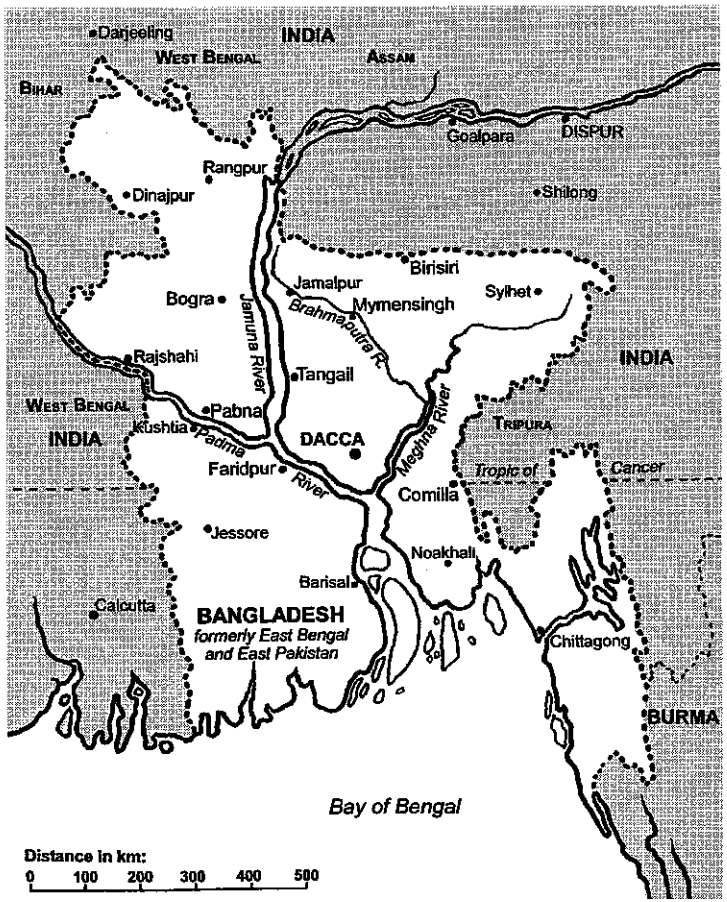
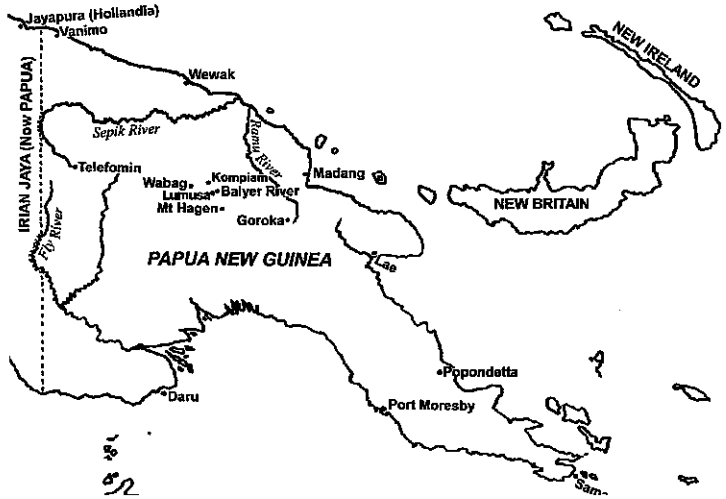
Map of Bangladesh



Map of Papua New Guinea



CHAPTER 10

Towards other Peoples: Australian Baptists and Cross-Cultural Mission

'Our heroic Carey': The Inspiration of Australian Baptist Missions

When Australian Baptists marked the centenary of the Baptist Missionary Society in 1892 Allan Webb paid warm tribute to 'our heroic Carey'.[1] That William Carey was the founder of Baptist missions and a central figure in the widespread Protestant missionary movement of the early nineteenth century was a point of pride for Australian Baptists. To be Baptist meant to be a supporter of world mission in the tradition of Carey. The single most unifying force among the diverse Baptists of the colonies was this missionary impulse.[2] Webb argued that Australian Baptists had a special responsibility: 'India itself has only begun to feel the first gleam of the dawn of which Carey was the herald ... If Australia does not take a foremost position in the evangelisation of the world, she has failed to see why she has come to the possession of her kingdom'.

India became the focus for Australian Baptists, although some raised the possibilities of the South Seas. In 1862, following the baptism of A.W. Murray, a former LMS missionary to the Pacific Islands, there was interest among both New South Wales and South Australian Baptists in having 'a mission to the heathen in the South Seas'.[3] But visiting Britain for the 1892 celebrations, Samuel Chapman explained: 'The hearts of all were turned to India. We felt that we were of the lineage of the men who had been working in India nearly a hundred years, and we wanted to go to India.'[4]

The visit of two BMS missionaries to Australia strengthened this almost innate commitment to India among Baptists. James Smith, a BMS missionary at Delhi, made a brief visit to Australia in 1858 and his health necessitated an extended stay in

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1 *VB*, January 1892, p. 11. See K.R. Manley, '"Our Heroic Carey": William Carey and Australian Baptists', *Our Yesterdays* 1 (1993), pp. 5-22. William Hopkins Carey, Mrs. J.P. Buttfield, Samuel Pearce Carey and ABMS missionaries, C.D. Baldwin and Florence Carey Horwood, were direct descendants of Carey.

2 B.S. Brown, 'A Century of Australian Baptist Overseas Missions', *Foundations* 9.1 (1966), pp. 58-69; J. Redman, *The Light Shines On. The Story of the Missionary Outreach of the Baptist People of Australia 1882-1982* (Hawthorn: ABMS, 1982).

3 *AE*, 1862, pp. 88, 180, 312-13, 328, 361; *Baptist Magazine* 54 (1862), p. 383.

4 J.B. Myers (ed.), *The Centenary Celebrations of the Baptist Missionary Society 1892-93* (London: BMS, 1893), p. 228.

Australia from 1861 to 1863. Smith stimulated missionary interest in Victoria and in June 1863 the Victorian Association recommended establishing a mission to India but nothing eventuated at that time.[5] Meanwhile, the vision and energy of Silas Mead, undoubtedly the principal motivator of Australian Baptist missions, had led the South Australians to form the first missionary society, the South Australian Baptist Missionary Society, in Flinders Street Church on 10 November 1864.[6] John Chamberlain Page, an Anglo-Indian, was a missionary at Barisal in Bengal but his poor health also brought him to Australia. His visit to Australia in 1865 was to be a major catalyst in motivating Australians to work in India. Page directed the South Australians to districts in East Bengal where the vast majority of people were peasant cultivators and where Islam was the dominant faith. He also offered to superintend the work of the South Australians by seeking out suitable 'native' preachers and contacting them regularly. The committee selected Faridpur as its sphere of missionary work.[7] John Sircar and Manik Chandu were the first national preachers. In 1867 Dr John Wenger took Page's place. The assistance of a succession of BMS missionaries was of fundamental importance in the pioneering days of the Australian mission.[8] They provided guidance about possible places to work and offered a pattern of missionary organization and programmes. The first convert, under the ministry of Kailas Chandra Mitra, who had succeeded John Sircar, was a young Brahmin named Panchanon Biswas who was baptized in 1871. He visited Australia on deputation in 1880 and later replaced Kailas.

On 18 October 1865 the Victorian Baptist Foreign Missionary Society was formed under the inspiration of Page and its mission area became the major regional town and district of Mymensingh. A significant influence here was Ruprecht Bion, a Swiss missionary who had gone to India in 1847 with a private Lutheran mission, adopted Baptist views and joined the BMS in India in 1851. He pioneered work at Mymensingh and reported regularly to Victorians about the progress of this centre. Two national evangelists were stationed at Mymensingh; land was purchased upon which houses and a small church were erected. A Brahmin convert, Joy Nath Choudhury, was one of these evangelists and during his visit to Victoria in 1892 he was set apart as Victoria's missionary to the Garos.[9] Converts were made at Mymensingh and a church was formed which by 1871 had eleven members. The evangelists travelled widely throughout the region and soon made contact with the

5 Brown, *Members One of Another*, pp. 38-40.

6 R. Gooden, 'Silas Mead: Baptist Missions Motivator'. The first committee members were S. Mead, H.L. Tuck, J. Neill, S. Summers, J. Cumming, T. Barmes, J. Kentish, J. Edwards, J. Beeby and J. Holden: J. Price, 'History of the Furreedpore Mission' in J. Price, S. Mead, S. Vincent (eds.), *Centenary Volume 1792-1892. South Australian and Tasmanian Baptist Mission at Fureedpore and Pubna* (Adelaide, 1892), p. 5.

7 'Faridpur' appears in various spellings in the literature, as did some other locations, but for the sake of convenience for each place one form is used consistently.

8 Wenger was succeeded by G. Rouse and G. Kerry: Price, 'Fureedpoore Mission', p. 11.

9 C.D. Baldwin, *God and the Garos* (Sydney, 1933), p. 90.

Garo tribespeople in the north. Bion visited all the centres supported by Australian Baptists and laid the foundations for all their work in Bengal. Bion himself visited Australia in 1884.[10] John Gregson (1822-1900) was yet another missionary to settle in Victoria in 1871 and later served as secretary of the Victorian mission: his experience and commitment were to prove invaluable to the committee.[11]

The initial strength of mission support was in these two southern colonies, but a similar pattern of development followed in the other colonies. In New South Wales Page had sparked missionary enthusiasm in 1865 but the New South Wales Society was not finally established until 1883. BMS workers suggested working in the Tipperah region at Comilla which was close to the other Australian centres of Faridpur and Mymensingh.[12] Queensland formed a society in 1885 and Noakhali became the centre for that colony. Sirajganj became the Tasmanian centre from 1897. Western Australia formed its Society in 1901 and supported work in Goalundo, north of Faridpur. Carrie Brown from Perth, supported by her father, had earlier gone to India in 1899 and worked with the South Australian Mission but was invalided home after twelve months.[13] Thus each colony had its own society with its own committee supporting work in its own location. The relatively meagre resources of the six societies were spread over five districts in Bengal. The need for one united society was apparent but colonial rivalries delayed this federation until 1913.

The Australian Japanese Mission

The first Australian Baptist man to volunteer had a most unusual career. In 1870 Wilton Hack (1843-1923), a young home missionary in Adelaide, applied to go as a missionary to Faridpur but was rejected on health grounds.[14] Hack was determined to work 'in fields not tended by others' and resolved to go to Japan. He asked that the society might give any additional funds to his work but never received any official endorsement.[15]

Encouraged by gifts from some private supporters, Hack left for Japan in 1873 with his wife, their three children and five other adults, including a printer. He referred to his work as 'The Australian Japanese Mission'. Language problems and military unrest restricted his activities but he hired a translator and established a mission press at Nagasaki in a country just emerging from an almost feudal stage. He distributed thousands of religious tracts even to priests and officials. His sphere of influence was extended to Hiroshima where Hack worked as an English teacher. Some converts, including a former Buddhist priest, were baptized and a church was

10 *VF*, July 1884, pp. 122-23; August 1884, pp. 137-38.

11 See the obituary for Gregson: *SB*, 12 July 1900, pp. 160-61.

12 Prior, *Some Fell on Good Ground*, pp. 187-90.

13 Moore (ed.), *Baptists of Western Australia*, p. 150.

14 *TP*, November 1877, p. 134.

15 *TP*, November 1873, p. 131. For Hack, see *ADB*, 4, p. 313; *Baptist Magazine* 68 (1876), pp. 22-24.

formed in November 1874, 'the first Christian Church I believe in all Japan that has been planted in any town not an open port'.[16] Money was a problem. He visited England in 1875-76 where he published letters appealing for support.[17] Angas gave him £100, and Hack returned to Japan.[18] Support to the total of some £1500 had been raised in both Britain and Australia. Indeed, in 1876 the Victorian Mission considered asking the BMS to take over the Mymensingh work so that they might form and sustain 'an Australian Baptist Mission for Japan'.[19] Mead in July 1877 reported that the South Australian mission was uncertain about supporting both Faridpur and Japan and thought that the Japan mission was about to close.[20] Hack's mission did fail. Dissension and insufficient support had led to the collapse of the work at Nagasaki and the church in Hiroshima was in confusion.[21]

Hack became interested in the possibility of bringing Japanese families to the Northern Territory in order to develop the region and benefit the immigrants. It all came to nothing. Hack exhausted such funds as he had and the British Consul had to open a subscription list among British nationals to obtain passage money for Hack and his family.[22] As we have seen, he later became a theosophist and a Free Thought lecturer. The perils of an individualistic mission were amply demonstrated. This Australian Japanese Mission rapidly faded from the memory of Baptist missionary enthusiasts.

The First Missionaries

So India became the field and the founding missionaries were two remarkable women. That women should offer for service was not really surprising. English Baptist missionary wives had pioneered a movement to gain access to the zenanas, or women's quarters of homes. In a cultural context where women of the upper classes were confined to zenanas, contact by missionaries seemed impossible. Elizabeth Sales and Marianne Lewis gained permission to visit homes in the 1850s. Upon returning to England, Mrs. Lewis led in the establishment of the Baptist Zenana Mission (BZM) in 1867. Though closely linked to the BMS, the BZM was a separate organization, run by women. Mrs. Hannah Martin led Victorian Baptist women to form an auxiliary for the BZM and from 1872 to 1885 they regularly forwarded money to BZM for the support of Bible women in Calcutta.[23] This

16 *TP*, May 1875, pp. 55-56; B.S. Brown, 'The Australian Japanese Mission' *BQ* 9.4 (1962), pp. 309-13.

17 *Freeman*, 24September 1875, pp. 484-85; 29 October 1875, p. 557; 17 December 1875, p. 641.

18 *TP*, September 1876, pp. 97-100.

19 Brown, 'The Australian Japanese Mission', p. 312.

20 *TP*, July 1877, pp. 81-82.

21 *Freeman*, 25 May 1877, pp. 264-65.

22 H.S. Williams, *Foreigners in Mikadoland* (Tokyo: Tuttle, 1963), pp. 178-83.

23 R. Gooden. 'We Trust them to establish the Work: Significant roles for early Australian Baptist women in overseas mission, 1864-1913' in M. Hutchinson and G. Treloar (eds.), *This Gospel shall be preached: Essays on the Australian Contribution to World Mission* (Sydney: CSAC, 1998), pp. 129-32.

Victorian Baptist Zenana Mission existed separately alongside the 'Foreign Mission of the Victorian Baptist Association' until the two bodies united in 1885 as the Victorian Baptist Foreign Mission Committee. Australian women were familiar with this form of Christian service and the two first Australian Baptist missionaries became zenana workers for the South Australian society.

Marie Gilbert had grown up in the Aberdeen Street Church in Geelong and in 1877, aged only nineteen and untrained, applied for BZM work through the Victorian Auxiliary and was accepted - provided the financial support came from Australia. The local auxiliary could not guarantee this and Gilbert moved to South Australia to train as a teacher.[24] Here Gilbert attended Flinders Street where she met another Baptist woman in the Teachers' College, Ellen Arnold (1858-1931). These two young schoolteachers were accepted for zenana work. Arnold had migrated with her family from England in 1879. The 1880 visit of Panchanon Biswas had stimulated Arnold's interest in mission work and Mead did not hesitate to encourage her to offer her services.

After a brief training in medicine, the two women were farewelled in Flinders Street Church on 26 October 1882. The first of hundreds of Australian Baptists to serve overseas, Gilbert and Arnold, young women aged 26 and 24, were met at Calcutta by BMS missionary George Kerry and his wife and immediately began language studies. In 1884 they joined the national agents at Faridpur but unfortunately Arnold's health broke down and she was compelled to return to Australia that same year. On recovering her health, under the guidance and inspiration of Mead, she visited most of the colonies and New Zealand. Pulpits were opened to this woman missionary and she so enthused her hearers that this 'crusade of Ellen Arnold', as Ball notes, 'fixed East Bengal as the mission field for Australian Baptists'.[25] She enlisted four other women who returned to Bengal with her in October 1885. This marked 'an epoch in the history of the Baptist denomination in Australia'.[26] At their farewell in Flinders Street Mead drew on the story of the feeding of the five thousand and imagined these women as being like the 'five barley loaves' going to face a seemingly impossible task. The 'five barley loaves' acquired a place of honour in Australian Baptist mission history.

Martha Plested was the first woman from the Queensland Association.[27] Two Victorians joined the group: Marion Fuller, a friend of Gilbert's from Aberdeen Street, and Ruth Wilkin, the sister of F.J. Wilkin, from Castlemaine. The other

24 Gooden, 'We trust them', p. 132. Another Victorian woman, Mary Seymour, also applied to the BZM but she ended up going to India in 1882 with the sponsorship of Anglican Revd H.B. McCartney and shared in work later to be maintained by the Church Missionary Society: R. Gooden, 'Victoria's Baptist "Awakened Women"', *Our Yesterdays* 12 (2004), pp. 66-68.

25 G.B. Ball, 'Arnold, Ellen' in *ADEB*, p. 13.

26 *TP*, November 1885, pp. 135-39.

27 D. Parker, *The Martha Plested Story* (Brisbane: BUQ, 1986).

'barley loaf' was Alice Pappin, another South Australian schoolteacher from the North Adelaide Church. Initially all these women lived at Faridpur in order to prepare for their work. New South Wales had hoped to send a missionary but none had emerged and eventually Ellen Arnold transferred to their society to commence zenana work at Comilla in 1887 with a BMS couple. The first missionary from New Zealand in 1886 was also a woman, Rosalie McGeorge, and she was joined by a Victorian, Annie Newcombe, a year later. As Gooden summarizes: '... all six Australian colonial missions [were] staffed initially with single women, a pattern followed by Western Australia in 1899'.[28] The Queensland Association in 1885 formally set down a rationale for this reliance on women:

> As men missionaries cannot carry the Gospel to the women of India, whom it is so important to reach; as women missionaries can visit the homes of the people, conduct schools for girls, and superintend the native preachers' work among the men of the country; as it costs less to support a European woman than a man, and as the work in these colonies is as yet young and funds are scarce, it is desirable for each colony to send out zenana missionaries as speedily as possible ... The option of engaging and dismissing native teachers and preachers with assistance of the London Baptist Missionary Society resident in Calcutta should be allowed these ladies, and they should be requested to use their judgment in organizing the work.[29]

These policies contrasted with the existing attitude of the BMS towards women missionaries. Australian women had a crucial role in missions and not simply in zenana work - they supervised national agents and by their reports played an essential role in publicizing the work of the fledgling societies. Cynics might highlight the fact that women were cheaper than single men and especially married men with families. The missions decided that single men should pass their language requirements before marrying. The first male missionary, Arthur Summers who went out from the Flinders Street church in 1887, did this while his fiancée waited in Australia. Abia Neville who was also originally from Flinders Street but went out in 1891 as a Victorian, married Ruth Wilkin but she had served eight years as a single missionary before marriage. Dr Cecil Mead, again from Flinders Street, went to India in 1893 and married Alice Pappin in 1896 but she also served a long period - ten years - as a single missionary. Although the official status of these women as 'a missionary's wife' changed, their actual functions were unaltered. The most impressive feature of the policy was the confidence displayed in the women to organize the mission work: 'In Australasian Baptist missionary endeavour, single women became the founders of their missions, not just an addendum or just women's missions supported by women's groups'.[30]

28 R. Gooden, 'We trust them', p. 134.

29 '1885 Report of the Queensland Baptist Missionary Society', as cited by Gooden, 'We trust them', p. 135.

30 Gooden, 'We trust them', p. 40.

The pioneers were a remarkable group. Gilbert, who had maintained the work after Arnold's enforced return, decided to study medicine for a few months in Scotland at her own expense and resigned in 1899 in order to work independently. Renowned for her eccentricities but also for her deep compassion and unswerving commitment to the Indian people, she worked among students in Calcutta, assisted new missionaries settle into India and regularly helped when staff were on holidays or furlough. Kate Allanby had come out as a missionary from Queensland in 1890, accompanying Martha Plested who had returned because of poor health in 1889. Allanby served until 1894 and after she had returned to Australia because of poor health and had fallen out with the home committee, Gilbert approached Allanby to begin work in Mayurbhanj. Here she established an independent mission that continues today.[31]

Martha Plested spent two years at Faridpur and then moved further south to Noakhali, which became the Queensland base.[32] Here she worked for almost thirty years, often in a difficult and isolated situation. She retired in 1918 and returned to Australia in 1922.[33]

Ellen Arnold acquired legendary status because of her remarkable character, her period of service from 1882 until 1931 - she remains the longest serving missionary with the ABMS - and because of her distinctive contributions:

> In Christ the female, placed last by paganism, has frequently become the first. Mary Magdalene was the pioneer witness of our Lord's resurrection. Lydia was the pioneer convert in Europe. Ellen Arnold was, with Marie Gilbert, the first Australian Baptist missionary to India. Her holy daring secured the honour for Australian women.[34]

Arnold initiated educational and medical work at Faridpur where she personally supervised a building project. In order to save the expense of her support she transferred to the New South Wales Society and in 1887 pioneered the zenana mission at Comilla. Once again she acquired land and began building a mission house in 1889. In 1892 she went to Pabna, the region in which she would live for most of the rest of her life. Here she preached, set up schools and dispensaries and shared in various relief programmes centred on the villages of Ataikola and Bera. A determined lady by any estimate, she was not always easy to work with but the Bengali people loved her and she helped establish the East Bengal Baptist Union. She served seven terms in Bengal and all but one of her furloughs were spent in Australia where, armed with maps, papers, curiosities and seemingly boundless enthusiasm, she was a greatly loved advocate for the mission. She died at Ataikola

31 G.B.C., *Kate Allanby of Mayurbhanj* (Brisbane: Evangelical Missionary Society in Mayurbhanj, 1933). Australian Baptist Graham Staines was serving with this mission when he and his two young sons were murdered in 1999.

32 G.B. Ball, 'The Australian Baptist Mission and its impact in Bengal, 1864-1954' (MA thesis, Flinders University, 1978), p. 23.

33 Ball, 'Australian Baptist Mission in Bengal', p. 24.

34 D. Mitchell, *Ellen Arnold* (Adelaide, 1932), p. 9.

where donations financed the erection of the Ellen Arnold Memorial Dispensary. The Bangladesh Baptist Union still observes 'Ellen Arnold Day' annually.[35]

Marion Fuller worked faithfully until she died of cholera in 1897. Ruth Wilkin (d. 1910) shared an account of how being a missionary affected her: 'I am so glad to be in India. The desire of years is satisfied now. I am really set apart for the Master's work - "free to serve". And yet I must confess I have often had a secret dread of the loneliness of such a life. This was the one thing I feared before coming to India'. But now with her friends at Faridpur - 'such a pretty place' - she and her friends were busy studying Bengali. She was anticipating her zenana work with a quiet optimism and determined realism: 'There is no thrilling adventure; just quiet steady plodding'. The spirit of Carey lived on in her. [36]

Arnold claimed in 1925, 'I have only been stopping a gap until men were available'.[37] The first males displayed character and ability. Arthur Summers (1864-1945) in 1890 began at Pabna where he served until 1903. He transferred to the BMS with whom he served from 1908 to 1920. Abia Neville (1866-1953) was based at Mymensingh and his account of the work, *White unto Harvest* (1898), encouraged supporters at home. A practical if difficult man, Neville and his wife Ruth (Wilkin) were a formidable team. Neville returned to pastoral ministry in Melbourne in 1907.[38] Dr Cecil Mead (1866-1940) pioneered the medical work and his partnership with Alice Pappin, a gifted teacher and linguist in her own right, was significant for the credibility and effectiveness of the mission. Mead began his medical work at Faridpur but was also deeply committed to preaching and teaching. They worked at Orakandi, where an outreach to the Nama Sudras was based, from 1910 and retired in 1921.[39]

A steady stream followed the first missionaries so that by 1913, when the state societies merged, 65 had been sent from Australian churches: 26 from Victoria, 21 from South Australia, 9 from New South Wales, 2 from Queensland, 4 from Tasmania and 3 from Western Australia.[40] Foundations had been laid but serious questions remained about the future directions of the mission. East Bengal was a highly segmented, hierarchical society that had witnessed long centuries of religious development and conflict. Whilst the pioneering work of Carey and the BMS had been instrumental in establishing Christian witness, by the time of the Australian missions it had also hardened Hindu opinion against the Christian Gospel.

Those first Australians faced a series of problems. Ball has argued that the main challenge was to find an identity for their work.[41] The opening of the first stations had been something of a hit or miss strategy and they did not really focus on any one

35 Redman, *The Light Shines On,* p. 21.

36 R. Wilkin, *Gleanings in a Foreign Field* (Geelong, 1891). Carey often referred to himself as a 'plodder'.

37 Redman, *The Light Shines On,* p. 21.

38 He married his wife's niece Flora Wilkin in 1911: *SB*, 2 March 1911, p. 150.

39 For Mead, see *ADEB* and W. Barry, *There was a Man* (Melbourne: ABFM, nd).

40 Ball, 'Australian Baptist Mission in Bengal', p. 16.

41 Ball, 'Australian Baptist Mission in Bengal', p. 5.

group. They were not in touch with the villages where the majority community of Muslims was mainly found as cultivators. This was one challenge they never really accepted. Their mission in Bengal was to Hindus, not to Muslims. At first they thought they were having an impact among the caste Hindus but this response was more often a concern to gain English language and education. Only gradually did these missionaries come to appreciate the demands placed upon an Indian who changed from one religious affiliation to another. Social and economic losses were dramatic and the missionaries were uncertain how best to help in this situation. That only a few caste Hindus and Muslims would become Christians was increasingly recognized by the missionaries although, of course, they continued to work hard and prized such converts as appeared. The search during the first twenty years of work in Bengal to find a more responsive group among whom they might work was one challenge to the missionaries. This quest was eventually to determine the identity of the Australian Baptist mission.

Another question facing the mission was that of a basic principle. The rise of 'faith missions', notably Hudson Taylor's China Inland Mission, attracted considerable Baptist interest and support. Many evangelical Christians preferred these 'faith' missions rather than the denominational missions. Whitley as secretary of the Victorian committee was puzzled in 1897 and wondered how Charles Reeve, who had founded the Poona Indian Village Mission, could find 140 offers for work in India with his mission and accept 30 of them whilst 'ours is neglected, though it tries to pay its agents a proper regular allowance'.[42] Marie Gilbert left the Faridpur mission to work by 'faith' and some missionaries in 1886 actually asked the committee either to reduce their allowance or not to pay them at all - but the committee refused. Amy Parsons served one term at Faridpur and then, on the matter of 'faith', left the mission although she served in India for the rest of her life.[43] Miss Ray Ehrenberg caused the committee further anxiety when she wanted to move away from Mymensingh and adopt 'native' life style which prompted Whitley to question her plan to live 'down with the people' - she subsequently left the mission to work independently.

The only time the missionaries from the different Australian societies actually met together was at their annual convention and this became a time to discuss problems and plans. This was where C.S. Mead pressed the issue of federation of the societies. The missionaries also distributed *Our Bond* a monthly paper which from 1893 circulated news and ideas among all the missionaries. The home committees were made up of well-meaning and dedicated people but most of them had little idea of the realities of life on the field. Despite requests from the missionaries, staff was not easily empowered to take more responsibility. Inevitably strained relationships developed. The home committee particularly opposed any suggestion that there were station 'committees' which could make policy decisions. It was a cumbersome and

42 Reeve was a Tasmanian evangelist: Ball, 'Australian Baptist Mission in Bengal', p. 29.

43 Information supplied by R. Gooden.

ineffective way of proceeding. Change came slowly as male staff became more experienced and commanded confidence. As the proposed federation grew near, the role of field missionary committees was clarified and Hedley Sutton (1876-1944), the Victorian committee secretary, who was an outstanding administrator, effectively developed a missionary manual which established clear guidelines for all. The most important administrative agency became the Field Council although the Home Board, as established in 1913, had the final responsibility for policy and finance. Thus the Australian Baptist societies became one mission and the older state loyalties gradually became less relevant. While state committees continued to encourage support within each state the Federal Board increasingly assumed the major role of leadership in Australia.

Baptists in Bengal (1882-1954)

How effective was the Australian work in Bengal?[44] The pioneers had no real idea what they were going to be or do. They were dedicated but largely untrained and tended at first to follow uncritically whatever the local BMS staff proposed. Bion's work had been scattered over several locations and he did not identify one particular people group with which to work. The first colonial societies shared this approach and each one also retained a strong emotional attachment to its own 'field'. Some time was needed, even after federation of the societies, to allow an objective assessment of all the work. This was first done in a systematic way in 1936 but the war interrupted and mission work virtually came to a halt. After the war, Indian independence and the birth of Pakistan in 1947 ushered in a new era for missions in the sub-continent. The pattern of mission work changed slowly as missionaries came to appreciate the need for adaptation in their approach to various groups but they were also responsive to local needs and established significant institutions to meet those needs.

Faridpur District

The first district where Australians served was Faridpur.[45] The pattern of this work was determined by the fact that the first missionaries were zenana pioneers and institutions became important. These missionaries also began primary schools. Alice Pappin commenced what became known as 'Miss Pappin's Jungle School' in a village outside the town.[46] C.S. Mead conducted a Dispensary at Faridpur but did not allow the medical work to grow into a major establishment and he concentrated heavily on evangelism. When Mead was transferred to Orakandi, P.J. Clarke supervised the transfer to Faridpur from Pabna of a small boarding school for boys. William Goldsack had added weaving to the school curriculum while it was at Pabna

44 For what follows, see Ball, 'Australian Baptist Mission in Bengal'.

45 Ball, 'Australian Baptist Mission in Bengal', pp. 40-49.

46 W.T. Whitley and S. Mead, *Our Indian Trip* (Melbourne, 1896), p. 16.

and carpentry was added at Faridpur. Lorraine Barber (1883-1966), destined to become a legendary figure in the mission's history, took over the school in 1919 and remained in service until 1948. During his thirty years the Faridpur Industrial School became 'one of the largest technical training centres in eastern India'.[47] This was the most ambitious institution established by Australian Baptists. Its purpose was to train the boys of Christian families to be highly competent tradesmen. In this way they greatly assisted the economic needs of the local Christian community. Indeed it eventually became too much for Australian Baptists to maintain and all the Faridpur work was taken over by the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1960.

Mead and his companions had only ever regarded Faridpur as a base from which they could visit the wider district. This itinerant ministry led Mead, Bertha Tuck and Grace Thomson to make contact with a large group of Nama Sudras living in the Gopalganj subdivision. These people numbered about 300,000 - about four times as many as any other Hindu caste in the district - and key leaders invited the missionaries to work among them because they sought advancement for their people. This was naturally regarded as great opportunity and in 1910 Mead and his family with the two women missionaries established a new centre at Orakandi. An extensive programme was developed in response to the great needs of the people as there were virtually no government facilities in this remote area. A high school was begun, a modest but valued medical programme was run by Mead and Thomson whilst Tuck established a widows' home which became a haven for many 'broken pots', as these widows - often still only children - were described by Bengalis.[48] This work at Orakandi was 'the closest the Australian Baptists ever came to identifying with a definite group within the Bengali community, and winning that group to Christianity'.[49]

The other subdivision of the Faridpur district where Australians worked was Goalundo and this was begun simply because the West Australians were determined to have their 'own field'. Goalundo town proved to be an unsatisfactory location and work was commenced in Rajbari where Edith King and Grace Brown worked. This was only ever a small operation and it proved difficult to provide staff.[50] Western Australian Baptists erected a church at Rajbari which has a tribute on a white marble tablet to Silas Mead as 'Father of Australian Missions in India'.[51]

Contact with the Nama Sudras promised a significant focus for the Faridpur mission, although this was to be a disappointment. The major missionary presence was in the town of Faridpur and most of this seems to have been overshadowed by the industrial school. The main contribution of the mission was really as an economic uplift agency to the Christians.

47 Ball, 'Australian Baptist Mission in Bengal', p. 44.

48 For Tuck and her work, see G. Collins, *Christ's Ambassador. India's Friend* (Melbourne; ABFM, nd).

49 Ball, 'Australian Baptist Mission in Bengal', p. 46.

50 Ball, 'Australian Baptist Mission in Bengal', p. 48.

51 Redman, *The Light Shines On*, p. 47.

Mymensingh and Tangail Districts

Mymensingh was regarded as a wealthy district and Islam was very strong throughout the region.[52] Australian Baptists were present in Mymensingh town from 1887. In 1895 a second centre was established at Tangail and in 1902 another centre was opened at Birisiri in the Garo area in the northern part of the district.

Prior to the arrival of the first Australians, the first resident missionary was John Ellison, a young BMS worker who accepted superintendence of the work for the Victorian society in 1883. Three acres of land were purchased in the European quarter of the town where the top ranking civil servants resided. A house in which both the Ellisons and the zenana missionary women should live was projected but they questioned the propriety of this and it was also thought to be unhelpful to their work since Bengali women would not come to a house where a man was living. Ellison rented another property and also commenced a small school which was attended by some Garos as well as Bengalis.

Educational work was to be a significant feature of the mission in Mymensingh. A girls' school was started in 1888 as training young women from an early age was an excellent way to teach the Christian faith as well as preparing them for domestic life. A succession of capable teachers gave dedicated service to this school: Wilkin, Emily Chambers (invalided home in 1895) and then, from 1895 until 1918, Iris Seymour who was succeeded by Janet Hogben until she left the field early in 1946.[53] Urgent need meant that many orphans were also cared for through the mission. A Gospel Hall was erected in the town and this had a continued use as a meeting place and reading room. No boys' school was started but a hostel where high school and college students could live was opened. Serampore College near Calcutta remained the most strategic centre for theological training but its tuition was all in English. The Australians decided to establish their own Vernacular Training Institute in Mymensingh. Sutton was a fine linguist and a gifted teacher and although the Institute was never very large he set an excellent standard. Other missionaries to help with the Institute included Harold Masters, Wilfred Crofts and Percy Lanyon. Many of the mission's ablest leaders were trained here. The Institute ceased operation not long after Sutton retired in 1928.

In Tangail a house was built where Abia and Ruth [Wilkin] Neville lived from 1895. Neville was an untiring worker, visiting houses regularly, teaching the Bible in Bengali and English. Tangail ceased to be a mission centre in 1921 and the property was sold in 1941.

Comilla

New Zealand Baptists worked in the other areas of Tipperah District (since 1960 known as Comilla) from 1890. New South Wales Baptists began work in the town

52 Ball, 'Australian Baptist Mission in Bengal', pp. 49-63.
53 E.E. Watson (ed.), *Our Heritage* (Melbourne: ABFM, 1951), p. 28.

and nearby areas of Comilla in 1887 when Ellen Arnold arrived.[54] Others to work at Comilla included Fay Denness (1887), Lillian Jaggers (1910) and Helen Cousin (1911). To find staff to work at Comilla was difficult but Walter Barry began in 1908 and served there until 1928. A small orphanage, a school and a technical training scheme were commenced. By paying a small subsidy the Comilla missionaries were able to give religious instruction in the government schools. One unique feature here was an invitation to the missionary to give 'Bible exposition' to undergraduates. E.E. Watson, an outstanding linguist, was regarded as 'Professor' of English Bible and was extremely well accepted. The Australian mission struggled to maintain the work at Comilla, especially during the depression years and in 1959 this work was transferred to the Southern Baptists.

Noakhali

Noakhali, located at the head of the Bay of Bengal, was an isolated district but was identified by Martha Plested for the Queensland mission.[55] With Marie Gilbert as companion she settled here in 1888. It proved to be a difficult location and by 1903 there were only eight converts. John and Cissie Ings, formerly of the New Zealand and New South Wales societies, agreed to serve here in 1907. Ings realized the town was in a hazardous location because of flooding and established a new centre at Feni where a house was opened in 1914. The family had to leave Bengal for health reasons in 1919. Mission work at Noakhali was generally disappointing.

Pabna District

Australian Baptist mission work in Pabna was commenced in 1890 by Arthur Summers.[56] Once again it was an example of the Australians over-extending themselves in their enthusiasm for new work. The staff was separated in that the men lived on the fringe of the town whilst the zenana missionaries' home was nearer the centre. Pabna, however, came to be regarded as the most significant location for Muslim work and some of the best students of Islam among Australian Baptists served here. The Summers family shared accommodation with Arnold and Miss Kealley who later married E.T. Thompson and shared with him in opening the work at Sirajganj for Tasmanian Baptists. When Mead first arrived in Bengal he engaged in some medical work at Pabna but was ordered by the home committee to concentrate on his language study. Mead was encouraged, however, by the presence in Pabna of Dr. C.H.S. Hope and his wife Dr. Laura (Fowler) Hope, Baptists from South Australia, who worked as independent, self-supporting medical missionaries, mostly in Pabna, from 1893 until 1933.

54 Ball, 'Australian Baptist Mission in Bengal', pp. 63-71.
55 Ball, 'Australian Baptist Mission in Bengal', pp. 71-75.
56 Ball, 'Australian Baptist Mission in Bengal', pp. 75-84.

William Goldsack (1871-1957), a South Australian, went to Faridpur in 1896 and came to Pabna in 1899. He started a small weaving school which was later moved to Faridpur. Goldsack was the most determined of the Australians to work with Muslims and in order to concentrate on this task was transferred to the BMS in 1912.

Hilda McLean (1879-1938), daughter of Melbourne businessman William and sister of Dr Alice Barber, went to Bengal in 1905 and was another gifted writer in communicating the Christian message to Muslims. C.D. Baldwin was a later missionary with a deep commitment to Muslim work at Pabna, as was Walter Schubert from 1953. The concentration of these Muslim experts at Pabna meant that Muslim enquirers from other centres were often referred to Pabna. But it was not that Muslims were especially responsive to evangelism at Pabna but rather that specialist skills were found among the staff there. Much of Ellen Arnold's life's work was done in this region and she fostered a number of small churches in the area, notably at Ataikola.

The Sirajganj subdivision of the Pabna district was the area supported by the Tasmanian mission although few Tasmanians actually went there. Miss Kealley came from South Australia to begin the work for Tasmania in 1891 whilst E.T. Thompson (1897), Elizabeth Soundy (1896) and Annie Farmilo (1900) were from Tasmania. All the Tasmanian workers resigned in protest at the formation of the ABFM in 1913. Tasmania contributed only a further six workers to Bengal. The work at Sirajganj was staffed for most of the time by T.C. Kelly from New South Wales who first went to Bengal in 1915 and worked hard with the Nama Sudra people, believing that a mass movement would begin among them but in this he was to be disappointed. Kelly retired in 1943. The work at Sirajganj subdivision was taken over by the Ceylon India General Mission in 1959.

'Holding the ropes'

Throughout all these years the churches at home had faithfully supported the work. Andrew Fuller had promised William Carey that he would 'hold the ropes' as Carey went 'down into the mine' of service in India. Chapman declared that Adelaide was like Kettering (Fuller's town) and that Mead was 'the Andrew Fuller' of Australian Baptists.[57] But there were hundreds of Baptist 'ropeholders' who prayed regularly, served faithfully on committees and gave generously to the work. Each issue of the denominational papers contained articles from missionaries. Every Assembly featured detailed mission reports. Missionaries on furlough or invalided home were speakers at church services or denominational missionary rallies. Children were taught about missions by means of maps and even by a game called 'Missionary Lotto'.[58] Books and pamphlets were published and after federation a magazine *Our Indian Field* was published from 1915 to 1949 when it was replaced by *Vision* in 1950. Of special

57 *TP*, September 1887, p. 130.

58 *SB*, 4 August 1910, p. 500.

importance were the Zenana Missionary Society (which in New South Wales changed to the Baptist Women's Missionary Union in 1950)[59], the Senior Girls' Missionary Union, the Junior Girls' Missionary Union and the Young Men's Missionary League, all of which promoted a deep knowledge of the mission and fostered keen personal interest in all the missionaries. The challenge to support missions or to enlist as a missionary was constantly before Baptists.

One such missionary deputationist of great influence from the early years was Dr Cecil Mead. Speaking to South Australian Baptists in April 1900 he thought of those missionaries who went out as being like 'spiritual doubles' of those who supported from home. Our results might be 'microscopic', observed Mead, but forces are silently at work: 'We are putting in leaven and the leaven is Christ'.[60] Later in the same year he spoke to the Union about 'Interest in missions':

> Interest in missions is a holy essence distilled out of the very heart of Christ. It is the overflowing of His heart into ours. ... Christians must be faced with the fact that missions means *must*, not *may*. The cause of missions has been lifted from the *optional* to a place among the *compulsory* subjects in the curriculum of Christian service. ... For it is an interest in Christ we want, not merely an interest in missions. The two are inseparable, and the latter is an integral part of the former.

A year later Mead spoke to the Western Australian Union and reflected on motives for missions:

> In recent years there has been a changed emphasis in regard to the missionary motive urged. We do not now seek to stir mere pity by depicting a terrible procession of heathen millions marching in solid rank towards hell simply because they have never heard the name of Christ. The Bible does not teach it. If much that used to be painted and urged were true, I, for one, could not stay on the mission field. It would be *too awful*. One could not eat or sleep.

The true missionary motive was love, self-sacrificing love. Mead suggested that there were 'gleams of truth' in Hinduism but 'India needs Christ to fulfil her own best ideals, and the wise missionary will seek to show that in Christianity, in the person, and teaching, and kingdom of Jesus, all that is best in Hinduism has been summed up and set forth in transfigured splendour'.[61]

The key figure at home was the General Secretary of the mission. Australian Baptists were served by exceptional men who undertook this responsibility. A.H. Collins acted in a voluntary capacity for a short period in 1913-14 and then J.C. Martin (1868-1935) served from 1914 until 1934.[62] Martin was based at Adelaide until in 1922 the Board relocated to Melbourne. His leadership during the troubled

59 BUNSW *Year Book 1950-51*, p. 87.

60 C.S. Mead, *Results of Mission Work in India* (Adelaide, 1900).

61 C.S. Mead, *The Goalundo Mission. Also an address on the Meaning, Magnitude and Motive of Missions* (Perth. 1901).

62 Brown, *A Cloud of Witnesses*, pp. 85-86.

years of war and depression was outstanding. In 1929 Martin rehearsed the results of the federation of missions. The isolation of missionaries had been broken, duplication of similar mission activities had ended. A greater continuity of service had been achieved. Missionaries had been selected from every state but sent to the locations for which they were best suited. Major crises, such as 'the cruel rise of exchange' had been better handled because of the national organization. Pooling of resources had enabled 'sane missionary policies' to be projected and 'haphazard methods' had been ended. Finally, it had effected 'a really remarkable unification of Australian Baptist missionary effort'.[63] Much of the credit for these achievements must be attributed to Martin.

Martin was succeeded as secretary by F.A. Marsh (1897-1976) who led the mission until 1958.[64] Trained at the Victorian College, Marsh assumed mission leadership at a critical time. Staff reductions and budget cuts became necessary and the war years created many difficulties of administration. Marsh was an admirable leader whose gifts and graces saw him widely accepted in ecumenical and government circles. His term was also marked by a dramatic expansion of operations after the war. After the partition of India the exchange rate to Pakistan rose dramatically and Marsh had to warn his denomination that it was possible the mission would run out of funds unless there was a generous response from them. The ABFM changed its name to the Australian Baptist Missionary Society (ABMS) in 1959.

A Fresh Focus

The first serious attempt to review the direction and achievements of the ABFM was undertaken in Marsh's time by a questionnaire sent to all centres in 1936 - some 23 years after federation - and the survey committee reported to a special meeting of the Field Council in February 1937. The particular concern was to help focus the mission's energies on those who were judged to be responsive or neglected peoples. It was recognized that some of the institutional work was monopolizing resources while the continuing relevance of some institutions was questioned. The Field Council agreed that the 'main lines of advance' were: (1) the Garo field; (2) selected Nama Sudra areas; (3) Muslim specialization. Staff was to be concentrated in responsive areas and the institutional programme was to be reduced. This decision was crucial: 'The ABFM should strive for a three-fold identity, as a mission to Muslims, to Nama Sudras and to Garos'.[65]

Missionaries were well aware that Muslims were the major group in their region but there are several reasons why they failed to become a mission to Muslims in these early years.[66] They experienced a more positive response from Hindus, even if they misunderstood the extent or motivation for that response. Mead believed there

63 *Baptist Record*, 15 November 1929, p. 1.

64 For Marsh, see *ADEB*; Brown, *Cloud of Witnesses*, pp. 77-78; J. Redman, *Mission Accomplished. The Story of F.A. Marsh* (Hawthorn: ABMS, nd).

65 Ball, 'Australian Baptist Mission in Bengal', p. 87.

66 Ball, 'Australian Baptist Mission in Bengal', pp. 101-130.

was an imminent mass movement towards Christianity.[67] The hostile attitude of Muslims to Christian missionaries was widespread. The missionaries' linguistic skills were generally inadequate and even the most gifted did not always adopt an appropriate attitude in their evangelism. Goldsack, the outstanding linguist, translated the Koran into Mussulmani Bengali which was the most commonly spoken form used in the region but his work was proscribed when Pakistan was established as a separate country because of footnotes he had added to his translation. His polemical tone spoiled much of his effectiveness, suggests Ball.[68] Mead had also adopted an aggressive stance as did Baldwin. Moreover, the attitude of the Bengali churches was a hindrance to Muslim evangelism. This was in part due to a fear of reprisals and also a suspicion of motives among supposed converts. Perhaps, too, the traditional Baptist emphasis on a personal decision for faith and baptism - the Muslims placed greater emphasis on family and community identity - restricted their effectiveness. Later missionaries adapted their strategy to this reality of Muslim life.

Despite a certain initial excitement about the opportunities among the Nama Sudras this outreach eventually failed in terms of converts although much practical good in terms of economic and social uplift was achieved. As J.C. Martin acknowledged in 1924, the approach from the Nama Sudras was 'disguised': 'It was not moral or religious reform that prompted it, but a desire for social status. This could be ensured by the coming of the missionary, and by that means alone. He represented unselfish service and increased efficiency and social opportunity for young Nama Sudra manhood'.[69] C.S. Mead recognized this but hoped that nonetheless their search for increased social status would be transformed into a religious quest. He prayed that the head of the community at Orakandi would become a Christian and that the ancient patriarchal system would then bring a dramatic change to the whole community. But Guru Chartan Babu did not become a Christian and this is the main reason why the Australians' hopes were not to be fulfilled.[70] Of course there were converts and the church did grow but it was not a mass movement. Mead retired in 1921 and Tuck in 1929 but the Widows' Home continued under Grace Thomson until she too retired in 1947. Increased costs meant a diminution of the village work and the Australian work at Orakandi was concluded.

Similarly, optimistic hopes for Sirajganj during the time of Kelly were not realized and Ball suggests this centre was 'the story of a movement that never came to anything'.[71] Again, a church grew slowly at Gobindasri, in the Mymensingh district. This centre, however, acquired a special significance for Australian Baptists. A new church was to be opened there in 1944 and on 29 July a group left Mymensingh for the service. The party of thirteen included four missionaries Cyril

67 Mead, *Results of mission Work*, p. 1.

68 Ball, 'Australian Baptist Mission in Bengal', pp. 109-124.

69 J.C. Martin, *In Eastern Bengal* (Melbourne, 1924), p. 41; as cited by Ball, 'Australian Baptist Mission in Bengal', p. 146.

70 Ball, 'Australian Baptist Mission in Bengal', p 147.

71 Ball, 'Australian Baptist Mission in Bengal', p. 155.

and Edna Moore, Ron Potter and his fiancée, Flo Horwood. The boats in which they were travelling were sunk in a storm that overwhelmed them and the missionaries, with the exception of Flo Horwood and baby Geoffrey Moore, were drowned. They were buried at Gobindasri, near the church building. This tragedy made a great impression on the local church. Their Hindu and Muslim villagers did not think that a missionary would ever come again and when, two weeks later, another missionary party arrived, the whole community was affected. Work was maintained here but Kolpotak later became the centre for this region. Here a multi-purpose cooperative society was formed in 1958 and although this was greeted with high hopes, family discontent split the movement and it failed. Missionaries had left Kulpotak by 1971. The Nama Sudras work, which showed promise more than once, was clearly not the major focus for effective mission work by Australian Baptists.[72]

The deaths of the Moores and Ron Potter naturally had a dramatic impact back in Australia. The Moores were from New South Wales and had been serving since 1938. Potter (1914-44) was from Victoria, a good student and sportsman who had been active in the SCM whilst at university. He left college in 1940 but was determined to serve with the mission. He sailed on 10 December 1941 although the shipping agent told him that 'only missionaries and maniacs' were travelling at that time. But Ron had a favourite saying of missionary C.T. Studd that he had pasted inside his study desk: 'If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, no sacrifice I can make for Him can be too great'.[73] He began language studies at Comilla but the war situation had become increasingly serious and he enlisted as a chaplain in the British army, and was present at the decisive battle against the Japanese at Kohima in Burma. He had just resigned as chaplain and was on leave when the tragedy occurred.[74] Many young people in the churches at home were challenged to take their places on the field. Neville Kirkwood recalled the impact of the news. As a youth he had accompanied his father - who was the state treasurer of the mission in Queensland - on deputation visits and had a developed awareness of the mission work. Kirkwood claims that a hundred or more young people made their way to missionary service in Asia, Africa, South America and the Pacific as a direct result of these tragic deaths. In his 1953 Bengali Language School at Darjeeling no less than 16 were studying as a result of the drownings. On the Sunday after the accident he was in a youth meeting when his own call came incessantly: 'Would you be prepared to go to India if I called?' His positive response led him to Baptist missionary service in Assam.[75] For many years the Moore-Potter Memorial Hostel in Melbourne, opened in 1949, was used for women missionaries in training and today the mission office in Melbourne is called Moore-Potter House.

72 Ball, 'Australian Baptist Mission in Bengal', pp. 155-65.

73 Papers relating to Ron Potter (in possession of his sister, Mrs. Audrey Lowe of Melbourne).

74 Brown, *A Cloud of Witnesses*, pp. 111-12.

75 N. Kirkwood, *Independent India's troubled Northeast, 1952-69: An Australian Missionary's Story* (Brisbane: Griffith University, 1996), pp. 1-2.

The war years were difficult for the mission in every way. For those in India the tensions and hardships were multiplied. The year 1943 was especially hard. People were starving and the Orakanda missionaries had large soup kitchens operating. Food distribution was handled by the staff at Comilla which became the casualty clearing station for troops injured in Burma. Much of the Mymensingh property was also taken over by the forces. Missionaries soon found themselves providing assistance to lonely or wounded troops from the British army.[76]

The Australian Baptists were most successful in Bengal in their work amongst the tribal Garos. The Garos were animists and descended from a violent tribes people. The church amongst the Plains Garos was far larger than that among the Bengali people. The first centre for Australian mission work was Birisiri and here Babu (Mr) Choudry was the most significant figure. He encouraged the Garo churches to be independent of the missionaries in leadership and finance. He asked for the boys' boarding school to be transferred from Mymensingh to Birisiri which was done in 1896. This school became self-supporting through the boys doing their own ploughing and farming. Unfortunately Choudry was somewhat erratic, deciding to join the Salvation Army in 1893 and later in 1901 transferring to the high church Oxford Mission which was a blow to the Baptist cause.[77] This marked the end of the first period of work amongst the Garos.

The second period is usually termed the 'Nall era', after P.C. Nall (1874-1945) and his wife Annie (1873-1967) who are still honoured among the Garo people. Nall was from New South Wales but had been seconded to the Victorian society to work at Mymensingh where he arrived in 1897.[78] His practical skills as a builder were invaluable. He felt called to work among the Garo people and indeed has been dubbed 'Apostle to the Garos' by Australian mission enthusiasts. Nall erected a mission house at Birisiri and moved there with his wife in 1902. He developed the Birisiri compound as the centre for Garo Baptist Union enterprises and enlarged the school so that by 1929 there were 134 boys - including 48 Garo Christian boys - in the school which had 52 boarders. Future teachers and leaders were educated in this school. A girls' school had been commenced in 1899 and this was expanded - the Nalls also fostered 23 village schools. In 1921 he established the Birisiri Bible and Training Institute where Jitendra Nath Biswas became an outstanding influence. In its first twenty years this Institute trained 132 Garos and 44 Bengalis. After partition in 1947 it was the only theological training institution in East Pakistan. Nall also planned to commence a teacher-training programme and the strategy was that these teachers effectively became pastors in the villages. In 1930 the Birisiri Guru Training Institute received government recognition. The staff were all Garos.

Nall also itinerated in the villages. The Garo churches organized themselves into circuits and there were some nine 'circuits' to each of which were attached five strong churches with another four or five outstations. When Nall left in 1929 he left behind

76 Redman, *The light Shines on*, pp. 103-14.

77 Ball, 'Australian Baptist Mission in Bengal', pp. 180-84.

78 For Nall, see *ADEB*; Brown, *Cloud of Witnesses*, pp. 93-94.

a strong church with capable local leaders. He had also been active in working for justice for the Garos who were often oppressed by the Bengalis. The extortions of money-lenders were a recurring problem and Nall established a cooperative bank in 1905 which was a great success at first but was crippled in 1923 after the embezzlement by a Bengali preacher, much to Nall's distress.[79]

The Garo work continued to thrive after the Nall era and in 1954 the mission handed over all departments of the work to the control of the Garo Baptist Union. The churches had grown, the institutions had flourished. Jess Redman, who had earlier been at Mymensingh, served as Principal of the Girls' Junior High School for a period of sixteen years. The Garo Union had also established a home mission base in the western districts where many churches had grown, near Tarini which they called 'Bethel'. A dispensary had been established at Birisiri in 1940 and was known as the Broadbanks Dispensary.[80] As Birisiri was subject to severe flooding, the mission established a hospital at Joyramkura - a decision which caused considerable contention among the Birisiri Garos. Missionaries like Victor White had been involved in seeking to resolve Garo-Bengali tensions and acted as a spokesperson for the Aboriginal Welfare Association formed in 1932.

Ball has suggested several reasons to explain the relative success of the mission among the Garos compared with the Bengalis.[81] There were not the same 'strong, self-sealing mechanisms' as existed among the Bengalis, both Hindu and Muslim. The Garo Chief at Birisiri had been converted at an early stage of the work. The strategy of using village schools proved to be extremely effective in influencing the Garo community. Key leaders were identified and encouraged and these became influential in both church and society. The confidence of the mission in handing over the work to the Garo Union in 1954 is testimony to the effectiveness of the work that had been done. Missionaries would now work within and under the direction of the Garo leaders. Hopes of a genuine church being formed had been realized. The Garos were effectively self-governing, self-supporting (certainly in their evangelistic programmes) and self-propagating.[82] The mission now knew that it was capable of working positively with tribal peoples in particular. The mission had the primary task of seeking to build churches that could manage their own affairs. Missionaries would serve as assistants when invited by an autonomous church. This discovery shaped their responses to the challenges of the future in other places as well as in the sub-continent.

The course of the missionary enterprise in India was dramatically changed in 1947. The 'Quit India' campaign against the British had been effective. At midnight on 14 August 1947 India received its independence from Britain. India was partitioned into two independent nations, India the home of the Hindus and Pakistan

79 Ball, 'Australian Baptist Mission in Bengal', pp. 184-95.

80 'Broadbanks' was the name of a fictional character in the writings of Dr F.W. Boreham who had anonymously financed the building of the dispensary: Crago, *The Story of F.W. Boreham*, p. 227.

81 Ball, 'Australian Baptist Mission in Bengal', pp. 216-19.

82 Ball, 'Australian Baptist Mission in Bengal', p. 227.

the home of Muslims. Pakistan was itself divided into two regions: West Pakistan and East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). East Bengal where Australian missionaries had served since 1882 was now East Pakistan. Extreme violence followed these events. The country was in chaos as Hindus and Muslims struggled to claim their lands in both west and east. Borders passed through villages and even through homes. Some ten million people were uprooted and fled across these new borders. An estimated half a million were massacred. Australian Baptists were now working in both India and East Pakistan.

Australian Baptists in Assam, India

Australian Baptists' traditional area of service was now largely confined to East Pakistan although one new venture, commenced only months before partition, meant that Australian Baptists still served in India. This work in Assam was to be significant in many ways and missionaries were able to work there from 1947 until 1970.[83]

The beginnings of this new work dated back to a request in October 1944 from the Boro people in Assam to send missionaries to them. This was far from where they were working, some 400 kilometres north across the Garo hills and the Brahmaputra River to the Goalpara district at the western end of Assam. American Baptist missionaries had been in contact with the Boros since 1905 and, although no missionary had lived among them, churches had been formed and joined in the Boro Baptist Union in 1927. The ABMS missionaries responded enthusiastically. Victor White visited the main centre of their work at Tukrajhjar in May 1946 and reported that he believed the invitation was the call of God to the mission. Finally on 1 May 1947 the Australian Baptists agreed to take full responsibility for mission work among the Boros in the area from the Brahmaputra River north to Bhutan.

Wilf and Gwenyth Crofts, experienced missionaries and now in their fifties, went to Tukrajhar. They knew no one in this village, little about the Boro people and their customs. Their first home was a thatched roof mud hut but the old mission house at Sirajganj was dismantled and transported to Tukrajhar. Thus began a mission partnership that led Australian missionaries to work not only among the Boros at Tukrajhar but from 1951 among the Garo people at Baghpara and from 1957 with the Rabhas at Debitola. The long years in Bengal had led the society to recognize that its special mission was to tribal peoples and in Assam this was to be amply demonstrated.

Tukrajhar was an isolated village, some 28 kilometres from the railway station at Bongaigaon, and tigers could still disrupt village life. Communication with the outside world was difficult and slow but the Crofts were soon joined by enthusiastic colleagues: Jean Harry (sister of Gwenyth Crofts) and Flo Horwood arrived in

83 The following account is based on J.V. Webster and D.N. Cheney, *Not by Chance. The Story of the Australian Baptist Missionary Society in Assam and the Boro, Garo and Rabha Churches* (Hawthorn: ABMS, 2000).

January 1948. The women gave themselves to language study and helped with the village school, established a girls' hostel in 1949 and encouraged the church women, most of whom were illiterate. In the following year Peter Ewing with his wife Win and family arrived.

The Boros are a part of the Bodo people who had migrated to Assam from Tibet and Burma centuries before. They were animists in their beliefs, believing that all natural objects and phenomena have souls. The Crofts had come as guests of the Boro Baptist Union which had churches in fifteen villages and Wilf trekked through the jungle to meet the people, preaching and teaching and generally seeking to build up the churches for their mission. Rex Glasby was appointed to Tukrajhar in 1953. Glasby was a former serviceman in the navy, a rugged individualist in character, who also became an outstanding missionary in this remote area. The Boros established the Bible Training Institute at Tukrajhar in 1956 where Soburam Bosumatri and Peter Ewing were lecturers. All of these initiatives in which the missionaries ably assisted the Boro Christians meant that when the missionaries were forced to leave Tukrajhar in 1969 they left a strong Christian community of over 6,000 people who shared in 29 churches within a 25-mile radius of the village. Many were now literate and could read their Bible and hymnbook and Boros were most ably leading all aspects of church life. The school had grown and in 1962 a high school with a gifted graduate Sulen Bosumatri as Headmaster, was begun. Medical work was also developed at Tukrajhar and a basic dispensary was supervised by Joyce McDonald from 1950 whilst in 1954 an enlarged dispensary, named the Crofts' Dispensary, served thousands of patients each year. The Indian government decreed that all dispensaries should be supervised by a doctor and Dr Joan Webster arrived in 1956. A house for patients and their families was opened in 1959 and a maternity centre was opened in 1967. Three village dispensaries were also operating in 1967.

The second focus of Australian work in Assam was among the Garos at Baghpara. At the time of partition thousands of Garos had fled into Assam. Most went to the Garo Hills but some stayed in the Goalpara District. Crofts found small Garo churches near Baghpara and was asked for help. In May 1949 the Garo Hills Baptist Union formally asked the Australians to help care for the Garo churches in this region who were formed into the Goalpara Garo Baptist Union. The Crofts and Jean Harry came to live at Baghpara in May 1951. Dulcie Cheney came as the first nurse in 1952 and Rex and Peggy Glasby (a pharmacist) went there in 1953.

A third tribe, the Rabhas, was also contacted by Jean Harry and Rex Glasby in 1953. The Rabhas had also come originally from the Tibet-Burma region and are another grouping among the Bodos. Some Rabhas had become Christians in earlier years but they had received little teaching and support. Rod Brown from Tukrajhar with two Boro leaders visited the Rabha area and recommended that work should be undertaken there. Neville Kirkwood similarly found a challenging but open possibility for mission. The Glasbys moved to Debitola in 1957 and the Kirkwoods were transferred there in 1966. The language had to be learned even though it had not been reduced to writing. Those interested in Christianity faced excommunication

from their village but finally in May 1959 some ten people declared their faith in baptism and a church was formed with Khagen as their pastor.

A second group was contacted at Sapkata village a further 80 kilometres away from Debitola and the small Rabha church undertook to visit here regularly. The village headman became a Christian and a church was formed in 1960. Growing political tension suggested that expatriate missionaries would soon have to leave the country and there was great joy when the Mizo Baptist Church agreed to appoint Revd and Mrs. Rokhama as missionaries to the Rabhas. When the Australians were obliged to leave the Rabhas the work was in capable and caring Indian hands.

The missionaries were concerned to help the villagers whose needs were immense. Extreme heat and floods damaged crops regularly. In May 1958 the Garo Baptist Union's rice crop was almost totally destroyed by an insect plague. Neville Kirkwood sought to establish an economic uplift programme. An experimental farm was established at Baghpara to introduce simple mechanization, pest control and better strains of fruit trees. The drought of 1960 was extremely harsh and the ABMS provided a needed tractor. Jean Harry commenced a school at Baghpara and a girls' hostel was started in 1953. Many material advantages to these Garos came from the development of education in the area. Similarly, medical aid was offered with the appointment of Dulcie Cheney as a nurse to Baghpara in 1953. In 1980 a new dispensary was opened and named the D.N. Cheney Dispensary in honour of Cheney's pioneering medical work. At Debitola Peggy Glasby did what she could to meet medical needs and in 1962 Beth McDonald was appointed the first nurse at Debitola. Care was given to train staff and the Baptist Unions were involved in decisions regarding medical work in all the centres but it was always difficult to get competent staff to work in such a remote part of the country.

A constant feature of the times was political unrest throughout the region. There was violence in Goalpara early in 1950 as angry mobs sought to expel Muslims from the area and Christians were pressed to participate. The Boro Baptist Union asked the missionaries to leave because of the danger to them. In 1955 rumours that Goalpara was to be separated from Assam and joined to West Bengal caused further unrest and this time the Hindus were the targets. The invasion of Tibet by China in 1950 forced thousands of Tibetans to seek refuge in India. Prime minister Nehru insisted that the McMahon line, the boundary agreed to by British and Tibetan officials in 1914, was fixed and not open to any negotiation. But notwithstanding much political effort by the Indians, the Chinese invaded India in October 1962 and war was declared. The Australian government representatives recommended that all women missionaries in Assam should go to Calcutta. But suddenly the war was over as the Chinese withdrew, and the missionaries returned to Assam. No one has ever been really sure as to just why the Chinese withdrew but missionary Joyce McDonald ventured the observation that 'prayer was a force to be reckoned with'.[84]

Tensions between India and Pakistan, especially over the territories of Kashmir, Punjab and Assam, were intense. In 1964 thousands of Garos fled from East

84 Webster and Cheney, *Not by Chance*, p. 132.

Pakistan into India; some million refugees left Pakistan for India across a two-month period. Kirkwood and fellow-missionary George Stubbs were deeply involved in the organization of support for these refugees and Australian Baptist World Aid supported this work.[85] Some of the refugees moved to the plains and settled in Goalpara providing the Garo Christians with special opportunities - five new churches were added to the Goalpara Garo Union. War between India and Pakistan broke out in 1965. Once again plans for the evacuation of missionaries from Assam were made although they were not needed as the war was over after only seventeen days. But Assam was increasingly a sensitive region where internal political tension was also building. Many of the Hills tribes wanted to separate from Assam. All foreigners were under suspicion and finally all missionaries were ordered to leave the country. By the middle of 1970 the last of the Australian Baptist missionaries had left India.

Across the years some 29 missionaries had served in Assam. There was understandable sadness at leaving but there was also a quiet confidence in the strength of the three church unions to maintain and extend their witness in Assam. The Boro, Garo and Rabha Unions combined to be represented on the North East India Christian Council by one body known as the Goalpara Baptist Union (later the Lower Assam Baptist Union and now a member of the Baptist World Alliance). Prayer and support from Australia have continued and the occasional visits by former missionaries have found churches still growing and demonstrating a missionary vision themselves.[86]

Australian Baptists in East Pakistan/Bangladesh

Across the border in East Pakistan the missionaries continued their work. Inevitably they were affected by the dramatic events unfolding around them. Some rationalization was needed: the work at Faridpur, Comilla and Sirajganj passed from Australian supervision. Institutional work was maintained at Mymensingh, Pabna and Birisiri in particular. Stable leadership was a feature of these years. Among long-serving missionaries were Emily Lord (1946-73), Arthur and Lois Newnham (1949-71 and 1980-87), Lola Henderson (1951-68), Harry West (1951-65), Trevor and Gwen Farmilo (1952-68), Peter and Myra Mellor (1953-65 and at the Mt Hermon School in India from 1966-70), Betty Anderson (1957-70) and Laurie Skinner (1955-74, 1978-81, 1985-87 and who also served in Papua New Guinea from 1987-93). The flight of many Garos into India in 1964 caused much distress for those leading the Garo churches. Homes were looted and churches had their property stolen. Dr Max and Ruth Bawden at Joyramkura had what seemed like multitudes seeking refuge in their home. One bright moment had been the opening of the Joyramkura Hospital by Principal Morling in 1962.[87]

85 Kirkwood, *Independent India's troubled Northeast*, pp. 52-63; Prior, *Caring is by Sharing*, pp. 39-42.

86 Webster and Cheney, *Not by Chance*, p. 163.

87 Redman, *the Light Shines On*, pp. 225-27.

The India-Pakistan war erupted in 1965 and this inevitably raised anxieties for all involved in the churches and the mission. The Baptist hospital was just a mile inside the border and, although the Pakistan army cleared all the women and children from the villages within seven miles of the border, Lola Henderson and Betty Anderson, in charge of the Joyramkura Hospital, were allowed to stay. Laurie Skinner came from Birisiri to give a hand. The British High Commission ordered all families and 'non-essential' personnel to move south to Dacca. Meanwhile, the government gave the remaining missionaries only 24 hours to leave the hospital. When all were gathered in Dacca it was agreed that all families and first-term staff should leave the country. The 'essential staff' who remained in Dacca were the nurses Lola Henderson, Betty Anderson and Emily Lord. Betty Salisbury, Laurie Skinner and Arthur Newnham were given permits to remain. When the men visited Pabna they found a strict wartime curfew in operation. Dr Max Bawden and his brother Bob - based at Mymensingh - had been on holidays with their families in India as these events unfolded. They were all eventually evacuated to Singapore. Walter Schubert and Peter Mellor accompanied the family groups to Australia: 22 of the staff returned to Australia.[88] The rest of the staff was able to return to Mymensingh but not to the border area at Birisiri and Joyramkura. It had been a frightening and disappointing period for the churches, the missionaries and their supporters. Eventually the hospital work was resumed and something like a normal life began again.

In the meanwhile Australian Baptists had been challenged to take seriously their location in East Pakistan and direct their witness to the dominant Muslim people. At Mymensingh Ray Schaefer established a method of outreach using Bible Correspondence Schools. But East Pakistan was undergoing a major political crisis. Widespread resentment emerged from the fact that most of the power was in the hands of those in West Pakistan and few economic benefits were flowing to the East. The army, mainly from the west, despised the Bengalis who were the major population in the east. There was growing political agitation for independence which resulted in the East Pakistan Awami League gaining majority control at the 1970 elections. Their leader Sheikh Mujib stood out for complete independence for the East, except for foreign policy. But the army under General Yahya would not allow the party to assume control and cracked down mercilessly on the Bengali population. In 1971 feelings overflowed. On Pakistan day - 23 March 1971 - the Pakistan flag was replaced throughout East Pakistan with a new flag - the flag of the anticipated new country of Bangladesh, or 'Bengal land'. Two days later civil war between supporters of the Awami League and the Government troops broke out and lasted until 16 December 1971 when the new nation of Bangladesh was born. India had supported the 'liberation army' and millions of refugees had fled into India.

The mission had naturally been anxious for its staff. A minimal presence was maintained at Mymensingh consisting of Grace Dodge, Betty Salisbury, the Schaefer family and the Hawley family. Two women, Kath Kells and Dale Quinn remained at Joyramkura. The Ryalls and the Robinsons were in considerable danger at Pabna and

88 *AB*, 1 December 1965, p. 1.

communication was extremely difficult. During March and April the liberation forces had controlled the region. From April to August the West Pakistan army controlled Mymensingh. From September to December there was a fierce struggle in the district. Barbara Hawley, the Schaefers, Kath Kells and Dale Quinn returned to Australia. Ian Hawley remained at Mymensingh with Grace Dodge and Betty Salisbury. The town was fired on and bombs were dropped on the outskirts of the town. The Pakistan army retreated to Dacca and the city fell into the hands of the Indian and liberation forces. Hawley and others on the field had survived a fearsome ordeal and shared in the joy of Bangladesh's independence.[89]

Rebuilding the new nation was a challenge in which the mission could help. The Garos had been badly affected and most of the Garo Christians were in refugee camps. It took many years for many of the Garos to return to Bangladesh. Joyramkura hospital had been vandalised and looted though the structure was still sound. Dr Beryl Barber (formerly Bowering) gave a year's service to share in the re-formation of the hospital. A 'Mission Joy' (for Joyramkura) group, as they were called, a team of 21 men and women from the suburban French's Forest Church in Sydney, came to Joyramkura in 1975-76 and helped with repairs and building. Generators and solar units were installed.[90]

Special focus among Muslims was given to work in what came to be termed 'new towns'. A fine group of younger missionaries accepted this challenge and lived in the towns, engaging in quiet but intentional witness to their neighbours. Jamalpur and Tangail were large towns where this approach was adopted. Ian and Barbara Hawley, Stuart and Margaret Robinson with Geoff and Kay Ryall pioneered this approach. Others followed this lead: David and Dawn Griffiths in 1972, Graeme Barnden, Peter and Ruth Blencowe in 1974. Then in 1976 Reg Owen and his wife, Morris Lee and Dr Neil Parker together with American Walt White and his wife Jeanine joined in the programme. Rosalind Gooden, a South Australian teacher, was a gifted language teacher and engaged in student evangelism in Dacca whilst also sharing in theological education.[91]

At the time of the ABMS centenary in 1982 'between 30 and 40 missionaries' were still serving in Bangladesh. Missionaries were located at Jamalpur (the Blencowes and Whites) and Tangail (the Lees and Robinsons), where they were quietly and sensitively witnessing to faith in Christ. Student work was still active in Dacca in partnership with the local Baptist Church: Rosalind Gooden and the Ryalls were located here. The work at Mymensingh continued with the schools, hostels and in evangelism where Grace Dodge, Graeme and Pat Barnden with Bryan and Heather McClelland were serving. At Pabna the work had revived under the leadership of veteran missionaries Arthur and Lois Newnham. The Garos were still being assisted

89 I. Hawley, 'Reflections on the 1971 Civil War in Bangladesh', unpublished paper given to the Baptist Historical Society of Victoria, 2004.

90 J. Prior, *Forty Years in the Forest. A History of the Frenchs Forest Baptist Church 1958-1998* (Frenchs Forest: Frenchs Forest Baptist Church, 1998), pp. 87-90; *Vision*, February 1976, pp. 8-10.

91 Redman, *The Light Shines On*, pp. 227-29.

as well at Birisiri and Joyramkura was a forty-bed hospital with both local and expatriate staff. Agricultural development aid was also given.[92]

But in 1988 the government instructed nine missionaries to leave and before long most others were denied visas as well. A year later the number of missionaries had dropped from 43 to 16.[93] Then in 1993 it was decreed that no 'missionaries' would be permitted to enter the country. Betty Salisbury, Kath Kells and Grace Dodge who had all served there for many years were among those obliged to return home. By 2004 the Bangladesh Baptist Fellowship included some 500 churches and a Christian community of 25,500. The Garo Baptist Convention had 142 churches and some 22,000 in the Christian community. The Christian College of Theology Bangladesh had over a thousand students taking its courses. Joyramkura was an effective hospital and development projects, such as 'Prottasha' in the Kishoreganj district, are supported.[94] Only a few specialist aid workers in education, health and development are able to live in the country but the Australian Baptist community maintains an active interest in the people with whom they have shared in mission since 1882.

Papua New Guinea: 'The land that time forgot'

Australian Baptists' support for the work in India was unwavering but just as a parent's capacity for love is enlarged by each additional child born into the family so an enlarged vision was to mark the post-war years as Baptists embraced a number of new locations for mission service. Foremost among these was Papua New Guinea (PNG) - referred to in early publicity as 'the land that time forgot' - where within a few years the number of missionaries would far exceed those in the Indian sub-continent and where a thriving and large church would be born among people who had had almost no contact with European civilization.[95]

Baptist chaplains from New South Wales who had served in PNG were seized with the vision of bringing the Christian gospel to the friendly people who had helped the Australian troops during the war. But the Baptist mission was struggling to re-establish the work in India after the war and did not have additional resources to begin a new effort. Marsh as ABMS leader was opposed. He knew that in 1941 a questionnaire to the missionaries in East Bengal had raised the question of a possible entry into PNG but the majority had felt that the older work had a prior claim on Australian Baptists.[96]

The frustrated chaplains resolved to find a way to achieve their vision. The key figures were Harry Orr and Alan Prior, both men of energy and capability, who hit

92 *Vision*, October 1982, p. 5.

93 *Vision*, Spring 1988. p. 1; Winter 1989, p. 8.

94 *Global Interaction 2004 Prayer Guide*, 2004.

95 The name of the country today is Papua New Guinea. Until 1914 the southern half of the country was Papua and the northern was New Guinea. For convenience, PNG is used here throughout.

96 J. Prior, 'Australian Baptist Mission History: Papua New Guinea, 1949-1975' (MA thesis, Macquarie University, 1992), p. 59.

on a solution. Since PNG was a mandated territory of Australia it was not really a 'foreign' country and therefore was the responsibility of the Federal Home Mission who should be asked to begin the work. This was taken to the BUA Triennial Assembly in Adelaide in 1947 and, as Richard Ansoul has suggested, 'This otherwise sleepy agency was jarred into sudden wakefulness' as they were asked to prepare a policy for subsequent consideration. The Home Mission readily accepted Prior and Orr's offer to ask New South Wales to accept responsibility. They gathered a group of seven chaplains together at Central Baptist on 18 September 1947 and approved the idea. The Assembly agreed to appoint the New South Wales chaplains as a committee, with power to co-opt, to investigate all aspects of the proposed mission and report to the next Assembly.[97]

Air Force chaplain Arthur Wilkins while on a duty tour to New Guinea consulted with the Administrator of the Territory and with other missions. He was promised financial support for medical and educational work.[98] Senior chaplain Bob Pickup later travelled to New Guinea to seek a precise location. New South Wales resolved in 1948 to commence mission work in the highlands of PNG.[99] There was some anxiety that one state should begin this work independently and fear that the work of the existing mission would suffer although only South Australia formally declined to support the project on the basis that it should be a federal project. [100] But New South Wales not only continued to support the mission work in India but also quite specifically resolved that the New Guinea Mission would be handed over to a federal body as soon as one was ready to accept responsibility. For the moment, however, the mission was a New South Wales project which others were invited to support. A Christmas appeal was launched with a target of £1,000 but early in the new year over £3,000 had been given. As it happened the new work captured the imagination of all Australian Baptists and stimulated mission support more generally. The Foreign Mission Board accepted responsibility in 1951 and New South Wales established a Regional Committee to administer the PNG work.[101] At the same time a Regional Committee for Asia was established and Albert Roberts and then Bill McFarlane gave wise and energetic leadership to this task in the ensuing years.

So a mission in PNG was born. But how was it to begin its work? Exactly where would it be located? Who would be willing to go and live in such a primitive and unknown region? Events unfolded quickly. A West Australian student at the New South Wales College was excited by the plans and, as a practical man with a good knowledge of building, Albert Kroenert proved to be just the man to be the pioneer missionary to PNG. Just one month after his marriage to Daphne, on 12 May 1949 Kroenert and Harry Orr - on leave from his church for three months - sailed to PNG

97 R. Ansoul, *Beautiful Feet. Australian Baptists enter Papua New Guinea* (Hawthorn: ABMS, pp. 5-6.

98 Report of Wilkins to Chaplains' Committee, as cited by Prior, 'Papua New Guinea', pp. 63-67.

99 *AB*, 21 September 1948, p. 3; BUNSW *Year Book 1948-49*, p. 62.

100 *AB*, 19 October 1948, p. 6.

101 BUNSW *Year Book 1951-52*, p. 83.

as the advance party. They arrived at Mt. Hagen and conferred with the Lutheran missionaries who had been extremely helpful. They were told of untouched tribal groups in the valley of the Baiyer River, north of Mt. Hagen. They tramped the forty miles or so and arrived among the Enga people, being greatly helped by a young man named Pii Maranyi who had spent some time with the Lutheran mission and spoke some Pidgin. A few Engas had some knowledge about white men but for most of them Kroenert and Orr were the first they ever saw. Change had come to the beautiful valley.

Stan Horswell had also agreed to join Kroenert for a year and as the latter erected mission buildings with the assistance of local men at an area called Kumbwareta, the former gave rudimentary medical aid and supported all aspects of their life in the isolated valley. On Sundays they would tell Bible stories using picture rolls and flannelgraphs with Pii interpreting for them. Sister Betty Crouch, originally from South Australia, became the first Baptist woman missionary in New Guinea and commenced a distinguished period of service as a medical missionary in July 1949. Orr had taken a movie of the site and initial contacts and a huge crowd gathered at Central Baptist on 24 September 1949 for his report and to see the film. Already there were additional volunteers accepted for service and when Daphne Kroenert left to join her husband she was accompanied by a young carpenter Don Doull; a pastor John Green, nursing sister Jean Lawes and a young graduate hoping to serve as linguist, Sheila Wesley-Smith, engaged to Norman Draper who was concluding his theological study in Melbourne before joining her. Two more nursing sisters soon followed - Nan Shaw and Pat O'Brien - whilst Mrs. Alice Green and family also travelled to the Baiyer. All these developments were widely publicized in the *Australian Baptist*. A souvenir booklet *Into the Land that Time Forgot* was sent to every minister and church in Australia and the first movie, 'New Guinea Beginnings', was shown repeatedly to churches around the state.

The Baiyer people were generally eager to welcome Western people into their midst even if at first this was because of the goods they brought with them. After Betty Crouch arrived the use of medicine also gained the interest and support of the people who were plagued by yaws, malaria, leprosy, pneumonia, tropical ulcers and a high rate of infant mortality. Because the station was so far removed from government support the mission was to become involved not only with medical care but also with education and assistance in economic support. The people spoke the Kyaka dialect of the main Enga language and Sheila Draper began work on the language.[102] Norman and Sheila Draper many years later collected the stories of many of the first Engas to have contact with the mission. All told of fierce tribal fighting and of constant fear of the spirits. As Mapusiya Kolo, to be a strategic figure in translation work, later recalled:

> We had many spirits to worry about: there were those who lived in the people's gardens, making their sweet potatoes and other foods grow well from season to

102 N. and S. Draper (eds.), *Daring to Believe. Personal accounts of life changing events in Papua New Guinea and Irian Jaya* (Hawthorn: ABMS, 1990), pp. 10-12.

> season. ... Secondly, there were the spirits who assisted our warriors on the frequent occasions when the clan went to war. These were the families' ancestral spirits, the ghosts of the dead ... So pigs were often killed as sacrifices and wailing and lamenting went on in the family home for a period after a death. This was to keep the spirit away...[103]

Gradually the Bible stories were understood. The missionaries were watched closely, and even when they were asked to close their eyes in prayer the more wily Engas kept their eyes wide open lest any tricks be played upon them whilst they were not looking. The story of a God who loved them and was a good Spirit and especially the story of Jesus dying on the cross for them evoked a response. It was a slow process but the young pioneers were determined to tell more and more people of their message.[104]

Harry Orr was back for a visit in October 1950 accompanied by Professor Eric Burleigh who was chairman of the ABFM Board. Both were greatly impressed with the progress made. The New Guinea Regional Committee presented to the ABFM Board a four year plan of development which involved the addition of many more missionaries; the erection of a permanent hospital building and an ambitious scheme for the purchase and operation of an aircraft for use in New Guinea.[105] This last proposal was never implemented because of the excellent service given by the Missionary Aviation Fellowship.

Arthur Kelshaw, helped by Wal Turner, set up a sawmill in 1951 so they could build the hospital which was named after C.J. and Mildred Tinsley. The first doctor to serve there from 1951 was New Zealander Dr Thelma Becroft and Dr Peter Burchett served there from 1959 until 1969. In 1951 Eleanor Crawford became the first schoolteacher and pioneered a significant educational work to be run by the mission. The mission was not confined to the one centre. Don Doull and John Green trekked into the Sau valley in 1951 and located the next site at Kompiam where the Kroenerts and the nurses Nan Shaw and Pat O'Brien began a second base. Charles and Pam Craig from New Zealand served there. The people at Kompiam spoke a different dialect, Sau Enga. The early years here were more of a struggle and the breakthrough came after other Engas assisted the missionary staff. When a good airstrip was built at Kompiam the Baptist buildings had to be moved. Later again, in 1961, George and Hazel Dickman pioneered a base at Lapalama, another hard day's trekking from Kompiam. Meanwhile, a centre had been commenced at Lumusa where the Drapers moved early in 1952 and were later joined by Jean Lawes.

An even more remote base was established west of the Baiyer, near the headwaters of the Sepik in a distinctly rugged terrain and only some forty miles from Dutch New Guinea. The only place which was possible to be used as a landing strip was at Telefomin and here the Baptists began another station working among the Min people. Don Doull was there initially and then the Aldridges but Doull later returned

103 Draper, *Daring to Believe*, pp. 92-93.

104 Redman, *The Light Shines On*, p. 137.

105 ABFM Report, as cited by Prior, 'Papua New Guinea', p. 114.

with his new wife Elaine.[106] A major disaster unfolded at Telefomin in November 1953. As it happened Norman Draper was on his own when two young Australian patrol officers and their two PNG constables were suddenly attacked at dawn and murdered by a group of Telefomin tribesmen. There were suggestions that earlier officers had treated the locals insensitively and that these killings were in reprisal for that ill treatment, but it is more likely that the uprising was a reaction against all white intruders. Draper's life was saved by his quick thinking in taking as hostage a small boy whose uncle was the main headman and leader of the insurgents. He radioed Wewak for help and when the uncle came looking for the boy he was locked up by Draper and a surviving policeman. Something like a hundred Telefomin men were sentenced to gaol and subsequent administration was far more balanced.[107] Draper left Telefomin but Don Doull and others stabilized the work which was reopened in 1953. A strategy was developed of building a number of airstrips and then placing indigenous leaders at these centres from which they would work in surrounding villages. A Bible School was established at Telefomin although it was later moved to Duranmin and this was where the young pastors received their basic training.

In 1960 Doull trekked into the Oksapmin Valley and a new centre was established at Tekin. As the people there spoke a different language from the Telefomin people Keith and Val Bricknell, the designated missionaries, undertook a linguistics course. Doull and Bricknell first settled at Tekin in 1962. Unfortunately Doug Vaughan, the other missionary at Telefomin and Tekin who had made a great contribution with his engineering skills in building airstrips, after seven years of service suffered a severe attack of asthma and with Rosemary had to return home. Bob and Gwen Williams and Lindsay and Meryl Smith also served here. This base also grew and converts and baptisms followed in a mass movement.[108] Fifty years after the beginning of this work a remarkable service of reconciliation took place at Telefomin when representatives of the Min people made an apology to relatives of the murdered patrol officers and received their forgiveness for what their ancestors had done. At the same time a 'spirit house' that had often been rebuilt was finally destroyed by fire.[109]

A major event was the first baptisms at the Baiyer River on 24 June 1956. Alan Prior wrote a moving account of the event, *Journey into Pentecost*, and a film recorded this dramatic moment as a church was born in the highlands of New Guinea. There had been exacting preparations of candidates over a long period. Victor and Lil White, experienced missionaries who had worked with tribal peoples in India, helped in New Guinea from 1955-57 and their assistance at this significant stage was important. The day before the baptisms, the Engas spontaneously held what was termed a 'backing service' in which debts were paid and restitution before God and

106 D. Doull, *One Passion. Church Planting in Papua New Guinea* (privately published, 2004), pp. 61-82.

107 Draper, *Daring to Believe*, pp. 135-36.

108 Draper, *Daring to Believe*, pp. 172-74.

109 *Vision*, February 2004, pp. 3-9: this includes a detailed reconstruction of the events.

the offended parties was made. The day of the baptism thousands gathered from the surrounding villages. In a natural amphitheatre over 8,000 watched as the first converts gathered. Dressed in white 'lap-laps' they processed two by two, led by Victor White and Troipu, the 'father' of the tribe, followed by Albert Kroenert and the first group. A request came from the congregation. There were many who were not in this first group but who wanted to show publicly that they too were Christians and wanted to be baptized as soon as possible. Permission was given and the response was unexpected and thrilling: about 1,000 Engas followed the first group as a witness to their fellow tribes-people. On that first day some 47 were baptized. Communion followed. The simple table was covered with banana leaves. Sweet potato was the Enga equivalent of bread and the communion 'wine' was water coloured with a little cordial to suggest the shed blood of Christ. The service had lasted three and a half hours. Two weeks later a crowd of 7,000 shared in a similar service at Lumusa when 41 were baptized. The church of the Baiyer River was formed on 22 July 1956 when Frank and Beryl Starr and Allan and Joy Tinsley represented the church in Australia. On the next day the church gathered to appoint its own pastor and officers.[110]

The baptisms, as Kyasimbuwa Maningiwai of Lumusa recalled, had been a point of special interest among the Engas:

> We had never learned to swim, or to feel at ease with the fast-flowing river of our area: we had believed them to be inhabited by harmful spirits, and thus to be places of treachery and death. We hated to be immersed in water, because it flowed unchecked into our eyes, nose, mouth and ears, choking and frightening us. But baptism involved going right under the water, because it signified dying with Christ, and rising to a new life in his strength. So the relatives of those who wished to be baptised were thus very often afraid. Their children, mothers, fathers might drown! ... Our traditional practice when burying the dead was to place the body in the ground in an upright, foetal position. Perhaps this influenced our method of baptism, since this signifies dying: we adopted the practice of pushing down the head of the kneeling candidate, rather than having him fall back into a prone position, which makes him or her much more difficult to lift.[111]

The leaders from within the PNG church have been outstanding. Tony Cupit has noted that the early leaders in the Enga church were tribal leaders and tended to be polygamous. These leaders exerted significant authority over the churches for in a patriarchal society their lead was likely to be followed. But the young church resolved that polygamists could not be pastors and the future church leadership arose among people who were not traditional tribal leaders. Two strands of leaders emerged. The first pastors were wise and mature but largely illiterate and with little awareness of the outside world. In 1964 four students were sent to the Christian Leaders Training College at Banz, whose founding principal was Baptist missionary Gilbert McArthur: Mapusiya Kolo, Kongoe Sipweanje, Kyapo Angalu and Pyuwa

110 A.C. Prior, *Journey into Pentecost* (Melbourne: ABFM, 1956).

111 Draper, *Daring to Believe*, pp. 113-14.

Kolo. These younger men gave fine leadership. The first baptisms in the Sepik area were in 1959 at Telefomin and Tekin, and a similar pattern of leadership unfolded with younger leaders including Silas Neksep, Jessie Wenben Bong - a polio victim befriended by Betty Crouch and an outstanding leader among women - James Nifinim and Diyos Wapnok.[112]

Medical work has been conducted at each centre. From 1974 there was a pronounced emphasis on 'localization' and this meant an increase in the standard of training given to nurses, and local doctors were appointed as soon as practicable. At the Tinsley Health Centre Sister Kyanju Mogg was appointed as matron and missionary Lois Davey was her advisor. Dr Cliff Smith became chair of the Churches Medical Council of Papua New Guinea for 1975 and Liaison officer in 1976. He returned to the Baiyer in 1979 but had to return to Australia in 1981. The first Enga doctor Dr Candy Lombange worked at the Tinsley Hospital where she became Medical Superintendent. The first medical sister to work at Lapolama was Dorothy Harris in 1967 and she moved to Tekin in 1971. At Tekin, Jill Flatters and Maisie Tomkins were also active in nursing. Faith Kramer from the Baiyer also served at Tekin as did Emily Ward.

A Bible School which at first catered only for Enga students was established at Kwinkia in 1969 under the leadership of Geoff Waugh. In the time of Seton Arndell it also trained students from the Sepik District. The first national Principals have been Maku Lunga and Kongoe Sipwanje. In 1975 a second College was started at Telefomin with about fifty students where Diyos and Lindsay Smith were lecturers. This College was soon moved to Duranmin.

Bible translation had not been a traditional task of ABMS workers but the New Guinea situation required that this be undertaken. Lumusa was established as the centre for language learning for PNG and Sheila Draper, Ern Kelly and Tony Cupit served successively as Field Linguist. Other translators, including Ken Osborne, Esther Foote and Sally Burton also worked hard across the years in preparing a Kyaka Bible but the cornerstone of this enterprise was Mapusiya Kolo who displayed a sharp intelligence, a deep spirituality and a gracious patience.[113] In December 1973 the Kyaka New Testament was first given to the Enga Church. Selected portions of the Old Testament were finally completed in 1988 and the Engas had much of the Bible in their own tongue. The Sau Enga language was also tackled and in January 1980 the New Testament was presented to the Sau people.

Several village schools were established and as the government policy was to conduct these in English to help in the unification of the hundreds of tribes in the local areas many Australian Baptists came for short-term appointments of two years to assist in this education work. Many returned for longer periods. Tragically,

112 T. Cupit, 'Patterns of Development among Baptists in Australia, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea in the first fifty years since their respective beginnings', in D.W. Bebbington (ed.), *The Gospel in the World, International Baptist Studies* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2002), pp. 256-57.

113 T. Cupit, *Stars Lighting up the Sky. Stories of Contemporary Christian Heroes* (Falls Church: BWA, 2003), pp. 35-45.

Beverley O'Connor from New South Wales was accidentally killed in 1969 while serving as a teacher at Baiyer River. Geoff Holland headed up the mission's educational programme and superintended the handover of the mission schools to the PNG authorities.

The growth and complexity of the mission's work led to a succession of mature people who became Field Leaders. Max Lord was the first to serve in this advisory role from 1969 and his guidance was invaluable especially when PNG became independent in 1975. Lord was succeeded in 1979 by experienced New Zealand missionary Rob Thomson who with his wife Win had served on the Enga field for many years. The Baptist Union of New Guinea was formed in September 1977 with some 15,000 members. Significant members in this new Union were the Western Highlands Baptist Union and the Sepik Baptist Union (later known as the Min Baptist Union). Later field advisors included Basil Brown, Rex Glasby, Hugh Nees, Trevor Ross and Roger Bryson.

Australian Baptists had also shared in assisting churches in various townships. The Boroko Baptist Church in Port Moresby was founded in 1958 and several Australians - including Keith Redman and Don Doull - have served as pastors and leaders. A second church in the capital city was established at Tokarara with Joshua Daimoi, from Irian Jaya who had trained at the Sydney College as its first pastor. Other centres where Baptist churches were established, often with Australians as leaders, included Madang, Hagen, Lae and at Arawa in Bougainville. In 1975 a home for the children of missionaries studying in the town was established at Wewak and was named 'Kumerere' and a second home 'Karuka' was opened in 1981. Dedicated 'house parents' fulfilled a fine caring role in both places.[114]

Another significant feature of the Enga Church has been the impact of revival on the churches.[115] The pastors at Baiyer River decided to hold a spiritual retreat in August 1973 and invited some pastors from the Solomon Islands to speak. At a service in the Lumusa area many people came under deep conviction and began to weep and confess their sins. At a special meeting in the sacred forest at Lambwakimbwa - once a centre of pagan worship - a special demonstration of what was judged to be the power of the Holy Spirit erupted. There were some amazing scenes as reconciliation and forgiveness were experienced. Some physical manifestations such as rhythmic shaking and healings were seen. The main responses were weeping, confession of sin, reconciliation and praising God. There were reports of speaking in tongues, some of vision and prophecy, miraculous healings and of demons being cast out. The pastors believed revival had come to their church.[116] Similarly, at Telefomin a movement among the Min people in 1977 had been marked by a turning of many to faith.[117] Excesses created some

114 Redman, *The Light Shines On*, pp. 159-62.

115 R.S. Arndell, 'New Religious Movements in Melanesia during the Twentieth Century, with special reference to the Revival Movement among the Enga people of Papua New Guinea since 1973' (MA thesis, Australian College of Theology, 1993).

116 Redman, *The Light Shines On*, pp. 163-66; *Vision*, May 1999, pp. 16-17.

117 Redman, *The Light Shines On*, pp. 156-57.

difficulties but the undoubted spiritual vitality of the church in PNG was deepened by this revival movement.

In 1987 Arndell assessed the long-term impact of the revival movement among the Engas. His first impression was of the vigorous growth of the church as thousands had been converted - there were then more than 300 churches and a membership of about 35,000. Secondly, Arndell was struck by a devotion to prayer and a great diversity in the spiritual gifts evident in the church. Moreover, the Enga church had a growing commitment to engage in missionary outreach and there was also a new emphasis on personal holiness and justice and righteousness. The status of women was improved and so was the quality of family life.[118] This revival movement is a striking example of 'new religious movements' which missiologists and sociologists have identified. In particular, the Enga revival illustrates the interaction of a tribal or primal society and its religion with a more powerful and sophisticated culture and its major religion. There was a deep dissatisfaction felt by many Kyaka Enga people with the form of Christianity which they had adopted: it lacked much of the excitement and relevance to their daily life which their old religion had offered. Over the ensuing years the revival has had a powerful effect on the culture by giving the Enga people confidence to use their traditional culture in the worship of God. Much of the song and dance of their culture has been taken into their religious life and at the same time much of the traditional culture has been transformed: family life has been enriched, polygamy has declined and tribal fighting has decreased. The Christian gospel has been contextualized to Enga culture so that it is not now a foreign imposition.[119]

By the time of the mission's centenary in 1982 there were about 60 missionaries and wives in PNG and the Western Highland Union had some 22,500 members and the Sepik Union another 17,000. In 1994 the Baiyer River Church commissioned missionaries to the Mia Mia people.[120] For many years the Australians had worked in partnership with all national churches and guidelines about this policy were adopted in 1990.[121] The mission was there on significant occasions such as the service at Pinyapaisa in July 1995 when 2,000 gathered to celebrate restoration of peace to the area and to form the Poina-Kyai Baptist Association.[122] A different pattern of pastoral training was attempted after the Bible Colleges had closed. 'The Baptist Theological College of Papua New Guinea' began in 1997 at Wewak with Dr Jim Kime as the founding Principal. This was intended to work on a de-centralized model with courses being given in different locations. Certain practical difficulties developed and Kime also felt that a local should be Principal. He became a mentor to Duli Asi, his successor, and also served as a consultant for the PNG Union in theological training. However, the local Colleges were re-established and the experiment was ended. In 1999 the jubilee of Baptist work in PNG was joyfully

118 *Vision*, February/March 1987, pp. 24-25.

119 Arndell, 'New Religious Movements'.

120 *Vision*, Winter 1994, p. 7.

121 *Vision*, Autumn 1990, p. 1.

122 *Vision*, Summer 1995, p 5.

celebrated and in 2001 the ABMS and the PNG leaders signed a memorandum of understanding which was hailed as marking a new era of partnership. The ABMS would assist, as invited, through consultancy and ministry visits; would send staff for short-term, specific, agreed roles; continue to recruit staff for medical and educational programmes as requested; subsidize funding and partnership in training to help facilitate the Papuans' cross-cultural mission initiatives; provide ongoing student scholarships and financial assistance in specified areas of ministry.[123]

The Baptist Church of PNG is making its own contribution in a nation that is still struggling with many aspects of development. That Australian Baptists were enabled to share in the birth and growth of a church in 'the land that time forgot' is prized as one of their greatest privileges.

Netherlands New Guinea/Irian Jaya

A work closely related in many ways to the Baptist mission in Papua New Guinea, at least in the formative years, was the mission among the Dani people in the Baliem Valley of what was Netherlands New Guinea. Here, too, was a tribal people still in the early 1950s living with almost no awareness of the outside world. The ABFM Board in 1955 accepted a recommendation to consider an exploratory trip into the region. A Baptist base was established at Sentani and an inter-mission camp was based inland at Lake Archbold. Gilbert McArthur and the inimitable Norman Draper were involved in the setting up of the airstrip at Bokondini. Draper with John Betteridge undertook the first trek and recommended that work be commenced in the North Baliem area of the hinterland. Ian Gruber was another of the pioneers. Working closely with other missions (the American Christian and Missionary Alliance, the Asia Pacific Christian Mission and the Regions Beyond Missionary Union) the Baptists agreed to settle at Tiom and constructed an airstrip. Within two years other strips were constructed at Maki and at Yugwa/Danime. The work of the Missionary Aviation Fellowship in pioneering these centres was quite crucial. Because of the terribly rugged terrain there was a history of regular battles among the tribes for the possession of the land where food could be grown. Yet another language had to be learned by Sheila Draper and associates and the excitable and bold Danis made for a tense initial period for the Baptist pioneers.

A stream of dedicated Australians volunteered to share in this task: people like Charles and Pam Craig, Noel and Elaine Charles, Laurie and Jean Cawley, Dane and Ann Mountford, Ken and Elwyn Green, Noel and Elaine Melzer, Brian and Jean Beaver, Dr John and Elizabeth Lawrence and Sister Jean Crowe. The first stations were at Tiom (1956), Maki (1957) and at Yugwa (1958). Gradually the Danis responded to the message of love. The first baptisms were at Maki on 6 May 1962 when 39 were baptized and a week later a further 31 at Tiom. So a new church was born but only four months later in September this infant church came under a severe trial when a Dani chief who resented the influence of the Christians launched a

123 *Vision*, May 2001, p. 17.

savage attack on the Christians and scores were martyred in several villages in the area of Maki. [124]

In 1963 with Indonesian independence, Irian Jaya became the name given to the territory (and today it is Papua). The West Irian Baptist Union was formed in December 1966 with 276 delegates from 78 churches. The medical work at Pit River was begun in 1961 and was based on the R.S. Pickup Memorial Hospital where the first doctor was Dr John Lawrence and he was joined by Jean Crowe. They immediately began training nationals to help in this strategic work. Dr Thelma Becroft also served in the Baliem where the hospital serviced a large community with many patients being flown in for treatment. In 1967 there were 1,800 patients of whom 30 were European missionaries. Dr Rob Wight replaced Dr Becroft in 1970 although she returned in 1979, some four years after Wight had returned to Australia, and died suddenly at Maki on 29 November 1987. This New Zealand doctor had served the Enga people for 16 years and the Danis for ten.[125] Jane Hunt gave years of dedicated service at the Pit River Hospital and helped in the training of many nurses.

The church grew rapidly during the 1970s. Bible teaching and training of church leaders was the essential base of the work. A Bible School was started and a Dani literacy programme had been inaugurated by Ken Green in 1963. Ron England built several literacy schools and Bill and Pat Goodlet who arrived in 1969 initially concentrated on this ministry. The bulk of the population embraced Christianity and Norman Draper later described this extraordinary development as 'one of the outstanding movements in the history of Christian missions. It is considered by many international leaders as a modern miracle'.[126]

But Baptist work in Irian Jaya was not confined to the Baliem. Joseph Karetji was Headmaster of the high school and pastor of the Indonesian church at the coastal town of Jayapura. Originally from Ambon in Indonesia, Karetji was a gifted leader and after studies at the Baptist College in Sydney returned in 1975 to support Baptists throughout the whole territory. In 1977 it was discovered that there was another group of Baptists in the far-western coastal region of Irian Jaya, known as the 'Birdshead', evangelized by Dutch Baptists over fifty years before. In 1977 the two Baptist groups met at a students' conference at the University in Jayapura. A church at Sorong has since grown steadily. A Theological College was established at Kotoraja with Joseph Karetji as Principal. Several Australians including Keith Jobberns have served as lecturers at this College. Bible schools were conducted at Maki and at Tiom. David Groves worked among the townspeople and students at Jayapura.[127]

But there had been rebellion and severe uprisings in the Dani area, much of it orchestrated by outside agitators. The whole of the Yugwa area and half of the Maki

124 Redman, *The Light Shines On*, pp. 167-73; Draper, *Daring to Believe*, pp. 201-205.

125 *Vision*, February/March 1988, pp. 12-13.

126 Draper, *Daring to Believe*, p. 206.

127 Redman, *The Light Shines On*, pp. 173-81; *Vision*, April 1978, p. 12.

region were devastated in 1977. Hardly a building remained intact. Over 350 villages had been burnt out. Dennis Brown returned to Yugwa to find his home had been looted. Australian Baptist World Aid responded to the emergency and 800 pounds of sweet potato were flown into the affected area. Gradually control was restored. Missionaries like Brown, Joe Sherriff and Rod Bensley helped the local leaders rebuild the work. In 1982, the year of the ABMS centenary, no less than 7,000 Danis were baptized and the church membership stood at 23,000. There were 22 ABMS missionaries working in Irian Jaya. The Western Dani New Testament was also dedicated in that year and, although an inter-mission venture, ABMS missionary Rod Bensley had worked closely in the project.[128] In 1986 it was reported that there had been 2,000 baptisms during the preceding five months in Irian Jaya.[129] Irian Jaya was politically a part of Indonesia after 1963 and political sensitivities in recent years have limited missionary involvement in that country.

Leadership at Home

After Marsh retired, the Board appointed J.D. Williams, an experienced pastor, as General Secretary and he led the mission for 25 years from 1958 to 1983. During these years the work of ABMS expanded dramatically, moving into new places of service with large increases in staff and budgets. An enlarged staff supported Williams who proved to be a visionary with a striking ability to communicate with home churches. Various crises, such as the war in Bangladesh, tribal uprisings in New Guinea and a variety of personal tragedies among missionary staff as well as financial emergencies, also required a strong Board to formulate policy and strategy. Tony Cupit was Overseas Secretary from 1972 to 1978 and Ian Hawley followed him in this strategic role from 1979 to 1982. Sadly, his successor Ray Schaefer and his wife were killed in an aircraft disaster near Sentani in Irian Jaya on 11 July 1983.[130] Chris Pittendrigh then served as Overseas Secretary (1984-2004).

Celebrations marked the centenary year of ABMS in 1982. The main service was held on 26 October in the Flinders Street Church - where it had all begun a hundred years before - and J.D. Williams noted that in one hundred years the ABMS had worked in nine fields of service, sent out 675 missionaries and in that year there were 170 missionaries serving in eight areas. The centenary project was to establish Bible Colleges on all the ABMS fields.[131]

Charles Olsen succeeded Williams as General Secretary from 1983 until 1994. In 1983 Rosalind Gooden became Associate Secretary for overseas and Rod Bensley became Associate Director for finance in 1984. Olsen reorganized much of the ABMS's financial base, introducing a direct mail programme and a somewhat controversial scheme of personal missionary support in 1982. A severe financial crisis developed in 1985 and at the 1986 Board meeting the difficult decision was

128 Redman, *The Light Shines On*, pp. 194-97.
129 *Vision*, July 1984, p. 16.
130 *Vision*, September 1983, pp. 3-4.
131 *Vision*, February 1983, pp. 4-5.

reached that no new missionaries or furloughing missionaries could return to the field without adequate support being promised.[132] Experienced missionary Ian Hawley served as General Secretary (later, General Director) from 1995 to 2004.

Another significant innovation was the establishment in 1984 of Service Fellowship International (SFI). Because several countries were either not permitting Western missionaries to enter or limiting the number who could, mission societies sought creative ways of continuing to serve national communities. SFI sought to cooperate with other people or organizations where there were identified needs and an invitation from the national group had been received. The purposes included medical, agricultural, educational, relief and development projects. SFI also sought to demonstrate 'a concern for justice and reconciliation throughout society and for the liberating of people from every kind of oppression' and help was to be given 'regardless of ethnic, cultural and religious beliefs'. For example, Barry Ison led a project among the Garos of Bangladesh in the REAP programme which provided an alternative income for many villagers. Teachers were found for China and Indonesia where they taught English. These and other 'tent-making' opportunities were undertaken in association with but separate from ABMS.[133] Clearly SFI reflected a new role for the traditional 'sending' churches and widened the focus of service. The partnership between ABMS and SFI with Australian Baptist World Aid (ABWAID) was another strategic development across these years.

Another growing programme was the sending of Mission Awareness Youth Teams who would visit one of the fields and experience a range of missionary tasks. This increased awareness generated support and in some cases led to people volunteering for missionary service. Rob Lutton was appointed National Youth Consultant in 1999.[134] Rosalind Gooden and others established a short intensive course, a partnership between ABMS and the North Queensland College of Ministries, in 1999. This is separate from the regular orientation course which the ABMS has run for many years.

Another initiative in 1997 was the People Group Adoption programme. A people group was defined as 'the largest ethnic group within which the Gospel can spread without being stopped by barriers such as language and culture'.[135] ABMS encouraged churches to develop strong relationships with a particular group. Seven unreached people groups were promoted among Australian Baptists: three in Indonesia, one in Malawi, one in Kazakstan, one in Thailand and one in China. Every church was invited to adopt a group for special prayer and interest. Many churches took up the challenge and found innovative ways to increase awareness and support for these peoples.

A highlight for ABMS was the BWA Congress in Melbourne in January 2000. Opportunity was taken to bring together 250 people, including delegates from 25 countries where ABMS had been associated in some way. This afforded a unique

132 *Vision*, October/November 1986, p. 3.
133 *Vision*, December/January 1987, pp. 2-3.
134 *Vision*, February 1999, p. 8.
135 *Vision*, May 1997, p. 9.

opportunity for reunions with missionaries and for faithful friends to meet some of those whose work they had long supported.[136]

In August 2002 the ABMS took a new name: 'Global InterAction' (GIA), a new name and - in the modern style - a 'vision statement': 'Following the unchanging Christ in a changing world, making disciples, building and empowering the church worldwide in holistic ministry'. GIA 'core values' are dependence on God, Christ-like compassion, intentional focus, identification, creative communication, a team approach and pastoral care of staff members.[137]

A new team of leaders, now known as 'Directors', was assembled in 2004-2005: Keith Jobberns (General Director), Chris Barnden (Director of Ministries), Karen Newnham (Director of Human Resources), Rob Lutton (Director of Partnership Development) and Trevor Spicer (Director of Finance and Administration). Each state Baptist Union has a Director for GIA. Grace Munro edits *Vision* and is publications manager. There are regional representatives and global consultants - usually experienced missionaries - and team leaders. Australian Baptists maintain a strong national commitment to mission.

Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malawi and Mozambique

In 1965 the South African Missionary Society approached the ABMS to help in Zambia. The presence of white South Africans in the independent Zambia was increasingly problematic as black Africans uniformly resented the apartheid policy of South Africa. But did Zambian Baptists want white Australians in their country? Williams visited the Baptists of the Lamba area and the Zambians pressed the need for people who would train leaders and assist pastors in the rural churches. Williams believed that this was a call from God and the Board eventually agreed.[138]

In May 1969 Gwen Chambers began medical work as the first ABMS missionary in Zambia. The two main needs were staffing of the medical work at Fiwale Hill and Kafulafuta and support for the Bible School at Fiwale Hill. This was the kind of tribal ministry that Australian Baptists had long undertaken. The buildings and equipment needed much work and John Grayson from Victoria gave two years to this task but died suddenly in 1972 from a heart attack. A succession of fine nurses followed Chambers to help in the rural medical work: Pat Furlonger and Dulcie Cheney (who had been in Assam) arrived later in 1969 and Myrtle Pettigrove in 1970. Others to serve as nurses included Beth and Heather McDonald, Grace Munro, Faith Kramer, Vicky Agnew, Jenny Emmett (later Woods), Lyn Cottrell, Gwendy Ridden, Sue Dykes, Yula Berry and Robyn Hughes.[139]

Les and Ruth Haydon from South Australia and Keith and Pam Gallagher from Western Australia arrived in 1972. The ABMS was insistent that the Lambas should themselves be responsible for the work and in 1972 the Lambaland Baptist

136 *Vision*, February 2000, p. 2.
137 *Vision*, August 2002.
138 Redman, *The Light Shines On*, pp. 205-206.
139 Redman, *The Light Shines On*, pp. 207-209.

Association was formed with 62 churches. As Kemp has noted, this 'marked the official transition from mission to church'.[140] Four years later the Baptist Union of Zambia was formed with the Lambaland Association (now the Northern Baptist Association of Zambia) as one of three constituent bodies. By 1976 there were 16 ABMS workers in the country. Haydon worked in the Fiwale Hill Bible School, teaching in English with an interpreter until he mastered the Lamba language. English, however, was the official language for education in Zambia and English courses were introduced in 1978. A regional Bible School programme eventually involving over 2,000 students was begun. Gallagher and George Stubbs laboured in church planting and nurture with a special attention to youth work. The Gallaghers worked in Mkushi and the Stubbs at Mukutuma and in areas west of Fiwale Hill. Grace Munro and Gwendy Ridden moved into pastoral evangelism among the women. In 1985 Munro initiated work among the Lenje people at Malambanyama which became a centre for evangelism, church planting and Bible training.[141] In all this, the missionaries were supporting Zambian leaders of outstanding ability, especially Bob Litana and his two capable and dedicated sons, Hudson and Paledge Litana.

Roger Kemp was especially concerned with theological education and in 1979 he conducted a pilot course for ten students, some at Ndola and some at Kitwe. Kemp, Stephen Venz and Ted Woods shared in the lectures. Kemp worked with the Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia to begin a programme in 1981 and was the founding Principal of what became the Theological College of Central Africa at Ndola. Rod Pell became Principal in 1988 and served at the College until 1996 when Joe Kapolyo followed him as Principal. The ABMS had always intended to withdraw from Zambia as soon as possible to enable the church to be totally independent of Western leadership and by 1998 this had been achieved. Short-term visits for specific purposes have continued.

Meanwhile, the ABMS had commenced service in Zimbabwe where three experienced workers went in 1983: Frank and Gladys Cleary and Gwendy Ridden who would work in the black townships. [142] The Clearys were relocated to the Philippines in 1990. A small group of missionaries worked in the country, including Ray and Mona Sprigg at Masvingo from 1989 to 1991 who then moved to Mbari, a suburb of Harare.[143] But by the end of 1997 there were no ABMS staff in Zimbabwe as the work they had been asked to do had finished.

In 1990 the ABMS decided to begin work among the Yao people in Malawi in association with the Zambesi Evangelical Church. The task was to help train national pastors at the Likhubula Bible School at Blantyre and help in outreach to the Muslims. [144] Bruce and Karen Newnham who had worked in Bangladesh joined

140 R. Kemp, 'South African Missionary Society in Zambia: A Missiological Evaluation' (DTheol thesis, University of South Africa, 1987), p. 173.
141 *Vision*, October 1985, pp. 4-5.
142 *Vision*, October 1983, p. 10.
143 *Vision*, February 1996, p. 3.
144 *Vision*, Summer 1990, p. 13.

in this effort. Stephen and Glenda Venz, previously in Zambia (1980-91), also joined this venture in 1992 despite suffering the sad loss of their young son Paul the year before. Keith and Pam Gallagher and Gwendy Ridden were based at Blantyre, whilst Ian and Wendy Dicks, Paul and Carolyn Campbell, Scott and Kathryn Girvan and John and Angela Wilmot were located at Mangochi.

The ABMS has also worked in Mozambique. In 2004 three families were serving in this nation.[145] David and Lynne Firth, after serving in Zimbabwe (1990-92), went to South Africa where David taught at the Baptist Theological College of South Africa at Johannesburg from 1993 to 1997.

Asia: Hong Kong, Thailand, Indonesia, Philippines, Cambodia, Vietnam, Singapore, China and Kazakstan

The mission's first contact with Hong Kong was in 1962 when Frank Marsh accepted an invitation to serve as Comptroller of the Hong Kong Baptist College. Marsh served until 1964 and also assisted with the resettlement of Chinese refugees on the island of Chu Lap Kok, a project supported by ABWAID.[146] June Sutton was seconded in 1965 by the International Ministries of the American Baptists to work among the Swatow Baptist churches. She concentrated on youth leadership, worked with children as Supervisor and Director of the Moon Lok Kindergarten and assisted with helping refugees from Vietnam. Sutton resigned from the mission in 1984. Dr John Olley and his wife Elaine also served in Hong Kong. John, who had a PhD in Physics as well as his training in theology, was appointed to the Chung Chi ('Honour Christ') College, one of the three colleges which form the Chinese University of Hong Kong where he taught from 1968 until 1978. Olley joined the staff of the Baptist College in Western Australia in 1978.

Lindsay Robertson taught theology at the Baptist Seminary at Singapore from 1988 and he and Jane are now at the Hong Kong Baptist Seminary. Sunny and Yee Mak are also working in Hong Kong. A significant number of SFI personnel are also teaching English in Mainland China.

At the invitation of American Baptists, Betty Edmonds who had already served as a teacher in Bangladesh and PNG, went to Thailand in 1971 to become Principal of the Chiang Mai International School. Other teachers, Shirley Dawes and Heather Welsh, later joined her. The school functioned as an international school for expatriates with pupils drawn from families in the diplomatic services, aid workers and missionaries.[147]

Sister Josie Falla early in 1972 went to the small mission hospital at Sangklaburi on the River Kwai which American Baptists had commenced in 1961. A school, a hostel for Thai and tribal children and an agricultural scheme were also based at this centre. Australian Baptists worked under the umbrella of the Thailand

145 *GIA Prayer Guide 2004*, p.8.

146 Prior, *Caring is by Sharing*, pp. 31-32; Redman, *Mission Accomplished*, pp. 41-43.

Baptist Missionary Fellowship. Josie Falla, working with Dr John Freeman, pioneered a village clinic programme. Sister Jan Stretton joined Falla and in 1977 they were supported by another nursing sister, Jan Vertigan, and Loes de Vos, a pharmacist who had been in PNG since 1973. The government's decision to build a dam meant that the site would be flooded and the hospital was relocated at Huay Malai in 1984.[148] In this mammoth task they were greatly assisted by work parties from New South Wales and funds from ABWAID.

Ray and Shirley Burman arrived in 1976 and after language study began evangelism among the tribal peoples but in a tragic boating accident Shirley was killed in July 1978 just as their work was beginning to be established.[149] Another centre for tribal evangelism was Fang where Ken and Jennifer Hawley and Graham and Carolyn Edgar gave special attention to training the local Christians. Norman and Heather Welsh, based at Chiang Mai, worked among the Lahu people near the Burmese border. An agriculturalist, Welsh was supported both by ABMS and ABWAID in the development programmes he initiated.[150] In recent years Australian Baptists have also worked with refugees from Burma (Myanmar) in refugee camps. In 1998 the Chiang Rai Christian service centre was initiated and Lyndal Brunner worked to provide help for AIDS sufferers.[151] Larry and Jan Martin worked from Chiang Rai in a church planting ministry at Payamengrai. GIA and SFI continue to have a significant presence in Thailand across a range of church-based and development programmes.

Small numbers of Australian Baptists have worked in other Asian countries for quite specific tasks at different times. In 1974 ABMS accepted an invitation from a national evangelical church, the Kingmi church, to work in Timor, Indonesia. This non-denominational church which had begun in the 1950s had established a Bible School at Kupang and sought Australian aid in helping with this training. Ian and Lorraine Minto in 1972 and Gil and Fay Venz in 1976 served in this location. Pastoral care, evangelism and teaching as well as rudimentary medical work were undertaken.[152] Difficulties with visas since 1981 have restricted ABMS and SFI work in Indonesia but at Bandung, Kupang, Salatiga in Java as well as in Papua Australian Baptists have worked in partnership with national churches. The teaching of English and agricultural assistance are still being offered by SFI personnel.

In 1990 Tim and Kate Boase began working at Iloilo City in the Philippines where Tim was a lecturer at the Central Philippine University. The Clearys also worked in the Philippines for a period. The Boases later moved to Thailand where Tim was again involved in theological education. Similarly in 1997 four ABMS workers were associated with Christian Care for Cambodia, a consortium of missions. In 2004 there were five ABMS missionaries in Cambodia. A SFI worker was also supported for community development in Vietnam.

148 Redman, *The Light Shines On*, pp. 218-21; *Vision*, April 1984, p. 15.

149 *Vision*, August 1978, p. 2.

150 *Vision*, December 1979/January 1980, p. 6.

151 *Vision*, July 2000, pp. 6-7.

152 Redman, *The Light Shines On*, pp. 237-42.

The adaptability of GIA and SFI to respond to specific needs and requests has led to a range of locations in which Australian Baptists have served or are currently working. Martin and Margaret Reilly worked in Nicaragua from 1992 to 1995 where they helped in pastoral and development work in impoverished rural areas in association with the Convencion Bautista de Nicaragua. Another couple, associated with the Baptist Union of Lebanon, is working in church development.

Another special opportunity to work is in Kazakstan - formerly a part of the Soviet Union but independent from 1991. Cooperative Services International invited Australian Baptists to work with a special focus on improving sheep farming methods as well as in teaching English.[153] Aid and development are priorities in this country.

Australian Baptists have regularly demonstrated their willingness to 'go into all the world' in the cause of the Christian Gospel. But there remained another pressing challenge much closer to home.

Australian Baptists and Aborigines

Australian Baptists did not have their own denominational mission work among Aborigines until after World War Two. In general, Baptists simply reflected the attitudes and ambiguities of evangelical Christians across this time.[154] Some early Baptists, as we have seen, were well known as humanitarian advocates for Aborigines. One state did at least talk about beginning a mission. Early in 1898 the *Southern Baptist* expressed concern about the murder of 'blacks' in Western Australia.[155] Perhaps stung by this observation, just a few months later the half-yearly meetings at Bayswater (WA) appointed Mrs. Kennedy as 'overseer of the work among the black women and children' with a small grant from the Foreign Mission committee. In the evening meeting she spoke about her call and hopes for this work and A.S. Wilson urged 'the claims of aborigines of Australia' and charged all present with 'their responsibility to God for indifference in the matter'.[156] No more was ever heard about this Aboriginal 'mission'.

Baptists were active supporters of the two largest non-denominational missions, the United Aborigines Mission (UAM) and the Aborigines Inland Mission of Australia (AIM), both of which grew out of the Christian Endeavour Union. In 1889 Baptist pastor H. Hockey of the Woollahra Church helped found a programme of visiting Aborigines at La Perouse, an Aboriginal reserve at Botany Bay. This became the La Perouse Aborigines Mission in 1895 and among the first missionaries was Retta Dixon (later, Long) from Petersham Baptist. In 1899 this was renamed the New South Wales Aborigines Mission (NSWAM) from which eventually came the UAM and the AIM. One of the founders of this mission and its

153 *Vision*, Autumn 1995, p. 7; Winter 1995, pp. 13-15.

154 For a balanced assessment of Missions among Australian Aborigines, see Carey, *Believing in Australia*, pp. 53-81.

155 *SB*, 1 January 1898, p. 1.

156 *SB*, 4 August 1898, p. 175.

president for many years was Baptist layman James Morton (1841-1919), also of the Petersham and then the Marrickville churches.[157] During the next thirty years there was a series of divisions and regroupings, the first of which was at Singleton under the leadership of Retta Long who formed the AIM in 1905. The NSWAM began work outside New South Wales and was then called the Australian Aborigines Mission (AAM) and after this had split and was reunited it became the UAM in 1929. By 1944 UAM had 83 missionaries - the largest number of missionaries of any organization working with Aborigines. The AIM had 62 missionaries and these two missions had nearly half the missionaries of all denominations and some ninety per cent of those working in settled areas.[158] Both missions were 'faith missions' and maintained a very strict conservative evangelical ethos. Baptists provided missionaries and support for both groups: among early workers were Nellie Smith and Lilian Fowler from the Parramatta Church and Miss McPherson from Stanmore.[159] But the doctrinal disputes within the AAM were of concern to conservative Baptists. In 1928 a group of missionaries who did not believe in eternal punishment for the wicked left the mission even though the secretary of the AAM assured Baptists that they were a 'body of old fashioned Christians'. Retta Long had not hesitated to insist that the AIM was different: there had never been any charge of modernism in its ranks, it had 'never swerved from its principles' and her work was well known in Baptist churches. In the preceding year there had been over 400 converts.[160] The style of AIM churches was 'baptist' and each local congregation was independent. In general the AIM did not establish 'mission stations' as such but tended to work where numbers of Aboriginal people lived, usually on the outskirts of country towns. Few AIM people were interested or involved in issues of justice for a marginalised people although they did develop a large children's home in Darwin and a Bible Training College was also started. The UAM tended to be more involved in institutions such as children's homes. The Colebrook Training Home at Quorn in South Australia gave 'half-caste' children training that would help them 'merge into the white population', as one of their trustees expressed it. Some scandals have since arisen about the treatment of children in this and other homes.

Certain individual Baptists made significant contributions to the welfare of Aborigines. Outstanding among these was J.H. Sexton of South Australia who was secretary of the Aborigines Friends' Association from 1911 for 31 years and was its President from 1943 to 1948. This Association had been formed in Adelaide in 1858 and its object was 'the moral, spiritual and physical well-being of the natives of this Province'.[161] In 1913 Sexton told a Royal Commission on the Aborigines: 'It would be better to keep these natives together on a big settlement because they could have supervision'. He also recommended purchasing land for them. From 1918 to

157 *AB*, 9 December 1919, p. 3.

158 Harris, *One Blood*, pp. 553-55.

159 Watkin-Smith, *Baptists in the Cradle City*, p. 88; *AB*, 1 February 1907, 1 March 1907, p. 3; 21 January 1913, p. 4.

160 *AB*, 15 May 1928, p. 6; 12 June 1928, p. 4; 3 July 1928, p. 6.

161 Harris, *One Blood*, p. 356.

1940 Sexton was also a member and at times secretary of the State Advisory Council for Aborigines. He visited Central Australia on several occasions and in 1930 interviewed tribal elders about the needs of Aborigines and published a report in 1932. Sexton also published several pamphlets about Aborigines, including *Aboriginal Intelligence* in 1946 in which he demanded full citizenship rights for Aborigines, some twenty years before they finally received them.[162]

Victorian Baptist W. Gordon Sprigg spoke out in 1928 about the treatment of the 'rightful owners of this country' at the Lake Tyers Government Mission, insisting that they should be treated as citizens.[163] There was support among Baptists in 1938 for the suggestion of the Aborigines Progressive Association that 26 January, the day that the First Fleet arrived, should be marked as 'a day of mourning and protest' and also that the Sunday nearest 26 January should be observed as 'Aboriginal Sunday'.[164] When the National Missionary Council proposed in 1943 that 31 January (rather than the more sensitive Australia Day of 26 January) should be a national day for Aborigines Baptist J. Whitsed Dovey was one of the signatories and the *Australian Baptist* supported the idea.[165] But these suggestions were largely lost in the turmoil of war years.

There had been occasional criticisms that Baptists did not have their own mission.[166] The Federal Home Mission in 1926 had included as part of its vision that we might 'discharge our obligations to the Aborigines of Australia', but had been preoccupied with the establishment of Baptist work in Canberra. In Western Australia in 1951 Edward Hogg brought a report to the Union, suggesting that something be done 'for the increasing number of half-castes in the southern part of the State' and welfare committees should be established. A.R. Stark was appointed to this role in Pingelly. The denomination also established the Baptist Aborigines Mission, initially at Carrolup, west of Katanning, which came to be known as Marribank. This home for children was closed in the late 1980s as government policies were changed. An Aboriginal church had been formed and the Marribank property was finally handed over to Aboriginal people after delicate negotiations with the state government on 13 June 1989. Marribank continued to develop and an Aboriginal church was also commenced in the metropolitan area with Keith Truscott and Mark Kickett as pastors.[167] A recent innovation in the state has been support by West Australian churches for the Malarrpa ministries, based at Boulder and which services the Aboriginal communities of Laverton, 400 kilometres to the north, Coonanna, 180 kilometres east and Norseman, 190 kilometres to the south. The

162 Details and quotations from S. Edgar's entry on Sexton in *ADB*, 11, pp. 571-72.

163 *AB*, 6 November 1928, p. 1; 20 November 1928, p. 3; 4 December 1928, p. 12. See also R. Broome, *Aboriginal Victorians. A History since 1800* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2005), pp. 220, 229-30.

164 *AB*, 25 January 1938, p. 1; 16 January 1940, p. 2.

165 *AB*, 26 January 1943, pp. 1, 5.

166 *AB*, 25 November 1924, p. 3.

167 Moore, *'All Western Australia is my parish'*, pp. 132-33; 204-205.

pastor is Peter Marumba, born in Kenya and trained in Canada - as John Olley observed, 'Peter doesn't come with the usual colonial baggage'.[168]

Meanwhile, Baptists nationally had established a mission to Aborigines. E.H. Watson, then a Baptist army chaplain, met with some Aboriginal men at the Alice Springs army camp in December 1942 and was disturbed about the conditions under which these Aborigines lived. He was keen to see Australian Baptists begin some ministry among the indigenous people of Central Australia and was greatly encouraged in this hope by Pastor Albrecht of the Lutheran Finke River Mission.[169] In 1944 the Home Mission Board and South Australian Baptists asked Pastor Laurie Reece then at Terowie to survey the area to the north-west of Haasts Bluff among the Ngarliya people. He recommended the establishment of a mission at Vaughan's Springs but the request was refused by authorities. A bore was drilled at Rick Hill and by July 1946 about 400 Warlpiris had been moved to this site which became known as Yuendumu, some 300 kilometres from Alice Springs, right in the red centre of the continent. Albrecht suggested that the Baptists might be approached. Board chairman W.P. Phillips visited the site and reported on the challenges awaiting the workers. The Board in August 1946 agreed to undertake the work and the first Australian Baptist missionaries to the Warlpiri were appointed: Pastor Philip Steer of Victoria as superintendent and Reece his associate. They arrived at the site on 13 February 1947 and 'Yuendumu' -with several spelling variants - became another mission name for Australian Baptists to remember. A small store was erected, a 'hospital' of a pre-fabricated iron shed was built in 1948 and Sister Pannell was appointed matron of the hospital by the government in 1949. A school was commenced with Bernice Loon from Adelaide as the first teacher in 1948. The location was extremely isolated and conditions were harsh.[170]

The Board had little idea about what was needed. A group of nomadic desert peoples had been gathered into a new location. The missionaries were young and inexperienced. They had to plan buildings, provide basic welfare for the people, study the language and try to teach and ultimately convert the people about whose culture and beliefs they really knew very little. Government employees were not always helpful and tended to regard the missionaries as welfare workers under their supervision. Perhaps it was not surprising that both Reece and Steer resigned in 1949 but they had the satisfaction of having laid the foundation for the new mission.

A new era commenced with the new missionary. A strong, independent and resourceful man, Tom Fleming had survived internment by the Japanese during the war.[171] Tom and Pat Fleming arrived with their baby son in April 1950 and served the people there for the next 25 years. Fleming inevitably revealed a paternalistic attitude but the Flemings were greatly loved by the Warlpiri people. A young Ian

168 M. Fitzgerald, 'Spreading the Word', *Time*, 2 August 2004, pp. 93-99.

169 I. Jordan, *Their Way. Towards an Indigenous Warlpiri Christianity* (Darwin: Charles Darwin University, 2003), p. 4.

170 Jordan, *Their Way*, pp. 4-6; Redman, *The Light Shines On*, pp. 243-45. See also P. Steer, *It happened at Yuendumu* (Hawthorn: ABMS, 1997).

171 *Vision*, February 1997, p. 4.

Hansen visited Yuendumu in December 1952 and admired Fleming's approach. 'What Tom did for years was to arbitrate in family and private disputes, see that children attended school, encourage the young men to learn a trade, and visit the Aboriginal camp to check on who was sick and needed treatment'. Hansen believed it was Fleming's influence, 'saintly and flawed', that established Yuendumu as a cohesive community.[172] Slowly conversions came and the work expanded. John Burton became assistant missionary in 1956 and concentrated on the language. Regular visits to various cattle stations also began at this time. Fleming visited Warrabri (now Ali Curung) and a church was built here where the Burtons pioneered the mission. Harold Evans was secretary for the Board in 1956 and greatly stimulated interest in the work as did Frank Starr, his successor from 1964 until 1975.

Hooker Creek (now Lajamanu) was also commenced with Jim and Marilyn Kime in 1962. This settlement had been established in 1949 by the Native Affairs Department for the Warlpiri people north of the Tanami desert even though the location was outside traditional Warlpiri territory and belonged to their traditional enemies the Gurundji people. The Reeces replaced the Burtons at Ali Curung and Kime gained experience here before beginning at Lajamanu. Visits to Wave Hill (Kalkarinji) followed. On 1 October 1964 the first baptism took place at Lajamanu when Maurice Jupurrula Luther confessed his faith and a week later the church was formed.

Meanwhile at Yuendumu a new church was built on land which the elders formally gave to the church.[173] Before a large gathering including many visiting dignitaries, a fine church building was opened in 1968. The beautiful stained glass window features the cross surrounded by the Dreamings of the various Warlpiri subsections or clan divisions. Baptisms were held on Easter day when Darby Jambidjinba, Jilly Nagamara and Rex Jabajananga were baptized. The church of Yuendumu was formed on 21 April 1968. The years that followed were far from easy and whilst the granting of citizenship following the referendum of 1967 - which Baptists strongly supported - the later Social Welfare Bill delivered much good but also brought unrestricted access to liquor. A host of social problems disrupted much community life.[174]

Looking back on those first days Ivan Jordan admits that 'we missed out because we were not involved in the culture and language as much as we should have been'.[175] But he notes that all Baptist work was conducted on government-run settlements where the policy of the time was assimilation. Fleming certainly evidenced cultural sensitivity and had raised the possibility of using Warlpiri iconography to present Christian stories and Jordan was to develop this approach

172 Hansen, *The Naked Fish*, pp. 97-98.

173 Redman, *The Light Shines On*, pp. 248-51.

174 *AB*, 6 April 1966, p. 4; 10 May 1967, p. 2; 17 May 1967, p. 1; Redman, *The Light Shines On*, p. 251.

175 Jordan, *Their Way*, p. 6.

considerably. When Fleming died, the moving tribute paid to Fleming by the Warlpiris was: 'That old Fleming he bin grow us up'.[176]

Wave Hill was the scene of a major confrontation by the Gurindji people when they walked off the station in 1966 and drew attention not only to the poor conditions for labourers there but also to their aspirations for the return of land which had been occupied by the pastoral company from the mid-nineteenth century. In 1975 Prime Minister Whitlam granted the Gurundji people leasehold rights to an area of 3250 square kilometres. Graham Paulson, the first Aboriginal Baptist pastor to be ordained (1968), and his wife Iris had arrived at Wave Hill in 1971.[177] Initial responses were encouraging and 25 were baptized at Wattie Creek. The Paulsons were followed by Ed and Kath Kingston until they moved to Yuendumu after the Flemings had retired. Gordon and Gwen Moore followed at Wave Hill in 1972 and the church was formed in 1977.

The Federal Home Mission had proposed that responsibility for the Aboriginal work should be transferred to the ABMS and this finally happened in 1978.

Ivan and Verl Jordan arrived at Lajamanu in 1973 and later moved to Yuendumu. Ivan gave a strong lead in a number of innovative approaches to work among the Warlpiris. John Harris commented in 1990:

> Perhaps the most striking use of Aboriginal cultural expression in the Christian context has been associated with the Baptist missions in central Australia among the Warlpiri, Gurundji and Alyawarra people. At places like Lajamanu, Yuendumu and Kalkarinji, a vibrant, distinctively Aboriginal Christian church is emerging, typified by Christian *purlapas* (corroborees), Christian iconographs and indigenous music, notably the use of the old 'law song' as a medium for credal statements.[178]

Jordan regards 1976 and the years following as crucial in the development of Baptist work amongst Aborigines. There was an 'obvious heightened God-consciousness' amongst the Aborigines in much of the Northern Territory and Western Australia. Among the Warlpiri this led to developing cultural expressions of Christian communication. Max Hart has described these as 'Aboriginal to the core' and most effective in presenting Bible stories.[179] Baptist Warlpiris performed a corroboree at the 2000 Baptist World Congress in Melbourne. Aboriginal Christian iconographs have been used in teaching and worship. Theology in symbol and simple shapes has been a relevant and powerful statement for contemporary Aborigines. Again a series of Bible songs has been developed to teach theology in such phrases as 'God is boss of everything' and 'Christians are one mob'.[180]

176 Jordan, *Their Way*, p. 148.

177 *AB*, 18 December 1968, p. 6.

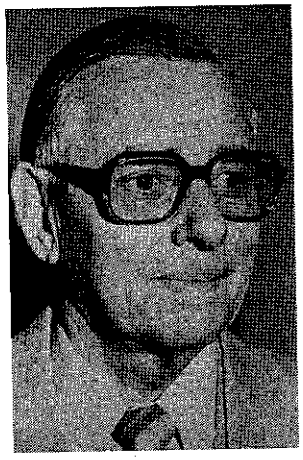
178 Harris, *One Blood*, p. 863.

179 M. Hart, *A Story of Fire Continued. Aboriginal Christianity* (Adelaide: New Creation, 1997), p. 206 as cited by Jordan, *Their Way*, p. 26.

180 Jordan, *Their Way*, pp. 145-46.

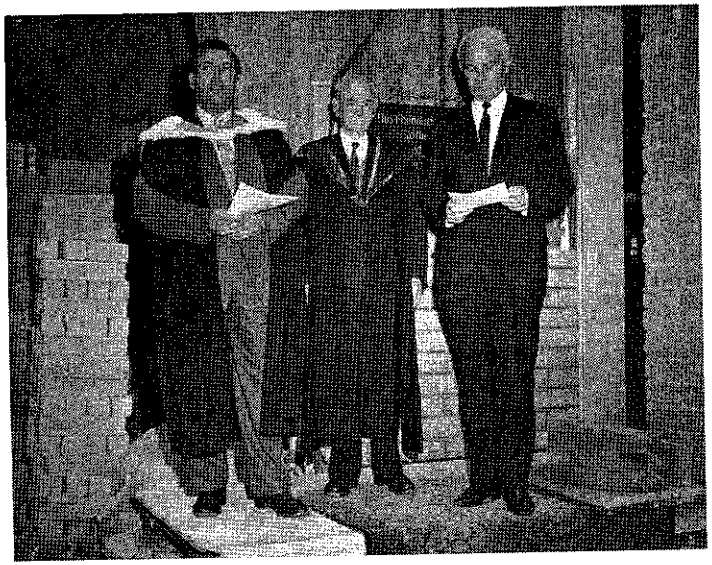
In more recent years ABMS has assisted in strengthening work with Aboriginal communities on the fringes of some urban areas in towns like Mount Isa (Qld), Alice Springs and Katherine in the Northern Territory. Aboriginal leaders have now assumed all responsibilities previously undertaken by missionaries in all their churches.

The challenges of cross-cultural mission remain before Australian Baptists, not least questions about justice and reconciliation with Aborigines. This was undoubtedly a key concern during the concluding decades of the twentieth century.



37: Les Watson, lay leader among WA Baptists

38: Basil Brown, theological educator at Whitley College (1953-79) and Baptist historian



39: D. Mervyn Himbury, Principal of the Victorian College (1959-86) and founder of Whitley College, with J.E. Newnham and John Hopkins at the stone laying