to destroy one of the most sacred rights of British democracy.<sup>97</sup>

The rhetoric may, to a subsequent generation, seem ‘over the top’. However, it does indicate the passion with which New Zealand Baptists

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<sup>95</sup> NZH, 17 September 1932, 13.

<sup>96</sup> New Zealand Baptist Union Handbook, 1932-1933, 28.

<sup>97</sup> *New Zealand Baptist*, November 1932, 345; NZH, 18 October 1932, 11.

sought to keep Sunday from becoming fun-day. North wrote an editorial in the *New Zealand Baptist* in 1934, noting 'a steady growth of Sunday travel and of Sunday sport' and lamenting the nation's 'losing a pearl of great price', namely 'the quiet Sunday'. He agreed that there was no basis in New Zealand for a 'compulsory Sabbatarianism'. However, in his view, '[a] triumphant case can be made out for a compulsory and unanimous day of rest'.<sup>98</sup>

### **Clamp-down on Sunday movies**

Although Sunday public transport was here to stay by the 1930s, this was not the case with Sunday movies. Screening movies was a good way to draw a crowd or to make money. Sections of the church were early to get into the showing of movies (sometimes on Sundays, sometimes on other days), with the Mount Eden Congregational Church being innovatory in this way as early as 1926.<sup>99</sup> 'Scrim' (Rev. C.G. Scrimgeour, whose commitment was much more to humanity and much less to Christian doctrine or to his Methodist Church) screened Sunday night non-religious 'feature movies' to crowds topping 1500 in his Auckland City Missioner role in 1929-1930 and his Anglican counterpart followed suit.<sup>100</sup> Soon seven or eight theatres with a total seating capacity of more than 13,000 were doing the same. One of these was that adversary of religion, the Rationalist Association, whose goals included 'the abrogation of all laws interfering with the free use of Sunday for the purpose of culture and recreation'.<sup>101</sup> Methodist and Anglican sabbatarian pressures eventually forced the closure of their own missioner-fostered movie sessions. Had this not been done, the churches would have no basis to oppose Sunday films more generally. Once Scrim's films stopped, his Sunday night congregations shrank from 1500 to 100.<sup>102</sup> It was entertainment not religion that the crowds were seeking. A few weeks later the City Council prohibited Sunday 'entertainments'.

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<sup>98</sup> *New Zealand Baptist*, June 1934, 166.

<sup>99</sup> *Auckland Star*, 17 April 1926, 4.

<sup>100</sup> Minutes of the Annual Conference of the Methodist Church of New Zealand, 1930, 118-19.

<sup>101</sup> Bill Cooke, *Heathen in Godzone: Seventy Years of Rationalism in New Zealand*, Auckland: NZ Association of Rationalists & Humanists, 1998, 27, 32, 48.

<sup>102</sup> Minutes of the Annual Conference of the Methodist Church of New Zealand, 1931, 134-36; Ian F. Faulkner, *The Decisive Decade: Some Aspects of the Development and Character of the Methodist Central Mission, Auckland, 1927-1937*, circulated as No. 37 of the proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society, 1982.

*NZ Herald* expressed full support for the ban: there was a need for continuing 'fidelity to what is central in the religion of the nation', lest there be a 'levelling of Sunday to weekday standards'. The purpose of Sunday was not simply rest and recreation, but the 'culture of the soul [was] its chief purpose'. So it was appropriate for the council to step in with its ban.<sup>103</sup>

The Council ban soon led to legal moves against the Rationalists. Although the Rationalist program included a lecture as well as a film, the Rationalist organisation was prosecuted and fined. A subsequent appeal to the Supreme Court [today's High Court] failed.<sup>104</sup> The fact that the Supreme Court judge, Justice Herdman, saw fit to label the Rationalists as a 'cult' suggests that significant, mainstream-society sympathy still remained with the church and was hostile to its adversaries. Financial stringencies resulting from revenue loss and proceedings costs forced the New Zealand Association for the Advancement of Rationalism to close and then to re-commence as the Rationalist Association and Sunday Freedom League.<sup>105</sup> That very name is indicative of the fact that the greatest way in which the church then impinged on the lives of ordinary citizens was probably through its sabbatarianism.

The Sunday-movies approach of Auckland City paralleled that of other bodies at that time. Roman Catholic Father J.J. O'Byrne, priest in a church untroubled about having a tight sabbath, had managed to get a permit to screen the sacred film, *King of Kings*, in Mount Eden in 1932, even though the issuing of this permit was contrary to the Mount Eden Borough Council's policy. In defence, it was pointed out that admission to the theatre was by voluntary donation and the total proceeds went to charity. A fiery discussion then ensued at a meeting of the borough councillors, with the mayor having the last word: 'As far as I am concerned, there will never be another picture shown on Sunday in Mount Eden.'<sup>106</sup>

Tight control on the issue of Sunday movies persisted well into the 1950s. When the Auckland City Council decided to relax its absolute

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<sup>103</sup> NZH, 22 November 1930, 10. A year later, the Council defined entertainments more closely, permitting concerts but specifically banning programs that included dancing or movies: NZH, 16 October 1931, 5.

<sup>104</sup> For reports on the successful prosecution see *Auckland Star*, 12 June 1931, 5; 16 September 1931, 9; 21 September 1931, 9.

<sup>105</sup> Cooke, 32-34. An *NZ Observer* editorial also suggested that the City Council move to stop movies was partly motivated by anti-Rationalist feeling: *NZ Observer*, 6 November 1930, 2-3.

<sup>106</sup> NZH, 13 July 1932, 10.

ban in 1935, only bona fide organisations not aiming for private profit could screen movies. In addition, these organisations had first to get the permission of a council committee chairman who would also act as censor of what was screened.<sup>107</sup> While one movie theatre was opened during World War Two as a concession to the needs of visiting servicemen, this outlet was closed as the war came to an end.<sup>108</sup> The 1950s, however, saw a bit of loosening, with commercial operators now being allowed to screen Sunday movies at two city locations, but the operators were careful to screen only films approved for general exhibition.<sup>109</sup>

Wellington had also loosened its ban on the screening of movies in World War Two to give some entertainment relief to servicemen on leave. However, a condition was that a clergyman should give a five-minute address prior to each Sunday afternoon screening. This practice continued into the 1950s with the Rev. Lloyd Geering, then serving as a Presbyterian minister, undertaking that role for a fee around 1951.<sup>110</sup>

Elsewhere bans on Sunday movie screening continued throughout the 1950s. In 1958 the Pukekohe Ministers' Fraternal (Anglican, Presbyterian, Methodist and Baptist) sent a delegation to the Pukekohe Borough Council, objecting to a recent council decision to allow the showing of commercial films on Sunday nights. The ministers argued that the Ten Commandments (including the fourth one on keeping the sabbath holy) were 'the foundation of civilisation as we know it', bring blessing for the obedient and retribution for the disobedient. They warned:

Lose Sunday and you lose Christianity; lose Christianity and you lose Christian morality, sooner or later, in this generation or the next. And where does the loss of Christianity lead? The Communist rule, atheist and amoral, is the end of this downward trail. Lose this book [the Bible], the faith it contains and the day for its preservation and you lose all that we count dearest.

In case these arguments did not sufficiently sway the councillors, the deputation reminded the councillors that the delegation 'voiced the opinion of above 1,000 responsible citizens of Pukekohe' [ignoring such

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<sup>107</sup> NZH, 28 June 1935, 13.

<sup>108</sup> *Auckland Star*, 6 April 1945, 3.

<sup>109</sup> NZH, 27 May 1958, 10; for earlier indication of Sunday theatre entertainment see Auckland City Council minutes 5 February 1953, 55.

<sup>110</sup> Lloyd Geering, *Wrestling with God: The Story of My Life*, Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 2006, 106.

a sizeable group could threaten re-election prospects]. The councillors were swayed, resolving 'that permission to screen commercial pictures in Pukekohe on Sundays be suspended for 12 months'.<sup>111</sup>

All this indicates that it took up until the 1960s for the last vestiges of sabbatarian control of Sunday movies to disappear throughout New Zealand. Increasingly it was the end of a non-Sunday-entertainment era generally. Auckland night-clubs, despite being a 'menace' and a threat to morality,<sup>112</sup> were able to push their closing beyond midnight until 1 a.m. on Sunday from 1945, and until 2 a.m. from 1962.<sup>113</sup> With the 1 a.m. extension, churches lobbied hard to have the innovation rescinded, but to no avail.<sup>114</sup> It was another thin end of the wedge: the quiet Sunday was on its way out.

### **Sunday sport and the fading of the 'quiet Sunday'**

By the late 1920s there was increasing demand for Sunday sport. Almost all golf clubs were open on that day. Tennis clubs were also moving in the same direction.<sup>115</sup> By 1934 three-quarters of Auckland's tennis clubs had Sunday play. Some of the others were located on Auckland City Council ground and subject to a Sunday ban. This ban was revoked in April 1934 by 10 votes to 9. It looks likely that intense lobbying of councillors occurred, for the matter was re-opened a month later. This time the ban was re-imposed in relation to council-owned locations by 11 votes to 10. The council decision displayed hair-splitting distinctions that commonly characterised the ongoing sabbath struggles (activity A ought not to be banned, but activity B, which looked like A, should be banned because of some narrow distinction). In this instance the mayor, Mr G.W. Hutchison, made this sort of distinction. In his view there were two types of council-located tennis clubs: those in public parks and those on council land used solely for tennis. He was not prepared to sanction play in the former context because players there would be amongst other

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<sup>111</sup> *Franklin Times*, 18 July 1958, 4; 22 July 1958, 5; *NZ Baptist*, October 1958, 554.

<sup>112</sup> Editorial in *Board and Council: Local Authorities Review*, 23 February 1944, 1.

<sup>113</sup> Auckland City Council minutes 1 November 1945, 731-32; 2 July 1962, 49.

<sup>114</sup> The lobbying churches and Christian-related groups were the Presbyterian, Methodist and Open Brethren Churches of Auckland, the Christian Businessmen's Association and the YMCA: Auckland City Council minutes 22 November 1945, 920.

<sup>115</sup> *Truth Seeker*, 3 September 1927, 7.

citizens who objected to seeing them play on Sundays. However, he was prepared to sanction Sunday play in the latter context because those who objected to Sunday play need not go near the courts. Because the original proposal was an all-or-nothing one, lacking the mayor's sort of distinction, he would support a Sunday ban on tennis clubs on all council-owned land.<sup>116</sup> A blanket-ban on Sunday tennis on council property was short-lived: sixteen months later the council lifted the ban in relation to tennis on the Victoria Park courts.<sup>117</sup>

Caution persisted for some time yet on the issue of Sunday sport. A ban on sport for boarders at Mount Albert Grammar School was lifted in 1935 but only after there was board discussion that noted that the decision would not affect church services. In the discussion one board member at least stressed that games might be permissible, but not 'organised games' such as football. The issue was clearly a sensitive one, with the final decision that 'games may be enjoyed *discreetly* on Sundays'.<sup>118</sup> As late as 1955, in giving permission to the Auckland Football Association to hold a representative trial match on Blandford Park, the City Council imposed the condition that spectators be barred. The secretary of the Association, in expressing his unhappiness about the spectator ban and the resultant inability to take up a collection to support the injured players' fund, nevertheless stated that apart from games in support of charity, 'the association is opposed to organized Sunday sport itself'.<sup>119</sup> While that decade saw increasing though limited normalising of Sunday sport, nevertheless the issue was a sensitive one and pro-Sunday-sport advocates needed to tread cautiously. Vestiges of older attitudes persisted, however, even into the 1970s. In 1973 the Pukekohe Borough Council declined an application for the annual Benson and Hedges 500 long distance motor race to be held on Sunday, not, it said, because it was opposed to Sunday sport, but because the race would run at a time which competed with church services.<sup>120</sup> It was the fading grin of the Cheshire cat.

### **Presbyterians and the sabbath**

Despite occasional sabbatarian victories, the Presbyterian Church was coming to realise even back in the 1930s that it could no longer

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<sup>116</sup> NZH, 11 May 1934, 8.

<sup>117</sup> Auckland City Council minutes 19 September 1935, 1249.

<sup>118</sup> *Dominion* 26 September 1935, 8. Emphasis added.

<sup>119</sup> *Auckland Star*, 27 May 1955, 29.

<sup>120</sup> 'No Sunday Date for Car Race', NZH, 12 July 1973, sect. 1, p.1.

significantly control the behaviour of society as a whole and that its focus must be more on influencing its own members to keep Sunday holy. Its 1933 Public Questions Committee report made the following observations:

- The Committee is deeply concerned about the futility of much of the Church's appeal to the secular arm for consideration of the vital realities enshrined in a religious observance of Sunday
- The Church's position is being gravely weakened by the laxity in this matter of many of her own members
- The Committee would therefore recommend that less emphasis should be placed on the appeal to the secular arm and more on the fact that "the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God".<sup>121</sup>

However, the church continued to bark at Sunday-activity innovations. There was concern, for example, in 1938 when elections were held for the first time on a Saturday. The convenor of the Presbyterian Public Questions Committee met with Walter Nash and received government assurances that no work would be done by the returning officers on the Sunday immediately after the election.<sup>122</sup> That committee also gave support to funeral directors in discouraging Sunday funerals in 1939.<sup>123</sup> And as late as 1964 the convenor of that committee met with a senior officer of the Tourist Department to ascertain the extent to which members of tour parties were given opportunity to attend Sunday services.<sup>124</sup> Such measures all had the look of rearguard actions of a retreating army.

Erosion of a stricter Sunday observance was gathering momentum in mid-twentieth-century New Zealand. By 1951 the Presbyterian minister, D.G. Gordon, could see that the traditional church stance was a lost cause:

Personally I cannot see New Zealand as a whole returning to a puritan Sabbath. Therefore any Church decisions on this subject

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<sup>121</sup> *Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand*, 1933, 89.

<sup>122</sup> Public Questions Committee minutes 16 September 1938 and 21 October 1938 (Presbyterian Church of New Zealand Archives, GA21).

<sup>123</sup> Public Questions Committee minutes 18 August 1939.

<sup>124</sup> Public Questions Committee minutes 5 June 1964.

should be made in view of our people living in a land with something akin to a continental Sunday.<sup>125</sup>

The same year his church seemed to take the same stance. Its Public Questions Committee, while stressing the obligation on Christians to be at a service of worship, took the view that how else the day should be spent was over to the conscience of each individual. The 1952 Public Questions Committee report, which General Assembly adopted, took a similar line, noting that recreation was a legitimate Sunday activity, and specifically including as recommended activities on Sunday:

The enjoyment of literature, art, music, indoor and outdoor recreation of such a nature that it does not interfere with our Christian duties [of public worship etc] . . . or involve organised sport and such activities as would deprive others of the rest and benefits of the Lord's Day.<sup>126</sup>

Already, however, the issue of organised sport (which the Public Questions Committee still opposed) was challenging sabbath-minded churches. An early trigger for debate was cricket, with its five-day matches, which were often played against international teams from countries whose formative religion was not Christianity (for example the Indian sub-continent). Walter Hadlee, captain of the New Zealand cricket team (and father of three subsequent national representative cricketers, including Sir Richard Hadlee), warned, in preaching at Knox Church, Christchurch after an overseas tour in 1949, that there would be increasing pressure for competitive Sunday sport – ‘a cancerous growth that will ultimately stifle any community that goes for it’.<sup>127</sup> In 1956 the Hawkes Bay Presbytery issued a statement opposing ‘all forms of organised Sunday sport’: ‘The Presbyterian Church is convinced of the value of our present Sunday, and does not wish to see a Continental Sunday introduced into New Zealand. Organised sport is the thin edge of the wedge in this connection.’<sup>128</sup>

The Presbyterian Assembly accepted in 1960 that individuals ‘may use their time on Sunday in healthy indoor and outdoor recreation as their consciences permit’ but reaffirmed its opposition to organised Sunday sport on the following grounds:

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<sup>125</sup> *Outlook* 10 July 1951, 8-9.

<sup>126</sup> *Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand*, 1952, 224-26.

<sup>127</sup> *Outlook*, 14 December 1949, 13.

<sup>128</sup> *Outlook*, 1 May 1956, 7.

1. It involves more and more people in Sunday work – especially transport workers, caterers and so on and will involve more as it increases.
2. It makes demands on young people which interfere with their Christian training.
3. It creates a community attitude of mind which may unthinkingly accept more and more inroads into the value of Sunday.<sup>129</sup>

### **Baptists and Sunday sport**

Baptists were part of the fight against organised Sunday sport. In 1952 the Timaru Baptists led by their pastor, the Rev. R.L. Fursdon, sought to get other bodies to join them in protest against a Sunday rugby special benefit match held in the city. No other body (and this presumably means no other church) would join them in the protest; so they went ahead on their own. The city council reply advised the church that ‘the general policy of this Council is unfavourable to organised sporting events on Sunday’.<sup>130</sup> Such a reply indicates that the matter was still a sensitive subject and local body politicians would listen to this sort of protest.

However, Sunday sport rolled on. A *New Zealand Baptist* editorial in 1955 noted the ongoing attack on ‘the strict observance of Sunday’ from three quarters, namely the ‘R.C. element’, the Seventh Day Adventists and some sporting bodies. The latter represented ‘the forces of paganism’. The editorial noted that the way Sunday was observed was a hallmark of a ‘Protestant Christian’ and that ‘Christians must give Sunday sport a wide berth even if it means losing matches or titles’.<sup>131</sup>

One Christian to follow this sort of advice in 1960 was Brian Wood, who was on the verge of gaining selection for the Auckland rugby team. However, he declined to join the team training that would likely have led to his selection: ‘As a Christian (Baptist) I feel I cannot take part in Sunday sport.’ The *New Zealand Baptist* congratulated Wood on his stand.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> *Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand*, 1960, 110a.

<sup>130</sup> *New Zealand Baptist*, February 1953, 34.

<sup>131</sup> *New Zealand Baptist*, October 1955, 235.

<sup>132</sup> *New Zealand Baptist*, July 1960, 167.

Several years later, three national cricket players (Victor Pollard, Brian Yuile and Bruce Murray – all Baptists) became heroes in the conservative Christian world of the mid-1960s for their stance in refusing to play in Sunday games.<sup>133</sup> The annual Baptist Assembly even passed a resolution in 1967 supporting their non-Sunday-sport stance.<sup>134</sup> Bruce Murray much later recalled that competition Sunday cricket did not occur in his youth. The dilemma cropped up in overseas tours, as these commonly involved Sunday play. The three Baptists would not play on Sunday, though they were prepared to make an exception in India and Pakistan, in cultural situations that did not have a Sunday tradition. However, they then reverted to not being available for Sunday cricket when the tour moved on to England. Vic Pollard later had qualms about having made the exception on the Indian sub-continent – the sabbath was an absolute biblical mandate which should be followed in all situations. Bruce Murray remained comfortable with the exception. In his mind, one reason for not playing sport in a more ‘Christian’ country like England or the West Indies was that to do so would look odd to the Christian sector of society. Murray’s non-Sunday play stance was clearly partly shaped by his Christian community. That community was largely against Sunday play and as a part of that community its members adhered to its values. By the early 1970s the possibility of representing New Zealand at cricket as a non-Sunday player was becoming increasingly problematic and Pollard and Murray both prematurely retired from the New Zealand team. In their later memories, the issue for Pollard was fidelity to Scripture; for Murray it was the need to have time available for a young family.<sup>135</sup> Either way it was the end of an era.

#### **Final efforts to preserve the sabbath**

Subsequently, Michael Jones (significantly a Pacific Islander where a traditional Sunday has much more been preserved) took the same bold stance in the 1980s and 1990s as a rugby player. He was probably the last Christian to take a non-Sunday-sport stance and still play in the national side. Changing societal values and increasing professionalism and Sunday

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<sup>133</sup> For a suggestion that Pollard failed to get final promotion from vice-captain to captain of the New Zealand cricket team in part at least because of his refusal to play on Sundays see *NZ Truth*, 10 March 1970, 36.

<sup>134</sup> *New Zealand Baptist*, January 1968, 14.

<sup>135</sup> Transcript of interview of Vic Pollard by Laurie Guy on 15 April 2006; transcript of interview of Bruce Murray by Laurie Guy on 6 November 2006.

play in the world of sport make it much more likely that more recently such a person would never get the chance to make it to the top.

By the time of Michael Jones in the 1980s there was almost no antipathy to a 'continental Sunday'. Over the previous generation most people, including most Protestant church-goers, had now come to embrace it. The outcome was that the church had little strength or will even to oppose full Sunday retail shopping, which was permitted (except for alcohol sales) under the Shop Trading Hours Repeal Act in 1990. Hotels and off-licence premises have been able to sell alcohol on Sundays since 1999. The current issue is whether to have full trade permitted on Easter Sunday.

New Zealand Baptists were slow to give up on the sabbath issue. While president of the Baptist Union in 1965, Stewart Carey bemoaned the decline in sabbath observance, with Sunday sport, pleasure and business all on the increase. Was it necessary, he asked, 'to travel on Sunday when you go to, or return from, a holiday? Must we squeeze the last ounce out of a holiday and neglect God?' To Carey, not only were gardening and lawn mowing off-limits on Sundays, but so also were knitting and sewing. Sunday expenditure was a particular bugbear: 'I wonder if you are shocked, as I am, as you see Christians going into shops on Sunday to purchase frozen peas or some other article of food, which with a little forethought could have been purchased during the week.'<sup>136</sup>

I personally recall attending a Baptist youth Easter camp around 1966 where that issue came up. In that era the Easter Sunday night camp meeting was always a major focus for evangelism. However, at this camp the speaker, a Baptist pastor, opened his address by giving the campers a verbal blast because a few of them had bought ice-creams etc at a local confectionery store in breach of the sabbath – hardly a brilliant way for the speaker to win converts and influence young people of that time.

The 1970 annual Baptist assembly came out strongly for one final time against Sunday sport. However, not all Baptists held to that perspective. A letter in response to the resolution saw nothing wrong with Sunday sport at non-church times.<sup>137</sup> And an article published by the *New Zealand Baptist* in 1970 noted the hypocrisy of Baptists who condemned Sunday trading and denied children the pleasure of buying an ice-cream on their way home from Sunday School, while putting out milk bottles on Saturday night for Sunday morning delivery and

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<sup>136</sup> *New Zealand Baptist*, March 1965, 56.

<sup>137</sup> *New Zealand Baptist*, June 1971, 6-7.

expecting to buy bread and newspapers on Mondays, even though their production had required Sunday work. The article writer concluded: 'The old platitudes ground out Sunday after Sunday to our forebears must give way in a modern world to a more real approach and more valid reasoning, however much it hurts.'<sup>138</sup>

New Zealand Baptists continued to voice sabbath concerns for another decade or two. The public questions committee sent a letter to the Wellington organisers of a 'run for fun' race in 1979, commending them for changing the run from Sunday to a Saturday morning.<sup>139</sup> The following year the same committee wrote to the New Zealand broadcasting tribunal urging it to keep public television and radio free of advertising on Sundays.<sup>140</sup> And in 1989 the congregation of Whakatane Baptist Church wrote to their member of parliament urging her to oppose any further liberalisation of Sunday trading.<sup>141</sup> However, Christian ability to influence society on the use of Sunday was almost gone. And so too was the will to do so. A century earlier the sabbatarian voice was a roar, often over matters that subsequent generations would consider minor. A century later that roar had become a whimper, fading almost to nothing.

**Laurie Guy**  
**Carey Baptist College**

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<sup>138</sup> L.E. Treliving, *New Zealand Baptist*, December 1970, 7.

<sup>139</sup> Public questions committee minutes, 16 October 1979: Baptist Archives: File MA701 MS B1/86, and file MA 704 MS B1/98.

<sup>140</sup> Letter, Bruce Turley and S.L. Edgar to B. Slane dated 7 March 1980: Baptist Archives: File MA701 MS B1/91.

<sup>141</sup> Letter Whakatane Baptist Church to Anne Fraser, MP, dated 22 February 1989: Baptist Archives: File 876 MS B1/170.,

## **‘A Holy Liberty in the Lord’? South Australian Baptists and Female Gender Roles, circa 1870 to 1940<sup>1</sup>**

### **ABSTRACT**

Between 1868 and 1940, most Baptist women in South Australia believed that their principal sphere of responsibility was the home, that the husband was head of the family, and that men should be the ones providing the main leadership in church and society. However, there was a moderate expansion of Baptist women’s sphere of influence between 1870 and 1940. Despite continuing constraints, Baptist women created and controlled their own organizations and successfully pushed for a greater role in church and denominational life. Baptist women were also among those who successfully campaigned for female suffrage in the 1890s. Furthermore, they took an active part in temperance campaigns and contributed strongly to community groups that were dedicated to social improvement. This article explores changes in Baptist women’s roles in the context of ideas about gender roles and femininity that were prevalent in churches and in the wider society.

### **Dominant Beliefs About Female Identity and Roles**

In a previous article on masculinity and the development of Christian character among South Australian Baptists, I argued that Baptists believed that men should accept their God-given responsibility of providing leadership in the public sphere if they were to attain the maturity of character that God intended for them.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, Baptists held that women should cultivate those qualities, given to them by God, that were suitable for their responsibilities in the home and the church as

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<sup>1</sup> Much of this article is drawn from the author’s doctoral thesis, J.S. Walker, ‘The Baptists in South Australia, circa 1900 to 1939’ (Flinders University, Adelaide, 2006).

<sup>2</sup> See PJB 5/1 April 2009: 5-26.

'helpmeets' to men. Undergirding Baptist beliefs about women was the idea that women should submit to those men who had responsibility for them. To James Gray, an influential Baptist layman, for example, there was a God-given chain of submission: the woman to man, the man to Christ, and Christ to God. He declared that women who controlled their husbands 'unsex[ed] themselves'.<sup>3</sup> According to this type of thinking, women should mind their place and not seek to displace male leadership in home, church or society.<sup>4</sup>

Baptists, almost without question, accepted that women's primary sphere of activity should be the home. In 1923, the Rev. E.R. Ledger, for example, who maintained that men were sanctified through their service in the public sphere, declared that:

young women can find no more beautiful, no more sanctifying avenue of Christian service than within the sacred precincts of the home... Let them concentrate on this high calling, that of making the atmosphere of the home sweet, helpful and attractive... This is no mean service. It does not make our 'daughters' drudges but queens. To keep home life sweet and strong is to do a noble work for the kingdom of God. To such ministry Christ calls.<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, Baptists believed that homes themselves became 'sacred precincts' which were made 'sweet, helpful and attractive' by women's service. Women were to have 'Christ in their heart', and show love, joy, peace and the other 'fruit of the Spirit' and thereby contribute 'charm and beauty'.<sup>6</sup> As Tosh has argued about English family relationships in the second half of the nineteenth century, 'men expected their homes to stand for a moral vision of life which would effect their own sensibilities for the better'.<sup>7</sup> Women, on the one hand, were seen as the weaker sex and hence vulnerable and needing protection, but on the

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<sup>3</sup> *Truth and Progress*, (TP), July 1877, 76.

<sup>4</sup> For a helpful discussion of the identity and roles of Baptist women in Australia, see Ken. R. Manley, *From Woolloomooloo to 'Eternity': A History of Australian Baptists, vol. 1, Growing an Australian Church, 1831-1914* (ed. A. Cross, Studies in Baptist History and Thought, 16.1; 2 vols; Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2006), 294-318.

<sup>5</sup> *Baptist Record* (BR), July 1923, 15.

<sup>6</sup> 'Senior Girls Missionary Union Badge: The Star Ideals', in Finsbury Park Baptist Church Senior Girls' Missionary Union, 'Book of Australia', unpublished manuscript, c. 1942, unpagged. This manuscript is currently held at the Baptist Centre, 35-39 King William Road, Unley, Adelaide.

<sup>7</sup> John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 55.

other hand, women (particularly mothers) were idealised as repositories, guardians and purveyors of purity. Girls' organisations associated with Baptist churches such as Phi Beta Pi and Snowdrop Bands reinforced these notions. During the initiation ceremony into Phi Beta Pi, girls were taught the meaning of the colours in the organisation's emblem. Blue stood for loyalty to whatever was noble, beautiful and good.<sup>8</sup> White spoke of purity and spotlessness, and were a call 'to be companions of the spotless Christ'.<sup>9</sup> Gold pointed to worth, and how the highest values came from toil, endurance, striving, perseverance and faith.<sup>10</sup> Presumably, the home was regarded as the principal site for such toil and endurance.<sup>11</sup>

Baptists also believed, given the moral qualities of women, that mothers should have the primary role in the moral and religious training of their children. As Gray put it, mothers had an 'especial sense' for this work.<sup>12</sup> Mrs. F.C. Spurr told the Australian Baptist Congress in Melbourne in 1911 that 'woman's chiefest mission' included training, aiding, brightening and interesting the 'little lives given to her in trust for God'.<sup>13</sup> In regard to mothers teaching their children, she claimed that 'morals make a people, but women make morals'. Mothers' Unions, modelled on the Anglican organisation of the same name, were formed in many Baptist churches in the first quarter of the twentieth century as an aid to the educative function of women in the home. Mothers' Unions included amongst their goals the awakening in 'mothers of all classes a sense of their great responsibility in the training of their boys and girls'.<sup>14</sup> Members were said to be united in the 'one great object' of winning their children for Christ.

Baptists also shared with many of their contemporaries the belief that the greatness of the British race (including 'Australian Britons') depended on women fulfilling their proper function in the home. In an

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<sup>8</sup> David H. Jemison, *The First Degree of Ritual, Order of Palestine: Supplement to the Manual of the Phi Beta Pi*, (Cincinnati, Ohio, Phi Beta Pi, 1917), 4. The companion boys' organisation to Phi Beta Pi was Kappa Sigma Pi.

<sup>9</sup> Jemison, *First Degree Ritual*, 5.

<sup>10</sup> Jemison, *First Degree Ritual*, 5.

<sup>11</sup> The spread of 'Mothers' Day' among Baptists and its use of the 'white flower of purity' was another indication of the association of motherhood with purity. See *Southern Baptist (SB)*, 27 July 1909, 182.

<sup>12</sup> *TP*, July 1877, 76.

<sup>13</sup> *SB*, 5 April 1911, 240. Spurr's husband, F.C. Spurr, was minister of Collins Street Baptist Church in central Melbourne.

<sup>14</sup> *SB*, 10 November 1903, 258.

article in the *Australian Baptist* entitled 'To the Girls of the Future: The Girl Who Loves Her Home', British Baptist author, Arthur Mee, in urging the British woman to make her home a 'shrine of sacred things', claimed that 'it is not an accident that the English race, controlling the lives of hundred of races throughout the world, is the most home-loving race of mankind.'<sup>15</sup> The future of British and Australian society, it was thought, depended on mothers being good 'home-makers'.<sup>16</sup> In a similar vein, the *Australian Baptist* claimed that it was from the home

that the vital, vitalizing and victorious energy goes forth that makes for good citizenship, and it is from the home, too, that the debilitating, destructive and demoralizing influence goes forth that undermines the strength of any nation.<sup>17</sup>

Mee's statement reveals how ideas about femininity were tied to concepts of race. Supposedly, the British way of being female was the epitome of femininity. The same assumptions were apparent in *Golden Gifts: An Australian Tale*, by South Australian Baptist author, Matilda Evans.<sup>18</sup> Evans portrays one of her characters, Edith Wallace, as filled with a mixture of disgust and pity when an aboriginal woman approached her. "A woman! Can it really be?" she exclaimed, in a low tone of disgust. It was a woman, wrapped in the customary blanket.<sup>19</sup> The aboriginal woman was so far removed from the British ideal of womanhood that she seemed barely human. Similarly, Baptists portrayed indigenous women on overseas mission fields as being ignorant, degraded, and abused by indigenous men.<sup>20</sup> Baptists used such beliefs to impress on church members the urgency of mission work among Australian aborigines and foreign races.<sup>21</sup>

The idealisation of motherhood was sometimes used to powerful

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<sup>15</sup> *Australian Baptist (AB)*, 10 February 1914, 7. Mee was author of the popular *Children's Encyclopedia*.

<sup>16</sup> *AB*, 7 July 1914, 2.

<sup>17</sup> *AB*, 7 July 1914, 2.

<sup>18</sup> Evans (1827-1886), writing under the pseudonym of Maud Jeanne Franc, had fifteen books published in London by Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, and Rivington. For many years she was a deaconess at North Adelaide Baptist Church. See Barbara Wall, *Our Own Matilda: Matilda Jane Evans, 1827-1886, Pioneer Woman and Novelist*, (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 1994).

<sup>19</sup> Cited in Margaret Allen, "White Already to Harvest": South Australian Women Missionaries to India', *Feminist Review* 65 (Summer 2000), 100-101.

<sup>20</sup> *SB*, 13 January 1898, 20; 19 October 1911, 699.

<sup>21</sup> See, for example, *SB*, 20 April 1911, 268-269; J.H. Sexton, *Australian Aborigines*, (Adelaide: Aborigines Friends' Association, 1944), 88-89.

evangelistic effect. One popular evangelistic song was entitled, 'If You Love Your Mother Meet Her in the Skies'.<sup>22</sup> The American evangelists, Chapman and Alexander, used a song of the same ilk, 'Tell Mother I'll be There', to great effect with 6,500 men at a special men's meeting at the Exhibition Building in Adelaide in 1909

When I was but a little child how well I recollect  
 How I would grieve my mother with my folly and neglect;  
 And now that she has gone to heaven I miss her tender care;  
 O Saviour, tell my mother I'll be there!

One day a message came to me, it bade me quickly come  
 If I would see my mother ere the Saviour took her home:  
 I promised her, before she died, for heaven to prepare;  
 O Saviour, tell my mother, I'll be there.<sup>23</sup>

This was one of the most requested songs by Australian troops in Young Men's Christian Association sing-songs in the First World War.<sup>24</sup> To reject Christ was to reject mother, a thought too painful to bear for many young Baptists.

A corollary of the idealisation of womanhood and motherhood was the deep anxiety evinced when women did not conform to the ideal. In this regard, Baptist leaders, along with leaders of other Christian denominations, were greatly alarmed at the declining birth rate. The Rev. W.S. Rolling, South Australian editor of the *Southern Baptist*, declared in 1909 that the decline was due to 'enfeebled moral fibre, to love of pleasure and impatience of pain'.<sup>25</sup> Presumably, given the reference to the pain of childbirth, his comments were directed at those women whom he considered to be acting selfishly. Rolling, who was echoing the findings made in 1904 by the New South Wales Royal Commission on the Decline in the Birth-rate, believed that if the trend continued, it would result in the fall of the British empire.<sup>26</sup> Like many Australians of

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<sup>22</sup> *SB*, 31 August 1909, 206.

<sup>23</sup> *SB*, 27 July 1909, 182. The words of the hymn are cited in Richard Broome, *Treasure in Earthen Vessels: Protestant Christianity in New South Wales Society, 1900-1914*, (St. Lucia, Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1980), 68.

<sup>24</sup> *AB*, 25 June 1918, 2.

<sup>25</sup> *SB*, 14 September 1909, 213.

<sup>26</sup> On this Royal Commission, see Neville Hicks, *'This Sin and Scandal': Australia's Population Debate, 1891-1911*, (Canberra: Australian National

the time, he was probably concerned that the 'lesser' races were reproducing at a faster rate than the British.<sup>27</sup> Many Australians were influenced by social Darwinist theories about competition between the races, and they viewed the declining birth rate as 'race suicide'.<sup>28</sup>

The behaviours associated with the 'flappers' of the 1920s also drew condemnation from Baptists. Baptists regarded them as 'cheapening of womanhood'.<sup>29</sup> To Baptists, the ultimate 'cheapening' was sexual intercourse outside of marriage. This was euphemistically referred to by the Baptist social activist, Rosetta Birks, when she spoke of 'the downfall of all womanly virtue'.<sup>30</sup> Concern over the sexual behaviour of women who frequented hotels was one of the principal motivations for Birks' temperance activities.<sup>31</sup> The desire to avoid anything that could even remotely add to the chance of sexual relations outside of marriage possibly also led many Baptist parents to avoid sexual education of their children. By the 1930s, this attitude was beginning to change and sex education was welcomed by some Baptists, but the *Baptist Record* declared that many of 'the younger married men and women of this generation can testify to the fact that sex was never once discussed between them and their parents'.<sup>32</sup> Young women, as was also the case with young men, were encouraged to enjoy sport and 'physical culture', literature and music, but prior to the 1930s, they were not taught about sexual pleasure. It is likely that this was not because of the previously widespread belief that women were the lascivious sex but because of the fear of the occurrence of sex outside of marriage.<sup>33</sup>

Baptists assumed that their beliefs about the home as the primary sphere of women's labour were completely in accord with unchanging

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University Press, 1978). Also see Susan Magarey, *Passions of the First Wave Feminists*, (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2001), 111-115.

<sup>27</sup> Many Australians, including the commissioners, were worried that unless the British race filled the empty spaces of Australia, then 'Asiatic hordes' would descend on the continent. Magarey, *Passions of the First Wave Feminists*, 112.

<sup>28</sup> On the declining birthrate and beliefs about 'race suicide', see Carol Bacchi, 'Evolution, Eugenics and Women: the Impact of Scientific Attitudes to Women, 1870-1920' in Elizabeth Windschuttle (ed.), *Women, Class and History: Feminist Perspectives on Australia, 1788-1978*, (Sydney: Fontana/Collins, 1980), 146-149.

<sup>29</sup> *BR*, 15 November 1927, 3.

<sup>30</sup> *SB*, 29 September 1903, 221.

<sup>31</sup> *SB*, 29 September 1903, 221.

<sup>32</sup> *BR*, 18 November 1939, 13.

<sup>33</sup> On this changing view of women, see Tosh, *A Man's Place*, 44-46 .

biblical principles. However, they were people of their time and were more influenced by contemporary social views than they realised. They exhibited the same polarised construction of gender that was typical of many people of their era.<sup>34</sup> While patriarchal practice in the sense of 'father rule' had long been entrenched, the rigid demarcation of spheres enunciated by Baptists such as Ledger excluded women from the economic process to a much greater degree than had been the case prior to the nineteenth century.<sup>35</sup> The very term 'helpmeet' that had been used primarily to refer to the woman's role as an economic producer, now took on the meaning of service to men in the home.<sup>36</sup> This ideal of family life owed much, in fact, to processes such as rationalisation and specialisation whose roots can be traced to Enlightenment thought.<sup>37</sup> A consequence of the diminished role of the family in economic production was that 'women's family role became centered on child care and taking care of men... Women of all classes (were) now expected to nurture and support husbands in addition to providing them with food and a clean house.'<sup>38</sup> This resulted in an increased intensity in the mothering role of women and helped to produce a growing emphasis on the family as a 'quintessentially relational and personal institution'.<sup>39</sup> All these changes occurred in the context of one of modern society's most salient features, that of large-scale urbanisation.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Tosh, *A Man's Place*, 46.

<sup>35</sup> On the use of the term 'patriarchy' in its limited sense of 'father-rule', see Tosh, *A Man's Place*, 3.

<sup>36</sup> Tosh, *A Man's Place*, 55.

<sup>37</sup> Despite some debate, historians generally agree that during the first half of the nineteenth century the degree of separation increased. For a summary of this debate, see Linda Wilson, *Constrained by Zeal: Female Spirituality Amongst Nonconformists, 1825-1875*, (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2000), 8-11.

<sup>38</sup> N. Chodrow, *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*, (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1978), 4-5. Cited in Kerreen Reiger, 'Women's Labour Redefined: Child-bearing and Rearing Advice in Australia, 1880s-1930s', in Margaret Bevege, Margaret James and Carmel Shute (eds), *Worth Her Salt: Women at Work in Australia*, (Sydney: Hale and Ironmonger, 1982), 72.

<sup>39</sup> N. Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering*, 4-5. Cited in Reiger, 'Women's Labour Redefined', 72. On the contribution of social-evolutionary thought to a more restricted role for women, see Lorna Duffin, 'Prisoners of Progress: Women and Evolution', in Sara Delamont and Lorna Duffin (eds.), *The Nineteenth-Century Woman: Her Cultural and Physical World*, (London: Croom Helm, 1978), 76.

<sup>40</sup> On the nineteenth-century family and processes of modernisation, see Tosh, *A Man's Place*, 4; K.M. Reiger, *The Disenchantment of the Home*:

### Shifting Boundaries

To this point, the discussion of Baptist constructs of femininity has suggested that women were placed in a subordinate position to men, one that largely excluded them from the public sphere. As has been evident from the views of women cited, women largely accepted the framework of the prevailing ideology of gender relations. There is no evidence to suggest that any Baptist woman or man ever challenged the prevailing belief that home and motherhood were essential elements of God's will for the vast majority of women. However, in Australian society and much of the English speaking world in the late nineteenth century, there were shifts in boundaries between women's domestic sphere and the public world of men.<sup>41</sup> The same was true amongst South Australian Baptists. While these shifts in thinking amongst Baptists did not fundamentally alter established ideas about gender roles, they did help develop what British historian Linda Wilson has called a 'third sphere' for women.<sup>42</sup> By this she means that church life provided a sphere, part way between the private and public spheres, that facilitated a transition from private to public involvement.

An important first consideration in regard to shifting gender boundaries is Baptist church polity. Historically, Baptists believed that all members could take part in the deliberations of the ultimate decision making body of the church, the church meeting. Although the reality in local churches often did not match the official ecclesiology, the potential for women to have a significant public role in the church was sometimes realised. Susan Juster, for instance, has shown that Baptist women in New England in the first half of the eighteenth century were able to use the relative egalitarianism of Baptist polity to gain greater access to formal channels of authority than women in churches with different structures.<sup>43</sup> It is difficult to gauge the extent to which South Australian Baptist women participated in church meetings. Lyndoch Baptist Church in the Barossa Valley, from the time of its foundation in 1859 until 1886,

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*Modernizing the Australian Family, 1880-1940*, (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1985), 32-55.

<sup>41</sup> For an outline of feminist explorations of this theme, see Susan Magarey, 'History, Cultural Studies, and Another Look at First Wave Feminism in Australia', *Australian Historical Studies* 106 (April 1996), 100-103.

<sup>42</sup> Wilson, *Constrained by Zeal*, 210-211.

<sup>43</sup> Susan Juster, *Disorderly Women: Sexual Politics and Evangelicalism in Revolutionary New England*, (Ithica and London: Cornell University Press, 1994), introduction and chapter 1.

perhaps reflecting more restrictive definitions of femininity that emerged in the first half of the nineteenth century, prohibited women from speaking in church meetings.<sup>44</sup> However, it is unlikely that this practice was the norm, and by the twentieth century it seems that some women exercised a strong voice in decision-making. Mrs. J. Clark, for instance, was described as being 'a woman of strong convictions which she expressed freely', while Mrs. J. Whiting was said to be 'fearless and outspoken at all times'.<sup>45</sup> Presumably, both these women freely expressed their opinions in church meetings. The same can be implied about Mrs. T.J. Naismith, a resident of Black Rock in South Australia's northern wheat belt. She was described as being interested 'in every movement in the district' and that 'her opinion and influence went far in decisions of vital interest to the neighbourhood'.<sup>46</sup> Women's confidence in the worth of their own opinions was also displayed outside the church meeting. Mrs. A.S. Branson, for instance, was described as being a good listener who 'had her own opinion of the worth of a sermon. If the minister helped her she told him so'.<sup>47</sup>

The relative egalitarianism of Baptist polity also went beyond the local congregation. From its inception in 1863, the South Australian Baptist Association (SABA, renamed the South Australian Baptist Union in 1894) encouraged women to join as personal members.<sup>48</sup> This gave them voting rights at the annual meetings. Although it seems that very few women took up this category of membership, the egalitarianism implicit within Baptist polity was evident in the SABA's 1891 ruling that

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<sup>44</sup> Brice P. Menzel, *The Lyndoch Baptist Church, 1859-1985*, (Lyndoch: South Australia, Lyndoch Baptist Church), 1986, 6. The trust deed of Salem (Gumeracha) Baptist Church, drawn up in 1854, excluded female church members from voting on 'temporal' issues (presumably matters of property and finance) in church meetings, but allowed them to vote on 'spiritual' matters including the choice of church officers and ministers. Salem Baptist Church, 'Indenture', (Gumeracha: South Australia, Salem Baptist Church, 1854), 4. The practice of excluding women from speaking and or voting in Baptist church meetings was not common before the nineteenth century. See J.H.Y. Briggs, 'She-preachers, Widows and Other Women: the Feminine Dimension in Baptist Life Since 1600', *Baptist Quarterly* 31 (July 1986), 337-350.

<sup>45</sup> *AB*, 4 March 1913, 4; 27 April 1915, 13.

<sup>46</sup> *BR*, 15 December 1927, 10.

<sup>47</sup> *BR*, 16 September 1929, 10.

<sup>48</sup> South Australian Baptist Association Minutes of the General Committee (SABAMGC), 23 November 1863, Society Record Group (SRG) 465/51/7/1, State Library of South Australia (SLSA).

there was no constitutional barrier to Parkside Baptist Church's plan to send a female delegate to the SABA annual meetings.<sup>49</sup> This decision was essentially an extension of local church practice and gave Baptist women opportunities that were denied to women in other denominations. Similar rights were not extended to Anglican women in Adelaide until 1946.<sup>50</sup> Baptist women took advantage of the opportunity to participate in denominational meetings, and from the early 1890s Baptist churches appointed an increasing number of women delegates to Association (Union) meetings.

The first indications of changing views among South Australian Baptists regarding women's public participation in church life were Rev. Silas Mead's support in 1868 for the introduction of women deaconesses and his call for women to pray publicly in church services.<sup>51</sup> Declaring that women possessed a 'holy liberty in the Lord', he argued that deaconesses could have a positive role by attending women about to be immersed, visiting the sick and needy, giving instruction to younger women of the church, and that they could 'lovingly watch over the whole sisterhood of the church'.<sup>52</sup> Mead also commended women to the work of evangelism and Sunday school teaching, and in support of his views, pointed to changing attitudes in England on the role of women in church life. Keen to provide a biblical rationale for his beliefs, he argued from the New Testament that women had public ministry in the early church, but not governing authority over men.<sup>53</sup> Mead also pointed to the impact that women were already having in society as nurses and in their work at home and overseas of spreading the gospel. In presenting his case, Mead demonstrated the type of pragmatism that was characteristic of an evangelicalism influenced by enlightenment

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<sup>49</sup> SABAMGC, 2 March 1891, SRG 465/51/7/4, SLSA.

<sup>50</sup> David Hilliard, *Godliness and Good Order: A History of the Anglican Church in South Australia*, (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 1986), 141.

<sup>51</sup> On the introduction of deaconesses to Baptist churches in England, see J. H. Y. Briggs, *The English Baptists of the Nineteenth Century*, (Oxford: Baptist Historical Society, 1994), 279-286. On similar developments among Australian Baptists, see Ken R. Manley, *From Woolloomooloo to Eternity*, vol. 1, 299-314.

<sup>52</sup> *TP*, August 1868, 159-160.

<sup>53</sup> Mead's views seem to have been identical to those expressed by his former theological college principal, Joseph Angus. On Angus' beliefs about the ministry of women in churches, see Briggs, *The English Baptists of the Nineteenth Century*, 285.

rationality.<sup>54</sup> The success of women in various fields of endeavour provided a kind of *ex post facto* justification to those endeavours.<sup>55</sup> Mead's views had an impact. Most Baptist churches had appointed deaconesses by the end of the nineteenth century.

The same combination of pragmatism and biblicism underpinned support for two initiatives in the 1880s which gave new opportunities to women. The first initiative was the evangelistic campaigns conducted in Baptist churches by Mrs. Emilia Baeyertz, a convert from Judaism.<sup>56</sup> Mead's biblical rationale for widened public ministry for women helped pave the way for the acceptance of Baeyertz' public ministry, and pragmatism was strongly evident in the enthusiasm for Baeyertz' evangelistic work. Her success helped dampen continuing concerns about the propriety of women preaching.<sup>57</sup> Indeed her ability to win converts, sometimes numbering over a hundred in a single church, was partly attributed to her femininity. Reference was made to her 'gentle refined deportment' and 'simple, natural, womanly eloquence'.<sup>58</sup> The second initiative, led by Mead, was the sending of Ellen Arnold and Marie Gilbert to East Bengal as the first missionaries from South Australia sponsored by the South Australian Baptist Missionary Society.<sup>59</sup> While some Baptists resisted this move because they believed that God was opposed to single women undertaking missionary activity, by the twentieth century Baptists unhesitatingly accepted the existence of women missionaries.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> On the pragmatism of evangelicals and its relationship to the Enlightenment, see D.W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s*, (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 65-66.

<sup>55</sup> I have drawn this insight from Briggs, *English Baptists of the Nineteenth Century*, 286.

<sup>56</sup> On Baeyertz's ministry in Australian Baptist churches, see Ken. R. Manley, *From Woolloomooloo to 'Eternity'*, vol. 1, 211-216.

<sup>57</sup> *TP*, January 1881, 8.

<sup>58</sup> *TP*, September 1881, 101-02.

<sup>59</sup> For a discussion of the views of early Australian Baptist women missionaries, including Arnold and Gilbert, see Rosalind Gooden, 'Awakened Women: Initial Formative Influences on Australian Baptist Women in Overseas Mission, 1864-1913', (ThM thesis, Melbourne College of Divinity, Melbourne, 1997).

<sup>60</sup> Another significant development regarding women and Baptist church life was the ruling of the SABA in 1891 that churches could send female delegates to SABA meetings. SABAGCM, 2 March 1891, SRG 465/51/7/4, SLSA.

A further sign of change was the role that some Baptist women and men played in the campaign to enfranchise women. The most prominent Baptist suffrage campaigner was Rosetta Birks, a leading social activist who was a council member of the Women's Suffrage League from its inception in 1888 and was its inaugural treasurer.<sup>61</sup> Another leading Baptist who supported women's suffrage was George Fowler, a leading business man who was a Women's Suffrage League councillor. His daughter, Dr. Laura Fowler, the first female to qualify as a medical doctor in South Australia, was held up by the suffrage movement as an example of what women could achieve.<sup>62</sup> Cornelius Proud, a stockbroker and self-styled 'socialist' who was a member of Flinders Street Baptist Church, was another who campaigned strongly for women's suffrage. Proud was an honorary member of the WCTU and was made a Women's Suffrage League councillor in 1892. He had the honour of carrying a 'monster' petition in support of women's suffrage to the South Australian parliament in 1894. In that year, South Australian women received the rights to vote and stand for election.<sup>63</sup>

The attitudes of Lilian Mead, the daughter of Silas and Anne Mead, were typical of those Baptist women who were agitating for change. Lilian Mead, in an address entitled 'The Awakened Woman' delivered to the South Australian WCTU state convention in 1895, set out the type of arguments that appealed to many Baptists who wanted a wider role for women. In calling for equal educational opportunities she argued:

'Why,' the awakened woman asked, 'if the intellectually accomplished man is not unmanly, is an intellectually accomplished woman unwomanly?'

Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Mary Somerville answered the question. Both highly intellectual women, both ideal wives and mothers, both occupying prominent and public positions, they were intensely and undeniably womanly. The awakened woman claimed almost immediately the right to enter new spheres of

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<sup>61</sup> Helen Jones, *In Her Own Name: A History of Women in South Australia from 1836*, (Adelaide, Wakefield Press, 1986), 101-03; 'Birks, Rosetta Jane' in Christopher Cunneen (ed.), *Australian Dictionary of Biography (ADB), Supplement 1850-1980*, (Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 2005).

<sup>62</sup> Laura Fowler married another doctor, Charles Hope, in 1893. They worked for much of their lives as independent medical missionaries in Bengal. Jones, *In Her Own Name*, 147; Alison Mackinnon, *The New Women: Adelaide's Early Women Graduates*, (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 1986), 44-60.

<sup>63</sup> Jones, *In Her Own Name*, 120.

work, and proved her right to the claim by doing well what she undertook ... She rightly reasoned that if even a moth does not exist only to subserve another's gain, much less does a woman.

Ruskin told her that a man *cannot* be helped effectively by a shadow or worthily by a slave. The nobler thought came to her almost as a revelation that God and not man is the end of existence to all his rational creatures.<sup>64</sup>

Lilian Mead did not challenge the notion that motherhood was pivotal to the role of women. Nonetheless, by arguing that women could be well educated and perform public functions and at the same time remain 'womanly', she challenged established ideas that education and public roles 'unsexed' women. Furthermore, her claim that 'God and not man is the end of existence' undermined the belief that women primarily existed for the benefit of men. This claim challenged the almost priestly function given to men, whereby, through a chain of authority, men stood between women and God, and between women and society outside the home.

Several notable young upper-middle-class Baptist women seized the educational opportunities available to them. Lilian Mead herself, the only girl educated at Prince Alfred College, a Methodist school for boys, achieved a first class matriculation in 1884 and commenced a Bachelor of Arts degree at the University of Adelaide. However, following the death of her stepmother in 1886, she withdrew from her studies to keep house for her father. Lilian never completed her degree, but did have two novels and a work of non-fiction published after moving to London with her father in 1897.<sup>65</sup> One of Lilian's younger sisters, Gertrude, graduated in medicine from the University of Adelaide, as did Laura Fowler. Another to pursue tertiary education was Dorothea Proud, the daughter of women's suffrage campaigners Cornelius and Emily Proud. She was a graduate of the Advanced School for Girls and the University of Adelaide. In 1912, she became the first Catherine Helen Spence Scholar in Sociology (an award given in honour of the South Australian

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<sup>64</sup> Lilian S. Mead, *The Awakened Woman: Paper Read at the Seventh Annual Convention of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union of South Australia*, (Adelaide: WCTU, 1895), 24-25.

<sup>65</sup> Mead was the only girl ever enrolled at Prince Alfred College. Her novels were: *A Brothers Need*, (1903); *Patsie's Brick's* (1905); *Daring and Doing: True Stories of Brave Deeds*, (1912). In 1900 Mead married Crosbie C. Brown, a tutor at the East London Training Institute, Harley House, London. Her father, Silas, was the principal of this institution. On Lilian Mead, see *The Advertiser*, 13 September 1994, 13.

Unitarian feminist). Proud used the scholarship to complete a doctoral thesis at the London School of Economics on the welfare of factory workers. She based her thesis on Seebohm Rowntree's initiatives for the welfare of his employees at his cocoa works in York. A book based on her thesis was published in 1916 with a foreword by the British Prime Minister, Lloyd George.<sup>66</sup>

Unfortunately for South Australian Baptists, these three young women were lost to them. In 1901, Gertrude Mead shifted to Perth where she practised medicine until her untimely death in 1919.<sup>67</sup> Lilian Mead remained in Britain, while Laura Fowler spent many years in India as a medical missionary. In 1917, Proud married an Australian soldier, Gordon Pavy, and returned to Adelaide with him two years later. She qualified for the Bar in 1928 and became a partner in her husband's legal firm. However, Proud did not retain her Baptist links.

One can only speculate about the impact these women might have had on Baptist understandings of femininity if they had remained in the denomination. There was certainly some sentiment in favour of further improvement in the position of women that they could have helped develop. In 1903, David Hollidge, for instance, a private school principal (Dorothea Proud's employer before she went to Britain), berated Baptists for the limitations they placed on women in church life. He claimed that 'the discovery of women is generally owing to the chapel debt', and that there were 'hundreds of women who devoutly wished that Dorcas had never been born.'<sup>68</sup> The latter was a reference to Dorcas societies which sought to follow the example of Dorcas, the woman of biblical times who made clothes for the poor. If Hollidge was right, there was considerable frustration among many Baptist women about the constraints placed on them in church life.

Despite this frustration, prior to the 1920s there was no Baptist leader, female or male, who was willing to publicly challenge the notion that leadership of churches was primarily a male affair. There is no record of any protest regarding the established practice whereby a woman could serve as a deaconess and thereby help look after the

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<sup>66</sup> E. Dorothea Proud, *Welfare Work: Employers' Experiments for Improving Working Conditions in Factories*, (London, John Bell and Sons, 1916). On Proud, see 'Pavy', *ADB*, 11, 1891-1939, 168-169; Alison Mackinnon, *The New Women*, 126-134; Marian Sawyer, *The Ethical State? Social Liberalism in Australia*, (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2003), xiii, ix.

<sup>67</sup> Mead, Gertrude Ella, *ADB*, 10, 1891-1939. In Perth, Mead practised from her home and focused on women's and children's health and welfare.

<sup>68</sup> *SB*, 12 May 1903, 112.

women and children of the church, but could not serve on the day-to-day governing body, the diaconate. Only occasionally did a woman fill a position in a local church that traditionally had been filled only by men, and this usually happened in small churches when there was no man willing to take on the role. Bessie Playford, mother of Thomas Playford who was to become premier of South Australia, was one woman who followed this pattern. Early in the twentieth century she became treasurer of Norton Summit Baptist Church, a position she held for over thirty years.<sup>69</sup>

Baptist women did appreciate the greater opportunities in church life in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Mrs. E.B. Turner, who was a voluntary worker with prisoners and their families, captured their mood when she declared that "The twentieth century has brought to women many open doors. Oh, may we not be slow to take advantage of our privileges."<sup>70</sup> Nevertheless, having gained these 'privileges', and despite some frustration over continued limitations on their scope of opportunity in church life, Baptist women eschewed any far-reaching challenge to the structure of gender relations. Instead, prior to the 1920s, Baptist women chose to extend their roles and influence in four main ways. Firstly, Baptist women, especially those who had gained respect through their religious endeavours, were sometimes able to exert greater influence than established gender ideologies normally permitted. Female missionaries, for instance, had high status in the Baptist world and they sometimes used their informal authority to telling effect. Harold Masters, recalled an encounter with Marie Gilbert, a missionary on furlough in Adelaide in 1911.

She button holed me and said 'Young man you are needed in India. I heard you preach last night at Lockleys, and I am convinced that Christ is calling you to serve in East Bengal. Don't delay. Go, and God will give you the necessary wisdom and guidance. Go to Orakandi. Dr. Mead will give you the training you need!'<sup>71</sup>

Masters heeded her instruction and duly became a missionary at Orakandi. Baptist ministers' wives with strong personalities, also sometimes successfully maneuvered around established gender

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<sup>69</sup> *BR*, 15 September 1933, 21. Playford was premier from 1938 to 1965.

<sup>70</sup> *SB*, 10 November 1903, 258.

<sup>71</sup> Redman, *The Light Shines On*, 16.

restrictions. In 1908, one church claimed that ‘With our pastor at the oar and his wife at the helm, all will be well.’<sup>72</sup>

Secondly, Baptist women expanded their public involvement through organisations of social reform such as the WCTU and through various philanthropic organisations.<sup>73</sup> One example was Mary Holden, whose husband was car manufacturer Henry Holden. She helped found and support the community-based Sick Poor Fund in Norwood and was also active in affairs of the District Bush Nursing Society and the Red Cross.<sup>74</sup> While well-to-do Baptist women such as Rosetta Birks and Mary Holden often took a leading role in charitable and social reform organisations, many less prominent Baptist women also made substantial contributions. In 1928, it was reported of the late Mrs. G.L. Inglis, a shy, retiring woman, that next ‘to her deep love of church work was her deep interest in the temperance cause, and as a member of the WCTU she filled various official positions’.<sup>75</sup>

Thirdly, although it is unlikely that many married Baptist women entered the paid workforce, some unmarried Baptist women did so. Teaching and nursing were popular professions for unmarried Baptist women. Alice Tibbits, for instance, was the first woman in Adelaide to train nurses, and became owner and matron of the Wakefield Street Private Hospital in central Adelaide.<sup>76</sup> It is also likely that some other unmarried Baptist women entered domestic service, or worked in shops, offices or factories.<sup>77</sup>

Fourthly, Baptist women built their own organisations. Prior to the 1920s, the main Baptist women’s organisation was the Ladies’ Zenana Committee. Founded in 1885, it was the first Baptist women’s organisation to coordinate efforts of women across churches.<sup>78</sup> It did not send its own missionaries but supported the efforts of female

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<sup>72</sup> *SB*, 29 September 1908, 229.

<sup>73</sup> Many South Australian women who were not Baptists, took a similar path. See Martin Woods, ‘Towards a Civil Society: Voluntary Community Service and Womanhood in South Australia, 1836–1936’, (PhD thesis, Flinders University, Adelaide, 2000), 86-90.

<sup>74</sup> Buttfield, *So Great a Change*, 134-135.

<sup>75</sup> *BR*, 15 December 1928, 10. For the activities of other Baptist WCTU members, see *BR*, 15 March 1926 14; 15 July 1936, 13.

<sup>76</sup> *BR*, 15 February 1932, 12. Tibbits was one of the first signatories to the women’s suffrage petition of 1894. See Jones, *In Her Own Name*, 161.

<sup>77</sup> On women and employment in South Australia, see Jones, *In Her Own Name*, ch. 9.

<sup>78</sup> *AB*, 27 September 1938, 4.

missionaries of the South Australian Baptist Missionary Society (later called the Furreedpore Mission) who ministered to Bengali women in their living quarters (*zenanas*). By 1909, the Ladies' Zenana Committee numbered forty, an equivalent size to the all-male general committee of the SABU.<sup>79</sup>

By the end of the First World War, many South Australian women, having contributed substantially on the 'home front' during the war, saw themselves as fully qualified to participate in the activities and opportunities of civic life.<sup>80</sup> Amongst Baptist women, this growing confidence resulted in a greater level of publicly expressed dissatisfaction about restrictions on women in church and denominational life. In 1925, 'Wondering' wrote to the *Baptist Record* criticising the failure of the SABU general committee to send any female delegates to the Australian Baptist Congress held in Adelaide. She asked: 'Did the Committee responsible for choosing the delegates think that South Australian Baptist women were only fit for 'Sowing and darning and feeding household sinners?''<sup>81</sup> 'Perplexed', another female correspondent, declared: 'I think that SOME of the South Australian Baptist ministers are the most extraordinary human beings, and the Baptist women in South Australia, the most forgiving.'<sup>82</sup> In the light of the SABU's failure to appoint female delegates to the congress, she attacked N.L. Beurle's call for men to be allowed to attend 'View Day', a meeting intended specifically for women.<sup>83</sup>

Many Baptist women had two ambitions regarding their role in church life. They wanted a greater say in congregational and denominational life, and, continuing a well-established trend, they wanted to control their own organisations. The founding of the Baptist Women's League (BWL) in 1924 provided a vehicle for both. Modelled on the British organisation of the same name, it was established largely through the efforts of Mrs. Emily Benskin, a columnist in the *Baptist*

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<sup>79</sup> In 1910, the Zenana Committee was superseded by a new organisation, the Baptist Women's Missionary Union. Its object was to 'seek to make all our Baptist women missionary enthusiasts, and Baptist homes missionary homes'. By 1912, there were 32 branches. There were 72 churches in the SABU at the time. *SB*, 26 September 1912, 620.

<sup>80</sup> See Woods, 'Towards a Civil Society', 399-400.

<sup>81</sup> *BR*, 17 September 1925, 14.

<sup>82</sup> *BR*, 15 October 1925, 9.

<sup>83</sup> Beurle was minister of North Adelaide Baptist Church, 1921-31. In 1974 his daughter, Edith McKay, became the first female president of the SABU.

*Record*.<sup>84</sup> It sought to affiliate existing local women's guilds with itself and coordinate Baptist work among women. The BWL's goals included fundraising and supporting home and foreign mission efforts, extending hospitality to Baptist girls and women who had moved to another district, and assisting Baptist girls who were 'seeking situations'.<sup>85</sup> In addition, it undertook to cater for SABU functions. Although the BWL was integrated into the life and work of the denomination, it maintained its independence. It was wary of conceding its independence to 'the lords of creation', as it once critically referred to men, and refused to become one of the departments of the SABU.<sup>86</sup> If it had done so, it would have had representation on the SABU general committee, but would also have come under its control. However, the BWL did agree to appoint delegates to the half-yearly and annual meetings of the SABU. In 1927, the *Baptist Record* noted that with the admittance of BWL delegates to SABU meetings for the first time, 'woman's enlarged sphere would be recognised'.<sup>87</sup>

The BWL soon proved its worth to the denomination. It catered for assembly meetings; initiated a land scheme that resulted in purchase of a block of land on which the South Plympton Baptist Church was built; helped struggling churches with their finances and property development; and supported the work of two institutions in which the SABU had an interest, the Morialta Children's Home and King's College, a joint Baptist-Congregational boys' school founded in 1923.<sup>88</sup>

Something of the motivation for the founding of the BWL can be seen in an article entitled, 'The Women's League', written by Benskin's husband, Frederick, the minister of Flinders Street Baptist Church. He claimed that although Baptist churches were more democratic than others and were thus in accord with the spirit of Christ, they had not displayed that democratic spirit to women. 'Matters' he complained 'are

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<sup>84</sup> Modelled on the British organisation of the same name, it was established largely through the efforts of Emily Benskin, a columnist in the *Baptist Record* who was married to the minister of Flinders Street Baptist Church, F.G. (Fred) Benskin. Edith K. Wilcox, *The Baptist Women's League South Australia, 1924-1945: Twenty-One Years Record of Happiness Love Service*, (Adelaide: Baptist Women's League, 1945), 11.

<sup>85</sup> Hughes, *Our First Hundred Years: The Baptist Church of South Australia*, (Adelaide: South Australian Baptist Union, 1937), 245; BR, 15 July 1924, 9.

<sup>86</sup> BR, 15 November 1926, 9; 15 January 1924, 4.

<sup>87</sup> BR, 14 May 1927, 7.

<sup>88</sup> Wilcox, *The Baptist Women's League of South Australia*, 11-25.

so ordained [by men] that men hold supreme control'.<sup>89</sup> Furthermore, he claimed, women were not treated as persons in their own right as they were not elected to serve as deacons in local churches and were unrepresented on the SABU general committee. 'Has not the time come for a more consistent recognition of the position and service of women in our church life and organisation?', he asked.

Many women undoubtedly shared Benskin's views. The unidentified writer of 'Through a Woman's Window' in the *Baptist Record*, while maintaining that women's 'supreme sphere' was the home and that women should make the most of the 'home opportunity', encouraged women to take hold of the 'unparalleled freedom' they now enjoyed.<sup>90</sup> She urged them to take up the opportunities for the 'fuller development' of all their powers and to engage in educational, industrial, social and political life. Furthermore, she declared, 'let women not fail the Church, or the worst is near'. In urging this, the writer claimed that sport and business were capturing men. Her implication was clear: men were failing the church and it was up to women to rescue it. The writer also drew on widely held beliefs about the particular moral attributes of women, asserting that women brought to all their efforts a special quality; the 'power of inspiration'. She enthused: 'She can do things, it is true, but she can do better than that. She can create ideals. She can mould thought. She can inspire enthusiastic efforts.'<sup>91</sup> These were the very attributes that women were thought to bring to the home. As Australian historian Judith Smart has written of Cecilia Downing, a Victorian Baptist 'first-wave' feminist, this type of approach to public life was a 'maternal citizenship' in which familial values were applied to society.<sup>92</sup>

At a local level, women's guilds catered for a range of needs and provided various opportunities for service. A report on the June 1938 meeting of the Norton Summit Baptist Church Women's Guild gives a good indication of the type of activities and emphases.

The meeting took the form of an American tea. There was a good attendance of ladies present. We were very fortunate in having with us Mesdames Cousins, Phelps and Druce, from the city. The programme consisted of competitions and games, and solos were

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<sup>89</sup> *BR*, 15 January 1924, 4.

<sup>90</sup> *BR*, 15 January 1926, 9.

<sup>91</sup> *BR*, 15 January 1926, 9.

<sup>92</sup> Judith Smart, "'For the Good that We Can Do': Cecilia Downing and Feminist Christian Citizenship", *Australian Feminist Studies* 19 (Autumn 1994), 45.

given by Mrs. Druce. Mrs. Cousins brought with her greetings from Mount Cooper, and greetings were by Mrs. Druce from the Prospect Guild. A very interesting address was given by Mrs. Phelps on the 'Good Samaritan'. Afternoon tea was served, after which ladies visited a jumble and sweet stall in charge of Mesdames Watkins and Spargo.<sup>93</sup>

Here were opportunities for spiritual uplift, friendship, fun, service and fund-raising. Addresses at guild meetings were rarely doctrinal but mostly inspirational or practical in purpose. Probably typical was a 'most interesting address' given by Mrs. A.W. Gordon at the Ladies' Guild of the Semaphore Park Baptist Church in 1938. Entitled 'Gardens and Flowers', it was said to contain 'much food for thought' because 'one cannot often realize how much joy flowers can give, especially to those who are shut in'.<sup>94</sup>

Although addresses such as this and other guild activities were often undemanding and would have posed little discomfort to the less religiously committed who might have attended guild meetings but not Sunday services, Guilds sometimes stimulated spiritual insight, deep relationships and sacrificial service.<sup>95</sup> In 1929, Mrs. D. Shaw, widow of the recently deceased minister of Georgetown Baptist Church, read portions of Second Corinthians chapters 5 and 6 to the assembled women of the ladies' guild. The *Baptist Record* reported:

As Mrs. Shaw read she explained her reading, and from the depths of her bereaved and sorrowing soul she encouraged and comforted her hearers. Her talk was an inspiration and blessing. At the close of the meeting the opportunity was taken to present to our departing president [Mrs. Shaw was president of the Guild] a handbag as a token of love and esteem from the Guild friends.<sup>96</sup>

Barreira has claimed that women's guilds helped women make 'sense of daily existence' and provided 'a transcendent account of daily

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<sup>93</sup> *BR*, 18 July 1938, 18.

<sup>94</sup> *BR*, 18 July 1938, 19. Such sentiments were probably influenced by Romantic strains that were pervasive throughout society and in Baptist church life.

<sup>95</sup> Guilds, like other organisations that were a part of the institutional church, hoped to attract those on the fringe of the church and draw them more fully into church life.

<sup>96</sup> *BR*, 16 September 1929, 17. Presumably she read the portions dealing with 'groaning for a heavenly body', being 'full of courage', and 'patiently enduring troubles, hardships, and difficulties'.

living'.<sup>97</sup> The events at Georgetown Baptist Ladies Guild are a striking example of these things.

Apart from ministering to their own members in times of need, women's guilds also expressed their purpose of 'much serving' in many creative ways. At Brighton Baptist Church in 1929, for example, guild members held weekly sewing meetings in one another's homes over a six-week period. They remade 162 articles of old clothing into new garments 'warm and well made' for the 'poor and distressed'.<sup>98</sup> Fund-raising for causes such as local church projects, home and foreign missions, West End Baptist Mission, King's College, and the Morialta Protestant Children's Home were an important part of guild activities.<sup>99</sup> When a guild was able to report at its annual meeting, as did Southwark Baptist Church's in 1938, that 'a large amount of service [had been] rendered' and that there was 'a good credit balance', members believed that the guild year had been well worthwhile.<sup>100</sup>

Often guild members had little other connection to the church. To encourage the link between guild and church, most women's guilds held annual services and Mothers' Day services that were tailored to appeal to women. Women featured in the leadership of these services and often there was a female speaker and a women's choir.<sup>101</sup> There is no evidence, however, to suggest that guilds were successful in drawing many women into fuller church involvement. Nor did guilds have a strong evangelistic orientation. Guild reports to the *Baptist Record* were silent on these issues, focusing instead on service and other activities.<sup>102</sup> Guilds were an important part of local churches, but like other ancillary church organisations they were not oriented to winning the 'lost'.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Paul Barreira, 'Protestant Piety and Religious Culture in South Australia, c. 1914 - c. 1981', (PhD thesis, Flinders University, Adelaide, 2003), 165.

<sup>98</sup> *BR*, 16 September 1929, 16.

<sup>99</sup> See the fund-raising activities of the various guilds listed in *BR*, 15 October 1934, 13-14.

<sup>100</sup> *BR*, 18 July 1938, 19.

<sup>101</sup> See, for example, the report of the Mothers' Day service at Richmond Baptist Church in 1937. *BR*, 16 June 1937, 18.

<sup>102</sup> For an exception, see the efforts of the members of the women's guild at West Croydon Baptist Church. *BR*, 15 September 1928, 19.

<sup>103</sup> This is not to deny that some women would have been converted or drawn into regular church attendance as a result of the friendships established in guilds. But guilds were not orientated towards winning the 'lost'.

### Further Initiatives

By the end of the 1920s, the shape of women's involvement in church life had taken a shape that was to continue well into the 1970s. Nonetheless, there were several significant initiatives in the 1930s, one of which was to have international consequences. A meeting of women at the Australian Baptist Assembly in Adelaide in 1932 moved that the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) include a large number of women on its executive committee, and set up a separate international women's committee. In response, the BWA changed its constitution two years later to provide for up to five women to become members of the executive committee. A separate women's committee was also subsequently founded.<sup>104</sup> A similar request from the Adelaide meeting that women be included on the executive of the Baptist Union of Australia came to nothing. Australian Baptist women were still confronted with conservative attitudes regarding gender

Women also continued to exert themselves through their own organisations apart from the BWL. One that enjoyed wide support was the Senior Girl's Missionary Union, which was founded in 1925. This organisation, along with the Junior Girls' Missionary Union, formed in 1935, ensured that the next generation of Baptist women would remain strong in their support of foreign mission work. South Australian Baptist women, Edith Wilcox in particular, also worked with Cecilia Downing from Victoria to establish the Women's Board of the Baptist Union of Australia. This board, which consisted of representatives from around Australia, sought to coordinate the work of Baptist women and to 'bind together Baptist Women in a fellowship of prayer and service for the Kingdom of God in Australia and throughout the World'.<sup>105</sup>

The most radical initiative of South Australian Baptist women in denominational life in the 1930s was the establishment of the 'Baptist Sisterhood'. Edith Wilcox, the secretary of the BWL was its main proponent. In an address to the half-yearly meetings of the SABU in 1936, she outlined the history of the Sisterhood (sometimes called Deaconess) movement in Britain and elsewhere, and differentiated the role of Sister from that of deaconess as then existing. She envisaged the Sisterhood as being a band of mainly young women who would be willing to 'give their time and talents to the smaller churches or other spheres of service in the homeland, much on the lines of overseas

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<sup>104</sup> Basil Brown, *Baptised Into One Body: A Short History of the Baptist Union of Australia*, 49.

<sup>105</sup> Brown, *Baptised Into One Body*, 49-51; BR, 19 September 1938, 3.

mission service'.<sup>106</sup> What Wilcox proposed was a kind of filling the gaps approach: there were not enough men to do the work, therefore women should be called on. At one level this was a cautious proposal designed to win the approval of the SABU. She was not proposing that the Sisters displace male home missionaries or pastors. At another level, it extended the range of opportunities for women. Wilcox hoped that Sisters would not only be able to serve as assistants to ministers in well-established churches, but that they would be able to serve as pastors of new or struggling churches. She probably hoped for even greater opportunities for women in the future.

Wilcox presented her initiative as a response to the call of Christ to extend his kingdom, but chose to justify it on pragmatic rather than specifically biblical grounds. She pointed to the need for more workers in the field and the success of the deaconess (Sisterhood) movement in other parts of the world. She further argued:

When we see the work women are doing in other spheres – doctors, lawyers, matrons of hospitals, almoners, and in our city offices capable, clever, trained women meeting one at every turn, we realise that there is a wealth of womanhood working in the various spheres. Why not use them also in God's work, in the field of Home Mission activity?<sup>107</sup>

Wilcox's arguments proved convincing. In 1938 the SABU approved the establishment of the Baptist Sisterhood and in the early 1940s three Sisters were appointed. In 1943, one of these, Margaret Sinclair, who had trained at the Melbourne Bible Institute, became the pastor of a small, struggling Baptist church in the working-class suburb of Hilton. Although unordained, she was the first woman to be appointed as a minister of a Baptist church in Australia.<sup>108</sup>

## Conclusion

Contemporary beliefs about gender roles and femininity both limited and increased roles for Baptist women in the last third of the nineteenth century. Beliefs about specialisation that derived from the Enlightenment and entrenched interpretations of the Bible's teaching on gender

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<sup>106</sup> Edith Wilcox, 'Concerning Deaconesses', typescript unpublished manuscript currently in my possession but to be deposited in the State Library of South Australia, 1.

<sup>107</sup> Wilcox, 'Concerning Deaconesses', 4.

<sup>108</sup> Wilcox, *The Baptist Women's League of South Australia*, 18.

relations often made it difficult for women to move beyond the home sphere, although a mix of biblicism and pragmatism opened up new opportunities for women as deaconesses and missionaries. The relative egalitarianism of Baptist church polity also provided opportunities for Baptist women that were denied to women in more hierarchical denominations. Baptist women such as Rosetta Birks and Lilian Mead challenged prevailing perspectives on women's suffrage as well as the education of women and Baptists women formed and controlled their own organisations. Nevertheless, Baptist women and men alike continued to believe that the home remained the principal sphere of endeavour for women. They believed that mothers had a vital role in shaping the character of their children and through them the future development of society.

By the 1920s some Baptist women were becoming increasingly frustrated by entrenched male attitudes and formed the BWL partly to give Baptist women a stronger voice in denominational affairs. In 1938 this more assertive attitude led to the formation of the Baptist Sisterhood and eventually to the appointment of Margaret Sinclair as the pastor of Hilton Baptist Church. As the efforts of women like Edith Wilcox demonstrate, many Baptist women sought to broaden the definition of Christian womanhood. In doing so, women contributed significantly to the life and mission of local churches and to the SABU. In the process, many women found Christian community, guidance and spiritual comfort.

Baptist women creatively explored what it meant for them to have a 'holy liberty in the Lord'. Nonetheless, despite the introduction of Sisters and the appointment of one non-ordained female pastor, definite limits remained on what a woman could or could not do in church life. Indeed, no South Australian Baptist woman was ordained until 1981 when Judith McAllister became the third Baptist woman to be ordained in Australia. Ultimately, entrenched attitudes constrained the ways that Baptist women could express their liberty in the Lord.

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## REVIEW ARTICLE

**Christopher Southgate, *The Groaning of Creation: God, Evolution, and the Problem of Evil*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008. (xii +196 pp). [ISBN: 978-0-664-23090-6]<sup>1</sup>**

Southgate is a Research Fellow in Theology at the University of Exeter and editor and principal author of an influential textbook, *God, Humanity and the Cosmos*, now in its third edition. In *The Groaning of Creation*<sup>2</sup> Southgate explores what it means to take the evolutionary development of nature seriously as a Christian, specifically addressing the questions: If God as Creator has allowed so much suffering through extinction and natural selection, can he ever be justified or rightly worshipped? And if so, how? His reply constitutes what he calls a ‘compound evolutionary theodicy’ which he bases upon his own ‘Trinitarian theology of creation and redemption.’ According to the publisher’s website:

Southgate argues that pain, suffering and extinction are intrinsic to the evolutionary process. The world that is ‘very good’ is also ‘groaning in travail’ and subjected by God to that travail. Southgate evaluates several attempts at evolutionary theodicy and then argues for his own approach, an approach that takes full account of God’s self-emptying and human beings special responsibilities as created co-creators.

More particularly, Southgate wants to rationalize for believers how an omnibenevolent, omnipotent, sovereign, and fully responsible God who is worthy of our worship could ordain evolution with all its

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<sup>1</sup> Parts of this review essay were read as a formal response to Dr Christopher Southgate, The Theological Meaning of Evolution Conference, Laidlaw College, Auckland, June 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Christopher Southgate, *The Groaning of Creation: God, Evolution, and the Problem of Evil* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008).

disvalues as the means of creating and sustaining animal life. In his own words:

I am trying to see how the two propositions (a) God is creator of this ambiguous world, which is 'good' but also 'groaning in labor pains,' and (b) God is 'worthy of worship' can be held together within the community of faith.

As a summary of the work we may explicate the basic contours of Southgate's argument in the following seven points.

1. The goodness of creation engenders many sorts of values.
2. Pain, suffering, death, and extinction are intrinsic to a creation evolving according to Darwinian principles.
3. An evolving creation was the only way God could engender all the beauty, diversity, sentience, and sophistication we see around us in the biosphere. (The 'only way' argument.)
4. God co-suffers with every sentient being in creation.
5. The Cross of Christ is the epitome of divine compassion, God's assuming of ultimate responsibility for creation's pain. Along with the Resurrection, the Cross inaugurates the transformation of creation, making possible the redemption of even the nonhuman creation, the eschatological doing-away with creation's groaning.
6. The need to give an account of how a loving God of loving relationship must provide an eschatological fulfilment for creatures that have no flourishing in this life. Such a God could never regard such a creature as a mere evolutionary expedient. This leads Southgate to posit an eschatological afterlife for individual animals.
7. Humans are of particular concern to God, if divine fellowship with creatures such as us is in any sense a goal of evolutionary creation. This makes human beings 'co-redeemers' or 'created co-creators' with God, or perhaps 'stewards or priests or contemplatives of creation,' with respect to the nonhuman creation and the healing of the evolutionary process. This leads Southgate to vegetarianism and a project to end biological extinction.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> This summary is adapted from the one provided by Tim Deibler, Review of *The Groaning of Creation*, American Scientific Affiliation (2009),

Points 1 and 2 above present a dualistic view of creation wherein its glories ('values') as well as its horrors ('disvalues') are constitutive. Southgate calls this the 'ambiguity' of creation. Points 1 and 2, when coupled with point 3, lead to the proposition that the 'values' of point 1 are not achievable except by the awful 'disvalues' of point 2. God himself is fully responsible, then, for the horrific disvalues within creation, since he is the one who chose to use evolution to accomplish his ends. Southgate contends that any adequate theodicy will emphasize not only that suffering and extinction occurs as necessary concomitants of the evolutionary process, but also:

1. that God suffers alongside God's creatures (the 'fellow sufferer who understands' in Whitehead's terms) and;
2. that there will be some form of eschatological redemption for creation, possibly including those individual creatures who lived frustrated lives of pointless suffering.

Southgate's evolutionary theodicy for non-human suffering affirms that a world of evolving life, with all its attendant pain and suffering, was the only way, or at least the best way, for God to bring into existence a diversity of life-forms to realize complex values in a law-governed universe. However, the suffering of individual creatures that never get the chance to flourish cries out for Divine compassion and solidarity as well as the possibility for redemption in the next life.

In Chapter 4, 'An Adventure in the Theology of Creation,' Southgate develops a trinitarian 'theology of creation,' an admittedly speculative enterprise that seeks to illuminate the relationship between the triune God and an evolutionary process that operates according to Darwinian principles. Taking up the theme of kenosis, Southgate suggests that God's self-emptying love is foundational both to intra-trinitarian relationships and to the relationship between God and the world. God the Father pours out his love, the essence of his being, giving rise to (begetting) God the Son, who, in turn, returns all that he is to the Father. And this intra-divine relationship of self-emptying love constitutes God the Holy Spirit. Southgate suggests that this inherently self-emptying, or kenotic, character of the divine love is the ground of God's desire to create the genuinely 'other'. This desire is realized in the creation of the world and in the evolutionary process where God 'lets be' a great variety of creatures.

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[http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_7049/is\\_1\\_61/ai\\_n31375133/pg\\_2/?tag=content;col1](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_7049/is_1_61/ai_n31375133/pg_2/?tag=content;col1) (accessed 15.6.2009). Southgate provides his own summary at *The Groaning of Creation*, 16.

The Spirit, meanwhile, both provides creatures with their ‘thisness,’ or particularity as unique individuals, and lures them onward toward new possibilities of fulfilment and self-transcendence. At any given time living creatures are in one of four possible states:

1. *Fulfilled* (flourishing as the kind of creature they are), a state in which the creature is utterly itself, in an environment in which it flourishes.
2. *Growing toward fulfilment*, not yet mature, but still with the possibility of attaining the ‘fulfilled’ state.
3. *Frustrated* (prevented from flourishing), held back in some way from fulfilment for a variety of reasons.
4. *Transcending itself* (either by chance mutation or some new learned capability).<sup>4</sup>

The first state is that a true ‘selving’, a ‘gift of existence from the Father, form and pattern from the Son, particularity from the Holy Spirit, and that the creature’s praise, in being itself, is offered by the Son to the Father, in the delight of the Spirit.’<sup>5</sup> The second state involves the pain of survival ‘because of the need to learn an aversion to negative stimuli.’<sup>6</sup> This is not due to some supposed ‘fall’ or ‘sin’ but is a necessary and God ordained process such that ‘The Godhead that is so committed to the creation as ultimately to experience birth and infancy as a human may be imagined to take an especial delight in the growth of young organisms.’<sup>7</sup> It would then seem that what Southgate is affirming is the Creator’s delight in the pain of his creatures! The third state of frustration is consistent and explainable by Darwin’s model of natural selection, and this to is not an ‘evil’ or frustration of the Creator’s will but is also a natural part of the good but groaning creation. In Trinitarian terms the pain and frustration of the creature is explained as being ‘received by the Son through the brooding immanence of the Spirit, and uttered in that Spirit as a song of lament to the Father. All that the frustrated creature suffers, and all it might have been but for frustration, is retained in the memory of the Trinity.’<sup>8</sup> The final state is the ‘especial gift of the Holy Spirit in creation’, the invitation for creatures to explore new possibilities of being. ‘The Spirit longs for creatures to transcend

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<sup>4</sup> Southgate, *The Groaning of Creation*, 64.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 64-65.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

themselves, to find new ways of relating,' writes Southgate, and illustrates with the examples of the symbiosis that gave rise to the first eukaryotic cells or the Middle to Upper Palaeolithic 'Transition' to *H. Sapiens*.<sup>9</sup> In short, self-transcendence occurs whenever cooperation between organisms results in producing new types of 'selves'.<sup>10</sup>

In the final three chapters of the book Southgate makes suggestions on the eschatological implications of his position – that there must be a 'heaven for pelicans' - and makes certain ethical considerations based around ways in which the human is to relate to the rest of creation, where he utilises such notions as 'ethical kenosis', and human priesthood of creation. Finally Southgate makes various proposals in environmental ethics, including a case for vegetarianism and a critical commentary on global warming and the issue of species extinction.

Christopher Southgate has provided a fascinating discussion of an evolutionary theodicy, opening up many helpful avenues of investigation, travelling down some of these avenues himself, and leaving others to be explored by those who follow. Evolutionary thought has long been accepted by many in the theological world and it has received a good deal of examination, and yet much of the literature is tangential to the strictly *theological* issues involved. Southgate's work exemplifies an approach to theology and evolutionary theory that knows what questions to ask and is able to address many of these questions in a lucid and helpful fashion. For this the work is to be recommended for all those interested in the interface between theology and science. The doctrines of creation, anthropology, God, Trinity, and eschatology are examined and constructive proposals are provided that begin to explore in some detail what a reconceived Christian theology may look like in light of an uncritical acceptance of Darwinian evolution. There is no doubt that further work from Southgate and further works in response to Southgate will be generated by this courageous publication.

This, however, does not mean the work is without its problems. A number of critical questions emerge from reading Southgate's book and paper. In the following I will simply raise a number of questions and provide reasons for raising them.

The first series of critical questions are general ones and concern hermeneutics – both as it applies to the science-theology discourse in general, and specifically to the text of Scripture. In relation to the former: How does Southgate's theology of creation relate to a scientific

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 65-66.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 66.

explanation of the evolutionary process? Are there ‘gaps’ in the process that require divine intervention to move it forward? Or does it operate according to purely naturalistic laws? And, if so, what explanatory power does the theological description add? To the latter: What hermeneutic is actually at play in the interpretation and application of Biblical texts such as Genesis 3, Psalm 8, and Romans 8? At key points throughout the work biblical texts are appealed to but in each instance the actual hermeneutic is ambiguous, leaving the impression that Southgate uses biblical texts to illustrate his own points (*eisegesis*) rather than working *a posteriori* from the biblical texts themselves (*exegesis*). A more general but related issue that deserves to be addressed in this regard is the notion of natural theology as opposed to a theology of nature. Southgate shows little awareness of the difference between these two notions and thus his work does not explicate his theological method, an issue of central importance, one would think, to the science-theology dialogue.

A second and more important issue concerns the constituent features of a genuinely *theological* account of creation. Southgate correctly stresses the triadic relations between God, the world, and humanity, as opposed to simply God and man, as the old language had it. However, is his work a genuinely *theological* account of creation? In her 1988 work *God and Creation in Christian Theology*, Kathryn Tanner outlines what is required in a theological account of creation in terms of theological language pertaining to God and creation in order to establish, what she calls, ‘rules for forming first order statements.’<sup>11</sup> Her argument, in quite orthodox fashion, first argues that basic to Christian discourse on creation one must recognize the transcendence of God as a central presupposition.<sup>12</sup> The second conviction is that God is active as a creative agent in the world. These two convictions are to govern Christian discourse on creation and thus also theological accounts of creation.

On both accounts Southgate’s work is rather ambiguous. While Whiteheadian process philosophy is ruled out as an option by Southgate, it is not clear that a panentheism, similar to Moltmann’s, is not actually what is being espoused. From the perspective of panentheism, God and the world are distinct and yet they mutually constitute the other so that what happens to, with, or in one; radically and ontologically affects the other. I make the suggestion of panentheism in regard to Southgate for a number of reasons: first, the language by which he speaks of the triune God’s *kenosis* into the world and in himself, the so-called ‘deep

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<sup>11</sup>Kathryn Tanner, *God and Creation in Christian Theology: Tyranny or Empowerment* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), 11, 27.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

intratrinitarian *kenosis*’, second, the way in which he regards human suffering to affect the intratrinitarian relations, and finally the appreciative way in which he draws upon the panentheism of such figures as Jürgen Moltmann. In such ways as these, and others, Southgate seems to threaten a Christian commitment to these first-order claims about God and the world that Tanner correctly identifies as properly basic to Christian discourse.

The basis for these first-order claims about God and the world is to be found in the doctrines of God the Trinity and Christology, and this raises a third but related point of criticism. As Kimlyn Bender has recently written, “To speak of creation is therefore implicitly yet intentionally to speak not first of a cosmology but of a relation between God and the world.”<sup>13</sup> This too is properly basic to a genuinely *theological* account of creation. In the words of Thomas Torrance: ‘it is distinctive of Christian theology that it treats of God in his relation to the world and of God in his relation to himself, not of one without the other.’<sup>14</sup> Torrance makes it clear that Creator and creation must be thought of in vital relation to each other. More specifically, ‘Our evangelical commitment to Jesus Christ “through whom and for whom the whole universe has been created,” as Paul expressed it, will not allow us to divorce redemption from creation, but compels us to give the empirical reality of the created order its full and proper place in theological interpretation of divine revelation, especially in the incarnate form and reality in Jesus Christ.’<sup>15</sup> It is for this reason that Torrance correctly appropriates the Patristic axiom that ‘creation is proleptically conditioned by redemption.’<sup>16</sup>

The economic activity of God the Son proceeds in tandem with that of God the Father and the God the Spirit, albeit in a distinctive way. The Son incarnate in Jesus Christ is the Word and Wisdom of God, the one through whom all that is has come to be and who sustains the creation itself, the one who has imparted to the universe its rational order and has come to restore it to the law of his divine love. Scripture paints a grand picture of the re-ordering of a fallen world in or through the incarnate Son as *omnipotent grace* (cf. Col 1.16-17). In the identity and

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<sup>13</sup> Kimlyn, J. Bender, ‘Christ, Creation and the Drama of Redemption’ “The Plays the Thing...” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 62 no.2 (2009), 150 (149-174).

<sup>14</sup> Thomas F. Torrance, *Reality and Evangelical Theology* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1999), 21.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>16</sup> For more on this see Myk Habets, ‘How “Creation is Proleptically Conditioned by Redemption”?’ *Colloquium* 41 (2009), 3-21.

mission of Jesus Christ the purposes of God for all of creation are realised.

It is this linking of creation with redemption that appears to be missing, or at least downplayed, in Southgate's work. While Southgate is willing to assert that creation is *through* Christ there does not seem to be any emphasis, as there is in Scripture, on creation being *for* Christ (cf. Eph 1.10; Col 1.16-17). As an example we may turn to the end of *The Groaning of Creation* where we read: 'What God alone could do, has done, once and for all, was to suffer death for the transformation of the world, to bear in the Christ the pain of the creation and of human sin.'<sup>17</sup> This is linked, throughout Southgate's work, to the notion of the *kenosis* of the triune God into the world and into himself. But this is *not* all that God could do or has done in the world! In Christ God has reconciled the world to himself, summed up all things, conquered death and evil, and established, in proleptic fashion, the *imago Dei* in humans and their eschatological *telos*. It is precisely on this basis that Jesus Christ is the Alpha and the Omega, our *arche* and *telos*, our Great High Priest, Saviour, and ever-ruling King. An articulation of this cosmic Christology appears to be absent in Southgate's work.

In the Incarnation, redemption intersects and overlaps with creation in such a way that all of history is encompassed by Christ and his Kingdom. Purpose is deliberately built into creation from the beginning and, as with human beings so with creation itself, perfection is anticipated from the very beginning of creation, yet this perfection will not come about mechanistically or 'naturally,' but rather through divine grace – through Christ. Southgate's work appears to present a somewhat Christologically-anaemic account of creation given the dislocation of Christ from the centre of the story to its periphery, or by turning Christ into a symbol of some prior commitment to a form of general divine love and *kenosis* rather than the Christ of Gospel revelation.

Having addressed only one or two issues briefly here it is clear that Southgate's work is as ambiguous and problematic as it is compelling and courageous. In the year of Darwin (2009) this work makes a welcome contribution to the ongoing discussion over science and religion within a Christian context.

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<sup>17</sup> Southgate, *The Groaning of Creation*, 114.

## REVIEWS

**James P. Byrd.** *Jonathan Edwards for Armchair Theologians.* Illustrations by Ron Hill. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008 (xiv + 195 pp.) [ISBN 978-0-664-23199-6.]

**Justo L. González and Catherine Gunsalus González.** *Heretics for Armchair Theologians.* Illustrations by Ron Hill. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008 (viii + 166 pp.) [ISBN 978-0-664-23205-4.]

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) is regarded as America's best theologian, one of its more significant philosophers, one of its most influential preachers, and one of the key figures in America's relatively brief history. He is also regarded as an austere, clinical, and perhaps even heartless Puritan who's Calvinism could only sponsor such theology as is found in his (in)famous sermon 'Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.' It may come as something of a surprise then to learn that the theology of Jonathan Edwards is currently undergoing something of a renaissance in contemporary American Christianity, especially amongst young adults. Through the medium of several high profile pastor-scholars his life has received renewed interest and his works are being reedited and published in a definitive, multi-volume project, the twenty-six volume Yale edition of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (1957-2008). In addition several intellectual biographies on Edwards have recently appeared and academic journals of theology teem with studies on this or that aspect of his theology. How do we account for this renewed interest in an eighteenth century Puritan from Massachusetts? James Byrd provides the answers in this addition to the *Armchair Theologians* series.

As with other volumes in this very helpful and creative series, Byrd's prose is lively and witty, and yet the historical details are reliable and the theological portrait accurate in this guide for laymen through the life and works of Jonathan Edwards. Throughout Byrd manages to present Edwards's thinking but also the motivations behind it and the cultural and contextual factors that help make sense of not only what

Edwards said but perhaps why he said it and, importantly, how it would have been received in his own day. Only then does Byrd allow the reader to judge Edwards and his impact. The illustrations from Ron Hill are, as usual, helpful, often funny, and a great addition to the volume.

Over seven short chapters Byrd works through the major periods and themes of Edwards' life and work and separates the man from the myths. Readers will find difficult themes like the freedom of the will, original sin, and true virtue explained in simple but reliable ways, along with detailed summaries of how Edwards analysed the religious affections. Most of Edwards' major works are covered in this little volume as are the main contours of his life and influence. One can think of no better basic introduction to Edwards than this and one of the best routes into his creative and complicated theology. From here one may easily progress to the critical monographs on Edwards' life and thought (by Marsden, etc) and, hopefully, into reading some of Edwards works for themselves (Byrd provides a short appendix on further reading to aid in this task, pp. 183-184). As Byrd concludes this slim volume: 'Certainly Edwards's image as a hellfire preacher remains, though it hardly has the last word. Edwards will always reward those who read deeper in his works, keeping in mind the "lively affections" that empowered his ideas' (p. 173).

*Heretics for Armchair Theologians* is one of the best volumes in the series to date. It was an inspired choice of topic and contributors. Justo González is one of the most respected historians of church history working today and his wife, Catherine Gunsalus González, is herself an emeritus Professor at Columbia Theological Seminary. This team effort works and it works well. In one of the best introductions to the aims and scope of the *Armchair* series of books we read, in the Preface:

This is not 'couch' theology, written for 'couch potatoes' who are curious about theological issues and who, if their curiosity is not quickly and easily satisfied, will simply push the remote control and go on to something else. In our minds, an armchair is the place where one relaxes after a long day of work; it is the place where one sits across from friends and others and exchanges experiences and opinions about life and about the walk ahead...In a word, it is a place of rest, refreshment, and evaluation along the trek of life. So an armchair theology is for believers taking a respite along the march of faith and obedience. To turn a common phrase around, it is the place where we 'talk the walk.'...What we have written is 'laptop,' rather than 'desktop,' theology...It is on a laptop that this book for armchair

theologians has been written...It is therefore something like a 'laptop theology' for 'armchair theologians' – or a theology on the march for fellow marchers (pp. vii-viii).

What a lovely and accurate description of this series of books and this volume in particular.

The González' take a very generous approach to heretics, defining them as faithful followers of Jesus Christ who had sincere beliefs and convictions and sought to act on these, however, judged by the standards of the church as a whole, were found out of step with scripture and thus were deemed heretics. Heretics are not mad-men bent on destroying the church or deliberately seditious characters seeking to undermine the faith of other believers. They are, rather, courageous individuals who spoke their minds against prevailing views of the time and were judged to be wrong in their beliefs. But in the process of the church evaluating and formulating orthodox responses to heretics, they must be seen as figures who helped the church clarify its doctrinal standards and theological explanations, and for that they are worthy of considerable sympathy. This may not be the prevailing view of heretics in the church today but it is the view the González' defend.

*Heretics* contains ten chapters and limits its focus based on two criteria; chronological and theological. Chronologically the study is limited to those heretics who lived up to the Chalcedonian Council in 451 AD. Theologically, only those whose views threatened the very core of Christian faith are considered. The specific heretics and heresies considered include: the Ebionites, Gnosticism, Marcion, the Montanists, the various anti-Trinitarian heretics (Arius, etc), the Donatists, Pelagius, and the various Christological heresies (Apollinaris, Nestorius, Eutychies). Each of these chapters covers social, political, and theological contexts and presents an overview of the issues, the main players, and the developing orthodoxy of the church in response to such heresies. Thus the Apostles Creed, the Nicene Creeds (325 and 381), the Councils of Orange, and the Formula of Chalcedon are all covered.

This is one of those rare little books that lecturers will be recommending to their students time and time again as it provides such a pithy, lucid, and candid survey of the first five centuries of doctrinal development, introduces many of the key figures and debates, and accentuates the utter exhilaration which can come from studying the history of Christian thought. In addition the illustrations by Ron Hill are a fantastic accomplishment to the text as the cartoons are creative and, unlike some of the other volumes (for instance the Edwards volume) the

illustrations enhance the text in significant ways. Ron Hill has outdone himself in this volume.

While the González' stick to historical survey for most of the volume they do conclude the work with a chapter entitled 'What Now?' In this chapter they offer a concise summary of doctrinal development in light of the survey just completed. They settle for a view of doctrinal 'evolution' that is somewhere in-between that of Reformed Protestantism and Roman Catholicism. Evangelicals will most likely think they have struck something like the correct balance, but many others will not. What appear to be disparaging comments on God's providence (p. 150) will disappoint many Protestants, and the rejection of an authoritative Church tradition will equally disappoint Roman Catholics. It is unclear why the González' felt they needed to move from historical critique to a more constructive evaluation of doctrinal development in the first place. It tended to detract from the work as a whole and may necessitate a note of explanation and/or caution from lecturers to their students about the final chapter.

*Heretics for Armchair Theologians* ranks as one of the best in this series to date and will certainly ensure the well-founded reputation the series has for informative, lively, creative, and fun introductions to church history and thought. Bravo the González's and WJK Press – well done!

### **Myk Habets**

**Richard A. Muller. *Christ and the Decree: Christology and Predestination in Reformed Theology from Calvin to Perkins*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986, 2008 (xiv + 240 pp.) [ISBN 978-0-8010-3610-1.]**

Originally published in 1986, Muller's *Christ and the Decree* was released again in 1988 and again in 2008 highlighting the ongoing interest in this field of study and the importance of Muller's work. Muller's basic thesis is that there is continuity between the Reformers theology and what he terms Reformed scholasticism/orthodoxy; the codification of that theology in late sixteenth and seventeenth century Reformed theology. *Christ and the Decree* is divided into two sections; the first surveys 'Reformed theology in its first codification', the second part considers 'the formulation of orthodox system.'

Muller's thesis is established in direct antithesis to all attempts to divide the theology of the early Reformers, notably Calvin, Bullinger, Musculus, and Vermigli, from Reformed systems of theology of the late sixteenth and seventeenth century, such as are found in the systems of theology developed by Beza, Ursinus, Zanchi, Polanus, and Perkins. In the 2008 Preface Muller reaffirms his commitment to continuity between these period of Reformed theology with the contention that 'barring rather different definitions of doctrine, such differences in order and arrangement have more to do with the literary genres of works examined than with any implied theological messages' (p. xi). In short, according to Muller, the differences between Calvin and Perkins, to take just two examples, are merely cosmetic rather than material. In order to establish his thesis of theological continuity Muller rejects certain features of modern historiography. First, he shows that Calvin, while being an important early source, is simply one of a number of Reformed thinkers and thus a comparison of his theology with that of seventeenth century examples proves nothing. To show continuity or discontinuity between periods of Reformed theology the various Reformed confessions need to act as the boundary markers. When this method is followed Calvin is seen as one of many Reformed thinkers to stress common Reformed themes, but in idiosyncratic ways largely dictated by contextual factors. All such discontinuity thus dissipates. Second, the idea that there is in Reformed theology generally, or Reformed theologians of this period specifically, anything like a central dogma or singular defining motif is erroneous. The commonly made assertion that Calvin's central dogma is the sovereignty of God, or Christ, while that of the Reformed orthodox is predestination, is utterly rejected by Muller as a complete misunderstanding of the sources. Third, the use of the scholastic method by late sixteenth and seventeenth century Reformed systematicians must be seen simply as the adoption of a method which does not affect theological content. Fourth, Muller argues against those who contend that the differences between the Reformers and the Reformed scholastics is based upon the use of rationalism by the latter group as the primary principle of explaining the will of God, as opposed to the use of faith and Scripture by the former group. According to Muller, this argument is misguided, Reformed scholasticism resorted to scholastic methods of reason in order to defend their theology from sophisticated critique from Roman Catholics (and others) who were themselves using scholastic methods of argumentation. A fifth contention of Muller's is that Christology and predestination are not antithetical in Reformed scholasticism but must be seen as interrelated in just the same ways as they are in the theologies of the Reformers. Simply because Beza, for

instance, located predestination in the doctrine of God and not in Christology/soteriology does not mean, according to Muller, a difference in doctrinal content, merely a difference in logical arrangement.

*Christ and the Decree* has been followed up by Muller in a series of major publications which develop the same thesis. In his *The Unaccommodated Calvin: Studies in the Foundation of a Theological Tradition* (2000), Muller attempts to understand Calvin in his 16th-century context, with attention to continuities and discontinuities between his thought and that of his predecessors, contemporaries, and successors. In the sequel to this work, *After Calvin: Studies in the Development of a Theological Tradition* (2003), Muller carries his thesis forward, with the goal of overcoming a series of nineteenth- and twentieth-century theological frameworks characteristic of much of the scholarship on Reformed orthodoxy, or what is often termed Calvinism after Calvin. This in turn was followed up by his *magnum opus* (to date!), the four volumes of his *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520 to ca. 1725*, (2003). Contending that the theology of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is often misrepresented in church histories and scholarly treatments, Muller exhaustively (and exhaustingly!) studies four specific doctrines (Prolegomena, Scripture, God, Trinity) to demonstrate how doctrine developed in the early Protestant period. These works should in turn be read in conjunction with *The Cambridge Companion to Reformation Theology* (2004), and *Protestant Scholasticism: Essays in Reassessment* (2006), which include important essays by Muller on the same theme.

Muller's work is meticulous, exhaustive, and dense. His project is focussed and significant. In his opinion he has proven his case and 'convincingly set aside the negative caricatures of Protestant orthodoxy that they persist only among the most historically blinded of dogmaticians (p. ix). While that is really a decision best left to others, it is true that Muller's work has established some useful parameters in the study of doctrinal development, has unearthed a wealth of important information that must be taken into consideration when venturing into this field, and he has constructed a formidable argument against those, like Brian Armstrong (*Calvin and the Amyraut Heresy*, 1969), and Basil Hall ('Calvin Against the Calvinists,' 1966), who wish to argue for radical discontinuity between the theology of the Reformers and Reformed orthodoxy. For this alone Muller's work proves itself to be absolutely essential for studies on Reformation theology.

This does not mean, however, that Muller's is the last word on the subject, despite him having the most words on it. After working through

Muller's arguments I am still not entirely convinced. Despite his protestations to the contrary Muller tends to flatten out the diverse thinkers and their theologies into neatly packaged categories. While he dismisses Armstrong's thesis outright, Armstrong does show how diverse Reformed thinkers are not cut from the same cloth and do in fact differ over essential theological points. Muller's claim that these are merely cosmetic differences is not true enough to the case. A second concern relates to Muller's repeated claim that method does not affect content. While this may be true it is not a necessary truth, each case in point has to be evaluated on its own merits. Muller simply assumes his point and then seeks evidence to illustrate it rather than entertaining a genuine historical inquiry to see if his point is true or not. In this regard Muller does not appear to critique his own subjective presuppositions sufficiently. A final concern relates to this point; when one reads Calvin's *Institutes*, Beza's *Tabula praedestinationis*, or Perkins' *A Golden Chaine* one gets a very clear sense of the differences between Calvin and the Reformed scholasticism of Beza and Perkins; and this strikes me as more than merely cosmetic. There are substantial differences of doctrine. Whether the divine decree is singular or plural makes a huge difference materially to soteriology not to mention proclamation and worship. These differences have been played out in the rejection of Barth's doctrine of election by federal Calvinists, for instance. Clearly they recognise doctrinal difference and not merely cosmetic masking, so much so that federal Calvinists refer to Barth's theology as 'neo-orthodox'. Would Muller's method extend to this debate as well? One thinks not. Perhaps Marshall McLuhan's adage, 'the medium is the message' holds true here, more so than Muller is willing to concede. These and other concerns remain over Muller's thesis, despite its undoubted value to scholarship.

**Myk Habets**

***Global Dictionary of Theology*. Eds. William A. Dyrness and Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen. Downers Grove: IVP, 2008. (xxviii + 996 pp.) [ISBN: 978-1-84474-350-6]**

The *Global Dictionary of Theology (GDT)* is a major new venture which represents the first reference work of its kind. From the Introduction we read that it 'was conceived to provide a general overview of theological reflection and practice throughout the world' (p. vii). The editors have

invited authors from around the globe to write entries from their own contextual perspectives. While broadly evangelical and ecumenical, the *GDT* reflects a rich and diverse variety of styles and perspectives on theological topics. For a number of entries more than one author was invited to write and the multiple perspectives are included in the one article as a form of dialogue or, even, contrast.

The choice of authors is discussed by the editors in the Introduction. What they wanted were theologians from around the globe, largely less well known, including ‘newly minted PhDs and young scholars in the beginning stages of their career’ (p. xi), in addition to a number of senior, world-class academicians. This is achieved handsomely as unknown scholars rub shoulders with familiar names in their respective fields. Included amongst the honour roll is Mark Baker, Henri Blocher, Simon Chan, Roland Chia, Frank Macchia, Nancey Murphy, and Jürgen Moltmann. Care is taken to ensure contributions are included from men and women, from the Americas, Asia, Europe, Africa, and even the Pacific.

A number of unusual features characterise the *GDT*: It does not include entries on any individuals, favouring themes and doctrinal topics instead; short entries were discouraged in favour of solid and weighty entries, sometimes the length of full journal articles; and a diversity of approaches and theologies was actively arranged across the entries and in many cases, within specific entries themselves, as for example when more than one author contributed to an entry. What has been paramount in the editor’s work is to get ‘contextual’ theology, by which they mean a theology which self-consciously works out of and within a particular context. To achieve this goal the editors state that they had to send articles back to be rewritten or rejected entries on the basis that they were not ‘contextual’ enough. As an example they cite non-western authors supplying entries on theological topics that read as if they could have been written by western theologians. The editors did not consider this to be contextual enough and thus commissioned new entries on occasion to achieve their goal.

A closer look at several entries in the *GDT* proves illustrative of its contents. The entry on ‘Theological Method’ (pp. 889-898) was written by three theologians in two parts. In the first half, ‘A Global Orientation,’ Gener and Bautista (from the Philippines) provide a brief history of theological method in the west (euro-American) and outside the west and emphasize the polycentric world within which theology is done. Next follows a discussion on the Bible and theological methods in which a variety of perspectives are surveyed, ranging from the work of

John Goldingay to Kwame Bediako. What comes through in this half-entry is consistent with the entire tenor of the *GDT* and is captured in the summary, 'Thus a global orientation in theology is ultimately pastoral and missiological...the story of the church in local situations reveals both the liberating power of the gospel and its cultural domestication...' (p. 894). In the second half, Kevin Vanhoozer from the USA presents a summary of his well-known theodrama in which he asks a number of pertinent questions relevant to the book as whole, namely, 'should theological method be local?' (p. 895). You will have to read his entry to see what he says. Together the entry on theological method is a stimulating one which provides a variety of perspectives from a range of voices and concludes with a useful select bibliography.

The second entry will be of interest to readers of *PJBR* – it is on 'Pacific Island Theology' (pp. 624-626) and is written by the well-known New Zealand Roman Catholic theologian, Neil Darragh, lecturer in theology, University of Auckland. I was interested to see how theology is done from our Pacific context, what marks it off from other theologies, and what continuities may be present. Darragh defines the geographical locale he represents as 'the islands of Polynesia, Melanesia and Micronesia...the larger island groups of Papua New Guinea and Aotearoa New Zealand' (p. 624). Already from such a broad swathe of the Pacific one wonders how a theology could typify this diverse region. It is not at all common thinking that Cook Islanders and New Zealanders, for instance, share a common cultural or theological outlook. The one uniting factor Darragh points out is colonisation by the British Empire which brought Christianity with it. Given this diversity Darragh isolates three themes in his article: 1) localisation, 2) public engagement, and 3) ecclesiology.

Reading Darragh's entry as one who lives in this region highlights both the attractiveness of the *GDT* and its major shortcomings. Darragh manages to capture something of the general feel and concerns shared by Pacific Christians and this allows the reader to bring this perspective into dialogue with voices from across the world. In this sense the global dimension of the *GDT* is achieved, and admirably so. The shortcomings of this approach is that I am not sure how accurate Darragh's description of theology done down here is. Darragh does not represent anything like evangelicalism, the largest Christian movement in the Pacific, and thus his seems more caricature than accurate description. And perhaps that is the failing of all contextual theologies, as perceived by the *GDT*. While context is undoubtedly important, and influential, it may just be that the continuities between global perspectives is what is actually unique about Christian theology.

My students are already using the *GDT* and are enjoying it. It is bringing a breadth to their studies and introducing them to a wider range of voices and perspectives than most western dictionaries do. For that this work will prove to be of enduring value. However, many of my students are not supplementing the *GDT* with other more standard dictionaries and studies, and that is skewing their perspectives and work (much like Wikipedia does), this too may be one of the enduring affects of the *GDT*. Either way, it is a major resource and a creative one at that which should find a place in any theological library.

### **Myk Habets**

***Essential IVP Reference Collection CD-ROM Version 3.***  
**Nottingham: IVP, 2007. [ISBN: 978-1-84474-206-6]**

Specifications: System Requirements: 500mhz Pentium III processor (1 GHz Pentium III recommended), CD/DVD-ROM drive. Operating System: Microsoft Windows 98 or later. Software: Microsoft Internet Explorer 6.0 or later. Memory: 192MB RAM (512MB recommended). Hard Drive: 550 MB hard drive space.

This is the third edition of the well known and well used IVP Reference Collection. Version three includes seventeen books including: twelve dictionaries, three commentaries, one Bible atlas, and a topical book. The 'big black IVP dictionaries' of the New Testament are included but, unfortunately a separate disc must be purchased to get the Old Testament Dictionaries. It is a shame that version 3 did not include the Old Testament Dictionaries as well as this would have made the package that much more attractive and saved the hassle of having to purchase two separate discs. Scholars using this resource would appreciate the inclusion of both Testaments at an additional cost. Included in version 3 is the new Logos Bible Software 3 engine, and an unlockable copy of Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*.

The IVP Dictionaries have set a benchmark for academic scholarship which is up-to-date, concise, and reliable. Having these dictionaries in electronic form allows for searches across all volumes instantaneously and speeds up the time taken for research and of course frees up shelf space. These dictionaries have become indispensable tools for study in biblical scholarship and the electronic Logos form of these

texts just makes their use that much easier. Pagination is included in these volumes which makes full citation an easy task.

This is an affordable package that is easy to install and operate and will find an enduring place in the libraries of scholars, pastors, and interested lay people alike. If you are involved in biblical-theological study then you will want the IVP reference Collection on your desktop – it is as simple as that.

### Myk Habets

**R. John Elford and D. Gareth Jones, *A Tangled Web: Medicine and Theology in Dialogue*, Oxford: Peter Lang, 2009 (288pp) [ISBN 978-3-03911-541-9]**

Peter Lang is starting a series entitled *New International Studies in Applied Ethics*, this work being reviewed is the premiere volume. Elford and Jones (eds.) have compiled a series of essays stimulated by D. Gareth Jones' visits to Liverpool and corresponding colloquia papers. The focus of these collected essays is to produce a volume in which one may appreciate how theological and biomedical research and practice may not only intersect but also enlighten each other—a daunting promise from the outset.

Each time a collection of essays on the intersection of theology and medicine crosses my desk I tend to consider the piece in light of the premiere compendium of theological discourse in medicine, *On Moral Medicine* (Lammers and Verhey, eds.). However, as I worked through this volume, I was swiftly moved to evaluate the collection of essays on their own merit. Truly, the pithy and pointed dialogue throughout this text lends itself to an engaging and enriching thought experience that does not serve to emphasize opposition but rather cooperation. However, that same pithy and pointed dialogue leaves one to consider not all is being said—such is the limitation of any compendium developed from essays initially intended to capture the attention of an audience. Nevertheless, as I will continue to show, this first volume does well to not only inform the reader of the intersections of medical science and theological wonder but also it excites the reader (or at the very least me) to approach this interdisciplinary dialogue with a renewed hope that the faithful speech of

theology may have an influential and necessary place at the table; rather, the bedside, the lecture theatre, or the lab.

The book has been divided into three sections, which attempt to give the collection of essays some focus and a sense of utility. The first section, *Theological Background*, begins with Gerrard Mannion call for theological consideration that is not simplistic and theologically unreflective (35), but rich and positively opportunistic; eager to draw sound insight and moral direction from dialogues that span multiple disciplines, cultures, and worldviews but also hopeful that peculiar insights birthed from theological reflection may be apprehended and esteemed in the marketplace. Elford, Hood, and Mealey follow Mannion's charge and echo his sentiments by emphasizing the limitations of theological reflection to garner the special knowledge required to grapple with ever-evolving technologies and biomedical advancements. Yet each also offer a warning: unless the voice of theology is once again heard in the marketplace, the relentless pursuit of human-perfection may become burdensome rather than a process or partnering in the redemptive work of Christ.

The second section, *Moral Boundaries*, includes five essays that move from theory to practice; considering various issues raised by the research and practice of medicine. Here, Jones' essay, "The human body: an anatomist's journey from death to life," is particularly noteworthy. At least for me, as an instructor of human anatomy and physiology and a son to a retired funeral director, I found Jones' consideration of how one should *treat the dead* to be a thorough application of the theoretical vision of the first section. However, it was Mannion's own essay about genetic technologies and community values that demonstrated how sociological, technological, ontological, *and* theological values must be considered to form a clear picture of the technological trajectory and moral dilemma raised by progressing genetics. Yet, Jones reminds the reader in another essay that there are limitations to the *tangled web* of medicine and theology.

The final section, *Regulation and Policy*, addresses the problem of policy making. If anything highlights the strained dialogue of theology and medicine than the political backdrop, which governs the practice of science and the voice of theology it is the topic of regulation and policy. Here one is reminded that the biomedical technologies, advancements, and practices addressed in the previous chapters are of an applied nature, confronting humanity in such a way as to call into question their safety, integrity, and utility. Throughout this section one is able to consider the relevance of theological discourse that may untangle the web of

confusion and concern to help inform and articulate policy recommendations. Yet, once again, the writers of these essays do a fine job at speaking faithfully (doing theology) in context as they challenge the reader to consider the tenuous relationships between moral concern, policy delimitations, and biomedical progress.

Though an excellent resource, this text does have some shortfalls. The brevity of each chapter and the lack of opposing voices prevent this book from being considered an extensive dialogue. However, such a book would be volumes long requiring a series within a series. A more legitimate concern that I considered as I read through this book was the tendency to focus on novel technologies rather than routine and regular concerns raised at the proverbial bedside. It is this on-the-frontiers-of-medicine concentration that weakens the utility of this text, and others like it. Of course, the glamour of these novel technologies and the constant media attention do give warrant to the writers to consider these topics, yet I wonder if there is a large audience that may benefit from these considerations? Nevertheless, the inclusion of topics regarding public scrutiny, researcher integrity, and cadaveric care-taking, for example, do balance my concerns and bolster the importance of this book for care-givers, decision-makers, and professionals.

All in all, I would highly recommend this book. The integrity of thought in each essay demonstrates the commitment of each author to rigorously and veraciously grapple with the intersecting paths of medicine and theology—two disciplines that attempt to illumine the path to human flourishing. Moreover, I would argue the editors were successful in their vision to produce a volume that is able to demonstrate how careful and collaborative discourse may be accomplished by both scientists and theologians thinking about the tough questions being raised by the practice and progress of medicine.

**Ashley J. Moyse**

**John H.Y. Briggs (ed.), *Pulpit and People: Studies in Eighteenth-Century Baptist Life and Thought*. Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2009. (208 pp.) [ISBN: 978-1-84227-403-3]**

This book focuses on a crucial period of English Baptist history. The English Baptists had had a good first century in terms of growth and consolidation. The granting of a significant level of toleration in 1689

suggested that better still was to come. In fact both General and Particular Baptists went through a major period of numerical and spiritual decline. This book highlights life and thought in that period and the spiritual renaissance that began to emerge.

The ten authors have produced interesting and diverse chapters. Not all are of equal quality in terms of scholarship and historical significance. They are not a systematic and comprehensive exploration of Baptist life in the eighteenth century. Most are fairly local studies, focusing on a particular pastor (or other figure) or congregation. At the same time the cumulative effect is to provide very illuminating windows into Baptist thought and life of that period. Rather than giving an overview of each chapter it is probably more helpful to comment selectively and at greater length on salient chapters and striking particulars within chapters.

Michael Haykin's chapter on Benjamin Beddome (1717-1795) illuminates Beddome's pastorate at the Baptist church at Bourton-on-the-Water for over fifty years. Beddome's start in ministry was a little shaky, his pastor-father warning him against harshness and excessively long sermons: 'Soften your voice and shorten your sermons...Let two hours be the longest time you spend in the pulpit at any place' (p. 99). Beddome persevered. Two matters helped. The first was Beddome's recognition that vital Christianity was a matter of both head and heart. The second matter was his emphasis on catechetical instruction, continuing the tradition of the Calvinistic Baptist movement from its inception in the 1630s (p. 101). Beddome ended up preaching to congregations of 500 to 600 for the rest of his life. Clearly he was an attractive speaker. This led to his being pursued for a year to accept the pastorate of a London church. However, the accepted norms of that time required his current church as well as the calling church to agree on the call and his current church would not agree. So Beddome faithfully stayed on, continuing in ministry though suffering severely from gout from the mid-1770s, even being carried into his church and preaching seated when the affliction became more severe. While Beddome had significance into the nineteenth century as a hymn-writer perhaps his greater significance was as a model of able and faithful ministry.

Clive Jarvis's chapter on Gilbert Boyce's challenges to John Wesley over infant baptism also made for interesting reading. The two men had slight personal acquaintance, Wesley staying once at Boyce's house in 1748. According to Wesley, he had barely sat down when Boyce 'fell upon the point of baptism' leading to ninety minutes of animated debate (p. 77). Two decades later Boyce authored a 198 page book, *A*

*Serious Reply to the Rev. Mr John Wesley.* Jarvis notes that Boyce's early protestations of his love and affection for Wesley must seriously be questioned because of Boyce's constant disagreement with Wesley page after page after page. Jarvis wryly notes that 'the only room in which Boyce could sit comfortably with Wesley was a debating chamber' (p. 79). Apparently Wesley found Dissenters' 'predisposition towards disputation' irksome (p. 77). It raises the question: is a disputatious approach part of Baptist DNA or at least a spiritual risk factor?

Paul Fiddes' chapter on Daniel Turner might produce a negative answer to that question, Turner having a very catholic view of the church and so supporting open communion as the central way of maintaining the unity of the universal church. How far, however, could Baptists go in their broadness? Stephen Copson's chapter focuses on three Baptist pastors influenced by Arian and/or Unitarian-type ideas, their General Baptist denomination being in the early stages of bifurcating into a renewed evangelicalism on the one hand or Unitarianism on the other.

Roger Hayden's chapter on Caleb Evans seemed rather odd, because while its title suggested that its focus would be on the anti-slavery issue, it looked much more at internal dissension in the Broadmead Church. One revealing comment, however, was that Evans' assistant, Robert Hall Jr, was accused of not being a Baptist because he did not think he could 're-baptise anyone who had been sprinkled in adult age'.

The chapter that much more significantly picked up Baptist involvement in the anti-slavery movement from the late 1780s was that by Timothy Whelan on publishers Martha Gurney and William Fox. Gurney obviously has significance as being a woman taking a strong public stance; but Fox is also very significant, with his *Address* on slavery running to 250,000 pamphlets in 26 editions, the most widely distributed pamphlet in the eighteenth century.

P.J. Morden's chapter on 'Andrew Fuller and *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation*' highlights the profound theological shift that came with Fuller's publication and the theological influences that led to that change of tack. Morden's obvious sympathy both with Calvinism and with Fuller may have influenced him to assert that Fuller was not responsible for the nineteenth-century Baptist shift away from Calvinism. From a logical perspective Morden may be right. But once preachers stress the need for individual response they have tipped the relative balance between divine and human activity. And once that balance is tipped at all, then it may

keep on tipping. Fuller does carry significant responsibility for the shift – perhaps for the better (if you are not a strong Calvinist).

I have said enough to indicate that while the book is not perfect, it is engaging and often quite revealing. Well worth a read for scholar-students of the Baptist churches.

**Laurie Guy**

## **Contributors to this Issue**

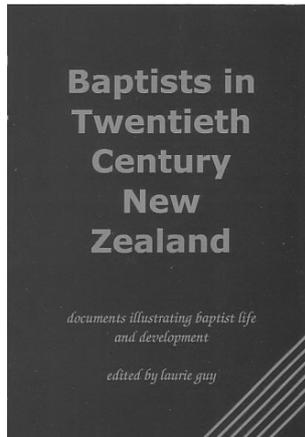
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# **NZ Baptists - in their own words!**

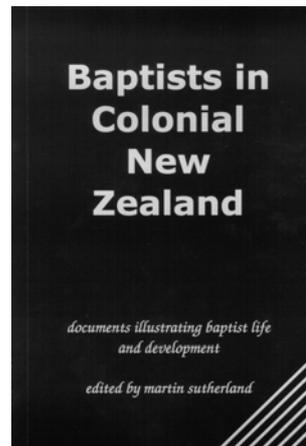


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