CHARITY AND EVANGELISATION:
THE MELBOURNE CITY MISSION 1854 – 1914

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Abbreviations

MCM  Melbourne City Mission
LCM  London City Mission
SCM  Sydney City Mission
EFR  Elizabeth Fry Retreat
VDPAS  Victorian Discharged Prisoners' Aid Society
LBS  Ladies' Benevolent Society (Melbourne)
COS  Charity Organization Society
It has become so commonly held as almost to be axiomatic among recent Australian historians, that the act of evangelising and giving charity to people, is essentially an act of control and discipline by powerful people in a society over those who have little power.

This thesis, in making a detailed examination of the Melbourne City Mission from 1854 to 1914, along with a smaller study of the Elizabeth Fry Retreat in the late 1880s, offers a substantial challenge to any over-simple application of this concept. In addition, it provides a new assessment of the roles of women of all classes, as they are revealed in acts of charitable evangelism.

The Introduction establishes the state of historiography in Australia, and to a lesser extent, overseas, in the field of evangelical and charity history. Chapters 1 and 2 make a general survey of the rise of evangelical charity in Great Britain and in Melbourne in the nineteenth century, and provide a detailed introduction to the City Mission movement, and the Melbourne City Mission in particular.

Chapters 3, 4 and 5 offer a close investigation of the personnel involved in MCM work in Melbourne: the men and women who founded and administered the Mission, its missionaries, and its clients.

Chapters 6 and 7 look at the MCM at work. Chapter 6 follows its history in the suburb of Collingwood as a succession of missionaries worked there, while Chapter 7 concentrates on the career of one missionary, William Hall, in Prahran.

Chapters 8 and 9 look particularly at prostitution and the lot of women who served gaol sentences. Chapter 8 describes and assesses the efforts of City Missionaries to help prostitutes in the 1870s. Chapter 9 looks at charitable responses in the 1880s, to women coming out of gaol, in the work of Sarah Swinborn and her institution, The Elizabeth Fry Retreat, and of a public charity, the Victorian Discharged Prisoners’ Aid Society.

The Conclusion offers revision of current ideas in many key aspects of charity history.
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Laying the foundation stone of the Elizabeth Fry Retreat 1913
Charitable evangelicalism has become a testing ground for some of the most recent preoccupations of Australian historians. Where employers knew their employees in the workplace, missionaries and charity workers knew the working classes in their homes. For historians who wish to study the relationship of the classes, this point of intersection outside the workplace is a tempting field for testing theories of social control. For feminist historians, the field is equally attractive, since charitable evangelicalism was one completely acceptable role for upper-class women outside the home, and their clients were, largely, women of the working classes.

Most records from the nineteenth century are formal - parliamentary papers, minute books, company and charity records - or anecdotal - as in newspaper reportage or personal memoirs. The records of the Melbourne City Mission, however, are an important alternative source of detailed information about the lives of the working classes and their responses to charitable evangelicals. From 1854 until 1914, the missionaries of the MCM filled in daily journals describing their visits to the homes of poorer Melburnians in six areas of the city; an almost continuous description of their lives can be found in those volumes which have survived. In addition to these semi-personal records of the MCM, there are a similar though smaller set of private journals, which describe the Elizabeth Fry Retreat, a small Home for distressed women, which eventually came under the control of the MCM. These were penned by the founder, Sarah Swinborn, and her Matrons, from the period 1887-1890. These two sources comprise a rare collection of semi-private descriptions of the interaction of working-class people and charitable evangelicals, and are the basis of the materials used in this thesis. They provide a counterweight to the more usual formal records like Minute Books, on which most historians in the area rely.

The Melbourne City Mission and the Elizabeth Fry Retreat are important
in the sense that they were not part of the well-known and loudly-proclaimed mainstream charities in the city, to which historians have thus far given most attention. They were fundamentally different in kind from the large Hospitals and Asylums and even the Ladies' Benevolent Societies, even though the same people can be found on the committees of both the MCM and mainstream charities. This study is therefore timely, in providing evidence of the variations and complexities of the charitable scene in nineteenth century Melbourne, for which Shurlee Swain's survey has provided the broad outline.1

The historiography of evangelical charity has changed dramatically over the last twenty years. Earlier histories were busy with dates, descriptions of buildings, laudatory character-studies of founders and workers, and telling anecdotes of good deeds done to the needy. Minute books, eulogies and foundation stones were principal sources of information. Many were jubilee or centenary histories. The Melbourne City Mission was no exception: in 1962, Colonel Percival Dale, MCM committee member since 1943, Superintendent of Bethesda Hospital, President of the Community Hospitals Association, Men's Social Secretary of the Salvation Army, and architect, published a small history, Loving Service in our Community 1855-1862, being the story of the work of the Melbourne City Mission.

This booklet explained the origins and purpose of the MCM, listed prominent men (and one or two women) who had been associated with it, and described and pictured its buildings. It drew the obligatory word-picture of tumultuous gold-rush Melbourne (gleaned from an early work of Geoffrey Blainey2), to set the scene for the founding. It described the rise of Mission Hall work, the gradual addition of Homes, and reviewed the work

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1 Shurlee Swain 'The Victorian Charity Network in the 1890s', PhD, University of Melbourne 1976.
2 Blainey Introducing Victoria, prepared to supply information for the A & NZ Association for the Advancement of Science, MUP 1955.
district by district.

It is a work which builds up a sense of enormous good, accumulating, as it were, over years and years of steady, uninterrupted and dedicated work, while undergoing suitable changes of direction and personnel. Dale expresses no disenchantment or complaint; no doubt as to the appropriateness of the work. He concludes modestly,

I have endeavoured to give a summary of the activities of a live Organization working in our midst for the good of the Community. (p 27)

The back page has an address to which donations could be sent, and instructions on how to will, gifts to the Mission. Dale conceived his task as historian to be that of the publicist who must make details of the work known to supporters or would-be supporters. He did not feel the need to justify the existence of the MGM; that seemed to him to be self-evident.

Since then, a new historiographical approach has emerged, which steps out of the rather claustrophobic self-focus of the earlier form. These newer works are no longer self-congratulatory, and are less likely to be public relations exercises. They are often written by professional historians with no personal involvement in the organisation. They acknowledge the wider society and its effects on the charitable body; they diligently track down the sources of its origin, overseas if need be, and then reconstruct the cultural ideologies that inform it.

Foremost among these in Melbourne have been the theses of Shurlee Swain, Anthea Hyslop and Renate Howe, which have described and placed charitable activities in their wider social context. The denominational histories of the Wesleyans (Howe), the Congregationalists (H R Jackson) and the Salvation Army (Blair Ussher) have further broadened our understanding. 3

3 Swain, ibid; Anthea Hyslop 'Social Reform Movements in Melbourne 1890-1914', PhD LaTrobe University 1980; Renate Howe 'The Response of Churches to Urbanisation in Melbourne and Chicago 1875-1914', PhD, University of Melbourne 1971 and 'The Wesleyen Church in Victoria 1855-1901', MA, University of Melbourne 1965; H R Jackson 'Aspects of Congregationalism in
Brian Dickey's No Charity There is the first general history of social welfare in Australia, and is a path-finding work of major importance as such. It uses a theoretical framework derived from sociologist Peter Townsend, and presents the work of charities in Australia up to 1890, as based on 'selectivity' in the givers' approach to the receivers, which gradually gives way over the following fifty years to the practice of 'minimum rights for the many'.

Other recent work on charity and evangelicalism by Australian historians, uses as its model the notion of social control. Its main proponents are Richard Kennedy and Elizabeth Windschuttle. The history of social control as a model in English historical writing is well known; it has been surveyed with great clarity by A P Donajgrodski in his introduction to Social Control in Nineteenth Century Britain (Croom Helm London 1977).

The concept of social control is borrowed from sociology, and argues that social order is maintained and expressed in all the social arrangements people make for themselves and others. Thus, not only the legal, economic or other formal systems under which people live, but also their family, moral, religious, charitable, and recreational patterns work to maintain and extend social order. Moreover, these latter forms of control are the more powerful because they are not always overt, and may mould an individual without his knowledge.


Kennedy and the contributors to Australian Welfare Studies have visualised social control, in the area of charity, as pressure exerted downwards by middle-class ideologues on an essentially passive group, which had little or no resistance to it. There is one influence, and it is conceived of as one-way, and as continuously pervasive, like the beam of a searchlight. Its purveyors, in large part bourgeois charitable evangelicals, are presented as a homogeneous group with a common ideology. This aimed to keep the poorer segments of the population disciplined, and 'in their place'. They defined the 'problems' of the poor, and devised the remedies for these problems. Their oppression is seen as in no way benign; supposedly altruistic motives were merely a cloak for self- and class-interest. Their religious motivation, if it is considered at all, is depicted as a major ideological weapon with which to coerce the poor, and a hypocritical one at that, for it is deemed to disguise the otherwise totally unjust nature of class exploitation under an innocent 'other worldliness'.

Charitable women are particularly reprehensible, to most of these historians. Where Caroline Chisholm, in 1847, could use the phrase 'God's Police' approvingly, to describe the 'civilising' and tempering influence of wives on their roughened Australian husbands, Kennedy, in 1985, prefers the more totalitarian 'God's gestapo'. 'Civilising' women, let loose outside the home as charity workers, are transformed into storm troopers in the class war: 7

They taught the poor to be grateful to the rich, to believe their poverty stemmed from sin and, in the case of working-class women, to model themselves on the femininity of their betters. From their viewpoint, they played an educational and supervisory role, exhorting dirty and unrespectable families to observe middle-class standards of propriety, cleanliness and order. Without middle-class money such standards were impossible, yet if the poor disobeyed charity could be withheld, an awful penalty...in a colony where no right to relief existed. 8

7 Anne Summers discusses Chisholm's ideas in Damned Whores and God's Police Penguin, Ringwood 1975 pp 301-2; for Kennedy's view, see Charity Warfare p 1
8 Ibid.
Although Kennedy's formulations are the most extreme in Australian studies, he does clearly indicate the generally severe attitude toward charitable agents held by contributors to the field, some of whose work will be referred to in later chapters.

Whereas Kennedy, in particular, relates social control rather narrowly to social class, feminist historians of charity are relating concepts of social control and hegemony to both social class and gender. They are concerned with two major issues: the processes and mechanisms by which women (and their children) in large part comprise 'the Poor'; and the exact nature of the status, involvement and power of women working in charity in relation to men and the State. Typically, much of their work is to be found in collections of essays covering the whole span of Australian history, and to which writers in many disciplines - history, sociology, political science, anthropology, psychology - have contributed. There are also many single-author studies which have opened up debate on the nature and place of women in Australian history. As yet, many of the hypotheses put forward in these works still require major detailed studies for their verification.

Judith Godden has provided a brief overview of Australian feminist historical directions thus far. She characterizes the situation as 'a debate on the status of women in Australian society.' In her view, broad studies, such as Dickey's No Charity There, generally under-represent the presence of


upper-class women in charity. While feminist historians have sought to raise and sharpen the prominence of women and their social functions, there is little general agreement amongst them, beyond the fact that there were women of high status in Australian society in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Windschuttle, Kingston and Summers argue for high status for those upper-class charitable women, who, in effect, endorsed the power of the ruling classes and were permitted to act as 'moral police', even while women were not permitted any real power outside these roles. Dixson argues that all women, including those of the upper classes, had low status and little self-esteem where public involvement was concerned; Grimshaw strongly disagrees with this. This debate on status is frequently engaged on issues to do with charity, since 'philanthropy was one of the few public and highly visible activities allowed women.'12

There is then, a rich, but hardly over-worked field of historical studies, to which this thesis offers amendment, elaboration or modification.

MCM committee members and missionaries certainly intended to influence the lower classes whom they chose to visit, by persuading them to adopt evangelical religious beliefs and moral standards. But it is insufficient merely to prove intention, or to assert the power of the giver in the gift relationship, a point at which some historians are content to stop. The working out of intention in practice, and the response of the receivers to the 'gift', is the focus of the following chapters.

12 Ibid.
CHAPTER 1

CHARITY AND EVANGELICALISM IN MELBOURNE

IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the Lord your God for the good land he has given you. Be careful that you do not forget the Lord...otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, then your heart will become proud and you will forget the Lord your God...and say to yourself, 'My power and the strength of my hands has produced this wealth for me.' But remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you the ability to produce wealth.

Deuteronomy 8: 11-14, 17-19

As the Scripture says, 'Everyone who calls out to the Lord for help will be saved.' But how can they call to him for help if they have not believed? And how can they believe if they have not heard the message? And how can they hear if the message is not proclaimed? And how can the message be proclaimed if the messengers are not sent out?

Romans 10: 13-15

The twin streams of charity and evangelicalism, flowing from their source in Great Britain, swept along a significant part of Melbourne's population in the second half of the nineteenth century. This thesis examines charitable evangelicals and their influence on other Melburnians, an influence arguably as potent as, and in many ways more enduring in its social consequences than, that of the gold rush.

Neither the charitable nor the evangelical were unreservedly pleased by the gold rush. The Calvinist view of life imported with such diligent evangelical Scots as James Balfour was quite unprepared for the assault of a gold rush. It was a view in which society progressed in an orderly manner and was, in its 'natural' and 'proper' state, hard. By diligence, and guided by sound religion and morality, Balfour believed that a man could improve his lot. His responsibility, after he had risen, was to help the
less fortunate through donations to charity, and to improve the moral and spiritual health of his society through the active exercise of his new positions of power. He could campaign to keep the Sabbath holy, support urban missionary work and encourage the temperance movement.¹

Such men did not come to Melbourne for its goldfields, but for its potential for a career in farming, business or the church. They considered themselves pioneers; ministers of religion came cautiously to the colony as to an outpost of civilization, and Dr Adam Cairns even brought his own cast iron prefabricated church with him.² The gold rush subverted the views of such men and women by creating a world in which few of their ideas could be seen as 'natural' or 'proper' any more. A poor man could become rich very quickly, and it did not depend on whether he was a good or bad individual, either. He was no longer required to exercise virtues of diligence, humility, long-suffering.

Such successful diggers thrust themselves brazenly into public notice. Melbourne was a target for their celebrations for there was little to spend money on, on the goldfields. The notorious 'diggers' weddings' were seen and recorded by almost every writer who hastened into print to record the extraordinary happenings in the colony. A union between a lucky digger and a willing girl could be arranged in a hotel, and the bridal party, the women in 'dresses of the most expensive description', were paraded through the city after the ceremony, in a cab gaily decked with ribbons. 'Often have I seen such parties', reported the Scottish merchant Just, 'and often witnessed the brandy bottle passing from bride to groomsman, from bridegroom to bridesmaid, while driving along the public streets.'³ S T Gill's watercolour catches this moment as one of wild vulgarity.


² D Macrae Stewart Growth in Fifty Years 1859-1909 p 31.

³ P Just Australia 1859 p 87.
S T Gill  Digger's Wedding in Melbourne 1852-3: Vulgar workingmen and women 'cutting a flash'.

(Source: M Cannon (ed.) The Victorian Goldfields 1852-3: An Original Album by S.T. Gill, Plate 38.)
Just records an even more telling tale of social order upended, which was passing in hushed voices round Melbourne society. The Governor’s wife was in ‘one of the principal drapers in Collins Street, admiring a piece of very rich silk.’ She did not buy it because of the expense, but ‘a rough-looking unshaven digger ... looked to the gentleman across the counter [and] said "cut me off a dress of that 'ere silk for my missus, mate" to the astonishment of Mrs La Trobe...’

This behaviour appalled Melbourne’s more sober citizens, but they were overwhelmed by the newcomers, some 500 000 of them, mostly men, by 1858. Some of the evangelicals, themselves new arrivals, pursued the lackeys of Mammon to the goldfields and tried to evangelise them.

By no means all the diggers were fortunate; in fact, most did not make their fortunes. For some, Melbourne was like some giant refugee camp. The harbour was clogged with deserted ships, the city blighted by vast camp-suburbs across the Yarra. Some prospective diggers never got out of Melbourne. Wooden tenements and shacks shot up on Collingwood Flat to accommodate the needy. Christian philanthropists hastily constructed two Immigrants’ Homes to provide food and shelter for the unfortunate. With the luckless ones came disease, unemployment, crime, vice, drunkenness, and, inevitably, miserable and sordid death. It was with circumstances such as these, unique to the city of Melbourne, that Melbourne’s charitable evangelicals were forced to wrestle.

Charity

Melbourne’s extraordinary rise from a city of fewer than 25,000 in 1850 to a massive metropolis of almost half a million in 1891 (see graph),

4 Ibid p 85, in a footnote.
Melbourne's Population 1850 - 1911

Source: Victorian Year Books
provided a rare and formidable challenge to its governing groups. The city was without an infrastructure. Its support systems reached tenuously to NSW and Great Britain. Its government was in the hands of successful settlers, squatters, merchants and the gold-rich, who tried to mould it to favour their own interests.\(^7\)

To many, the generous availability of gold to all-comers meant that no one in the colony should have been poor. Yet desperate poverty disfigured the pristine city, for those who were alert to see it. In the tent-city on the Yarra bank, in the shacks on Collingwood Flat,

It is a well-known fact that sickness prevails to a large extent amongst the newly arrived immigrants, and respectable families are frequently reduced to extreme destitution and suffering. Many a husband with a large and helpless family has had to exclaim - "I cannot dig, and to beg I am ashamed."\(^8\)

The Government offered nothing to such families; nor were the other normal supports of British society available.

At home in the midst of his relatives and friends, his case would have excited the warmest sympathy and obtained a cheerful and considerate attention. His children could not long have wanted bread...but here they are surrounded by strangers, and they feel themselves alone in all their wretchedness and misery.\(^9\)

In the city of the 1850s, the immigrant was generally without an extended family and close neighbours; and there were no parishes, no well-established local Councils, no charitable aristocracy, no government action on behalf of the poor. Indeed, Governor Gipps had declared in 1840, 'I cannot consider it the business of Government to provide a General Hospital...even for the town of Melbourne. Such institutions are the objects of private charity.' Gipps was reflecting current British...

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\(^7\) The Melbourne City Council, incorporated in 1842, was also the preserve of the successful. Wealthy rate-payers had multiple votes; no one could stand for election unless he had £1000 in property. See Michael Cannon Life in the Cities Vol 3, Nelson 1975, p 22, and David Dunstan Governing the Metropolis: Melbourne 1850-1891: UP Melbourne 1984.

\(^8\) Letter to the Editor from a subscriber to the Melbourne City Mission Argus 16 May 1855.

\(^9\) Ibid
thinking on the care of the poor.  

In Great Britain, a Poor Law had provided a complete service from Elizabethan times for those in need. Parishes looked after their own poor, and paid for this through rating the occupiers of property. Before 1834, there were workhouses, but most aid was given in the form of wage supplementation, fuel and rent assistance, pensions and some job provision for the unemployed. Under the effects of industrialization, the cost of wars and the increasing costs of poor relief, opinion turned against the Poor Law, and the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, specified that relief was not to be given to able-bodied people unless they entered the workhouse. There, food and conditions were to be kept spartan and the work strenuous, to deter people from entering and to stimulate them to look after themselves. The workhouse became a hated and demeaning place where the poor were, in effect, punished for their poverty and misfortune. 

In Australia, both the well-to-do and the poor wanted nothing to do with such a system. The wealthy abhorred a rate (or any form of land tax); such taxes fell heavily on the wealthy and usually went up, not down. The poor did not want the degradation and coercion of the Poor Law; they wanted work and the opportunity to make good. While perhaps agreeing that a Poor Law might be required in the old, long-settled and traditionally structured society of Britain, most people tended to regard the new 'golden land' as one of boundless opportunities for all. The Victorian government was thus unwilling to legislate for the care of the poor. The initiative for providing help for the needy was passed over to the citizenry. Without any central direction, they responded in an entirely haphazard manner, on the whole reproducing and adapting the forms of private charity that had sprung up in Great Britain in the middle of the nineteenth century.

10 Brian Dickey No Charity There quoted p 35.

11 See J B Hirst 'Keeping colonial history colonial: the Hartz Thesis revisited' in Historical Studies Vol 21 No 82 April 1984 for a summary of both the British and colonial scenes.
From 1845, the Ladies' Benevolent Society placed a Visitor - a voluntary worker from the ranks of well-to-do - in each suburb and the city centre. She investigated cases of distress brought to her notice, and gave assistance in small sums of money and food vouchers if the recipients were adjudged worthy to receive it.\textsuperscript{12} For the first few years they worked entirely with donations from the public, until the government began to provide a yearly grant - a mere £500 in 1863, rising to £3000 in 1869 to the Melbourne branch. Lesser branches in needier suburbs received much less.\textsuperscript{13} This service was the front line of Melbourne poor relief until the era of pensions began at the turn of the century.

The LBS was supplemented by a confetti of other charities. By the end of the century, the provision of charity fell into two major categories.

A Major public institutions
*various hospitals the Melbourne 1846
  the Lying-in 1856
  the Homeopathic 1869 (now Prince Henry's)
  the Children's 1870
  the Austin 1882 (then for incurables)
  the Alfred
*various asylums Benevolent Asylum 1850, run by the LBS for the aged
  the Immigrants' Homes 1853 for the destitute, in St Kilda Road and Royal Park
  the Orphan Asylum 1851
  the Deaf and Dumb Asylum 1860
  the Home for the Blind
  the Yarra Bend Insane Asylum
*various services Industrial Schools for Children 1864-81, and other reformatories
  the Boarding Out system of baby and child care
  the Melbourne District Nursing Society 1885
  the Discharged Prisoners' Aid Society 1872

\textsuperscript{12} For a discussion of the terms 'lady', 'woman' and 'female', and the practice of distinguishing between the 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor, see Chapter 3 pp 45-9, and Chapters 8 and 9.

\textsuperscript{13} See Report of the Royal Commission on Charitable Institutions VPP 1871 No 1 (v2) p xii. The ad hoc nature of Melbourne's charities is illustrated well here. There was no governing body which co-ordinated the various branches of the LBS. Each branch was separate and autonomous. The Melbourne branch, which became almost superfluous as the city centre became more commercial and less residential, attracted the most donations and the greatest subsidies. It was the oldest branch, and was run by the most important ladies in the city. But the greatest need lay elsewhere.
Private and church-run charities

Ragged Schools for poor children, begun by Mrs Hornbrook
Miss Sutherland's work from Scots' Church, and William Forster's Gordon Institute for Boys, in placing difficult or at risk children in rural homes
The Melbourne City Mission 1854
The Wesley Central Mission 1892
Dr Singleton's Night Shelters and Refuges
Refuges for prostitutes (The Catholic nuns of the Convent of the Good Shepherd, Abbotsford ran a Magdalen Asylum from 1863. The Protestant Refuge in Carlton 1858 was the longest lived of several Protestant refuges.)
Model Lodging Houses for poor workmen
The Elizabeth Fry Retreat, South Yarra for women in conflict with the law
Free Medical Dispensaries for the poor in Collingwood and Richmond 1869
The Collingwood creche for working mothers set up by the Australian Church of the Rev Charles Strong
Rev Cherbury's Home of Hope for Children, Collingwood

and many other local and private charitable enterprises

The hospitals and large institutions were operated by public societies. Membership was gained by paying an annual subscription; this gave one the right to elect the managing committee, and to give tickets of admission to people who wanted to enter the institution. No person seeking help could enter the institution without a ticket signed by a subscriber. The government eventually matched subscriptions with a yearly grant. Lists of subscribers were published annually, so that it became important for anyone who wished to be seen as a social leader to be a subscriber to at least one or two charities.

These charities operated individually, without any connection with each other. In 1886, however, a body was set up to co-ordinate and rationalise the disbursement of aid to the distressed: the Charity Organization Society, adapted from an English model. It attempted to streamline and

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14 Ragged Schools, following the British model, offered a basic education plus religious instruction to children too poor to afford even the penny or so a week which ordinary schooling cost. By 1868 there were eleven of these schools scattered over the city from Collingwood to Prahran. They were superseded when universal free education was introduced by the government in 1872. See Sixth Annual Report, The Hornbrook Ragged Schools Association 1868.

15 For the institutions and services listed, see Cannon op cit, Dickey op cit. For descriptions of life in such places, see James The Vagabond Papers.
improve the efficiency of Melbourne's charities, so that aid was not wasted on 'undeserving' people, or duplicated by various charitable bodies. But the whole system of getting aid was so bewildering, arranged for the administrative convenience of its subscribers rather than for the needs of its clients, that it is a wonder that Melbourne's poor were able to make much use of it at all. In addition, some areas of charity were popular while others scarcely received any support. In 1885, there were several Refuges for prostitutes wishing to reform, but only one creche where decent working mothers could leave their children while they earned a living: a nice irony.16

Almost all of these charities were based on British models, but British charities were all supplementary to the Poor Law. They tended to be specialist, and to represent the particular hobby and concern of the well-to-do. They were also the vehicles whereby middle- and upper-class women could legitimately go out into the world and occupy themselves. They tended to be a major outlet for what money such women had.17

Charities in Britain were set up for every conceivable purpose. A glance at Prochaska's lists shows charities established by every known religious sect, by individuals, groups, districts, crafts and professions. There was a Society for Superceding the Necessity of Climbing Boys, societies looking after indigent cabmen or retired governesses.18 Many of these charities were the personal indulgence of their patrons, for charity

16 Hospitals, for instance, commonly refused to accept certain patients. Even the Austin Hospital for incurables refused to accept cancer patients, because it was a frightening and sometimes unsightly disease. For a complete survey of the charity system see Shurlee Swain 'The Victorian Charity Network in the 1890s', PhD thesis University of Melbourne 1976. For hospitals' admission policies see ibid p 62. For the CCS see R Kennedy Charity Warfare Melbourne 1985 and Anthea Hyslop 'Social Reform Movements In Melbourne 1890-1914', PhD LaTrobe University 1980 pp 35-51.


18 Ibid pp 231-252
in Britain was an optional extra. They were also class-biased: retired governesses received much more in the way of assistance than sick cabmen. Charities could pick and choose their clientele; the undeserving - the one who contributed to his own difficulties by indulgence in drink or vice - could be rejected, in favour of the moral poor. The undeserving then had to fall back on the harsh provisions of the Poor Law.

These attitudes and practices were transferred to the antipodes, but charity in Melbourne could not be a benevolent hobby. Even the undeserving had to be given some help, or there would be no help at all, since there was no Poor Law to which they could be referred. The burden of total care for welfare fell heavily on Melbourne's charitable, especially on the women who ran many of the charities. Their work was a serious commitment and produced a high level of anxiety.

It became evident that the funding of basic social welfare through voluntary donations, even with government supplementation, was utterly unsatisfactory. Funds were always short, and the level of giving was erratic. Charities competed against each other for donations. Used to the British version of charity as an optional butter on the basic bread of Poor Law relief, and freed from many of the obligations that a closer-knit social fabric imposed on people in the Old Country, large numbers of Melburnians kept their money to themselves. As Jessie Cairns, long-time President of the Melbourne LBS put it,

> I think it is the same class that subscribes to all our charities; there is an immense number that do not subscribe at all, and there is no possibility of getting at them; they are called upon by the collectors but refuse to give.

When asked for her remedy to this problem, she responded

> It is very difficult to make any suggestion; gentlemen know

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19 Swain _op cit_ pp 38-107.

20 See Chapter 3 for a discussion of these ladies.

21 Royal Commission on Charitable Institutions, _VPP_, 1871, No 1 (v2) p 20.
these things so much better than ladies; but it has occurred to me that a rate would be very desirable, so many do not give at all to the charities; that is, if a rate could be got without a poor law.

Although she knew well the antipathy of the colonists to taxes on property, she saw the only solution to equitable funding for the poor to lie in such measures. 22

This impossible situation was worsened by the standing of women in their society. 'Ladies' did not work at jobs, but 'ladies' could provide charity. Thus, by implication, charitable work was not 'real' work, not, as it were, in the mainstream of that important work carried out by men. It was to be regarded as amateur and probably inefficient, something noble, certainly, but unconnected with the really vital social issues with which men grappled in business and Parliament. Even men's involvement with charity was principally through membership of governing committees, necessarily a part-time occupation. This inevitably meant a less-than-full engagement with the problems of the charity, a problem exacerbated by a tendency for men to be on more than one committee. Their activities were directed more towards the smooth running of the charity, than to innovation or evaluation, both of which would require a greater commitment of time and energy. Charity and the welfare of the poor thus became more and more a peripheral issue. This, in turn, made it easy for uninvolved citizens to underrate the importance of what charitable agencies were doing, to avoid or minimize donations to them, and to explain the failure of charity to keep pace with the needs of the poor as only to be expected from the efforts of the feebler sex and part-time male committee members. 23

22 Ibid p 22.

23 Detailed examples of the workings of such committees will be found in Chapters 3 and 9. Note the comment of Superintendent LaTrobe in 1849 to a request from the Orphan Board that a Ladies' Committee be formed to look after female orphans: 'No doubt the members of the Board are aware that Ladies' Committees prove sometimes...very difficult to manage, and if the object aimed at could be secured with...formal arrangements it might be better.' PRO Colonial Land and Immigration Papers, Box 115/2, Letter 49/240.
In this way, the grossly handicapped system of charity could be blamed for its inadequacies by a society which had itself imposed many of these handicaps. In much the same way public opinion could blame the poor for their poverty, without having to note and grapple with those inequities in society which were major contributors to poverty. For instance, the LBS proved that it was impossible for a woman to earn a living at needlework. Mrs Euphemia Turnbull testified to the Royal Commission on Charitable Institutions in 1871,

The women in my own neighbourhood I judge from; by working till twelve o'clock at night they barely earn 5s. a week, and how is a woman to support herself and four children on that? Some of the ladies have taken the work themselves, and sat the whole day to see how much they could earn, and could not do enough to make a living by it; and those women never need be on the society if they could get sufficient work. 24

Yet the general view was that males were breadwinners, and women's work did not need to be well paid. The actual existence of countless female breadwinners and the low bargaining power of women of all classes, meant that this glaring inequity was not addressed. Mrs Cairns' diffidence in suggesting a rate, and Mrs Turnbull's unconscious use of the word 'work' when she clearly means 'payment', underline the lack of confidence in their own judgement, in their ability to diagnose social problems accurately, which afflicted even these energetic and publicly active women. They were aware that, as women, they were fundamentally uneducated in the public world of law, politics and business, the domain of men, and their unsureness in venturing judgements on that world shows through.

The charity network failed to carry the load. Often the sick or frail aged poor ended in gaol on vagrancy charges, for there was simply not enough accommodation for them in charitable institutions. Fifty-six year old fisherman James Winchester, for example, died in the Melbourne Gaol Hospital of a stroke while serving three months' hard labour for vagrancy in 1883. The medical officer testified that he had been in gaol earlier in

24 VPP op cit.
the same year, paralysed by an earlier stroke. The sad truth was that to a man so ill and helpless, the Gaol Hospital provided the most readily accessible form of aid and care in the city. As Hirst aptly puts it, 'In England the workhouses were condemned as prisons; in Australia the anxiety to avoid the cruelty of the workhouses meant prisons were actually being used in their place.' The scale of the depression of the 1890s underlined even more clearly the inadequacies of voluntary charity, based as it was on donations; at a time when charity was most needed, charitable societies' incomes fell drastically.

Rethinking about charity and providing care for the poor joined the other streams of thought which were gathering momentum in the 1890s. Socialist ideas about the reorganisation of society, and the cause of women's emancipation, were bubbling up into public debate. As the turn of the century and Federation both approached, idealistic yearnings for changes that would produce a purer and more just society added a Utopian quality to the discourse. Anthea Hyslop has traced the campaigns for factory reform and the abolition of sweated labour, as well as the rise of opinion in favour of a minimum wage and pensions for the aged poor in that decade. In the period up to World War 1 the fruits of women's efforts to gain civil, legal and economic rights were in part realised in the right to vote, in pensions for widows, in new ideas about child care and protection, and campaigns against drink, drugs and gambling. Throughout these years, it is evident that 'charity' itself was changing; personal benevolent alms-giving was giving way to the scientific principles of social welfare, in large part administered by the state and organized by specially trained people. Although the state was taking a more central role, these changes also deeply influenced the old charitable societies; the Melbourne City

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25 Inquest on James Winchester, PRO series 24, No 315 703/1883. Hirst op cit p 89.

26 Hyslop op cit.
Mission was no exception (see Chapter 2).

Evangelicalism

Charity and evangelicalism in nineteenth century Melbourne were in complex alliance: it is almost impossible to speak of one without the other. The powerful evangelical revival in Great Britain beginning in the late eighteenth century became a vigorous current in the great outpouring of charity in the nineteenth century, to the extent that many charities were missions, and many missions charities. Charles Booth, in the volume of his massive survey *Life and Labour of the People in London* published 1892, described a city 'dotted over with buildings devoted to this work. In the poorer parts especially, in almost every street, there is a mission; they are more numerous than schools or churches, and only less numerous than public houses.'

From these premises, men and women ventured into the surrounding lanes, Bible in hand. Their converts entered for the weekly Gospel Meetings.

As with charities, missions were set up for every conceivable purpose: to convert Jews, Negroes, sailors; to save prostitutes and criminals. At the most glamorous - and dangerous - end of the spectrum were the foreign missions, but missions at home were more numerous, especially after the British census of 1851 confirmed (as active middle class evangelists had long been aware) that the working classes were not religious and did not attend church.

The people who created missions were in many cases the creators of charities, for they sprang from the same cultural and mental processes. To the evangelical Christian, especially in the zealous days after his own

27 Vol vii, p 270.

28 Prochaska *op cit* pp 231-252 for lists.

29 K Inglis *Churches and the Working Classes in Victorian England* Routledge


deeply exhilarating conversion, the principal purpose of life was to bring the Gospel to those ignorant of it so they too could share the life-changing experience. Every charitable activity such a Christian undertook had this evangelical purpose. What is more, the Gospel of salvation had to be pressed home to each individual personally. Evangelicals were less interested in mass-producing Christian converts than in saving the one lost sheep whom they came to know personally. The parable of the lost sheep was very popular; 'Joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons' according to Luke.30

The Bible also commanded Christians to help those in need. Heasman states that by the mid-nineteenth century in Britain, those who had been converted were straightway expected to become involved in work amongst the less fortunate.31 The notion of personalized evangelism joined with the preference for giving charity to the poor personally and individually, which was the hallmark of many charitable societies; the most characteristic form of such missions and charities was home visitation. This was the method most favoured by women engaged in such work, who felt competent at a personal level, and in the homes of the poor, but had no training in the more highly institutionalised forms of charity. Victorian women were firmly inculcated with their moral and spiritual duties to serve others, through a constant flow of popular religious literature. Who could resist the deeply moving deathbed conversion, or the saving of innocent little children in darkened hovels from a life of filth and degradation?32

Not only was the preferred modus operandi the same in charity and evangelism; the complex of notions about the two worked in remarkably

similar ways. Where charity was concerned, it was commonly felt that people were poor because they had mismanaged their lives through various inadequacies in their characters, combined with misfortunes. The English Charity Organization Society founded in 1869 saw charity as providing the necessary breathing space for poor people to enable them to make a fresh start, free from those errors of conduct or accidental misfortunes which had led them to their present poverty. They stressed notions of character building, independence and strengthening. Likewise, the evangelical path began with the admission of personal error and inadequacy, the acknowledgement of one's sinful nature, and one's inability to control life as one wished. With this admission came the acceptance of the need for help. This help, or salvation, came from throwing oneself at the foot of the Cross, and surrendering to Christ Jesus. In both thought patterns, life would continue to be hard, but one would be strengthened and enabled to go on.

Where the two lines of thought coincided in evangelical charity workers, the logical end was to pursue conversion as an act of charity. The need was seen as self-evident. Poverty and evangelical Christianity both stressed the helplessness of man and offered ways to make him a little less helpless, or, at least, a means by which he might bear his helplessness, or even take comfort in it. 'Blessed are the poor in spirit'. These notions have been preserved in the great and still popular hymns:

Abide with me: fast falls the eventide;  
The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide;  
When other helpers fail, and comforts flee,  
Help of the helpless, O abide with me.  
Henry Lyte 1793-1847

Nothing in my hand I bring,  
Simply to Thy cross I cling;  
Naked, come to thee for dress;  
Helpless look to thee for grace;

Foul, I to the fountain fly;  
Wash me, Saviour, or I die.  
Rock of ages, cleft for me,  
Let me hide myself in Thee.  
A M Toplady 1740-78

The involvement of evangelicals in systematic personal visitation was instrumental - in Melbourne as in London - in bringing to public notice the extent of the needs of the poor. Many missionaries set up small self-help groups with their Mothers' Meetings, with instruction in the care of the home and children, savings funds, gym clubs, Sunday schools and so on. Evangelism and charity in these areas were virtually synonymous.

The involvement of evangelicals in charity also dispelled the idea that charity was provided by the rich for the poor. Many evangelical charity workers were themselves poor; and by the late nineteenth century, the donations and subscriptions which supported the work came from all levels of society. Charity was no longer to be thought of as a preserve of the rich, but the responsibility of all Christians of whatever station, each as he or she could afford. Indeed, the annual subscription to the society or charity was itself part of the personalizing so much sought by evangelicals; not all could be workers in the field, but all could be part of the work. The little magazines put out by mission societies for their subscribers were rich with personal anecdotes, so that the donor could say 'This child I helped to feed; that poor soul on her death bed I helped to bring to Christ'. They emphasized that all citizens are responsible for the care of their less fortunate fellows.

In both England and Melbourne, by the end of the nineteenth century, a vigorous Christian Socialist movement was produced from just such a conclusion, although by no means all Christians with social consciences supported socialism. The ideas and activities which they developed and publicized contributed largely to the wider sense that Christ's salvation should be augmented on earth by greater human justice; in Melbourne this

34 Heasman op cit p 286 for England; Bysslop op cit for Melbourne.
led to pressure for Old Age Pensions and the abolition of sweating.

Melbourne in the second half of the nineteenth century reproduced the missionary structures of Great Britain just as she reproduced her forms of charity. All major denominations engaged as a matter of course in foreign missionary enterprises, but Melbourne itself was not neglected. A survey of the evangelical paper The Southern Cross for the year 1878 reveals the existence of the Melbourne City Mission; a City Female Factory Mission; Flower Missionaries\(^{35}\); the Melbourne Gospel Tent; the Bouverie Street Mission, Carlton; the Seamen’s Mission; the Chinese Mission of the Presbyterian Church; the Melbourne United Evangelistic Association; the Church of England Mission to Aborigines; and the Rev Cherbury’s Collingwood Mission - all ably supported by the Religious Tract Society.

Christians were aware though, that, as the century waned, the old evangelical fervour was dying. The Southern Cross, in the 1880s, became increasingly disturbed by this decline. Despite periodic Missions (in the modern sense of ‘crusades’), the general evangelical pressure was easing. By the early years of the twentieth century most local missions had either disappeared, were continuing in a very minor and depleted way, or were evolving into social welfare agencies.

The Melbourne City Mission and the City Mission Movement

The Melbourne City Mission is the major focus of this thesis. It provides a valuable object of study in many of its aspects. It was one of the very few interdenominational Protestant bodies to undertake evangelism, using house-to-house visitation by paid missionaries. It was the only group which had paid agents working daily with the poor; it played a major part

\(^{35}\) Contact was made by the giving of a flower to people coming out of factories, hotels or theatres, or to those in hospital.
in establishing the principal of payment and training for social workers, thus opening the way to the whole range of social services which exist today. It was not an agency for dispensing relief to poor families, but acted as a channelling body for the poor, by directing them to sources of relief, and explaining to them the workings of the charity network. Missionaries knew how and from whom aid could be got.

Missionaries became valued mediators in many other situations. They placed children in schools, wrote letters for the illiterate, visited people in prison and hospital for families unable to make the trip, hired cabs to take the sick to hospital, explained the meaning of legal documents, wrote references, appeared in court on behalf of people, arranged for the care of orphans, took prostitutes to the Refuge, buried the dead and conducted private commemorative services for them, and listened daily to the anxieties and problems of the families they visited. They recorded all these activities in their Journals, many of which have survived to provide crucial information for the historian.

The City Mission movement was the brainchild of a Scottish evangelical David Nasmith, who began the Glasgow City Mission in 1826 to evangelise the poor. After his successes there, he moved on to other spiritually blighted cities; the London City Mission, begun in 1835, soon outstripped its parent in the extent and success of its operations. Nasmith continued to set up City Missions until, at his death in 1839, there were 45 in Great Britain and 36 in USA and Canada. Many of these collapsed without strong leadership, but those which survived, in many cases, became the organizing point around which social work developed in the twentieth century.36

By the 1880s, the London City Mission had carried development of the movement to its most extensive point. Its missionaries became key people to the populations amongst whom they worked. Some specialized in particular groups of people - soldiers, postmen, cabmen, policemen, even gypsies.

36 Heasman op cit p 35.
Others organized community interaction, setting up mothers' meetings, ragged schools and Gospel Meetings, the poor man's church. They provided advice on where to seek aid in times of need. Through the publication of their monthly magazine, a wide range of people were acquainted with conditions in the slums. 37 By 1889, the LCM was employing 491 men, who conducted a staggering 66,390 indoor meetings in Mission Halls, factories and similar places, 8,650 outdoor meetings, plus countless thousands of visits to people in their own homes in that year alone. 38

Although Nasmith had no time in which to found City Missions in the antipodes, the movement was nonetheless swiftly transplanted there. The Melbourne City Mission was inaugurated in 1854; a Hobart Town City Mission was in operation in 1855; 39 the Sydney City Mission made a somewhat belated start in 1862; 40 missions also existed in Adelaide, Brisbane, Launceston and Ballarat. 41 Each of these Missions was established through the concern of local Christians, who had had some contact with City Missions in Britain and saw their suitability as working structures for tackling similar problems of godlessness among the poor in Australian cities.

The Melbourne City Mission was prompted initially by lay men and women, but the leadership of the body was primarily in the hands of leading Protestant clerics. The Sydney City Mission had a different texture. Its founder, the businessman Benjamin Short, impressed the stamp of the business world on the Mission, although prominent clerics were always associated with it. 42 Both these Missions had contacts with the

37 Ibid p 36.

38 Southern Cross 5 July 1889.

39 Argus 25 May 1855.


41 Melbourne City Mission Minutes 2 February 1905.

42 Kaldor ibid p 61.
London City Mission, which they both adopted as their parent body, and whose rules they followed. But all initiation of contact came from Australia; there was no flow of support and encouragement, although direct requests for advice were usually met. The LCM, which itself had begun as a parochial charity, was still of that mind, despite its size, and was not going to be pushed into leadership of an international movement.43

Yet the slightness of the contact between the various Australian Missions and London permitted each to evolve in its own distinctive way. The SCM, run on business principles, launched energetically into acquiring properties and Mission Halls in the 1880s, and was incorporated in 1901, partly in order to safeguard its properties. Its work was conducted from its fifteen Mission Halls well into the 1960s. Melbourne, less adventurous, perhaps, because of its clerical leadership, did not adopt the principle of working from halls until 1901, and was not incorporated until 1908.44

This separate evolution of the Australian City Missions was abetted by the complete lack of contact between them, until after the turn of the century, when, in 1901, the MCM sought advice from the energetic Secretary of the SCM, Rev E Moore, on the way to go about acquiring and using properties. Moore organized the first Inter Mission Conference in 1905. The City Mission Movement in Australia was finally coming of age.45

43 Such is still the case. The LCM continues its work in London today in precisely the same form as in the 1880s. It has not evolved into the forms of the present day Melbourne or Sydney City Missions, which are social welfare agencies offering a wide variety of services. See Handbook of the London City Mission 1976 edition.

44 Kaldor op cit p 64. Minutes op cit 3 January 1901, 10 July 1903. Letter of incorporation in Minute Book 15 August 1908.

45 Minutes ibid 4 April, 3 May 1901, 2 February 1905.
The Hon. James Balfour, M.L.C., for many years the honored president of the Melbourne City Mission

Mrs. Hornbrook, Founder of the Mission

(Pictures from City Mission Record 1 June 1927.)

Dr John Singleton (1808-91), founder and MCM committee member 1867-71.

(Picture from War Cry 9 February 1884)
CHAPTER 2

THE MELBOURNE CITY MISSION 1854-1914

"...for Christ and humanity."

Missionary William Hall,
Journal 22 June 1904.

Beginnings

Out of the turmoil threatening the citizens of gold-rush Melbourne in 1854, came the comforting clear call for a united endeavour to restore God to His people and order to society. The call came from Bishop Perry, and was addressed to men and women, representing "the intelligence, respectability and wealth of the metropolis."¹

The proposal to form a Melbourne City Mission was unveiled before an audience of six hundred by the Bishop of Melbourne on 11 August 1854. First mooted by some concerned Christian men and women - notably, Mrs Hornbrook, founder of Melbourne's Ragged Schools movement, and Dr John Singleton, philanthropist extraordinaire² - the idea received enough support to be at last presented to Melbourne's citizenry at this public meeting in the Mechanic's Institute. A strange exaltation gripped the gathering. Speaker after speaker rose to add his contribution to the energetic sense of purpose moving through the hall.

'The object of the Mission' declared Perry, "...is...to deliver out of the bondage of our great adversary, the devil, those whom he now holds captives at his will; to make the intemperate sober, to make the vicious...

¹ The Banner 15 August 1854.
² Weekly Times 6 August 1904; Singleton Narrative of Incidents in the Eventful Life of a Physician 1891 p 144.
good...’3 Rev W L Chase 4 pronounced that ‘the Sabbath-breakers, the
thoughtless, the profligate, the drunkard, the profane, the ignorant, the
back-slider and the infidel need to be solemnly warned and diligently
instructed. But’, he asked, ‘how is this great and necessary work to be
accomplished?’ Fortunately, a model existed already for such a work, in the
London City Mission. Its rules had been obtained and its practices
examined, and found to offer no violence to the beliefs of any Protestant.
‘No sacrifice of sound doctrine respecting forms of Church Government is
required, but true Christians differing in their views of ecclesiastical
polity, co-operate together for the spread of vital religion.’5

This vision of Christian harmony and co-operation was grasped by the
audience enthusiastically. It was proposed that

Missionaries of approved character and qualifications, who shall
give themselves to the work, shall be employed and paid by the
Institution. Their duty shall be to visit from house to house, in
the respective districts that shall be assigned to them, read the
Scriptures, engage in religious conversation and urge those who
are living in the neglect of religion to observe the Sabbath, and
to attend public worship. They shall also see that all persons
possess the Scriptures, shall distribute approved religious
tracts, and aid in obtaining scriptural education for children.
...they shall hold meetings for the reading and expounding of the
Scriptures and prayer.6

A committee elected by the meeting was to conduct the business of the
Mission and administer its funds, raised through donations, subscriptions,
legacies and collections. The committee was to consist of men, clerical and
lay, representing all Protestant denominations in the city. Dr Perry, Henry
Langlands, a prominent Baptist, and Mr Allen ‘of the Gas Works’ then
described to the audience the workings of the London City Mission, and its

3 Banner op cit.

4 He was referring to the two preliminary meetings of 3 and 11 July, which
had thoroughly discussed the nature of the proposed Mission.

5 Argus 16 August 1854. The phrase ‘vital religion’ was used by evangelicals
to describe their own form of religion, especially when, following a
dramatic conversion, a person’s life was significantly changed. See Ian
Bradley The Call to Seriousness, Macmillan New York 1976, Introduction
and Chapter 1.

6 Argus ibid.
parent body, the Glasgow City Mission. Other speakers gave their views. Dr Adam Cairns, the foremost Presbyterian minister in the colony, spoke eloquently for many when he described Melbourne—`in many respects the most interesting and marvellous of places in all this world...Nothing in history resembles it!'—as also a sink of iniquity. `The evil which exists among us is not only most energetic, but most formidable. No sooner does the immigrant reach our shores but he finds temptations...the drinking shop greets him at every turning...so many fountains of pollution—the curse and disgrace of Melbourne; [they] soon forget their early associations and they learn first, to desecrate the Sabbath...Then they forget the worship of God as a necessary consequence...' 7

The fear of social anarchy was strong also in Henry Cooke, a well-to-do merchant, who was elected Treasurer of the new Mission at the meeting. He continued Cairns' analysis in the editorial of the first issue of his newspaper, The Age, 17 October 1854. 8

Everything connected with the social condition of Victoria possesses an interest to be measured only by its singular physical advantages and its expanding prospects. ...But...moral causes are omnipotent and lasting, whilst mere material good is speedily neutralized or turned into positive evil, by the poison of social depravity. Could we suppose that the sunny fields of Victoria were by and bye to be occupied by many millions of human beings, indifferent to the principles of Christian morality, we could foresee nothing in such a state of things but a universal and increasing social corruption.

In another article in the same issue, entitled The Evil and the Good the dangers were spelt out more specifically. There were three sources of evil in the colony: first, intemperance, `that scarlet sin that is hurrying thousands to destruction'; second, `mammonism...vulgar pride, insatiable arrogance, a spirit of fraud and over-reaching' brought about by freely available gold; and, third, the mixed character of the population in which

7 Banner op cit.
8 The Cooke brothers pledged their paper to uphold `freedom of commerce, freedom of religion' and to be high both in principle and tone. The paper became insolvent in 1856 and was taken over by Ebenezer and David Syme. See G Hutton & L Tanner (eds) The Age: 125 Years of Age Nelson, Melbourne 1979, p v.
'the profane, the sensual and the reckless' are prominent. 'Even those who were blameless at home are soon seduced by the general example; the youth, accustomed to habits of religion in his father's house, soon throws off restraints and follows the multitude in a career of self-indulgence.'

Cooke's answer to this threat was 'the number of energetic Christian men which has come in with the vital flood, and who have brought along with them both a pure faith and a will to exert it.' For 'nothing less than religious influences can be expected to neutralize these deep rooted vices, and save this country from becoming a reproach and a bye-word among the nations.'

It is interesting to note that the Argus did not share this view of the social condition of Victoria. 'Society in the colony is gradually passing from the state of confusion into which it was thrown by the gold discoveries, to a condition of order and permanence.' But for Henry Cooke and Dr Cairns, social dislocation with its irreligion and vice could not be self-correcting; so the Mission was envisaged as a frontline attack, led by men 'not only of...philanthropic and Christian spirit, but...of a large and liberal mind' who would restore society to godliness and moral order. For gold had changed men; as Dr Cairns warned, Melbourne's population was quite different from that ground-down slum population ministered to in London: 'men here are in the prime of life, in the vigour of body and intellect, some of them highly educated, full of robustness, self-willed, daring, bold...'

The salvation of the masses was seen by Cairns and Cooke as the most suitable way of taming and controlling a burgeoning society which they saw as threatening in its self-confidence and its lack of order, harmony, discipline. It seemed a quite uncontrolled freedom. The sources of its licence were the age-old sources of sin: greed and lust, drink and

9 Argus 18 October 1854
10 Banner op cit.
godlessness, but found in a time and place where it seemed that the
disciplinary weight of civilization would not be felt sufficiently to press
men into decency.

Thus salvation was seen as having a vital social role, as well as a
spiritual one. Religion was the common bond which would enable this jumble
of people to cohere, and which would hold at bay the notion that material
gain and enjoyment were the vital elements of life. People will only seek
each other and God when self-sufficiency proves impossible; self-suffic-
ience does not make for social conscience or obedience; self-sufficiency
does not lead to God. But prove to a man his own weakness, and he will not
only welcome Christ, but will make a better citizen as well.

This was the view of men who saw themselves as the leaders of the young
city of Melbourne, best fitted to lay down the path that society should
follow. Hence the mixture of confident exhilaration, a sense of being well
and rightly placed; and the slight tug of anxiety that forces beyond their
influence might thwart their efforts.\textsuperscript{11}

Unfortunately, as was usual on public occasions, only the voices of
religious and business leaders were heard. It is unlikely that they ref-
lected, for example, the process of thought in the mind of Mrs Hornbrook,
the elderly widow who had begun the campaign for a City Mission. She was
apparently a woman of such modesty that there is scarcely a trace of her
left for the historian to find. From the few references to her that remain,
it would seem that love for, and distress at, the difficulties of others
loomed larger in her mind than notions of social order.

The ladies\textsuperscript{12} who made up the later committees seem also to have been
more concerned with relieving distress and raising morals than with

\textsuperscript{11} A more detailed analysis of the origins and social position of these men
will be found in Chapter 3.

\textsuperscript{12} I use the term in this thesis to indicate those who were active as
leaders of the MCM. 'Women' are clients of the Mission. The class
implications of these terms will be discussed later.
fulfilling any other social purpose. Similarly, it would be wrong to assume that the actual missionaries in any way adhered to the notions of the Cooke and Cairns of the committee, or consciously purveyed them in their daily tasks. What actually happened between missionary and client will be examined in a later chapter.

It can be assumed, then, that the opinions aired at the inaugural meeting did not fully reflect those of many supporters of the Mission, but were those of a certain type of prominent man whose involvement, once the Mission was a working institution, was only slight. One can argue, too, that these ideas were in some sense peculiar to 1854. A W Martin examined the attitudes of 'an emergent upper class unsure of its authority' to the upheavals caused by the gold rush, in Sydney in 1854.13 Their reactions were virtually the same as those of Perry, Cairns and Cooke. Where Cairns talks of 'self-willed, daring, bold' men, Henry Parkes talks of the 'haughty and discourteous bearing of workmen...the only Master acknowledged during the week [being] Drunkenness.'14 When things settled to their former state in 1855, he remarked that workmen were no longer 'so obtrusive and so extravagant.'15

Martin notes that a Select Committee inquiring into intemperance in 1854-5 was distressed that old patterns of class division and behaviour were overturned by the gold rush. This distress eased greatly in 1855 when the 'normal' social patterns reasserted themselves; the market again acted as a discipline on the labour force, and the workingman sank back into his 'place'. 1854 was also a year of great disturbance in Melbourne. Governor Hotham saw 'jumble and confusion' in government and commerce. Gold

13 'Drink and deviance in Sydney: investigating intemperance 1854-5' in Historical Studies April 1977, Vol 17 No 68.
14 Empire 4 March and 7 November 1854, quoted in ibid p 359.
15 Ibid.
production was falling, imports were rising; wages fell, unemployment rose. The Eureka outburst was brewing. It is possible that these events were working on the anxieties of Melbourne's emergent ruling class, and that such men saw the MCM as an avenue through which to regularize society. If so, however, this view did not last long: the rhetoric of later annual meetings of the MCM stressed the helplessness of the poor and the impotence of the Mission.

The Melbourne City Mission 1854-6

The inaugural meeting was a great success. The MCM was formed, five missionaries were hired at a handsome £300 per annum each, and were set to work round Melbourne. Within a year, the two problems that were to dog the Mission for the rest of the century had become evident.

The first was already under debate at a meeting in Collingwood in May 1855.

A controversy took place concerning the propriety of relieving the bodily wants of the poorer people, -clothing and feeding them as well as administering spiritual advice. [Some] thought the association ought not to partake of the nature of a benevolent society. [Others], on the other hand, considered it was useless administering advice and spiritual consolation to men who wanted bread and meat, but that preaching to the ignorant and destitute would be more likely to be effective, if at the same time they saw their pressing necessities were relieved.

The Collingwood missionary, Joseph Greathead, had taken it upon himself to organize aid for the poor on the Flat; two bakers supplied him with 'a certain number of loaves per week for the relief of the famishing'. But the resolution of this problem was swept aside by another more urgent concern for the committee.

This second problem threatened the very existence of the Mission. By

16 Serle The Golden Age pp 157, 160
17 Argus 24 May 1855.
18 Ibid 22 May 1855.
May 1855, it was 'all but brought to a stand for want of funds'; it had ceased to function by September 1856. The problem of funding remained constant and insoluble into the twentieth century.

**The Ladies' Melbourne and Suburban City Mission 1856-1864**

In August 1856, when it was evident that the original committee had given up its attempt to run the MCM, a group of ladies who had urged its foundation, led by Mrs Hornbrook and Mrs Handfield, organized themselves to raise money to employ missionaries. They were deeply involved with the Protestant Refuge which they had set up, first in Richmond, then in 1858, in Carlton, and looked to a missionary to seek out repentant prostitutes to enter it. They proposed that a gentlemen's committee led by the Rev H H P Handfield should direct the Mission, now to be known as The Ladies' Melbourne and Suburban City Mission.  

The new Mission had many connections with the lapsed MCM: many of the committee members and missionaries had served in the latter. Beginning with caution, the ladies provided £200 per annum (which the men 'deemed too small a sum') to employ one missionary, Joseph Greathead. Over the next few months, more were employed at the same salary, and distributed over the city as shown on the map. As they resigned or died, they were replaced. Each was required to provide a record of his labours by completing a daily journal. In addition to the ordinary missionaries, a converted Jew, Mr Mollis, was hired half-time to work through lodging houses frequented by sailors and Jews, and Mrs Clarke, a Biblewoman of twenty years'

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19 Ibid 5 May 1855; Age 2 September 1856.

20 I shall continue to use the abbreviation MCM throughout, for the name of the Mission was altered slightly on many occasions.

21 Minutes 13 and 20 August 1856.

22 Ibid 14 September 1858.
Distribution of Missionaries over Melbourne 1854-64

- 1856
- added 1857
- extended 1860
- reduced 1862
experience in England, was hired to work especially 'where the haunts of the fallen are found.'

While the work was thus expanding, the committees were wrestling with circumstances not covered by the London City Mission rules. For example, should missionaries be allowed to preach regularly in churches? When and where else could they preach? It became clear that each missionary should have a superintendent from the committee who would read his Journal, and to whom these other problems could be referred.

The most unpleasant task was to deal with accusations against Joseph Greathead of being drunk and of frequenting bars. His accusers, a clergyman and his wife and another couple, testified before both committees, sitting separately. Then Greathead was called to defend himself. The Ladies’ committee felt the charges were proven; the men’s committee did not. However, even the imputation of unseemliness was seen as damaging to the Mission, and Greathead’s services were dispensed with.

By February 1864, it was clear that the most pressing concerns for the committees were organizational. The men’s committee developed many new rules designed to control the missionaries: to define their activities and relationship with the committee and clientele more exactly; and to clarify which basic doctrines must be presented by the missionaries to maintain the interdenominational balance of the Mission. Details in Missionaries’ Journals were to be more complete, with names of clients, street names and numbers fully recorded. Limitations were placed on visitations to Hospitals, Asylums, schools etc. On the vexed question of supplying relief to the poor, the missionary was instructed not to administer relief

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23 Ibid 9 March 1863. A Biblewoman was a female door-to-door missionary, usually from the working class. She also set up mothers’ meetings which provided poor women with domestic advice and skills as well as prayer and religious instruction.

24 Minutes 17 January 1859.

25 Ibid 30 December 1859, 5 and 13 January 1860.
personally, nor occupy his time in seeking relief, but simply report the case to his superintendent. Missionaries were to attend church and take communion regularly. Rules for superintendents were laid down.26

Meanwhile, the Ladies' committee was wrestling with the difficulties of fund raising. These were such that they decided in May 1864 to hand over fund-raising to 'the Churches of Melbourne and its suburbs', and restrict themselves to the support of the Biblewoman, whose work more closely followed their own female interests.27

The Melbourne and Suburban Bible and Domestic Female Mission 1864-?

The Mission now split in two. The ladies, working with Biblewomen, expanded the hitherto limited evangelical aims of the Mission into something more akin to a community welfare programme for poor women and their families. By 1868, they were employing seven Biblewomen. In this, they were more fortunate than the men's committee, because they were able to employ women at £52 per annum, whereas the men had to pay four times as much to male missionaries.28

Their work was concentrated in Collingwood, Fitzroy, Carlton and Richmond, although one patroness paid for a time for a woman to work in Castlemaine. The Biblewomen visited house to house, organized cottage prayer meetings and mothers' meetings for reading and work (mostly sewing), allowing a community of women to form to exchange ideas and skills, and provide friendship and support for each other. These weekly or fortnightly meetings provided practical training in parenting and household skills, hygiene and sewing. The ladies reported proudly in the 1866 Annual Report

26 Ibid 22 February, 4 April, 6, 16, 24 June, 30 August 1864, 3 January 1865.

27 Ibid 13 May, 5 July 1864

that 'habits of industry and cleanliness have been formed or stimulated.'

Women of all classes engaged in much the same life tasks in caring for their households and bearing and raising children. Because the lady superintendents were not pursuing professional careers (as were their male counterparts in the Mission), they were free themselves to engage in direct contact with poor women when they conducted the mothers’ meetings. They perceived this contact as providing 'the "missing link" in society and [uniting] to an extent hitherto unknown the different classes of female society; raising and blessing each by the contact and sympathy of the others.'

There are scarcely any surviving records of the Ladies’ Mission. A letter to the Southern Cross testifies to its continuing existence in 1882, but silence falls thereafter.

The Melbourne and Suburban City Mission 1864-1902

Meanwhile, the men’s committee set about reorganizing their arm of the Mission, with an elaborate scheme intended to provide long-term reliable financing of their activities. The Minister and a layman from each of the Protestant churches in Melbourne were to become General Committee members and provide at least £5 annually to supplement private subscriptions, and what the paid collector was able to get. An executive committee would run

29 2nd Annual Report of the Melbourne and Suburban Bible and Domestic Female Mission 1866. The use of the phrase 'missing link' in inverted commas suggests that the Ladies were now using as their model Mrs Ranyard’s London Bible and Domestic Mission, begun 1857, rather than the London City Mission. Mrs Ranyard described her work in her book Missing Link published 1860, and gave the same name to a periodical on her work among women. See K Heasman Evangelicals in Action London 1962, pp 25-6, 36-7. Heasman’s description of Mrs Ranyard’s Mission matches closely the work of the Melbourne ladies, but for one area. Heasman records, 'The city missionaries and the biblewomen usually worked together in a [London] district...and the Mission Hall would often be the centre for the biblewomen's meetings.' ibid p 37. There is some evidence of missionaries working with biblewomen in Melbourne (see Chapter 4), but since the NFM did not work from Mission Halls regularly until 1900, the link between the two arms of the mission was tenuous at best.
Distribution of Missionaries over Melbourne and suburbs

1854-1914

NORTH MELBOURNE
Samuel Stephens 1857-1875
Edward Knox 1877-1880
Thomas Murray 1880-1887
(to Collingwood)
George Fowler 1886-1892
George Martin 1892-1894
(from City; to S.Melb)
Miss Burns 1905-1912
(to Carlton)

BRUNSWICK
Miss Hartnett 1896-1914
Miss Dykes 1908-1914

CARLTON/FITZROY
? Henderson 1858-1859
Ziba Sumner 1869-1872
Andrew Mason 1873-1888
Thomas Murray 1890-1893
(from Collingwood)
Miss Todd 1895-?
Miss Aitcheson 1895-1914
Miss Ikin 1912-1914
(fom N.Melb; to Pt Melb)

CENTRAL CITY
William Buchanan 1854-1858
? Withey 1854-5, 1857-59
Samuel Weir 1859-1862
Henry Brien 1861-1864
John Cromack 1871-1889
(from Prahran)
William Shepherd 1886-1890
(to S.Melbourne)
George Martin 1891
(from Richmond; to N.Melb)
Miss McKenzie 1892-1893

SOUTH MELBOURNE
? Nicholson 1867-1869
(including Prahran 1868)
Charles Hoffman 1871-1885
George Martin 1885-1890
(to C'wood/Richmond)
William Shepherd 1890-1893
(from City; to C'wood)
George Martin 1894-1895
(from City)
William Hall 1901-1913
(from Prahran)
Mrs Whitridge 1906-1914

PRAHRAN
Ebenezer Taylor 1864-1866
Andrew Mason 1866-1868
John Cromack 1869-1870
(to City; part-time Collector 1871-89)
Reuben West 1870-1876
William Shepherd 1879-1881
1881-1883
Aeneas English 1883
William Hall 1884-1900
(to S.Melbourne)

COLLINGWOOD/RICHMOND
Joseph Greathead 1854-1859
William Gould 1859-1862
John Ivey 1862-1886
Andrew Mason 1873-1885
Thomas Murray 1887-1890
(from N.Melbourne; to Carlton/Fitzroy)
James Barber 1888-1891
George Martin 1890-1891
(from S.Melbourne; to Central City)
William Shepherd 1894-1912
(from S.Melbourne; to Pt.Melbourne)
Miss McEwen 1896-1898
Miss Young 1898-1907
Miss Thompson (Mrs Whitridge) 1901-1904
Miss Dickson 1905-1914

YARRA RIVER

PORT MELBOURNE
Miss Todd 1901-1912
(from Carlton/Fitzroy)
Miss Ikin 1901-1912
(to Carlton/Fitzroy)
Miss Burns 1913-1914
(from Carlton/Fitzroy)

PORT PHILLIP BAY

Distribution of Missionaries

1854-1914
the day-to-day affairs of the Mission, with the Rev Robert Hamilton continuing as Secretary. The name was to be changed to the Melbourne and Suburban City Mission. These proposals were agreed to at a public meeting attended by most of the new delegates.\footnote{30 Minutes 6, 16, 24, 27 June 1864.}

The new arrangements never really worked. The number of missionaries did grow to six, but one was to be a Bush Missionary, starting work in 1867 at Broadmeadows and Bulla, under a private sponsor.\footnote{31 This arm of the Mission was the charity of George Brodie, until he died in 1879. Missionaries were eventually based at Dandenong, Phillip Island, and Healesville. Minutes 7 and 15 January 1867, Annual Report 1873, and the diary of Joseph Sherwill, the Healesville missionary.} The missionaries discharged their duties diligently. They visited house to house, exhorting and instructing. They referred families to sources of temporal aid, and placed their children in schools. They comforted the sick and eased the dying. In pairs, they visited the unsavoury district around Little Bourke Street, to persuade prostitutes to abandon their life of vice.\footnote{32 An examination of this aspect of the work is found in Chapter 8.}

But by 1870, it was clear that the Mission was in severe difficulties. Victoria’s population had grown by 60% between 1861 and 1881. In the latter year, there were 283,000 people in Melbourne, and many of these had flocked to the city during the 1870s as country work opportunities declined.\footnote{33 Geoffrey Serle The Rush to be Rich MUP Melbourne 1971, pp 1 and 6.} The possible clientele had increased enormously, but the Mission could barely afford the five missionaries with whom it had covered the city in the late 1850s.

The 1870s were dismal years for the Mission. The committee frantically moved their five missionaries around the city in a vain attempt to meet the need. They lowered the rates of pay of the men; the salary now began at £120 per annum for a single man, with a £10 increment for a wife, and £5 for each child, up to a maximum of £150 per annum. Mission finances were
a disaster. In 1872, the committee took out an overdraft for the first time, to pay the men. By 1877, only four missionaries were being employed.

The blame for this situation was placed fully at the doors of Melbourne's Protestant churches, who had almost completely failed to support the Mission. '...it is hardly creditable' reported the anxious secretary the Rev Hamilton to the Annual Meeting in 1874, 'that out of the 100 churches in Melbourne and suburbs, only 13 subscribed anything towards the mission funds.' Another speaker put it more forcibly. 'The churches are too respectable for the classes amongst whom the missionaries work, and it may be that both pastors and congregations feel that an influx of this kind of people would not be desirable.'

The 1880s were somewhat more encouraging. The income of the Mission rose with the rising prosperity of the city. The economy was torn away from the domination of the gold industry, and now agriculture and Melbourne's commercial and manufacturing industries provided balance. These were being strengthened by the rapid expansion of railways throughout the state. In the city itself, extensive railway construction combined with the activities of land and housing speculators lured working men to housing estates on the outskirts of the city.

The city itself was now 'Marvellous Melbourne', one of the finest Victorian cities in the world, 'teeming with wealth and humanity...with broad streets full of handsome shops, and crowded with bustling well-dressed people'. If Melbourne was also unsewered and known as

34 Minutes 1 June 1869.
35 Argus 12 November 1872.
36 Ibid 24 November 1874. See Chapter 10 for a discussion of the relationship of the churches and the working class.
38 G A Sala, a visiting lecturer-journalist, quoted in Ibid, p 229.
'Marvellous Smelbourne', it could boast of grandiose and splendid buildings, paved streets, and every modern elegance. The population continued to rise dramatically; by the end of the decade almost every second house was new.39

Yet during these years of rapid expansion hardly a new mission district was opened up, and the total number of male missionaries never rose above seven. One of these was the aged John Ivey, then in his seventies, and long past his most useful days. He, like the committee members, had aged in the service of the Mission. They had been middle-aged when they began the connection, and age had slowed and dampened their enthusiasms and energies. New younger leadership emerged slowly and diffidently. Mission policy was markedly conservative and wary in the 1880s, despite an improvement in finances. Even the conservative Southern Cross chided the committee.

The City Mission is one of those unobtrusive, but most valuable agencies which do their work quietly and unostentatiously. The agents of the mission never thrust themselves or their work into popular notice. ...We regret this too-retiring modesty of the missionaries and the reticence of the committee.40

It was in this decade that the Sydney City Mission began to acquire Mission Halls as bases from which to work more effectively. But Melbourne, despite the urgings of the young South Melbourne missionary William Shepherd, could not bring itself to take this step forward.41

In many ways the task of taking over the committee from the older founders was a very difficult one. The founders were, indeed, pioneers, and had been filled with energy, opportunism and evangelical fervour, to attack new situations: to create and build. Many, like Dr Cairns and Dr Singleton, were quite eccentric individualists, attracted to, and well suited for, the demands of a new society. But they lived to see their hopes and efforts thwarted by the meteoric growth of the city and the crippling lack of

39 Ibid p 233; Serle op cit pp 272-3.
40 27 July 1888.
41 Minutes 27 March, 1 May 1888.
Mission funds. They kept on doggedly with the MCM, but were increasingly dispirited and tired.

The next generation of leaders inherited a cumbersome and entrenched organization with no clear view as to how it was to proceed. Five missionaries were mere specks in the huge non-Christian working-class population.

The appalling depression of the 1890s very nearly annihilated the Mission. Its own financial state, normally precarious, was devastated. The Mission could not rely on generous donations from individuals, such as the £300 given at a moment of crisis in 1868 by "J M", nor donations from the hard-hit businesses canvassed by their paid Collector, nor adequate support from their private subscribers, also affected by the Crash. James Balfour was a case in point. He was one of the Mission's most consistent and oldest supporters, soon to be made its first life President; but a glance at his budget shows that, whereas he gave £737 to charity in 1890, he could only afford £101 in 1893. The slight support of the churches dwindled even further. Those with money probably preferred to donate to charities offering food, clothing and shelter to the destitute, rather than to an evangelical cause. Even the use of legacies was denied the Mission. The £500 received in 1887 and the £1000 in 1888 were invested in the Modern Permanent Building Society and the Australian Deposit and Mortgage Bank, both of which closed their doors in April 1893, unable to meet demands for cash.

Thus at a time when Melbourne desperately needed the services of such a well-placed body, the Mission was forced to respond by cutting its missionaries' salaries by at least 20%, by not replacing men who resigned or died (leaving only two by 1895), and by hiring four women to continue

42 Ibid 10 November 1868.
43 Davison op cit p 226.
44 Minutes 26 July 1887, 27 November 1888, 4 May 1893.
the work at a third the cost of men. They were paid £1 a week each.45

The missionaries responded in different ways. William Hall in Prahran attempted to keep up door-to-door evangelism, while attending to the desperate needs of his clients by distributing small amounts of money and food given to him for the purpose by the better off. William Shepherd threw himself so determinedly into poor relief in South Melbourne, assisting the Ladies' Benevolent Society with distribution of aid from emergency depots, that the committee became uneasy at his neglect of evangelical visiting. He arranged a Christmas Tea for the poor in 1893, and hired a hall and equipped it with sewing machines to provide a small source of income for some.46

The new lady missionaries were deeply involved trying to relieve distress in Fitzroy, Collingwood and Carlton, while in the new district of Brunswick, Miss Hartnett was already drawing forth awe and admiration. Her concern for helpless women drove her to seek out, hire and occupy a house to use as a refuge, without waiting for the committee to act, raising her own funds in the area, since the committee had none.47

As well as dramatizing the financial fragility of the Mission, the Depression brought its other great problem into focus: to what extent should provision of material aid supplement evangelism? The destitution was so great that the necessity of providing food, clothing and rent was unquestionable. The missionaries spontaneously rose to the occasion, and the committee was unable to control their activities. The debate raged again in the committee rooms. The Rev J McL Abernethy still averred that the evangelical task should take primacy, even in the worst days of 1892. But the views of the committee were changing. Abernethy's last stand on the


46 Ibid 3 August, 9 November 1893, 5 and 26 April 1894.

47 Ibid 5 July, 1 November 1900.
matter had little effect. In 1901, he declared that

the main aim of the Mission - winning souls to God - [was] being hindered by the huge amount of benevolent work that was being done. He thought that every family in the District should be visited and where distress was found the attention of the Ladies' Benevolent Soc...shd be called to it. Mr. Shepherd argued that it was almost impossible to leave cases of distress to the cure of others and also shewed the difficulty that was attended in getting immediate help, that the Missionary's best opportunity for winning the confidence of the people was thro' helping them in their need. ...Rev. T. J. Mal yon spoke of the philanthropic aspect of the Mission that it could not be lightly set aside.48

Change had been forced on the Mission. Assessment of the work and its problems had been superficial until this period. The connection between evangelism and philanthropy had not been faced; neither had the reasons for the lack of financial support been sought.

But renovation of the MCM had, in practice, already begun, in the work of William Shepherd and the lady missionaries. Sister Hartnett's Brunswick Home was so patently useful, and the lady herself so powerful and impressive, that the committee could not but accept her changes to its policy. Miss Young found a hall in Collingwood, and persuaded the committee to hire it, in 1900. The move towards centering the work in halls was further advanced by the gift of land for a hall in North Melbourne, by William Howat in January 1901. In May 1901, the committee voted 'to concede the principle' that missionaries should work from district halls.49

The committee itself, moving to this new rhythm, called a special conference of those interested in the future of the MCM, to follow a dinner at the Bourke Street Coffee Palace, where a complete reassessment of the institution was made.50 The Rev Edwin Steggall was appointed on 7 December 1899 as the first full-time paid Superintendent of the MCM. Plans were outlined to make the Mission more visible to its supporters, by publishing a monthly magazine about Mission work. The City Mission Record began

48 Ibid 28 July 1892; 5 December 1901.
49 Ibid 4 January, 5 July 1900. 3 January, 30 May 1901.
50 Ibid 5 and 26 October 1899.
appearing in June 1900. Distinguished patrons were sought; a President, James Balfour MLC, was appointed, with Vice Presidents representing the Protestant denominations involved in the Mission. 51

**The Melbourne City Mission 1902-1914**

The renewal of the Mission was marked by a reversion to its original name on 5 June 1902. The work began to take on its new character more clearly over the next few years.

The financial base of the MCM was broadened. More legacies and large gifts were being received from patrons like Mr and Mrs James Griffiths, of Griffiths Teas. Annual appeals in newspapers produced a good response. 52 Fund-raising auxiliaries were set up in some of the local districts. 53 A Ladies' Advisory Board, consisting mainly of wives of committee members, was formed in 1911 for fund-raising by means of fairs, 'Drawing Room meetings and Garden Parties'. The men set up a permanent finance committee in the same year. 54

The work from Mission Halls advanced rapidly. (See chart). They became centres for a wide range of activities: gospel meetings, and mothers' meetings with their array of services offering savings funds, and sewing circles with the use of MCM sewing machines. They even catered for the Edwardian enthusiasm for calisthenics, with their gym classes for girls, boys and men. 55 Around each missionary formed a group of local supporters, who had become a sufficiently formalized body by 1912 to have a Conference

51 Ibid 7 July 1901.

52 Ibid For example, 11 December 1902.

53 Ibid Brunswick 10 December 1903, North Melbourne 10 November 1904, Port Melbourne 26 March 1907.

54 Ibid 14 March, 5 December 1911.

55 Ibid See for example, 4 June 1907.
### Mission Halls of the MCM 1881-1914

Source: MCM Minute Books

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>EAST RICHMOND</td>
<td>Hall briefly rented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1888</td>
<td></td>
<td>Shepherd unsuccessful in seeking a hall to work from.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1889</td>
<td>COLLINGWOOD</td>
<td>February-September hall hired for Charles Barber to use, without success.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891-1894</td>
<td>SOUTH MELBOURNE</td>
<td>Clarke Street. Hall rented by Shepherd until lack of funds caused the MCM to give it up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900-1905</td>
<td>COLLINGWOOD</td>
<td>Hall, corner Gold &amp; Keele Streets rented by Sister Young, then the Tabernacle, Sackville Street. In 1903, moved to Singleton Mission Hall, Wellington Street.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901-1914</td>
<td>NORTH MELBOURNE</td>
<td>Land in Mary Street donated by William Howat. Disused Essendon hall bought for £140 and moved to Mary Street, in 1903.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1903-1914</td>
<td>NORTH RICHMOND, Crown Street</td>
<td>'Yarraberg Hall', the private mission of Miss Adeline Waterhouse, signed over to the MCM by her trustees. 1906 used by Free Kindergarten movement as well as MCM. 1907 new room built at back. 1908 old hall burnt down. 1908 site on Bridge Road contiguous to Crown Street land bought. New hall constructed for £518. 1909 Crown Street land sold for £53. 1911 debt on hall paid off.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905-1914</td>
<td>COLLINGWOOD</td>
<td>Hornbrook Ragged School Hall Sydney Street offered by trustees to MCM, 1905. Hall sewered 1907.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906-1914</td>
<td>PORT MELBOURNE</td>
<td>Land bought to celebrate MCM's jubilee, and hall erected (architect: Bridgeway) for £530.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914-</td>
<td>EAST BRUNSWICK</td>
<td>Hall built from the Shaw bequest.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The MCM successfully negotiated in 1905 with local councils and the MMBW for rates to be waived.
The Richmond Hall, Crown Street, in 1904. It was built c.1900 by Miss Adeline Waterhouse for her 'Yarraberg Mission'. It came to the MCM in 1903, but was burnt down in 1908.

(JCM photographs)

Erected in 1908 to celebrate the MCM's 50th Jubilee
of Helpers of its own, at which 75 men and women gathered in the Collingwood Hall for an exchange of ideas. 56

The status of the missionaries was rising. The ladies had developed a distinctive uniform and were known as 'Sister'. They had even been granted pay rises, although the highest paid received only £78 per annum, compared to the male missionaries’ £120 and the Superintendent’s £260. 57 Their opportunities for autonomous activity increased, now that they had a public base and assistants in the district halls. In May 1905, six delegates attended the first national City Mission Conference, arranged by the energetic Rev E Moore of the Sydney City Mission. In May 1912, eleven delegates attended the SCM Jubilee and the Conference of Australian City Missions in Sydney. 58 Sister L R Dickson was the first missionary to receive a course of training at a Missionaries’ Training Home before beginning work. 59

In 1906, the Mission celebrated its Jubilee with great ceremony (see illustration). In the same year the MCM was incorporated. A Jubilee Hall was built and opened in Port Melbourne in 1908. 60

The last initiative of the committee in this period was the decision to hire a new sort of male missionary. They began looking for younger men who had already shown exceptional talent in Mission work; men like R L Mason, General Superintendent of the Launceston City Mission. The domination of the lady missionaries was about to end; so too were the careers of the last of the old male missionaries. The committee could not afford to keep on Shepherd and Hall, and pay the handsome salary the new sort of man required. They were thus retired - unwillingly - with one year’s salary to

56 Ibid 2 April 1912.
57 Ibid 30 September 1913.
58 Ibid 2 January, 9 March 1905. 5 March, 7 May 1912.
59 Ibid 12 February 1903.
60 Ibid 31 May, 15 September 1906. 4 February 1908.
be paid over three years. Then they could apply for the Commonwealth Old Age Pension, introduced in 1908. So the loose ends of the old evangelical Mission were tied up.

1914 ended on an optimistic note. The MCM had successfully evolved from an age in which the missionary was the obedient servant of a patriarchal committee, and engaged in lone evangelism, to the age of enterprising partnership between a more professionally organized administration and a well-supported and semi-autonomous Mission staff working from district halls. Evangelism had given way to evangelical community service. By the end of 1914, the committee was reporting ‘splendid work’ from all the halls; evangelical crusades, Boys’ Brigades, Sunday Schools, even classes to remedy the plight of ‘young people suffering from defective education’. The committee expressed deep thankfulness that God was ‘gloriously working’ through the missionaries. The only cloud on the horizon was a 50% reduction in the Mission’s income ‘owing to the many patriotic funds’ to which the newly declared war had given rise.

61 Ibid 3 September 1912, 10 June 1913. Brian Dickey No Charity There p 118.

62 This was a boys’ club organized on semi-military lines, somewhat similar to the Boy Scouts.

63 Minutes 1 December 1914.
The Annual Meeting of the MCM held in the Melbourne Town Hall 28 July 1904, 2000 attending.
(The Weekly Times 6 August 1904)
CHAPTER 3

LEADERS OF THE MELBOURNE CITY MISSION

We must go on in faith and hope; for God's love is stronger than Satan's malice and a faithful confession that Jesus is the Son of God is the victory that overcometh the world.

2nd Annual Report of the Ladies'
Melbourne and Suburban City Mission 1858

Founders and early leaders 1854-1880

What sort of person would seek involvement in the leadership of a City Mission? The accompanying charts enable generalizations to be made about the social composition of MCM committees.

Two thirds of the founders and early leaders of the MCM were born before 1820 (See Charts 3 and 4), and were mature men and women in a young Melbourne. About half of the men in the sample (Chart 4) were in the colony before the gold rush. Those men who arrived during the 1850s were sent either by their church or an evangelical organization like the British and Foreign Bible Society (Becher, Taylor), or emigrated to set up business with no connections directly with the gold industry (Balfour, Jennings, Ogilvy). They represent a major group of immigrants who had not come to the infant colony for the gold rush, but with the intention of settling permanently. The motives of the clergy seem to have been almost wholly missionary, while the laymen saw good fortune through hard work as a legitimate goal if it was accompanied by Christian service and a sober life.

The Ladies

Some of the ladies involved in the MCM were married to committee men, and shared their evangelical and philanthropic convictions (Handfield, Cairns). Their careers, however, are clearly separate from their husbands'
### Founders and Early Leaders of the Melbourne City Mission - Women

Sources: Family records, Church Journals, charitable publications, shipping records

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Names, dates, denomination</th>
<th>Place of origin</th>
<th>Arrived</th>
<th>If married,</th>
<th>Evangelical &amp; charitable involvements</th>
<th>Husband or father in MCM?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jessie Cairns 1811-1906</td>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>1853</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>On committee MCM 1854-5. On committees of the Lying-In Hospital &amp; Orphan Asylum. Extraordinarily long service with Melbourne Ladies' Benevolent Society - President for over 20 years. V-President of Ragged Schools Assoc 1868.</td>
<td>Husband Dr Adam Cairns on MCM Committee 1854-65.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Ann Dawbarn 1827-1890</td>
<td>Cambridgeshire</td>
<td>1852</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>On Ladies' committee MCM 1858-1864, then Secretary of the Biblewomen's Mission 1864-1890.</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Louise Dunn 1817-1897</td>
<td>Bedford England</td>
<td>1850</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>On committee MCM 1858. On committee of Orphan Asylum for at least 20 years. Extraordinarily long service with the Melbourne Ladies' Benevolent Society - Treasurer for well over 20 years.</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eliza Jane Forsyth 1818-1861</td>
<td>Greenock Scotland</td>
<td>1852</td>
<td>unmarried</td>
<td>With Hester Hornbrook, founded MCM. On committee 1854-1861.</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Handfield 1833-1875</td>
<td>Devon England</td>
<td>1848</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>On founding committee of Lying-In Hospital. Secretary of Ladies' committee of MCM 1858-1864.</td>
<td>Husband Canon HH Handfield Secretary of MCM men's committee 1856-1859.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hester Hornbrook 1855-1862</td>
<td>Montego Bay</td>
<td>1849</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Founder of MCM and President of Ladies' Committee 1856-1862. Founder of Ragged Schools in Melbourne &amp; Protestant Refuge.</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaret Peppers</td>
<td>England</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Treasurer of MCM Ladies' Committee 1858-1864. On committee of Ragged Schools Association in the 1860s.</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Other ladies pursued careers in this area independent of husbands and fathers.

To Mrs Hester Hornbrook has been attributed the founding, not only of the MCN, but of the Ragged Schools Movement in Melbourne, and probably the Protestant Refuge for prostitutes. Yet we know little of her. She was an elderly widow of 69 in 1854, apparently with no surviving children. She was born in Jamaica, and had married a doctor. She arrived in Melbourne in 1849; why she came to the city is unknown. However, she saw the need for an urban mission, and was vigorous enough to interest sufficient men and women to form the MCN.

In response to the continuous statistics and lamentations of the Collingwood missionary, Joseph Greathead, about the hundreds of unschooled children in that part of the city, Mrs Hornbrook began to set up Ragged Schools to provide a free basic education for them. At her death in 1862, there were nine schools operating in Collingwood, the city centre and Prahran. We are told by those who took over the schools after her death that, 'though aged, feeble in health, and straitened in circumstances, she was strong in that faith which removes mountains.'

Eliza Jane Forsyth was Mrs Hornbrook's friend and fellow-founder of the MCN. This lady arrived in Melbourne with her father in 1852 from their Scottish home in Greenock. She was unmarried, and died aged 43 in 1861. Little else is known of her.

When the first attempt at a mission failed in 1856, it was Mrs

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1 Dr John Singleton A Narrative...of a Physician 1891, p 144.
2 See Chapter 6, following.
3 First Annual Report of the Hornbrook Ragged Schools Association 1863. The schools were established in Smith Street (1859), Rokeby Street (1860), Simpson Street (1861), and Sydney Street (1861), all in Collingwood; two schools in Little Bourke Street (1860) and one in Little Lonsdale Street (1862); and Commercial Road (1861) and Duke Street (1862) Prahran. By 1868, the Association had established three more schools in Sackville Street Collingwood, Cremorne Street Richmond, and York Street Eastern Hill. See Sixth Annual Report 1868.
4 PRO Shipping Lists; they were cabin passengers on the Thomas Lowry.
Horningbrook, Miss Forsyth and the small group of ladies running the Protestant Refuge, who restored it, and raised the money for its continuance. The ladies of this committee gave years of service to the MCM and other Melbourne charities.

Mary Handfield was the first secretary of the Ladies' Committee, and, indeed, gave more of her time to the MCM than her husband, who was secretary of the Gentlemen's Committee 1856-1860. She was born a member of a prominent Devon family of land-owning gentry, the Tripps. She and her husband arrived in the colony in 1848 and settled in Napier Street Fitzroy. With Frances Perry, and most of the other women mentioned in this chapter, she was on the founding committee of the Lying-In Hospital 1856 (later the Royal Women's), although she herself was childless. 5

Three ladies on the early committee, Mrs Cairns, Mrs Henderson and Mrs Odell, were wives of ministers. Mrs Cairns and Mrs Odell, unlike Mrs Hornbrook, Miss Forsyth and Mrs Handfield - each had many children but still managed considerable involvement in Melbourne's charity and mission life. Mrs Langlands and Mrs Sands were wives of prominent businessmen - the Baptist Henry Langlands, and Sands of Sands and McDougall Directories fame.

Both Jessie Cairns and Louisa Dunn had astoundingly long careers in the Ladies' Benevolent Society, Melbourne branch. Mrs Cairns was President and Mrs Dunn Treasurer for well over twenty years. Jessie Cairns seems to have been a gentle but purposeful lady. We have a brief glimpse of her in Collingwood in 1855 from the pen of missionary Joseph Greathead, visiting a dying man. She 'called while I was there...leaving him money and new laid eggs.' 6 The voices of both these ladies can be heard in their testimony to Royal Commissions on charity in 1862, 1871 and 1891. 7

5 Details supplied by the courtesy of the Handfield family.

6 Joseph Greathead's Journal 21 May 1855, his emphasis.

7 See also Melbourne Ladies' Benevolent Society Women's Work During 50 Years Melbourne 1895.
Mary Handfield (1833-1876), Secretary of the MCM Ladies Committee, 1858-1864.
Left, at the time of her connection with the MCM. Right, in more mature years.

H H P Handfield (1828-1900), Committee member of the MCM 1854-9; Secretary 1856-9.
Left, at the time of his connection with the MCM. Right, in more mature years.

(Photographs courtesy of descendant Mary Handfield)
Mrs Margaret Peppers and Mrs Gedge were also deeply involved in MCM work, but there is little information to be found about them, except that the former was on the committee of the Rokeby Street Ragged School. Mrs Mary Ann Dawbarn also gave years of service to the MCM. She arrived in the colony with her husband and four children in 1852\(^8\); at the time of her death, aged 63 in 1890, all had died. Her work with the the Biblewomen's branch of the MCM, and as a Vice President of the IBS, may well have been her only interests in a lonely old age; MCM Secretary Rev Robert Hamilton was with her when she died, and arranged for her burial.

Of the women on Chart 3, only Mrs Cairns and Mrs Odell had large families. The sample is small, but it would seem logical that those women who had not exhausted themselves in prolonged child-bearing and rearing had more energy and time to give to charitable activities, and, perhaps, required such an interest usefully to fill their time. It is interesting that Mrs Handfield reared four, and Mrs Langlands five, children not their own; the former were Canon Handfield's brother's children, and the latter children of Henry Langlands' earlier marriages. Both these women, however, avoided the debilitating effects of pregnancy and giving birth. The picture is even clearer if we look at women who were close to the heart of charity work through their families' involvement, but did not participate themselves. Mrs Philippa Becher was the daughter of that doyen of charity workers, Henry Jennings\(^9\), sister of Miss Henrietta Jennings who was working in charity in St Kilda and headed the Ladies' Committee of the Victorian Discharged Prisoners' Aid Society\(^10\), and wife of Rev Michael Becher, a MCM committee member for nineteen years. At the time of her husband's death in

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8 PRO Shipping Records; they were cabin passengers on the Hibernia.

9 Jennings was on the committees of the MCM, the Chinese Mission, the Orphan Asylum, the Victorian Sailors' Mission, the Church Missionary Society, the Asylum for the Blind, the Ragged Schools Association etc. See Annual Reports of the various societies, and Sands & McDougall Directories.

10 See Chapter 9 for her work with the VDPAS.
1883, Mrs Becher was 48 years old, and had given birth to sixteen children, her youngest being 2 years of age. Her name, understandably, does not appear on the committee lists of any charity for the bulk of this time, but even she, in 1881, became the Secretary of the Ragged Schools Association. Mrs Langley, wife of an Anglican Bishop, was in a similar position.11

Charity work was one sphere outside the home in which ladies not burdened with heavy family responsibilities could work, and for which they were seen as being fitted through their experience in the management of their own homes. The qualities ‘natural’ to women, which would not permit other more forceful public activities, suited them well for charity and missionary work.12 For the most part, too, they were able to afford servants to help with domestic tasks, thus freeing them for outside work. Charity work was thus essentially a part-time and an unpaid occupation. As Sarah Ellis, a prominent English charity worker put it,

as society is at present constituted, a lady may do almost anything from motives of charity or zeal,...but so soon as a woman begins to receive money, however great her need,...the heroine is transformed into a tradeswoman.13

Here, in a nutshell, was the distinction between ‘lady’ and ‘woman’, between a member of the MCC Ladies’ committee, and the MCC Biblewoman, even if the social origins of both women were the same.

Charity work was also the logical duty, as well as an obviously useful task for Christian ladies, and offered real opportunities for evangelism. As Prochaska’s study of England in the nineteenth century demonstrates, ladies were there following the same path, beginning their public work by way of small groups, providing domestic assistance to, and evangelizing the

11 See Chapter 9, pp 216-7.

12 Frank Prochaska lists the following words used to describe special feminine traits as understood in the nineteenth century: ‘moral, modest, attentive, intuitive, humble, gentle, patient, sensitive, perceptive, compassionate, self-sacrificing, tactful, deductive, practical, religious, benevolent, instinctive and mild.’ Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth Century England Oxford 1980, p 3.

13 Quoted in ibid p 6.
Jessie Cairns (1811-1906), MCM founder and committee member 1854-5. President of the Melbourne Ladies' Benevolent Society for over twenty years.

(Photograph from Melbourne Ladies' Benevolent Society, Women's Work during Fifty Years Melbourne 1895.)
How similar was charity work in England and Melbourne? Were the Melbourne ladies involved in charity out of guilt at being themselves well off while others were not; or because they sought the exercise of power over others; or because money was becoming available through the profits of industry and trade? Such theories have been put forward by historians looking at the English scene. 15

We have seen that the evangelical spirit demanded such involvement, and thus it was an outlet permitted to women. What of the notions of guilt, power-seeking and the availability of money? These explanations seem less likely in Melbourne. Few of the ladies mentioned in this chapter were well-to-do. Clerics were not well-paid, although some wives may have received an independent income. Some, like Mrs Hornbrook and Mrs Dawbarn, were widows of straitened means. The social origins of most were modest. In no sense could they be seen as ‘Lady Bountifuls’ generously bestowing largesse on the poor.

The circumstances surrounding the exercise of charity in Melbourne were far from encouraging, as has been shown in Chapter 1. For groups like the Ladies’ Benevolent Society, which attempted large-scale relief of the poor, there were massive constraints. They bore the brunt of caring for the distressed, since there was no Poor Law, yet they were never funded adequately or with any consistency. Mrs Cairns’ testimony to the Royal Commission on Charitable Institutions in 1871 reveals the paucity of funds available to the ladies of the society, which they were unable to overcome. They received £4000 from the government in 1871, which supplemented private subscriptions, but

[we] are in a miserable state so far; we are always in debt, and so much in debt; we were £1000 in debt when the last sum was paid [by the government]. We got £1000, and that just relieved us; then we began in debt again. 16

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15 Heasman op cit pp 10-16.
It is ironic that a society formed to ease poverty should itself be regarded as poor.

Mrs Cairns makes it clear that this deficit had to be bridged by the ladies themselves:

Do you find any difficulty in getting ladies to act? -Very considerable; and one cause of that is that they have to be so much out of pocket; many ladies cannot afford it. When we have £1000 of debt...It is owing to the ladies themselves. Many ladies' husbands will not allow them to go into debt. 17

Ladies had little access to large sums of money, controlled as they were by the male world of husbands, fathers and their financial institutions, and the ladies accepted this fact. They were fully engaged in canvassing for subscriptions, which, as Mrs Cairns explained to the Select Committee, (see Chapter 1, page 9), depended on the fluctuating generosity of a few Melburnians. Bazaars and tea meetings may also have contributed modest sums. When Louisa Dunn was asked whether the bank required any security from the society for its overdraft, she replied,

they have talked of it but we cannot give it. There is only here and there a lady who can give it herself, and we can hardly expect our husbands to give it. 18

The consequences of this financial starvation were grim. The need for aid was far greater than the funds available, and the ladies were forced to devise criteria as to who should be assisted. They distinguished not only between the 'deserving' (the moral poor) and the 'undeserving' (those who

16 Royal Commission on Charitable Institutions 1871, VPP No 1 (v2), p 20.
18 Ibid, p 23. Curiously, Kennedy turns the Melbourne LBS's poverty into an indicator of the ladies' importance, in that the government was willing to give them more than other LBS branches. He manages to imply that the ladies were complacent about this, and would not have given more to the poor if they had more funds. This sadly misrepresents the tone of Mrs Cairns' evidence, and avoids the question of how a financially relatively powerless and ignorant group could be expected to fund itself adequately. The question of funding is absolutely crucial to any judgement about the LBS, especially their use of criteria for distribution of aid. Kennedy's denigration of these women is at times obsessive. His use of inverted commas - describing the ladies as 'kind' and 'dedicated' - conveys his feeling that such women must be cruel hypocrites; he cannot imagine kind personnel in an oppressive system. See Charity Warfare Melbourne 1985, p 139; pp 16 & 143.
contributed to their poverty by drinking and other bad habits), but also between the able-bodied and the helpless. These decisions were more ruthless than those made by their English counterparts, for there were no Poor Law provisions to care for those rejected in Melbourne. Thus 'very seldom' did the society give aid to families of able-bodied but unemployed men, and only a minimal amount was given even to deserving cases - 'only the necessaries of life, of course'. Mrs Cairns was under no illusions as to the generosity of her society: 'it is a mere pittance we give them, just to keep them from starvation'.

The Royal Commissioners were loath to recommend any major increase in funds to the society, however. A strong strand in contemporary debate about poor relief argued that too much relief would 'pauperise' the poor; that is, the reliance of people on charity would kill their independence and sap their initiative, pushing them into a lethargic state of chronic destitution. Mrs Cairns may have shared these views; her 'of course' (above) seems to acknowledge the argument. Nevertheless, it is clear that she felt that her society was not in any danger of pauperising people by over-generosity, and would need a substantial increase in funds before such a condition might be reached.

This sort of charity work cannot have gratified the ladies' egos to any marked extent, for it was a mine-field of difficulties and disappointments. Mrs Cairns seems more wearied by the exercise of her powers in allocation of relief than exhilarated by it. The ladies of the LBS were the victims of a trap: the community had willingly given them the responsibility of caring for the needy, but provided only a pittance with which to do it. Their gender made it almost impossible for them to break out of the trap, and indeed, worked in collusion with it, such was their sense of their female role to do their duty industriously, frugally and obediently. Mrs Cairns' lack of daring and imagination where fund-raising was concerned may have

19 Royal Commission...1871 op cit pp 19-20.
been yet another by-product of her deference to men as the ones properly suited to creating wealth. She had a frugal house-keeper's attitude to money - and to its disbursement to the poor - and even felt guilty that the poor would suffer even more if the work was handed over to an official body: 'there would be such an amount spent on mere management if we gave it up'. So she gave 25 years' devoted but unadventurous service to the LBS (1855-1880; as President from 1862), in the most unrewarding circumstances.

It is a wretched thing to be constantly in debt - to be doing such a work - doing a great deal of hard work - and to be in debt too, is too much.\(^2\)

Mrs Cairns paid the penalty for her diffidence. Although she was a key figure in the Melbourne charity scene for decades, her work received scarcely any acknowledgement outside her own ladies' circle. Her life was arguably much more useful to the community than that of her husband, the much-admired cleric and theologian, Dr Adam Cairns, yet it is his biography that is to be found in all the celebratory collections of the nineteenth century. Her own death notices consist principally of further eulogies on her husband's life. (See illustration) Her anonymity is still perpetuated, since one looks in vain for her name in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*.

\(^2\) Ibid, p 22. Kennedy demonstrates that the ladies were not well-rewarded by their peers for their work. 'Year by year the ladies displayed their sense of inferiority ('decorum') by calling upon some gentleman to conduct their annual meeting. He nearly always pleaded a prior engagement.' He goes on to argue however, that they 'avenged' their 'mainly unconscious frustration' at this regular slighting, by their harsh treatment of the poor; a dubious conclusion indeed. *Charity Warfare* p 141.
Mrs Adam Cairns died at Toorak on Sunday morning, at the advanced age of 95 years. Mrs. Cairns was the relict of one of the earliest Presbyterian ministers in Victoria, and throughout her long stay in this country has been known for her active church work. She came to Victoria in 1853 with her husband, Rev. Dr. Adam Cairns, of Cupar, one of the twelve "missioners" appointed by the Free Church of Scotland in response to the urgent need for clergymen in the young colony. Dr. Cairns was well known to the colonists as an earnest man and an eloquent preacher, and a congregation soon gathered around him in Melbourne. He was, with Dr. McIntosh McKay, of Dunoon, placed at the head of the little band of incoming clergy. Dr. Cairns brought with him an iron cottage and an iron church. In the former, which cost £1,000 simply to put it together, he found a temporary home. The cottage in which Dr. Cairns and his wife lived for many years still stands in the Scotch College grounds. The iron church was not so fortunate. It was decreed unfit for Melbourne, and for many a day its ribs and pews lay prone in the grass at St. Kilda. Dr. Cameron in his "Fifty Years of Presbyterianism in Victoria", states that the church eventually found its way to New Zealand, where it now serves the humbler, but more appropriate purpose of a mechanics' institute. Dr. Cairns' congregation set themselves the ponderous undertaking of building Chalmers' Church and manse. Only one of Dr. Cairns' fellow pioneers, Rev. Mr. Adam, of Beaufort, survives. Mrs. Cairns leaves a family of daughters and grandchildren. Mrs. Robert Harper, of "Myoora" Toorak, is the second daughter.

DEATH OF MRS. CAIRNS.

At the morning service at the Toorak Presbyterian Church yesterday the Rev. J. F. Macrae announced to the congregation that he had just received intimation of the sudden death of Mrs. Cairns, widow of the late Rev. Dr. Adam Cairns, formerly minister of Chalmers Church, Eastern Hill. Except for recurring symptoms of heart trouble, Mrs. Cairns had enjoyed wonderful health for her advanced age. She died, as she had always wished to die, suddenly and peacefully. As she was in the act of dressing shortly before 11 o'clock, at her residence in Clifton-road, Toorak, yesterday, her heart failed.

It is a coincidence that the deceased lady's husband passed away in his sleep early on Sunday morning, on January 30, 1881. Mrs. Cairns, who had attained her 93rd year on May 30 last, came to Melbourne with her husband on September 10, 1833, by the ship Hurricane, having among her fellow-passengers the Rev. William and Mrs. Henderson, the Rev. A. and Mrs. Adam, and the Rev. A. Simpson. Dr. Cairns brought with him a corrugated iron cottage, which was erected in due course in Landowne-street, Eastern Hill, and which served as the manse of Chalmers Church for some years.

Mrs. Cairns was possessed of fine womanly qualities, abounded in good works, and was held in the highest esteem by all who knew her. Of her family only two survive, namely, Mrs. Robert Harper and Mrs. S. H. Oliver. Other daughters who predeceased their mother were Mrs. W. P. Muir, Mrs. J. C. Lloyd, and Mrs. A. Turnbull. Her only son, Ebenezer, died in the early sixties, and his memorial sermon was preached by the Rev. Dr. J. Oswald Dykes, who was then on a visit to Melbourne. Mrs. Cairns's remains will be interred to-morrow, and the interment will be preceded by a service at the Toorak church.

Argus 27 August 1906 p 5.
The Gentlemen

Far more information is available about the gentlemen of the MCM than about the ladies. The male domain was the public world, and material about these men was published in contemporary newspapers, journals and books.21 The history of men's involvement in the MCM is, then, well-charted.

Despite the Anglican Bishop Perry's prominence at the foundation of the Mission, the active leadership soon passed to the more pronouncedly evangelical sects, the Presbyterians, Baptists and Congregationalists. The Wesleyans were not prominent in the leadership; their ministers were hampered by the compulsory itinerancy of their circuit system. We can define this group of men quite sharply. Scots and Irish were over-represented; all except the first Baptists were well-educated, some with more than one degree; most had a strongly evangelical background, often undergoing a passionate conversion in their youth (Balfour, Singleton, Rev James Martin); several were frustrated would-be foreign missionaries (Rev W Jarrett, Hamilton, Bickford).22

They viewed the colony as a mission field, and most were involved in many other forms of mission work besides the MCM. Businessman Henry Cooke's Victorian Religious Tract Society, for instance, was the major source of tracts in Victoria, and he was a driving force in the Melbourne United

21 None of the women active in the MCM finds a place in the Australian Dictionary Of Biography. Mrs Hornbrook and Mrs Cairns should certainly be included.

22 According to J D Bollen, 'Few of Australia's early ministers felt a special vocation for colonial service. Jarrett had ideas of work in India.' Religion in Australian Society 1973, p 7. Jarrett was a foundation secretary of the MCM. This yearning for foreign fields is still evident in 1894, when the then secretary of the MCM, Rev E Steggall, took his leave in India. Minutes of MCM, 8 March 1894. Darkest Africa, India and China were regarded as 'real' mission fields in the nineteenth century; it is hard now to appreciate the mystique surrounding foreign missionaries. Several supporters of the MCM had themselves been converted at meetings where foreign missionaries were guest speakers.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Denomination</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Canon H H P Handfield</td>
<td>1824-1900</td>
<td>C of E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Hordern</td>
<td>1831-1881</td>
<td>C of E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Henry Jennings</td>
<td>c.1803-1885</td>
<td>C of E</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rev Alexander Kininmont Fifer</td>
<td>1815-1881</td>
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<td>Rev George Mackie</td>
<td>1823-1871</td>
<td>Presbyterian</td>
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<td>Mr David Ogilvy</td>
<td>1871-1871</td>
<td>Presbyterian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rev Andrew Ramsay</td>
<td>1809-1869</td>
<td>Presbyterian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr John Singleton</td>
<td>1803-1891</td>
<td>C of E, then Salvation Army</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rev James Taylor</td>
<td>1815-1896</td>
<td>Baptist</td>
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</table>
Evangelistic Association and the City Female Factory Mission. For the clergymen, the mere establishing of their denomination in the colony was a missionary enterprise requiring formidable energy.

Despite the involvement of large numbers of Christian Melburnians in the first MCM committee, and the later attempt to broaden the base of Mission support in 1864, the MCM of the nineteenth century was in the hands of a committee of seldom more than fourteen men. Of these, some served only briefly. The remainder gave attention to the Mission for astonishingly long periods, some for twenty or more years: men such as the Rev Michael Becher, incumbent of St James; Henry Cooke, businessman and founder of the Age; David Ogilvy, Presbyterian solicitor; and the Rev Robert Hamilton.

Hamilton was one of the most determined of the founders. He was a Scot, the son of parents of lowly artisan class, who, as the protege of a learned cleric, not only educated himself, but went to University and took orders in 1840. He married, and came to the colony in 1847, aged 44, with a definite missionary intent. He evangelised on the goldfields in the early 1850s. By the middle of the decade he was in Fitzroy, drawing together a Presbyterian congregation and raising money for the building of a church in Napier Street. At the same time he was preaching every week to the aborigines at the Coranderrk Station, and working to run the MCM. He was Secretary for fifteen years and a committee member 1854-1891. From 1867-1880 he administered the Bush Mission arm of the MCM. He convened the Chinese and Aborigines Committee of the Presbyterian Church 1872-1878, taught at the Chinese seminary, and in his latter years was a Chaplain at the Melbourne Gaol. He was Moderator of the Presbyterian Assembly in 1877, and wrote the first history of Presbyterianism in Victoria. At the time of his death he had prepared a history of the MCM which is unfortunately lost.

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23 Southern Cross 1878 issues.

24 Obit in Presbyterian Monthly and Messenger November 1890, January 1892.
Rev Robert Hamilton (1813-1891), committee member of the MCM 1854-91, Secretary for 15 years, and administrator of the Bush Mission of the MCM.
Hamilton's career is typical of those of other clerics associated with the MCM. For him, the colony was a mission field; not as exotic as West Africa, perhaps, but nonetheless a necessary theatre for missionary work. For the son of an artisan, his education, his evangelical Christianity and his move to Melbourne provided him with otherwise unattainable rewards: a personally satisfying and upwardly mobile career, couched in a wholesome and spiritually rich life. His is a success story: of humble origins rising to leadership in what became a powerful community, in a mission field where dedicated labourers were well-rewarded.

Except that he was a businessman and a little younger, James Balfour was cast in the same mould. He too was a Scot, son of a corn merchant; as a boy in the 1830s, 'he already held advanced notions of being a philanthropist and a missionary.' He openly espoused the evangelical Calvinist ethos that it was his duty as a Christian to make a material success of his life. Filled with evangelical and capitalist zeal, he selected the colony as the theatre for his activities, and, armed with his Bible and a religious tract entitled 'A Young Man from Home', ventured forth. The tract warned him that youth is, 'when away from the restraining influences of a moral home, like sheep among wolves, prey to the manifold temptations in plain or subtle guise in the world. Safety from these perils can only be found in religion.'

He arrived in Victoria in 1852, and immediately joined the committee of the British and Foreign Bible Society. This was the first of a multitude of religious and charitable committees on which he was to serve: the Orphan Asylum, the Deaf and Dumb Institution, the Ragged Schools Association, the Presbyterian Theological College Building Appeal, the YMCA, the YWCA etc. He was on the 1854 and 1864 MCM committees, and again in the 1870s.

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27 Ibid pp 14, 26, 48, 105.
In 1901, he accepted the first life-Presidency of the MCM.\textsuperscript{28}

Combined with this was a successful business career (despite suffering badly in the crash of the 1890s), marriage into the Henty family, a political career as an MLA 1866-9 and an MLC 1874-1913; a steady trip to the top of Melbourne society.\textsuperscript{29}

Dr John Singleton, of humble origins and Irish birth, was another energetic Christian philanthropist. He experienced a passionate conversion in his youth, and studied medicine so as to devote his life to the physical and spiritual health of others. After twenty years' service in Dublin, he came to the colony in the 1840s with the same sense of mission.\textsuperscript{30}

He was one of the founders of the MCM, on the 1854 committee and again in 1867-1871, during which time he set up the Free Mission Medical Dispensary in Collingwood in 1868 as an auxiliary of the MCM. (This foundation is still in operation today as the Collingwood Community Health Centre.) His long and busy life was spent entirely in helping Melbourne's poor and disreputable. He set up homes for fallen women, the homeless and the aged, and built a mission hall in Little Bourke Street. He was a regular prison visitor. He was the most conspicuous and active individual philanthropist in Melbourne, and an early member of the Salvation Army, whose practical charitable orientation suited his temperament better than establishment Anglicanism.\textsuperscript{31}

The Rev Michael Becher was a far less flamboyant personality than Dr Singleton, but a devoted and active committee-member of the MCM from 1864 till his death in 1883. He was the son of an Anglican clergyman, who worked for the Church Missionary Society and the British and Foreign Bible Society. Michael Becher came to Australia in 1855 with Dr Charles to...

\textsuperscript{28} The Banner 15 August 1854, MCM Minutes 23 May 1864, Argus 12 November 1872, 27 November 1873, 26 November 1874, 16 November 1875, Minutes ibid 4 July 1901.

\textsuperscript{29} Lemon, \textit{op cit} p.iii.

\textsuperscript{30} Singleton, \textit{op cit} pp. xxii-xxiii.

\textsuperscript{31} The Banner 15 August 1854, MCM Minutes 5 November 1868, 9 February 1869, Singleton ibid.
promote the latter society, and married MCM committee member Henry
Jennings' daughter Philippa in 1856. In 1860 he was invited to St James'
and accepted. He was a long-time Superintendent of the missionary appointed
by the MCM to the city proper. 'There were few religious or charitable
societies with which he was not in some way connected.'

Rev James Bickford and Canon H H P Handfield were both fifth sons, the
former of a farmer, the latter of a navy captain. Bickford was converted,
joined the Wesleyan Church and spent fourteen years as a missionary in the
West Indies before being sent to Australia. He was not in Melbourne long
before he was moved again, but was involved in many missionary bodies and
was on the MCM committee 1870-3. 'A pastor and preacher of only average
ability, most of his time was devoted to administration where he was
distinguished by a tireless zeal and capacity for work.'

Handfield came to Australia with Bishop Perry in 1848, was ordained in
1851 and became incumbent of St Peter's Eastern Hill in 1854. He was made a
Canon in 1876. His was quite a handsome career for a fifth son. He was on
the 1854 committee of the MCM, and secretary of the reconstituted body of
1856, until 1859. Of all the founders of the mission he seems the least
evangelical. Perhaps Bollen's judgement is true here: 'It was Australia's
good fortune that so many English clergy could not hope for preferment at
home. Facing the prospect of maintaining clerical dignity on a curate's
pay, they chose colonial service.'

By the 1860s, these men were well-settled in the paths they were to
follow. The businessmen were rising to the top in their careers, and making
their mark as social leaders in business and politics. The clergymen were
nearly all engaged in elaborate building programmes, constructing from
nothing the splendid churches still dotting the city today. By the 1870s,

32 Obit in The Church of England Messenger 6 February 1883.
33 See entry in Australian Dictionary of Biography 1850-1900 Vol 1
   pp 162-3.
34 Bollen Optitp 8. For Handfield see The Leader 18 August 1900.
they had identified, and were coming to grips with, those ideas and groups in Melbourne society that they were finding more and more unacceptable.

The MCM itself may have been a cheering exercise in inter-denomination-al co-operation, but the religious colour of the 1870s and 1880s was combative rather than conciliatory. Sectarian sniping between Protestant and Roman Catholic was fierce and constant, but scarcely less so were the battles within the ranks of the Protestants themselves. New ideas were abroad and the Protestant denominations struggled with them in these decades. The most rigid denomination theologically – the Presbyterians – felt the crisis most acutely, in a violent split over the views of the Rev Charles Strong, minister of the prestigious Scots Church. The furore over Strong's liberalism was an over-riding concern for Rev Robert Hamilton, secretary of the MCM, who was a senior Presbyterian clergyman and Moderator of the Assembly in 1877. His Jubilee History of the Presbyterian Church in Victoria (Melbourne 1888), for which he received his doctorate, shows the full extent of the disturbance which Rev Strong caused in earnest, if narrowly Calvinist, Presbyterian breasts. 'The problem' concludes Roe in her study of the issue,

came from the confrontation of Calvinism by contemporary knowledge about the nature and history of the world. Moreover, it presented itself as an inevitable product of the serious rethinking carried on in debates and discussions in Victoria since the early 'seventies, and brought out into the open by Strong.35

Committee members of the MCM were prominent participants in this and other debates on controversial moral issues. Many of these debates focussed on public behaviour, such as the use of the Sabbath. Dr Cairns, Rev Samuel Chapman and Rev Joseph Dare were notable in the outcry against running trains and opening the Public Library on Sundays.36 Dr Singleton's name appears in temperance and sexual morality issues; he and Rev James Bickford

36 Ibid pp 154, 161.
were founding members of The Society for Promoting Morality. They fought these debates all the more bitterly for perceiving that times were indeed changing. A society which did not fully accept man's sinfulness, and adopted a relativist morality was unthinkable to them.

They engaged vigorously in acrid theological debates in the journals of the day, on evolutionary theory and the trend toward a less dogmatic theology. Rev Bickford attended the first of Dr Bromby's controversial lectures, 'Creation Versus Development' in 1870, and was so distressed that, having first ascertained that Bishop Perry or other leading clerics were not taking up the cudgels immediately, he wrote a letter to the Argus on 24 August strongly refuting Bromby's Darwinist views. Rev H Wollaston, secretary of the MCM 1874-1885, contributed an article to this continuing debate in the Melbourne Review.

The voices of non-Christian liberal thinkers were becoming stronger, insisting that changes in society must be acknowledged and improvements worked for. In Marcus Clarke's words,

> The melancholy of the age arises from this growing conviction that the Religion of old time is insufficient for present needs, that the tender time for trustfulness in the supernatural is over.

The leaders of the MCM rejected this modern thinking utterly, whether it came from irreligious mouths such as Clarke's, or from the liberal pulpits of the Rev Strong or Dr Bromby. Old-style evangelicals felt the pressure of these newer elements bearing strongly on them, and many became increasingly rigid and defensive.

In this atmosphere it became impossible for the leadership of the MCM

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38 Bickford ibid pp 241-7.

39 Roe op cit p 150 footnote 9.

40 Quoted in Roe, ibid p 151.

41 Serle The Rush to be Rich provides an overview of the situation pp 127-144, 156-175.
to generate new ideas about its duties to the poor and godless, or even to assess the reasons for its failure to meet the challenge imposed on it by the growth and changing face of Melbourne. In this, as in other areas, the leaders were fighting a rear-guard action simply to hold their own. Many founders and early leaders had died, and most of the others were old and becoming frail. Only five of the men on Chart 4 survived the 1880s.

These men were also, and primarily, founders of their religious denominations in the state, and of Melbourne’s industrial, commercial and political worlds. These were the concerns that absorbed their greatest energies, and naturally so. The sheer effort required to form congregations and build churches, set up businesses, and take the lead politically and socially in the new colony drastically reduced time left for bodies like the MCM, not to mention the many other organizations that Balfour, Hamilton, Singleton et al engaged themselves in.

Their involvement in the MCM was an outlet for a driving desire to evangelise, plus a social and religious impulse to aid the unfortunate. But in many senses, the MCM was really a pious hobby for the ladies and gentlemen who supported it. It was a serious undertaking, certainly, but in the face of the vital work occupying most of their attention, and the lack of financial support, there was no question of trying to create an MCM which would be a major influence in the city. Thus the Mission lost the dynamic thrust of its origins, and by the 1880s had faded into insignificance in Melbourne society. It was only just kept up.

Leadership in transition: the 1880s and 1890s

The 1880s were Melbourne’s most exuberant years since the gold rush, but for the MCM, they unfortunately coincided with the closing years of its early leaders, and the slackening of purpose which accompanied this. The loss of these men was all the more devastating because of their remarkable homogeneity in age, outlook and origin. That they should all be losing
Name, dates, denomination

Rev J McL Aberneth
1831-1904
Presbyterian

Mr Nathaniel Billi
1822-1911

Mr James Chute
1824-1833
C of E

Rev Samuel Halcott
1831-1833
Baptist

Rev James T. Wesley
1835-1839

Mr A.
1826-1829
Presbyterian

Theo.
1840-1843

G. Bil...
1857-1859

their powers at much the same time worked to the disadvantage of the MCM. Younger men had not on the whole been brought into the leadership or encouraged to adopt the ideals and enthusiasms of the founders. It was a matter of using anyone who could be found to fill the gaps. The conservative Anglican Rev H M Wollaston succeeded Dr Hamilton as Secretary 1874-1885.

In 1885, Wollaston was succeeded as secretary by the doctrinally rigorous Northern Ireland Presbyterian, Rev James McL Abernethy. His conservatism became a major force in the committee. He served several times as secretary, until he retired from the committee in 1901. However, his terms of leadership alternated with those of several Congregational ministers: men such as Rev J Rickard, Rev J B Rudduck and especially Rev E Steggall who was to lead MCM affairs 1899-1910. It was from these latter men that moves emerged, at first tentatively, and then more confidently, to change the practical and ideological thrust of the MCM.

Information about these Congregationalists is scanty, making it difficult to assess the origin of the newer ideas in their thinking. Nevertheless, according to an article in the City Mission Record, Rudduck was one of the originators of the movement known as "The Bitter Cry of Outcast London". His energies and means were unsparingly used in that great effort which startled the whole community in Great Britain. The Bitter Cry... was published in England in 1883 by the Congregational church; it was a grim pamphlet detailing the lot of London's poor, and calling for government intervention to secure social justice for them as a supplement to private charity and evangelization. This more liberal approach to social matters was transported by men like Rudduck to Melbourne, and Rae is surely correct to characterize the Congregational ministers in the city at this time as being among the most liberal in the colony. She talks of leaders in the 1880s who 'were prepared to discuss the theories of Darwin, Tyndall, Huxley and Spencer, and to examine the relevance of state

42 City Mission Record 12 September 1903 p 6. See also A S Wohl The Eternal Slum London 1977, pp 210-1.
socialism in the Christian framework. 43 An increasing liberalism in the Congregational Church – activities allowed on Sundays, dancing permitted etc – is attested to by Hugh Jackson.44

It was under Edwin Steggall that the MCM embarked on the new path that was to take it into the twentieth century. It was he who ‘arranged to attend to all cases of want with regard to women and children in the present depressed state of the labouring classes’ at the onset of the effects of the disastrous 1891 Crash45; it was James Abernethy who argued that this ‘was not the direct work they were required to do.’46 Abernethy’s braking effect on the committee tends to confirm Roe’s judgement that the Presbyterians were the most conservative denomination in the colony, and the most resistant to new Christian social thinking.47 We can press this view too hard, but it seems likely that an undeclared ideological war was fought out in the ranks of the committee in the see-sawing leadership of Presbyterian and Congregational ministers, who held alternating terms as secretary.

However, the strongly developed Christian-socialist ideas of Rev Charles Strong, and the Wesleyan Church’s efforts in founding a Central Mission ‘that would combine evangelistic, social and philanthropic activities’, and in running Pleasant Sunday Afternoons in which trade unionists and ministers alike spoke on factory legislation and old age pensions48, find no reflection at all in MCM Minutes. The Colonial Government itself was ahead of the MCM in its thinking about the causes of

43 Roe op cit p 156.
45 MCM Minutes 28 February 1892.
46 Ibid 28 July 1892.
47 Roe ibid pp 160-163.
48 Renate Howe "Protestantism, social Christianity and the ecology of Melbourne 1890-1900" in Historical Studies Vol 19 No 74, April 1980 pp 61, 63.
poverty and suffering in the community and what might be done about it. The Report of the Royal Commission on Old Age Pensions 1897, notes Hyslop, acknowledged the truth of the oft-repeated assertion that drunkenness was greatly to blame, but pointed out that this failing was 'very often the effect of the unfavorable environment' and named 'the conditions of modern industry' as the 'most prolific' cause of destitution among the aged. 49

With the MCM, it seems to be the case that a moderately liberal leadership responded to forces within the Mission that moved it away from evangelism into evangelical community welfare. These forces, as described in Chapter 2, were the depression of the 1890s, and the forced employment of women (with their own ideas of what Mission activity should include) as missionaries. These combined, in a much more liberally-thinking Christian context, to produce new directions for the MCM.

Chart 5 provides information about committee members who served mainly in the 1880s and 1890s. They were mostly of the same generation as the earlier men, and have much in common with them. None was native born; the largest group entered the colony in the 1850s; all were of British origin, though with a slightly greater preponderance of Englishmen. All major Protestant denominations were represented. The most significant difference is in the involvement of the laymen. It is clear that by the 1880s, laymen were joining the committee on retirement, rather than during their working life. (Leslie, Kitchen, Sydserff, Veal, Marsden) They represent an impressive range of occupations. (Civil servant, soap manufacturer, master mariner, school teacher, storekeeper) Despite being elderly, they were able to give their full attention to MCM matters, bringing to bear mature expertise.

49 Hyslop op cit p 146. The MCM was not the only body slow to move with the times. Hyslop concludes, 'it is fair to say of the COS that, as the 1890s progressed, its guiding principles, however well-meaning, became increasingly conservative by contrast with other views of social welfare, and yearly less appropriate to community needs.' ibid p 50.
New directions in leadership 1900-1914

The balance between clergy and laymen on the committee eventually tilted in favour of the latter. This movement can be dated precisely. In late 1899, when the future viability of the MCM was in the balance, a meeting of the committee with 'some leading Xian citizens' was proposed, to assess possibilities for the future. It was to be preceded by a dinner in the Bourke Street Coffee Palace, sponsored by accountant William Howat. This meeting, held in November 1899, set the future for the MCM. The first initiative was to make provision for a full-time paid Superintendent.50

Just as importantly, many prominent Christian laymen were brought into the ambit of the MCM through this meeting. In 1899-1900 there were seven clergy and four laymen on the committee; in 1900-1901 there were seven of each; in the years 1901-1914, this trend was maintained. Many of the clergy were on the committee as representatives of their denomination, as required by the constitution, but their involvement (i.e. attendance at meetings) was not great. The laymen, however, became more prominent over the years. When the important Finance Committee was set up in 1911, only one of the four members was a clergyman.51 (See Chart 6) In 1914-1915 a precedent was set when three laymen were elected to the committee because they were already deeply involved in MCM work in raising funds or helping in Mission Hall work.52 In this way, men with a strong commitment to the MCM were able to re-charge its energies.

Typical of the new laymen were H M Nicholson, the Treasurer (an accountant), A M Strongman (a prominent solicitor), and William Howat (an accountant), who with the Rev T W Hughes Jones, made up the new Finance Committee. (See Chart 6) By now, the growing number of properties,

50 MCM Minutes 5 and 26 October, 10 November 1899.
51 MCM Minutes 5 December 1911.
52 Ibid, 3 February 1914 (Mr Charles Du Vi), 5 May 1914 (Mr W A Rae), 2 February 1915 (Mr Rogers).
Male Leaders of the Melbourne City Mission after 1900

Source: MCM Minute Books, City Mission Record, trade journals, obituaries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name, dates, denomination</th>
<th>Place of origin</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Arrived in Victoria</th>
<th>Evangelical &amp; charitable involvements</th>
<th>Career</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>William Halsey 1859-1935</td>
<td>Deptford, England</td>
<td>Bermondsey Grammar</td>
<td>c. 1885</td>
<td>On MCM committee 1900-1914+; Finance committee 1911+</td>
<td>Major shoe &amp; leather merchant with branches interstate &amp; NZ. Sole agent for many overseas companies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Howat 1850-192?</td>
<td>Ayrshire, Scotland</td>
<td>Scotch College, Melbourne</td>
<td>1855</td>
<td>On MCM committee 1900 - 1914+; Vice President of Sunday School Union. YMCA committee; Evangelisation Society committee. Deeply involved in Temperance movement. Donor of land to the MCM.</td>
<td>Managing clerk for Sir W J Clarke. Fellow of the Institute of Accountants. Elder of the Presbyterian Church from 1876.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**CHART 6**

**Male Leaders of the Melbourne City Mission after 1900**

**Source:** MCM Minute Books, City Mission Record, trade journals, obituaries.
complicated bequests and legacies in the hands of the MCM required a far more sophisticated administration, and highly experienced administrators. These were to be found mainly in the laymen, and their influence was proportionately greater. Indeed, the Finance Committee, during the illness of the Superintendent, took some ruthless decisions about the future of the MCM, which might not otherwise have been made; they dismissed the long-serving and dedicated missionaries, William Shepherd and J Keith Macintyre, in order to afford the services of R L Mason, erstwhile head of the Launceston City Mission who was seen by them as both able and young, and thus a more valuable missioner.\(^53\)

The November 1899 meeting also enlisted the continuing financial support of other laymen who did not, for various reasons, become actual committee members. Indeed, Houat had donated two blocks of land in Mary Street North Melbourne for the construction of a Mission Hall (the first built for, and exclusively owned by the MCM) several months before joining the committee.\(^54\) Tea merchant James Griffiths pledged himself to contribute regularly to the Superintendent's salary, and gave hundreds of pounds over the next fifteen or so years for other mission needs. He was obviously closely in touch with the committee, although not an actual member.\(^55\)

However, clerical leadership still prevailed. The Superintendency was held first by Rev Edwin Steggall, who relinquished it, because of ill-health, to Rev R Keith Mackay in 1910;\(^56\) both were Congregational ministers. Steggall had been a hard-working and humane leader, but Mackay was a publicist and motivator of rare enthusiasm and flair. He was constantly out, preaching and speaking in churches all over the state,

\(^{53}\) *Ibid* 10 June 1913.

\(^{54}\) *Ibid* 3 January and 4 July 1901.

\(^{55}\) *Ibid* 10 November 1899, and for instance, 1 March 1900, 3 January 1901, 11 February 1904, 13 December 1906, 14 September 1909, 6 February 1912, 5 August 1913.

\(^{56}\) *Ibid* 10, 14 and 17 March 1910.
Rev. E. Steggall (1851-1932)
MCM Secretary for 16 years, and
first Superintendent of the
Mission 1898-1910

Rev R Keith Mackay (18 ?-1923),
General Superintendent of the
Melbourne City Mission 1910-17.

(Photograph from The Rechabite,
15 January 1907, Vol 1 p 238.)
advocating the claims of the MCM. He circularized 'all Graziers and Station owners in Victoria' for support. He was quick to see that ladies interested in the MCM could become important in fund-raising and organization; the Ladies' Advisory Board resulted, with Mrs Mackay as first President. When the Secretary of the London City Mission visited in 1912, Mackay persuaded the Mayor of the city to provide a reception for him, plus 'two motors' to drive the party around the suburbs. In contrast with the dour leadership of previous Scottish Presbyterians, Mackay was decidedly jovial and entertained many a meeting with his popular recitation, 'How's that, umpire!' At the opening of the new East Brunswick Hall in 1914, he was publicly commended for 'his unwearied diligence and untiring zeal in the discharge of his duties', which, it was felt, had largely helped to give a wider publicity to the work of our City Mission and to increase its influence as an organization in the Community....His fine cheery helpful spirit and his perfect faith in the power of the Gospel to save men is a feature in his character which with God's blessing cannot fail to ensure prosperity- and to make this great undenominational Mission a greater power for good.'

What is particularly interesting to the historian is the changing nature of the historical records about MCM committee members. Up to the 1890s, there is abundant material on the lives and careers of most men. The same information is featured over and over again; thus date of arrival in the colony becomes an almost ritual, incantatory element in biographies, along with place of origin, status of parents and later successes. It was

57 Ibid 8 November 1910.

58 Ibid 9 August 1910. His absences required a secretarial assistant to look after the office, and a young woman was employed at 25s. a week. So the formal trappings added a more impressive public image to the Mission, which was augmented by the donation of a brass name plate by William Howat (ibid 8 November 1910), and the removal of the office from the back to the front of the building at 66 Elizabeth Street, enabling the windows to be lettered. Their landlord was James Griffiths. In 1913 they moved to Clarke's Building, 430 Bourke Street.

59 Southern Cross 4 August, 1 December 1899.

60 MCM Minutes ibid 1 July 1914.
as if, in the chaos of making a new society, signposts had to be identified by which the culture could see from whence it had come, and at what it had arrived: a sort of cultural geography was required, which would map the shape of the society's progress, to authenticate what had been created, and give it an understandable shape.

Graeme Davison has identified the nature of this 'map'; it was the myth of the pioneer, of man making good in a harsh new land, with only modest resources, but with virtue and godliness on his side. Davison terms it the 'mobility myth'; only those who had made good (i.e. were materially and socially successful) found a place in the great commemorative histories and biographical dictionaries of the 1880s. Women were not included, as I have previously indicated, despite significant and strenuous contributions to the new society.

Committee members of the MCM were among the participants in these myths; their clientele, Melbourne's poor working class, were not. They were men and women, often of similar background, who had not 'made good' in the new land, but instead were defeated by it. They do not figure in the histories and biographies; indeed, so potent was the myth, that their existence was not even acknowledged in the minds of many.

For the men and women who came a generation after the 'pioneers', history had little interest, even though they were major actors in the Melbourne of the early twentieth century. The 'mobility myth' was, in a sense, killed off by the 1890s Depression; it was not yet evident that a new myth was in the making, unless it was the nationwide move to federal-

61 Graeme Davison 'The dimensions of mobility in Nineteenth Century Australia' in Australia 1888 Bulletin 2, August 1979, p 7.

62 Davison ibid p 10 quotes a journalist, H M Franklyn's simple-minded picture of the Australian working man on his 10s. a day rising to become his own master and owner of his own home, using those virtues of hard work, sobriety and thrift by which the successful, in the 'mobility myth', had made it. Yet recent, as yet unpublished, work by Jenny Lee and Charles Fahey indicates that many thousands earned more like 7s. a day, and seldom worked even 50 of the 52 weeks a year. They were at the mercy of the fluctuating market and consequent lay-offs, often for many weeks of the years.
ism, and a new form of antipodean Utopia brought about by governments, not by the efforts of individuals. The MCM committeemen 1900-1914 exist in a sort of limbo; there is little available information about them, and no clear frame by which we may know them.

The founders and early leaders of the MCM were the children of the fervent evangelical British homes of the early nineteenth century, or were the dramatic converts of evangelical preaching. For them, salvation through faith in Christ's saving death was the single most important fact of life, which coloured and shaped all that they thought and did. It also made them profoundly serious and determinedly moral, even puritanical, in their conduct. Their sense that conversion was the most urgent need of all human beings, gave them the missionary zeal to seek out non-believers, even pursuing them into their own homes to relieve their spiritual destitution. It also gave them licence, in their own eyes, to reprove any perceived defects in the conduct of those about them. To them, the necessity for conversion far outweighed in importance the provision of temporary relief for the poor; indeed, suggestions that society be re-organized in the interests of greater social justice did not engage their support for the very reason that such attempts were irrelevant to spiritual health.

However, this tightly-focused and all-pervading evangelicalism had passed its peak by the end of the century. After a transitional period in which the old fervour sat uneasily with newer ideas, a new type of man took the lead in the MCM. This man was committed deeply to the evangelistic aims of the MCM, but saw a clear duty to work equally for the physical and social well-being of its clients, and talked quite easily of devoting 'fully half' of MCM funds to the Relief Department of the Mission.63 He was also likely to be fully at ease in the business world, and to be bringing the techniques and expertise of business to bear on the running of the MCM.

63 Ibid 4 May 1915.
A M Strongman (18 ?-1938)

(Photograph in Weekly Times
27 August 1904 p. 9.)

H M Nicholson (18 ?-1920)

(Photograph in Weekly Times
1 August 1903 p. 10.)
Committee Members after 1900

William Howat (1850–?)

(Picture from Temperance in Australia, a record of the International Temperance Convention Melbourne, 1888, p. 198.)

William Halsey (1859–1935)

(Photograph from The Australian Leather Journal 15 December 1904 p. 523.)
CHAPTER 4
MISSIONARIES OF THE MELBOURNE CITY MISSION

Dismiss me not Thy service, Lord,
But train me for Thy will;
For ever I in fields so broad
Some duties may fulfil;
And I will ask for no reward,
Except to serve Thee still.

All works are good, and each is best
As most it pleases Thee;
Each worker pleases when the rest
He serves in charity;
And neither man nor work unblest
Will Thou permit to be.

T T Lynch 1818-71
(popular evangelical hymn)

...there is nothing sensational about the work of a missionary.
Port Melbourne missionary Sister Todd, 12 October 1904.

The Men

Male missionaries came from the working or lower middle class. (See Chart 7) They were recruited for the MGM after responding to advertisements in Melbourne’s daily papers, and were selected after filling in a questionnaire supplied to the MGM by the London City Mission and submitting to an interview before the committee. There was rarely a shortage of would-be missionaries, as the accompanying List of Applicants for 25 September 1888 indicates. There were usually some who claimed previous experience of mission work (Rev J Smith, W Cavanagh); some were just looking for a job (D Campbell, who gives his address as the Emigrants’ Home, was probably one of these); there were usually some from higher-status occupations (Thos Curry, engineer; W A Gay, overseer of works), who may have been religious enthusiasts or simply unemployed. All the major Protestant sects were represented, as well as fringe groups of the more zealous kind (C M Broomfield, Tabernacle). Men often applied several times for a position. The John Hall on the 1888 list was probably the brother of missionary William Hall.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Cholin</th>
<th>Church</th>
<th>Accepted</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>William Baugh</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>William Duthie</td>
<td>39</td>
<td></td>
<td>Helyum</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mrs. Brown</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Rev. John Smith</td>
<td>59</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>C. H. Morefield</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rev. M.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>John Tomlinson</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>John McEwen</td>
<td>55</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Rev. A. C.</td>
<td>38</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rev. E.</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mrs. Buttingham</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>J. C. Barker</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. Marshall</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. E. E.</td>
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<td>Rev. J.</td>
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<td>Richard lakes</td>
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<td>Rev. C.</td>
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<td>John Hall</td>
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<td>W. Campbell</td>
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The preference of the committee was to hire family men in the 30-45 age group.¹ They were regarded as sufficiently stable and mature to be able to handle the often difficult personal confrontations required by the job, while yet being young and healthy enough to survive its physical rigours. They were searchingly questioned on their theology. Since there are no recorded instances of any missionary's theology causing outcry from any quarter, we must assume that in this respect their initial vetting by the committee had been most thorough. Applicants were expected to be models of moral probity in their personal lives and total abstainers from alcohol.²

Such biographical data as are available are recorded on Chart 7. Of 16 whose place of origin is known, nearly a third (5) were Irish. Only two were Scots, although as we have already seen, Scots were over-represented on the committee. Eight were English, and one, Charles Hoffman, was from Finland. Of the sample, only one, William Hall, was native born, from Tasmania.

Their parents were, on the whole, working or lower middle class, with such occupations as shoemaking, drapery, and house-decorating. Two families farmed; two fathers were clergymen, one was a pharmacist and one a builder and contractor; five were artisans of one sort or another.

Most men were not highly educated. They wrote reasonably well in their Journals, although usually with imperfections of spelling or grammar. Writing varied from the absolutely correct entries of William Hall, to the crudely energetic style of William Shepherd - 'He has given up the drink and has nopped of swearing' he wrote on 30 January 1882.

Many had experienced a deeply-felt conversion as a result of listening

¹ MCM Minutes 27 April 1862.
² I have found no official regulation on drinking (until 1911; see p 77) or sexual morality, but it is clear, both from the abhorrence for drink expressed in missionary Journals and the anti-liquor agitations of committee members, that these matters were extremely important, perhaps so important as to be taken as read. Missionaries suffered instant dismissal if they were found offending in these matters. See the cases of Joseph Greathead, Charles Barber and Mr Nicholson.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name, denomination</th>
<th>Place of origin Status of parents Dates of Service</th>
<th>No. of years' service hired</th>
<th>Age when Reason for ceasing missionary work</th>
<th>Other occupation</th>
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<td>Barber, James C of E</td>
<td>Deptford, England</td>
<td>1888-1891</td>
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<td>Brady, Ophelia</td>
<td>Mount Shannon, Ireland. Farmer</td>
<td>1867-1879</td>
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<td>Brien, Henry</td>
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<td>1861-1864</td>
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<td>Buchanan, William</td>
<td>Ireland.</td>
<td>1854-1858</td>
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<td>Cromack, John</td>
<td>Leeds, England.</td>
<td>1889-1889</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>English, Aeneas</td>
<td>Dublin, Ireland</td>
<td>1853</td>
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<td>Fowler, George</td>
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<td>1887-1892</td>
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<td>Gould, William</td>
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<td>1860-1862</td>
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<td>Greathead, Joseph</td>
<td>Sheerness, Kent, England</td>
<td>1854-1859</td>
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<td>Tasmania, shoemaker</td>
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<td>1858-1859</td>
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<td>Hoffman, Charles</td>
<td>Finland, clergyman</td>
<td>7 -1885</td>
<td>1855</td>
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<td>Hutchinson, George</td>
<td>Ireland, clergyman</td>
<td>1863</td>
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<td>Ivey, John</td>
<td>Bristol, England, house decorator</td>
<td>1862-1896</td>
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<td>Knox, Edward</td>
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<td>1877-1880</td>
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<td>Mollia, ?</td>
<td></td>
<td>1858-1861</td>
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<td>Macon, Andrew Presbyterian</td>
<td>Fifeshire, Scotland, 1866-1868; draper 1872-1873</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Resigned in '68 to be a Draper's assistant country missionary, Died in 1888</td>
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<td>Martin, George Welsh Independent</td>
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<td>1885-1895</td>
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<td>Murray, Thomas</td>
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<td>1853-1860 (Bush). 1880-1893 (City)</td>
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<td>Nicholson, ?</td>
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<td>1867-1889</td>
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<td>Shepherd, William Salvation Army</td>
<td>Dundee, Scotland, undertaker</td>
<td>1879-1881; 1885-1913</td>
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<td>Gloucestershire, England</td>
<td>1856-1875</td>
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<tr>
<td>Summer, Ziba</td>
<td>Oxfordshire, England; lawyer, Bursforth, Yorkshire, England, manager of cotton mill</td>
<td>1859-1892</td>
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<td>45</td>
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<td>Taylor, Ebenezer Wesleyan</td>
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<td>1864-1866</td>
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<td>Turnbull, Archibald Methodist</td>
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<td>1868-1870</td>
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<td>Wibey, ?</td>
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<td>1854-1856; 1857-1859</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wier, Samuel C of E</td>
<td>Co. Down, Ireland, farmer</td>
<td>1859-1862</td>
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<tr>
<td>West, Reuben</td>
<td>Leicester, England, woolcomber</td>
<td>1870-1876</td>
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</table>
to an evangelist. Hall, (nominally Anglican) was converted at a Wesleyan meeting, while Shepherd was described in an early MCM history as 'a man's man' who had, in his youth 'been caught up in the gay life of our City' before his conversion at a mission rally in a Gospel Hall; when the Salvation Army began recruiting members in Melbourne in 1882, Shepherd was one of the first to be measured for a uniform. Others also admitted to a mildly riotous youth, but this was regarded as a powerful advantage in dealing with others still in the grip of debauchery.

Nearly two-thirds of the sample were employed in missionary work for a comparatively short period, finding themselves unsuited to the work for various reasons. Of the 29 men in the sample, 18 served five years or less; two of them were dismissed, eleven resigned and two died. Many found that their health suffered badly.

However, eleven men served more than five years, most of them considerably longer. Four men died in service, two were retired by the committee, and the rest resigned, two to further their careers in the church. Four men, John Cronack (20 years), William Hall (29 years), John Ivey (34 years) and William Shepherd (31 years) were outstanding in their length of service.

To an extent, this picture matches that drawn by Max Warren in his study of foreign missionaries (ie missionaries in non-Christian countries). Warren saw the missionary movement emanating from Britain as 'in part an expression of a far wider development - the social emancipation of the under-privileged classes in this country.' W N Gunson takes this further: 'Most of the missionaries...took with them into the field the New Mechanic's consciousness of his social position, his desire to better

3 City Mission Record Obit, 1 December 1923.
4 Cronack's Journal 4 September 1873. There was a longstanding evangelical tradition that converts used the 'testimony' of their own sinful past to contrast with their changed and purified lives since conversion.
himself, and his dependence on, and obligations to, the less fortunate'.

Gunson stresses, however, that such men also clung to their class of origin, seeing it as a theatre for the exercise of their new-found superiority, as the ground where their own change would be most fully understood, and in order to recruit men and women to follow in their footsteps.

But this mobility, Warren stresses, was in part achieved through their intensely-held beliefs and high level of personal drive (what he terms their 'inner-directedness'), which they believed implicitly to be the Holy Spirit at work in them. Missionaries from the pious lower middle classes represent that particular nineteenth century intense moral and spiritual seriousness so well described by Bradley. They were all men who had been 'called'.

All the MCM missionaries were from the working or lower middle class. None had been educated past secondary schooling, and most fell short of that. They were 'inner-directed' men, driven by their total belief in Christian teachings and an earnest enthusiasm to tell others. Yet there are differences from the Gunson/Warren model. With the exception of native-born William Hall, the men and their families had taken a major decision before joining the MŒ: the decision to emigrate to Australia. In most respects, this was a more momentous decision than that to become an urban missionary.

Were they coming to the new land to improve their status and their standard of living? What sort of 'fresh start' did they imagine they would get? We would need to know a complex range of details about the sorts of family, economic and social pressures operating on each family. What combination of reasons, for instance, would move those men and their wives in their fifties, (Greathead, Ivey, Stephens), to sail thousands of miles to an unknown land, leaving most of their children behind? Did they go to

6 W N Gunson 'Evangelical Missionaries in the South Seas 1797-1860' PhD ANU quoted in Warren ibid p 40.

7 Ian Bradley The Call to Seriousness, Macmillan New York 1976.
pave the way for their children? Did they go for the good of their health? Were they driven from Great Britain by unemployment? Joseph Greathead kept a journal of his voyage to Australia, and there are hints in it that unemployment may have driven him from England. His wife was clearly an unwilling emigrant.\(^8\)

The decision was taken without knowledge of the existence of the MCM. Even had they come with the vague intention of working for the Lord, they could hardly have expected payment for so doing. Clearly, difficulties in finding employment in Melbourne led many into the arms of the Mission. John Ivey had run up a bill of £20 for medicines for his sick wife which he was unable to pay because he was unemployed, at the time he joined the MCM.\(^9\)

It is most probable, then, that a man looking for work in Melbourne, who was a devout and zealous Christian, would light upon one of the regular advertisements placed by the MCM in the daily papers, and would then see his fitness for the task and apply for it. The only native-born missionary that we know of, William Hall, was in secure employment in a drapery, but he was prepared to give up his opportunities and security there, in his desire to spread God's word.

What preconceptions and assumptions did these men bring to the job? There was undeniably a sense of glamour and adventure about foreign missionary work; did this hold true for urban work? Many of the men had undergone the exhilarating experience of conversion in response to the powerful preaching of missionaries. Missionaries were given opportunities for influencing others in far-reaching ways, their only raw materials the force of their convictions and the persuasiveness of their tongues. Were MCM recruits attracted to this exercise of power?

The role of missionary was an honourable and dignified one, bringing one close to the level of respect accorded the clergy. John Cromack was

\(^8\) Joseph Greathead Journal of his voyage from London to Melbourne on board the 'Diana' 9 April 1853-16 August 1853. MS Latrobe Library.

\(^9\) Minutes 26 December 1862.
using the title 'Reverend' before he joined the MCM, although not ordained. 10 Some men were clearly using their terms as missionaries as preparation for taking orders. George Martin, Ebenezer Taylor and Archibald Turnbull all became clergymen. Yet one can hardly regard the pulpit of the Maldon Welsh Independent Church, mounted by George Martin, as a great step up in status. No missionary successfully stormed the rarefied heights of establishment Anglicanism.

Missionary work, then, seemed to promise some rise in status, and a certain power over the people evangelised. Yet daily, the missionary was reminded of his subservience, and often of his impotence. The power he used was God's power, not his own; he knew he was an unworthy instrument in God's plan. He was reminded, not only by his own meditations and Bible-knowledge, but by his superiors, the committee, and his inferiors, his clients.

The nineteenth century committees never treated their missionaries as anything other than inferiors and hired servants, even when admiring their skills and successes. The distinction between themselves - ordained clergymen and social leaders - and the missionaries - working-class employees - was always maintained, despite the fact that many of the clergy had risen to orders from the lower classes. 11

Committees seldom saw their missionaries, who could only attend meetings if summoned. The instructions of the committee were made known to the missionaries through the weekly contact each had with his Superintendent, usually a committee member and a clergyman in the missionary's district. Approaches to the committee - requests for sick leave, or relocation expenses - were made by letter. The committee seldom consulted a missionary.

10 Minutes 7 September 1869.

11 British clergy were aware of this threat to their position and role. Warren records the polemic of a Canon of St Paul's in the early 1800s, who called for someone 'to rescue Religion from the hands of didactic artizans - whoever prefers a respectable clergyman for his teacher to a delerious mechanic'. Quoted in Warren op cit p 62.
about his reallocation to another district. Missionaries were expected
simply to obey, and to move.

The introduction of journal-keeping was in large part designed to
assure the committee that missionaries were working hard and abiding by
their instructions. And there were plenty of these to abide by. In 1864, it
was decided 'that preaching on the part of Missionaries, as a rule, be
absolutely prohibited'. At this stage, the missionary was not permitted in
any way to usurp the role of the clergy, and the committee took much
exception to missionaries holding private funerals and, very occasionally,
baptisms for poor families. These stringencies were eased in the 1880s,
and missionaries preached regularly on street corners, in Gospel Halls, and
even in churches.

The journal was to be presented every month to the Superintendent for
'inspection', and be signed by him. When the missionary came to pick up his
journal, the two were urged to 'take counsel' about the work. The journal
was later supplemented by the Statistics Sheet (see illustration), on which
detailed information about the month's work was to be recorded statistical-
ly. This enabled the compilation of those grand statistics used so promi-
ently at the Annual Meetings to convince subscribers that good work was be-
ing done by their agents; it also served as a further check and discipline
on the missionary. The sheets, containing family names, addresses and
religious affiliation of all householders visited, were also forwarded to
the ministers of each denomination in the district, to be followed up. The
aim was to increase church attendance.

Missionaries were not permitted to retain their own journals: if they
wished to keep them, the committee insisted that they copy them out. On a

12 Minutes 4 April 1864. See also 17 January 1859. The committee was
debating the matter of emergency baptisms as late as 1904. See ibid
13 April 1904.

13 Minutes 16 June 1864.

14 Ibid 7 March 1866. The Greathead journal in the LaTrobe Library is in
fact Greathead's copy. The original is lost. All other journals referred
Part of a Statistics Sheet of his activities for the month of January 1897, filled in by William Hall, Prahran Missionary


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<th>Days</th>
<th>Hours Preached</th>
<th>Visitors Paid</th>
<th>Church Disciplined</th>
<th>Sick Visited</th>
<th>Sermon Lodged</th>
<th>Attendance at Meetings</th>
<th>Sermons Visited</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
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<td>29</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Total | 147 | 225 | 245 | 120 | 21 | 670 | 926 | 250 |

[Signature]

Journal of Mr. William Hall for the Month of January 1897.
man’s resignation or death, his journals were passed over to the committee. This supervision seems to have been reasonably thorough. Some Superintendents even corrected the spelling mistakes of their missionaries: Rev George Mackie did so, in delicate purple ink, in Reuben West’s journal.

For much of the nineteenth century, the missionaries were not given a regular holiday each year. They were expected to work six and a half days a week, including public holidays (six hours a day, three hours on Sunday). When ill or exhausted, they would apply for time off, and be granted a few days. For a few years, a house in Dromana was made available by a supporter of the MCM for an annual week’s holiday for each missionary and his family. By the end of the century, missionaries were allowed two week’s holiday in summer. This was increased to three, with an extra week when they wanted it, in 1908. When a missionary died, a few lines of appreciation and regret, plus a gift of a few pounds was offered to his family. This contrasts with the much longer eulogies sent to families of fellow committee members who had died. (see illustration)

Most missionaries consequently had a rather distant and formal relationship with their Superintendents. One exception was Reuben West’s friendship with Rev George Mackie. Mackie actually took time to write friendly and supportive comments in West’s journal, to encourage him. ‘Have read thus far,’ he wrote on 3 April 1871, ‘and attest the carefulness of the work, and its vast importance among the fallen.’ The warmth that

to in this thesis were in the possession of the MCM until 1983, when they were given to the Melbourne University Archives. They are the originals.

15 Ibid 30 September 1856.

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid 31 December 1889. Similar offers kept occurring. Lady missionaries were offered a cottage at Black Rock for a month in 1906. See 13 December 1906. Sometimes a sick missionary had a convalescent holiday paid for by a friend of the Mission. eg James Griffiths paid for Hall, 4 April 1901; William Howat for Shepherd 11 October 1906.

18 Ibid 5 May 1908.
Eulogies by the MCM Committee to dead Committee Members and Missionaries

Source: MCM Minute Books

Rev A M Ramsey, committee member

It affords us very sincere though mournful pleasure to bear our testimony to the many Christian excellences of our late esteemed friend and brother in Christ, the Rev A. M. Ramsey. It was our happiness to have been associated with him in several religious and benevolent enterprises extending over a period of about sixteen years. We always found him ready and willing to help forward every good work. We love to recall the remembrance of his cheerful kindly greeting, his quiet genial disposition and loving spirit, and that large warm-hearted sympathy which so readily flowed to all who needed his willing service and aid. While his sincere and uncompromising fidelity to principle elicited our respect, his Christian courtesy and catholic spirit, (uniformly exhibited to all who advocated views opposed to those he held) won our esteem and love. He truly loved all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and did much by his personal influence and example to strengthen the bonds of Christian love and fellowship among the true followers of Christ associated with other churches. His memory is dear to us and he will ever retain a high place in our esteem and affectionate remembrance. We can therefore most sincerely join in conveying to the bereaved family of our dear departed friend an expression of our sympathy.

We join in asking his Saviour to be a Father to the fatherless and a Husband to the widow, and

'When soon or late they reach the coast
O'er life's rough ocean driven,
May they be found no wanderer lost,
A family in Heaven.'

1 February 1870

John Cromack, missionary

Resolved - That the Committee having heard of the death of one of our oldest Missionaries Mr. John Cromack desire to place on record their deep appreciation of his long intelligent and zealous service for the Lord Jesus Christ in the work of the City Mission.

[£25 to his widow]

28 May 1889

John Ivey, missionary

The Committee have heard with great regret of the death of Mr. Ivey, their oldest missionary. Mr Ivey was a long time in the service of the Mission and had much spiritual success in his district. Kindly and compassionate to the poor among whom he laboured ever studying in what way he could best advance their material and spiritual interests. Even in the wanderings of the deathbed, they and their wants were often on his lips showing how near his heart they were. The Committee are thankful to add that their departed brother's end was full of hope and peace.

[A month's salary to be paid to his relatives]

6 February 1896
existed between the two men is poignantly evident in the final entry in West's journal for 1871.

Raining very heavy till 12 o'clock. At which time I went to the Manse to enquire about Mr. Mackie; and was told that he had just departed this life. The news almost paralyzed me. For though it had been said there was no hope, I did not believe he would go so soon. I felt very sad, and tears came to my relief. To me it is almost like a dream; and his affable ways are ever before me. ...I saw that numbers of the people in South Yarra had put up their shutters, showing the great respect they have for the departed Gentleman. 12 November 1871

Missionaries were not well-paid. This alone ensured that they remained members of the respectable working class, confined for their working lives to rental accommodation. Chart 8 compares their pay rates with those of other workers. Artisans were paid by the week, and were usually not fully employed all year, whereas missionaries were salaried workers. Nevertheless, their income was low, and they suffered badly in the 1890s depression. Occasional requests for a higher wage were usually refused, since the Mission was chronically short of funds.19

Missionaries were liable to dismissal without much compunction if the committee thought they had failed in their duty in some way. Greathead was the first to suffer this fate, after a minister and his wife testified they saw him frequenting hotels.20 Mr Nicholson's adultery led to his expulsion, while Charles Barber also offended in his relationship with a female servant. Barber resented his dismissal and took the MCM to court, but the Judge found for the Mission.21

Most missionaries resigned or were dismissed, some died in service, but a few completed their working lives in the MCM's service. These men posed a problem for the committee: they felt obliged to provide some sort of pension for them, yet were normally without extra funds for such 'dead' expenditure.

19 Ibid see for example, 30 December 1890, 8 February 1894, 7 February 1901.

20 Ibid 30 December 1859, 5 & 13 January 1860.

21 Ibid 2 March 1869. See Chapter 6 for details.
### Male Missionaries' pay rates in £ pa 1854-1913

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Rate (£ pa)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1854</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1856</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1862</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1869</td>
<td>120 for single man; £5 increment for wife and every child under 16 years, up to £150.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880s</td>
<td>As above, plus £5 increment for every five years of service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1892</td>
<td>March 10% pay cut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>May 50% pay cut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>June 75% pay cut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>September average pay about 120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>New missionary 200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: MCM Minute Books

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### Clerical Salaries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Swallow and Ariell Biscuit Company</th>
<th>Modern Permanent Building Society</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>36.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1894</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>35.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Swallow and Ariell, Minutes of Directors (Melbourne University Archives); Modern Permanent Building Society, Minutes of Directors.

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### Clerical Salaries, c. 1885

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>£ pa 1890</th>
<th>£ pa 1894</th>
<th>Reduction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>500-1000</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>300-400</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountant</td>
<td>200-300</td>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head clerk</td>
<td>75-150</td>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Hoffman Patent Steam Brick Company, Minutes of Directors, 1885; Swallow and Ariell, Notebook of Staff Salaries, 1887 (Melbourne University Archives); Modern Permanent Building Society, Minutes of Directors, 1885; Butlin, Australia and New Zealand Bank, pp. 250-2; Salaries of Permanent, Professional and Clerical Officers in Banks of Issue, Insurance Officers and Wool Warehouses, 1894-5, Victorian Statistical Register, 1894, Interchange, p. 245.

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### Wage Rates, Melbourne, 1890-4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>1890 (shillings per day)</th>
<th>1894 (shillings per day)</th>
<th>Percentage reduction</th>
<th>Labour exchange rate 1890-4</th>
<th>Percentage reduction 1890-3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plasterers</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>55.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bricklayers</td>
<td>10-12</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>59.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpenters</td>
<td>10-12</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Builders' labourers</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>2/6 to 5</td>
<td>48.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Victorian Yearbook, 1890, 1894; Age, 10 Mar. 1893.

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John Ivey was the first such. Employed in 1862, aged 53, he was placed in the difficult Collingwood district, where he worked for the rest of his life. His pay was reduced in 1869 from £150 to £135 pa, since he now had only one child under sixteen. As he aged, his eyesight and health began to fail, but he continued to work as he was able, with a much-reduced salary. He died in 1896 aged 86, the only missionary whose wage was not cut during the Depression, since it was already very low.

But it was William Hall and William Shepherd who really tested the committee's humanity and sense of social justice. With the changes sweeping the Mission after the review of 1900, the new committees were keen to start anew with the work centred on Mission Halls. Shepherd and Hall were the only male missionaries to survive the desperate 1890s; Shepherd had long been agitating for a hall from which to work, but his colleague was too set in his ways to want this challenge. He preferred his solo work, and veered away from any wider organizational tasks. By 1910, even Shepherd, although still extremely active in hall work, was in poor health, and gradually losing that ebullience that had so inspired his earlier work.

Hall had by then considerably exercised the committee. In 1900 they had received some 'comments' on the man's work in Prahran, and suddenly realised they had forgotten all about him, so unobtrusive was he. When the Secretary visited the district, he 'found there were populous parts of it which had not received attention inasmuch as Mr Hall was carrying out instructions given to him some time ago.' It was decided to move Hall to South Melbourne, to give him a fresh start in a needy area, and to stimulate him to adopt a more progressive approach. This had little effect. Hall was loath to move from Prahran, where his family was well settled. While he was receiving travel expenses from the committee, he did not look

22 How much is not known. The relevant Minute Book 1871-1886 is missing.
23 Minutes 13 September 1900.
24 Ibid 1 November 1900.
William Shepherd (1846-1923)

William Hall (1849-1915) (MCM photographs)
very hard for a house to rent in South Melbourne; as soon as the committee stopped the payments, he was forced to rent a house and move. Once there, by simply not doing anything about finding a suitable hall from which to work, he baulked the committee and kept to his old pattern of visitation. By 1904, he had even moved back to Williams Road Prahran, which his family had come to regard as home.25

In 1907, the committee tried to transfer him to Collingwood for six months to fill a temporary vacancy there, but he was so unwilling that Shepherd volunteered instead.26 When in 1910, after 'very considerable discussion' of the state of the finances, it was decided to retrench a missionary and retire from one of the districts, Hall was the immediate choice. He protested, and was given a three month extension, which, owing to changes on the committee, lingered on for two years, before 'the matter of Mr Hall' was again considered. Hall had not modernized his style, and the committee found 'his methods and work are not satisfactory.'27 Particularly, 'the failure of Mr Hall to establish himself in Hall work in his district was referred to.'28 Such passive resistance could no longer be tolerated.

He was to be retired on £40 pa for three years (1/3 his salary), 'and as he is now 63 years of age he will in two years be able to claim the Old Age Pension. It is by the committee considered that 3 years allowance should be sufficient and all the Mission can afford.' With Hall gone, the rate of pay of the ladies could be increased, £80 saved and £20 gained.29 Hall responded with a letter which was a model of dignity without servility, despite the fact that he was offering to continue working for

25 Ibid 2 May, 4 July, 1 August 1901. City Mission Record 12 June 1904; missionaries' addresses were given in each monthly issue.

26 Minutes 8 November, 3 December 1907.

27 Ibid 1 March 1910; 2 July 1912.

28 Ibid 3 September 1912.

29 Ibid.
the MCM at £5 per month. But the committee stood firm: Hall went.

This exercise in biting the bullet stiffened the committee sufficiently to make further excisions. William Shepherd and J Keith MacIntyre were retired on the same terms as Hall the following year. The combined savings would go to hiring a bright new young man, R L Mason, formerly General Superintendent of the Launceston City Mission. This was effected by the end of the year, despite resistance from the luckless retirees.

It had proved relatively easy for the committees of 1900 on to introduce new policies in almost all areas of Mission governance, but the handling of the missionaries was a rocky and thorny way. We have seen how the men who survived the 1890s fared: Shepherd adapted quickly and easily; Hall blocked and parried. Both met the same fate in the search for financial rationalization and younger and better men.

The resolution of the committee in finally retiring missionaries no longer of full use to the Mission prompted it also to revise its policy on conditions of hiring and dismissal/resignation. It had already tightened its rules and regulations in 1911, with detailed instructions to be used by missionaries when handling money. This area had expanded rapidly with the growth of Hall work with their savings funds, local fund raising etc. Missionaries were now requested to sign the Total Abstinence Pledge and a booklet of the Constitution, Rules and Instructions. In 1913, major decisions about the treatment of missionaries were taken:

1. Men must be over 25 and under 35; women over 25 and under 30, except in special circumstances.
2. They must have 'a good sound english education', and be examined to prove it.

MacIntyre had been appointed to the Bush Mission arm of the MCM in 1878, working in the Heytesbury forest area in the Western District. After this was closed down, he had worked for a time for the Baptist Home Mission, and had been re-employed by the MCM in 1908, as a hospital visitor. See Col P Dale op cit p 9, and Minutes 3 November 1908. For the hiring of Mason see ibid 3 June 1913.

Ibid 8 February 1911.
3. They must conform to the Constitution. 'As far as possible it will be expected that the members of the family of married missionaries will assist in the work of the Mission.'

4. They must give evidence of reasonable confidence in conducting meetings.

5. They must retire at sixty, unless the committee decides otherwise.

6. Each will be assured in a first class Life Assurance Society: men, £200 maturing at 60, women, £100.

7. Sums from the policy will be handed to the missionary at retirement.

8. Premiums to be paid 2/3 by MCM, 1/3 by missionary, deductible monthly.

9. The policy is to be held by the MCM in a Bank deed box.

10. The policy is not assignable.

11. If a missionary should retire early in ill health, the policy shall be handed over as is.

12. If the missionary resigns, the President, Treasurer and Secretary shall decide the course of action.32

Thus the committee moved to cover areas of the employer/employee relationship previously undefined.

The Sisters

Although none of their journals survives, the careers of the missionary Sisters, as they were called, are quite well-documented through Minute Books and the City Mission Record, published monthly from mid-1900. The Sisters reported on their work regularly, and other people also contributed information and descriptions. That family information available on each of the Sisters is recorded on Chart 9.

At the time of their employment, the women were all unmarried, and at an age when the possibility of marriage was remote. They were the daughters of professional men or of skilled workers. Some had grown up in one or other of the districts, within respectable church-going families. Lillian Dickson attended St George's Presbyterian Church in Collingwood. The incumbent was the Rev Daniel McKenzie, a long-time MCM committee member and publicist. She taught in the Sunday School with MCM missionary Maggie

32 Ibid 19 March 1913.
### Sisters of the Melbourne City Mission 1895-1914

**Source:** MCM Minute Books

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Names, dates,</th>
<th>Place of origin and status of father</th>
<th>Married</th>
<th>Age when hired</th>
<th>Length of service</th>
<th>Reason for ceasing service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maggie Aitcheson 1874-1935</td>
<td>Glasgow, Scotland carpenter</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>40 years 1895-1935</td>
<td>Death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lillian Dickson 1876-1944</td>
<td>Collingwood, Engineer from Scotland.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>38 years 1903-1941</td>
<td>Ill health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emily Dykes 1876-1937</td>
<td>Married, 1930.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Marriage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth Hartnett 1857-1931</td>
<td>Melbourne, Shoemaker &amp; saddler, Ireland.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>23 years 1898-1919</td>
<td>Blindness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E J Todd</td>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>17 years 1895-1912</td>
<td></td>
<td>Resigned after refusing to change districts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Thompson 1867 - 7 (Mrs Whitridge)</td>
<td>Father a state school teacher</td>
<td>Married Sec. 34 of China In-Land Mission 1905. Widowed 1906.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth Young 1862-1930</td>
<td>Ireland, Cooper.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>9 years 1898-1907</td>
<td>Resigned over some difficulty</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Aitcheson, and herself became a missionary under the encouragement of the former, and the friendship of the latter.\(^{33}\)

Some, like Sister Dykes, had worked voluntarily for the poor, before seeking formalization of their position as City Missionaries. Miss Dykes was ‘an old friend and fellow worker of Sister Hartnett’.\(^{34}\) The Sisters felt ‘called’ to the work. In the words of Sister Aitcheson, in her tribute to Sister Hartnett, ‘She knew that she had received a definite call to the work, and she was always conscious of and responded to the urge to go forward.’\(^{35}\)

Elizabeth Hartnett was the one MCM missionary who drew universal admiration from all who dealt with her. The Australian-born daughter of an English saddler and shoemaker, she had already spent ten years in voluntary charity work before joining the MCM in 1896. Her move to paid work may have been encouraged by the death of her father, which left her responsible for her mother. Her salary was in part met by the Brunswick Presbyterian Church, which had approached the MCM to begin work in a Brunswick sorely demoralized by the Depression. She began work at £52 per annum; she was 37 years old.\(^{36}\)

At first, her work was house-to-house visitation, and the directing of souls both to God and sources of temporal relief. But as early as 1900, she had begun working to secure a house where unmarried pregnant and ill-treated girls and women might find care. At a time when the committee was still wondering if it could even afford her wages, she convinced the men of the need for such a Home.\(^{37}\)

Miss Hartnett was a woman of natural grace and refinement, with an

\(^{33}\) City Mission Record 12 March 1903 p 5, and 1 August 1920 p 8.

\(^{34}\) Ibid 12 April 1905 p 5.

\(^{35}\) Ibid 1 December 1933.

\(^{36}\) Minutes 4 June, 2 July 1896; biographical information courtesy of her great-niece Mrs Gwen Hartnett.

\(^{37}\) Minutes 5 April, 5 July 1900.
exquisite gentle face; but she had the toughness of spirit and powers of organization to drive her project forward without the committee’s help. She had drawn around her a group of hard-working ladies, led by a Mrs Watson. Together, they raised money and a small place was rented to begin the work. The committee was asked for 5s to make up the rent. The Home was officially opened on 12 December 1900 to general acclaim. Sister Hartnett had succeeded quickly and effectively in doing what William Shepherd had for years been urging upon the Mission: to commit itself to wider outreach and the acquisition of property.

The Brunswick Presbyterian Church was at first alarmed at the time being given by Sister Hartnett to the Home, at the expense of visitation; nonetheless, they ‘eulogized’ her work. But the need for the Home grew. In October 1901, she took over two two-storied shops in west Lygon Street for two years at 23s a week, guaranteed in her own name. Medical services were supplied free by Dr Mary Fletcher.

In 1903, the committee allotted another missionary, Sister Dickson, to assist her. By 1904, she had her eye on the Salvation Army Rescue Home in Albion Street, which was closing. In an extraordinary coup, Sister Hartnett had, by the end of the year, persuaded a local charitable gentleman, Mr Charles Young, to buy it for her work. Mrs Watson provided a further £150 in memory of her daughter. The Home was soon filled with mothers and babies.

Such was the influence of Elizabeth Hartnett. People vied to help her. All renovations, extensions and even the new building opened in 1913, were paid for, usually quickly, from money she and her lady helpers raised.

38 Ibid 1 November 1900, 3 January 1901.
39 Ibid 7 February 1901.
40 Ibid 7 November 1901.
41 City Mission Record 12 February 1902.
42 Minutes 10 December 1904.
Charles Young provided her with a life annuity while she wished to run the Home, and insisted that the committee provide her with 'suitable assistance as would enable her to conduct the Home with efficiency'. Mrs Jessie Pickett was employed as Matron.43

Even the MCM committee, never known for treating its workers as anything more than loyal servants, was deeply under her influence, and wrote to her to express 'their sense of the exceptionally deep interest she had always manifested in her work and congratulate her on the kindly provision that had by the goodness [of] God been made for her, and hoping that she would long be spared to continue the oversight of the Home.'44

Her influence was enormous. We are told that at the first anniversary tea in the Brunswick Town Hall (lent without charge by the City Council) to celebrate the opening of the Home, 'no less that thirty-one tables were provided, and more than one sitting was necessary to accommodate all who came to the tea. ...the ladies of Brunswick...seemed to vie with each other' to present tables. The same scenes were repeated in subsequent years.45

Any distressed woman or child was admitted to the Home; unmarried pregnant girls, deserted children, women and children fleeing domestic violence, deserted wives, widows. Children went on to Miss Sutherland for placement; young women were sent to situations. 'Love was the only law, and no framed and glazed set of rules and regulations confronted the visitor as soon as the door was opened', according to Rev E Steggall.46 It was 'in every sense a home and not a reformatory', opined its patron, Charles Young.47

43 Ibid 14 December 1905; 7 May 1907; 4 February 1913.
44 Ibid 7 May 1907.
45 City Mission Record 12 March 1904. See March issues in 1905 and 1906.
46 Ibid 12 November 1904.
watched. They went to their own churches, and she had never found anyone failing to come back to dinner". Not a single negative testimony has survived.

The historian is in a difficult position here: none of the inmates of Sister Hartnett's Home has left any private evidence of her experience there. As with all institutions, there must have been problems. Sister Hartnett was undoubtedly an exceptional woman, but there is evidence that a myth was being created about her during her lifetime, from which any dross was carefully removed. The two accompanying photographs of her, depicting her early and late in her career, show how complete this process was, even before her death.

In 1904, Sister Hartnett registered herself under the Infant Life Protection Act to have care over infants under two years of age. In 1909, an agreement for adopting children from the Home was drawn up and approved. Sadly, however, at the moment of her greatest influence, she was increasingly hampered by rapidly-failing eyesight. Had it not been for the devoted care of her niece, Miss Fraser, (paid 2s 6d per week by the local ladies' committee and 5s by the men for her life's labour) she would soon have been rendered useless. As it was, little by little, the work became impossible. She, Miss Fraser and Mrs Pickett all retired together in 1919. She had to give up the Presidency of the Ladies' Auxiliary in 1928. Her active successor at the Home, Sister Margaret, noted that 'wherever one goes Sister Hartnett's name is as "ointment poured forth".'

She died in 1931. In November 1933 memorial stones to her were unveiled at the Home in an atmosphere permeated with reverence. 'Many desired the opportunity of speaking, but those privileged paid very high tribute to her

48 Ibid.
49 Ibid 12 April 1904; Minutes 29 June 1909.
50 City Mission Record 1 April 1919; 1 May 1928.
51 Ibid 1 May 1920.
Elizabeth Hartnett (1857-1931)

Sister Hartnett in 1904.

The creation of the myth of Sister Hartnett is evident in the difference between these two photographs.

The Late Sister Hartnett,
with three of her charges at the Home.

(MCM photographs)
Sister Hartnett's Brunswick Home.

Above, the original Home as pictured in the City Mission Record in 1904.

Below, the second building on the site, opened in 1913 at a cost of £1600. City Mission Record 1913.

TWENTY-ONE YEARS' LOVING MINISTRY

Founded by Sister Hartnett in 1900

Last year there were 30 women and 28 infants in the Home.

Since the Home opened—nearly 430 Women and Girls
420 Infants and 70 Neglected Children have been cared for.

SUPPORTED BY VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTIONS
memory. I heard it said afterwards, 'It was a wonderful gathering, and the speeches beautiful, and yet the half has not been told of that great soul...'. It was left to fellow-missionary Sister Aitcheson to write her tribute to Sister Hartnett's 'gentleness, patience and tact with the girl-mothers' by whom her memory 'shall always be revered and blessed...not only to the girls in the Home...but all over the district of Brunswick' by the poor families she helped and encouraged.52

If Maggie Aitcheson saw Elizabeth Hartnett as a charismatic Angel, she saw herself as belonging to 'the Order of Plodders'.53 She had migrated with her family from Glasgow in 1895. She heard missionary George Martin speaking at meetings at her Uncle's house and elsewhere. He told her of the MCM's plan to hire ladies. She also met several committee members, one of whom, Captain Sydserff, suggested she would make a good missionary. She was considering taking up nursing, but also applied to be a lady missionary. She accepted employment with the MCM at £1 per week, with North Carlton as her district. She was 31 years old.54 She was a hard-working energetic but sympathetic woman, and actively pressed for a Mission Hall to work from. She was a deeply convinced Christian, committed to the service of others. She believed that religious truth could enlighten people's lives. At her death in 1935, she was still in charge of her district, Richmond, deeply admired for her strength and 'saintliness'.55

Although her journals have not survived, her regular contributions to the Record provide considerable insight. She wrote lengthy reports in the popular Dickensian style. Although today her writing seems to prey too much on sentiment, she was undoubtedly a skilled popularizer of the MCM's work by providing that which subscribers wanted to hear. She was alert to the

52 Ibid 1 December 1933.
53 City Mission Record 1 October 1920 p 6.
54 Minutes 15 August 1895. City Mission Record 1 August 1920.
55 Ibid 1 May 1935.
Lillian Dickson (1876-1944)

A clear growth in 'saintliness' as they age; MCM photographs from 1904 (left) and the 1920s.

Maggie Aitcheson (1874-1935)

(MCM photographs)
drama of events, and exploited admirably the serial possibilities of the
Record. William Hall's plain but informative paragraphs were no match, nor
even the brisk straightforwardness of William Shepherd.

In her presentation of the death of a child, Sister Aitcheson was able
to add her contribution to the long evangelical tradition of writing on the
subject. She had no doubt read of many children's death-beds in the British
Evangelical Magazine, or some other such publication, and knew well what
was expected of her. In the Record of 12 February 1903, she introduced
Little Olly, a girl with a heart defect.

Come with me; tread softly, please. The bedroom door stands open
and so hides the bed from view, but on the right hand side is a
chest-of-drawers with a looking-glass on it. Look, and you will
see reflected a child's sweet face smiling at you. Going up to
the bed the first thing that attracts you is the neck. The
jugular veins look as if they would burst, the breath short and
laboured. The little heart is too weak to drive the blood to and
from; the face transparent with delicate pink tint; pretty, red
lips; bright eyes, which seem to laugh at you. ...On the bed is a
dress box containing dolls, dressed and undressed...I had been
telling her about my Sunday-school children, so she wants to help
to give them a Christmas tree, and started right away. But this
'little pilgrim' of fifteen years is hastening Home, and is
getting so weak that the box has had to be put aside.

In the 12 March issue, she tells how she and Olly confronted the girl's
impending death, talking about what it might be like to meet Jesus.

The next night I went to stay with her. At midnight the struggle
became dreadful; the father, mother and I knelt in silent prayer.
...As the little head tossed on the pillow, the mother said, "Can
I help you, Olly?" "No, no," she said. "Who can help you, Olly?"
"Jesus, Jesus," she replied faintly.

As I returned home in the bright moonlight at 3 a.m., I thought
how grand it will be when 'God' explains all mysteries.
The next day Olly went home, and when her box with the dolls and
(toys for my Christmas tree (referred to last month) was given to
me, I felt as if the things were too sacred to be used.

Sister Aitcheson was very much aware of the reader for whom she was
writing. She received parcels, especially at Christmas, made up by
Christian children's groups from Melbourne's churches, containing gifts for
the poor. She would write reports for these children:

My attention was rivetted on four little mites who were quite
bewildered when "Santa Claus" called them by name. When they got
the toys they squatted down on the floor and were oblivious to
to all around, and simply gazed at the toys, and every few minutes
it was "I look what I got". Record 12 January 1905
The Sisters in 1904

Left, E.J. Todd

Right, Mary Thompson (1867-?)
(Mrs Whitridge)

Left, Elizabeth Young
(1862-1930)

(MQM photographs)
I went to see my grumbly old woman ... and the widow with four children in one room. I wrote to the Queen's Fund on her behalf, and what do you think she got? -a mangle. Are you not glad, children? You boys throw your caps up in the air. I feel as glad as if I had got the mangle myself. Record 12 January 1904

Compare this with William Hall's 'Please convey our sincere thanks to our kind friends who forwarded us the Christmas cheer...these gifts were very opportune', in the same 1905 issue.

Sister Aitcheson also corresponded with a group of factory girls, who weekly sent her money out of their wages, to help the poor. She wrote open letters couched in contrivedly simple language to them, free of Christian jargon, and always encouragingly, which were no doubt intended to inform MCM subscribers of another aspect of her work, at the same time as they supported the girls.

My dear girls,
We have been thinking and talking about you, and praying for you very much lately, and especially the one who has just lost her sister. ...Some of you, after working hard all day, go home, perhaps to meet constant friction and jar, and it makes you irritable, and you feel you don't care what you do to get out of it. Listen, girls, keep quite silent, and have a little whisper talk with Jesus, it will help you so much. Record 12 May 1905.

Not all the Sisters were able to keep alive that kindly, optimistic tone Sister Aitcheson achieved. She was fortunate to have the close assistance and friendship of Sister Dickson for most of her forty years of work in Richmond; the two ladies shared the same house and worked as a team, providing support for each other. Sister Todd, alone in South Melbourne, wrote infrequently for the Record, and her reports were sombre, if not disheartened.

The winter just ended has been a very trying one in this, as well as other districts. One has just the same story to repeat, for there is nothing sensational about the work of a missionary. From the beginning to the close of the year, one hears the same sad tales of want and distress. We see the unchanging scene of poverty, the unfurnished room, the fireless hearth, the empty cupboard... 12 October 1904.

Sister Aitcheson was writing to encourage herself and the subscribers, focussing often on those brief happy moments: Sister Todd was writing to express her own sense of the unremitting cruelty and desolation of poverty. She too was being worn down by her daily contact with its relentlessness,
fully aware that the innocent suffered in a system that offered no hope of real amelioration or social justice.

She was further disheartened by the death of her only supporter in the work, her Superintendent, the Rev J McL Abernethy. She wrote of him,

He was to me more like a father than a superintendent, so kind, thoughtful and hospitable. I could always talk over any private business of my own with him, knowing him to be a true friend. I will hear Mr Abernethy's kind welcome no more on earth, but as long as I live I shall remember him with the kindest feelings. Record 12 October 1904.

She was never to have quite this helpful relationship again with a Superintendent. In 1908, her then Superintendent complained that she had not brought her journal to him for six months. She replied that he had treated her and it 'indifferently'. In 1911, she refused an instruction to change districts, and was asked to resign. Letters were sent in support of her from various Port Melbourne groups, and Sister Todd herself wrote asking to be allowed to remain there, 'where she had been employed for over sixteen years, and assuring the committee that 1. she had resigned the position of Secretary to the Ladies' Benevolent Society of Port Melbourne ...2. That she would obey the instructions of the Committee as conveyed to her by the Secretary.'

There was a stay of execution, but when the order to change districts was re-issued in 1912, and she resigned rather than obey, her resignation was accepted 'with thanks for past services'. Sisters Todd and Aitcheson had been almost the first women employed by the MCM, hired as they were in 1895. When the latter died in 1935 aged 71, while still carrying out her duties, the MCM immediately built and named an extension of the Richmond Hall in her honour. No such tribute was given to Sister Todd, despite her twenty years' hard work.

56 Minutes 1 December 1908.
57 Ibid 6 June 1911.
58 Ibid 6 February 1912.
59 Record 1 January 1939.
MCM committees, naturally enough, preferred to deal with missionaries who were strong stable people, without any obvious personal weaknesses or needs. The committees' record in dealing compassionately and sympathetically with missionaries undergoing crises in their lives is not commendable. Hall's fears of trying new methods irritated them. Sister Todd's need for far greater support was not acknowledged. The unfortunate Eneas English, employed for less than a year, suffered to the fullest extent the inability of the committee to succour its own workers. He was from Adelaide, presumably driven to Melbourne in the search for employment through which he could support his family in South Australia. His journal gave several clear warnings that all was not well with him, had his Superintendent been alert to hear them. His health was deteriorating rapidly to the point where he was having 'severe attack[s] of headache, pain in my left side, and expectorating blood etc' then, he lost the enormous sum of £26 as he was taking it to the GPO to send to his children. He spent a lonely and distressed Christmas, finally on the 28 December taking his resignation to the Secretary of the Mission. The last entry in his journal, presumably read later with some horror by the Rev Wollaston, shows how critical his state was.

I intend to make my way back to my children as soon as possible. But I fear I am so weak in strength, that I will not be able to carry out my Expectations. I fainted twice yesterday on my way to my lodgings. Endured great struggles this and last week.

Eneas English's body was discovered four days later on Brighton beach. It was concluded that he had 'shot himself with a revolver while of unsound mind.' He was 42 years old.

60 English's Journal 9 September 1883.
61 Ibid 3 October 1883.
62 Ibid 28 December 1883.
63 Death certificate 1884/355.
Emily Dykes (18??-1937) Missionary for 25 years 1905-1931.

Sister Burns, missionary for over 25 years, from 1908.
Missionaries at work

House-to-house visitation

As soon as the missionary took his Bible and stepped into the streets, he was free of the committee, and bound only by his sense of what was fitting, and his clients' responses. Conversion of the godless was his consuming concern. William Shepherd describes a visit which produced the desired result.

Mr & Mrs Armour by name No. 8 Cliff st found that they were not saved so I told them about my own conversion they listened very eagerly... I then laid down the plan of salvation by faith and after some little time the wife step't into liberty I then bore down on the husband & left him no escape but through the Blood & shortly he too ventured his soul on Christ we then had some prayer thanking God for opening their eyes to the truth... I will give their names to the minister of their district that he may look after them. [sic throughout] 16 June 1882

Through his daily visitation of the houses of the working-class, the missionary put himself at the mercy of his clientele. It was up to them to judge him, and then accord him respect or derision, as they wished. There were people aplenty who despised both his message and him, and were quick to scorn any pretension to authority or superiority. (See Chapter 5, Chart 10) Others, mostly women and those in desperate circumstances, treated him with deference and trust. It needed great doggedness for a missionary to survive this erratic response that alternately battered and stimulated his morale.

At the beginning of his service, each man had to try for himself what worked with the clients and what was unacceptable. William Hall attacked his work with somewhat ill-advised zeal, and reported

I had fire and water in one instance - a Roman Catholic bootmaker, who became angry when I plied home to him about his lost condition which I did kindly. He threatened violence and ordered me out of his shop, and as I did not leave instantly, he splashed me with water out of his shop tub. I retreated and exhorted him from the footpath to seek mercy and prayed for him. 27 March 1884.

Experience taught Hall, and the other missionaries, how to temper their enthusiasm; when to persist and when to give way. Joseph Greathead was
aware in all manner of ways of the need for tact. After very heavy rain, he found on Collingwood Flat 'the mud and dirt being so deep & general as to prevent my entering the house with anything like freedom, or decency...[it] has made me ashamed to intrude...’64 He sensed how women battling to create a decent home in such difficult conditions would be angered at his traipsing mud into their cottages.

John Cronack set his own guidelines.

To speak to people about their homes and habits is what I never do, though I often feel as if I should like [to]. That is, about their domestic habits. It would, no doubt, annoy them and besides they might not see it in the same light and think they were needlessly intermedled [sic] with. 1 September 1871.

The men occasionally offered medical advice. Greathead had been a pharmacist, and Cronack felt free to advise mothers on the 'blight' in their children's eyes since 'some parents have a poor notion how to act with their children.'65

Cronack saw the statistics sheet as a threat to good work, at times. Of the poverty-stricken, violent people of Alfred Place, Richmond, he concluded

it is useless to get particulars as to names &c to appear to be pr[y]ing this would raise suspisions [sic], cause them to think that I was seeking information against them, and would block up my way, and prevent access to them. 10 November 1871.

By making remarks such as these in their journals, missionaries were commenting on mission policy and advising their superiors.

The missionaries all saw false religion as their enemy, whether it was Roman Catholicism, Agnosticism, Socialism, Spiritualism, Swedenborgianism, Mormonism, Islam, or any other deviancy from Protestantism. All such manifestations were boldly confronted.

The violence of anti-Catholic feeling varied from man to man. Joseph Greathead was proud of his influence among lonely Irishwomen on Collingwood Flat, and angry that they had little education in their faith, so that it

64 Greathead’s Journal 12 & 13 June 1855.
65 Cronack’s Journal 24 April 1879.
seemed to him to be mainly superstition. He was flattered to learn that the
priests had warned against him as a pernicious meddler.

The Old Woman with whom on the 21st October I conversed - said
"she had been told I was a Heretic" and if I ever dared to darken
her door again, she would throw a sauspan [sic] of boiling water
over me, and would do it now, if [I] did not immediately be off". In
the most mild and affectionate manner [I] endeavoured to calm
her fears of danger arising [sic] from my presence but to no
purpose as she declared "her Salvation was in danger, all the
while I was in her sight". 15 December 1854.

Most of the missionaries took pleasure in describing their arguments
with Catholics in detail: usually they saw the victory as theirs.

Knocking at a door it was opened by a female who appeared vexed
at having been disturbed - observing I had put her out, as she
was saying her prayers - and would have to begin again, expressed
my regret at having caused her inconvenience, but assured her God
would not bless her the less on that account. "I was saying my
prayers to the Holy Virgin, not to God." - is she in the house
then? "Why no! in heaven to be sure and she will pray for me to
God." How do you know that? my bible tells me that Jesus Christ
for our encouragement left it upon record, that whatsoever we ask
the Father in His name, He would do it (reading to her the 14th
John, 13th & 14th verses) and that at his death, Our Saviour left
his poor widowed Mother, who had no comfortable home of her own,
to the care of a dear friend and disciple St John ...She
expressed her great pity [sic] at my Ignorance "as this person
was another woman altogether" ...read to her out of her "Douay"
[sic] version of the new testament Christs sufferings and death
...on coming to the 25th [Chapter of John] 6th & 7th verses she
was amazed, and trust in some small degree her mind was led from
the efficacy of the Holy Virgin's intercession. Joseph
Greathead 11 October 1854.

It is important to give a full account of these interviews. One
person "you don't mark yourself with the Signe [sic] of the
cross." Said "No, it does no good, but I believe in him who died
upon the cross." But she again said, "You do not go to
confession." I said, "O yes I do, I confess to God, not to a
man." She said, "But you do not believe in the blessed Virgin." Said,
"Certainly I do." She said, "Then you are not a Protestant,
for no Protestant believes in the holy Virgin." ...Said, "I
belive [sic] all about Mary the Bible teaches me...but no more,
is not that enough?" ...These conversations with them are of
daily occurrance. [sic] John Cromack 24 August 1871.66

As late as 1901, relationships with City Missionaries could be tense, as
William Hall reported:

Met with quite a nest of R.C.s while visiting...Brought before
several of these the necessity for regeneration, but it was like
a foreign language apparently to most. 21 May 1901.

66 See also Journals of Cromack 19 March 1872, 3 October 1873; Andrew Mason
7 July 1880, Samuel Stephens 22 November 1872.
Yet Hall was amazed a few days later when a Catholic woman said to him, 'Goodbye, and I hope you will have good luck and prosper in your undertakings.'

The tract was a major weapon in the war against false belief. Greathead, in the 1850s, found Catholic women usually happy to take a tract; it may have been the only reading matter they ever saw. Cronack reported in the 1870s that 'The priests teach them to hate tracts, as well as City Missioners, but friendly conversation generally prevents or disarms their prejudice. While often they would not take a tract at the beginning of my visit, they will at the end.' Tracts were to hand for all types of error. Greathead graciously gave one to a Socialist, entitled The Converted Socialist: a Brand Plucked from the Burning.

Attempting to refute the views of those following fringe sects was often just as difficult. Eneas English found in Prahran,

a woman named Romereil, who is completely infatuated with the Plymouth Brethren's peculiar and fanciful views, and seems to be saturated with hatred against the Church of England. I thought it my duty to expose and refute their unscriptural tenets more in the language of Scripture than in my own words as they are so fond of quoting from the Word. 19 March 1883.

A shoemaker who asked Samuel Stephens what he thought of Mormonism received the confident reply that he had read the Book of Mormon and found it all 'foolery and deception'. 'So is Christianity', replied the man. Stephens

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67 Hall's Journal 27 May 1901. Ordinary people were often more tolerant than the missionary. One Catholic woman said to Stephens 'I am no bigot I should be most happy to see you if you will please to call another day.' (26 September 1872) A man said 'I am a Roman Catholic, but we are all trying for the same end.' (11 March 1874)

68 Tracts were supplied by the Religious Tract Society of Victoria, founded by Henry Cooke in 1856. The MOM was by far their largest distributor; 5000 in 1859, 10 000 in 1861. See Annual Reports in Victorian Pamphlets v85 Latrobe Library. Tracts originated from England and USA, but a tract mentioned by Greathead on 19 October 1856, titled 'Mikey, an Australian Boy', suggests writers were already trying to reflect the Australian experience. Greathead also distributed tracts in German and Chinese. See his Journal, 8 November 1854.

69 Cronack's Journal 19 March 1872.

70 Greathead's Journal 19 October 1854.
came back with 'infallible evidence of the Christian system being founded on facts', concluding darkly, 'To deny a truth because you cannot understand it shows weakness or depravity or both.'

But missionaries had a wider sense of their mission than simply spreading religious truth. They were utterly convinced also of their duty to reform morals and correct behaviour. Along with Bible, tracts and statistical notebook, they carried the Pledge Book, primary weapon in the war against drink. Personal testimony helped. Cronack referred drinkers to his own successful renunciation of drink in 1843. William Shepherd dared even more fearful tactics in his treatment of Mr Mouldy:

I shook hands with him and sat down. he had a vessel with beer in front of him he said I suppose you have come to get me to sign the pledge. I said I was glad to hear him talk like that and he said that he would so I took the Beer away of[f] the table and threw it out & brought him some water from the tap. he sighed and we had some prayer. 4 February 1882.

The missionaries also attacked gambling and horse-racing, swearing, cock- and dog-fighting, and even undesirable reading habits. No excuse was permitted.

As I offered a tract to a man I saw a book in his hand. "Oh, its a bit of a Novel" [he said]. I said there are very few novels of any good. The composition is too often wild and fanciful and not founded upon any fact but instead of works of fiction that often mislead the mind we may obtain useful knowledge from the Bible and other good books. He talked of only passing away the time I spoke of the Sabbath. Public worship. The example we set. What God requires of us &c. He endeavoured to hide himself by not doing any harm. I replied that our obligation extends to not only to avoid doing evil, but also to do good &c. Stephens 22 September 1872.

Desecration of the Sabbath was another target; shopkeepers, cricketing schoolboys, and cabdrivers were all urged to desist from their activities

71 Stephens' Journal 30 March 1871. See also Stephens on Islam 18 July 1870, and Swedenborgianism 6 October 1871.

72 Cronack's Journal 4 September 1873. See also John Ivey 6-7 October 1865; Edward Knox 16 October 1879.

73 Hall's Journal 23 August 1901.

74 West's Journal 5 December 1871; Cronack's Journal 6 March 1872.
on the Sabbath. Hall even told a 76 year old theatrical agent 'that if he accepted Christ he could not follow the theatrical business', to which he rightly 'wanted to know how he could do without his profession.'

Some attempted marriage counselling as well. They invariably felt compelled to advise wives to remain with violent or drunken husbands for the sake of their children. They saw marriage as a sacred bond, and they also saw what a dreadful struggle life was for widows and deserted wives.

Missionaries were also strongly committed to education for children, as an important element in assisting them to make their way in life, and in counteracting what they saw as often harmful influences in the home. Joseph Greathead's constant reporting of the deleterious effects of lack of schooling on young Collingwood children in 1854, led Mrs Hornbrook to set up her Ragged Schools. Missionaries then became the agents who found and brought needy children to the many schools she set up.

Some of the earlier missionaries were expert at attending deathbeds. The custom of working for death-bed conversions seems to have come from an earlier age - it was popular with Charles Wesley's contemporaries and John Ivey was the last practitioner in the MCM. There was no shirking, and missionaries spoke openly of impending death to men and women who wanted to deny they were dying. Archibald Turnbull was called urgently to attend 'Mr G':

I went and found him in agony, suffering excruciating pain in his body while two persons were busily engaged rubbing his body with mustard. he was glad to see me. he could not speak at the time, but would join hands as if to pray...I did so, while he continually ejaculated "heal my backslidings", while the whole

75 See Journals of Cronack 23 June 1872; Mason 4 March 1866; Stephens 5 August 1870.

76 Hall's Journal 28 March 1905.

77 See Journals of Cronack May-June 1871; Ivey 12 October 1865; Stephens 12 April 1873; Turnbull 16 June 1869; Stephens 6 April 1869.

78 See Chapter 3, footnote 3; also Cronack's Journal 15 & 27 March 1872, 12 February & 11 March 1879.

family wept bitterly. After prayer I told him that the Lord would, now "heal his backslidings and love him freely" if he could "but believe". I asked him to tell me if he had any fears of being rejected. He replied "only my backslidings". I then told him to sue for pardon just as he was, and said..."Can you believe that Christ saves up to the uttermost all who go unto God through Him. If you can, now look to Jesus, and He will save you now, this moment. His pains came on him more severe than ever, and in his agony he said,..."If I perish I'll perish at the cross". I told him that that resolve was Faith, "Now you are saved "justified by faith" and peace is certain"....While I held his clammy hand, he opened his eyes with such a bright glance I could tell that peace had come. He said "Goodbye, till we meet in Heaven." 12 December 1869.

Mr G. died at peace surrounded by his family. Mrs G. told Turnbull a week later that 'Godliness with contentment is great gain'; she too now believed and joyed in her husband's end.80

All the missionaries customarily 'improved' deaths to the bereaved families, even using the loss of their own loved ones as powerful spiritual examples.81

Missionaries were required to run meetings in cottages, in the open air, and in Gospel Halls and charitable institutions. In 1901-4 William Hall either preached at, or was responsible for supplying a weekly preacher for the Lang Street Home, the Elizabeth Fry Retreat, the Old West End Brewery, the Men's Home St Kilda Road, Try Hall Hawksburn, the Mothers' Meeting, and the YMCA Bible Class.82 For years Prahran missionaries had preached on Sunday afternoons at the gate of St Kilda cemetery. West preached in the Botanical Gardens until all public speaking was banned there.83 Men preached on the wharves, and on vacant blocks in the city.84

The missionaries had a range of workers who assisted them in running

80 Turnbull's Journal 17 December 1869. See also Ivey's Journal 30-31 March 1865.
81 Hall 3 December 1890; Stephens 2 July 1875.
82 Hall's Journal 5 May, 26 April, 26 May, 30 June 1901; 20 November 1902; 7 & 17 May 1903; 6 March 1904.
84 Knox's Journal 15 August 1877; Turnbull 6 May 1869, Cronack 9 March 1872.
meetings. Some, like Mrs Harris, Mrs Creig and Mrs Box were Biblewomen. Laymen from local churches, like Mr Craig who helped Hall, commonly assisted. Missionaries’ wives also involved themselves in their husbands’ work.

Being a missionary was hard work. Missionaries and their families suffered illness and misfortune. The house next door to John Ivey’s burnt down in April 1867. He and his wife were ‘stupified’ [sic] by the fumes, and their daughters’ room was destroyed by the flames.

All my things were put into the street – & it raining it all got wet & we likewise – this catastrophe so affected me that I have been unable fully to discharge my duties. 5 April 1867

A Gospel Tent pitched at Oakleigh for a Mission to railway workers fell on Andrew Mason’s head, injuring him. The men required stamina; blisters were a problem since the men walked miles each day. On 3 October 1870, Reuben West walked from his home in Prahran to Cromack’s house in Emerald Hill, then to Eastern Hill to collect his journal from Dr Cairns, his superintendent, then walked back to South Yarra, a distance of about 12 kilometres or over 7 miles. Unexpected trials had to be endured. One old deaf lady was enthusiastic to hear West’s message, but

I had to speak to her through a speaking trumpet she...kept me shouting till I was almost exhausted. 27 June 1870.

Mission Hall work

Working from halls required a different regime of activity from the missionaries. House-to-house visitation still continued, but services at institutions had to be abandoned in favour of hall-centred meetings. (Rev J

85 Stephens 12 May 1871, May 1872.
86 Hall 7 October 1900. Mrs West seems to have been a regular charitable visitor; West’s Journal 30 June 1870.
87 Mason’s Journal 25 November 1878.
88 Turnbull’s Journal 17 June 1869.
Keith Macintyre continued services at institutions between 1908 and 1913 as his sole duty; on his retirement these services lapsed.) The commitment of the MCM to a fuller provision of food and clothing to the needy meant the development of more elaborate procuring, storage and distribution procedures. The public, urged through the pages of the City Mission Record, sent parcels; it was the responsibility of the missionaries to acknowledge gifts, and to write monthly reports of their work for the magazine.

Missionaries were now the organizers and directors of quite large voluntary work forces. They handled large quantities of money at times, the proceeds of local fund-raising activities. They held the funds banked weekly at the Mothers' meetings, and disbursed them once a year in winter, when they were most needed.

In place of institutional visiting, they were required to set up and run daily and nightly hall-based activities. On Sundays there were Sunday School and Gospel services. During the week, there was the Mothers' Meeting, and perhaps a Free Kindergarten in the daytime, and at night Physical Culture nights for boys and girls, Boys' Brigade, a Men's Meeting, perhaps a Sewing Circle for working girls or a Girls' Guild.

There were many annual events to prepare for: Harvest Festival, annual anniversaries of the founding of each hall, Christmas parties, Sunday School Picnics, Physical Culture Displays, fund-raising fetes and so on. Sister Todd confessed to dreading the week before Christmas; she claimed to have worked about 18 hours a day in Christmas week 1905.89

The employment of women altered the nature of mission work markedly. The nineteenth century male missionaries found many situations they encountered required action which was outside the range of behaviour considered appropriate for their gender. For instance, Reuben West came upon an elderly woman crippled with rheumatism living alone.

The house is in a most filthy state. It would be truly a charity to have her removed to the Hospital or some other place of care.

89 City Mission Record 12 January 1906.
It is a pity there is no help for such creatures. 2 November 1871.

And he went away. William Hall was cut to the heart when he visited the Young family in Balmoral Street Prahran:

Mr Young's little daughter opened the door, and on looking through the passage into a back room I could see him swaithing [sic] his dear little infant child, whom he had bathed, whose mother died on the day of its birth. 4 October 1897.

Feeling helpless, Hall stole away. The missionary Sisters on the other hand, were far from helpless onlookers when they came upon such situations. They could set to work, in the knowledge that the tasks required were women's work. Sister Aitcheson came on a deserted wife, seriously ill:

She was blue with cold and black with dirt, crying, a little baby on the bed without any clothing, crying, a girl standing in the middle of the room crying, went out to the yard found kerosene tin, sent girl for gravy [sic] beef, set to and got mother and baby washed, went and got some new under-garments for them, blankets and rug, made beef tea for mother and food for baby. When they were comfortable I read [a Bible passage]...In the evening had a flock bed and pillows sent to them.

The work of Sisters was much more practically effective than that of their male counterparts.

With visitation duties such as these, and hall work as well, the missionaries' workload increased substantially. The missionary now became a major figure in the district, in most cases admired if not beloved, the hub of a vital new community centre which was buzzing with activity on all days of the week. The Mission Hall was the focus of the spiritual and recreational life for hundreds of families, indispensable in times of crisis; and the key figure holding all together was the missionary.

90 Ibid 12 July 1903.
CHAPTER 5

THE PEOPLE SERVED BY THE MELBOURNE CITY MISSION

I see so much poverty at every step that I scarcely know how to speak to some.
Archibald Turnbull’s Journal 10 June 1869.

I have always noticed that if we can improve people spiritually and morally, all other improvements follow.
John Cronack’s Journal 1 September 1871.

Ministers cannot solve the problem caused by our modern cities. Christian families today do not live in the city; the residue, who can afford no suburban residence, are non-Christian, non-church goers. Our own home heathen...are worse than the heathen. Are they to be left to anarchist agitators? Your Committee, in the strength of the risen and compassionate Christ, say no!

The founders and leaders of the Mission never clearly identified the people to whom they should minister. The speech-making of the inaugural meeting seemed to identify a particular group quite clearly, yet this was a delusory definitiveness. Bishop Perry aimed at those in ‘bondage of our great adversary, the devil...the intemperate...the vicious’.

Henry Jennings intended ‘all who sit in darkness’ - the great mass of the unsaved. Dr Cairns seemed to include people who had been decent Christians in England. They ‘soon forget their early associations, and they learn, first, to desecrate the Sabbath... Then they forget the worship of God’. He distinguished between the ‘degraded’ urban population ministered to by the London City Mission, and, in Melbourne by contrast, ‘men...in the prime of life, in the vigour of body and intellect, some of them highly educated,

1 The Banner 15 August 1854.
2 Ibid.
full of robustness, self-willed, daring, bold.' Rev Chase presented the
first Committee's view that clients were to be 'those persons who are in a
state of spiritual destitution'. He talked of 'the people at large', as
well as the intemperate and vicious. 'Every true servant of the Lord Jesus
crest desire to see the whole of the population constantly visited by men of
God.'

An ambiguity existed here. Was the Mission to concern itself with the
vicious and intemperate only, or also extend its work amongst 'respectable'
but unsaved people of the city? Some speakers, like Jennings and Chase,
obviously intended non-Christians in the broadest sense as the targets of
the MCM. Dr Cairns and Bishop Perry saw the morally degraded and spirit-
ually empty as prime recipients of attention: spiritually empty but
'respectable' people do not, it seems, come within their meaning. Cairns,
too, talks only of men as recipients: indeed, the rhetoric of the Mission
is usually couched in male terms.

When the Mission came into being, practical considerations in effect
bolstered the Perry/Cairns position, in that the Mission could only afford
to place missionaries in the poorest districts, where vices were more
overt. Thus the MCM soon defined its clientele as poor, godless and often
vicious. The hopes of Chase and Jennings for a missionary in all districts
of the city - presumably to include rich and respectable areas - was never
realised. There were never enough funds to pay for a complete coverage of
the city.

A subtle shift of perspective occurred when the ladies' committee
became the vital support on which the Mission depended, 1856-64. They
specifically directed their interests to poor, godless and vicious women.
The reconstituted MCM of 1856 began with a single missionary, Joseph
Greathead, whose brief was 'to labour in Little Bourke Street' among the

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3 Ibid.
4 Argus 16 August 1854.
prostitutes; he was later removed 'to a district near the Female Refuge where he lived' in Cremorne. The ladies had set up this Refuge for penitent prostitutes prior to their involvement with the MCM in 1856, and supported the Mission from that date, as it provided the necessary link between prostitutes on the streets and the Refuge. After 1864, when they began to employ Biblewomen, this perspective widened to include poor, godless but not necessarily vicious women.

Further definition of the MCM's clientele was effected through the behavioural patterns of the missionaries, men of the working and lower middle classes, who forebore to visit the homes of the obviously well-to-do. They seem to have had no specific instructions not to do so, but to have limited themselves to a clientele with whom they felt comfortable. There is a timidity and deference in the missionaries' references to the rich. Reuben West, working in South Yarra, 'came across several lodges at park gates', and while he would speak to the gate-keepers and give them tracts, he never ventured down the long drives to the mansions beyond, even to speak to the servants. And certainly, close-packed workingmen's cottages in Prahran offered more souls per acre, a more efficient working ratio.

Further definition of the clientele was effected in other ways not fully understood by the founders. By far the greatest number of respondents were women, because the missionaries visited homes during the day when most men were at work. The committees of the 1870s onwards did not fully grasp the implications of the city's colossal growth, from about 125,000 people in 1861 to 283,000 in 1881, and the way in which this population dispersed itself around the city. The central city district rapidly declined as a

5 Minutes 9 September 1856.
6 Ibid 1 October 1857.
7 West's Journal 26 August 1870. The evidence used in this chapter is taken from the diaries of male missionaries, since none written by a woman has survived. Hence the concentration on the male viewpoint and experience. Where evidence exists I have represented the Sisters' attitudes and experience.
residential area, while surrounding areas took on the nature of dormitory suburbs. Workingmen, especially after the spread of tramways and the building of railway lines radiating from the city, in the 1870s and later, became commuters.

Mission leaders could be excused for not really understanding and coming to terms with these extremely rapid developments, for their models, the English City Missions, offered little assistance. The London City Mission was in fact dealing with the reverse phenomenon: the increasing concentration of the poor working class into slums clearly demarcated from respectable areas. 8

Melbourne's blessing of plenty of empty land, became the Mission's curse. A glance at the accompanying map of the Melbourne metropolitan area c.1890 indicates clearly that, while the MCM was struggling to man the old suburbs of the 1860s, huge areas which they would have liked to service - especially the new working class suburbs to the north of the city - were entirely beyond their reach. The growing army of working class commuters was matched by a decline in small workshops attached to living quarters and a rise in factories. Increasingly, then, missionaries found themselves in less and less contact with employed working men.

The regular mentions of visits to men working from their workshop/homes, in the 1860s and early 1870s, are practically gone by the 1880s. Samuel Stephens regularly visited the premises of Atkins the shoemaker in Little Collins Street, West Melbourne. Atkins and his half-dozen or so workmen were accustomed to drinking on the job; not for them the new factory disciplines of sobriety, punctuality and set working routines. 9 In his more than thirty visits to the workshop between 1869 and 1875, it was

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8 This was the result, paradoxically, of slum clearance, street improvements and railway building. Evicted occupants moved into already densely populated surrounding districts, thus creating poor ghettoes. A S Wohl The Eternal Slum, OP cit pp 21-3, 26.

9 See Janet McCalman 'Class and respectability in a working class suburb: Richmond, Victoria, before the Great War', Historical Studies Vol 20, No 78, April 1982, p 91.
The growth of Melbourne by c1890

Areas covered by the MCM


MCM Minute Books
Atkins' drinking problem, and the more acute alcoholism of his wife, that was the focus of Stephens' attention. But aside from this, he evidently enjoyed the relaxed male camaraderie of the workshop, and he records conversations on all manner of subjects.

His reportage confirms the traditional view in Europe that shoemakers were radical in their social and religious views. Hobsbawm and Scott have demonstrated that their radicalism was so noticeable that it found a voice in common sayings. Shoemakers were independent workers, and their craft physically undemanding; there was nothing to do whilst working but talk, and, it seems, drink. Having once achieved a reputation for being 'deep' and radical thinkers on social and religious matters, shoemakers - certainly the ones Stephens conversed with - lived up to it.

Thomas Paine had written The Rights of Man, lauding the seizing of rights by the common man in the French Revolution, and The Age of Reason, denouncing the speciousness of religion as it existed, nearly a century earlier; but his popularity in this group had obviously not abated. The ideas and activities of Robert Owen and the Owenite groups in Britain in the 1830s and '40s also provided fuel for these men's ideas on the rights of workers and the uselessness of religion, views which they put forcefully to Stephens. Once, after discussion about whether or not Heaven existed, there was 'much conversation' about Paine and Owen. Stephens had actually heard Owen speak; but he naturally dismissed the views on religion of both Paine and Owen; and he records that most of the shoemakers 'were on my side'. He promised to lend one stubborn soul Bishop Watson's reply to Paine. The last recorded discussion of this sort is found in Stephens' Journal 19 January 1874. In reply to a young man he replies tartly, 'I said I had read the "Age of Reason" and I could not conceive that any man of intelligence could indulge in the taste for Thom Paynes [sic] writings.'


11 Stephens' Journal 21 June 1869.
Unfortunately, Stephens' Journal ends shortly after this.

The MCM apparently never contemplated extending visitation into factories or commercial establishments except as they abutted dwellings as in the shoemakers' case. Ironically, when this did occur in the late 1890s, it was on the initiative of one of the new MCM Sisters, who was concerned for the welfare of female factory workers.

Before her appointment as a missionary, Lillian Dickson was visiting factories. The committee assigned her to help Sister Hartnett in Brunswick, with time to continue her factory work. During 1904, the committee received no fewer than four letters from factory girls praising Sister Dickson's ministry to them. Two were signed by a young Roman Catholic woman on behalf of her workmates; a third was a request from the Match Factory and the Braeside Shirt factory in Richmond for Sister Dickson to visit them. It is not clear how long she maintained this visitation. This work was atypical of ordinary MCM work, however. After the mid-1870s, the Mission's clientele was primarily housebound women, and men who were either old, ill or unemployed.

The missionary journals seem to indicate that the population was generally intermingled in most of the districts visited. With the exception of the poor ghetto of Collingwood Flat (see Chapter 6) and perhaps the Cremorne district of Richmond (although very little information on this area survives from the missionaries), there were few clear divisions between the moderately wealthy, those with an adequate income, and the very poor. Richer households tended to cluster in some streets; 'working men's cottages' might be erected by entrepreneurs in other streets, or parts of streets; but there was seemingly no logic as to their placement, and the two types could, and did, adjoin. St Vincent Place in South Melbourne is still an expensive and prestigious address; small working-class wooden houses still surround it. The very poor were forced by the low rental into

12 Minutes 10 March, 9 June, 10 November, 8 December 1904.
alleys and back lanes - often named 'X Place', such as Little Moray Place off Little Moray Street, South Melbourne - or into patches of sub-standard housing (often in the middle of decent housing), which the missionaries noted as being 'bad' areas.

The intermingled nature of the population confronted missionaries with a wide range of social circumstances, and they were even able to chart the progress of households from one standard of living to another. The Robertson family lived in modest respectability at 64 Spring Street Prahran until Mr Robertson died. After a few months without steady income, the widow was obliged to move her family into nearby Pakington Place, an alley described by William Hall as a place of 'squalor' notable only for its low rents.13 The line between decent respectability and destitution was fine, and the flow of families from one to the other was constant.

Even within seemingly homogeneous 'poor' areas, the householders themselves recognized subtle gradations of well-being and respectability, and enforced these, often quite rudely, on the missionaries. They saw clearly that to be visited by a missionary implied an identification of them not only as poor but also as degraded: if the Mission had not, itself, defined its clientele unambiguously, the suburban householders certainly had no doubts. 'Some appear to be fully satisfied with this present world,' writes Reuben West. 'they are trying to make their heaven on earth...They don't want a saviour they don't want Christ, in their opinion Christ is only for the back slums of the city. They are good enough.'14

Here the evidence seems indeed to support McCalman's account of householders, who, through a regime of 'cleanliness, sobriety; extra-marital chastity, thrift, time-consciousness, self-reliance,... independence and self-responsibility' had won through to a self-respect which provided them with 'some sort of psychological defence against the indignities of class

13 William Hall's Journal 26 April 1890
14 West's Journal 19 August 1870.
stigma and the frustrations of political impotence and social insignificance. 15

The people referred to by West and the other missionaries show extreme sensitivity, often expressing itself in anger and contempt, for any action or word which might suggest that they were part of the feckless poor. They were intent on preserving their self-created status. In McCalman's words, 'Keeping respectable meant that people lived with a perpetual sense of threat - not just from their employers and social betters, but also from their social inferiors, the unrespectable drunken, dirty, casual poor.' 16 A person in this situation spoke of her anxieties to John Ivey:

...converse with Woman with large family much tried in supporting them - Husbands earning small - she deeply deplored the present state of our young around - she was very thankful for my converse - felt cheered - living without social intercourse as Neighbours are unsuitable companions low Rent fixing them there - sent two of her children to S[cripture] F[ree] school. 8 November 1864 (Ivey's emphasis).

For some, having to accept charity marked the transition from respectability to disrepute. Edward Knox visited the iron houses in Hotham regularly; very poor people lived there. But on one visit,

Mrs Tickner said she had just received notice that her small weekly allowance from her son had stopped. I said what will you do now, she did not know for she had not ever received a penny piece from charity, but I said if there is no other alternative why not? After difficult conversation I left. 17 January 1879.

People made the finest of distinctions between their own and others' poverty. Archibald Turnbull held a service at the Mission Free Medical Dispensary on Collingwood Flat - arguably the poorest area in Melbourne - and only ten turned up. Turnbull explained, 'The fact that the place is opened for the very poor was sufficient to keep away many who would otherwise attend, though they never go to any other place of worship [because of their own poverty].' 17

15 McCalman op cit p 90. An elaboration of her thesis can be found in Struggletown MUP 1984, which traces the lives of a generation of Richmond residents 1900-1960.

16 Ibid p 92.
For some people living with the constant threat of destitution, the mere existence of richer classes was a thorn in their flesh. Wealthy people had little awareness of how much they were detested by people unable to bear poverty with docility. Such people regarded the missionary as a figure sent by the rich, his very presence a reproach and an insult to them. 'One woman and her Daughter were insolent at being called upon. I was directed to call upon the Gentry and give them impudence', records Stephens. This kind of response was comparatively rare, however.

The most difficult areas visited by the missionaries were those where respectable and degraded poor lived together. Cronack's description sums up the common experience.

In Steed st [Richmond]...which consists of what is called respectable people, was not treated so respectfully by some. The buildings are new, and most of the people are strangers, and I had not visited the street before. Some of the people were very kind and asked me in...Two or three did not take my visit so well. The most respectable person said, and in a very resentful manner, "I think that people should be allowed to do as they like...but it is the clergyman's business to visit people and to get them to go to Church." Said, "Yes, and it is my business too, and I am about my business." She said, "But if I did not go to a place of worship, do you think that I should go by your calling." I said, Perhaps you might and if you did not that would be your fault not mine." She said "I do go to church." I told her that going to church was [good] but it was a small matter compared to being a Christian. We had some other words. When ever anything of this kind occurs, it is always with respectable people, or rather show respectable people. Ones work would be utterly unbearable, if it were all like this. [Cranack's emphasis]

In religious terms, then, the struggle for respectability took the form most often of denying one's personal sinfulness. To admit to sin was to admit to being weak and subject to evil tendencies; the results of human weakness - filthiness, intemperance, promiscuity, thriftlessness, laziness and dependence on charity - were evident in the houses all around the respectable person. The whole fight for respectability required a decent householder to shun and abhor such weakness. To be classed as a sinner when

17 Turnbull's Journal 17 June 1869.
18 Stephens' Journal 20 August 1869.
19 Cranack's Journal 2 November 1871.
one's whole life was a constant struggle to avoid social contamination by more obviously degraded people was to deny the fundamental foundation of the whole effort to 'make good' and become respectable. No wonder then that the most common response to missionaries was to deny personal sinfulness; in their own words, such people were 'good enough'.

The missionaries described this attitude as 'building on the rock of self', or 'not awakened to their need' etc. The best time to catch such people was in a time of crisis: a death in the family, or a period of prolonged unemployment. This hostility to the basic ideas of Christianity where they run against one's social and emotional life-view, can be found even amongst professing Christians. West complained,

I often feel grieved when I am visiting people who are members of Churches, and find that they have so little heart for Christ. I notice even a change in their countenances when I mention his blessed name, as though I had said something they little expected to hear. they are occupied with the world and not with Jesus and yet what is there worth knowing amongst men but Jesus and him crucified. 20 May 1870.

To such people, attendance at church was only another outward and visible sign of their respectability, of their self-made apartness from 'the poor'. The poor could not afford to go to church.

The missionaries gained far more personal satisfaction, and were less often humiliated, in their dealings with the extremely poor, who had so few of the good things of life to soothe and preoccupy them, that they were mostly grateful for any concern in their troubles, and were much more receptive to talk of man's lowly and sinful state and Jesus' saving love. Naturally then, missionaries moved more amongst people who valued them, and who could be benefited most spectacularly by their message.

The accompanying table charts the range of response of clients to the overtures of a missionary. I have used William Hall's journals 1882-1910 in Prahran and South Melbourne to attempt a rough estimate of the nature and frequency of these responses. The language used to define response is his own. I take his experience to be largely the same as his fellow missionaries', although most did not write so precisely and methodically as he.
CHART 10
The Rance of Client Response to the Missionaries
(drawn from the Journals of William Hall 1.882-1.912, and couched in his
language)
Range of Response
NEGATIVE RESPONSE
"Physically violent
Made denunciations against Christianity
Abusive
Slammed door in missionary's face
Argumentative, mocking, flippant
Door not opened
W

Indifferent
'
No time' to talk
'Light and frivolous'
'Building on rock of self', complacent

Frequency of Response

Polite but `not awakened to their need'
Considered there was 'plenty of time'
Believed something else; :soman
Catholics, spiritualists, Mormons etc;
agnostics; sceptics

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Too distressed by misfortune to listen
usefully to religious talk;. wanting
sympathy and comfort

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Struggling with "besetting sin` or doubt

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'Thankful' for visit
Listened 'with interest'
'Heard the Word gladly'
Felt 'the power of truth' but undecided

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POSITIVE RESPONSE
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One very clear impression from Hall's journals is that the proportion of Christians to non-Christians in the population visited was small, and largely unchanging. The journals reflect no trend to greater or lesser interest in things religious over the thirty or so years, not even during the depression of the 1890s. By far the bulk of the population visited had little spiritual knowledge or inclination. Even mention of Sunday School during childhood is infrequent.

Missionaries were greatly sustained during their visitation when they came across real Christians; often the impression is left that the missionary needed the support of these people more than they needed him. William Hall recounts:

When I remarked that "The Lord had been gracious to us in sending us such splendid rains, which were better than gold dust," she said, "Yes," but still a little gold dust [sic] would be very good!" She cheered me by her good humour, and another woman cheered me by her disposition to emphasize the bright side of Christianity.[sic] These more than compensated for one who rudely shut the door against me. 15 May 1903.

An amazed Reuben West records one day's visitation in Toorak, when he was well received by everyone he visited:

read and prayed with the people, they all received me very kindly and were anxious that I shall call again in fact I have not been so kindly received in any place as I was in Toorak, if they were washing they would leave it, if they were at work in the garden they would come into the house anxious to have conversation with me...gave 22 tracts, visited 17. 21 October 1870.

This response was unique. Usually, missionaries could not relax for a moment. Their clients were capable of devising nicely-judged torments for them. Samuel Stephens records,

At one house a young Woman wished to converse about the Scripture and the Church; that brought several of the neighbours in then she produced a pack of cards. I exhorted them all and left. 3 February 1869.

To such non-believers Stephens was a pathetic figure of fun. The majority of those visited, while not being so cruel, were equally as uninterested in the Christian message.

That this was the acutely painful realisation of all the missionaries
is clear, from their occasional anguished remarks. They found, too, many professing Christians to be well short of the mark. 'How few appear to have heart in the matter,' lamented West. 'There is plenty of Religiousness, but very little Christianity.' This situation was, in the end, to sound the death knell of the MSI as a purely evangelising agent, since ultimately it destroyed the hope, long and tenaciously held by leaders, supporters and missionaries, that it was possible to 'convert the world' and work to the improvement of the nation and the race.

The table indicates responses and their frequency, but it must be remembered that the same person could respond quite differently on different visits. The missionary really came into his own when people were going through some crisis. If receptiveness to his intrusion into the home was relatively low when the talk was purely on religious matters, it was correspondingly high when he called at a time of distress. As John Cromack put it, 'Trouble opens peoples ears and minds to the truth, when nothing else will.' Then the missionary really came into his own. Women, especially, bearing the brunt of illness, the unemployment, death or desertion of the breadwinner, and the problems of child-rearing, often saw him as the only source of aid and comfort. Many only needed a sympathetic ear. John Ivey, underlining heavily in his Journal, recorded the words of a woman, who said to him,

I am thankful to see you - for I can't tell anyone but you my trials and you always cheer me on and I am now determined to do my duty come what will. 17 March 1869.

The struggle for dignity did prevent many people confiding their fears and trouble to neighbours, but a missionary must have seemed a suitably neutral person and a trustworthy confidant. After sharing the confidences of one distressed woman, John Ivey was moved again to write,

such a case as this gives Missionary much influence over a family and, indeed a neighbourhood - folks here having no one to consult with confidence and secrecy [sic] 17 January 1865.

20 West's Journal 18 May 1876. See also 17 August 1871.

21 Cromack's Journal 25 July 1873.
Many of these women lived in frightful poverty, trying against the odds to support themselves and their children. Some, like Mrs Moore, found that the missionary could offer them nothing. 'Mrs Moore has now to work very hard at her needle to get a living now the prices are reduced. I tried again to console her, but she is not pleased at her lot and can't think of much else.' records Edward Knox on 9 December 1879. And indeed, missionaries felt inadequate to the task of evangelising women in such awful and unjust circumstances. Cranack tells of several women deserted by their husbands, who by working &c have to toil for their families. Many of these work hard all week...say that they are so tired on the Sabbath, and having to get the children off to school &c they never get out themselves...It is difficult sometimes how to deal with their honest tale. 21 July 1873.

It would be easy to underestimate the importance to many of these women struggling on day after day, of the words of encouragement and sympathy offered them by the missionary. He might be literally the only person in the world to see and acknowledge the depth and constancy of their struggle to hold life together. Ivey was fully aware of his importance as an onlooker who saw, and thus could give value to, the battle to live of an individual, who otherwise might give up and yield herself to insignificance. Some sense of self-esteem enabled many women doggedly 'to do their duty', and it was for this that a missionary might provide vital food.

Saw a poor woman whose Husband is away - literally in want - suggested source of assistance - accompanying same with some suitable cautions to one in her forlorn condition so near to further evil - heard me in tears - and promised to resist such overtures as a means of relief. 3 November 1864.

In less desperate circumstances, visits were still useful to poor women. Edward Knox called also on Mr Forbes, and found he had recovered so far as to go to work. So I sat and conversed with his wife...After prayer she said I am so glad I left off my washing to sit and speak with you...I feel strengthened. 12 April 1877.

The missionary could be the only outside company to visit the sick or aged. When Knox visited sick Mr Palmer on 19 June 1878, 'the old man said in tears, I misses you Sir, for you cheer me and [it] does me good when you come.' Frequently, the sick were left alone all day while the breadwinner
was at work. Stephens visited the aged bedridden Mrs Delvenside almost weekly for upwards of three years.22

Access to medical care was severely limited for the poor, hence the vital importance of Dr Singleton's Free Mission Medical Dispensary, set up in Collingwood as an auxiliary of the MCM in 1868. Yet this 'Free' dispensary was not without its cost: to Dr Singleton, for whom the Collingwood Council would not waive the rent for the premises because the MCM 'rested on a sectarian basis,' the reference, it was understood, being to the fact that Roman Catholics were not members thereof; and to the patients, from whom the Mission extracted payment of a sort. Singleton told the MCM committee:

-that the waiting room had been hung round with texts of Scripture in large type and tracts were distributed among the patients, -that it was proposed to read a portion of Scripture and offer a short prayer before the medical duties were begun, -that [the sick were to be given tracts]...to read at home and give their opinion concerning when they returned for advice.24

Yet the need for such a service was clear: 84 patients were seen in the first six three-hour sessions. A local dentist, Mr Emanuel, also offered his services free, along with Dr Singleton and his colleagues. 1500 patients were treated in the first six months.25

Ill health and poverty were inevitable companions. Contemporary opinion put illness down to unhealthy air - 'miasma' - but it was more likely the result, amongst the poor, of poor diet, insufficient warmth in winter, and overcrowded living conditions. These, in turn, were the results of insufficient income, or in some cases, income wastefully used. Reuben West visited a deserted wife whose health had broken down from overwork and poor living conditions:

Mrs Standly is ill suffering from disease of the chest her house

22 Stephens' Journal from mid 1870 until mid 1873.
23 Minutes 9 February 1869.
24 Ibid 9 February, 2 March 1869.
25 Ibid 6 April, 6 July 1869.
is a most miserable dwelling the windows broken and rags for
curtains no chairs in the house no fire and the house in a filthy
state and two little children playing in a lumber room...I spoke
to her about the Lord Jesus but she appeared to have no desire
for anything good living in a kind of come day go day condition
no matter what comes next. 22 June 1870.

As we have seen from earlier examples, the encouragement of a missionary
was occasionally able to prevent women from reaching this stage of complete
demoralisation.

For men, unemployment was a fear lurking always just around the corner.
For women, any paid work they undertook usually involved drudgery - hours
at the needle or washtub - for grossly inadequate payment. Women with
children were further disadvantaged if they needed to work. Child care was
extremely hard to get, and many jobs like domestic service required virtual
abandonment of one's children. Pregnancy and childbirth further threatened
the already poor health of such women, as well as preventing them from
working to earn their living for a prolonged period. The birth of another
child could easily destroy a struggling family, as in the case of the
Johnson family of Spencer Street. Stephens on a visit on 6 April 1869 found
Johnson dying in bed with tuberculosis, while his wife lay next to him rec-
overing from the birth of a child two days before. The Ladies' Benevolent
Society visitor was keeping them and their other children alive.

The death of a wife in childbirth was a catastrophe for a working man,
and his children were commonly given up to orphanages or Industrial Schools
if he had no other female relative to care for them. William Hall tried to
help Mr Reynolds of Albert Street Port Melbourne to keep his children
together after the death of his wife. For some months the family managed,
but Hall was eventually called in.

He said his difficulty was his infant son 24 years old. There are
three other children, the eldest being a girl not yet 10 years
old, and not sensible enough to give the proper attention to her
little brother during her father's absence. He desires the child
to be placed under the care of some Xian [sic] people...The child
having whooping cough makes it difficult... 7 February 1890.

Hall tried to get the boy under the care of the Scots' Church Children's
Aid Society, but they refused to take him 'on a/c of the whooping cough,
and his having a father, who should not be relieved of his responsibility, as he had health and work. 26 The ladies were willing to pay 5s a week for a month to have the boy boarded out. The father decided to struggle on at home, and apologised for troubling Hall. 'I said "I admired him the rather for trying to keep his children around him".' Hall was also impressed that the father was 'giving his spare time to putting things right in the home' and that he was a member of a Lodge. 27 However, disaster dogged Mr Reynolds; he injured his knee, and was unable to work. Miss Sutherland was willing to arrange the boarding out of his children if he would agree to make 'reasonable payments'. 28 Hall and the father took the children to Miss Sutherland, who judged the little boy to be too ill and had him admitted to the Children's Hospital; the other three were boarded out. Mr Reynolds paid 10s a week to the Society towards the cost. 29 What happened to the Reynolds family thereafter is unknown.

Complete and permanent disintegration of families was common. It was often the lot of the missionary to organize this dismemberment. 'Took two children to Police Court,' recorded John Ivey on 24 October 1865. 'Mother dead. Father gone to Melbourne Hospital -/six children/- to be admitted Friday to the Industrial School.' Andrew Mason handled the case of the Beckett family:

Mrs Beckett a widow with two children very ill and quite destitute. I got a conveyance and sent her to Hospital. I got Mr Cherbury to take her boys into the Home of Hope. 3 July 1880.

A particularly distressing case involved the Webber family. Edward Knox found Mrs Webber weak from the birth of her baby, and distraught at the suicide of her husband. Her baby had been put in an orphanage while she recovered her strength in the Lying In Hospital. She eventually returned

26 Hall's Journal 8 February 1890.
27 Ibid.
28 Ibid 24 March 1890.
29 Ibid 2 April 1890.
home, still weak, and took up the care of her child; but she had no income. The child was thus placed with another woman under the boarding out system; this woman became ill, and when Mrs Webber visited her child, she was 'broken-hearted' at the improper care given the little one. Knox helped her write a complaint to the authorities, and got a doctor to testify as well. Finally, the mother, now well enough to care properly for her baby, had the child boarded out to herself. 30

One of the major tasks of the missionaries - the one which drew them most often from evangelism - was that of liaison between distressed families and the charitable agencies. The recommendation of a missionary was usually sufficient to activate a charitable body to render aid. But apart from this practical function, people valued the missionary for his concern and sympathy, his human warmth and ability to console. He seems to have been almost the only outsider to concern himself with the mental and emotional trauma of catastrophes like severe illness and approaching death; and to attend not only to the sufferer but also to his or her equally distressed family. Infant mortality may have been a common fact of life, but it was still an event which caused parents acute grief. Parents sought out the missionary at such times. John Ivey records,

Sought for by a woman in my former district - found Infant Dead - suggested way of burial having no means - they were most Thankful. 5 January 1865.

Next day, he conducted a little service for the baby in the parents' home; an unofficial private marking of the child's death which obviously gave the parents great comfort, and provided a dignity to the death. Ivey frequently arranged burials for poor families, for they often had little idea of how to do it themselves. In 1864, he attempted to have government burials of the poor conducted in a more seemly manner, by approaching the Chief Secretary with a list of complaints and suggestions, but from 'The Vagabond's' account of pauper funerals in 1876, matters can hardly have improved much.

Provision by the state for pauper burials was of the most meagre, and the
behaviour of the participants (officials, gravediggers, clerics) was
callous. The dead were buried several in a grave, and when it was full, a
clergyman read a brief service over it, pocketed his fee and left.31 Ivey’s
personal memorial services in the home take on an added lustre. He was
frequently asked by people who did not go to church and were not otherwise
religious, to conduct a service in the house the day after the burial.32

Missionaries grew used to seeing the dead lying on floors, chairs,
sofas, beds, covered only by rags, tablecloths, sheets or whatever, often
already decomposing, because their families could not cope with the diff-
culties of burying them.33 Cromack was a regular visitor of Mrs Murphy, a
deserted wife living in a hovel in Argyle Place, Richmond. Death was real
to this woman: her daughter had been sent home from hospital to die, her
back broken in an accident. The dying was long and painful; during it Mrs
Murphy’s new baby also died. Cromack visited often to sit with the girl and
comfort Mrs Murphy. His was virtually the only sympathy and support given
to this tragically afflicted family.34

The elderly, especially when frail or sick, were a particular concern.
Many had outlived, or lost touch with their families. All the usual
problems of poverty were exacerbated for the old, by their failing strength
and inability to earn. Typical was an aged couple living in Commercial Road
Prahran, who were struggling to rear their grandchildren. They had chickens
and tried to live on the income from eggs and the 4s a week the little boy
earned.35 Missionaries discovered and reported to the Ladies’ Benevolent
Society dozens of destitute old people, and had as many more admitted to

31 J S James ‘Pauper Funerals’ 23 December 1876, reprinted in M Cannon (ed)
The Vagabond Papers pp 66-73.
32 Ivey’s Journal 20, 23 & 29 November 1864, 16 & 27 July 1865.
33 See for example Turnbull’s Journal 20 May 1869.
34 Cromack’s Journal 20, 22 & 25 February 1879.
35 West’s Journal 22 August, 12 October 1870.
the Benevolent Asylum to live out their days. Hall found 73 year old Mr Drury, bedridden and existing on 4s a week 'out of which he has sometimes to pay 2/6 for medicine. 3d worth of oatmeal has to eke out for 6 or 7 meals.'36 Another old man, ill and alone, was in such a 'beastly condition' that Hall had to get the Inspector of Nuisances from the Health Department to get him out of the house and into the Benevolent Asylum.37

Once he was known in a district, the missionary was frequently made use of by the people. Parents having difficulty managing their children asked for advice. Ivey was 'sent for by a Mother to remonstrate with her Giddy Daughter - and to advise and try to persuade her to take a place.'38 'Some parents complained of the behaviour of their children, and asked me to speak to them, for their good,' wrote Cramack.39 Matters frequently went further than this, and parents asked for help in having unruly children sent to the country or put in Industrial Schools for short terms. Hall saw Mrs Champion, of 5 Victoria St., [Prahran] about her boy Charles, who is 12 years of age, and very difficult to manage. She has to keep him with shirt and coat, but no trousers on to keep him off the streets. Gave her the address of Mr. Barber of the "Try Society" to whom I had spoken about the boy, who may do something for him, if he will go into the country. 22 June 1888

Parents and charitable agents were convinced of the therapeutic nature of rural Victoria, and the efficacy of country air and hard work in expunging the depraving influence of the city in young minds and bodies. Charles went to the country,40 but was not, apparently, susceptible to its purer air, for he was back in the care of the 'Try Boys' in 1890, still 'beyond his Mother's control'.41

Several times, missionaries were applied to for help with insane or

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36 Hall's Journal 19 November 1885.
37 Ibid 7, 8 & 9 September 1886.
38 Ivey's Journal 17 February 1866.
39 Cramack's Journal 17 March 1879.
40 Hall's Journal 11 September 1888.
41 Ibid 20 August 1890.
suicidal people. Families were devastated by such problems. Ivey was summoned one day by

one family in great distress - son a lunatic - wandered away - tried to console them...In afternoon they found him, and seeing me they called me in to consult as to best course to take regarding him. 27 January 1865

Several times in his career, Hall had to deal with attempted suicide. His answer was to offer God all the more fervently, with some success.42

The missionary's services were sought on behalf of those in gaol, or their families. Ivey speaks of visiting a prisoner 'by request of a Woman very ill'. The need for the husband to receive a visitor was urgent, that 'being the only day he could be seen for three months', stresses Ivey.43

Missionaries were asked to write letters, usually to another colony or England44; to testify in Court for people; and to provide letters of 'character'. Ziba Sumner wrote such a character reference for a widow, Mrs Grant, who was bringing a breach of promise suit against a young man who had jilted her daughter.45 Missionaries offered, or were asked to mediate between separated couples who were seeking reconciliation.46 Occasionally difficult legal problems were put before them. Cromack rather awkwardly wrote of a woman who had 'property at whom the interest of which has been sent her, but for some time it has not been sent. She wished me to read the correspondence and advise her.'47 Those trying to give up 'the drink' used the missionary and his pledge book much as they would use Alcoholics Anonymous today.48

42 Ibid 8, 11, 18, October, 1 November, 6 December 1886, 22 August 1887.
43 Ivey's Journal 7 December 1865. See also West 13 July 1871.
44 Ivey's Journal 17 March 1865.
46 See for example Stephens' Journal 17 August 1869, 10 February 1873.
47 Cromack's Journal 30 January 1872.
48 See for example ibid 6 August 1873.
If the MOM committee were certain, until the turn of the century, that their missionaries should not give goods or money to the poor, the poor themselves had quite the reverse opinion. Caught as they were between these two opposite pressures, the missionaries did the best they could. Some were more susceptible to the pitiable plight of people than others; all, at some stage, considered the nature of poverty and their own role in visiting the poor. Cromack wrote down his thoughts frequently.

I met with much poverty and saw much domestic misery. Men complain of the want of employment. Many tails [sic] of woe were told me evidently with a view to get me to do something for them. In all cases I advised them to go to the Members of the Benevolent Asylum. But I know that in some of the cases the society would not go [sic] anything, as drink is at the bottom of their poverty. It is very painful to hear these people talk, and to know that what is said is true, but to know also that it is all brought on by themselves. I gave them good advice which if they would act upon it, would do them more good than money or anything the Benevolent Society can do for them.

22 August 1871.

Two persons asked me, how it was I did not come to see if they needed a loaf of bread. This is no uncommon remark, especially from R.Caths. I said, "If I brought about with me, every day, a bakers cart full of loaves, and a brewers waggon full of barrels of ale, I could get people to take it all, especially the ale. That it was the getting ale that made some people need to have loaves to be given to them. But that instead of taking such people loaves, we tried [sic] to get them to leave the ale, and then they will all have loaves enough of their own." This sort of thing one has often to say. 28 March 1872.49

It is clear from Cronack's comments that many looked with an assessing and exploitative eye at the missionaries. Seldom was a missionary greeted with full approval; seldom was he able fully to satisfy the wants of his clients. Men were much less willing to accept visitation than women, and

49 Cronack's focus on alcohol and people's weakness for it as a, if not the, major cause of poverty, reflects a current trend of thought, especially amongst middle class protestants. With the formation of Temperance Societies and the Women's Christian Temperance Union (1885), the campaign to dry up the city was well under way. Whereas Mrs Joseph Greathead, a devout Christian, could long for a medicinal glass of stout when she was seasick, in 1853, by the end of the century, even the use of alcohol as a medicine had been routed by the attack of Christian doctors. See Greathead's Journal of his Voyage from London to Melbourne... 9 May 1853; Dr John Singleton Narrative...in the...Life of a Physician Appendix V, which promotes 'a simple, common-sense, and non-alcoholic treatment' of typhoid, which Singleton had sent to 1500 doctors in Australia and New Zealand in 1878. pp 394-401.
were more openly hostile and sceptical. Male missionaries benefited from the traditional deference of women to men of the cloth, even though they were not ordained. To many women they had the authority that belongs to the male as well as to the man of God; their response was respectful deference. Men were more inclined to treat them as equals, or even inferiors:

At one house a burley [sic] man heard us for a little while and then stood up and exhibited a menacing attitude. I advised to let him spend his fury. The housekeeper endeavoured to quell him and he went out.50

- but violent behaviour from women was by no means unknown.

Shaman. A poor widow with a number of children. She was under the influence of drink. I spoke to her about it, and advised her to give it up, but she appeared annoyed with me. And came to my house in the evening and threatened to strangle me.51

Men often objected to their wives' interest in, and attention to the missionaries,52 and likewise often did their best to avoid speaking to them. 'I find it very difficult to get at the men,' complained Reuben West, 'if they are at home as I walk in at the front door they walk out the back.'53

With what joy and gratitude, then, did missionaries revel in the fortunes of those they had converted. Converts often sought the missionary's good opinion as their spiritual mentor, and used him as an arbiter of standards and a sharer of confidentialities. They were proud and anxious to demonstrate to him the improvement in their lives. Ivey was pleased to record,

Saw woman who once lived in my former district - much pleased to see me, and said - How different I am to what I was once - then I delighted in reading novels - songs &c But, now I take pleasure in reading good books showing me one feel pleasure in prayer - believing my prayers are heard. I can bear my trials with more fortitude and more than that I have a Hope of Heaven hereafter and knowing her for some time I believe she spoke the genuine feeling of her heart - when I first spoke to her of personal religion she, tartly, said I am no Heathen. I said Certainly not

50 Stephens' Journal 15 October 1873.
51 Mason's Journal 21 May 1879.
52 Stephens' Journal 12 March 1874.
53 West's Journal 27 May 1870.
but, are you a Christian? 24 January 1865 (Ivey’s emphasis)

One woman showed Stephens two Bank Books, which, along with new furniture, attested to the effects of her husband’s signing the pledge months before. The missionaries were aware of how easy it was to ‘back-slide’, so they never felt completely sure of any soul. They loved to hear of people who ‘held’. Hall recounts,

Mrs Hebb, of 28 [Hardy Street, Prahran], cheered my heart by telling me of her son, whom I spoke to over two years ago in the Mission Hall, when - what was better - the Lord spoke salvation to his soul. He is running the race with patience. Praise God! (We like to know that they stand.) 10 August 1886.

The journals of the missionaries paint a fine-grained picture of the lives and concerns of Melbourne’s working class. Not only do they reveal, for example, the depression of the 1890s, but also the regular hardship of the winter months, at its worst in July/August, and other more serious but largely overlooked slumps. That of 1879 was as cruel as the worst of the 1890s. Mason’s journal entries for July 1879 are almost entirely about his desperate measures to keep destitute families in Collingwood fed, clothed and sheltered. He arranged relief from the local Relief Committee for no less than 75 families during the month. The usual poor - the sick, the elderly, the disabled, widowed or deserted women - were augmented by large numbers of unemployed and their families. Cromack was similarly involved in Richmond and the city. People sent him clothes, blankets, boots and shoes for distribution. He worked to help the Clerks and Shopmen Relief Committee, with the permission of the committee. Cromack gives vivid details of the influx of people from other states into Emerald Hill, ‘in hope of doing better here’ in the winter of 1872, testifying to the forced

54 Stephens’ Journal 14 April, 30 September 1874.
55 Mason’s Journal July 1879.
56 Cromack’s Journal July 1879.
mobility of the lower classes in search of work. 57

A harrowing glimpse of the conditions under which the very poor lived, is to be found throughout the journals. West describes a 'house' in Cremorne:

There is no window to the house they live in; and all the light they get must come through the doorway. When the door is shut of course they are in darkness. The house is a one-roomed house and 8 persons live and sleep in one room. I did not see any bedstead so I suppose they all take the floor for it. 15 November 1871

Cronack describes a whole street, or rather an alley, where families paid a mere 3s a week rent for tiny shacks. No family had any furniture other than 'old cans and drapers cases.' 58 He also describes a 'court' off McKillop Street which he and Stephens stumbled across by accident. This place was in the centre of Melbourne, but quite hidden.

I quite accedently [sic] found a Court behind [some buildings] full of people, and in a most deplorable condition. Mr S. said to me "I have visited through this st. again and again but never noticed that there was such a place as this behind."...In this court were lots of children, not one of whom attending any school...All the houses utterly worthless as human habitations, and the yard a perfect puddle-hole. In one house was a fine looking woman, and her three fine children. She was drunk, and her house all wet and dirty and even flooded with rain, and the children nearly hair [sic]...In another house were two men and two women, all dead drunk, only two of the four able to speak, and that with difficulty. The next house was closed against us. We saw a drunken woman with a blackened face go in just before. In the next house was an old man, who had buried his wife only last week. 2 July 1872.

The journals show more of the life of Melbourne's population than just its poverty. Various public events created great excitement. In the weeks following Dr Bromby's controversial lectures on evolution in 1870, several people talked over the ideas raised with the missionaries. The general excitement of Melbourne Cup Day is noted with disapproval every year. Waves of epidemic disease are recorded; measles, scarlet fever, smallpox, typhoid. 59

Well known to all Melburnians are the reactions to Melbourne's weather:

57 Ibid 12 July 1872.
58 Cronack's Journal 24 January 1872.
59 Ivey's Journal 10 December 1866, 30 April 1867. Cronack's Journal 24 April 1879, and many other references.
The people did not appear to be in a very good temper,' comments West on the 30 December 1870. 'The Christmas Holidays and a hot wind blowing had something to do with it, and another thing having no rain lately they are without water, and a number of their fowl have died.' Even the ending of the Franco-Prussian War drew a response:

everyone appeared to be excited about the war...I think I saw more drunkeness [sic] in the City today than I have ever seen before in a day since I have been in the colony...The R. Catholics were more abrupt than usual...I think they are grieved about the French being beaten.'

comments West.60

We have seen that some of the people were attracted to fringe religious sects. (See Chapter 4) Those interested in orthodox Christianity were keen attenders of their own religious meetings, whether in local Mission Halls, or outdoors. Attending outdoor meetings of all sorts was a common recreational pastime.

It has become common for recent historians of social welfare to visualize the poor as under a far-reaching, coercive and grimly efficient control by purveyors of charity.61 Certainly extensive control was possible in the institutions set up by charitable bodies, but the consistent evidence of the missionaries shows that only a tiny proportion of the poor came under this form of control. The normal state of the poor was to battle with their own problems almost entirely unsupported and uncontrolled by charitable agents. Charitable agents were often only one small infrequently invoked source of help in a whole range of tactics used by people to help themselves. Charity was usually a last resort, and was both intended as such, and sought for as such. Then, as now, the poor had little idea of

60 West's Journal 24 & 25 October 1870.

what assistance might be available to them, and it is clear that the bulk of them just struggled along as best they could; using relatives, neighbours, friends, and the pawn shop, and making do in all manner of ways. It was almost an accident that a charitable person stumbled on them.

Where it operated, the MCM was a useful adjunct to the lives of Melbourne's people. It is clear from the foregoing discussion that six or seven men spread thinly over heavily-populated areas could not do much for any but the few who came under their notice. It took many months for a missionary to work his way around a suburb and come back for a second visit; he was distracted by many other calls on his time and interest. It was often a matter of sheer luck that he visited a family in desperate need of help from a person like himself, and always his evangelical duties demanded his primary attention. Some people obviously benefited from his evangelism, but many more ignored it. They were looking for more practical forms of assistance from him.
CHAPTER 6

TWO DISTRICTS OF THE MCM:

1 COLLINGWOOD

Anyone could hardly ever take a walk through these neighbourhoods but he must observe much that would make the heart feel very sad;...the fortunes of these men had not only been crushed, but the men had been crushed with them; and these isolated, scattered, and despairing fellow-creatures were the legitimate objects of aid...and sympathy...

Argus 16 May 1855

That in the very heart of our wealthy city there should exist such loathsome hovels, such squalid huts, heaps of rubbish and decaying matter; that human beings of the most degraded type, with sin and misery in every feature, should inhabit these most unhealthy dens is almost incredible in this land of sunshine and abundance.

Presbyterian Monthly Messenger February 1883.

The experiences gone through and scenes witnessed make one thankful when the winter is over. The pinched faces of the little ones, and look of almost despair on that of the mothers, haunt one long after seeing them.

Sister E Young, City Mission Record
12 August 1901.

Collingwood was a suburb 'crippled from birth'.1 'The Hill', rising up from Wellington Street to Fitzroy, was salubrious and respectable; but 'the Flat', from Wellington Street to the Yarra was, from the beginnings of settlement in the early 1850s, the dark and deformed part of the city.

At first, its lush meadows, scattering of stately gums and pleasant river bank, seemed to make it a Melburnian Elysian Fields; but the Flat, as East Collingwood became known, was boggy and ill-drained. The rubbish and pollution humans bring with them had less chance of being absorbed and removed, than on the Hill. Indeed, the liquid wastes of the Hill flowed down onto the Flat, and 'the sink became choked earlier than it did

1 Bernard Barrett The Inner Suburbs MUP Melbourne 1971 p 8.
elsewhere. Eventually, open drains were dug through the Flat, and along these oozed a disgusting sludge, dotted with butchers' offal and rotting garbage, and subject to flooding over the surrounding areas.

Decent people who could afford it would not live in the unhealthy 'miasmas' of the Flat, preferring the clean air and gravitational drainage of the Hill. Thus from its beginnings, the Flat was consigned to the poor. It had been camped on by diggers and destitute families from 1851, and since it was conveniently located outside the rather too stringent building regulations of the City of Melbourne, its buildings were, increasingly, undersized wooden affairs thrown up by entrepreneurs on tiny subdivisions for just such a class of people. From its beginnings, it was seen as repository for the lowest classes, and from the mid 1850s, of a large cheap labour force.

Joseph Greathead 1854-6

When Joseph Greathead took up his appointment as the MCM's first missionary in Collingwood in October 1854, the population on the Flat was already about 9000 souls, and, as censuses of 1857, 1861 and 1871 show, it was the most populous suburb in Melbourne. The area still retained a rural prettiness with much open space for children to play in. Greathead moved his family - his wife and four youngest children - into a wooden house in Raphael Street, a short distance from the site of the old Glasshouse, which only three years before 'stood alone in the centre of the swamp'.

2 Ibid p 9.
3 Ibid pp 45-6, 51.
5 Ibid pp 9-10.
6 Ibid p 24.
7 According to a local journalist in 1855 quoted in ibid p 25.
Greathead and his wife had migrated in 1853 from Sheerness on the Thames estuary, leaving their seven eldest children behind. Perhaps Greathead had been driven out by unemployment, for he certainly had little money when the family landed in Melbourne, and was grateful for a job unloading lumber from the "Diana" for a wood merchant. He was a keen Christian, and clearly intended to throw himself into evangelism for the newly-formed Melbourne City Mission, late in 1854.8

On his first day's work, Greathead mapped out his district. (See map) Then he began systematic visitation of its people, starting at the Yarra River at Simpsons Road and working back to Wellington Street, and as far north as HodgsOns Road and Gipps Street. This took him most of October. Along the river bank, near the one school in the district, the Wesleyan School, he found a group of German brickmakers, whom he judged to be intelligent and respectable, since they were orderly and well-behaved, and he was able to give them some religious tracts, in German, provided by the city's Lutheran pastor Rev Matthias Goethe, which they received 'with much pleasure and surprise'. Greathead visited '20 houses and tents occupied by brickmakers'. Moving further along the river bank, he visited another 14 families, 'and all the wool-washers employed on the Yarra edge'.9

Greathead found dozens of children running around, playing in the paddocks, and began to hand out tracts to them.

fell in with a lot of girls surrounding one who was correctly reading one of the books given to her brother at Mr Littles yesterday, as they seemed all deeply interested, gave to each one, with a promise they would next time they met or saw me, stop and tell me its contents, and learn the Hymns on the covers. 14 October 1854.

These tracts were specially written for children, told simple but exciting stories, and drew a moral at the end. Greathead found he was on to a good thing. There can have been little reading matter on the Flat, and the

8 Greathead Journal of his voyage from London to Melbourne on board the "Diana" 9 April 1853-16 August 1853 15 August 1853.

9 Greathead's Journal 11 and 12 October 1854.
tracts soon became highly desirable objects. A mother told him, 'a book you
gave my girl last Thursday has done us so much good.' (16 October) Two days
later,

one little maid came up to me saying, "you gave my sister a
little book about a Sweep who did not steal, won't you give me
one, for I know the hymn on the cover"! Could I refuse when she
commenced and repeated it - "Happy the child whose tender years
&c". 18 October 1854.

The next day Greathead 'came upon a lot of children, in an empty house
unfinished, seated around a girl who was reading to them, a book given her
yesterday - "Mikey an Australian Boy."' Seizing the opportunity, he rein-
forced the lesson about how it was wrong to steal, and then simply told the
story of Christ.10

From 25 October, Greathead began visitation north from Hodgsons and
Gipps Streets as far as Dight's Falls. He found many young Irish Catholic
wives, who were dubious about his visitation. It is likely that these young
women were from amongst the large number - some four thousand - of young
Irish women who were brought into Australia in the late 1840s, now married
and with young families. Greathead took a complacent pleasure in giving
words of guidance to such uninformed and deferential females.11 Although
many could read, they had no Bibles 'or means of obtaining knowledge of its
Saving Truths', and seemed ignorant of the basic beliefs of Christianity.
They accepted tracts and picture cards, although not without embarrassment.

she selected a card representing the Crucifixion, with the hymn
under it "Rock of ages, cleft for me" observing "Oh! that picture
is my religion," catching the eye of a woman who was watching
her, with confusion and haste slipped it into her pocket,
desiring me to go away directly in a tone and manner purposely
[sic] to disabuse the persons mind. 26 October 1854.

Greathead somewhat smugly exclaimed against the primitive superstitious
nature of their religious knowledge, and self-righteously set out to wrest
them from the grip of the priests.

10 Ibid 19 October 1854.
11 Chris McConville 'Emigrant Irish & Suburban Catholics: Faith & Nation in
Melbourne and Sydney 1851-1933' PhD University of Melbourne 1984, pp
2-3.
Now, Greathead began to come across people in distress; Mrs Kaye, a sick woman with six children and a drunken husband; W M Booth seriously ill; the lonely elderly Mrs Slater. There were also many cases of temporary distress by want of that regular employment, that the families have been accustomed to, and more especially among those recently arrived in the Colony. Many people, like the woman in Rupert Street, were not coping at all well. She was in tears and apparently in much distress of mind, enquired if anything was amiss or wrong. "Wrong - Yes - all is wrong and going to Hell!"...and shut to the door. 17 October 1854.

Apparently there were at this time few families in the northern part of the Flat, for a week later Greathead was beginning his second sweep of the district. (3 November 1854). Apart from the Germans, whom he found to be a very quiet and civil people, householders along Simpsons Road struck him as careless and far too fond of drinking. The women were getting together in each other's houses for drinking parties, while their 'shoeless dirty children' ran about 'without schooling and without fear of God or Man - there being little or no restraint...though in nearly every residence, the Bible prayer and hymn books may be seen.' Many of these parents were young, and freed from the restraint of their own parents when they migrated. Many husbands were out of work, an added burden to the difficulties of early married life in a new land. No doubt the abnormal concentration of young families, living without the presence of older families and relatives, exaggerated the difficulties of their life, leaving them without the guidance or support they would otherwise have had in Britain.

Greathead was appalled at the seeming lack of any idea of proper parenting of their own children, especially in educating them. The

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12 Greathead's Journal 15 to 31 October 1854.
13 Ibid 1 November 1854.
14 Ibid 10 November 1854.
15 Ibid 8 November 1854.
supineness of Parents in this matter is fearful.' Out of a total of 350 children questioned by Greathead, 59 only were at school, be it a day or Sunday school. His grand total by the end of the year showed that out of 3612 children counted, 358 occasionally went to day school, and 513 to Sunday school.

Greathead felt that the quality of the people improved as he moved on. North of Hodgson Road and Gipps Street 'upon the whole they are better informed people than south of it, more children at school, and better clothed' he wrote on 15 November. The families around Gold Street complained that there was no church or school near them; they seemed to Greathead to be respectable people.

Having gone through the district twice, Greathead was now known and sought after by people in trouble: an unemployed recent immigrant whose wife had just given birth (8 December); a family whose child died in a house fire (14 December); an unemployed disabled father of six (16 December) and so on. The coming of Christmas brought not joy but demoralization as severe unemployment persisted. Greathead found drunkenness rife. He came across the Tunks couple in the middle of a terrible binge:

on a filthy table stood broken bottles - and a lighted candle, its wick doubled to one side, melting all before it, and running among the clotted hair of a man’s head. he was...imprecating on the body and soul of a woman who lay nearly naked, upon the floor (which was of earth) with a lighted pipe in her mouth - she in return cursing him for his brutality...where she lay bleeding... [He] furiously taking up a bottle...[cursed] his wife for having drunk its contents,...threatening to murder her -(looking me in the face) "and then the world would say 'O what a wretch he was to kill his poor Wife!'..." [He]...staggered [off] in the direction of the Leeds Arms. I left this abode of wretchedness with feelings impossible to describe. 30 December 1854.

In this month, Greathead recorded the ominous information, 'this month...men very few, if any, they having for want of employment, left for the Diggins [sic]' The women and children waited anxiously for money to
be sent them. Meanwhile their destitution was so great that Greathead was desperately seeking out private benefactors who would agree to support one or other of the helpless families, and making contact with the Ladies’ Benevolent Society which was just beginning work in Collingwood.

By the end of February the inevitable anxiety and lack of income in the homes of lone wives was causing much ‘quiet suffering...Many mothers seem broken down and greatly softened in mind’, and were less inclined to scoff at Greathead’s message of faith. The women, ‘being so much alone, revert in their quiet solitude to days and months gone by’ with a sad nostalgia.

In a situation already dominated by unemployment, Greathead found ‘much depression of mind, and disappointment by several new arrivals, not having obtained employment and the realization of their hopes.’ By 10 March, many of the tents in the paddocks near Gold Street were gone, the families driven away by unemployment. Other families were collapsing. Every Sunday, Greathead, concerned for the children, was sweeping the Flat trying to get them to go to Sunday School, but he lamented in his monthly report, ‘what can be expected of the rising generation of this district?’ filled as it was with ‘every vice and snare’ which accustomed children ‘to scenes totally destructive of all delicacy of feeling.’

The longer fathers were away from home, the more the mothers complained to Greathead of ‘the depravity and general disobedience...of their children, especially of the larger class of boys, who by scores daily waste their time in gambling and mischievous [sic] play.’ Mrs Dewell said her sons were away ten or twelve days at a time, ‘living she cannot tell how,

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19 Ibid 19 January 1855.
20 Ibid 10 February 1855.
21 Ibid 22 & 23 February 1855.
22 Ibid 24 February 1855.
23 Ibid 2 March 1855.
24 Ibid 31 March 1855.
about the streets of the City and Wharf." 25

By now, too, Greathead was feeling daily the backlash from Roman Catholics who had been warned against him by their priest. The gullible young Irish women gave way to burly Catholic men. Greathead was attacked by 'an Awful blaspheming man, who seized me by the collar, and shaking me... threatened sundry things,' and tore up his tracts.26 Even those of Protestant allegiance complained to him that they would 'never again get into the old good methods they were once in the Habit at Home of practicing [sic] - for there are so many hindrances and drawbacks that they had not contemplated on their arrival.'27 At a Sunday service on the Flat, Greathead 'could recognize no one who had promised to be there.'28 The tone of his Journal becomes grimmer and grimmer.

As winter set in, matters worsened. Greathead tried to help a young woman who had gone mad, and many other mothers appeared 'almost prostrated with family care.'29 The weather was now bitterly cold and wet, and the Flat had become such a quagmire that Greathead was loath to enter houses and further to distress the women with the mud he brought in.30 Families literally starving came to his notice daily. Such was the general poverty that mothers could not even afford the few pence a week for their children's schooling.

Greathead felt compelled to make out a list of his most destitute and deserving families to present to the committee of the newly-formed Collingwood Benevolent Society, despite doubting the propriety of his act, as an employee of the MCM. There were ten utterly desperate families on his

25 Ibid 16 April 1855.
26 Ibid 3 April 1855.
27 Ibid 9 May 1855.
28 Ibid 13 May 1855.
29 Ibid 4 & 6 June 1855.
30 Ibid 13 June 1855.
list, being sustained by kind, but almost equally as destitute families, and by the occasional free loaf of bread which Greathead had arranged for a local baker to provide for those in extremis. A gentleman from the new committee came 'to authenticate the cases' and was appalled at what he saw. He was on the staff of the Argus, and got work for three of the men immediately.

One starving family was amazed to have someone else's leg of lamb delivered to their door by mistake, plus 2s 6d change. Greathead could not find where it came from, so he told them to eat and enjoy it, as a gift from Providence.

Want was by now so widespread as to be beyond the charitable to alleviate, despite measures such as the CBS's soup kitchen which was crowded daily. Greathead was convinced that 'till a reunion of absent fathers, with their families, is effected, little can be done effectually to remedy [sic] this state of things.' By now, the people had got past thinking of Home, and softening again towards religion. Numbers were bitter and angry, and resented Greathead's familes; 'many seem overwhelmed with fear for the future and its consequences to them and their children.' So it went on. 'Met today with more anxious lonely mothers...' lamented Greathead on 25 August; there is now no trace of complacency or pomposity in his journal entries.

Mrs Kyle, in intense distress, her husband ill and her children starving, came to Greathead for help.

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32 Greathead's Journal 9, 11 12 July 1855.
33 Ibid 18 July 1855.
34 Ibid 21 July 1855.
36 Ibid 1 August 1855.
trust in the providence of God when we have all things richly to enjoy, as I and mine have had, all my life long, till we came to this unfortunate distant land." to the best of my ability relieved her present necessity. 29 September 1855.

Her case was typical.

The severity of circumstances lessened slightly with the coming of spring and finer weather, but this dreadful season of privation had marked Greathead and the families on the Flat irrevocably. The pleasant visitations of 1854 were no more. The light-hearted young married couples were split up, the women worn and desperate, many of the husbands dead in far off places or never to return. Illness and derangement flourished.37 Religion had not eased suffering minds. Greathead admitted in December, 'Its sad to contemplate the stunted dwarfish state of personal piety...'38

Even people like the Booths, for whom Greathead worked very hard in October 1854, when Mr Booth was seriously ill, turned on him. Greathead met Booth in Little Bourke Steet; he was drunk and

without hat and only one shoe on..."You see I am daring the Almighty to do his work" [he said]...I followed him to his home...his wife was lying on the floor bleeding from a severe cut over the nose - every domestic article that would break lay scattered in scores of pieces, chairs and tables upset, even doors broken...he with both hands seized the hair of his head and screamed out "This is the way we are going to Hell..."...could only solemnly warn him of his awful and fearful condition. 8 March 1856.

Blow followed blow for the luckless Greathead, and the poor of the Flat. Greathead's supportive Superintendent Rev Scott died in April 1856.39 Then the first MCM ran out of money, and Greathead was dismissed. It was now his turn to experience the horrible anxiety of being unemployed, with a family to sustain. His work in Collingwood was finished. Only then did Greathead discover how much he was valued by, and how deeply attached he himself had become to many of Collingwood's people.40

37 Ibid 1, 3, 5 December 1855.
38 Ibid 14 December 1855.
39 Ibid 9 April 1856.
40 Ibid 12 & 13 June 1856. Greathead remained in Collingwood. When the
Census reports, cited by Barrett, show that females in East Collingwood significantly outnumbered males from the late 1850s; in 1861, 41% of males were dependent boys. Mortality figures for East Collingwood topped government statistics for the metropolitan area in the 1850s and 1860s; 71% of all deaths were of children under five; female suicides outnumbered male 7 to 2 in 1876.41

Greathead's extraordinary journal shows the beginning of the process whereby women - widows, deserted or lone wives and their families - made up the majority of people fixed on the Flat by their lack of income. He documents the sliding of a whole population into the maw of poverty. Its relentless grinding ceases to be a statistical trend and becomes a human catastrophe, in which all hopes for a decent and happy life were destroyed for hundreds of people. We feel their physical, social, moral and spiritual collapse in all its painful indignity and despair.

Greathead had started confidently in his role as missionary in 1854, seeing himself as a benevolent paternal figure capable of assisting people to lead better lives. When he ceased work in 1856, he had learnt the hard lesson that he could really offer little that Collingwood people wanted. Religion was impotent in the face of social catastrophe, and he found himself striving more and more to provide food and shelter for the destitute. He became desperate to salvage something for God out of all the hopelessness around him, and threw himself feverishly into trying to save the children, rounding them up on Sundays, and taking them to Sunday School. It was a seemingly hopeless task - but in the matter of schools, his concern directly inspired Mrs Hornbrook to begin to set up Ragged Schools for poor children. The first were in Collingwood.

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reconstituted MCM of August 1856 advertised for missionaries, Greathead was working at the Wesleyan school on the Flat, but he applied and was appointed to Melbourne proper.

41 Barrett _op cit_ pp 34, 56.
John Ivey 1862-1896

When John Ivey began work in Collingwood in 1862, the population was well on its way to the peak of its first burst of growth of nearly 20,000 in 1866. In 1875 the population was about 21,000, but from 1881-1891 it increased rapidly again to about 35,000. The trend for unemployed men to seek work in the country, leaving behind wife and children (sometimes permanently) continued. The concentration of women was at its highest in 1881, when there were 109 females to every 100 males.42

It was obvious by then, as it had not been in 1854, that for substantial numbers poverty was a permanent state, and no alleviation was in sight. Barrett has characterized the governance of local affairs by the Council, dominated by shop keepers, small business- and tradesmen, as a battle of competing self-interest; amenities for the luckless poor rated very low on the agenda. In fact, despite public works - the open drains were finally put underground in 1867, removing the most flagrant health-hazard on the Flat - living conditions actually worsened as time passed.43

Noxious industries like tanning and brewing polluted air and river. Population density was increasing, and health was no better for the malnourished and ill-sheltered poor. Wooden shacks which were new in 1854, were now dilapidated and crumbling. The Observer reported in 1875, 'there are some two thousand two- or three-roomed wooden shanties in all stages of decay, in which are immured families large enough for houses twice the size.' Common complaints were of water lying under the floor; of floors resting directly on the earth; bad ventilation; lack of water supply; and inadequate earth closets.44 Yet these houses were tenanted by people glad to have any sort of roof over their heads.

42 Barrett ibid p 140.
43 Ibid p 65 and others.
44 Ibid.
Empty blocks were mostly built on by the 1880s, so open space for children was no longer available. Even the new housing was of poor quality. In the '80s, detached wooden shacks were being demolished and rows of shoddily ill-constructed terrace houses - four houses in the place of two - were built. They were rented out by mainly absentee landlords. As soon as anyone made good, he or she left the area, to be replaced by new unfortunates driven out of more affluent suburbs by poverty. Thus, prevailing conditions and the actions of exploiters - crude builders like the Slater brothers - conspired to fix and even worsen the lot of the poor. 45

John Ivey knew well what poverty was; when he applied for the position of missionary, he was 53 years old and unemployed, and he owed £20 to a Spencer Street chemist for medicines for his sick wife. He still had two children to support. 46 He was afflicted by failing eyesight, further disqualifying him from all sorts of employment, especially his own trade of house-painting. Employment by the MCM was a crucial stroke of good fortune to him, then. The Journal which survives him dates from November 1864 until November 1869, but Ivey laboured on in Collingwood, from his home in Cambridge Street, until his death in 1896, aged 86. 'Even in the wanderings of the deathbed, [Collingwood people]...and their wants were often on his lips, showing how near his heart they were.' 47

Ivey's district was substantially the same as Greathead's; its boundaries were Wellington Street, Simpsons Road, the Yarra, and Vere Street. His Journal conveys a powerful impression of intense anxiety and an unsettled irritable response to life on the Flat. New and older immigrants alike were still blindly struggling with the experience of uprooting themselves from an ordered society and wandering into an antipodean chaos. Their imaginations had failed to prepare them for the experience. Many yearned for

46 MCM Minutes 27 April, 22 & 26 December 1862.
'Home', and suffered acutely from a sense of displacement, cut off from family and familiar places, and the support and stability they might offer. 'I am pleased to see you' said one woman to Ivey, 'but for such visits I don't know what I should do in this colony - with no relatives - and unknown to Christian friends.' Ivey was in the same situation, having left all in his 50s to try the new land. In the pages of his Journal, the bitterness at the golden dream gone awry strikes out at the reader. To new immigrants, still arriving in the suburb in a state of shocked horror at the hostility of the land they had entered on so hopefully, Ivey offered this uncompromising advice:

if unsuccessful to trust in God's providence, and if successful to be provident - as trial and vicissitude are incidental to colonial life. 19 December 1865.

Desirable social patterns were still as far from being established as in Greathead's day, and Ivey followed the former missionary's concern for children's education. He was constantly on the hunt for boys and girls who might be enrolled at the local Ragged Schools. To parents, he enforced the importance and duty of our persevering in Home and School training as the most likely means of counteracting the evil influences so abundant and so injurious around us. 2 November 1864.

In his view of the embattled state of Collingwood life, education was not so much a way up to better things, as an aid to basic survival. As part of this training, he conducted regular services and scripture lessons at the Rokeby and Sackville Street schools.

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48 Ivey's Journal 12 February 1866. See also 1 December 1865, 10 December 1866. The most vivid and distressing passages of Joseph Greathead's Journal of his voyage to Australia ibid show how disenchantment with the process of migration was well begun, while still at sea and under the rigours of seasickness and gales. His wife especially was constantly in tears, and daily reciting a litany of the names of dear ones left behind. On 24 April her grief made Greathead 'sincerely wish she had never come'. On 3 May, 'Mother still very poorly, she is no society at all, sits moping and quiet, or weeping which depresses and quite unmans me.' By 15 June, he was in the same state; 'my mind is much exercised in pondering over absent loved ones, how we long to know of the welfare of our Dear William and Sarah', their eldest children.

49 Ivey's Journal 15 and 24 November 1864.
Ivey never met Greathead, but his sense of Collingwood as a spawning bed of vices, and of men and women so careworn or vicious as to be unable properly to direct their children’s growth, matches Greathead’s 1855 conclusions. Many parents agreed with their assessment. One woman ‘deeply deplored the present state of the young around’ and was fearful for her own children - ‘Neighbours are unsuitable companions low rent fixing her there.’

Ivey was prepared to take action for the benefit of children where he could, even to the extent of trying to get rid of people he judged to be of pernicious influence.

Pleased to record that my Efforts had been the means of removing a most disreputable Character who had been the Instrument of much evil among the Juvenile portion of the neighbourhod - from which she is now expelled. 16 September 1868.

But by now, children of the early generation of Collingwood were in all sorts of trouble. Sons and daughters were in gaol, or on the streets, and causing heartache to their parents. The suburb was producing young people who were reckless and criminal, and parents confided their anxieties about them to Ivey, as they might have to their own fathers. Ivey’s white hair, slow and dignified deportment and partial blindness commended him to mothers as a benevolent patriarch.

The bulk of Ivey’s difficult cases were alcoholic men and women, battered and deserted wives, widows and the helpless elderly. He struggled hard to support and help, but his advice to wives of drunken husbands is pitiful in its impotence. He urged prayer and the Pledge Book; encouraged one wife ‘to try kindness with him - the terror of Human Law has no effect’; ‘we must hope on’, he told another. Wives were grateful for any respite. One

50 Ibid 8 November 1864.


52 Ibid 11 November 1864.

53 Ibid 24 November 1864.
was 'truly thankful for the persevering efforts made - the past nine months have been the happiest for many years to Her.'\textsuperscript{54} But more commonly, Ivey's entries have the despair of this one:

Consoled with two poor oppressed Women in domestic life - and one for many years - driven almost to desperation by it - I urged them to make God their refuge - no human aid could deliver them - and to struggle on for the sake of their children - whose ruin without them was certain. 12 October 1865. [Ivey's emphases]

It is an indictment of his society that there was indeed no socially legitimate 'human aid' that these women could seek. For women to leave such husbands when they had no economic or other supportive resources was only to replace one nightmare with another.

It never occurred to Ivey - or indeed to any of the missionaries - that a society which permitted such ill-treatment of women, may have been fundamentally flawed. He could not see that if, for instance, working women were more justly paid, their sufferings would be greatly reduced, and there would be some viable alternative to dependence on brutal husbands. He did not question the propriety of a charity system which required virtual destitution before meagre assistance was offered. He could not conceive of a satisfactory life for women independent of men or the traditional family model. All he could see was moral failure in husbands in deserting their wives, or taking to drink. All he could do was sympathise and encourage.

Alcoholics sought Ivey's help, realising the extent to which they required strong constant encouragement to give up drinking. One temporary abstainer 'begged I would see him to encourage him.' Ivey lent him books to read, and painted happy pictures of family life if he could keep free of alcohol, and urged him 'not to trust himself, but, seek Divine Strength to help him.'\textsuperscript{55} Some few people did succeed in freeing themselves from addiction; most did not. Ivey was even prepared to call in the Police, to have neglected children of drunkards removed from their parents and

\textsuperscript{54} \textit{Ibid} 7 October 1865.

\textsuperscript{55} \textit{Ibid} 4 January 1865. See also 27 September, 4, 5, 6, 7 & 9 October 1865.
surroundings and thus 'rescued from the pathway of evil'.

Alarming records of suicidal and insane people dot Ivey’s Journal; the by-products of the dreadful and often unendurable struggles of people to live, or of shames too great to bear. The helpless elderly could be carried to Hospital, or admission sought for them in the Benevolent Asylum. In a young society, the traditional care of the old by their younger families was not to be expected. Often there was no family, or in the disintegration so common in colonial families, members had permanently lost touch with each other.

Illness was particularly hard on Collingwood families. Ivey always tried to turn the loss of children into a time of hope for parents, by assuring them of their child’s immortality, while encouraging them to turn to Christ. He did not see his using a child’s death to press the claims of religion, as exploitative, although others might not agree. Thus in January 1865, he mentions

many pleasing and impressive conversations today - suggested by unusual mortality of children in neighbourhood.

23 January 1865.

During the measles epidemic of December 1866, Ivey himself caught the disease; after his recovery, he visited afflicted families. He was ‘most thankfully received as they said scarcely anyone came to cheer them.’

Ivey’s own general health was poor, and he suffered bouts of that common illness on the Flat, ‘inflammation of the bowels’. The lot of others was worse:

have been several times today to cheer and encourage Mrs Pembridge with four children ill - three of whom are in a most dangerous state and but little hope of living - tried to induce a spirit of resignation and to pray for grace to trust them in the Hand of God. ...Since writing two dear children died...and another going fast I fear. 30 April 1867 [Ivey’s emphases]

56 Ibid 24 March 1865.
57 Ibid 27 & 30 January, 1 December 1865.
58 Ibid 10 December 1865. Ivey was still visiting the sick on 27 December.
59 Ibid see for example 18 - 26 February 1867.
Ivey put his greatest efforts into the nurture of dying people and their families; it was a great evangelical tradition to work for a good death, and a death-bed conversion was to him the greatest triumph of any missionary; such a soul assuredly was saved. He was summoned at midnight one night to Mrs Humphries' bedside, and found her 'afraid to go to sleep lest she should be lost'. Ivey spoke to her of Christ and urged her to believe in His saving promise. When he left she said 'she now felt happy in trusting Him.' Next morning Ivey rushed round to see her, and found her sinking fast in Death. But that she had been calm and composed ever since I left...I prayed with her with great effort she said I am so thankful to you for all your trouble - All terror of Death was now gone - and shortly after, she informed her sister, that She should soon lie in Heaven - and tried to tell them someone was come for her and fell asleep in Jesus. 31 March 1865. [Ivey's emphasis]

'Consoled', 'remonstrated': in recounting his dealings with Collingwood residents, Ivey uses these words most frequently, and they reflect his philosophy of visitation. Those suffering required and were given consolation; those engaging in destructive negative behaviour required to be, and were remonstrated with urgently and vigorously. Since he had little in a practical sense to offer, it was all the more important to hearten and inspire people. If they would not accept God, at least wise words about the consequences of their behaviour might reach home, or support and encouragement in an impossible situation might strengthen and comfort.

We are reminded forcibly that the missionary's main armament was his own language, and the aura of his presence. Ivey used his benign elderliness, and his sense of occasion to work on people for the Lord, but the only thing he knew well, or thought about, was the Bible and contemporary interpretation of it. He had no skill at thinking about social problems, or suggesting anything but the simplest solutions.

Between 1871 and 1893, factories in Collingwood increased in number

60 Ibid 30 March 1865.
from 36 to 120, and there was a tenfold increase in horsepower used.\textsuperscript{61} Shoe-making had been important since the 1860s, supported by the river-side tanneries; by the 1880s, textile factories joined shoe factories in importance. The revolting tannery smells united with factory smoke to foul Collingwood air. Wastes poured into the turgid Yarra. Breweries also thrived in the 1880s; there were four huge ones by 1893.\textsuperscript{62} The last substantial open spaces - the land over the enclosed drains, and the 86 acres of Dight’s Paddock - had been sold and subdivided for houses by the 1890s, except for an area to become a League football ground.\textsuperscript{63}

By now Collingwood was recognized in Melbourne as a repository of the poor. It was becoming a target for both journalistic exposes on the poor, slums, vice etc\textsuperscript{64} and the benevolent attentions of evangelicals and charity workers. Apart from the MCM and local church missions, the two most prominent and effective workers in the city were the Rev Cherbury and the ubiquitous Dr Singleton. The former and his wife ran a mission, and had founded the Home of Hope for orphaned or neglected children, and later, the Pilgrim’s Rest, a home for the frail elderly. Singleton set up the Free Medical Dispensary in 1868, and in 1877, its adjunct, the Mission Hall, in Wellington Street. In opening the latter, Singleton was years ahead of the MCM. His own description of the life of the Mission Hall, gives an idea of the range of its influence:

The hall, capable of holding 400 people, was built and opened... free of debt...
1. A prayer meeting was and is still held in the hall at seven o’clock on Sunday morning [for the workers] to pray for the Churches, their own families, and unconverted around.
2. A children’s church is held at eleven o’clock a.m., with frequent singing the Gospel, and short suitable addresses - more or less of a catechitical kind - being given, about 300

\textsuperscript{61} Barrett \textit{ibid} p 157.
\textsuperscript{62} Ibid p 158.
\textsuperscript{63} Ibid pp 143, 155-6.
\textsuperscript{64} ‘The Vagabond’s’ exposes date mainly from the 1870s. Comment is made in the Presbyterian Monthly Messenger February 1883, of ‘several startling articles on "The Back Slums"’ which had just appeared in the Argus.
Dr. Singleton's Homes, 18-20 Islington St., Collingwood,

Mr. and Mrs. C. M. Cherbury, Founders of the Pilgrims' Rest, Fairfield Park

City Mission Record 1 July 1927.
children attending...

3. Sunday School...having over 150 children, collected from the neighbourhood, and Bible classes in the afternoon. One of these classes has above twenty-five girls from twelve to eighteen years of age, and is conducted by a devoted Christian lady with very blessed results...; a class of young children numbering about 40, is conducted on the infant school plan most successfully.

4. A Bible-class for adults is also conducted, which has furnished many workers, such as tract visitors, Sunday-school teachers, assistants at the outdoor services, or visitors of the sick.

5. Evangelistic services, Sunday and Tuesday evenings, by a band of devoted Christian workers. These meetings have been greatly blessed by God in the reclamation of a large number, and the saving conversion of many; these assisted by a Christian choir, hold open-air meetings also, and distribute tracts, and are known as "The Working Band".

6. On Friday evenings, Mrs Baeyertz, the converted Jewess, has held crowded meetings from the first opening of the hall. A year ago an addition was made so as to accommodate 600 persons, and it has been frequently so crowded that the aisles have been filled...

A large number have from time to time become total abstainers and a Society conducted on the principles of the Gospel formed, having its meetings for adults on Monday evenings, and a Band of Hope on Wednesday evenings [to promote temperance in children]; both of these are well attended.

The Working Band of Good Templars occupy the hall on Thursday evenings. There are three separate choirs and players of the harmonium...A foundation has been made for a Dorcas Society, to get clothing, especially for the sick poor, and it is hoped soon to hold a flower show in the hall, in order to cultivate a taste for cottage and window gardening....

Since the hall has been opened, two tea-meetings, with music etc, have been held, to which the aged (over sixty) were invited...

All working in this hive of industry are volunteers...

Mr Henry Cooke and myself give a general supervision of the above...

Brethren, pray for us. John Singleton.65

John Ivey was a major conduit by which people were directed to the Mission Hall community. It claimed to nurture self-help and moral strength, and endorsed those habits of industriousness, temperance, frugality and thrift which respectable poor families imposed on themselves in order to avert the worst threats of poverty. Its spiritual message provided a description of life - and death - by which those who believed in it could make some sense of their lives, and made even their deaths more hopeful.

Such, at least, were the aims of Singleton, his workers and Ivey.

65 A letter in the Southern Cross 8 June 1878.
Nevertheless, it was one of the very few local centres where poor people could gather, in Collingwood. It provided a place where people could meet each other, make and nurture friendships, support and help each other. It offered many material benefits: food, clothing, entertainment, physical recreation, children's clubs, and so on.

But still poverty thrived. Women were still grossly underpaid for their labour, and discriminated against as before. Men suffered the discipline of the fluctuating labour market, and could expect to be out of work for at least a few weeks every year as seasonal influences called for, and then dispensed with, their labour. The situation was particularly bad in the last years of the 1870s. In May 1878, a mass meeting of Collingwood unemployed was held, attended by Mr Berry, the Chief Secretary. At least the journalist who reported it went away pleased. 'Happily,' he reported, 'it was evident that our artisans do not want...to become pensioners of the State. ...All they say is...a very large number of men from no fault of theirs are out of work.'

66 Southern Cross 25 May 1878.

67 MCM Minutes 19 February 1866, 7 July 1868.

Indeed, the winter of 1879 provided a bitter foretaste of what was to come in the 1890s, and to many more than the usual poor.

Andrew Mason 1873-1885

When he began work in Collingwood, Andrew Mason was already a highly experienced missionary. He had worked for the MCM from 1866 to 1868 in Richmond, Prahran and the City, then transferred to country work for Mr Learmonth to try and improve his health. He was reappointed to
Collingwood in 1873.

He was himself a Collingwood resident, and married his second wife in MCM Secretary Rev Robert Hamilton's Fitzroy church in 1865 when he was 33 years old. Hamilton probably encouraged him to take up missionary work, and give up carpentry.

Mason moved into a scene familiar to John Ivey. The litany of needy cases in May 1879 did not augur well for the coming winter:

22 May. Mrs Stobbs. A poor old widow who is lame and very destitute. I took a pair of blankets to her which I got from a Lady in South Yarra. She was very thankful for them.

Mrs Sturrock in Johnston Street, an old woman. She is very ill, apparently dying, & she is very poor & not well attended to. She asked me to go to Dr Singleton & ask him to visit her. I did so & he promised to go & visit her the following day.

27 May. Four children in an old house in Gold Street, their Mother died in Melbourne Hospital last week & their Step Father has left them quite destitute.

28 May. Mrs Hogets deserted by her husband left with two children quite destitute. As she is not able to work I advised her to go to the Immigrants Home.

30 May. I went to see the four little girls in the old house in Gold Street as the Father had not returned to them and they had been depending on the neighbours for food for a whole week. I took them before the Magistrates at the Police Court, and they were sent to the Industrial Schools.

Mrs Bell in a delicate state of health with four children quite destitute. The Father went away to Sydney some time ago. And he has not sent any money to them. I went to the Lady for the district to ask her to visit them.

But as always, with winter approaching, this already grim scene became even more desperate, with the addition of families of unemployed men. The month of July was non-stop work for Mason, as he sought aid for starving, poorly dressed freezing families. He became an almost full-time assistant to the Relief Committee set up to cope with the need. He mentions directly in his Journal seventy-five families for whom he 'signed a paper' to qualify them for aid by the Relief Committee in the month of July. He was 'finding anything from three to nine utterly destitute families every working day.

Another worsening social problem also shows up in Mason's Journal for 1879: the growth in the numbers of aged people requiring care. The mature adults who poured into the colony for the gold rush in the 1850s, had become the old people of the 1880s. The failure of Melbourne society
adequately to care for these men and women in destitute old age becomes evident with each of Mason’s entries. For example, Mason first tried to get the Gordon couple into the Benevolent Asylum on 11 September, but only after seven visits and three months did he finally get them admitted.\(^{68}\) It was in response to this need that the Rev Cherbury founded the Pilgrim’s Rest in Fairfield and Dr Singleton his Homes for the aged in Islington Street Collingwood.\(^{69}\)

Mason worked on in Collingwood until 1885, then his own family was plunged into a catastrophic breakdown, of the sort that he had been encountering weekly in his work. He became seriously ill, and it soon became evident that he would not recover. The illness involved some sort of mental derangement and caused great emotional and financial distress to his family. Eventually he was sent to the Yarra Bend Asylum. An MCM committee member moved, in 1887, that £12 be sent to his wife, but the Mission simply did not have the money. Mason died in the Asylum in June 1888, of heart disease, aged 57. His widow was sent £5 and condolences by the Committee. What happened to her thereafter is unknown.\(^{70}\)

**Charles Barber 1888–1891**

In employing Charles Barber to undertake the major part of Collingwood work in 1888, both the MCM and the people of Collingwood were short-changed. For Barber was an ambitious, stupid and conceited man, who set out to use church work as a way to better himself, and cut a figure among his own class.

At thirty, he was one of the youngest missionaries ever appointed. He had a wife and four children, and was a carpenter by trade, although he had

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\(^{68}\) Mason’s *Journal* 11, 16, 17, 25 September, 20, 27, 29 November 1879.

\(^{69}\) *City Mission Record* 1 April, 1 May 1929.

\(^{70}\) *MCM Minutes* 22 February, 29 March 1887, 26 June 1888.
worked as a missionary in the Glebe in Sydney, for the Church of England. 71 His work in Collingwood did not live up to expectations. In 1889, the MCM made tentative moves towards working from Mission Halls, and rented such a hall in Collingwood. Barber did not put in the hard work required to establish it, and told the committee it would not work; they let the plan lapse. Another decade was to pass before hall work was established. Early in 1891, charges of misbehaviour were levelled at him, and he was dismissed. Foolishly, he decided to bring charges against the committee for wrongful dismissal; the case came to court in June 1891, was fully reported, and caused something of a sensation. 72

In court, Barber revealed himself as a man of boundless vanity and arrogance, whose delight was to impress women and lord it over them. His contempt for them also rises to the surface like a bad smell. He had previously worked for the Salvation Army in Sydney and had been sacked for 'being too familiar with girls outside the army, in a manner unbecoming to [his] position.' 73 'Weren't you charged with blackening your wife's eye?' demanded the Defence Counsel. 'Never by my wife,' countered Barber. She had died in childbirth shortly after Barber was hired by the MCM; two months later Barber was engaged to another girl. Using his MCM contacts, he had his children admitted to the Orphan Asylum. 74

Barber had been accused of indecently assaulting a young servant in the house of Miss Sutherland, the lady in charge of the Scots Church Children's Aid Society. Barber was in the habit of visiting Miss Sutherland and her friend Mrs Armour in their home, and the servant, Ruth Milner aged 18, had fallen in love with Barber. There had been talk of marriage; Barber had

71 Ibid 25 September 1888, and Age 25 June 1891. Barber was selected from 19 candidates; he was clearly a plausible man.

72 Ibid 26 February, 28 August 1889; 23 March, 8, 20, 28 April 1891. The Age, Argus and Daily Telegraph reported the case in great detail 24-27 June 1891.

73 Argus 25 June 1891.

74 Ibid and Daily Telegraph 25 June 1891.
given her a photograph of himself; then followed 'the disgraceful bathroom incident'75, which, alleged Milner, began with Barber ‘chirping with his lips, apparently inviting her to kiss him.’76 Next day, Milner visited Barber in his own home, where he showed her his dead wife’s clothes and again attempted improprieties. Milner testified that she thought Barber was going to marry the Matron of the Orphanage where his children were lodged, and that he also boasted that Miss Sutherland was cherishing ‘an ardent affection for him.’77 Barber tried to convince the court that Milner was the jealous instigator, and he the innocent victim, of a plot to blacken his name, but was caught out in several lies, and the MCM’s dismissal of him was upheld.

Barber was literally out of his class in his dealings both with charitable ladies, and Milner, whom he regarded as a rather simple-minded girl. Miss Sutherland was appalled at the 'low language' he and Milner used to discuss their behaviour, and regarded Barber as 'an audacious traitor' and a 'mean smug wretch'.78 The Secretary of the MCM, the Rev Steggall, showed himself totally bemused by the sexual behaviour of members of the lower classes; 'I can hardly believe it possible that any man would have done such a thing.'79

Barber was ruined by this case. He could not get a job - in evidence he claimed already to have tried without success for jobs with another mission, as a tea merchant, as a carpenter, and as Health Inspector of Flemington80 - and by 1900, was describing himself as 'labourer.'81

75 Argus 25 June 1891.
76 Ibid 27 June 1891.
77 Daily Telegraph 25 June 1891.
78 Ibid, and Argus 27 June 1891.
79 Age 26 June 1891.
80 Ibid 25 June 1891.
81 On his daughter’s death certificate, 13 March 1900. Barber had remarried less than two months after the court case in 1891; she was a domestic
The hiring of Barber by the MCM shows how easily an ambitious and unscrupulous man could attach himself to the coat-tails of religion and charity for his own ends. 'Every right-thinking person,' editorialized the Southern Cross after the case was over, 'will rejoice that the City Mission Committee has emerged triumphantly from its recent severe trial. If the result had been otherwise, prudent men would have found it necessary to think twice before assuming any responsibility at all in connection with philanthropic enterprises.'

The MCM had emerged, but it was far from 'triumphant'; it was at the brink of a terrible depression, its funds were grossly depleted, and the work in Collingwood, perhaps the neediest suburb of all, was in disarray. In the worst years of deprivation, 1892-3, there was no worker there at all. In 1894 the energetic William Shepherd was transferred there, to be replaced in 1896 by Miss McEwen. Her successor, in 1898, was Miss Elizabeth Young.

Elizabeth Young 1898-1907 (see photograph following p 84)

Miss Young, the daughter of an Irish cooper, had already served an apprenticeship in Christian charity work. She was a worker for another of Dr Singleton's Collingwood charities, the Free Breakfast Movement. The Doctor himself had died in 1891, but his daughters and committees were continuing his work. She was the third Sister appointed by the MCM, and went first to work with Sister Aitcheson in Fitzroy. Her employment was insecure, to say the least. In mid-1900 it looked as if the MCM would not be able to pay her meagre wages of £1 per week, and she worked on unpaid for weeks at a time.

82 Southern Cross 3 July 1891.

83 MCM Minutes 25 August 1898, 5 April 1900, 7 March 1901. City Mission Record obituary 1 January 1931.
She was quickly transferred to Collingwood where 'she was soon able to pick up the trail of the visitation work of the late John Ivey'. Her main concern lay with mothers and girls, and she hunted diligently for a room or hall where she could begin meetings for these. This fitted well with the new MCM policy of developing hall work. By 1900, there were several halls associated with churches and missions in the suburb; Sister Young hired a room in the Tabernacle in Sackville Street for her Mothers' Meeting in mid-1900. In the first year, aggregate attendance was 560. She reported, The meetings had proved to be times of quiet rest for tired workers in the middle of the week, when they not only had a pleasant time together, but also enjoyed a cup of tea.

Sister Young also opened a winter savings fund for the mothers, for blankets, sheets, firewood and so on. In the first year £8 10s was deposited, money which she felt would not otherwise have been saved by hard-pressed women. In the second year, £27 0s 10d was raised, supplemented by a donation of 10s by the Gas Company to offset the cost of coke. Sister Young reported 'considerable interest' in this fund by Collingwood women. She was aware that this interest did not necessarily extend to things religious, but was untroubled.

For the past six weeks our average attendance at the Mothers' Meeting has been over 80 mothers. We know that many come for the cup of tea; neither do I blame them, for it is often to them the first cup of tea that day....The mothers with the little ones have my first attention with the scones, especially those I know so well. Coming to one whose baby was crying, I asked what was wrong. "She is hungry, sister," and the big tears ran down her cheeks and the mothers around her shed tears too. I gave the little one a scone and the poor mother was just as hungry.

By August 1906, the winter fund was £46. The Mothers' Meeting was becoming an important practical and emotional support to a particularly embattled

84 City Mission Record ibid.
85 Ibid 12 August 1901.
86 Ibid.
87 Ibid 12 July 1902.
88 Ibid 12 September 1905.
sector of Collingwood society.

In 1903, Sister Young moved her meeting to the Singleton Mission Hall in Wellington Street, using it also for a Girls' Club. The Club, for girls working in local factories and businesses, provided a pleasant evening and taught 'the art of cutting and making garments'. Girls paid ld a week for material. Sister Young became increasingly concerned at the demands made on these girls:

As the cold weather advanced it was almost impossible for them to sew, and they would often put down their work to rub their hands together to make them warm, and then bravely go on with their work. I wondered what I could do to make them more comfortable, and arranged to give them a tea before the work was commenced. Now the girls come straight from the factory and plenty of warm tea and sandwiches are ready for them, and when all are seated one of the girls stands up, while the others bow their heads, and very reverently says the grace. Then there is a wonderful quietness for about ten minutes, after which the pleasant chatter begins. A visitor remarked when they came in, "How tired they look," but that quickly disappears, and they are soon ready for their sewing with cheerful, bright and happy spirits.

It was not unusual for these girls, many in their early teens, to have burdensome family responsibilities, which were making severe inroads into their health and youth. Sister Young noted in January 1905,

At this time of year our girls work late and early, and are very wearied...While chatting with a group of them...[one] girl, aged fifteen, looked up at me with such a sad face, and said, "things are bad at our house. I am the only one earning anything, and that is only 2s 6d a week." In 1905, the MCM achieved the breakthrough it had been waiting for to further the work in Collingwood: the Hornbrook Ragged Schools Association offered their now-unused school in Sydney Street to the MCM almost rent-free. By June, alterations had doubled its size, to now seat 200. There was a smaller room with a fireplace and cupboards, and another outside with a 'fixed copper and other useful appliances.' At its opening, the Mayor of

89 Ibid 12 May 1904.
90 Ibid 12 August 1904.
91 Ibid 12 January 1905.
92 MCM Minutes April 1905
Collingwood, Cr Rains, lauded Sister Young, saying 'he had been glad to use her for dispensing charity at his disposal.' 93

Sister Young and her helpers transferred their meetings to the Hornbrook Hall. Now that there was a permanent base, other programmes could be started. First came a Sunday School, and the organization of Christmas picnics and outings. 94 The annual anniversary of Sister Young's work in the suburb - held with some pomp (and a display of gymnastics by the new Boys' Club) in the Collingwood Town Hall - testified to the increasingly formalized nature of the work and its impact on the upper end of Collingwood society, several of whom were now workers for Sister Young. The weekly meetings were visited by groups from other suburban churches. The Clifton Hill Presbyterian Church (consisting largely of former Collingwood residents who had moved out to the rather more salubrious neighbouring suburb), gave the Girls' Club a pleasant evening of 'singing, recitations and club swinging, and a plentiful supply of good things for supper.' 95

Sister Young still maintained her house-to-house visitation, and was constantly at the service of desperate and needy people, who sought her out at her home in Vere Street at all hours of the day and night, starving, poorly clad, sick, despairing. It is the detailed depiction of her contacts with the people she served that fill her reports in the City Mission Record.

Yet the devoted Sister Young resigned from MCM service early in 1907. It is not clear what her precise reasons were; it was certainly a shock to the MCM committee. But undoubtedly, confusion in the charitable scene in Collingwood played a significant part. In September 1905, Sister Young complained of 'unnecessary interference on the part of the Wesleyan Mission'

93 City Mission Record 12 August 1905.
94 Ibid 12 January 1906.
95 Ibid 12 August 1906.
in her work, and an approach to that group was made about ‘overlapping’. 96 After Sister Young’s sudden resignation in February 1907, Sister Lillian Dickson was put in to Collingwood to hold the fort until a permanent appointment could be made. In May she reported ‘the results of the united efforts of the different workers in Collingwood to deal systematically with visiting and distributing charity.’ 97 Clearly, demarcation disputes among charity workers had grown: Collingwood had long been popular as a venue for Christian charitable activity, and the MCM’s sudden change of form in the area may have given rise to disputes.

Collingwood’s poor were not slow to take advantage of the plethora of charitable activists. Sister Dickson presented an extensive report of the work in Collingwood in June 1907, which dealt with ‘the Mother’s Meeting; the use made of the Savings Bank; the large amounts of overlapping in visitation; the work of the Girls’ Friendly Society and the general condition of things in Collingwood.’ After discussion, the Committee decided that women should not be able to join more than one Mothers’ Meeting or fund, that a voluntary instructress be sought for the GFS, and that the date of the Annual Tea be changed so as not to clash with a rival body’s function. 98 Clearly, the charitable scene was fraught with uncharitable conflicts between the workers, a situation made the most of by their clientele. It was this state of affairs, plus declining attendances, which made the committee decide in November to reduce the scale of work in Collingwood, and send Sister Dickson back to work in Richmond. 99 William Shepherd agreed yet again to take over temporarily in Collingwood, where he was soon ‘working vigorously’ to revive interest in the Mission. 100

96 MCM Minutes 14 September 1905.
97 Ibid 7 March 1907.
98 Ibid 4 June 1907.
99 Ibid 8 November 1907.
100 Ibid 3 December 1907, 4 February 1908.
Shepherd found, to his dismay, that the MCM had been pushed aside by other better-supported charitable groups, which irritatingly, had adopted MCM techniques in their work. 'We have very few local helps,' he complained, 'as our work is not much known, and nearly all the local churches have Sisters, who are helped by their respective churches.' He concluded rather bitterly, 'We are working outside the camp, seeking to save the lost. At our meetings we have no collections, and our seats are all free.' 101 He was very much of the opinion that the MCM had been pushed aside from the decent poor, and left only with the dregs of the population ignored by the other charities. Even the new Hall, useful gift though it was, was in an out-of-the-way back street.

Shepherd got to work to build up substantial support for his work. The Kew Baptist Church was slowly recruited. They sent Harvest Festival fruit, vegetables and corn to him to distribute at his own Harvest Service. The huge numbers trying to get into the Hall required the ruthless services of a doorkeeper, a reformed alcoholic. After the service, the food was distributed, augmented by cases of fruit and vegetables from other donors. One senses the desperate pressure of needy poor people to get something from this extravagantly abundant collection of foodstuffs. 102 As 1910 progressed, Kew women virtually took charge of the running of the Mothers' Meeting, while their church sewing group kept a constant stream of new clothes coming from their machines. 103 'We have had a big fight,' reported Shepherd in May, 'but it looks as if we had turned the corner. Hallelujah!' 104

Shepherd also tried to plug a gap in the work by beginning a Men's

101 City Mission Record 12 June 1909.
103 Ibid 12 May, 12 June, 12 August 1910.
104 Ibid 12 May 1910.
Meeting in mid-1909, at which coffee and sandwiches were served, and, in 1911, an adult Bible Class. He also worked to improve the flow of food into the homes of the very poor; a soup kitchen operated every winter, and several farming communities, notably Winniam and Nhill, sent frequent food parcels. The 'drinking problem' was addressed through the formation of an adult Gospel Temperance Society and its juvenile adjunct, a Band of Hope. In the midst of all this he also raised funds to repair the old and leaking hall. Clearly, the more practical support services Shepherd could provide, the more 'competitive' the MCM would be in Collingwood in attracting a clientele, but the more it fixed that clientele amongst the very poor.

In 1912, a swap of personnel was made; Shepherd was sent to Port Melbourne and Sisters Ikin and Burns to Collingwood, in an effort to rejuvenate the work in both areas. But there was evidently a feeling on the committee that work run by Sisters did not have the full impact they desired, and that a male missionary should be appointed to each district 'in view of the importance of winning men from the evil of their ways.' In 1914, therefore, the new missionary Mr R Mason was given oversight of Collingwood work.

The state of the poor in Collingwood remained grim throughout the period 1854-1914; the response of evangelical charitable groups became increasingly complex as various groups rallied to the cause, adopted each other’s ideas and techniques and worked independently to suit themselves.

107 Ibid 12 December 1913.
109 Ibid 6 February 1912.
110 Ibid 1 April 1913.
111 Ibid 5 May 1914.
It is an irony that the MCM, the longest worker in the field, should be pushed aside by later comers, and be forced to fight for a minor place in the charitable scene. Yet the weaknesses of the Mission are fully revealed in a survey of the work in Collingwood. It depended profoundly on the personal powers of its missionaries, and their strengths and weaknesses inevitably mark their work. At vital times, even their efforts were undermined by the poverty of the MCM, which caused work to cease entirely in the area. Thus, any continuity was fortuitous; at each change of personnel, the work virtually began again. Lessons learnt by missionaries were learnt afresh by their successors. The consequence of the discontinuous presence of the Mission was that no real understanding of the nature of poverty, and its connection with the structure of society, ever penetrated the minds of missionaries and committee members. Yet here, more than anywhere else in Melbourne, the extent of poverty made pure evangelism almost impossible. The missionaries' usefulness in the suburb consisted in their multitudinous small acts of kindness, repeated endlessly from the time of Joseph Greathead to the Mission Hall era. These small deeds soothed some social lacerations, while the deep-seated social pathology that created poverty went unrecognized.
CHAPTER 7

TWO DISTRICTS OF THE CM:

2 PRAHRAN

Weather wet but I & another brother in Christ stormed a house of Sin in Albert st. trusting in the Living God & we did not leave until three of them professed to accept salvation...[sic]
Missionary William Shepherd Journal
24 April 1882

I thank God for inclining the Committee to raise the missionaries’ salaries. The Lord has made up to me what I sacrificed in salary in giving up the business I was in: And, what is still better He has given me improved health since I have been in His work altogether. Better still, He has given me precious souls for Jesus.
Missionary William Hall Journal
23 July 1884

I thank God for fourteen years of City Mission work...
Ibid 1 March 1898

Being the first day of the 58th year of the City Mission I asked God for a token for good, and, praise His Name, He led me to a precious soul.
Ibid 1 July 1912

At first sight, Prahran was an unlikely venue for a City Mission. The municipality included two of the plushest neighbourhoods in the metropolis - Toorak and South Yarra - and perhaps the most thriving retail centre outside the central business district itself. Its political destinies were guided by the merchants and real estate developers of Chapel Street, High Street and Commercial Road who projected a confident and prosperous image of the place. These men lived in substantial comfort on South Yarra Hill, their villas interspersed with the town houses of wealthy pastoralists. Prahran was no
Collingwood, despite some similarities. Certainly, the prestigious parts of
the suburb were high on the ridge above the Yarra River, while the poorer
parts were low-lying, clustering around the railway line, a major asset to
the suburb from 1869. As late as 1884, when the municipality contained 28
factories and a host of smaller bootmaking, saddlery and other workshops, an
Argus journalist claimed that the city was 'destitute of back slums' and
that 'very few artisans or "working men" reside in Prahran, the land and the
cottages there being, as a rule, too dear for those classes.' 1 Alexander
Sutherland, who visited the district in 1888, noted that it was 'a more
plebeian district' than Toorak, but 'with every sign of comfort in the long
rows of cottages and terraced houses, each with its little plot of ground in
front.' 2

Prahran did not develop major factory complexes as did Collingwood,
where manufacturers had a large docile pool of very poor workers to fill
their workforce. Prahran's working class population has been characterized
quite differently. T R Tholfsen argues the case for a strong presence of
self-employed artisans in small businesses (like saddlery and bootmaking),
with much more in common with middle class practices and ideals than those
of the working class, and thus more likely to accept middle-class leader-
ship. In this suburb, particularly, the notion of the 'sturdy independent
workman' could be purveyed with some pretensions to truth. 3

Yet this appearance of prosperity was somewhat misleading. Even in the
1860s and 1870s, when it still retained the freshness of a semi-rural
retreat, Prahran had its complement of poor people, as the MCM recognized
when it first placed Ebenezer Taylor there in 1864. His successor, Reuben
West 'visited on the plains of Prahran', where 'at the first house I saw an
old woman and her daughter...18 years of age, and the mother is very ill in

1 Argus 6 September 1884. See also G Curr 'Liberalism, Localism and Suburban
2 A Sutherland Victoria and its Metropolis Melbourne 1888, Vol 1 p 563.
3 Discussed in Curr, ibid p 150.
bed: they are very poor and have used the closet and surrounding fence for
firewood so that the house stands quite alone.4 On the outskirts of South
Yarra, he 'came across several lodges at park gates', and he gave tracts to
the gatekeepers.5 He never approached the opulent mansions at the end of the
drives, however.

As land prices soared during the 1880s, the poor were not driven from
Prahran, but merely squeezed into smaller quarters. Speculators and develop-
ers multiplied their gains by dividing their suburban estates into smaller
and smaller parcels.6 New courts and alleys bisected old subdivisions, and
comfortable villa allotments were sliced into pocket-handkerchief building
blocks. All along the valley below the salubrious heights of Toorak and
South Yarra, in narrow lanes behind the glittering shop-fronts of Chapel
Street and in jerry-built cottages pushed hard up against the railway line
in West Prahran, the back slums denied by casual observers were gradually
coming into being.

Through the Journals of Andrew Mason (1866-7), Reuben West (1870-1,
1876), William Shepherd (1881-3), and William Hall (1884-1900), we can
compose a clear portrait of Prahran's poor. They were mostly honest working
people who, for a variety of reasons, had lost their regular source of
income. As in Collingwood, many were widows and deserted wives, mostly with
young families; and elderly people. A small but significant number depended
upon a husband with a chronic illness or a disability which prevented him
working regularly. Less frequently, the alcoholism, insanity or improvid-
ence of one of its members dragged a family down. There is little evidence
that the poor were poor because they shirked hard work. Indeed, the over-
whelming impression is one of hard-working women - the missionaries met

4 Reuben West's Journal 12 August 1870.
5 Ibid 26 August 1870.

6 Whereas in 1873 the block bounded by Commercial Road, Chapel Street,
Toorak Road and Williams Road (an area of 158 acres), had a population of
1025, the block bounded by Malvern Road, Orrong Road, Toorak Road and
mainly women in their day-time visiting - stoically repeating an endless cycle of drudgery. Nor is there evidence that with the provision of charitable assistance the poor man would come to live on the expectations of easy handouts instead of relying on his own labours for his subsistence - a notion assiduously propagated by the Charity Organization Society.7 Charity did not prevent the struggle for existence; it merely made it more tolerable.

Since any family could become poor almost overnight through the death or illness of the breadwinner, the families aided by the missionaries were not necessarily concentrated in a particular part of West Prahran. If their poverty continued for very long, however, they were inevitably driven to house-sharing and to the cheapest house they could rent, which was likely to be found in one of the back alleys, rights of way and little warrens of streets tucked away behind the main streets, such as those in the northeastern elbow of the Punt Road - Commercial Road intersection. In the depressed 1890s, when poverty spread more widely, even hitherto self-sufficient workingmen's estates off Williams Road (Aberdeen Road, Bay View Street, Pridham Street) produced their crop of desperately needy families.

Throughout the period the poorest of the poor were found in the narrowest dead-end streets known as 'Place'. Here rents were lowest, houses shoddiest, and residents most demoralized. When Hall visited a house in Pakington Place on 9 May 1875, he found that 'there was so much dirt and squalor that an offensive odour was plainly noticeable at the door.' When a respectable family fell on hard times it inevitably gravitated to such places. So when her husband died in 1890, Mrs Robertson and her children vacated their home at 64 Spring Street, and 'were obliged to move into Pakington Place', where William Hall assisted them with 2s for urgently needed food.8

8 Ibid 26 April 1890.
An equally depressed neighbourhood was found just a few hundred yards away in Alma Place, Windsor. 'Quite a change has come over one spot which I used to visit', Hall remarked in September 1900:

This is Alma Place, which was otherwise known by the non-euphonic name of 'Tin Pot Alley'. There were some strange characters there, and some very drunken and depraved. They lived in very old-fashioned houses made of corrugated iron. They were old-fashioned and old, and veritable ovens in the summer, but they were homes for the poor. Now, what a change! people and houses have both disappeared! Thanks to the Metropolitan Board of Works, a great eye-sore has been removed, and a great improvement to this neighbourhood is now apparent. The small street which crosses the lower end of this alley has had most of its houses demolished. There were two standing, one of which is getting into a dilapidated condition; a good proportion of the fencing having been removed and stuffed broken window panes were visible. Still this forms a home for an aged widow woman who will not need it long.  

27 September 1890

The widow in question was Mrs Reid whom Hall had first encountered while her husband was still alive over a decade earlier. They were then already old and Mr Reid's frailty and ill-health prevented him earning more than a token income. To make matters more difficult, their daughter had died, leaving a son for the old couple to bring up. He was too much for them; he robbed his grandmother and ran away. He was found, and handed over to Mr Groom's institution for wayward boys in Brighton.9 By early 1890, Mr Reid was gravely ill. 'The poor old man was suffering terribly with cancer in his mouth,' Hall reported on 18 April. 'Between the tears of himself and devoted wife he said in the Scotch expression, (referring to Jesus), "I will lippen (trust) to him".' Hall was in the habit of mentioning the medical treatment his sick charges received, but in Reid's case he makes no mention of it and we may conclude that indeed he had none. Nor was he taken into a hospital; the fear of incurable and disfiguring diseases such as cancer made doctors reluctant to accept their victims.10 Spiritual consolation and friendly visits were all that Hall could offer, and all that the Reids apparently received. On 10 October the cancer was discharging from the old man's face,

9 Ibid 20 December 1889; 10 January 1890.

10 For further discussion of hospital policy in this area see S Swain 'The Victorian Charity Network in the 1890s' PhD thesis, University of Melbourne 1976, p 62.
and shortly thereafter he took to his bed and prepared to die. At the end of
the month he was still alive 'but in a terrible condition of body'.

Early in November Hall himself became seriously ill, and by the time he
resumed his journal the Reid's tragedy had been overwhelmed by one of his
own.

After illness of myself, and my dear little Leslie, who died on
22nd inst., started Mission work again....I miss my dear son very
much, but bow submissively to the Divine will. 28 November
1890.

Saw Mrs Reid of Alma Place. Her husband died the same night as my
dear little Leslie. 2 December 1890.

The old lady herself lived on alone in Alma Place for more than another deca-
ade. 'Mrs Reid', her visitor noted in 1894, '...keeps up in a wonderful way.
She is about 75, with a large stock of deep time furrows on her honest
Scotch face.' Living so long in a slum-environment, she appears neverthe-
less to have resisted the demoralization which, according to contemporary
urban investigators, inevitably went with it.

The economic insecurity of other poor folk forced them to be constantly
on the move. Between 1892 and 1900 Mrs Basterfield and her son changed their
lodgings at least seven times. These constant changes of address suggest
that she was frequently unable to pay the rent and had to move on. Hall,
with his occasional gifts of money and clothing, was one of her few allies
in a constant battle with poverty and ill-health. On 5 June 1894 he found
her 'still struggling with difficulties' and offered her 'a little help'. No
sooner had he caught up with her, however, than she moved again. This
continual moving about meant that it was impossible, even if the MCM
committee had allowed it, for Hall to offer the Basterfields regular aid.

Destitution was not confined to the widow and the elderly. Many young
men were struck down by chronic illness and by the early 1890s an increasing

11 Hall ibid 19 September, 31 October 1890.
12 Ibid 2 December 1894.
13 Ibid 23 June, 6 September 1892; 5 June 1894; 12 December 1897; 25 January
1898.
number suffered prolonged unemployment. Unable to offer continuing or substantial assistance himself, William Hall nevertheless went to extraordinary lengths to secure aid for deserving individuals from the main charities. In 1895 a young married couple, the Austins, were made destitute by the husband's unfitness to work 'from disease of the brain'. Hall found them about to be evicted from their cottage; after giving them some immediate assistance, he interceded with their minister, Mr Cox. He in turn supplied them with potatoes and promised to find money for the rent. Next day Hall gave them 3s 6d for rent and reported their case to the Prahran Ladies' Benevolent Society.

By early September the Austins had resolved to leave Melbourne and go home to Warracknabeal 'as Mrs Austin thinks she could make a living there'. Hall applied to the local Member for a free railway pass and Mrs Austin wrote to her friends in Warracknabeal 'so as to be sure of a place of refuge when she arrives there'. With an assurance of help from country friends, and the backing of the Prahran Town Clerk and the local Member, Hall then called on the Premier, the Hon C Turner, to obtain the rail pass. When Turner granted a pass for only half the fare the indefatigable missionary took the problem to Mr Fraser, Secretary of the COS who obtained a pass for the entire fare. Hall then persuaded Mrs Butchart, Secretary of the Prahran LBS, to grant the destitute couple a sum of money to tide them over the move. 'Told Mrs Austin', he noted on 21 September. 'Her husband had another slight attack last night - perhaps caused by the worry, brought on by their distressed circumstances'. Austin became too ill to travel, so Hall had twice to have the date altered on the rail pass. He arranged for a carter to take their furniture to the station for 5s and found two friends willing to meet the cost.14

Finally, on 1 October,

Mrs Austin failed to get ready on time to catch the 6.30 train for Warracknabeal; so I had to get the Secretary of the Railways to o

14 Ibid 7, 21, 22 August; 6, 11, 17, 20, 21, 30 September 1895.
extend the time of the pass. Arranged with the Austins, and saw them off by the 4.20 train. Gave Mrs Austin the £2.0.0 voted by the Ladies' Benev. Soc. She and Mr A. expressed their thanks for the interest which had been taken in them, and Mrs Austin promised to write and let me know how they got on. Mr Austin assured me he was fully trusting in the Saviour. 1 October 1895.

Received a letter from Mrs Austin. Mr Austin was taken ill on the journey. They remained in Ballarat for the Tuesday night, but proceeded to Warracknabeal on the Wednesday. Their friends were very kind to them....In the letter, she states, "Mr Austin wishes to be kindly remembered to you all. He says he will never forget your kindness to him while he was in Melbourne." 9 October 1895.

Consider the effort required to meet this emergency: the long list of separate agencies who were called upon to give help: the local church, the MLA, the Town Clerk of Prahran, the LBS, the COS, the Premier of Victoria, the Railway authorities, the carter, two private benefactors and the Austins' country friends. Hall was at the centre, indefatigable in his efforts to promote and co-ordinate aid to the couple. In some ways, his task was simpler than that of the modern social worker. Hall apparently had personal and immediate access to the relevant officials, from the Premier down; but mobilizing and co-ordinating ten separate bodies, as well as Mr and Mrs Austin themselves, was a complex undertaking requiring all the powers of persistence, persuasion and patience at his command.

Because the missionaries named the people they visited, and because William Hall's Journal thoroughly records his cases over the unusually long period of 1884 - 1900, the historian has the rare opportunity of following the fortunes and patterns of life of several of Prahran's families.

The Mouldy family cannot help but fascinate. William Shepherd was the first to discover them, in 'a terrible den of sin', namely, 55 Albert Street, next door to the Rev Burchett's house! Mrs Mouldy was lying ill in bed after a long drinking bout. Shepherd 'told her how Christ had pardoned my sins and was able and willing to save her.' He read from the Bible, reasoned, urged and prayed, 'and at last the light shone [sic] in she shook, wept and was free.' She signed the Pledge Book at once, and Shepherd had
great hopes for her 'if she is spared'.

He returned a few days later. 'It is quite a treat to see such a change in her' he wrote with pleasure. Mrs Mouldy asked him to speak to her husband, so Shepherd called back at dinner time.

I shook hands with him and sat down. he had a vessel with beer in front of him he said I suppose you have come to get me to sign the pledge I said I was glad to hear him talk like that and he said that he would so I took the beer away of [sic] the table and threw it out and brought him some water from the tap he sighed and we had some prayer. 4 February 1882.

The Mouldys promised to attend Shepherd's weekly Sunday open air service at the gates of St Kilda cemetery.

From this time on, the family and the MCM became inextricably linked. Mrs Mouldy's conversion was genuine, but so too was her alcoholism. They waged a continuing battle for domination. She came regularly to the cemetery services and the small meetings, but she also relapsed regularly into great drinking bouts. On 20 September 1882, Shepherd characterized her as 'a good worker for Christ...trying to bring others to Jesus so is her husband there is good work going on but I have no room to take them to big enough as my own house is now too small and many of the sort that I am getting hold of will not go to a regular church...'. But alas, on 30 November 1882, he reported that Mrs Mouldy had, as he put it, 'backslidden', but 'she has given up the drink again and proffeses [sic] to receive forgiveness again she is verry [sic] much altered through the effects of the drink but she is coming to our meetings again."

Despite the fact that Shepherd left the district in 1883, when his successor William Hall visited the Mouldys on 23 July 1886, who should be there but Shepherd, still diligently trying to assist the family in its struggles. Mrs Mouldy had been sent to a Mrs Carlos' house in Fitzroy to break her from a horrendous drinking spree. Another bout in August was followed by a sober and penitent spell. Hall 'was very glad to find Mrs Mouldy clothed and in her right mind...on Friday last she knelt down and

15 Shepherd's Journal 31 January 1882.
asked God to forgive her, and take away the desire for the drink. She has been improving since.¹⁶

In his well over forty recorded visits to this family before they left the district in 1890, Hall records ten serious drinking bouts, several of which threatened Mrs Mouldy's life. Between these, she clung to Christianity, penitent and fervid. Her life had become a living dialectic of sin and redemption. Religion gave form to both her tendencies to enthusiasm and depression. Her guilt and disgust at herself after drinking was lifted when she turned again to Christ, and she felt the certainty of being forgiven and being 'born again'; a marking of the end of an undesirable phase, and of a fresh start for the better. Although drinking was her curse, the Christian doctrine of sin gave it an acknowledged place in life. The doctrine of sin explained and gave a certain validity to her lapses, as well as offering her hope, in the endless mercy of God, for better things.

The missionaries who cared for her had some sense of this. She was not condemned as a hypocrite, or abandoned to her fate. Backsliding only made open again the glorious possibility of being saved anew. Nevertheless, her alcoholic debauches did pose a fundamental dilemma for them. Theologically, her rises and falls were acceptable; morally and socially, they were not. The genuineness of her religious impulse could not be denied, yet her Christian commitment was not leading to significantly improved behaviour. The logical conclusion, that Christianity did not of necessity lead to social and moral improvement, was a notion unacceptable to missionaries and MCS leaders alike, since it made nonsense of one their most dearly-held ideas, that conversion equals social and moral rescue. Ethics and theology had become so intertwined that it was impossible for these men to see them as in any way separate. The Mrs Mouldys of the MCS's clientele remained something of an embarrassment and a puzzlement. Yet for Mrs Mouldy herself, perhaps more than for other more orthodox converts, religion made some

¹⁶ Hall's Journal 4 & 10 August 1886.
Mr Mouldy was also subject to vacillating impulses, but was a less extreme character than his wife. He was lazy and fond of drinking; but, albeit to a lesser extent than his wife, he too showed a conflicting tension between the urge to better himself and the impulse to let go. His fallibility is conveyed by Hall:

Mr Mouldy had joined a man named Sam Robinson and they twain have opened a coffee-well, not palace,-shop in 129 Chapel St. Mr Robinson insisted on my taking a cup of cocoa to christen the place, (he said). I managed the cocoa, to be obliging, but with difficulty escaped having to force a dirty, heavy-looking pie down my throat. By the way I impressed upon him that although their premises were rather old and worn, they could take pains to have things clean, as cleanliness was next to godliness. It is to be hoped their business will succeed. They charge only one penny for a cup of Coffee - two potatoes provided for the same charge. 9 September 1886.

The venture failed.

It becomes clear that Mr Mouldy's fecklessness and Mrs Mouldy's mother's fondness for the drink were major factors in her own inability to break the drinking habit. Mrs Mouldy was given marvellous support from neighbours and friends whenever she became desperately ill after drinking. They took her into their homes, or found places for her in Homes like Mrs Swinborn's Elizabeth Fry Retreat, and the Lang Street Home, but the crucial support - an alcohol-free home - was denied her by her husband and mother, who were themselves addicted.

Hall was appalled that Mrs Mouldy's own mother was a 'stumbling block' to her daughter: 'She brought beer into the house while I was there,' he reports with amazement. He was even prepared to get her removed to the Benevolent Asylum so as to be unable to pervert her daughter further, but they would not take her since she was being supported by her family.

Matters came to a head in late 1889, when both mother and daughter had a prolonged drinking spell. The health of both was broken. Mrs Mouldy was

17 Ibid 19 October, 4 November 1886; 4 March 1887, 28 November 1888, 28 January 1890.
18 Ibid 1 March 1887.
taken to the Lang Street Home, and her mother to the Immigrants' Home, where she soon died. Hall conveyed the news to Mrs Mouldy. 'I trust this will be a warning to her,' he commented. Apparently it was, for he records no more drinking in 1890. The family moved from the district in December. Mrs Mouldy wrote a letter to Hall expressing 'her gratitude for the interest taken in her'.

The Ridett family provides an excellent case study of a family chronically poor because Mr Ridett's epilepsy rendered him unemployable. The family faced periodic crises when either or both of the parents became ill, and required support, throughout the 1880s and 1890s. In 1886, Ridett was ill for a prolonged time, so Mrs Ridett got a mangle and began to take in washing to support the family. Her income was supplemented by the Prahran LBS. 1889 was a bad year, for Mrs Ridett's health broke down, and the family was barely able to struggle on. Local medico Dr Danne provided free medical help. But family life must have been dreadful; in December a son ran away, was found, and finally sent to his grandparents in the wilds of Mooroolbark.

To this family, the 1890s were the same as the '80s. Where thousands were discovering poverty for the first time during the Depression, life continued as usual for the Ridetts as they lurched from crisis to crisis. The aid offered them continued during the Depression, for they were by now, well embedded in the charity system, a known case. All the same, 1892 was a bad year for them. Ridett was seriously ill, and eight weeks behind in the rent. Henry Cooke assisted with the rent (he paid £3, and got the rent reduced from 8s 6d to 6s 6d a week), Hall gave an emergency 2s 6d, and St George's Church allocated them 15s a month. Hall did his best to get

19 Ibid 25 October 1889; 24 & 29 January, 3 December 1890.
20 Hall's Journal 7 December 1886.
22 Ibid 16 & 23 March 1892.
Ridett admitted to the Austin Hospital for Incurables, but hospital policy excluded epileptics, even though Ridett's legs, arms and hands were becoming distorted and he urgently needed treatment. On 8 April, Hall found him out of bed, but in a 'sad condition' with both knee joints twisted out of place. By October, Mrs Ridett was in the Alfred Hospital. She was failing in health through hard work, pregnancies and poor diet.

1894 began more hopefully for the family. Mr Ridett was in reasonable health and had started a wood yard; but the change for the better could not last. The health of both parents was ruined. In 1895, Hall provided the family with regular gifts of money, potatoes, flour and so on. In 1897, a son (the same one?) was sent to Mr Groom's Brighton Home, and Mrs Ridett had another baby. So it went on. When Hall was transferred from the district in 1901, Ridett was now victim to a galaxy of medical complications. Hall kept an interest in the family, and reported in 1904 that Ridett was in the Melbourne Hospital.

Charitable aid to the Ridetts did not lessen in the 1890s, but it came from many sources, was quite often meagre, and little of it was continuing, so the family was obliged to seek it out afresh during each crisis. Hall himself provided some continuity through his visitation. Mr Ridett was a professed Christian, while Mrs Ridett was vague. But she never pretended to conversion in order to 'earn' Hall's help, nor did he want her to.

The view of Prahran's poor which comes to us through Hall's Journals is inevitably coloured by his theological outlook and evangelistic purpose; yet between the lines of his reports there are also many clues to the way in which his mission was interpreted by its subjects. The dominant mood of the poor appears to have been one of resignation and acceptance. To those who had known nothing else, poverty and charity must have seemed immutable.

23 Ibid 24, 25, 31 March, 7 & 8 April, 4, 10, 28 October 1892.
24 Ibid 8 February, 25 March, 6 June, 17 July 1895.
25 Ibid 25 February, 1 July 1897; 15 January, 17 April, 29 May 1901; 19 September 1904.
parts of the social system. The households of Prahran, like those of Collingwood, were reservoirs of grief, struggle and endurance. Some cried against their hard fate, but most seemed to accept and expect it. The most troublesome cases of melancholy and resentment that Hall came across were those of middle class people who had come down in the world. Mrs Beaumont, of Davis St, when Hall first met her in 1891, was ‘passing through a severe loss through the failure of a financial institution’. She fell into profound depression, lost her faith, and lived her life out in bitterness and near-poverty. Hall’s entry for 29 June 1894 – ‘Mrs Beaumont is still in the same sad condition’ – is typical of his almost weekly references to her for the next seven years.

Hall’s own view was that bereavements, illnesses and poverty were part of life’s discipline, put upon us to show our frailty and need for God. This was the attitude he brought to his own troubles – the loss of two sons in infancy, and the breadline wage to which the MCM reduced him throughout the Depression, and on which he had to support a wife and four daughters. He held the common view that the Depression itself was God’s punishment on an arrogant, frivolous and godless people. On 17 May 1893, he notes: ‘Continued visitation in Andrew St., keeping the claims of the Lord before the people, and making special allusion to the cause of the great depression – our national sin....Attended mtg [meeting] for national humiliation and prayer, in the Prahran Town Hall, at 3 p.m.’

Most of the families Hall visited would probably not have disagreed with this grim verdict. Those with some notion of Christianity gained perhaps from Sunday School in their youth, or from contact with a Mission, and even those with no knowledge of the faith at all, had no thought that the world was other than as Christians portrayed it. Very few denied that man was sinful and needed God’s forgiveness. Even fewer denied the existence of God altogether. Hall mentions these, usually prefacing his

26 Ibid 21 August 1891.
William Hall, in the bosom of his family; wife Amy, and daughters Ethel, Lillian, Katie and Amy in the early 1900s.

(Photograph courtesy of Dr David Henshaw, great grandson of William and Amy Hall.)
remarks with 'I came across some very peculiar views today...'. Those
daring souls who claimed to be Free Thinkers who argued that science had
disproved religion and the biblical account of creation, amounted to about
a dozen in Hall's seventeen years in Prahran. Most who rejected
Christianity still thought in Christian terms. 'One man said he did not
mind suffering if he saw others suffering also, and it would afford him
consolation in Hell to see others there'.27

Nor was there much apparent support for the new views on social justice
being propounded by Rev Charles Strong and other liberal churchmen. Several
members of Dr Strong's Australian Church lived in Hall's district, of whom
one, Miss Reichman of 14 Moor St, 'rejoiced that he was so broad. Showed
her that he was broad in the wrong way, at the sacrifice of truth'.28 Hall
was referring, not to his social ideas, but the, to him, much more serious
matter of Strong's denial of Jesus Christ's full divinity. New ideas on
social justice are simply not found in Hall's Journals.

Hall records only one case of a man not wishing his distress to be made
known to the Ladies' Benevolent Society. Mr Ellis was reduced to poverty by
illness, but 'He would not let me ask the Ladies' Society to help them as
he thinks it might injure him in his business prospects. He accepted a
little temporary aid.'29 Many people asked Hall to call on neighbours or
friends who were in difficulties. Others waited until Hall got round to
their street, and called on them. It is not clear whether they then asked
his aid, or whether he volunteered to seek it for them. But the
paternalistic charity system meant that once he was introduced to a family
in distress, and engaged to secure aid for them, they had to place
themselves completely in the hands of charitable agents and comply
absolutely with their decisions.

27 Ibid 23 March 1885.
28 Ibid 11 June 1888.
29 Ibid 11 June 1888.
People who found they could not live with those decisions were met with very coldly. Reuben West reported on 9 October 1871, 'Saw...Mrs Egan, the person Mrs Mackie [wife of his Superintendent the Rev Mackie] wished me to see. She is certainly very poor; but I fear she has been a little obstinate with the Matron of the Industrial Home; and that I think is the reason the Ladies are so much against her'.

In theory the missionaries agreed with the distinction between the 'deserving' poor - the widow, the orphan, the elderly, the sick (providing they were frugal, hardworking and morally sound) - and the 'undeserving' - the lazy, the drunken, the improvident, the vicious, or those with a family who could and should support them. Hall concurred with the Ladies' decision not to give aid to Mrs Dornan 'because of her drinking proclivities, neglect of her home, and violent conduct. The daughter...proved to be delicate, but...said the mother had been trading upon her illness. Gave her 2/- to get strengthening food for herself.'

But in practice, the missionaries never turned their backs on people. All were regarded as precious to God. Hall was able to develop good long-term relationships with many families, counselling and sympathising with them in times of trouble. His knowledge of the families and of the many charitable organizations - their rules and mode of operation - enabled him constantly to bring the two together fruitfully. He was meticulous in his attention, and so patently honest that the IBS, the COS, the Hospitals, the child rescue agencies, the Homes and the local churches, almost always accepted his recommendations. He was go-between, clerk, adviser, chaperon, comforter; and he never willingly gave up on a case.

Most important, as we have seen, he was able to render advice and many forms of aid to people whose situation would not render them acceptable as recipients of charity to the big organizations. His efforts to help people, who, like Mrs Mouldy, had drinking problems, are notable. People like the

30 Ibid 23 February 1892.
Pomeroy, the Johnstons, Mrs Finlay and Mrs Walsh, were long-term concerns for Hall. He organized support for them, got them in to Homes to dry out, and had a few spectacular successes. Mrs Walsh, not a Christian, was taken under the wing of Mrs Bolitho, one of Hall's converts, and herself a poor widow; charity was by no means the exclusive preserve of the moneyed classes. The Pomeroy's actually went to church, although they were not converted, to Hall's disappointment. Nonetheless church-going was a kind of imprimatur upon Mr Pomeroy's return to 'respectability' after his debasement by alcohol. 31

Hall's career reveals a continuing dilemma. Although he was a most systematic and efficient man, conscientious and dutiful, the aid he provided Prahran's poor can only be described as random. Charitable assistance was not, after all, his primary aim. He was a fervent evangelical, and every day he spent sorting out the affairs of a family in crisis was a day lost for preaching the Gospel. The cases he undertook were mainly discovered while he was evangelising house to house. He did not seek families in distress, although he had a small list of 'regular' sick and needy families like the Ridetts with whom he persevered.

Hall was limited by his unwillingness to reduce the time he spent in evangelical visitation, and by the fact that his services were spread thinly over a very large area. The MCC simply could not afford more intensive servicing of the area. Nor is it clear that they wished to. They too, were caught in the tension between evangelizing and rendering aid.

Hall was a modestly successful evangelist, and always had his numbers of converts to add to the statistics at the Annual Meeting. But he was a quiet conservative man, with none of William Shepherd's bluff heartiness of manner. He was at his best in personal conversations with one or two people. He wasn't good at organizing large numbers of people; he did not

31 Ibid Mrs Walsh 19 August 1885, 24 December 1886, 5 September 1890, 1 July 1891, 30 December 1891. The Pomeroy 3 & 17 October 1890, 30 January 1891, 1 & 20 May 1892, 2 & 16 April 1894.
have the charisma to set people aflame. He did have many workers who helped him in the work; women like Mrs Bolitho, men like Mr Craig who regularly helped out by taking services in the Homes when Hall could not cover them himself. But there was no group work, and Hall was not the man to take a Mission Hall and build a strong following around it, through marshalling local Christians to build up the work, as was to happen in Collingwood.

The MCMI took the decision to abandon work in Prahran at the time when the major renovation of its work was in train in 1900. Income was still unstable, and there were other charitable evangelicals at work in Prahran. Hall was moved to South Melbourne, which was judged to be a needier area. LBS figures quoted by Swain for the 1890s provide some insight into this decision: 15.3% of their cases were in Collingwood, spread over 24.12% of the suburb’s population; only 5.6% of their cases were in Prahran covering 7.8% of the people. Prahran was clearly a much less needy area. But South Melbourne was scarcely less so - 4% of LBS cases which came from 4.93% of the suburb’s people. One concludes that the move was more to do with committee dissatisfaction with Hall’s lack of drive than with any imagined greater need in South Melbourne. The rationale seems to have been ‘new place, fresh start’, with the strong expectation that Hall would succeed in setting up Mission Hall work there, where he had failed in Prahran.

32 Shurlee Swain op cit p 81.
CHAPTER 8

PROSTITUTION IN MELBOURNE IN THE 1870s

Sin is forged around these [young women] like a huge chain...
Sister Aitcheson City Mission Record 12 January 1906.

If a girl is not inclined to leave this life she is in, nobody can make her.
Prostitute to John Ivey, 18 July 1870.

I feel sick while I think of the sights which we have to witness there among these poor beings. I believe something yet remains to be done for them, more than is being done,...The present means is inefectual...[sic]
Archibald Turnbull’s Journal 17 May 1869.

If the language of contemporaries is to be believed, Melbourne’s prostitutes were little more than bestial predators, and their houses the lairs, dens or warrens of a vile rodent species. Word-pictures emphasized a sort of claustrophobia which afflicted a righteous soul as he entered the districts of vice, and was enveloped in a steamy darkness of fetid smells and horrific Dantean sights.¹

And indeed, the district bounded by Spring, Russell, Bourke and Latrobe Streets, did consist of tiny lanes and rights-of-way, narrowing and turning behind and around the grand stone buildings that lined the main streets. Walkways opened through gaps between buildings into courtyards like deep pits between the surrounding premises, and still other smaller passageways led from them. Juliet Terrace led to the dark heartland of prostitution in Melbourne, Bilking Square, lined with tiny two-roomed wooden cottages. So notorious did this district become, that the city fathers changed the suggestive names of Romeo Lane and Juliet Terrace in the early 1880s, to the

The Prostitution District of Melbourne c 1880

- Location of brothels in the eastern end of the city centre which were listed by police in 1883 and 1884

5 Hotels noted in evidence at the Royal Commission on Police as either letting beds to prostitutes or allowing women to solicit in bars:

2. Mechanic's 11. Australasian
3. Hicken's 12. Horse and Jockey
5. Royal Mail 14. Exhibition
6. North British 15. Latrobe
7. Glasgow Arms 16. Supreme Court
8. Cleaf's 17. Albion
9. Garnick's Head 18. Prince Arthur/Prince George

- Mission Halls
- Police station

source: G. Davison, D. Dunstan, C. McConville (eds.) The Outcasts of Melbourne Melbourne 1985, p.77.

Mission Halls from MMBW map of the late 1880s, No. 1014, 1019
innocuous Crossley Lane and Liverpool Lane. All the lanes had well-known popular names which never appeared in official records; Bilking Square named for the practice of bilking, Horse and Jockey Lane named for the hotel on its corner, and so on.

The upright citizens of Melbourne were made unpleasantly aware that a rapid growth of the Social Evil was one undesirable result of an increased and wealthy (and predominantly male) population from the gold rush. Government avoided this unruly problem until the 1870s, when journalist and former MP David Blair was commissioned to report on vice in the city. Blair's interest in social reform was fashioned within a strong Presbyterian framework. He was well-informed about trends in British thought on vice, quoting from several recent investigations into prostitution. Following a French study into the reasons why Parisian women became prostitutes, various British investigators had set to work. Scottish evangelical William Tait had confirmed the French study, when he found that poverty caused by unemployment or gross underpayment had driven the majority of women he surveyed into prostitution. Tait added a host of other causes to this, such as laziness, love of finery, wildness of temper and so on. Later theorists like W R Greg and William Acton both depicted the male sexual urge as 'natural' but generally considered women as devoid of sexual appetite. Acton took up the French finding that prostitution was usually only a phase in the lives of the women concerned, who then went on to take a more conventional and unobtrusive place in society. It was not a case of once 'fallen', lost for life. Thus Acton recommended regulation of the vice so that the woman could 'pass through this stage of her existence with as little permanent injury to herself and as little mischief to society as

2 Entry by Jill Roe Australian Dictionary of Biography 1850-1900 p 179.

possible.  

Blair was as well-informed about the resulting recent British legislation to control vice; it was thought similar legislation might be useful in Victoria. The British Contagious Diseases Acts of 1864, 1866 and 1869 were introduced to control the spread of venereal disease amongst soldiers and sailors in garrison towns and ports. Women living in these places who were prostitutes underwent fortnightly medical examinations, and, if found to be infected, were interned in lock hospitals for up to nine months. By 1869, impassioned and serious opposition to the acts was in full swing, with groups such as Josephine Butler’s Ladies’ National Association working for their repeal. There were many grounds for objection, but most saw the laws as an attack on the rights of women and the blatant formalisation of a double standard of sexual morality. At the time when the Victorian government was considering introducing such legislation in the 1870s, the British parliament was already under pressure to repeal the acts.

Following the lead of the Mother Country, many of the other Australian colonies investigated the possibility of Contagious Diseases legislation to discipline prostitutes and ‘protect’ men. Acts were passed in 1868 in Queensland and 1879 in Tasmania. No act was drawn up in South Australia despite a majority recommendation in favour of one in 1867. The Queensland Act was in force well into the twentieth century, although the last British act was repealed in 1886.

Blair reported extensively in 1873 on prostitution in Melbourne. He declared the evil to be ineradicable, following Acton in seeing the male sexual urge as, perhaps, regrettable, but all the same ‘natural’; but was

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4 Quoted in Walkowitz ibid p 46. For a description of Greg and Acton’s work see pp 42-6.

5 Walkowitz ibid pp 1-2. ‘The acts became a battleground where diverse and competing groups vied with each other for social and political power.’ (p 5)

6 Kay Daniels (ed) So Much Hard Work; Women and Prostitution in Australian History Fontana/Collins Sydney 1984, Tasmania p 23; South Australia p 115; Queensland pp 141-5.
the disease accompanying prostitution controllable? Following the report of a Select Committee on the matter in 1878, the government decided against any legislation. But Blair insisted that police could do more to control vice under existing laws, through tighter surveillance of 'disorderly houses', dancing saloons and the like, and more vigorous prosecution of offenders soliciting in the streets or selling pornographic material. "Beyond this it does not appear to be the duty of a Government to make provision for protecting the morals of the population." 

Government stepped from the arena; thereafter only the police and moral evangelicals concerned themselves with 'fallen women' and the problems raised for society by their activities. Foremost among the latter was the Melbourne City Mission. The ladies who helped to found the MCM also founded one of Melbourne's first 'Refuges' for penitent prostitutes. This same group rescued the MCM from financial collapse in 1856, specifically so that missionary Joseph Greathead could seek out women to enter their Refuge in his visitation. Greathead did not like this work and was transferred to an easier district in 1859. Two men replaced him, but even they could not yield the results expected by the ladies. In 1862, they suggested that female missionaries might be more effective with the 'outcasts of society', so a Biblewoman, Mrs Clarke, was hired almost as soon as she stepped off the boat in 1863.

The Ladies' Committee eventually maintained several Biblewomen in various districts who took turns to visit the haunts of vice. Similarly, the men's committee decided that pairs of their male missionaries should be

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7 Blair op cit p 17; & 'Report from the Select Committee upon a Bill for the Prevention of Contagious Diseases' V & P 1878, Vol 1, Minutes of Evidence.

8 Blair ibid p 17.

9 MCM Minutes 2 & 9 September 1856.

10 Ibid 15 March 1859.

11 Ibid 7 June 1862, 9 March 1863.
taken from their normal suburban duties, to work in the vicious part of the city two afternoons a week, in rotation. This continued into the 1880s.12 George Hill, a charitable visitor to the City Police Court who counselled those in trouble, suggested that the churches were quite happy to leave the prostitutes to the care of missionaries, for ministers never ventured into bad areas.13

The prostitution industry in Melbourne was complex and hierarchical. Taking pride of place were the handsome and luxuriously furnished houses of the most sophisticated brothel keepers. Just as the missionaries never ventured into the houses of the well-to-do classes elsewhere, so too they never gained entrance to these establishments. Reuben West tried, but managed only a tantalizing glimpse. 'I could see into the front room which is most beautifully furnished. It is almost an impossibility', he concluded paradoxically, 'to get into those respectable houses where respectable prostitutes are living.'14 The owner of this house, located 'near Chubb's buildings',15 was an adventurous entrepreneur named Mrs West. In a business world monopolised by men, Mrs West and women like her were running their elegant brothels in the main streets, investing their proceeds in real estate, and making substantial profits in their all-female businesses. According to Captain Standish, Chief Commissioner of Police, women were employed at a wage in these houses, never saw their earnings, and were even dressed by the madam.16

Other equally enterprising women accumulated housing stock which they rented to free-lance prostitutes, either furnished or unfurnished. Archibald Turnbull was told in May 1869 that Mrs Mills of Little Bourke

12 Ibid 6 October 1868.
13 'Report from the Select Committee...1878' ibid, p 13.
14 Reuben West's Journal 21 August 1871.
15 John Cromack's Journal 6 July 1872.
16 'Report from the Select Committee...1878' ibid, p 3.
Street owned fifteen furnished houses, and a grocery store. Some of these were houses with some pretensions to respectability. 'We went into one house,' reported West in 1871, 'where we saw four young girls seated at a well-laid table...each with a tumbler of ale at her right hand.' These girls clubbed together to rent the house, 30s a week furnished (or 15s a week unfurnished). Mrs Mill was charging 18s a week for a two-roomed furnished house in a court off Horse and Jockey Lane in July 1874.

Other houses in lanes and rights-of-way were little more than hovels. The foul-mouthed aggressive Mrs Shields owned many of the degraded cottages in Bilking Square, Romeo Lane and Juliet Terrace, the sleaziest locales in Melbourne. She exploited her hapless tenants to the full. They were the least intelligent and resourceful of the city's prostitutes, the most totally reduced by vice. They moved restlessly from house to house, street to street, unable to master their circumstances, unable to maintain a sufficient income to afford regular weekly rents.

In April 1873, Samuel Stephens ventured into one of Mrs Shields' 'cottages' in Romeo Lane, and found 'the brick wall at the back had fallen down and the substitute was bags and rags hung up with a few bricks piled up a foot high at its bottom.' The place was empty of furniture, and one of the two women who were renting it was lying on a heap of clothes or rags. Mrs Shields was charging 7s a week for such unfurnished two-roomed 'houses' in Romeo Lane. In Bilking Square, girls were paying 18s to 20s a week for furnished two-roomed houses 'worth about 5/-', estimated John Cranack. He himself was renting a detached stone house of four rooms and an outroom in

17 Archibald Turnbull's Journal 3 May 1869.
18 West's Journal 21 September 1871.
19 Samuel Stephens' Journal 22 July 1874.
20 Cranack ibid 11 June 1872, and evidence given to the Select Committee 1878 ibid pp 13-14.
21 Stephens ibid 16 April 1873.
22 Ibid 20 May 1874.
a respectable lane between Bourke Street and Little Collins Street East at the Spring Street end for 12s a week.  

Mrs Shields frequently poured drunken abuse over the missionaries and tried to prevent them entering some of her houses. She had no interest in either piety or reform. She was notable to Cronack for her 'brutal violence', and for not only owning all of the houses except one in Juliet Terrace, but also living in the street, personally supervising her property and returns.  

Sergeant Dalton testified that a fourth group of prostitutes existed who did not live in the city, but commuted from 'respectable' suburbs such as Emerald Hill and Richmond. They plied their business at night, using 'respectable receiving houses', or, if they were very 'low', and the weather was fine, the Fitzroy Gardens or the Yarra bank. They were servant girls or factory workers attracted by the money they could earn. Presumably they were able to hide their fall from respectability in a way impossible for those who lived in known vicious areas, unless pregnancy intervened. The exciting attractions of the city were obvious to girls in the suburbs; West tried to advise a Prahran widow who was weeping over her headstrong daughter because she wished 'to engage herself to one of those plaoeses [sic - palaces?] in Town where they wear costume as waiter.' The mother felt that 'if she did her character would be gone.'  

According to both missionaries and police, the prostitution industry in its most profitable forms was run by women. Men only became prominent at the lowest and vilest levels. Bilking Square and the surrounding lanes was infested with criminal types and young larrikins, and scenes of drunken brawling involving both sexes were frequent. 'At one house,' wrote

23 Ibid 22 July 1873; Cronack's Journal 11 June 1872.
24 Cronack ibid 23 July 1873.
25 'Report from the Select Committee...1878' op cit pp 3, 16.
26 West's Journal 17 August 1870.
Stephens, 'the Mrs of the House came and said "This is a bad house you had better not come here, and a drunken man was coming blustering, and the door was shut against us."

27 West tried to break up a fight between two women who had their fists clenched in each other's hair. I never before saw anyone fight so vicious. There were soon a number of people collected but no one attempted to stop them. I went to them and tried...But I could do no good until two other girls came up and set to work to unclench their hands, and so liberate them from each other's hair. 21 September 1871.

On one extraordinary day in July 1873, the uneasy missionaries entered Juliet Terrace, and were made frighteningly aware of the connection between the lowest levels of vice and the criminal world. Cranack was told that, because of the introduction of parole, prisoners were to be remitted two months in twelve of their sentences, for good behaviour. The authorities had unwisely released 72 men from Pentridge on the same day, and they had poured into Juliet Terrace to celebrate. The resulting spree turned into an orgy of drinking, womanising, swearing and brawling. To Cranack, it was 'a regular Corroborree [sic]. The whole place swarmed with men and women, many of whom were drunk and acting in the most shameful manner, and the language exceeded all I ever heard, in all the places of the city since I became a missionary.' He and Stephens were terrified, but held their ground, since to retreat 'might have the appearance of being driven off and giving place to the devil, and...it might encourage them at another time and weaken us.' Mrs Shields took the opportunity of being particularly coarse and malicious at their expense. The missionaries escaped unharmed, except that some wag had pinned a tract to the back of Stephens' coat.

27 Stephens' Journal 3 July 1872.

to take place. Arrests could be made and promotions earned, all for the expenditure of a mere 10s. Since criminals were released from gaol destitute, there was some attraction in this offer. The same man told Turnbull that prostitutes were a regular source of information about crimes and criminals for the police.29

Many prostitutes engaged in petty crimes. Bilking Square was named after a common practice. Sumner and West were proudly told by one woman that 'she did not give way to men now as she once did.' When they asked her how she made her living then, 'she said, taking money from men and running away.' She could not see West's point that the one might be as bad as the other.30 George Hill described bilking in more detail. A man was inveigled into bed on the expectation of sexual favours; the woman stole his wallet, then left the room on some pretext, and never returned. It was not likely that a man so cheated would summon the police.31

The police were, all in all, reasonably content not to harass prostitutes. There were many advantages in maintaining the ghetto-like nature of the district, where an eye could easily be kept on disreputable types. Proper citizens of Melbourne never ventured into such areas, in any case. To Captain Standish, such an area was the result of 'the natural desire of men'.32 The police made most arrests for drunkenness and disorderly conduct; McConville has shown the difficulties facing the police in trying to arrest women outright for prostitution.33 Occasionally, they cleared various streets after complaints by property owners. Turnbull regarded such clearances as stupid. In May 1869, he remarked, 'It is having the same effect as the last raid made by the police. They are going wherever they

29 Turnbull's Journal 24 June 1869.
30 West's Journal 5 July 1871.
31 'Report from the Select Committee...1878' op cit p 10.
32 Ibid p 2.
33 McConville op cit pp 87-9.
can find a place of resort.' At the beginning of 1872, Cromack reported the clearance of Griffin Lane, but by March it was 'infested again. There is good property in it and some of the property owners had twice had it cleared of them, but they got in again.' Landlords could get at least 5s a week more from prostitutes than from respectable citizens.34

One aspect of prostitution did protrude into the public eye, and that was its connection with theatres. In 1876, the *Argus* reporter 'The Vagabond' wrote a florid expose of the practice of women picking up men (or vice versa) in theatre foyers. In his eyes, it was the flagrancy of their behaviour which perhaps offended most;

flaunting in their dress, bold and vulgar in their manners, they flounce in and out of the stalls during the performance...they laugh and talk amongst themselves, or with some of their male friends, Melbourne "cads", who ("dressed to kill", with slouched hats, a la larrikin, and paget coats) crowd and crush decent people in a manner which would not be tolerated in England or America.35

The room where liaisons were made was known as 'the saddling paddock'. The Vagabond noted that the customers were men of all types and conditions, gentlemen and thieves, 'new chums' and clerks.

Prostitution was also closely connected with the many hotels in the area, although Captain Standish was adamant that drink was not a cause of prostitution: 'drink comes afterwards, not before'.36 Women picked up clients in hotels. It was illegal for brothels to sell liquor to their clients, but many did, or sent out to the nearest pub for supplies as needed. The missionaries rarely ventured into the pubs, but testify to the prevalence of drinking among prostitutes, which was to them one of the nastiest features of the whole business. The drinking habit accelerated a woman's physical and moral decline. The missionaries quite commonly came

34 Turnbull *Journal* 10 May 1869; Cromack*r Journal 13 March 1872. 'Report from the Select Committee...1878' op cit p 14.

35 J S James *The Vagabond Papers* op cit p 231.

36 'Report from the Select Committee...1878' ibid p 6. See also McConville op cit p 90 for a more thorough description of the place of hotels in the prostitution business.
upon women drunk before noon. 'Many of the girls in Little Bourke Street were quite drunk,' commented West, and 'were lying on the pavement in the open street in a beastly manner.'

Cranack was appalled at the change he saw in one of the women he had known for three years. She 'was, perhaps, the cleanest and most hansom [sic] person living this life in Melbourne. But drink is showing its deadly effects on her. She is getting coarse, bloated and vulgar.'

Drink was a source of solace and oblivion for many women in their dangerous lifestyle. Stephens described this incident in January 1875, in a house in Romeo Lane:

a young woman came in whose eye was blackened, and face bruised. She was trembling from head to foot. Soon after another woman of the same character came in with a jug of ale and gave the trembling one a glassful which was drunk off. In a few minutes another large tumblerful was administered and drunk. 14 January 1875.

The missionaries were as curious as most people about why girls turned to prostitution, and frequently recorded little histories of those they spoke to. The following reasons were given by 32 women who answered directly:

- deserted wives: 10
- wives who had left husbands: 3
- widows; wives of improvident or gaolled men: 5
- prostitutes by choice: 6
- orphans or from unhappy homes: 3
- seduced, with child to support: 5

32

(Source: Journals of five missionaries 1866-1880)

Although the sample is small, overwhelmingly, the need to earn a living is the commonest cause. Working class men and women did not hold such rigorous views on virtue as the middle class, and their sexual behaviour was freer. The distance between sexual customs and attitudes of middle class

37 West's Journal 2 December 1870.
38 Cranack's Journal 3 September 1873.
evangelical clergy and working class men and women is illuminated in the trial of Charles Barber, where even a conversation on a tram between Barber and the servant seemed to the clerical gentlemen to be highly improper. As to a man actually touching the person of a woman sexually outside marriage, it was unimaginable. To committee members of the MCM, such overt display was aberrant. To the missionaries, it was disapproved of as leading to sin. To the unchristian working-class person, it was normal behaviour. 39

What was unimaginable to the middle class was possible for a working-class woman, if circumstances conspired against her. Most of the women in the sample – 18 out of 32 – had suffered unhappy marital careers, while 5 had a child out of wedlock, leaving them utterly vulnerable if they had no family support. Prostitution was one of the very few ways to earn money and keep one's child; a girl with a live-in situation as a servant might earn 10 - 12s a week, and it cost 10s a week to have a baby cared for. Even the 6 who were prostitutes by choice are not clear-cut cases. Two, at least, had widowed mothers who were quite happy to live off their daughters' earnings, and would have had a struggle to survive without them. One was the handsome woman Cromack referred to on p 185. He had an unpleasant conversation with her mother, who had called to get some money from her daughter. 'I know she will soon be in her grave,' said the mother, soulfully. Cromack was furious - 'yet this mother does all she can to prevent her daughter from going to the Refuge.' 40 Those from unhappy homes may have been victims of incest or sexual abuse in their childhood. 41

Consider, too, the case of eighteen-year-old Amelia Jones, whom Cromack found sitting beside her dead father in a tiny shack off Cumberland Place. Her brother was in prison, her mother dead, and she and her sister-in-law

39 See Chapter 6, pp 147-8.
40 Cromack's Journal 3 September 1873.
41 There is no evidence of this; however, modern investigations, including the Neave Report 1985, have found the incidence of childhood sexual abuse to be high in prostitutes. Incest has been, and is still, an area of human experience most deeply buried from public notice.
with two small children were destitute and helpless. Amelia assured Cromack that she has so far lived properly, and had not, as she said, "been a bad girl". Cromack gained admittance for her to 'The Home for the Destitute', commenting, 'had she remained here, she must have gone to the bad.' The sister-in-law was left to her fate.42

Most of the women in the sample were in their late teens or early twenties, and sexually experienced before turning to vice. This was found to be the case in London, too. The Rescue Society there noted a one- or two-year interval between sexual initiation and becoming a prostitute - time enough for a marriage to be made and to fail. This matches well enough with the Melbourne experience. Most women must have ceased prostituting themselves by the time they were thirty, for the general impression is of younger women. This, too, matches with the European experience.43

The economic attractions of prostitution were powerful for women facing destitution. The lot of respectable women on their own could be appalling, as the missionaries knew only too well. Young women knew it too. Prostitution required little in the way of skills and could be entered into quickly. The returns were immediate.

That women were vicious through economic necessity was not a conclusion reached by anybody of importance in Melbourne at the time. David Blair had scotched that idea firmly in his 1873 Report. He acknowledged that many respectable overseas studies - including Tait's - had found economic motives to be the most powerful, followed by poor upbringing by bad parents in bad neighbourhoods. Seduction, and 'love of idleness, vanity and vicious inclination' came a long way behind. But, without seeking specific information on the matter, Blair concluded that in Melbourne,

it is not credible, nor even possible, that women here are driven to vice by poverty, or from want of employment, or from insufficient wages....Actual starvation, or long-continued

42 Cromack's Journal 12 & 13 April 1879.
43 Walkowitz op cit pp 15-16.
privation, excepting it be deliberately chosen, is unknown. Charity was easily available, there were plenty of jobs (were not ladies always complaining of a shortage of servants?), so, he concluded, 'It is beyond doubt that by far the larger number of fallen women in Victoria have become so of their own deliberate choice, either from a love of idleness and luxurious habits, or from an inherent propensity to vice.'

Blair spoke from the grossest ignorance, and with the assurance of one who has never wanted for anything much in his life. It is clear he knew nothing of the utter poverty that could be found in Melbourne; but the poor have no voice, and the voices of those who ministered to them - the LBS and the MCM - were scarcely heard by those in power. Blair's 'love of idleness' may have been seen by the women he accused as the wish to avoid demoralizing and ill-rewarded years of sheer drudgery and poverty. The 'vanity' one could read as a girl's pleasure in her youthful attractiveness, which for a moment makes her wanted and valued, however cursorily.

Unhappily for many women, the cost of investing their bodies to earn a living in this way, was often virulent infection, brutal ill-treatment, addiction to alcohol, illegitimate children, physical deterioration, and eventually destitution and perhaps an early death. But the short-term rewards were attractive to young women, and offered one avenue for avoiding a life of chronic poverty.

Many would have preferred other choices, had they been available. As one woman sadly said to Stephens, 'people are obliged to do many things they don't like to get a living.' All Stephens could answer was that 'honest virtuous living with piety and perseverance would be sure to gain a livelihood by any woman.' This contemporary middle-class Christian view was met with laughter and contempt by many of the prostitutes. There were hundreds of virtuous working-class women in the suburbs who were exhausting

44 Blair op cit p 7.
45 Stephens' Journal 23 October 1872.
themselves in daily drudgery eking out a bare living. Working girls knew very well what hardworking virtuous piety meant for such women, and it was neither just nor tolerable.

It is possible that taking up prostitution was, for some, a defiant gesture of rebellion, an assertion of independence, albeit ultimately self-defeating, of young women refusing to accept the docile and unjust lot of women of their class. Walkowitz argues that since many prostitutes came from fragmented families - one or other parent dead, for instance - then they did not undergo the rigorous socialization girls normally experienced, and were able to resist `the conditions of subordination and dependency traditionally expected of them.'

There is some evidence for this from a later period. Collingwood missionary Sister Young reported in 1906,

> The one great evil is the late hours they are out of their homes. The poor mothers say the beginning of it has been the liberty the child has had when they have either had to work in the factory or go out charring for their maintenance.

The drudgery of their mothers' lives may have determined many that this would not be their lot, while their own freedom made prostitution an alternative.

Both Dr Singleton and Constable O'Mara estimated there were about 600 open prostitutes in Melbourne in 1878, and perhaps as many more covert ones. The market, money and the superficial attraction of fine clothes and a good time were powerful incentives.

There was an extraordinary interaction between missionaries and prostitutes, in which one can observe a substantial shift in the views of some of the men about the whole problem of prostitution. Some men of a more rigidly doctrinal bent, such as Samuel Stephens, found this work distasteful and

46 Walkowitz, op cit pp 19-20.
47 City Mission Record 12 April 1906, p 3.
48 'Report from the Select Committee...1878,' op cit pp 13 & 67.
unrewarding, and preferred theological battles with Roman Catholics in the suburbs. But others were profoundly moved to sympathy for the women and their plight in all its degradation and unfairness.

The women reacted in various ways to the missionaries. Some lived up to the common notion of the prostitute as a completely vile and unregenerate creature. Stephens was abused by a woman 'in her scarlet petticoat and little on her shoulders', who brought out a glass of ale and drank it defiantly in front of him, 'damming [sic] and cursing'. 49 This woman acted out the stereotype she knew Stephens expected, but not all missionaries were so treated. Ivey, Cromack and West were much better treated than the disengaged Stephens. John Ivey, elderly and benevolent, was often received like a father, where Stephens provoked contempt.

'At one place a young woman was insolent and I cautioned her of the consequences,' records Stephens in his usual stiff admonitory manner. 'She was under the influence of strong drink,' he continues, 'and she said, "I don't want your tracts, I am not of your religion." I replied, you have no Religion. If you follow your course it will lead you not to heaven but to Hell. After that, as Mr Ivey passed the doors she called him in and burst into tears. Implored him to deliver her out of her wretchedness.' 50 Of course, Ivey many not have been turned to if Stephens had not condemned her first; perhaps there was a place for both kinds of men.

Stephens' stiff-neckedness provoked mockery. West reports of the enjoyment larrikins took in 'taking a rise out of Mr Stephens'. 51 Another woman, condemned by Stephens for allowing her body to be used for money, shrewdly counter-attacked; 'I suppose you get paid for doing this,' thus showing her contempt for a person lucky enough to be paid for virtue and piety. The inference was that if sex was debased by payment, then so too

49 Stephens's Journal 14 May 1873.
50 Ibid 25 July 1870.
51 West's Journal 14 September 1871.
was Christianity.\textsuperscript{52} The missionaries were often to write; 'very little encouragement in these visits.'\textsuperscript{53}

In general, the women accepted the familiar presence of the missionaries, and often welcomed their visits. They gradually assumed the position of advisor on many problems, and acted as a liaison with the Refuges. They were used as a channel of communication for prostitutes and their families, conveying messages about illnesses and deaths.\textsuperscript{54} They often arranged for desperately ill women to be admitted to hospital.\textsuperscript{55} On other occasions, they assisted young women newly released from the Lying In Hospital. Such women often had no support at all, and no money, and drifted into prostitution. One such woman had herself arrested as a vagrant, and went to gaol to get food and shelter for herself and her infant, rather than take to the streets.\textsuperscript{56} Women were released from gaol destitute, and several times missionaries found them in brothels, whether they had previously been prostitutes or not.\textsuperscript{57}

Cranack was on particularly good terms with the women. Indeed, he was invited to tea with a former prostitute now respectably married, who was proud to show him of her rise in fortune.\textsuperscript{58} He was greatly assisted in 1873 by handing out copies of a particularly affecting religious tract, a long poem called Beautiful Snow. This became enormously popular, and gained him entree into almost any house. When he ran short of copies, he found girls...

\textsuperscript{52} Stephens' Journal 7 August 1872.
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid 27 March 1872.
\textsuperscript{54} eg ibid 7 September 1871.
\textsuperscript{55} eg ibid 20 November 1872.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid 29 April 1875; Cranack's Journal 20 August 1873.
\textsuperscript{57} Cranack records on 27 August 1873 that a woman just out of gaol solicited him. 'She remarked that it was a great pity [sic] that there was no place for a female to go to when she comes out of prison, as in her case, and so from sheer destitution turns aside to wrong. I have met with other cases of this kind...'
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid 20 September 1873.
were copying the poem out, or even stealing it from each other.\textsuperscript{59} The poem attests to the youthful romantic sentimentality which filled the younger girls; no hardened realist could admire it. Its viewpoint is that of the middle-class Christian:

Once I was as pure as the snow - but I fell:
Fell, like the snowflakes, from heaven - to hell;
Fell, to be tramped as the filth of the street:
Fell, to be scoffed, to be spit on and beat. ...
Merciful God! have I fallen so low?
And yet I was once like this beautiful snow!

The 'fall' is utter, and irredeemable, as the pure state preceding it was an almost Eden-like perfection. That girls, no doubt gradually moving from one hardship to the next, so that their 'fall' was scarcely to be felt as sudden disaster, could have relished the images of this poem so fervently, testifies to the pervasiveness of middle-class Christian morality, found even in this most unlikely of soils. Even the stereotype middle-class family, loving and supportive, and complete, is found in the poem.

Once I was fair as the beautiful snow,
With an eye like its crystals, a heart like its glow;
Once I was loved for my innocent grace -
Flattered and sought for the charm of my face.
Father,
Mother,
Sisters all,
God, and myself, I have lost by my fall.

Even the anomaly of snow becomes acceptable in the exquisitely sentimental final image in which purity is remade in death:

Fainting,
Freezing,
Dying alone
Too wicked for prayer, too weak for my moan ...
To lie and die in my terrible woe,
With a bed and a shroud of the beautiful snow.

No doubt it was the sheer romantic fantasy of this poem that appealed. Anything closer to the reality would have had little fascination.

The innocent escapism of literature could not rival alcohol and drugs as agents of temporary release from life's meanness. There are several references to opium addiction in the Journals. In 1892, the MCM was still

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid 17 July 1873; Stephens' Journal 21 May 1873.
concerned at its use among prostitutes:

In several cases opium has got such a terrible hold on some of the girls, that,... their systems have got...saturated with it, and if affects them mentally, and they have, or seem to have, no recollection of what is said to them from day to day....it has a greater hold on some of them than drink. 60

Opium meant the Chinese. Missionaries and prostitutes were ambivalent about the Chinese, whose ghetto areas often coincided with vicious districts. A general hostility is evident in some. Stephens deeply offended a woman with a baby in her arms, by commenting 'I see your child is not of the Chinese sort.' She retorted angrily, 'I would kill it if it was.' 61

On the other hand, the missionaries often recorded most charitably cases of Chinese marriages with European women, where well-brought-up children 'speak English and are sent to school.' 62 In many cases, it was the Chinese who were disadvantaged by living in the area, not the white population. There were Chinese brothels, however. In speaking of Bragan (?) Lane, Cromack commented,

This is a beastly place, full of the lowest houses and females and Chinamen. Some other houses were occupied by shoeblacks &c...The Chinamen seemed shy as if they thought I was a spy...I did my best among them...A Mrs Ah Ping and a Mrs Ah Chung, both European women, are married to Chinamen, but they keep bad houses.
31 March 1879.

Indeed, in contrast to the prurient and bigoted interest of the 1878 Parliamentary Committee in the supposed paedophiliac preferences of the Chinese, the missionaries had very little to say about Chinese involvement in prostitution, and more often mentioned gambling as their particular vice. 63 Charles Hodges, a Chinese Interpreter, testified that some women preferred Chinese clients, since Chinese men did not have as wide a

61 Stephens Journal 11 June 1873.
62 Ibid 7 October 1871.
63 'Report from the Select Committee...1878' op cit pp 4, 64-5; Cromack's Journal 20 July 1872, 10 August 1873.
selection of women as European men had, so they were assured of custom.64

Drugs were used in Chinese brothels, but there is no evidence to suggest drugs were used as a means of seducing innocent women, as the Committee seemed to suppose. Cromack records the death of a 22-year-old brothel-keeper from an overdose of liquor and opium; her brothel was run for Chinese, in a court near Horse and Jockey Lane.65

The watershed for missionaries in their dealings with prostitutes was the issue of Refuges, the 'Homes' for 'fallen' women. The years of experience, and the lessons learnt, all cohered in a mutual rejection of Refuges as they then existed.

In 1870 there were two Refuges: one run by the nuns of the convent of the Good Shepherd at Abbotsford, and one run by Protestant ladies in Carlton near the cemetery. The same ladies, Mrs Hornbrook, Mrs Handfield and others, who provided the impetus for both the first and second City Missions, had organized this Refuge in the early 1850s.

Both Refuges were modelled on English institutions, along the lines of the Magdalen Hospital, founded 1758. It was a penitentiary; that is, it was a kind of prison to which a woman committed herself for two years, submitting herself to a drab uniform, cropped hair and hard work of the domestic sort, to expiate her guilt and sin. A sense of guilt was a principal qualification for entry, and those who did not feel sufficiently guilty either left, or had an appropriate sense of guiltiness inculcated in them. In this respect, the process of 'reformation' closely paralleled the evangelical model for conversion used by the missionaries themselves; the first step was self-abnegation through a realisation of personal sinfulness. After two years, Refuges felt that they had fitted women for virtuous and humble

64 'Report from the Select Committee...1878' op cit p 64.
65 Cromack's Journal 16 July 1873.
lives as domestic servants. 66

The Abbotsford Refuge required a two-year stay, and cut off the women's hair (a precaution which made them unattractive, and therefore less likely to abandon the Refuge and return to the streets). The Carlton Refuge required a stay of only one year, but the first week of this was solitary confinement, presumably to allow the young woman a chance to examine her soul whilst free of undesirable influences. 67 Both places would not admit a person a second time, or provide her with clothes or assistance should she want to leave before her time was up. The Carlton Refuge accepted women with babies; indeed, most of the inmates came direct from the Lying In Hospital, in many cases forced to accept the strictures of the Refuge in order to get food and shelter for themselves and their babies. Since the Carlton Refuge could take only 25 women, and the nuns a similar number, and most stayed the full year or two years, their usefulness in quelling vice, or even providing the chance for women to escape the vicious life, was small.

That these Refuges were run to suit the punitive notions - religious, social and moral - of their organizers, and with no real understanding of prostitution or the needs and outlook of prostitutes, becomes all too obvious. Likewise, the continual cries of women to the missionaries for help, indicate that there was a great need for some way out of the net of prostitution. The clash between the ideas of the Refuge staff and the quite different ideas and needs of the prostitutes, produced bitterness and anger on both sides, and in part accounts for the extreme authoritarianism of the control exercised by staff over these unruly and often dangerously unco-operative women. Many women seeking escape from vice did not feel the guilt expected of them, or feel it to a degree sufficient to satisfy


67 West's Journal 13 June 1870; Dr John Singleton op cit pp 245-f.
evangelical middle-class matrons. Most felt the dangers and sufferings which accompanied their trade were sufficient punishment. Most did not want to lose one or two years of their lives in 'prison'. Some had much simpler objections. 'Conversed with one who had been to R. Catholic Refuge age 19,' records Stephens, 'said 'I have worked hard there but could not get enough to eat. I left after staying a month. I am not a R. Catholic although I went there.'

The Refuges were by no means emergency centres which would take all comers whatever their state. 'The Refuge lately refused two without Bonnet and Shawl at 11 P.M.,' reported Stephens. The Matron looked closely at every applicant, selecting only those who seemed most fitted, in attitude and demeanour, for the sort of rehabilitation the Refuge wished to provide. There were few enough places to offer, and women rushing distraught to the Refuge late at night, perhaps after some dreadful ordeal, received less consideration than those brought in the cold light of day by a missionary or lady.

Once admitted, young women were expected to behave well. Girls who were not docile enough could be expelled without notice. West 'saw Jane Johnson, the young woman who was turned out of the Refuge. She has no home and often sleeps in an empty house.' Preference was given to very young girls as being more worthy of reclamation. 'Ruth Nathan said she was in the Refuge 9 days and was turned out because she was to [sic] old. She is a fine strong woman 32 years of age.'

Reuben West became increasingly disenchanted with the injustices and stupidities of the Refuge system during 1871. It was his attempts to have

68 West 's Journal 7 September 1871
69 Stephens ' Journal 5 July 1874.
70 Stephens ibid 29 January 1873.
71 West's Journal 3 April 1871.
72 Ibid 6 April 1871.
two girls, Mary Cockbill and Eliza Wallis, admitted to the Carlton Refuge, that completed his disenchantment.

The two girls were friends and wished to enter together, but Mrs Pears, the Matron, had only one vacancy. She recognized Eliza Wallis, and said to West,

that one I would not take at any price she was sent here once by the Authorities and only stayed a week it is no use taking her in for she would not stay two hours and she would upset the whole the place I would never take her in again besides she has a mother who ought to look after her.

West continues,

here the Girl said let me out then. the key was turned and she went out and the door was closed against her. The other said I do not wish to stay unless she stays. Why said the Matron she will never do you any good besides I would rather you not stay than stay a week or two then go out I can't bear it. -What kind of work do you have to do here. -Matron; you are not afraid of work are you it is the fear of work that has been the ruin of you. No said the girl I am not afraid of work. I will stay and hope to stay 12 months. after a few words of advice we left. The other Girl was staying outside the Gate. The Matron looked out and told her she need not stay.

West was bitterly disappointed. 'I am quite deceived in the Refuge for I thought they would be so glad to receive them. Jesus the true refuge is never closed against anyone no matter how black they might be.'

Two days later Mary Cockbill was back on the streets again. When West asked her what had happened, she told him 'she was put in a room by herself and she could see no one which made her more unhappy. She would much rather have been put to work at once as she would then have had someone to speak to but solitude she could not bear for it put her so much in mind of a prison.' West was outraged that the girl's chance of reclamation was lost, simply because there was more human warmth offered her by her prostitute friends than by those dedicated to helping her.

73 Ibid 11 April 1871. It is instructive to read Stephens' account of the same incident: 'There Wallis was recognized as an old offender and refused admittance and there being room for only one Cockbill remained.'

74 West ibid 13 April 1871. Again, Stephens' account strikes a quite different note: 'We were vexed to learn that the Young Woman Cockbill whom we took to the Refuge left that place on the morrow evening. The
The Refuge was the place of bluntest confrontation between middle-class Christian moral and social notions and the more pragmatic culture and ideas of working-class women. The disparity between the two is glaring. West's account of Mary Cockbill's experience shows that what the girl wanted was comfort and support. While this was obvious to West, it was not to the Matron, who adhered to the stereotyped view that Mary had prostituted herself because she was lazy, and needed punishment, a time of expiation and the discipline of work. We have seen how David Blair easily dismissed the findings of overseas investigations on the economic causes of vice, in favour of indolence and love of luxury as causes. The stereotype was deeply embedded.

Working from faulty premises, the ladies had created an institution largely at odds with the real needs of its inmates. The staff were in an invidious position in trying to 'fit' the inmates to meet the notions of the organizers. The 'fit' was poor indeed, if we listen to the tone of desperation and bitterness in the Matron's voice as she dealt with the two girls; 'I would rather you not stay than stay a week or two then go out I can't bear it'. Paradoxes abounded. The inmates entered voluntarily, yet the place was more a prison than a haven. We are told that 'a most imposing brick wall, some ten feet high' surrounded the property. The girls were allotted 'cell-like rooms about ten feet by six feet, with narrow slots for windows' through which they could see the high brick wall 'whichever way they looked.' The gates were massive; 'there was a great turning of locks' when they were opened. Yet the staff did not have the absolute control of warders over prisoners; the inmates could leave at any time. Girls with babies had few options but to stay, but childless girls were only held by their own longing to be free of prostitution.

reason she assigned was that she was put alone and no one came to speak to her.'

Far from enabling its organizers to control the inmates, these girls stamped their own mark on the Refuge, even when, like Mary Cockbill, they only stayed briefly. Matron Pears was, in some senses, at the mercy of the girls; the more unsuitable the arrangements in the Refuge, the more anxious and harrassed the Matron, and the more disappointed when the institution failed in its purpose of reclamation. The buildings, designed to meet the concept of the 'penitentiary', were a major constraint on staff and inmates.

Recent studies of institutions - schools, prisons, hospitals - have indicated that if there is a 'hidden curriculum' at work in the the organizational framework of the institution, which forces the inmates to adopt certain behaviour and ideas, there is also a 'hidden curriculum' at work created by the inmates themselves. Some research argues that this latter may even be more potent than that of the authority, if there are enough 'gaps' in the day not totally controlled by those in charge, or insufficient staff.  

This seems to have been the state of the Refuge. The diary of the Matron of the Elizabeth Fry Retreat, a Refuge begun in the 1880s in Prahran, shows inmates' peer groups at work, successfully resisting Christian indoctrination and exerting considerable influence on the conduct of the laundry in which they were required to work.  

One may assume a similar situation in the Carlton Refuge.

It is clear that the Matron's major task was not so much reclamation of prostitutes as the maintenance of the Refuge in a reasonably stable and workable state. Her strategies in trying to maintain equilibrium appear to have been to use her right to accept or reject applicants, and to 'turn out' any, who once accepted, proved to be disruptive. The Refuge may have been a haven, but it was also a difficult and dreary place, full of tension.

76 See for example, Cusick 1973, Birkstead 1976, Cusick, Martin & Palonsky 1976.

77 See the diaries of the Matron, and Sarah Swinborn (founder of the Elizabeth Fry Retreat) 1887-1890, and Chapter 9 following.
Outside observers did not perceive this. The ladies and gentlemen who ran it were complacent about their creation. George Hill testified to the 1878 Select Committee that it was 'a beautiful establishment. There is no mistake; it is one of the grandest establishments I ever saw', especially since Matron Hurry took over. Captain Standish, Chief Commissioner of Police, thought the Abbotsford Refuge 'the most admirably conducted institution I have ever visited.'

West's experiences with the Refuges did bear fruit. When his Superintendent, the Rev George Mackie, read the account of Mary Cockbil1 in West's Journal, he was so disturbed by the case that he wrote a comment in the Journal himself. He expressed horror at the whole rationale behind Refuges. He felt they should be places 'of all possible activity and cheerfulness', and that the present system was 'folly'. These views he carried to the committee, where he was joined in his advocacy by Dr John Singleton. The latter had himself been attempting rescue work, visiting vicious districts of Sunday afternoons since 1868. He had offered a harmonium to the Carlton Refuge, only to have his gift refused at first, 'as being too much to do for these women.' The accumulating evidence of his own and the missionaries' experiences, crystallized in a paper which he read to the Society for Promoting Morality. Virtual imprisonment was not the way to handle the problem; reformation was far more likely if prostitutes could be placed as servants under the care of godly women, 'beginning with low wages, of course, until they could prove themselves worthy of higher', and in a family atmosphere of kindliness and piety. Singleton's attitudes were enlightened for his times. When he testified to the 1878 Select

78 'Report from the Select Committee 1878' op cit pp 12, 3.
79 Reuben West's Journal 14 April 1871.
80 Singleton op cit p 246.
81 Ibid p 247. Singleton was in line with the latest thinking of the London City Mission on the treatment of prostitutes, and he may have heard of
Committee, he was the only witness who rejected a Contagious Diseases Act as discriminating against women. He declared,

> I have looked at that matter in a moral view, and I think it is very unfair that the women alone should be examined and not the man...I think it a hard thing that healthy women should be provided for men [to infect], and go into the hospital to be cured, in order to be ready for similar work. 

The MCM had no brief, nor sufficient finances, to embark upon this scheme. It was as a private philanthropist, then, that Dr Singleton had established his Temporary Home for Friendless and Fallen Women in 1870 in a house in North Melbourne. It soon moved to Fitzroy before finally settling in a six-roomed detached stone cottage in Islington Street, Collingwood in 1871, encouraged by the MCM. A ten-roomed dormitory was added, the total costing £1200. Women up to the age of 40 were accepted. 26 at a time could be housed, staying an average of six to eight weeks. They were instructed in all the domestic arts, attended Bible classes and services of worship, and after a few weeks, were placed in situations. Singleton testified to the 1878 Select Committee that up to October, 142 women had passed through the Home already that year.

The impact of the MCM in this area cannot be underrated. Their members were the only Melburnians, except for a few policemen, who really knew about the nature of prostitution in the city. Most citizens, like David their London Female Mission; but conditions in Melbourne were such that he could have reached the same conclusions independently. See Heasman op cit p 150. Foreign ideas certainly reached the city, for one prostitute who had tried and failed the Refuge, spoke to Stephens of what she heard about a Refuge in England where Girls were sent to situations or provided with money to start in the world to gain an honest livelihood. [sic] 13 June 1870. Stephens also spoke to a woman from Pittsburgh, who had run a penitentiary, about putting new inmates in solitary confinement. She rejected the practice. Stephens added, 'This note is to suggest an improvement upon that plan if possible...' 5 December 1872.

82 'Report from the Select Committee...1878' op cit p 67.

83 Singleton on cit pp 245-50; 'Report from the Select Committee...1878' ibid pp 69-70.
Blair, seduced by 'Marvellous Melbourne', believed that there was no real poverty to speak of in the city, and that vice was perpetrated by a small, unnatural group which had little connection with the rest of humanity. The ghetto-like brothel district of the 1870s and 1880s reinforced this notion.84

Charitable evangelicals were the only ones who tried to respond to the situation as it was, because they were the only ones who saw it as it was. Their 'eyes' were the Melbourne City Missionaries. The move to humanize the treatment of prostitutes comes entirely from the MCN and its supporters, and its effects were long-lasting.

84 McConville op cit p 97.
CHAPTER 9

FEMALES AND PRISON: THE ELIZABETH FRY RETREAT AND THE VICTORIAN DISCHARGED PRISONERS' AID SOCIETY IN THE 1880S

Our prisons were perhaps never so full as now, and many in those dismal places are to be greatly pitied because they have not had, as others, the home Christian training which makes the conscience active, so that they may fear to offend their God, or injure their neighbour. All that now remains is for the charitably disposed to take this matter up, and do their best to help Mrs Swinborn in the noble cause which she for so many years has successfully carried out.

Prahran Chronicle 19 November 1886

Prison visitation was another task undertaken by Melbourne's charitable evangelicals, following well-established British models. It was yet one more of Dr John Singleton's self-imposed duties, his frequent visits to the Melbourne Gaol often co-inciding with those of Mrs Sarah Swinborn, who had been inspired to take up that work with which her fellow-Quakeress, Elizabeth Fry, had so astonished England.

Within three years of her first visit to Newgate Gaol in 1816, Elizabeth Fry had completely changed the lot of women prisoners. She did this with the permission of prison authorities, but also actually sought the approval of the women prisoners themselves for her proposals, an unheard of notion at the time. She instituted a school to teach women to read, write and sew, and drastically improved their living conditions within the Gaol. Her readings to the prisoners from the Scriptures were events not to be missed by sight-seers from the world of high society. Her innovations became part of prison policy, and she and her helpers spread these reforms throughout the kingdom and overseas for the next twenty years. She was widely revered as a saint,
and was the moving force behind the setting up of Benevolent Societies and a nursing order for the poor, amongst many other benefactions. She was married to a Quaker minister, and bore eleven children. She died in 1845, when Mrs Swinborn was a girl of sixteen.¹

While Dr Singleton and Mrs Swinborn sought to follow Mrs Fry's example to encourage and convert prisoners while they were undergoing their sentences, the Victorian Discharged Prisoners' Aid Society (the VDPAS), founded in 1872, concerned itself with assisting the newly-released.² In the early 1880s, the newly-formed Melbourne Salvation Army also entered the field. Missionary William Shepherd, after three years in Prahran, interrupted his career with the MCM for a year or so from mid-1882³ to join their Prison Gate Brigade.

When the doors of the Gaol clanged behind prisoners on the day of their release, they returned to society with nothing but what they stood up in. Many had no alternative but to return to previous haunts and seek help from former 'bad' companions. Women frequently ended up in the prostitution district, as we have seen in Chapter 8. The VDPAS and the Prison Gate Brigade attempted to break this cycle. The VDPAS offered small sums of money and clothing to 'deserving' prisoners - those whose case seemed to offer a reasonable chance of rehabilitation - to help them make a fresh start: the Prison Gate Brigade, more generously, offered a bed and assistance to whoever sought it. There was a stark and irreconcilable chasm between the two - in sympathy, in their ideologies of charity, and in their practices. Brigade

¹ J White (ed) Makers of Nineteenth Century Culture 1800-1914 entry no. 171, by June Rose. The most recent account of Mrs Fry's life and work is June Rose Elizabeth Fry 1980.

² The file on the VDPAS held in the LaTrobe Library, MSS 10663 & 11145, provided material used in this chapter. The file includes Minute Books, Letter Books and other records.

³ City Mission Record 1 December 1923. Shepherd was one of the first two men in Melbourne to be measured for the Army uniform. He was appointed a Captain.
members were often semi-skilled and unskilled workers, as were the prisoners. VDPAS officers were members of well-to-do and politically powerful classes.  

Female prisoners, although they were considerably fewer than males, were poorly off. Their offences generally were minor — mainly petty theft, behavioural offences such as drunkenness and riotous behaviour, (prostitutes were usually arrested on these latter charges), and vagrancy — yet the likelihood of recidivism was high. In the 1880s, the VDPAS turned its attention to the special case of female prisoners; at the same time, Mrs Swinborn had also decided upon, and was working towards, establishing a Home or temporary Retreat for newly-released female prisoners, from which they might be returned to 'the world', better-fitted to do well. In the tortuous and occasionally interlocking paths taken by Mrs Swinborn and the VDPAS in their attempts to help female prisoners, we have a rare insight into the processes by which charitable agents formed their opinions and devised their acts of charity.

Sarah Swinborn and the Elizabeth Fry Retreat

Sarah Singleton married James Swinborn in her home town of Clitheroe in Lancashire in 1853, when she was 24 years old. The honeymoon for the young couple was a sea voyage to Australia, and their early married life was spent trying to establish themselves in Melbourne. Her father was a shop-keeper,

4 See Blair Ussher 'The Salvation War' in G Davison, D Dunstan & C McConville (eds) The Outcasts of Melbourne, especially pp 135-9, for the social composition of the Army. See the discussion following for the social outlook and composition of the VDPAS.

5 Chris McConville 'The Location of Melbourne's Prostitutes 1870-1920', Historical Studies Vol 19, No 74, April 1980, pp 87-89

6 She was not related to Dr Singleton as far as I am aware. All biographical detail is used with kind permission of Mrs Swinborn's grand-daughter Mrs Jean Stubington.
and her husband a belt, shirt and corset maker; Sarah herself worked hard with James to set up a solid business, she sewing the satin parts of the corsets, but the pair had little success. James was industrious, but a poor businessman.

Mrs Swinborn was scarcely to be differentiated socially from many of the female prisoners for whom she worked. Her origins were humble, and her husband never rose above the level of a respectable artisan of the lower middle class. The family was often very poor. The family was also constantly on the move, and always lived in rented accommodation. They started in 1853 in North Melbourne, moved to Collingwood in 1854, and, from about 1858 on, to the Prahran/South Yarra/Windsor area. During this time, James is variously described as draper, clerk, machine sewer and shirtmaker, further evidence of the economic uncertainty of the family, and a life on the edge of poverty.

This latter information was gleaned from the death certificates of their children. The appalling facts are these: between 1854 and 1868, Sarah gave birth to eleven children, of whom only three survived. Special distress must have attended the deaths of Sarah (aged 27 days) and Annie (aged 18 days), who starved to death from 'the inability of the mother to suckle'. Of the other children, James died at birth of a heart defect, William at five months, of diarrhoea, Ellen at 8 months of cholera, Sophia at 17 days, of 'cerebral congestion and effusion', Herbert at three weeks of 'irritation of bowels and brain', and, most severely, Henry at eleven years, of typhoid. The agony of these losses, unsupported by wider family, must have been intense. Years later, when she visited a friend whose baby was seriously ill, 'it brought old times back again when I too had so often to watch these dear little ones pass away.'

James and Sarah Swinborn were Quakers, and the Society of Friends was their social locus. Mrs Swinborn's interest in prison work stemmed directly

7 Mrs Swinborn's Journal 13 March 1889.
Sarah and James Swinborn, with their children Fanny, Arthur and Sarah Dell.

(Photograph courtesy of Mrs Jean Stubington, granddaughter of Sarah and James Swinborn)
from her knowledge of Elizabeth Fry, the great Quaker heroine. The committee of the VDPAS, with whom Mrs Swinborn had dealings, unhesitatingly spoke of her as 'a lady', the title no doubt earned by the fine quality of her life, her devoutness and her devotion to those in need. But it cannot be said that she 'rose' in society according to any of the usual criteria. The family was never secure financially; her son Arthur was himself a not-very-successful shopkeeper. The family never moved freely in more highly-placed social circles, and never belonged to a social group of much cachet.

From the mid 1860s, schooled and made stronger, it would seem, by more than a decade of cruel family griefs, Mrs Swinborn became fully involved in seeking out the poor, the vicious and the suffering women in the Melbourne Gaol, to bring to them the solace that only God could give. She was introduced into the Gaol by Dr Singleton; beyond this fact we know little of her relationship with the good doctor. She visited the Gaol during the week, and held a regular church service on Saturday. She became such a familiar and authoritative presence in the gaol, that she was able to have sick women transferred to the Gaol Hospital without official permission.

Her interests moved beyond the gaol; she ran a Sunday School in the Hornbrook Ragged School building in Commercial Road, South Yarra, and she was, for a while the Superintendent of the Lang Street Home for Fallen and Friendless Women in South Yarra, before she decided to create her own Home, the Elizabeth Fry Retreat. She was a foundation member of, and a vigorous activist and theorist for, the Women's Christian Temperance Union. She was part of a deputation to the Premier on 30 November 1887 'to tell him what we want and expect in time to have total Prohibition of liquor trafic [sic] in opium & tobacco'. She met visiting feminist leaders at the railway station.

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8 See her obituary in City Mission Record 12 December 1902 p 4.
9 Mrs Swinborn's Journal 14 October, 16 & 18 November 1887.
when they arrived; women such as Olive Schreiner\textsuperscript{10} and Jessie Ackerman.\textsuperscript{11}

It is evident that she had an enormous range of contacts in the charity world. She was well-acquainted with Dr Singleton's Homes, the Carlton Refuge\textsuperscript{12}, the Geelong Refuge, the Salvation Army Home in Brunswick, Rev Cherbury's Home of Hope for children\textsuperscript{13}, the Infants' Asylum\textsuperscript{14}, and the Sailors' Home\textsuperscript{15}; and she herself became a source of advice and information for other intending philanthropists. Her Journal is full of entries like the following:

Mr Dunn he wanted information about Retreat as some of his co-religionists want to start a Refuge, but Mr Dunn thought they had better help one already started. Mrs Crowley came in afternoon to see Retreat will see me again but I think childrens work will suit her best. 10 June 1889

Mrs Swinborn was obviously a woman of enormous energy, capable of moving widely around the city as needs demanded. There are many entries like this one in her Journal:

In Fitzroy Police Court about Margt Greenlaw & brought her away she is to stay 12 months [at the Retreat] retd to Town met Mrs Love and Wardale [WCTU friends] at Dr Bevan's noon meeting [at the Congregational Church] then to HM Gaol Spoke to several women there went to try and find poor Mrs Grey, late McShae - out in 122 Sackville St Collingwood - was told she had been sent to Yarra Bend [Asylum for the Insane] about six weeks since. 11 July 1889.

She did not take holidays unless forced by ill-health. An occasional outing, like a day at Cheltenham beach\textsuperscript{16}, was sufficient to please and restore her.

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid 26 February 1889.
\textsuperscript{11} Ibid 7 June 1889.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid 4 June 1889; 21 August 1890.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid 27 May 1889.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid 16 & 17 May 1889.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid 24 May 1889.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid 19 April 1889.
On 20 January 1885, Mrs Swinborn opened the Elizabeth Fry Retreat in a house near her own in Albion Street, South Yarra. She had established the need for some such place of refuge for women leaving gaol; ‘whilst conversing with the various characters from time to time brought under her notice, she found many of them being very desirous of being under her care on leaving prison’, reported a journalist on the Prahran Chronicle, 19 November 1886, after an interview with the lady. Mrs Swinborn explained that other ‘Homes’ were, to her mind, unsuitable for what she had in mind.

She had felt that the establishment of a place where the character aimed to be benefited could be better managed in, not what might be termed by the name of a home, but by a place of retreat, it therefore entered into her mind to call her have the Elizabeth Fry Retreat.17

She made it clear to the journalist that she was particularly concerned about certain sorts of women who would usually be considered ‘undeserving’ of aid by other charities. Of her first year’s intake, Mrs Swinborn claimed that of the 46 women,

fully forty would have been refused admittance into any home beyond a few days on account of their age, and she felt whilst speaking with them in prison, that though they had so much longer given way to sin and temptation had greater power over them, still as long as there was a desire to reform, she had no right to refuse to help them, as they in common with the younger women have souls for eternity.18

In 1886, Mrs Swinborn was able to move the Retreat to larger premises on an acre of land in Argo Street, South Yarra. This cottage was large, and was soon added to by the acquisition of smaller neighbouring cottages. The wash house was set up in some outbuildings, surrounded by fruit trees. (See illustration)

In this small cluster of buildings, the inmates - some 20 to 25 at any one time - were trained in domestic duties to fit them for situations as servants. The laundry provided not only training, but income - £236 17s 4d in the first year alone. The carriers Mayne and Nickless collected the

17 Prahran Chronicle 19 November 1886.
18 Ibid. As has been shown in Chapter 8, Refuges and Homes preferred young women for their clientele, as being more likely of rehabilitation.
ELIZABETH FRY RETREAT, SOUTH YARRA.

Present Building.

Above: The original building, Argo Street, c1890.

Above: The new building, 1913.

Source: MCM photographs.
washing from householders and redelivered it after the women had washed, starched and ironed it. The cycle took one week. Mrs Swinborn also hoped 'to strengthen the religious impressions already made' by herself on the women whilst in gaol (assisted by the Prahran missionary William Hall, who conducted a service, with some lay assistance, every Sunday for the next sixteen years);

and when the growth of these [skills and impressions] is evident and the training deemed sufficient, then, but not until then, to place...[the women] in situations where they may be watched over, and, as much as possible, sheltered.20

In addition to the income from the laundry, Mrs Swinborn funded her Retreat through private subscriptions, and relied for the success of both laundry and subscription lists on many local women, who supported her in one or both areas.

The establishment of the Retreat was not greeted with unalloyed enthusiasm, however. One person who spoke with condemnation was Mrs Gee, Matron of the Melbourne Gaol, to whom Mrs Swinborn was, no doubt, a nuisance, and a threat to her own authority in the Gaol. She was cynical about the likelihood of reformation of most women prisoners. She testified to the VDPAS

That Mrs Swinborne [sic] visits once a week, has a religious service, and takes them indiscriminately into her Home, those with bad intentions thus contaminate those with good, and many return to gaol. Mrs Swinborne obtains situations for them, but few remain. That, in her opinion, the women attend the religious services [in the gaol], not for spiritual instruction, but to send messages outside to friends through Mrs Swinborne and Dr Singleton. That the women and girls return to gaol from the Salvation Army [Home in Brunswick], and what is worse, bring others with them.21

Mrs Swinborn did not have fixed ideas about her Retreat. She accepted almost any woman who applied to enter. Indeed, by 1888, a large number of the inmates had not come from gaol at all; they had come themselves or been brought by friends, family or charity workers. Magistrates had begun to use

19 Details from a Circular Letter to raise funds for the purchase of the Argo Street property, found in Mrs Swinborn's Journal.

20 Prahran Chronicle ibid.

21 VDPAS Minutes 1 May 1885.
the Retreat as an alternative to the Gaol as a place to which to send female offenders; such women were 'sentenced' to a stay of a set length, say three, or six months. This reflects both the high esteem in which Magistrates held Mrs Swinborn, and their sense of the inappropriateness, if not the danger, of a gaol sentence for many female offenders.

Thus, the intake was certainly 'indiscriminate'. Older women figured prominently. Many of the women were, or had been, prostitutes, but the dominating problems were those of drug addiction; alcohol, snuff and opium. Families brought mothers and grandmothers in to dry out: women like Mrs Berry, brought by her husband, and even 'superior' women like Mrs Charlotte Morton, who was several times admitted drunk and 'in a terrible state', 'but still maintaining a lady-like appearance.'\(^\text{22}\) Others, like Jemima Martin, were merely old and incapable, unsupported by relatives, and in declining health. She entered the Retreat in August 1887, and was still there two years later. Even though Mrs Swinborn had got her admitted to the Immigrants' Home, (after unsuccessfully trying the Benevolent Asylum), she soon returned, having adopted the Retreat as Home. She seems to have had a stroke, amongst other illnesses, and Mrs Swinborn was able to locate a niece, but the Retreat seemed destined to have her until she died.

Sarah Phinister and Annie Ryan entered the Retreat to have their babies; Maria Norton and Julia Thompson were placed by magistrates in Mrs Swinborn's care. The latter was 'so fearfully bad with syphilis you could not keep near her', recorded Mrs Swinborn. Others, like Rose de la Piere came 'seeking shelter. She seems a respectable woman', commented the Matron, but 'embittered' by a sad, harsh life. Louisa Chinque, Louisa Davis, Julia Edwards, Eva Hagane and Maggie Losa were brought in by missionaries and lady charity workers from 'the lanes' - the prostitution district around Little Bourke.

\(^{22}\) For all references to the inmates in this Chapter, refer to Appendix. The information is compiled from Mrs Swinborn's Journals 1888-1890, and the Matron's Journal 1888-9. The spelling of women's names is quite haphazard, and I have used the most frequent spellings, even where they seem to be wrong. The ladies seem to have been particularly at sea with foreign surnames.
Street. Margaret Dowset, Alice Carstairs, Mary Keating and Emily Murphy came from various gaols, both city and country, after serving sentences. Ironically, one alcoholic woman, Alice Hoffman, was the widow of MCM missionary Charles Hoffman, who died suddenly in 1883; she was unable to cope with the struggles of widowhood.

These were all women with major problems of social maladjustment. Most were addicted to alcohol; many were prostitutes; many had grave problems in their family relationships, and not a few had been rejected by their husbands, parents and even children. Rose de la Piere's husband died while she was in the Retreat, and when Mrs Swinborn took her to see her five children, they would have 'nothing to do with her'. Margaret Dowson and young Maria Burton had been discarded by their husbands. Most were unable to keep down jobs; some were simply aimless and unable to look after themselves, like Maria Norton, 'a rather vacant kind of girl'; some, like Mary Jane Ball, Alice Carstairs and Emily Murphy, were violent. A few were, at times, mad: women like Charlotte Barrett and Mary Keating.

It is clear that by failing to define a precise and limited clientele, and admitting almost any woman 'in need', no matter how widely the needs differed, Mrs Swinborn had given herself a very difficult problem. The Retreat was not organized in any specific way to treat the problems the inmates brought with them. All were dealt with alike. The Retreat offered: separation from society and its pressures; shelter, food and clothing; regular hours; freedom from drugs; training in domestic duties, especially laundry work; occasional 'treats' and holidays; Christian worship and instruction; and a job as a servant for each when she left. Mrs Swinborn hoped that kindly treatment, by herself and the Matron, exposure to the Christian message (consisting of morning and evening prayers and the Sunday service), plus the absence of harmful influences, would give the women a chance to free themselves from bad habits, pull themselves together, and attack life outside again better prepared and strengthened. A glance at virtually any history in the Appendix is sufficient to show that most women
were not much better able to cope with life after a stay in the Retreat, than before. Mrs Gee was right; 'Mrs Swinborne [sic] obtains situations for them but few remain.'

What Mrs Swinborn achieved was not a cure for social ills, but a temporary patching-up of people. Her Retreat offered a transitory respite. But this in itself was an important need felt by the women, who came back again and again, seeking solace and care after each fresh disaster. Because there were no rigorous rules about admission or leaving - all, except those sent by magistrates, were free to leave if they wished, although Mrs Swinborn often tried to get them to agree to a definite term for their stay - women were frequently in and out. Other charitable institutions would have seen this as an unwarranted exploitation of facilities. To Mrs Swinborn, it was meeting needs, needs which did not fit easily into rational orderings, but matched more nearly the spasmodic urges of the confused and distressed.

But was the Retreat positively harmful to some of the women? What of Mrs Gee's charge of contamination, of mingling bad with less bad, which was inevitable, given Mrs Swinborn's policy of accepting all comers? There is some evidence that the most violent and anti-social women were regarded by Mrs Swinborn as dangerous to the other women and were not re-admitted. There were two of whom she wrote, 'they should be locked up for life': Alice Carstairs and Emily Murphy. In both cases, the women caused much trouble when in the Retreat, and continued abusing and harassing the staff, hanging around outside for days, talking to the women through the fence, before being forced to seek help elsewhere. Emily Murphy tried the Abbotsford convent, returned to the EFR and abused Mrs Swinborn, and went on to the Salvation Army Home in Brunswick. (This was the building later acquired by Sister Hartnett for her Home for the Melbourne City Mission). Alice Carstairs was last recorded as having been admitted for a second time to the Immigrants' Home.

These were women who acutely resented their dependency on charity, and
demonstrated their resentment by 'giving as much trouble as possible'. They were clearly women of spirit. Emily Murphy had been a prostitute, but appeared to be in an advanced stage of syphilis, and no longer able to make a living. She seems to have been entirely alone, without family, or at least, family who would acknowledge her. She was not able to be docile under the humiliations now inflicted on her; she was taken by the Matron to the Eye and Ear Hospital about her eye condition, and was treated with such contempt by the doctor that she stormed out of the Retreat next day in a fury. 'Poor and proud with nothing but sin', concluded Mrs Swinborn.

While Mrs Swinborn sought to strengthen the self-esteem of women in the Retreat, it is clear that 'pride' - that is, too much self-assertion - was one quality of which poor down-trodden women should not have too much, especially if they were to require charitable assistance. The case of Mary Higgins is a frightening demonstration of this. In May 1888, she was brought in from the Richmond lock-up by Mrs Berry (a lady who helped Mrs Swinborn do the rounds of the local courts to assist women whose cases were to be heard), apparently sent by the magistrate. The Matron mentions her terrible temper, but she was alone and pregnant, and required help. She was sent to Dr Singleton's better-equipped Home to have her baby. The Matron of the Retreat visited her, and again records outbursts of temper. She is next heard of at the Infant Asylum in May 1889. Mrs Swinborn had received an urgent letter from the Matron of the Asylum, who was finding it impossible to manage the girl. The Retreat was full, so Mrs Swinborn scoured the city to find a place that would accept her - the Immigrants' Home, the Benevolent Asylum, even back to the Richmond Police Station. Mary was becoming daily more violent and abusive. The Matron took her to the Salvation Army Home, but they only accepted her for the weekend. 'What to do for the girl she seems so determinedly wicked that we are afraid she will do something fearful', wrote Mrs Swinborn with foreboding. Mrs Judge of the Brunswick

23 Matron's Journal 29 January 1889.
Horne next tried the Carlton Refuge. 'Poor girl she seems possessed' is Mrs Swinborn's last comment on Mary, who had now passed into others' responsibility. The sheer desperation and anger of Mary Higgins at being tied by her baby to humiliating dependency is unmistakeable. She ended up being passed around the charitable agencies, one after the other, because she could not suppress the violence of her resentment at being reduced to a creature requiring 'care'.

Indeed, all the women in the Elizabeth Fry Retreat had lost control of their own lives, and were victims of self-destructive habits, or had been placed in situations of complete dependency which had reduced them to the role of ill-treated victims. In marriage, many were badly abused by husbands; for single women, the low pay and drudgery of the employment open to them effectively closed off all possibilities for personal power and independence. Children were more often than not an added millstone. Such women were the most disadvantaged human beings in Melbourne, with the possible exception of the Aborigines, for even charities for the most part turned their backs on them. They were virtually helpless economically, at the mercy of husbands and employers, and badly paid. As prostitutes, some of them had chosen employment which was short-term and self-destructive; and if they sought escape in alcohol, they hastened their own decline, came into the hands of the police, and were often expelled from their families.

Little wonder that the Retreat could do little for them. They would leave its gates, and re-enter a social and economic world utterly hostile to them, protected only by a fragile and hardly-achieved equilibrium. They would take a situation, drudge for a while, fall in with former companions or seek solace in drink, and without continuing support and quite unprotected, would end up back in gaol or the Retreat. Mary Jane Ball left to take a situation 'to see whether she [could] manage'; a month later her employer called the Matron to come and take her away. She was lying drunk in the front garden, 'the snails crawling over her and such crowds of people'. Bella Robertson left the Retreat on 23 May 1888 saying 'she must look out
for herself. By 25 August she was dead.

Mrs Swinborn was aware of the results of a lack of continuing support, but in her own rather shapeless way of doing things, she never really organized herself to address the problem. She wrote letters to the women, occasionally called to see them, was glad when they visited on their day off; but she did not vet the employers of her women, and often seems to have sent them to situations of sheer unceasing hard labour and exploitation scarcely calculated to encourage them to lead good lives. Her original idea was that respectable households would give the women their best chance at doing well; but she underestimated both the attitudes of the employers and the demands of the work required of the women.

Some employers had attitudes to their unfortunate servants utterly opposed to the warm sympathy Mrs Swinborn offered them. To these ladies, if there was to be rehabilitation for their servants, it was to be through suffering and humiliation. Sarah Phinister and Mary Graceton came back to the Retreat because their employer, Mrs Acton, "was so very overbearing the poor women could bear it no longer." In other cases, the ladies were more kindly, but their huge households entailed an enormous domestic burden of work, with too few people to do it. Mrs Langley - wife of the Anglican Rev (later Bishop) Langley, MCM committee member from 1878 and Vice President of the Mission until his death in 1906 - did her charitable duty by taking her servants from the Retreat. One, Florence Owen, complained to the Matron that she was "very hard worked," and when she fell ill Mrs Langley summoned a charitable doctor and had him remove Florence. This seems like the cruelest treatment, and it certainly did Florence little good, but the historian should be wary in judgement. The demands on Mrs Langley herself in this household were horrendous. She was at this time undergoing her fourteenth pregnancy in seventeen years (nearly all her children surviving), and was to give birth to her last child two years later. The physical toll on her of all these pregnancies, not to mention the continuing care required by her growing family, must have been enormous. She could not afford the risk of a
possibly contagious sick person in her house, or the loss of her servant's services in the multitude of domestic tasks needing to be done. There were many forms of oppression for women in nineteenth century Melbourne, not all of them reserved for the poor. In this and other cases, though, the lady had the opportunity of passing part of her own burden onto a woman of inferior class.

It is possible, by building up fragmentary case histories of the inmates, and attending to the comments in the Matron's Journal, to gain some valuable insights into the social climate of this charitable institution. The formal controls over the women were not particularly severe or over-riding. There do not seem to have been many rules. Certainly, no alcohol, snuff, tobacco or opium was permitted, and the women had to join in the week's laundry work and attend the spiritual exercises unless ill, but there appear to have been few other restrictions. The women had time for personal sewing and other handcrafts. There were few staff; the matron and one, or occasionally two, assistants seem to have been all, with Mrs Swinborn dropping in now and then. The Retreat at this time was accommodating about 25 women, although frequently urgent cases above that number were admitted, and women were forced to sleep on mattresses in the passageways. The ethos by which Mrs Swinborn ran the Retreat did not require much more than Christian commitment in her staff; when the Matron needed a holiday, her friends Mrs and Mrs Berry looked after the Retreat for a week without any special preparation or difficulties.24

The women rose at about 7 am, had prayers at about 7.15, breakfasted, and early in the week were at the washtubs by 8.00 am. As the week's wash was completed with the less arduous starching, ironing and folding about Friday, these hours relaxed somewhat. Services were held on Sundays. No

24 Matron's Journal 9 March 1888.
indication of the evening routine is given in the journals. Life became
strained when there were fewer than 25 women in the Retreat, since there
were fewer hands to assist with the laundry, and it was often still being
completed late on Saturday at such times. One presumes that the women
engaged in other tasks of cleaning and food preparation in the house, but
the definite rhythm evident in the weekly routine was set by the task of
washing.

The low staff-inmate ratio, the frequent absences of the Matron -
shopping, taking women to situations, to the doctor, to pawn shops etc - and
the quite lengthy periods of free time for the inmates, especially towards
the end of the week, meant that the climate of the Retreat was shaped as
much by the nature of the inmates as by the staff. As far as changing
numbers permitted, hierarchies formed, rudimentary power structures which
put a scale of value on the various tasks to be performed. To be put ‘to the
collars’ in the ironing room was considered the most desirable job; it
required finer skills and trustworthiness and was in pleasanter surroundings
than the coppers, the mangles or the lines.

The women were able to enforce their preferences quite often. Maggie
Dowsett refused to wash, and was put on the mangle, a slightly better,
because less heavy and exhausting, job than the coppers. Matilda Day,
described as ‘a foolish creature but willing’ on entering the Retreat, had
gained sufficient power after a few months, that, when the Matron ‘wanted
her to try the coppers...she would not and said so.’ Rose de la Pierre
refused to go into the wash house while Maggie Losa was in the ironing room:
Rose was ‘respectable’ while Maggie was a former prostitute, and this may
have been Rose’s pathetic assertion of her superior status over a ‘fallen’
woman. Ellen Spears was very angry when she was taken from the ironing of

26 Ibid 28 March, 8 July 1889.
27 Ibid 3 September 1889.
collars. It would seem that both Matron and women used the washing task as a forum for testing their powers against each other.

The second anniversary of the Matron's coming to the Retreat, 14 July 1888, provides evidence of the activity of cliques among the women. Maria Burton suggested the women present an address of thanks to the Matron. Mrs Swinborn bought a card, the address was written on it, and it was taken to be framed. Many women prepared small personal gifts for her. There has been great excitement at the Retreat for some days past - loud whisperings. Matron requested not to go into certain rooms - all secrets to be told tomorrow evening', wrote Mrs Swinborn on 13 July 1888. Nellie Hampton presented the address, Maria a bouquet of flowers, Mary Jane Ball a scent bottle, Mary Frazer and Sarah Phinister a book, Charlotte Barrett some of her own fancy work in the shape of a locket. The presentation was made in the class-room, and tea taken in the ironing room.

But the evening was not entirely happy. The Matron recorded in her Journal, 'We decided that each woman who took part in the conspiracy should apologize [sic] to Maria for she was the one who arranged the address and each woman said how sorry they are so each one is at peace again.' It is not clear what the 'conspiracy' was, but the incident attests to the existence of a group of women who were not pleased to pay tribute to the Matron, or who used the occasion as a way to thwart a rival clique. There are many references to violent quarrels among the women, which the Matron tried to arbitrate. An apology was expected as the appropriate conclusion to such outbursts. This could be induced in obdurate women by locking them in a room until they had calmed down, and by counselling sessions with the Matron or Mrs Swinborn. The final sanction, rarely used, was expulsion from the

28 Ibid 5 February 1889.
29 Mrs Swinborn's Journal 14 July 1888.
30 Matron's Journal 16 July 1888.
31 Ibid 26 July 1889. Mary Jane Nichol, after a terrible fight with Polly Stripling, was locked up for four hours 'before she would give in'; ibid
Friendships between the women seem to have been among the most valuable benefits of a stay in the Retreat, but there was no way of maintaining these outside. Mary Jane Ball and Sarah Clark became attached to each other, but, the Matron records, 'MJ has been upset ever since Sarah went away. She misses her.' 33 But the dismal fact of the Retreat was that very few women were ever sufficiently strengthened to overcome their own habits and weaknesses, or to break through the structural oppression that awaited them outside.

Sarah Swinborn was fully aware of this. So were her daughters, Fanny and Sarah Dell, who took over from their mother after her death in 1902. Even in the leaflet they issued to raise money for the construction of the new building opened in 1914 (see illustration), they declare with startling honesty, 'we have to bear in mind the utter hopelessness, from a human standpoint, of effecting, in very many cases, any permanent reform.' 34

Fanny and Sarah Dell had not married. As young women, they were not much involved in their mother's projects, and when she died it was by no means easy for them to decide to carry on the Retreat themselves. In March 1903, the MCM committee was investigating the possibility of acquiring it as an adjunct to the Mission, 'as this institution was in a seemingly uncertain condition as to its continuance'. 35 By the following month, however, with the formation of a Council of Management, the Swinborn sisters did take over

24 March 1889.

32 Ibid 2 & 3 July 1889.

33 Ibid 20 April 1888.

34 Swinborn family papers, held by Mrs Swinborn's grand-daughter Mrs Stubington.

35 MCM Minutes 12 March 1903.
Laying the Foundation Stone of the
New Elizabeth Fry Retreat, 8 October 1913.

Key: 1. Margaret Swinborn and 2. Arthur Swinborn
and their daughters 3. Jean and 4. Pearl
5. Fanny Swinborn 6. Sarah Dell Swinborn
7. Miss Anderson, Matron for many years.
8. Fergus Robertson, Clerk of the Quakers' Meeting
9, 10, 11. Rachael, Marion and Margaret Hopkins
12. Mr. Crosby 13. Mr. Beale 14. Mr. Thomas Cook
15. Mrs. Edith Miller (Williams) 16. Dr. Fred Williams
17 & 18 Mr. & Mrs. Cruickshank 19. Mrs. Stone
(nee Norman-the Stationers) and her daughters
first woman doctor and 22. Dr. Mary Stone
23. Mrs. Alice Pierce and her daughter

(Names as recalled by Mrs. Pearl Woodward,
daughter of Arthur Swinborn. MCM photograph)
their mother's establishment. In 1914, they saw, with pride, the opening of
the new building, fully paid for without a mortgage, a fact which is still a
source of admiration in the family. Theirs was a life of service, in which
they laboured to run the Retreat with economy, so as to get full value from
each pound donated for its running. Sarah Dell made all the new garments
required by the women, on her sewing machine in her modest Glen Iris home.
Fanny, who managed the Retreat, had personal arrangements with Prahran
shopkeepers for the supply of unsold vegetables and meat, drapery lines
which were not selling or were seconds, cheap groceries and so on.

In 1944, the two women were forced by age to give up their active invol-
vement, and the Elizabeth Fry Retreat finally became part of the Melbourne
City Mission. In 1958 it was renamed Swinborn Lodge in honour of the
Swinborn ladies, and in 1974, was transferred to 4 Canning Street Carlton,
where it continues its original function of caring for women in trouble with
the law, although in a greatly altered way. The Argo Street property was
bought by Prahran Council, the building demolished and a small, delightful
park planted. Its fountain is named for the Swinborn family.

THE VDPAS, MRS SWINBORN AND THE CRISIS OVER FEMALE PRISONERS

The genesis of the Elizabeth Fry Retreat was in no way the simple resp-
ond to a need that Mrs Swinborn implied, in her interview with the Prahran
Chronicle reporter. In all subsequent accounts of the Retreat, too,
important stages were suppressed, which throw light on the behaviour of
Melbourne’s charitable individuals and societies in the 1880s.

The exact nature of Mrs Swinborn’s relationship with Dr Singleton
remains obscure. The two were very closely connected; they had both been
visiting the Melbourne Gaol, for over twenty years. There is a clear simi-
arity, in ideology and practice, between her Retreat and his Temporary Home
for Friendless and Fallen Women, established in 1870, both so different from
the other penitential refuges and charitable institutions. The formulation of ideas on the care of women was undoubtedly part of the regular conversation between the two people. Yet neither acknowledged any influence from the other. Both maintained the impression of having simply and spontaneously created their institutions to meet needs, as if the entire complicated context of Melbourne charity did not exist.

In particular, Mrs Swinborn's association with the Victorian Discharged Prisoners' Aid Society was never mentioned by her, or by any later writer on the Retreat. Yet she was a principal figure in the attempts of the VDPAS between 1885 and 1888, to provide specialized assistance to women leaving gaol. What follows is derived largely from the Minutes and Letter Books of the VDPAS, which provide a sudden and vivid insight into the activities of that body, and their connection with, and attitudes to, a freelance philanthropist like Mrs Swinborn.

From its foundation in 1872, the VDPAS was fully aware that 'the reclamation of discharged female prisoners is of vital importance to the community - morally and economically', and should receive special attention separate from that given to male ex-prisoners.36 Subsequent annual reports indicate much concern, but no action, except for the gathering of information, from all over the world, of other Prisoners' Aid Societies' policies and actions. Here the conclusion was reached that 'All female prisoners' aid societies employ homes of some sort or another.'37 Finally, in 1880, £250 was invested by the all-male committee 'as a nucleus of a fund for the aid of Discharged Female Prisoners'38, and by 1882, a Ladies' Committee had been appointed.39

From its inception, the Ladies' Committee was at loggerheads with the General Committee. The Ladies had done their homework thoroughly, and were

37 3rd Annual Report 1875.
38 VDPAS Minutes 11 July 1880.
well acquainted with the latest developments overseas. Since the early
1880s, those interested in Victoria’s penal system had taken up the new idea
of a probationary system of punishment, especially for first offenders. The
state of Massachusetts had inaugurated a scheme in 1878, whereby officers
were appointed to enquire into, and report to the court on the cases of per-
sons about to be sentenced, and to supervise those who were released under
certain conditions. A principal area of debate over the scheme in Victoria,
concerned the extent to which police, or other groups, such as charitable
organisations like the VDPAS, would be involved in probation duties. The
Ladies’ Committee of the VDPAS began planning, not only to set up a Home for
newly-discharged female prisoners, but for the implementation of a system of
probation for women prisoners, with themselves as probation officers. 40

The greatest publicist of the probation scheme was in fact an English-
man, and a former Director of Criminal Investigations (Scotland Yard),
Howard Vincent. He made a grand tour in 1884, via Massachusetts, taking in
New Zealand and Australia, meeting with political leaders to promote his
views on probation. Yet it is clear that the Ladies of the VDPAS were well-
formed about the scheme before Vincent arrived. It is possible that they
had read an address to the Social Science Congress by Vincent, which was
published in the Victorian Review in November 1883. They had certainly
formulated a definite scheme by February 1884. 41

This came as a disturbing jolt to the men of the General Committee of the
VDPAS. They had apparently envisaged the Ladies’ Committee as a docile
adjunct which would dutifully carry out their own instructions; the formula-

40 VDPAS Minutes 4 February 1884; Stephen White, 'Howard Vincent and the
development of Probation in Australia, New Zealand and the United
Kingdom', Historical Studies Vol 18 No 73, October 1979, pp 598, 602.

41 White ibid pp 602-3. White has demonstrated the extent to which
developments in penal systems overseas were monitored in Melbourne, by
looking at the Annual Reports of George Guillaume for the Department of
Industrial and Reformatory Schools 1882, and 1883, in which data on
probation is discussed. See pp 604-5. Guillaume was also a member of the
General Committee of the VDPAS, which, clearly, was fully aware of the
progress of probation schemes in other countries.
tion of policy, would naturally, they assumed, remain in their own hands. When the ladies requested the use of the bank account set up in 1880 for the benefit of female prisoners, the men saw this as providing the means by which the Ladies’ Committee could implement policies over which the General Committee had no control.

Ephraim Zox, MLA, the Chairman, led the first discussion about these developments, in December 1883. He objected to granting the Ladies’ Committee the separate bank account, arguing that ‘himself and other members were much in the dark as to its operations and intentions, whether the Ladies were acting independently or were co-operating with the General Committee.’ The invested money, he claimed in an interesting about-face, was not for female prisoners after all, but ‘was invested for prudential reasons.’ The Rev Short added his comment about the capacities of women to plan and execute projects and handle money: ‘they would find it all end in disappointment and failure.’ J C Lloyd, the Secretary, suggested the Ladies could make arrangements with existing refuges to take discharged female prisoners, if they wished, ‘instead of going to the expense of building, furnishing, matron’s salary and so on.’

The Ladies pressed on with their plans, under the leadership of 38-year-old Miss Henrietta Jennings, one of the redoubtable Jennings clan, almost all of whom were deeply involved in Melbourne’s charitable landscape. (Her father, Henry Jennings, has already been referred to in Chapter 3, footnote 9.) Other committee members, like Mrs Manifold, Mrs Tripp and Lady O’Loghlen, were socially prominent and active in charity. Early in 1884, they formally proposed the introduction of a full probationary scheme, which would require amendment of the law. This proposal, in eight firmly-worded points, was sent by the Ladies simultaneously to the General Committee and to the Chief Secretary. The men reacted angrily to this show of independ-

42 VDPAS Minutes 10 December 1883.

43 Ibid 4 February 1884. Undated copy of proposal, Inward Correspondence 1874-1885. The General Committee of the VDPAS, despite great interest in
ence, and its attempt to force their hand, and determined to restrict the
Ladies to working only for discharged prisoners. The financial starvation
was to continue. In a letter of 2 April 1884, the Secretary suggested
that if the Ladies saw their way to the necessary funds, great
good might be done by commencing a Home or Refuge on a small scale
for discharged female prisoners who will voluntarily enter it —
while until we have proper safeguards for retaining those who
decline the restraints of a refuge, it would be manifestly
injudicious to remove prisoners from safe Custody.

The matter was still being argued in June, the Ladies continuing to
prove ‘difficult’ to manage. By September, the Ladies had decided to hire a
lady visitor to attend the gaol to counsel and assist women prisoners on a
regular basis, although the men could not see any need for such a service.
What were the likely results? Who would pay the visitor? 44

At this point, the Society became aware of Mrs Swinborn and her proposed
Retreat. J C Lloyd, the Secretary, wrote to Miss Jennings to give her
the name of a Mrs J. Swinborn (card enclosed) who a few days ago
called at my private residence soliciting a subscription towards
the erection of a Female Refuge in consequence of the existing
refuges being inadequate for the accommodation of many seeking
after-shelter.

This lady, it appears, has for many years past been a regular
visitor at the gaol, and is said to have a great deal of influence
for good over the female prisoners.

The Committee think with me that she would be a very useful
lady for your committee...with her co-operation, the Ladies’
Committee might be enabled to commence building operations,
and...she would be a very suitable lady to be engaged as a Matron
to visit the Gaol. 45

Mrs Swinborn must have seemed to both Ladies and Gentlemen a gift from
heaven, since she promised to have exactly what the Society had been seeking
— a Home for discharged female prisoners, and a regular and trusted entree
into the Gaol. The Ladies met her, and forwarded a request for £50 a year

the idea of probation, the presentation of a paper on Vincent’s views and
a discussion at the Annual Meeting in November 1884, did not develop
concrete proposals to put to the government.

44 VDPAS Minutes 9 June, 15 September 1884. It is possible that the Ladies
were still hoping to create a female probation system, and that their
attempt to appoint a Lady Visitor was to prepare a lady for the position
of probation officer, by familiarizing her with the Gaol and with the
problems of female prisoners.

for the Retreat, if Mrs Swinborn received into it women that the VDPAS
nominated. 46 Again the men's committee became irritated and obstructive;
resolutions were passed demanding that the Ladies make no decisions or
proposals except through themselves, and that all money should be issued
officially from the General Committee, even money the Ladies themselves had
raised. 47 Eventually, Mrs Swinborn was invited to speak to the General
Committee about her Retreat, and the nature of her work. 48 Ever cautious,
the men also interviewed Mrs Gee, Matron of the Melbourne Gaol, who, as we
have seen, testified that Mrs Swinborn took women 'indiscriminately' into
her Home, where the worse 'contaminate' the better. 49 The men would take no
decision; matters dragged on; in January 1886, Miss Jennings had had enough,
and intimated that the Ladies' Committee was likely to disband.

Now that the Ladies were routed, and male authority restored, the men
decided, paradoxically, that it would be a good idea to employ Mrs Swinborn
after all. They offered her the post of VDPAS agent to care for discharged
female prisoners applying for aid, as it was 'the opinion of the committee
that Personal Supervision and a Refuge are both essential for the proper
treatment of female prisoners.' 50 She was appointed at £50 a year for one
year. 51 Rules were laid down for her guidance: she was to visit the Gaol
once a week to see women asking for aid; she was to forward her assessment
of each case to the Committee, and carry out its instructions; she was to
work entirely under the supervision of the General Committee. She was also
to get a free railway pass when it was necessary to visit a country gaol. 52

46 VDPAS Minutes 19 January 1885.
47 Ibid 30 March 1885.
48 Ibid 27 April 1885.
49 Ibid 1 May 1885.
50 Ibid 15 March 1886.
51 Ibid 17 May 1886.
52 Ibid 31 May, 6 September 1886.
The rules were clearly an attempt by the Committee to exert the complete control over Mrs Swinborn which they had failed to exert over the Ladies’ Committee. But Mrs Swinborn was to prove as awkward and intransigent over the next year as the Committee had found the Ladies’ Committee to be. She did not abide by their rules: she put in accounts for sums she had already expended on clothing for women leaving the Retreat for situations, instead of applying for the money in advance so the men could consider the case; she did not provide written records of the women taken into her Retreat under the Society’s aegis; she mixed up ‘her’ women with the Society’s women, and so on. In the meeting of 21 May 1888, her services were dispensed with,

on the motion of Mr. Looker, seconded by Mr. Cock, in consequence of the small results which have attended Mrs Swinborn’s engagement as Lady Agent for the past twelve months and the low state of the funds.

This was the death-blow for the committee’s interest in special provision for female prisoners; they could not see any way of conducting work amongst females without using ladies, and ladies were too irregular and independent in their behaviour to be successfully controlled. A motion moved at the 1888 annual meeting to revive the matter was firmly quashed in committee.

I have gone into considerable detail about Mrs Swinborn’s connection with the VDPAS, because it reveals important information about the relationships between different types of charitable enterprise, and between ladies and gentlemen involved in charity in the late nineteenth century. The ladies were particularly assertive and adventurous in their thinking on the treatment of female prisoners. They were confident of their right to act in this field of charity, and to establish an independent sisterly arm of the VDPAS. They entered the field with a flourish, but were eventually brought down by

53 Ibid 20 September, 1 November 1886; 2 May, 27 June 1887.
54 Ibid 13 December 1886; 7 February 1887.
55 Ibid 17 December 1888; 28 January 1889.
the obduracy and sheer unco-operativeness of the men's committee. Their only
way of retreat with dignity was to disband, and leave the field completely.
Again, the men's committee had completely unreasonable expectations of Mrs
Swinborn, imagining that they could interpose their own ideology and methods
of charity into her work, when she had been working in the field for twenty
or more years already. They sought to exploit the Retreat, which she had
created to fulfill her own particular vision, as an adjunct of their own
plans.

The area of prisoners' charity, like that of assistance to prostitutes,
was one in which aid could be given in such a way as further to punish the
recipients. It was possibly the least generous and kindly area of charity in
which to work, unless, like Mrs Swinborn and Dr Singleton, the charitable
were filled with an enormous compassion and sympathy for their clients. The
VDPAS Minute Books from 1872 into the 1880s in fact testify to a gradual but
inexorable hardening of the Society's attitudes to their clients, who
become, clearly, the enemy, to be endlessly suspected of perfidy and to be
dominated and controlled at all costs. As this attitude was developing, so
was the Society's meticulous, almost obsessive, attitude towards the keeping
of detailed and accurate files. They assumed these would enable them to
identify 'undeserving' prisoners, and thus prevent 'imposition' on their
funds. Almost anything could render a prisoner 'undeserving'. We learn, for
instance, that 'Mary Ann Thorpe [was] declined [aid] as she appeared with a
blackened eye.'56 This, somehow, provided evidence of her moral turpitude,
and hence her unworthiness to receive aid.

The records of the Society were diligently kept, and intending recip-
ients of aid were required to answer well over thirty questions before a
decision was made. This information-seeking was a source of complaint

56 Ibid 29 October 1877. This meticulous attention to record-keeping was a
characteristic of the English COS, and one of the hallmarks of the COS
movement, as Judith Fido has demonstrated. See her 'The Charity Organ-
isation Society and Social Casework in London 1869-1900' in Donajgrodski
(ed.) Social Control in Nineteenth Century Britain Croom Helm London 1977,
pp 207-230.
against the Ladies' Committee as well. Mrs Gee, Matron of the Gaol, testified 'that female prisoners who do not ask for aid complain of their Records being supplied to the Ladies' Committee, and the Ladies who go to see them reading over their crimes to them...' 57

The Committee increasingly came to be dominated by men of an authoritarian stamp, under the chairmanship from 1880 of E L Zox. He, and a few other long-term members of the committee - notably Messrs Cock (of the Benevolent Asylum committee) and Looker - came to dominate the activities of the VDPAS, to toughen its policies, and to over-ride 'softer' members like J C Lloyd. 58 The activities of the Society were gradually reduced by ever more precise regulation. Zox eventually carried the same rigorous attitudes and the devotion to orderly rule- and record-keeping over into the Charity Organization Society, of which he was Vice President.

Ephraim Zox was a successful clothier in the city. As MLA for East Melbourne, he showed particular interest in matters to do with charity, was a member of several charity committees, and sat on parliamentary commissions investigating Melbourne's charities throughout the 1880s and 1890s. He had the ear of two Premiers, Gillies and Munro, his social conservatism falling in nicely with their own. At the time when, as Chairman of the VDPAS, he was dealing with the Ladies' Committee, Zox was also contributing to the narrow and oppressive ideas of the Charity Organisation Society, formed in 1887, and dedicated to bringing 'scientific principles' to Melbourne's charities. Zox, as joint Vice President of the Society, was an active member of the

57 Ibid 1 May 1885. The VDPAS records in the LaTrobe Library op cit contain a list of thirty questions. Prisoners were quizzed minutely as to whether they had any family which could be expected to support them, for example.

58 J C Lloyd was a son-in-law of Jessie and Dr Adam Cairns, and a great worker for Presbyterianism in the state. He retired from the VDPAS in ill-health in 1885, and died in 1887. See Presbyterian Monthly and Messenger 1 January 1888, Vol 3, pp 19-20. W R Looker was a stock and station agent with extensive squatting interests in three states. As a prominent JP, he was chairman of the Bench in the Oakleigh District for many years. He was a lay canon of St Paul's, and secretary or treasurer 'to about a dozen institutions', according to A Sutherland Victoria and Its Metropolis 1888 Vol 2, p 568; see also J Smith (ed.) Cyclopedia of Victoria 1903 Vol 1, p 478.
In fact, the 'scientific principles' provided the COS with ideological ammunition for what Kennedy has rightly characterised as a charity war, in which the Society fought for nothing less than the complete control and supervision of all Melbourne's charitable bodies. A major thrust of this ideology was to convince Melburnians that much charitable aid was wasted through the overlapping of charities, and the deliberate exploitation of the charitable by large numbers of unscrupulous working-class parasites. Through application of strict principles of investigation of each applicant for charity, the COS offered the well-to-do the pie-in-the-sky of a more efficient and useful system of charity which would, simultaneously, save them money, and extirpate 'genuine' poverty.  

Naturally, many of these aims won support. But the COS had to convince the charities not only of the worth and utility of its ideas, but also of its respect for their own rights and charitable hegemonies. Kennedy describes its approach to the Melbourne Ladies' Benevolent Society, 'the great citadel of Melbourne's outdoor relief, which the COS must infiltrate, capture, or batter down if it were ever successfully to control the city's poor relief and repress "indiscriminate charity."' The Ladies' resistance to the COS, as Kennedy describes it, is remarkably similar to the battle between the Ladies' Committee and the General Committee of the VDPAS. In fact, Zox was experiencing a kind of dress-rehearsal in reverse for the battle he was to engage in with the MLBS, on behalf of the COS. 

Kennedy describes the terms of the battle between the MLBS and the COS: superficial co-operation and courtesy, subverted by the Ladies' use of techniques of stubbornness - the refusal to take, or refrain from taking, 

59 Richard Kennedy Charity Warfare provides a detailed study of the ideology and role of the COS in Melbourne. See pp 88-90 for Zox and the founding meetings of the Society.  
60 Ibid. Kennedy lists the nine objects of the COS on p 89.  
61 Ibid p 137.
certain actions - the falling back on technical rights, procedural
difficulties and so on. While Kennedy mostly characterizes this battle as
serious and well-understood by the combatants, he also, at times, sadly
misrepresents the role of the ladies. He under-rates their intelligence, as
did the men of the COS and the VDPAS. Mrs Turnbull's conscious and effective
policy of deliberate obfuscation, he avers, 'could be interpreted as being
quite clever.'62 The Ladies' refusal to co-operate he describes as 'an
endearing collective stubbornness', which he finds an 'amusing trait', as if
it were some kind of dull female stupidity, rather than a consciously-used
and most effective way of preserving the Ladies' hegemony. Worst of all, he
accuses them of 'play[ing] all the games of the conventional female', in
agreeing with, then ignoring the requests of the COS.63 We are meant to
disapprove of the guile of womankind.

What are we to make, then, of precisely the same techniques used by Zox
and his male VDPAS committee members against the Ladies' Committee? The
General Committee agreed to many of the things the Ladies proposed, but, by
inaction, stubborn refusal to assist, and the withholding of legitimate
funds from them on some spurious technicality, (not to mention Zox's use of
his parliamentary standing to subvert the Ladies' proposal to the Chief
Secretary of a probationary scheme for women prisoners), they placed an
obdurate and immovable block between the Ladies and their ability to realise
their aims. Are these to be seen as endearing (or whatever) traits peculiar
to the male sex? Are they not, rather, techniques of power-mongering, clever
ploys and manoeuvrings to thwart unwarranted attacks on a power base - no
matter what the gender of those resorting to them?

Kennedy has failed fully to realise the ferocity of the gender-war in
which charitable men and women were engaged, even while acknowledging that
the ultimate outcome was the routing of women from the only field of public

62 Ibid p 147.
63 Ibid p 143.
endeavour over which they had any control.\textsuperscript{64} For by promoting the 'science' of charity, charity was 'masculinized', turned into a utilitarian act of efficient administration, from which weak female 'sentiment' and 'unreason'\textsuperscript{65} were banished. This story should be told fairly, freed as far as is possible from the hackneyed jargon of sexism.

Mrs Swinborn was the antithesis of everything Zox and the committee strove to be. The VDPAS was directed to helping only those prisoners who seemed in their judgement likely to make good: Mrs Swinborn helped those who needed help, and especially those likely to be rejected by 'official' charities like the VDPAS. The Society demanded results - that is, people obviously reformed: Mrs Swinborn had to bear continual disappointments in this respect. The records of the Society were diligently kept: Mrs Swinborn's records can, at best, be described as sketchy - there were incomplete and badly-spelt lists scribbled in the back of the Matron's Journal for 1887, 1888, and 1889. The Society treated its clients dispassionately: Mrs Swinborn treated her women with sympathy and patience. But her lack of formal regulation and of positive results - of drunkards reformed, of prostitutes cleansed, of misfits made to conform - must have marked her to men like Zox as a philanthropic amateur, irrational and 'soft', a mere do-gooder. She and Dr Singleton were going against the main stream in not distinguishing, in their charity, between the deserving and the undeserving.

Mrs Swinborn must have been humiliated and hurt by her association with the VDPAS. She had accepted employment because she needed the money for her Retreat, and because the official acceptance of her as a VDPAS agent gave her greater status and access to gaols. It must have seemed to her to

\textsuperscript{64} Ibid pp 200-1.

\textsuperscript{65} Kennedy himself describes the flexibility of the MLBS in not rigorously applying categories of 'deserving' and 'undeserving', simply because many innocents would suffer, as 'unreason'. \textit{Ibid} p 145.
promise fruitful co-operation with another body working in her own field. Yet the VDPAS seemed niggardly and positively antagonistic to the welfare of female ex-prisoners, by limiting their interest and help to such a very narrow range of women. This same meanness had fallen on her as well. The positive consequences of this experience were that Mrs Swinborn never ever used or trusted a committee again, not even one of her own choosing. Both she and Dr Singleton isolated themselves, as far as was possible, from the interference of others, so as to be free of pressure to conform with ideas they could not agree with. 66

Mrs Swinborn and Dr Singleton did not want to be part of the more formal charitable activities in Melbourne, because they were not happy with much that was being thought and done by those in charge. Charity in Melbourne was limited in its vision, competing in its services, and dominated by the personal quirks of its organisers. The COS merely threatened to overlay a range of ideologies with its own version. However, the problem with individual foundations, like those of Mrs Swinborn and Dr Singleton, was, what would become of them when their founders died. Their institutions were kept alive by their daughters, assisted by committees, but when these ladies could no longer continue, nearly all the institutions passed into the care of the Melbourne City Mission; they still exist in some form or another today.

66 When Lady Loch visited the Retreat, she was most surprised at Mrs Swinborn's methods: 'having no com' [sic - committee] was such an unusual thing. 'Mrs Swinborn's Journal 1 August 1887. Dr Singleton's most famous clash with 'orthodox' charity was over the issue of how many Melburnians were actually homeless, and forced to sleep out. Kennedy has given an account of this confrontation ibid pp 108-110. It was the Secretary of the MCM, Rev J B Rudduck, who first took issue with Singleton's statement that hundreds slept out. He actually organised the unfortunate City Missionaries to comb areas of Melbourne on two cold winter nights in 1889; only a handful of homeless people was found. The news of the venture sparked off a lively controversy between supporters and opponents of Singleton. Jacob Goldstein contributed a condemnatory tract on behalf of the COS, titled The Homeless Poor. The Doctor ignored the debate. Instead, he opened two emergency night shelters.
Charity, as if it didn’t have enough trouble in this day and age, will always be suspected of morbidity – sadomasochism, perversity of some sort. All higher or moral tendencies lie under suspicion of being rackets.

Saul Bellow Herzog p 56.

There is some danger that the coming generations of historians, having little direct experience of religion in the conventional sense, will be too ready to collapse it into something else; most probably social protest or its converse, ‘social control’.

Patrick Collinson History Today

The Melbourne City Mission was a typical evangelical creation. The desire to evangelize overcame even denominational Protestant boundaries, and permitted common and unified action in bringing the Gospel to the godless. It provided one of the very few opportunities for upper-class Melburnians to learn about the life of the working classes.

Although its organizers and supporters were generally happy about its activities, and although its statistical lists – of converts and people ‘rescued’, of missionary visits made and meetings held – were impressive enough at most Annual Meetings to reassure, the committees were in the long term greatly disappointed that the Mission’s scope was so limited. The fervent evangelicalism of ministers and laymen and women in the 1850s, gave way in the 1870s and 1880s to a sluggishness, which required constant whipping up by famous visiting evangelists, and the spur of religious periodicals.

To committee members, the Mission had failed for clear-cut reasons: the
Christian churches did not support it, giving their first enthusiasm and their money to missions and charities of their own denominations. The MCM lay in limbo: its interdenominationalism had placed it in a no-man's-land, and it had become neither purely evangelical nor purely charitable. It was quite unable to cope with the enormous growth of its potential field of work, Melbourne's population. It suffered from being little known and quiet and modest in its public face, attracting, by the 1870s, dedicated workers rather than inspired publicists.

The catastrophe of the 1890s forced change and re-evaluation on the Mission. Current notions of greater social justice for the poor melded with the decision to set up Mission Halls and create centres for the poor which were concerned with both the spiritual and physical well-being of their clients. The willingness of clerics to make better use of the financial and business expertise of lay members resulted in a more soundly-based funding of the Mission. The City Mission Record became the central connecting point of the committee, the missionaries, the supporters and the clients.

Contemporaries had various opinions as to the MCM's worth and efficacy. In the continuing debate over how charity should be organized in the city, the MCM was several times suggested as the major co-ordinating body for Melbourne's charities, but it resolutely refused to take the direction later seized so assertively by the COS. The evangelical task was given primacy over the charitable until 1900: the committee was ever anxious that evangelism not be swallowed up in, or seen as only a component of, charitable activity. It is an irony that, in the twentieth century, the MCM

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1 See for example Minutes of evidence, Royal Commission on Charitable Institutions, V & P 1871, No 1, (v.2). Mrs Cairns, as President of the MIBS was asked about the MCM, 'As to that City Mission, could not the operation of it be so extended as to relieve the ladies, by affording them that information which they now have to seek for by their own labor?' Mrs Cairns answered that she thought the MCM would reject the idea, since 'they do not relieve'. p 22. See also Presbyterian Monthly Messenger, February 1883 p 100: a strong argument for increased exertion by the City Corporation, the Board of Health, as well as the combined Churches acting together under some such agency as the City Mission' to co-ordinate charity is called for.
was to succumb to the urgings of the earlier generations; many nineteenth-century charitable foundations eventually came under its control. These included the Elizabeth Fry Retreat, and the Homes of Dr Singleton and the Rev Cherbury, which, ideologically, had always had more in common with the MCM, than with the more grandiose institutions of main-stream charity. The MCM’s close links with the poor in their daily life had moved its sympathies and its activities in the opposite direction to that proposed by the COS.

The form of Christianity conveyed by the MCM to the poor concentrated on salvation, and although there was real concern that converts go to church, there was little interest as to where and how the client worshipped, so long as it was not in the Roman Catholic church, or with one of the fringe sects like the Plymouth Brethren. Its theology was of necessity both simple and basic, to suit the interdenominational nature of the venture, and offend no one.

Missionaries who survived the demands of the job generally enjoyed the chance to be paid for spreading beliefs which were vital to them personally, and which allowed them so many opportunities to ‘perform’ for an endlessly new audience. Many were pleased to have the power to design their own days’ activities; they relished their superior knowledge of things religious over the spiritually-untutored; they were proud to be in a position of discovering need and bringing aid to poor families, by directing charitable agencies to them. They were also worn by the constant emotional demands of the job, of coping with rejection, ignorance, rudeness, unresponsiveness. Many despaired at their inability significantly to ameliorate hardship, or to convert more than a small number to their beliefs.

Most clients regarded the missionaries’ visits as minor interruptions to their days’ activities. Christians and new converts found in them, support and encouragement and Christian teaching. Clients who were distressed did receive comfort and sympathy, a point worth noting at a time when charitable visitation is generally held to be a cold and intimidating act, as the title of Brian Dickey’s book, *No Charity There*, conveys. The care and interest of
the missionaries must be regarded as an achievement, when few agencies could help, and fewer offered sympathy and an attentive ear to the miseries of suffering people.

The missionaries' charitable assistance was not rendered at the price of pretended conversion. Clients were exhorted to turn to God, and had to engage in a certain amount of religious conversation, but the missionaries were hyper-naturally alert to any suggestion that a conversion might not be genuine. Clearly, the simple schema, following Kennedy, of the charitable act as an exercise of power by a forceful class over another essentially passive class, is inadequate to describe the complexity of these missionary/client interactions. William Hall's Statistics Sheet (following p 72) claims only 'Prof Con' - professed conversion - in his 'Remarks' column. On a matter as vital to the eternal soul as salvation, no pretence could be allowed. The best a missionary could do was present the life-giving message as persuasively as possible and hope for a positive and lasting result. We know that he or she was mostly disappointed.

The MCM was a major bridge between charitable agencies and their clients; its missionaries were intermediaries, whose role has been relatively unconsidered, but whose intervention altered the face of the charitable act. Although their visitation was irregular, they did return to particular families over days, weeks, months, even years, keying them in to a range of charitable services as needed, and facilitating the contact between client and charity.

The creation of small communities around the Mission Halls after 1900, contributed to the survival of many poor families, by providing them with membership of a supportive group. One can assume that the provision of occasions and a place for meeting, enabled women in particular, to strengthen and extend their informal networks of friendship, since they were denied the usual avenues by which men could get together - the pub, the Mechanics Institute, the Trade Union. Recent work by Ellen Ross in England indicates that informal networks were a vital means by which London women bore the
vagaries of their lives, and developed strategies for surviving better. The range of MOM Mission Hall activities eventually provided a social life for all members of the family, and connections with other families in a like position. These hidden networks of linked families brought together by the programmes of the Hall may have been the most important benefits and achievements of the missionary effort.


3 Gareth Stedman Jones 'Class expression versus social control? A critique of recent trends in the social history of 'leisure'', in History Workshop No 4. 1977, p 164.
In contrast, the marxist view of the relations of production emphasises that there is a continual and continuing antagonism between owners and controllers of the means of production, and the producers of the surplus. Class conflict is a permanent feature, while the notion of social control implies an episodic relation. The two concepts are incompatible. 4

The sociologists who used the phrase 'social control' were expressing a view of human nature, not of human relations. It was to account for the deviation of some individuals from, and their return to some proposed 'normal' order of human behaviour, in both its use by its creator, Edward Ross, and a later exponent Talcott Parsons. Their models are functionalist; how to ensure the conformity of the individual to the whole.

Stedman Jones' critique sought to clarify many issues raised in the study of leisure activities in nineteenth century Britain. The notion of social control has been used to conceptualise changes in working class leisure habits as the working out of middle class intentions to discipline the working classes, by directing them away from leisure practices deemed to be immoral and socially disruptive. This view grants the working classes no autonomy to sustain or change their own habits. It also seems to imply that the working classes would have burst into revolution (their 'proper' state) without the hoodwinking or diversion imposed on them by, say, methodism or football. 5

In Kennedy's work in Australia, the same sorts of unspoken assumptions are offered where charity is concerned. He seems to assume that the function of charity was primarily to prevent the working classes from becoming sufficiently desperate in their poverty to rise up against their oppressors.

The detailed study of the MCN demonstrates that this sort of notion is ultimately untenable, on many grounds.

First, the conceptualization of charity and evangelism as a potent one-

4 Ibid p 165.
way exercise of power over the poor cannot be sustained. All participants in the charitable and evangelical exchange were active, and mutually influential. Just as the evangelical charity worker sought to influence the poorer client, so that client to a significant extent set limits to the behaviour and influence she would allow from the visitor. This was far more pronounced with missionaries, whose spiritual message was not seen as being as vital as the food or money offered by other charitable visitors. But the client engaged in effective negotiation even with those giving aid. Even the defeated women of the Elizabeth Fry Retreat defined, to a large extent, the sort of treatment they would accept from Mrs Swinborn and her Matrons. (See Chapter 9)

Missionaries' behaviour and views were modified by the reactions and actions of their clients; likewise, committee men were influenced by their missionaries, even while they exerted influence on them. For instance, missionaries educated the committee on prostitution and Refuges, having themselves been educated by their experiences in trying to help prostitutes. This actually resulted in the creation of new forms of 'Refuge' (see Chapter 8). The older Refuges were seen to be failing because of the mismatch between what their clients would accept and what their organizers deemed they should have. Working-class men and women, and prostitutes, had their own systems of social order (control?), which provided them with a degree of immunity to the efforts of others to change them. The camaraderie of prostitutes provided them with a protective code of mutual help and friendship, a powerful incentive to remain as they were, rather than go to a Refuge. The social warmth generated by working class drinking habits was more than sufficient to shield men from pressure to give up drink.

Secondly, evangelism and charity were episodic, occasional interactions between missionaries and their clients. The study of the MCM at work makes it clear that even the poor of the working classes were not constantly exposed to the glare of purveyors of charity and religion. Indeed, as Kennedy points out, one of the principal objections of the COS to the status quo was
that charity was random and fragmented, and did not usually treat the whole situation of a client.\textsuperscript{6} The poor were, by and large, left to themselves, and developed strategies of their own, like the 'midnight flit', to cope with their circumstances. Only the completely helpless fell under the more total control of admission to an institution. Even there, their own behaviour was a major factor in the climate of the institution, and some of them still had the power to remove themselves from the institution, and did so.

Thirdly, the charitable evangelicals and their clients were not two clear-cut homogeneous groups. Many MCW workers were themselves members of the working classes, although the majority of aid-givers were of the middle classes. Male committee members were organizers and polemicists; charitable women were organizers and, more significantly, workers, and in contact with their clients, a difference in gender roles not sufficiently noted. Kennedy writes of charity workers in stern, often bitter language which lumps all the charitable together, as if they were homogeneous in all essentials, and largely to be condemned. He is prepared to allow Dr Singleton exemption, for his case is unavoidably admirable, as the Doctor's autobiography and contemporary reports testify. Singleton's views on women, the poor, the homeless etc might almost be modern, and it is much easier therefore to find them admirable. But Kennedy has little time for people like Mrs Cairns, who, despite decades of work for the poor, did not leave any justificatory autobiography of her life's work, as did the clever doctor. It is easy to maintain rage against faceless people, and treat them as types. In Mrs Cairns' case, Chapter 1 shows those conditions of her career which severely curtailed her effectiveness.

There were major divisions of opinion and practice among the charitable, and these were not merely a matter of degree, as Kennedy would like to argue. He assumes that because the MLBS remained associated with the COS, they basically accepted COS ideology. The two differed only on the degree of

\textsuperscript{6} Kennedy \textit{Charity Warfare} \textsuperscript{op cit} P 89.
ruthlessness to be displayed in their pursuit of efficiency and the rooting out of 'imposition'. However, groups may have associated with the COS for reasons other than ideological agreement. It would have been foolish to turn their backs on a centralizing, and potentially very powerful agency, which was, on its own admission, seeking to control the charitable scene; especially foolish, if a group's ideology was different in crucial respects. Mrs Swinborn was also a member of the COS, and her ideology was radically different. Yet, while they were members, she and others like her would, at the least, be able to monitor the latest developments in COS thinking and strategy, while at best, they may have been able significantly to affect decisions and policy, and to modify or recast the direction of the organization. Indeed, Mrs Swinborn and the MCM missionaries - working-class people by all definitions - fit awkwardly into any analysis of charity which is based on a rigid class schema. One of the difficulties in polarizing the charitable scene as part of the class war is adequately to explain what must then be seen as 'deviations' from that pure form. What are we to make of such people working within their own class as charitable evangelicals?

Are we to see them as betraying their class, having been inculcated with middle-class ideas? It is conceivable that their behaviour and ideas originated more in working-class conditions of life and cultural patterns, than from those of the upper classes. Certainly, many of the virtues supposedly emanating from the upper classes - thrift, industriousness and so on - of necessity, were practised most rigorously in the working classes. McCalman's Struggletown has demonstrated the truly local nature of many working-class virtues.

Certainly, in looking at the MCM and the Elizabeth Fry Retreat, it is difficult to get anything like an exact 'fit' between the notion that the upper classes control and the lower classes are controlled. The missionaries
and Mrs Swinborn were all members of the lower classes, but it would be simplistic to see them as in some way class traitors for purveying a cause said to be held only by the upper classes. There is no doubt at all that, on the one hand, they purveyed their own deeply held beliefs about religion and morality (which first came to strength in Wesley’s popular revival, but which historians now tend to see as largely those of the middle classes), and on the other hand, remained members of their class, without aspiring to middle-class social acceptance. They did aspire to respectability, as did most working-class people. But working-class respectability was not the same as middle-class respectability. The missionaries were constantly encountering industrious, thrifty, chaste, respectable families, whose members swore, or drank a little, or worked on Sundays. Virtue had different faces in different sections of the population.

The missionaries’ clients cannot be pictured as being under their control. The clients had most of the advantages in the relationship. They were on their own home ground, and the missionary spoke to them only with their permission. (Most work done by historians has been where the reverse was more normal.) Even if they needed help, the clients did not necessarily seek it from the missionary. The latter thus required constantly to modify his or her behaviour and strategies for appealing to the client. The behaviour of the clients in its own way ‘controlled’ what the charitable evangelical could do for or to them. Mrs Swinborn perceived this, and designed her Retreat accordingly, doing her best to make it the sort of place to which women wanted to come. Her constant adjustments to the daily patterns at the Retreat reflect her responsiveness to her clients, and her willingness to try for a more compatible organisation.

This is in no way to minimize the suffering of the poor, their victimization in the work force, and the sheer injustice of a charitable system that required yet more sacrifice from them in return for a pitiable level of assistance. It is, rather, to recognize the range and subtlety of the responses of the poor, and identify the ways in which transactions with
charitable evangelicals could be to some degree directed and altered by them. The poor are not to be characterized as a sullen and impotent mass.

It can be argued, indeed, that the MCM committee minimized its own opportunities for controlling the working classes in showing a strict respect for each individual's spiritual autonomy. For years the Mission refrained from extending its charitable work, not only because it was financially very difficult, but because it was feared that charity would divert from the missionary task itself, and that genuine conversions might not result if conversion were too closely linked with charitable support. Involvement in the contemporary ferment on social issues was seen by committee members such as the Rev J McL Abernethy as endangering the Gospel, not promoting it. The full commitment to charitable work was largely foisted on the MCM by its own missionaries in the 1890s.

In summary, then, the disciplinary influence of charitable evangelicals of the MCM on the poorer classes was as nothing, compared to the tyranny of the labour market, and the myth that Australia was the golden land of opportunity. In many respects, the MCM provided an inter-class connection which may not otherwise have existed, but failed to capitalize on this connection for much of its history. In fact, the MCM provided working-class people with the rare opportunity to reject with a flourish what they may have thought the upper classes were offering them: they could literally shut the door in the missionary's face.

Fourthly, historians must seek behind the intentions and motives of the charitable evangelicals, and examine the actual working out of their actions. It is clear that there were in fact two Melbourne City Missions. There was the MCM as presented by leading clerics and laymen at annual meetings, in the speeches delivered from Town Hall platforms and reported by the press, and in the rhetoric, statistics and subscription lists of the Annual Reports. The participants were male, socially conservative and 'important' in the affairs of the city. They often had only the flimsiest connection with the Mission, and were capable of flourishes of the following
Our own home heathen...are worse than the heathen. Are they to be left to anarchist agitators? Your Committee, in the strength of the risen and compassionate Christ, say No!

36th Annual Report of the MCM 1892

It is salutory to note that if a history of the MCM had been attempted using only these sources of information, and its Minute Books, then the historian may well have concluded that the organization was clearly an instrument of discipline and control over the working classes.

But the actual MCM at work was more the product of those whose voices were not often heard in public: the early committee women, the missionaries and their clients. The record of the missionaries' Journals demonstrates what in reality was possible. Missionaries were in no sense a foil for 'anarchist agitators'; for every conversion there were dozens of people who literally ignored them. The Journals show the great variety of life-styles and outlooks amongst working-class people, testifying to a richly complex culture which the term 'working class' only very loosely covers.

Printed descriptions, public speeches, and even case histories, may fall far short of an accurate representation of the nature of an organization. The viewpoint of such records is always that of the leaders, who intend certain things to happen, and who organize to act in certain ways. The rhetoric of intentions may sound confident, even over-bearing, and so may the declaration of results. These pronouncements are designed to justify the organization, ward off or answer criticism, and are read or heard by a very limited range of people, whose social status is equivalent to the leaders'. Yet the practice of the organization might be vastly different from the way it is pictured by its leaders, or certain sorts of onlookers. It is worth remembering that Police thought the Carlton Refuge a splendid and successful place.

This is a major drawback in Elizabeth Windschuttle's picture of the Female School of Industry in Sydney in the 1820s. She shows how the organizers intended a total control of their pupils, and is content that this is what actually occurred; the intimidating daily timetable is
reprinted in full. Yet she explains that, for reasons of economy, adult staff were few in number, and supervision was delegated to older pupils of the school. As recent studies cited in Chapter 8, footnote 76, have shown, the fewer the primary authority figures in attendance and fully committed to the institution’s ideology, the weaker the inculcation of that ideology, and the more scope for pupils to develop their own ethos and networks of power. Windschuttle has mistaken the organizers’ propaganda, designed to deflect the criticisms of those who were objecting to the school, for a description of what the school was actually like.9

Windschuttle concludes, in italics, that ‘social control was the overt aim’ of the ladies who ran the charity school.10 This is a curious conclusion, since an educational institution that does not control its students is unimaginable; the very act of teaching involves the selection of what is to be taught and the rejection of what is not.11 More useful and more important questions remain unanswered in her study. How thorough and complete was the control of the orphans, in practice? Is there evidence of girls expelled, or of alterations to the running of the school which might indicate that all was not running as smoothly as the ladies may have hoped? How far did their instruction differ from the instruction offered other girls in the 1820s, in private homes and schools?

Donajgrodski’s warning applies very much to Australian charity history:

To identify social control processes in religion, social work, leisure...is not to assert that the control element within each is

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9 Ibid. See quotes on p 19.


11 The ladies who ran the school appreciated this: ‘The Ladies’ Committee believed that it was not instruction or education itself that provoked dissent among the lower orders, but the ‘Species of knowledge communicated.’ Windschuttle ‘Feeding the Poor and Sapping their Strength: the Public Role of Ruling-Class Women in Eastern Australia, 1788-1850’ in Windschuttle (ed) Women, Class and History: Feminist Perspectives on Australia 1788-1978 Fontana/Collins 1980, p 68.
necessarily its main characteristic, still less its only meaning. Parents undertake control functions with respect to their children, and vice versa, but it would be a cynic indeed who saw this as the true and only meaning of family life.\textsuperscript{12}

Brian Dickey's use of particular sorts of public records in the construction of \textit{No Charity There}, may turn out to be its greatest limitation, a limitation of which he himself is aware. He concedes the picture is not complete:

\begin{quote}
It should be emphasized that...there is little or no evidence of challenges from the objects of social welfare action - the recipients - which has so far come to light.\textsuperscript{13}
\end{quote}

There are such records, as this thesis, and works like Margaret Barbalet's study of the South Australian boarding-out programme, attest.\textsuperscript{14}

Finally, the rigid application of social control theory to class analysis, may work only at the expense of ignoring or explaining away other important forces in society which cut across class. Two such forces which have been insufficiently considered in recent Australian writing have been the effects of gender, and the existence of religious beliefs.

\begin{quote}
Any study of the workings of gender must acknowledge that in a patriarchal society, the work and attitudes of women help to sustain male dominance. In this respect, both upper and lower class women were subjected to control by their men in nineteenth century Melbourne, in which they largely acquiesced, even while 'ladies' of the upper classes had more opportunities
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{12} Donajgrodski \textit{op cit} p 15.

\textsuperscript{13} Dickey \textit{op cit} p 69.

\textsuperscript{14} Margaret Barbalet \textit{Far from a Low Gutter Girl. The Forgotten World of State Wards: South Australia 1887-1940} OUP, Melbourne 1983.
for exercise of power than women of the working classes. Windschuttle and Kennedy both recognise this state of affairs, but have paid insufficient attention to the working-out of this competing, and more pervasive, form of social control.15

For it is clear that to place primary responsibility for the care of the poor on the shoulders of the ladies of the Benevolent Societies, both for the raising and distribution of money, was to reduce the significance and value of charity work, and minimize political interest in poverty. Not to pay such ladies for their work further trivialized their efforts, since payment places a formal value on an act. Voluntary work was, and is, respectable; but the very fact that it is voluntary conveys an impression, to those outside the organisation, that it is not essential, and that volunteers can abandon their work if they feel like it.

The complexity of the nature of voluntary work is conveyed by a later MCM worker, Sister Grace, wife of a Baptist minister Rev A W Bean, who ran an inner city rescue mission from 1912. In the midst of her Record of Daily Events for 7 January 1927, this passionate cry leaps from the page:

Mr Payne here again- He gave me information re Matron´s resignation & Mrs Lamb´s!!! There is a condition of things here which is far from fitting in with the scriptural idea of consecrated wholehearted service to God. The joy is quite taken out of my life & work through the place and favour shown to hired service - Quite Trade's Hall lines of conduct incompatible with free will devotion to God's work, or consideration of the claims of the works, or for my age, experience, or wholly honorary 16 yrs service.16

We see here the collision between an other-worldly view of the value of unpaid, untrained but dedicated work, and a worldly view of the value of paid and trained labour. The two positions were quite incompatible.

A woman's duty to work selflessly for others links with the whole undervaluing of women's work in the home, and the consistent underpaying of

15 See Kennedy opcit p34; Windschuttle '"Feeding the Poor and Sapping their Strength": the Public Role of the Ruling Class', in her Women, Class and History, p 59.

16 Sister Grace Record of Daily Events is held by the University of Melbourne Archives as part of the MCM papers.
her work outside the home. The primary reward for woman's work was social approval; commendation for being truly womanly. Thus voluntary work is prescribed by an ideal or sentimental view of womanly service; which, while wholly commendable, is, after all, only what was thought to be right and proper for women. Paid workers, however, work in a system of precise valuation for specific acts, in which a commodity – labour – and not a range of virtuous qualities – dutifulness, industriousness, kindness etc – is under consideration. Sister Grace saw that her womanly valuation – that is, the very virtues she was demonstrating daily – was being sabotaged. She felt her whole self under attack. This was the consequence of an assault on the voluntary role which professional training and pay was making more and more in the 1920s.

The trivialization of the work of voluntary workers continues today, and these ladies receive no mercy from the Australian historian. They are not considered fortunate that there was one constricted avenue for public work open to them. Rather, they are castigated for meanness, or worse, are treated as dull and stupid. Any shortfall in their behaviour is thus treated as if it stems from their own personal failings, rather than from any inherent social limitation on them. Even they distinguished between 'deserving' and 'undeserving' in their clientele; the modern historian has no such compunction. 17

Ironically, feminist historians like Windschuttle, are in the awkward position of condemning upper class women for exercising control over the poor through their charity work, when the same women were themselves acknowledged victims of male dominance. 18 As yet, there has been no reconciling of

17 Australia lacks a detailed study of charitable women of the kind that Frank Prochaska has provided for England in his Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth Century England Clarendon Press, Oxford 1980. A beginning has been made in Marilyn Lake and Farley Kelly (eds) Double Time: Women in Victoria 150 Years Penguin, Ringwood 1985. Jill Matthews Good and Mad Women: The Historical Construction of Femininity in Twentieth Century Australia George Allen & Unwin Sydney 1984 has provided a general schema upon which such a work might be based, which avoids the superficiality inherent in other models currently in use.

18 Windschuttle op cit.
these two positions: 'ladies' are either tyrannical and complacent, or helpless and oppressed.

Clearly, the level of importance granted to female charity workers also affects judgements made about female charity recipients, who make up the largest part of the poor.

There is a clear difference, in the understanding and approach to evangelical charity, between men and women. The men of the MCM committee demonstrate primarily a managerial and organizational approach to the task of the Mission. They worried about raising money, they set up regulations and guidelines; they collected statistics and ran grandiose Annual Meetings, at which it was customary for six or eight of them each to make a speech. They talked mainly in terms of men as their clientele, when most clients were women. They preferred methods of lecture, exhortation and instruction. They did not concern themselves with the domestic arrangements of their clients. They treated their missionaries as men of lower class, and were paternalistic towards their female missionaries. These were all attitudes and techniques of management transferred directly from their public lives as clerics and businessmen, and their private roles as masters in their own homes.

Male missionaries generally were well-disciplined workers, who fulfilled the terms of their hire obediently. There were few complaints against them for failing to fill in their Journals, or report to their Superintendents. Towards these, they were deferential. In their day-to-day relations with their clients, they treated the men as equals, on the whole, while expecting modesty and deference from the women. They were mostly married, and their wives were expected to support them in a wide variety of ways.

Female missionaries were far less well-disciplined members of the workforce. They came mostly from lower middle-class households, and had not been employed in other work before, unless it was voluntary charity work. Because they felt 'called' to their work by God, the instructions of the committee did not have priority over their own judgement as to what was right. They were less dutiful in, for instance, the completing of their Journals, when
they could see more useful ways of employing their time. They were likely to embark on projects without consulting the committee first. They suffered for their femaleness in attracting less status for the Mission from the community in which they worked, however practically valuable their work, thus provoking the MCM committee to adopt a policy of having both a male and female missionary in each district. They were single. If they were without a close working partner and friend, they were often lonely and depressed.

Members of the early MCM Ladies' Committee had a different view of the work to the men. They saw their clientele as essentially female; they ignored or failed to set up regulations, preferring instead flexible guidelines. They regarded the collection of statistics as of less importance; they aimed to purify and 'improve' people, and associated this with practical interference in domestic arrangements, either to relieve immediate want, or to provide personalized instruction and help in household management, care of the sick and of children. These, as with the men, were attitudes and behaviours transferred directly from their private life as household managers and mothers.

The female client, then as now, fails to achieve her central position in the landscape of charity. The great charity crises, like the 1890s depression, are generally discussed in terms of male unemployment, yet the continuing persistence of female poverty is, in the long run, far more spectacular to the historian. Working-class women were the victims of double oppression: the public structural exploitation of gross underpayment for, and limitation to, a small range of mostly unpleasant and arduous jobs; and the private oppression in the home brought about by their inferior status to their fathers, husbands and brothers. Much poverty and distress was inflicted on working-class women by their own men, and not necessarily because their men were under stress from unemployment. This potent and systematic working of a form of social control was more pervasive and active than the effects of occasional visitation by missionaries or charity workers. Ill-treated working-class women had almost no effective resources or avenues by which to amend
their lot. The Trade Unions of their husbands or fathers showed little or no concern for them. The law was inaccessible to them. They carried the major part of the burden of maintaining the viability of the myth of the sacred family.

The male client was usually ill or elderly; even when unemployed, he was not often accessible to the missionary. He treated the missionary as an equal, or near-equal, and was more likely to discuss theoretical than practical matters with him: the state of the economy or the political situation. He was more likely to be rude, and to deny access to the missionary, than was his wife. He would have little to do with female missionaries unless he was ill, or had suffered a painful bereavement.

In summary, the profound differences between the lives of women and men, were major determinants in their power and capacity to act for themselves and on behalf of others. Both sexes were limited in what was permitted to them, but women much more so than men, and the working classes much more so than the middle classes. Charitable ladies were severely constrained by their inferior status and knowledge, and thus charity itself laboured under gross limitations deriving from their powerlessness and lack of wider vision. The extremely low status of working-class women was the principal hindrance to their achievement of greater social justice; they were, by and large, invisible to those (males) with social, economic and political power.

The influence of gender as a vital social determinant in nineteenth century charity history, has not been given more than passing acknowledge- ment until very recently. Seminal work, by Jill Matthews and Kerreen Reiger on twentieth century femininity, and especially Marilyn Lake’s powerful argument for a complete revision of the historical context through a consider- ation of masculinist as well as feminist behaviour, have provided new direc- tions for the study of gender in charity history. Lake contends that current conceptual frameworks have ‘served to obscure one of the greatest polit- ical struggles in Australian history: the contest between men and women at the end of the nineteenth century for the control of the national culture.’
If Lake is right, that the ideal of the Domestic Man, and the central position of the family, was a major part of the rise of evangelicalism, then the work of charitable evangelical men and women, and the campaigns against selfish male habits - drinking, gambling, the double standard of sexual morality - fought by them, become intelligible in a context far different from a narrow class analysis, or even the pale dichotomy of 'respectable' and 'unrespectable'. As Lake argues, 'to depict women's concerns with temperance and social purity in terms of 'respectability' is to ignore the sexual politics; to describe the campaigners as Wowsers is to stigmatise them in the language of their masculinist enemies.' Kennedy's twentieth century abusive derision of charitable women only continues the vitriolic posturing of nineteenth century masculinists. Lake's view may provide a more fruitful path to follow than the single-minded pursuit of 'villains' which has dominated charity history writing to date.19

The deletion of a consideration of religious belief from history-writing is like the deletion of a consideration of the place of women: it gives the impression that religion, or women, don't matter; that they are peripheral to what is really important in society. The nature of religious belief has been almost entirely unconsidered in recent Australian writing on charity. It is impossible now to write from within a Christian world-view; Christian-

19 Matthews op cit; Kereen Reiger The Disenchantment of the Home: Modernising the Australian Family 1880-1940 OUP, Melbourne 1985; Marilyn Lake 'The Politics of Respectability: the Masculinist Context', is the fourth in a series of Historical Reconsiderations by various historians. Historical Studies Vol 22 No 86, April 1986, pp 116 & 127. Lake and Kelly's collection of biographies of Victorian women in Double Time op cit includes five nineteenth century charity workers, so that some comparisons are becoming possible about such women. One interesting similarity is that, like Mrs Swinborn, Selena Sutherland, Marie Kirk and Bessie Harrison Lee were all of very humble birth and social status, and all accustomed to poverty at times in their own lives. The stereotype of the middle-class charity worker does not fit.
ity has become, for many, another of the great ideologies of time past which have tramelled the world's peoples. Australians are now far enough away from absorption by Christianity, intellectually and morally, as to be increasingly less capable of imagining the nature of men and women who were fully convinced of a Christian world view. In this sense, much of the nineteenth-century world has become alien territory.

However, our culture is not sufficiently divorced from the claims of religion that it can think dispassionately about it. There is still much anger and contempt to be felt in the work of non-Christian historians in whose youth Christianity still claimed to be a, if not the, central binding force of society. Further, the form of Christianity imbuing nineteenth and early twentieth century Australian society, was intimately connected with an extreme form of social respectability and the rising power of the middle classes. Two consequences have resulted: Christianity has been dismissed as being no more than part of the ideological weaponry of the ruling classes, and conversely, the working classes have been asserted to be, in their 'true' state, irreligious, that is, uncontaminated by Christianity. Any working-class Christianity that can be detected is presented as deriving from middle-class interference.

In Australian history writing, this is the view taken by Kennedy and most other historians. Brian Dickey runs against the stream in this respect. Very little work has been done on the nature of working-class religion; the focus has been on the middle classes as purveyors, rather than on the working classes as recipients, as in the work of Bollen, and the tracing of denominations by Renate Howe (the Wesleyans) and H R Jackson (Congregationalism). Only Blair Ussher's recent work on the Salvation Army provides an alternative framework.

Hugh McLeod has surveyed the work of historians in Europe and America on the role of religion in cities, and rightly points out that these works concentrate on the notion of an ever-advancing secularization. In urban studies, this has become a given, which effectively shields the historian from the need to examine the persistence of working-class religious urges. The works McLeod cites provide extensive reasons why religion does not establish itself in the lower classes in cities.21

Close study of the work of the McM shows a much more subtle situation. The daily journal entries of the missionaries indicate that there were groups of active and committed Christians in the working classes. These were people for whom Christianity gave comfort, and explained the world in a way they found believable. They seem in their response to, and use of Christianity, to endorse Geertz's analysis:

the strange opacity of certain empirical events, the dumb senselessness of intense or inexorable pain, and the enigmatic unaccountability of gross iniquity all raise the uncomfortable suspicion that perhaps the world, and hence man's life in the world, has no genuine order at all - no empirical regularity, no emotional form, no moral coherence. And the religious response to this incoherence is...the formulation, by means of symbols, of an image of such a genuine order of the world which will account for, and even celebrate, the perceived ambiguities, puzzles, and paradoxes in human experience. The effort is not to deny the undeniable...but to deny that there are inexplicable events, that life is unendurable, and that justice is a mirage.22

Many of these Christians were women to whom life had dealt severe blows; alcoholics like Mrs Mouldy (see Chapter 7), widows like Mrs G. (see Chapter 4). For them, there was no escape from their class or the hardness of their lot. Christian belief allowed them to conceive of an alternate and ultimate reality, in which they were not victims or despised, but loved creatures equal with others. Belief could not eradicate their suffering, but it made

21 Hugh McLeod 'Religion in the City', Urban History Yearbook 1978, pp 7-18. Work by writers of the French school of sociologie religieuse inspired by Gabriel Le Bras, and of the Chicago school of urban sociology are cited. Renate Howe’s 'The Response of Protestant Churches to Urbanization in Melbourne and Chicago 1875-1914' PhD University of Melbourne follows the work of this latter school.

it sufferable.

But the clearest evidence we have that this was indeed a living and life-transforming belief is the daily behaviour and writing of the missionaries themselves; one cannot read page after page without being totally convinced of the reality of their faith to them, a faith so powerful that they could use their own bereavements as a source of encouragement and 'improvement' for others. They are not campaigning for the upper classes; they are speaking for, and of themselves.

The missionaries in Melbourne match closely with those described by Warren and Gunson (see pp 68-9), and Hugh McLeod in his work on nineteenth century London:

> Working-class religious converts were mainly drawn from those with ideas, in search of meanings, systems, explanations...

although they were not all 'drawn from the more prosperous sections of the working-classes - those whose lack of status and power was more acute than their material need'.

Their motives cannot be reduced merely to ambition to rise in personal power to escape from the limitations of their class.

Very real problems remain for the historian, even if we establish the reality of belief to some individuals. Middle-class contemporaries were constantly wringing their hands in public over the irreligious nature of the masses; indeed, they are often cited by historians as supplying irrefutable evidence that religion was a middle-class monopoly. What they were really saying, though, was that the working classes did not attend their churches. This is quite a different thing.

From the evidence of the Journals, there appears to have been a vigorous Christianity amongst the working classes, but it took a different public form to that of the middle classes. Gospel Halls, not categorized by the establishment as Churches, appear to have had regular enthusiastic congregations; there were such Halls in all the suburbs in which the missionaries

23 Hugh McLeod Class and Religion in the Late Victorian City London 1974, p 283.
worked. Open-air meetings were not entirely random events, and certainly were not only for light entertainment. The meeting on Sunday afternoons at the gates of St Kilda Cemetery begun by William Shepherd, and continued by his successors - William Hall appears to have preached there for years - was clearly well-established, and must have attracted a regular clientele, who were capable of turning out even on wet Sundays in winter. Hall regularly notes large crowds of people.

There is evidence that members of local churches assisted in the less formal forms of working-class worship. Many of those who, for instance, sang in the choirs associated with Dr Singleton’s Collingwood Mission Hall, were attendants at nearby churches. Other 'respectable' local people also assisted in the services, and made the Mission Hall their social and religious locus, while not being church members elsewhere. An elderly man explained to me that his mother dressed in her best dress, with hat and gloves, every Friday night, to sing in one of the Singleton choirs; he located the family by explaining that they could not afford meat more than once a week, and then only sausages. Yet for his mother this was the most important event in the week; it was in this activity that she constructed and re-affirmed reality for herself. We have already seen the extensive numbers associated with MCM Mission Halls, for social but also religious reasons. Indeed, religious members of the working classes seem to have had a far more responsive structure for worship than the middle classes. They were not even bound to the Sunday service.

While working-class patterns of worship were attractive, the nature of middle-class churches actually repelled the working classes. Besides the inflexibility of the time and form of worship, there were other rigidities. The custom of hiring pews by the year inevitably divided the congregation, separating the wealthy and the poor. The level of good dress prevented many poor people attending decently and unobtrusively. The Napier Street Presbyterian Church in Fitzroy had a Collection Book in which the offering of each person in the congregation was noted down against his or her name,
beginning with the Rev Robert Hamilton and his family; the Rev Mr Hamilton was a committee member of the MCM from 1856 until his death in 1891, and Secretary for fifteen years, yet in this area, the rigour of formal Presbyterianism worked against the poor attending his own church. The formal language and theological cast of Hamilton’s sermons likewise may have proved inscrutable to poorly-educated people not fully au fait with colonial Presbyterianism and its Scottish origins. Why go to hear him, when a perfectly comprehensible, and certainly more enjoyable service could be had, in the nearby Mission Hall, led by a preacher - a man or a woman - who spoke an understandable language, and inspired by lively, modern music by Sankey or other contemporary chorus writers? Working-class Christians were freer in their faith; even 'backsliding' - the temporary loss of faith - was far more tolerated and understood. Moral lapses, likewise, were more kindly treated; the working classes were permitted to be less perfect than the middle classes.

We are talking, essentially, of alternate forms of Christianity, each suited to people of different economic and social circumstances, and with different cultural frameworks. The middle classes bewailed the ignorance of the working classes, when in many respects they had much to learn about the Faith and its public conduct, from their inferiors. Indeed, the cultural alliance of nineteenth-century middle-class religion with respectability and rurality has so dominated our vision that it was, and is, very easy to equate the one with the other.

While Christians were very much in the minority in the working classes (if we judge by the response of people to Hall’s evangelizing; see Chart 10 following p 107), their numbers probably reflect more accurately the percentage of genuine believers in a population than the inflated numbers in middle class churches. It was Martin Luther who declared that the number of true Christians in a population was likely to be small; this may well be

24 Luther, On Governmental Authority 1523. Luther’s notion was entirely against the hopes of evangelicals, who were filled with the vision of
true of Melbourne's middle class church-goers. Attendance at a church was a well-nigh obligatory act for anyone intending to demonstrate his respectability and moral rectitude. It is clear that Melbourne's churches contained many who had a very tenuous interest in the doctrines of Christianity; William Hall records that the Pomeroy family were attending church since Mr Pomeroy had given up drinking, but stresses that they were not converted. The act was purely to claim respectability. Perhaps the emphasis of historians should be reversed; the irreligion of the middle classes may need more attention than that of the working classes.

The case of Mr Pomeroy also demonstrates that although a missionary could exercise a powerful persuasion over some of his clients, it would be unwise to assume that he was then able to control what the client did with his teaching. Pomeroy used the Pledge Book and the moral precepts offered him, to the extent that he became 'respectable' enough to attend church; church attendance then confirmed his respectability. But Pomeroy was not at all interested in the spiritual world described to him by Hall. He fits comfortably with theories of religion which suggest its real function is the inculcating of a morality that will further the ideals of respectability and social mobility in this world. Mrs Mouldy, on the other hand, took fully into her heart the spiritual message, and persisted in it long after Hall had thrown up his hands in bewilderment at her state, for his moral teaching had had no effect on her drinking at all. Mrs Mouldy and many other poor Christian women are recognizable figures in Marx's picture of religion as that which reconciles helpless oppressed people to the inequalities and injustices of this world, by offering them a deferred reward in the next.

The working-class churches were promoted by evangelical middle-class

converting the world. The evangelicals' obsession with statistics - for church attendance, for converts made - demonstrates a concern with quantity rather than quality which is the very reverse of Luther's assertion.

25 William Hall's Journal 3 & 17 October 1890, 30 January 1891, 1 & 20 May 1892, 2 & 16 April 1894.
Christians; they provided funds for missionaries, buildings or land, and regular support for Gospel Hall programmes. Preachers and workers were supplied from the ranks of working-class converts. There would have been much less formal religious activity in the working classes without middle-class organization and interference. But this interference was not an effective form of social control, for the working-class 'churches' produced by their activity were quite unlike conventional churches, although the Christian doctrine and morality preached were broadly the same.

Numbers could be considerable at times of intense missionary activity, with hundreds attending a week or two-week programme of evangelical meetings, but clearly there was a significant wastage as new converts 'backslid'. Since being religious was far less important to one's status in the working classes than in the middle classes, this was quite easily done. If one lost interest in religion, there were fewer other reasons for continuing the connection with a Mission Hall, especially for men. As the case of the Pomeroy attests, the reverse could be true for the middle class churches: one might choose to attend church for a wide variety of reasons, none of them to do with religious belief. Not for nothing was the charge laid against many middle-class church-goers of hypocrisy.

The missionaries were aware that the number who 'stood' was small. We can assume that these made up the genuinely religious of the working classes, whose lives were transcended and their thoughts on life recast, as a result of their acceptance of Christianity. Clearly, a great deal more work remains to be done before a full picture of working-class religious activity can be drawn.

26 I am talking here of 'churches' in Mission Halls in very poor districts like Collingwood, and generally attracting the poorest clientele. There must surely have been other forms of working-class church, perhaps made up of the families of respectable artisans, whose church-going may have been seen as an essential element by which their sub-culture expressed its collective identity, and individuals their worth and respectability. Work needs to be done in this area.
When all the strands - class, gender, religious belief - are drawn together in the work of the charitable evangelicals of the MCM and the EFR, several important issues, which have been largely over-looked, over-simplified, or mis-represented in the broad polemical sweep of recent Australian history, come into focus. These issues concern the nature of class interaction; the extent of the power of the MCM and the EFR; the strength and nature of working-class religion; the consequences of the double difficulty of being female and its effect on charity; and the nature and motivation of working-class evangelists.

Interactions between the MCM and their clients cannot be conceived as being sorties in a class war, in which a helpless class was at the mercy of a sharply-aware and dominant ruling class. Clients actively participated in interaction between themselves and the MCM, and had their own cultural expressions of religion. Rather than being powerful dominating organisations, the MCM and the EFR were poorly run, and stumbled along from year to year. Their administrators were at the mercy of broad economic, social and political movements, which they did not fully understand and could not control. They depended for their own existence on charity, struggling to exist on inadequate and fluctuating donations from well-wishers. They were run, not by powerful thinkers or social activists, but by quiet hard-working and often dull people. Such people could undoubtedly have been more potent in their influence over their clients, had they been better organised and better supported by their peers. They were sustained in their luckless tasks by a spiritual vision, and so intent were they on it, that other forms of apprehension about society were closed to them. The process of thinking more widely about the nature and actions of the MCM, was effectively delayed until 1900, but the actions and ideals of the Mission thereafter were more generous and understanding to their clients, rather than less so.

Ignorance and goodwill mark particularly the ladies connected with the
MCN. Nowhere is there found the assertion of class discipline as an overt aim; indeed, the early committee women saw their work as the 'missing link' binding the classes together in sympathy. If, in the exercise of their task, this romantic notion meant that the ladies instructed the women in economical housekeeping, was this practice dangerous or harmful to either party? None of the ladies is remotely like the 'God's gestapo' of Kennedy's invention.

The missionaries and Mrs Swinborn typify those members of the lower classes who aspired to a level of respectability and morality usually associated with with the middle classes, but who showed no interest in 'upward mobility', no wish to 'escape' their social origins. In this, they cut across the conclusions of many historians, such as Gunson and McLeod, for whom upward mobility has explained much, if not all of the motivation of working-class missionaries. Their lives are marked by many of the economic hallmarks of working-class families: fluctuating income, no security of employment, a life in rental accommodation in working-class suburbs. Yet they were in no way demoralized or resentful of their lot, and attained a level of dignity and settled satisfaction, in large part attributable to the deep security of their religious beliefs, which markedly altered their perception of the meaning of life-events and situations. The emotional commitment others put into their economic advancement, the development of radical political or social ideas, or the pursuit of pleasure, these people expended in pursuing their faith.

Their Christian clients were similarly preoccupied. Women of the working classes, in particular, seem to have been attracted to the alternate perspective that religion provided, since their social, economic and political ignorance and impotence, left few other avenues by which they could recast their lives in a more satisfactory form. Even the pursuit of pleasure was a severely limited prospect. The Mission Halls drew such women together into small identifiable groups.

Most recipients of temporal aid were poverty-stricken women, children, the frail elderly, or the sick - all groups with little or no active partic-
ipation in the capitalist work structure and no unity among themselves, and thus of peripheral interest to workers and employers alike. The revolution was not to be started from their ranks. The MOM and the EFR at least offered a little support and consolation to them; people whose disadvantage was often so severe that they were almost treated as aliens in their own society. There was certainly a class dimension to the whole notion of evangelising the lower classes, but this was diffused to a degree by the use of lower-class missionaries, whose work on behalf of their masters was mediated by their own social origins and habits. The class relationship at its most dominating is to be found in the interactions of missionaries and committee men, not in those between missionaries and their clients.

Non-Christian clients responded to the missionaries or not, as their moods and natures dictated, and they made use of them in times of crisis as a valuable source of advice, a charity contact, or simply a sympathetic ear. We see them vigorous in resisting anything they saw as imposition, and calculating as to how best to use any possible services. There is little trace of a cowed and passive population; rather, the reverse. People showed remarkable resilience in coping with problems, and the majority were unlikely to use the services of a charity unless in an extreme position of helplessness, and then, if possible, only until the crisis was weathered.

The MOM came to its clients bearing gifts, but this study has shown that the gift relationship, rather than being a straightforward expression of power, was extremely complex and not all in the favour of the giver. People were not obliged to accept the gift, and those who did could not be made to use it as the givers intended. Such conclusions can only be drawn from material which reveals the responses of the clients, as well as the intentions of charitable agents. The 'thick description', to use Geertz's phrase, made possible by the surviving Journals of the MOM and the EFR, uncovers the richness and complexity of the lives of nineteenth century Melburnians, and the people who spent their lives ministering to them.
APPENDIX

Data on the Inmates of the Elizabeth Fry Retreat 1886-1890

Sources: Journals of Sarah Swinborn 1887-1890
Matrons’ Journals, Elizabeth Fry Retreat 1888-9
Occasional references to earlier dates from lists in the back of the Matron’s Journal.

Abbreviations:
- S Sarah Swinborn’s Journal
- M Matrons’ Journals
- EFR Elizabeth Fry Retreat
- G entered EFR from Gaol
- HMG Her Majesty’s Gaol

the lanes the prostitution district round Little Bourke Street

Mary Jane Ball
1 March 88 M -Mrs Woods called, MJB had gone & not returned. 6 March 88 returned to Mrs W. 20 April 88 upset about S Clark leaving. 21 April 88 very angry. 6 July 88 was going with M to Gallery, but in bad temper. ‘a great trial’. 28 September 88 sister came to get MJB to ‘take her place, but it would not be prudent, so a refusal has been sent’. 29 September 88 ‘a peice [sic] of work with MJ this morning she was in a storm’. 9 November 88 has promised to go for a week ‘to see whether she can manage’. 12 November 88 to Mrs Bennison’s. 10 December 88 going to Mrs Webb’s. 13 December 88 visited EFR, seems all right. 14 December 88 Mrs B called; MJB lying drunk in garden. M went; ‘the snails crawling over and such crowds of people’. Back to EFR.

Charlotte Barrett
14 July 88 S -gave Matron a cord locket made by herself. 24 September 88 M - ‘poor little’ CB gone; ‘whatever took her away I cannot tell...most grieving’. 5 October 88 in, ‘in a most disreputable condition. full of drink, been taking opium’. 18 October 88 Louisa Chinque in the lanes said CB had been locked up. 22 October 88 S went to pay her fine ‘but she was so rude & said she would stay her time & go to the [Salvation] Army’. 5 January 89 in HMG, acting insane through drink; put herself in front of a tram to stop it. 1 February 89 M -out of gaol. 22 August 89 S -brought her in from HMG.

Mrs Berry
12 March 89 M -brought to S by husband, drinking problem. 2 July 89 ‘spoke roughly’ but apologized. 9 July 89 daughter Ellen visited.

Hanna Bowen
4 October 88 M -her son came for her. I do so fear for this poor old woman she is very good in her own eyes’. 11 March 89 in, drunk. 26 March 89 out; ‘just ruination to the poor woman’. 3 July 89 brought in by [City Missionary] Mr Shepherd.
### Maria Burton

- **14 July 87** S -in. 11 January 88 refused to do washing, later apologized. 17 February 88 out, 'sad at parting'.
- **26 February 88** visited EFR; likes her situation.
- **21 March 88** came in worn out & drunk at 10.30 pm.
- **26 March 88** unsettled. 'something so noble in her'.
- **27 March 88** wanted to go, not allowed until S came.
- **28 March 88** out. 8 April 88 drinking, wanting to come in. Back at night, talking through the fence.
- **10 April 88** drinking. 11 April 88 came in at 3.00 am cold & miserable. EFR full, but 'I laid her down in the passage'. 14 July 88 S -been hostile & ruined MB's effort. 2 October 88 got her 'at the collars'.
- **5 December 88** 'in distress about her husband went to Galachana [Salvation Army Home] about her portmanteau and got it'. 6 December 88 husband 'in a drunken fury...I went round with her and the man locked me in'. 7 December 88 took some drink this morning.
- **18 December 88** drinking next door. Wanted to come in, but was refused. 19 January 89 S -14 days or fine for drinking.

### Mary Ann Bushby

- **18 April 88** M -in country situation 10 weeks, came to town, has spent all. 31 May 88 fuss, angry with Sarah.
- **2 June 88** M trying to get her things out of pawn.
- **22 June 88** refused to drink from cracked cup.
- **7 August 88** quarrel with E Barrie. 8 September 88 'in one of her miserable tempers again'. 11 September 88 another outbreak. 21 November 88 Mrs Morgan says she is drinking on the job & wants her to leave.
- **22 November 88** 'here 3 times taking the drink, losing her clothes'. 26 November 88 staying for a few days.
- **25 January 89** 'full of sorrow & not comfortable in her place'.

### Alice Carstairs G

- **19 August 86** S -in from HMG. 2 April 87 'she wants locking up for life'. 15 November 87 'went over the fence', at fence disturbing Maria Lawson. 18 April 88 in from Immigrants' Home 18 April 88 M - 'very weak; seems nothing for it but to take her in'.
- **29 January 89** 'giving as much trouble as possible'.
- **30 January 89** out; deliberately ruined brown dress so no one else could have it. Denied this, 'showing such a proud wicked spirit'. 1 February 89 at corner cottage, drunk. 4 February 89 S -drunk and abusive about EFR. 4 February 89 M -drunk, brought by PC, refused entry, taken in cab to watchhouse.
- **5 February 89** went to Immigrants' Home.

### Louisa Chinque

- **9 January 88** M -tried to run away with Emily Murphy. S brought her back. 26 January 88 unsettled. Wanted to go but was talked out of it. 10 February 88 ran away.
- **11 February 88** at EFR for her clothes; 'she coolly says she is going to go on as before'. 1 July 88 Mrs Langlands brought 'poor Louie' in. 17 July 88 'took her to Chinaman but he wouldn't let her have her clothes'. 18 October 88 seen in lanes. 16 December 88 in. 17 December 88 feeling very bad. 24 January 89 getting tobacco through fence from E Edwards.
- **10 February 89** disappeared.
Sarah Clark

17 September S -in. 22 October 87 in 'in a terrible plight'. 17 April 88 to situation at Mrs Bell's. 'she was much broken up at leaving'. 2 May 88 left situation. 18 May 88 S -drinking. 23 May 88 M -drinking. 9 August 88 brought in drunk.

20 February 89 arm getting better. 22 February 89 out; a 'great storm...she said she did not understand about the nine months'. 8 March 89 M visited her; well. Sent her clothes to Dr Singleton's Shelter. 14 March 89 in lane by EFR drunk & swearing. 17 March 89 brought in by [City Missionary] Mr Shepherd; in for 12 months. 27 March 89 out.

Louisa Collins

13 January 87 S -getting situation for her.
19 January 87 still trying. 20 January 87 advertised again. 28 January 88 M -wanted to come in, but would not give up packet of snuff. 29 January 88 came in frozen; snuff gone 'so I just took her and put her to bed.' 6 February 88 found trying to leave.

7 February 88 saw Mrs S; no letter from her husband, wants to go. 11 August 88 in, drunk, with Lucy.
28 August 88 out. 19 September 88 'showing her spirit of independence' wants to go; 'most hurtful for her'.
31 October 88 out. 'I do not know where it is to end for the poor girl'. 24 November 88 S -in HMG again; she needs 'locking up altogether'. 22 February 89 M -came asking to be taken in, & was. 23 May 89 trouble. 'She is a very unsatisfactory character'. 19 August 89 to situation. 25 August 89 came to tea. 30 August 89 left job. 1 September 89 in, drunk; 'poor girl looks very miserable'. 16 September 89 her things sent back from her St Kilda situation.

Louisa Davis

21 March 87 S -seen in [Bilking] Square. Taken to EFR.
12 February 89 Morgan alias Davis wants to come in.
13 February 89 came in cab 'fearfully bruised'.
13 February 89 M -brought by Mrs Silcock 'dreadfully used, her ear terribly swollen and cut'.
27 February 89 very poorly again; Dr says to take care of her. 5 March 89 very angry when M objected to her writing to 'that man'. 6 March 89 back to her usual humour. 16 April 89 quarrel with M Egden. 20 April 89 'poor Louie put out about staying nine mth, would go, it is such sorrow to let these poor girls go'.
31 May 89 Mrs Silcock [sic] brought her. Says she'll stay 12 mths, 'but I fear she will not settle'.

Miss Dandy

5 May 87 S -on remand; daughter of C of E minister, stealing for boyfriend. 14 May 87 will stay with Mrs Bush in Brunswick if let off, till she can be got home; 'have not much faith that she will keep her word'.
Margaret Dowsett  
11 October 87 S -letter from her to come in from Geelong Gaol for 6 months. Has seen husband & children; he will take her back if she comes in. 
11 January 88 M -wouldn't wash, went on the mangle. 
23 January 88 ill, in bed all day. 24 January 88 taken to Hospital. 31 January 88 M visited her; doing well, but 'her husband has never been to see her I have written to him again'. 14 February 88 back from Hospital. 23 April 88 very overbearing; hit Bessie. 
17 May 88 out; husband came for her. 24 May 88 came for her clothes. Drinking, husband vile. Going home to mother & sister. 10 November 88 in prison.

Isabella Denmark  
26 April 89 M -in, ill; 'a very bad case. has a very sore foot, a low type of woman'. 27 April 89 trouble; 'she is helpless & dirty'. 29 April 89 Dr came; 'She is in a bad state'. 30 April 89 police at EFR. 
1 May 89 dying, midnight crisis & conversion. Police took her to HMG hospital on 2 May. Died. [Her death certificate indicates she was 24 years old, born in Dunolly, was married, with one child, & died of pneumonia.]

Julia Edwards  
23 July 86 S -lost sight of. 24 October 88 brought in by [City Missionary] Mr Shepherd. 'she looked quite clean but she has been going very deeply into sin'. 
2 November 88 left EFR suddenly, 'but I do not think she ever meant to settle'.

Mary Eyden  
13 January 89 M -asked to come in. 25 February 89 M went to Fitzroy to see ME's daughter. Found she had lied. 12 March 89 her child brought. 16 April 89 quarrel with L Davis; 'was most rude to me but poor thing she has had much to make her crossed'. 21 May 89 M went to get her wedding ring; woman couldn't find it. 9 July 89 M took her to pawnshop for ring & field glasses. 19 August 89 to situation. 23 August 89 came back; had left job on 21st; drinking, went again. 
28 August 89 Mrs Neil asked she be taken in; drunk. 2 September 89 out; said she had an appointment.

Mary Fraser  
12 May 87 S -'rushed out of a house begging me to take her'; money, watch & many of her clothes had gone for drink. 15 July 87 saw Mr Hill about her. 25 January 88 M -in; 'came straight from Mrs Woods here'. 
31 January 88 went with M to visit Maggie Dowsett in Hospital. 16 February 88 fretting. 19 March 88 to see Dr at Lying In Hospital; not considered eligible, taken to Women's Hospital. 26 March 88 to Hospital. 
6 August 88 to Incurables Hospital. 23 October 88 M visited her with Maria & M J Nichol; 'in bed, but looking no worse'.

Matilda Fay or Day  
28 March 89 M -brought by S from Court; had baby 10 days ago; 'a foolish creature but willing'. 2 July 89 'in a terrible fury'. 3 July 89 more trouble, almost thrown out. 8 July 89 out; 'wanted her to try the coppers but she would not and said so'. 29 October 89 to situation. 13 November 89 doesn't like situation. 16 November 89 won't take job in the country.
28 November 89 came looking miserable.

Eva Hagne
12 April 88 M -brought by Miss Booth; 'a forward proud girl but she May be won for right and glory'.
25 April 88 very rude to Nellie, had to go. Seen at night in the lanes.

Mary Higgins
5 May 88 M -brought in by Mrs Berry from Richmond Lock-up. 31 August 88 in terrible temper; S sent her to bed. 19 September 88 taken to Dr Singleton's.
13 March 89 M visited 'little' MH & her baby; been 'giving way to temper'. 14 May 89 S -letter from Infant Asylum; 'they cannot manage her' but 'we are so full'. 16 May 89 S to Immigrants' Home to see if they will take her; talked to Matron of Infant Asylum.
17 May 89 MH abusive & dangerous; many people consulted about her; 'she seems so determinedly wicked that we are afraid she will do something fearful'.
20 May 89 Immigrants' Home & Refuge tried; 'poor girl she seems possessed'.

Emma Hill
18 November 87 S -at 11:00 pm begging to come in.
3 January 88 M -quarrelling. 10 May 88 engaged by Mrs Langley to replace Florence Owen, ill. 15 June 88 visited EFR; very happy. 14 May 89 will stay 12 months longer.

Alice Hoffman
13 October 86 S -'widow of City Missionary - inveterate drunkard'. 6 May 89 M -in; 'very much broken down, worn out'. 31 May 89 Dr called with something for her pains. 18 June 89 out.

Margaret James
14 April 88 S -in; in bathroom, drunk. Remanded.
17 April 88 at HMG; too ill for Court appearance.
1 November 88 beaten & robbed. 2 November 88 M -S brought her in from Collingwood Court. 12 December 88 would go out. 19 December 88 in; walked from Collingwood, no food for 2 days. 9 January 89 ran away (S -broke fence) with J Irvine. 12 January 89 S in lanes looking for her. 10, 11 January 89 Mrs Lawson looking for her. 21 March 89 S -talk with S, still denies having relations in Launceston. 23 August 89 M -in. 21 September 89 'very restless'; out.

Mary Keating G
29 October 86 S -'from Melbourne, Kew. good in her situation but going out to friends poisoned in drink'.
20 May 87 S to Hotham Town Hall to find her.
1 March 88 M -Mrs Woods wants her to replace MJB as servant. 6 March 88 not needed; MJB back. 8 March 88 situation at Mrs Bell's. 30 March 88 visited EFR; job 'comfortable'. 10 April 88 left job & has not returned. 11 April 88 S trying to find her. (S -enquired at Police Court'). 14 April 88 in gaol on remand. 19 April 88 S -very ill; in strait jacket at nights. 24 April 88 mad. 26 April 88 still ill.
28 April 88 'she makes such strange and idiotic noises not like a human being'. 2 May 88 sent to Yarra Bend Insane Asylum. 19 June 88 S visited her. 3 August 88 S brought her from Asylum. 16 March 89 M -M took her to Library for a few hours. 11 May 89 to situation.
9 June 89 came drunk. 14 June 89 very bad; 'quite mad'. 19 June 89 very bad; 'she is frightening so many of them'. 20 June 89 S - took her to Police Station & she went in herself. 22 June 89 in HMG Hospital for treatment for 2 weeks. 2 September 89 M - to situation. 11 September 89 heard she was all right. 7 November 89 called; Nurse went to the City with her to buy a hat & saw her to the station. 8 November 89 hadn't gone back to her job. 14 November 89 S heard she was in HMG Hospital. 9 January 90 S - visited by S; 'seems mending'. 25 March 90 out for the day; S took her to get clothing.

Rose Lawrence  G  3 September 86 S - from Sandhurst. 21 March 87 taken to situation. 29 September 87 Police will try & 'intimidate the parents' to leave her alone. 3 November 87 came to visit from Mrs Horsfall's. 30 November 87 discussed her with Mr Brett.

Ellen Lawson  26 March 87 S - waiting at HMG gate to get S to take her into EFR. 23 January 88 quarrelled with Florence Owen. 12 January 88 daughter came to see her. 14 May 88 out.

Maggie Losa  4 April 88 M - in, drunk, brought by Mrs Berry from the Midnight Mission in the lanes. 3 September 88 in ironing room. 24 September 88 very poorly, in bed. 31 October 88 to situation. 13 November 88 in. 25 November 88 to situation. 31 December 88 walked from city to be taken in; not wise, put her on a tram & suggested Immigrants' Home. 25 January 89 'here such a sight of sin'. 30 February 90 S - in.

Susan McCann  5 August 87 S - seeking her little girl. A Mrs Walstab trying to get the child returned to her but she 'is not at all safe to have charge'.

Jemima Martin  25 August 87 S - in. 16 January 88 had a visitor. 26 April 88 M - M took her to Immigrants' Home, after trying Benevolent Asylum. She came back late & was put to bed. 22 June 88 S - leg very bad; low & weak. 23 June 88 had a fit of paralysis; conscious in the afternoon. 25 June 88 M - still very ill; can't locate relatives. 26 June 88 S - her niece came but she did not know her. 6 July 88 M - a little better. 26 November 88 a bad turn. 19 August 89 taken ill; 'very grateful' for medical help.

Charlotte Morton  26 July 88 M - drunk, but a lady. In. 27 July 88 out; lied. 8 September 88 drunk 'but still maintaining a lady-like appearance'. In. 11 September 88 out. 8 October 88 in 'in a terrible state'. 2 February 89 S - passing bad cheques. 11 February 89 at Prahran Court; given herself up for a week's medical treatment. 13 February 89 Dr saw her in the EFR. 27 February 89 M - very poorly. 11 March 89 out.
Emily Murphy  G  6 May 87 S-in. 'Abbotsford'. 9 September 87 looking for her in Fitzroy in vile places. 19 November 87 letter from sister 'so much trouble with her'. 30 November 87 spoke to Mr Brett about her. 2 January 88 to eye doctor. 5 January 88 M-out; indignant at remarks made to her by Dr about her eyes. 11 January 88 came drunk asking to come in 'but her influence is so bad on the other girls we could not'. 18 January 88 'here in great distress but we can do nothing'. 20 January 88 outside EFR 'ever troublesome'. 23 January 88 troublesome. 22 February 88 left the convent, came to see M, changed her clothes, looking for a job. Saw S, 'most abusive'. 27 March 88 S -to Fitzroy about E's goods. 26 June 88 came drunk & abusive. 16 August 88 letter from her. 31 January 89 S -letter from Mrs Rashe; E wants her jewellery to sell & clothes out of pawn. Declined. 2 February 89 at EFR to get jewellery; staying at Salvation Army in Brunswick. 16 July 89 gave Mrs Judge E's box from the bank.

Mary Jane Nichol  6 October 87 S -in EFR. 16 January 88 sister Anne visited. 4 May 88 gone to help Lizzie in situation until Florence Owen is better. (Mrs Langley's). 12 May 88 back at EFR. 23 October 88 went with M to visit M Fraser in Hospital; 'took baby'. 16 November 88 wouldn't go out to hear Cantata because M wasn't going. 27 November 88 at the mangle. 3 December 88 allowed to go out to see about a situation; 'came home quite stupid'. 16 January 89 quarrelling with Polly; 'most provoking'. 23 January 89 to situation. 24 March 89 terrible fight with Polly; locked up for 4 hours 'before she would give in'. 29 May 89 in a very bad temper. 4 June 89 trouble. 13 June 89 engaged at 6s. a week. 14 June 89 to situation.

Maria Norton  G  1 February 88 M -in from Court with S; 'rather a vacant kind of girl'. 18 July 88 left her place, 'felt imposed on'. 9 August 88 taken to next job. 30 September 88 in; after going out from job 'got to the drink'. 19 October 88 in; 'so weak & unable to take care of herself'. 12 December 88 out; 'I let her go doubting her safety'. 15 December 88 visited; in a situation; 'so thankful'. 19 December 88 came with her new address. 31 October 89 in.

Florence Owen  4 October 87 S -at EFR, went to situation; then to Hospital; left & now is drinking. 23 January 88 M -quarrelled with E Lawson. 8 March 88 to situation at Mrs Langley's. 30 March 88 visited EFR; 'is very hard worked'. 10 April 88 Mrs L doesn't want her any more. 4 May 88 still at Mrs L's but very ill; taken in by Dr Molloy. 10 July 88 came drunk at night, given a temporary bed. 11 July 88 out.

Sarah Phinister  2 January 87 S -has a daughter. 6 January 87 registered baby, Elizabeth Jessie Phinister. 1 April 87 suspected typhoid; hospitals full; will go
in tomorrow. 24 June 88 M -went out with M Graceton; 'I do hope she will try to do well'. 7 July 88 in with M Graceton; Mrs Acton 'was so very overbearing the poor women could not bear it longer'. 14 July 88 S -gave M a book as a gift. 21 July 88 M -out. 27 November 88 M went to see her about the baby. 28 November 88 in bed very ill at Mrs B's; baby gone away.

Rose de la Piere

18 January 87 S -at EFR. 21 June 87 husband died; taken by S to see her children, 5 boys, but 'they will have nothing to do with her'. Brought her back to EFR. 3 April 88 M - 'seeking shelter. she seems a respectable woman'. 3 September 88 wouldn't go in wash house because M Losa was in ironing room. A sad life, 'embittered'. 11 October 88 'a little scene'. 1 January 89 S -S went to meet her at Spencer Street station; not there. 27 June 89 Miss Brumby met S with Rose. S took R to Royal Park to see her daughter.

Isabella Robertson

19 March 87 S -to Mrs Watkin's as servant at 10s. a week. 16 August 87 S got her jacket from pawnshop. 24 April 88 seen in Immigrants' Home at needlework. 26 July 88 M -left her situation; drunk. Admitted. 23 August 88 out; 'she says she must look out for herself'. 25 August 88 dead. [Her death certificate indicates she was 54 years old, was born in Scotland, came to Australia when she was 22, and was married with two adult children. She died of pneumonia and kidney disease.]

Annie Ryan

10 May 89 M -brought by Mr Miller 'in trouble'. 5 June 89 S -Mrs Kerr brought her a large bundle of children's clothes. 19 June 89 visited by Mrs Kerr & [City Missionary] Mr Martin. 24 July 89 M -S took her to hospital. 1 August 89 S -a son born at the Lying In Hospital.

Ellen Spears

21 March 88 M -came early, wanting to come in. To go to Immigrants' Home for a week 'just to see how much in earnest she is'. 13 January 89 in, drunk. 5 February 89 taken from ironing collars, & angry. 15 May 89 seen, 'very tired & cast down'. 4 June 89 dispute with Edith, Ellen most at fault. 6 July 89 to situation. 20 July 89 visited, content in place. 28 July 89 to EFR to tea. 18 August 89 in; 'feels that she cannot resist the drink'. 26 August 89 out. 2 September 89 brought in by lady from Mission Hall. 7 September 89 out, 'unsettled'. 25 November 89 Mrs Neil brought her; couldn't admit her, sent to Immigrants' Home.

Polly Stripling

28 September 88 M -'in a serious temper...disappointed at not hearing from her daughter'. 30 September 88 'terrible temper'; M went to see her son. (S 'poor thing') 1 October 88 son came to say sister is well. 9 November 88 S -clever at making fun & dressing up on half-holiday. 9 January 89 M -letter from son; to visit. 16 January 89 quarrel with MJ. 1 May 89 Polly called M to attend I Denmark, dying. 21 May 89
'another storm'. 24 May 89 S -Queen's Birthday; took P to Sailors' Home to help with Tea. 29 May 89 M -'in sad humour'. 4 June 89 troublesome. 8 July 89 daughter's visit. 25 August 90 S -P's daughter Violet & baby came to see S; 'her poor mother does not seem to be doing any good'.

Julia Thompson

7 May 88 S -S took her from Court & got her a situation. 12 January 89 on remand from Prahran; 'so fearfully bad with syphilis you could not keep near her'. 14 January 89 got 6 months.

Maria Williams

1 October 88 M -out. 24 October 88 came of own accord; 'dirty & full of drink'. 29 October 88 M took her to get her clothes from hotel off L. Bourke Street. 'very shaky still & much deafen'. 12 November 88 out to see cousin -a lie.

Maggie Wilson

5 January 88 M -in. 21 July 88 out. 30 August 88 wanted to leave with Maria; talked out of it; 'poor child, she does want to do right'. 10 September 88 'caught her coming out of house next door'. Notified Mrs Born. 12 September 88 Miss B came for M; 'oh how I hope she will do right'. 16 September 88 visited EFR; 'she has quite got over her bout'. 18 March 89 came for her clothes, going to SA Home, Geelong. 24 May 89 in, from Geelong. 28 May 89 out. 17 August 89 ran away with Nellie Coe. 21 August 89 back, & sorry.
1 MANUSCRIPT SOURCES

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- 1865 - 1870
- 1887 - 1899
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- 27 March 1886 - 24 November 1887
- 10 September 1886 - 28 December 1888
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- 1 February 1889 - 22 December 1890
- 31 March 1890 - 4 January 1892
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- 19 January - 26 June 1893
- 6 December 1892 - 23 December 1894
- 25 July 1893 - 26 May 1895
- 29 January 1894 - 31 August 1898
- 5 February 1895 - 26 August 1896
- 27 May 1895 - 22 February 1897
- 4 May 1897 - 4 April 1898
- 1 February 1900 - 21 April 1901
- 23 April 1901 - 20 December 1903
- 2 September 1903 - 26 October 1905
- 25 January 1904 - 8 February 1906
- 3 November 1905 - 27 November 1907
- 16 February 1906 - 20 February 1908
- 27 November 1907 - 17 February 1910
- 28 February 1908 - 5 May 1910
- 25 February 1910 - 1 September 1912
- 13 May 1910 - 14 July 1912

John Ivey
- 1 November 1864 - 31 August 1867
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Edward Knox
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- 1 November 1878 - 30 November 1881
Thomas Murray 7 May 1880 - 9 January 1881
William Shepherd 5 October 1881 - 13 January 1883
Archibald Turnbull 1 May 1869 - 31 December 1869
Samuel Stephens 1 February 1869 - 29 February 1872
1 September 1869 - 13 March 1873
1 April 1872 - 30 July 1875
17 March 1873 - 30 May 1875
Reuben West 17 January 1876 - 10 September 1876
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Joseph Greathead
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Journal of his voyage from London to Melbourne on board the 'Diana' 9 April 1853 - 16 August 1853.

Elizabeth Fry Retreat material

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Journals of Sarah Swinborn 1887 - 1890
Matron's Journals 1888 -1889

In private possession:

Family papers and photographs in the possession of Mrs Jean Stubington, Mrs Swinborn's grand-daughter.

Victorian Discharged Prisoners' Aid Society material

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The Weekly Times

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Otzen, Roslyn

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1986

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