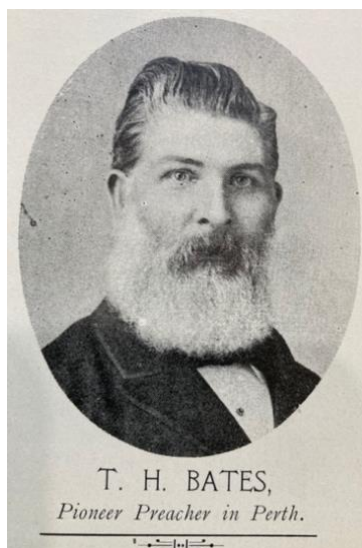


CHURCHES OF CHRIST NSW

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The Boys From OZ

The Life and Labours of T. H. Bates

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The Conference of Churches of Christ in NSW will consider for publication short papers on historical and theological topics relevant to the development of Churches of Christ. The publication of a paper does not constitute an official endorsement of the view expressed therein.

Thomas Herbert Bates (1843–1925)

For the first years of its growth in Australia the Restoration movement relied on visiting evangelists from Great Britain and the United States. Except for a handful they came, stayed for a period, and then returned to their homelands. They mentored a few young men for the ministry, but it was not enough. Those who stayed were Thomas Jefferson Gore, Aaron Burr Maston, Matthew Wood Green, and John Strang.¹ The majority of the American evangelists—as that is how they were known—were prepared for ministry at the College of the Bible in Lexington, Kentucky. Their success earned for their *alma mater* a stellar reputation. The Australian churches longed for a college of their own, but the longing was not fulfilled until 1907. In the meantime, the practice developed of young men travelling to the United States for training. The irony is that the majority who went to the United States to train remained there, with the minority returning home.

Those who went were affectionately known as ‘Our Australian Boys,’ and contact was maintained by letters, journals and the occasional visit by leading Australian laymen. The ‘Australian Club’ became a featured of the Lexington College of the Bible scene from the mid-1880s when there was a substantial cohort of ‘Boys from Oz’ as Harold Hayward likes to call them.

A tea meeting, to welcome Thomas Bennett, Cornelius Moore, and Charles Thurgood home from the United States, was held in the Lygon Street, Melbourne chapel on Tuesday evening, 5 December 1882. As Victorian Conference President,² Thomas Herbert Bates presided over the meeting. He stated on the occasion that he had been the first Australian to cross the ocean to study God’s word better; and in connection with this he wanted particularly to refer to the importing of preachers. He mentioned that there had been talk of an Australian Bible college and although it failed, he hoped the day would come when the Australian churches should have such an institution in their community.³

Bates was born in Litlington, Cambridgeshire on 20 September 1843 and baptised in St Catherine’s Church of England on 17 December of that year. He was the eldest child of John Pateman Bates (1820–1901), a master blacksmith, and Hannah Gray (1825–1895). He had a sister Elizabeth (1846–1902) and brother William (1847–1922). At the age of eleven, Bates, with his family, arrived in Melbourne aboard the *Utopia* on 25 June 1855. He came under the influence of Henry Earl, was baptised and joined the Church of Christ in Lygon Street, Melbourne.



St Catherine’s Litlington

Bates travelled to the College of the Bible, Lexington, in 1868 where he metaphorically sat at the feet of the redoubtable John W. McGarvey, graduating in 1872. One of his classmates at Lexington was another Australian, Thomas Capp, with whom he maintained a life-long friendship. The timing of this may be significant. The first Restoration Movement churches were established in Victoria in the early 1850s but the arrival of Bethany trained Henry Earl in 1864 gave the movement an enormous impetus and the need for trained ministers became apparent.

Midway through his college course Bates, who was not fond of appearing in print, wrote to Thomas Gore the editor of the *Australian Christian Pioneer*. His thoughts were turning towards Australia where he had passed his boyhood and youth and where he expected to work. He was looking forward to seeing his family. Bates loved America, had formed many friendships among his fellow students, and also in the local community; had not been too homesick, and was bolstered by visits from Henry Earl, Alexander Magarey and William Magarey and his wife. He wrote that ‘it was almost like being at home again to be in their company.’ As they arrived during vacation, he was able to spend quality time with them. He spent three weeks with Alexander Magarey, but Earl was conducting a mission so their contact was brief.

The remainder of that vacation he spent in Tennessee, preaching with good success. His joy was still further increased when he returned to Lexington and found Thomas Capp, from Melbourne, at the College. He had only a slight acquaintance with Capp, having met with him in Melbourne in 1865. As soon as they saw each other, there sprung up between them that close bond that bound brothers and countrymen together. They spent a year together at the College. Capp was the second Australian to venture to Lexington.

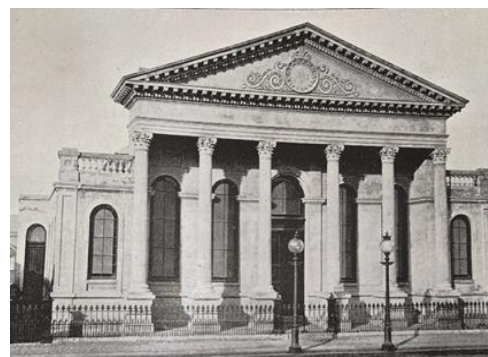
The publication of the letter bolstered the movement in Australia for a college. He wrote:

No one, unless he has been here and seen for himself, can understand and appreciate the many advantages to be derived from a Bible College, in which the sacred word is the text book, and where young men, full of love to God and their fellowmen, come to sit at the feet of Jesus and learn of Him. For two years this has been my privilege, and I trust to make some of these advantages manifest when I shall return to my distant home to preach the glorious gospel of the ever-blessed God.⁴

Bates expressed his joy at the ‘intelligence’ he had of the move in Australia to establish a college. He expressed his belief that the movement would not regret it; that it was necessary and must be done, or the bright future pictured for the cause of Christ in Australia would never be realised, and that there was no reason on earth why the Christian Ministry should not be an educated ministry.

Evangelising in New Zealand

After acting as supply at Collingwood, Melbourne, for three months, Bates accepted a call to the ministry of the Church of Christ at Dunedin. A social gathering to welcome him was held in the Tabernacle, Great King Street, on the evening of 27 May 1873. The chapel was comfortably filled, and the excellent repast was eagerly shared. After the tables had been cleared, Samuel Elborn took the chair, and stated that the church had made great progress both in its numbers and influence. Great benefits had been derived from the visits of several able and eloquent preachers; and he believed Bates, who had lately arrived from America, and had consented to spend twelve months with them, would also be the means of doing great good.⁵ Soon after Bates was gazetted as an officiating minister.⁶ He was the first evangelist in New Zealand to receive a permanent engagement from a church.



The Tabernacle, Great King Street

The Dunedin paper the *Saturday Advertiser* featured a columnist who went under the by-line of Didymus ('twin'). On 17 June 1876, he devoted his column to Bates, and what he wrote is worth quoting in full:

The denomination, known as Christian Disciples are generally happy in their choice of pastors. I have heard several of their preachers in Australia, and they seemed to me to be men well suited to their calling. Some few months ago I had the pleasure of noticing Mr Green, who then occupied the pulpit of the Christian Chapel in Great King Street; and on Sunday evening last I went to hear Mr Thomas H. Bates, the present pastor. Mr Bates is a strong, healthy-looking young man with an honest open countenance. There is very little of the parson in his appearance; in fact, he looks more like a bluff country gentleman farmer than a clergyman. When he ascends his pulpit platform, you cannot help wondering why such a jolly-looking man adopted the church as a profession. But when you hear him pray and preach, his sincere manner convinces you that he has his heart in his work. An eminent writer has said, 'To a certain order of mind Divine Philosophy is a necessity;' and I cannot help thinking that Mr Bates is the possessor of a mind of this class. In the tenets of his church he sees the highest moral and spiritual development. He believes that he, in conjunction with his fellow evangelists, has a mission to revive the old apostolic spirit, and to restore Christianity to what he believes to be its primitive simplicity. As a pulpit orator he is entitled to take a respectable position amongst our preachers. His enunciation is clear and distinct, his diction plain and simple, and his gestures are appropriate. He is always earnest and forcible, and sometimes he is impressive and eloquent. He has a strong penchant for argumentative theology, as in nearly all his discourses he endeavours to prove that every system of Christianity which does not acknowledge the necessity of baptismal regeneration is decidedly wrong. Mr Bates is fond of interlarding his lectures and sermons with moral anecdotes applicable to his subject. After listening to one of Mr Bates's discourses you cannot help feeling refreshed. Although he may not have convinced you of the soundness of his views, you must give him credit for the earnestness and sincerity of his motives. I have heard Mr Bates preach on several occasions, and always with profit to myself.⁷

In the second half of 1875 Bates was asked to go to Invercargill to help revive the church which had been depleted by removals to the Western goldfields. He held services at the Theatre Royal on Sunday mornings and evenings, which were well attended. Further, he also held a Bible class on Wednesday evenings at Henry's old schoolhouse, Ethan Street and welcomed 'all who choose to attend, whether old or young.'⁸ Bates remained at Dunedin until October 1876 and did a great work for two reasons: his preaching appealed to both the heart and mind,⁹ and he had learnt from his time in America the value of advertising. Weekly, the local papers contained advertisements such as 'Mr T. H. Bates from Kentucky University, America, is advertised to preach in the Oddfellows' Hall, tomorrow evening, at 6.30 p.m.'¹⁰

From there he relocated to Christchurch, having raised the membership at Dunedin from 150 to 300. He remained in Christchurch until the end of 1879. During his time the congregation reached almost 200.¹¹ He became a significant voice in Southland receiving many invitations to preach. At the opening of the Spring Grove chapel on 28 March, 1877 Bates was the keynote speaker.¹² At Christchurch he held a successful 'ecumenical' tea meeting. There was a large

attendance at the public meeting that followed the dinner at which Bates spoke on ‘The History of Disciples.’ He was followed by John Cannon, of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, who urged



Spring Grove Chapel

with great earnestness the necessity of being a Christian rather than seeming to be one. The Rev Charles Dallaston then gave a humorous address, in which he referred to the pleasure he experienced in co-operating with all Christians, and concluded by wishing God-speed to the Church. The various speeches were interspersed with suitable anthems sung by the choir.

On 31 January 1879, aged 35, he married Selina Ann Ladbrook (1861–1922) who was just 18, and was connected with a pioneering Churches of Christ family. Their first child, a daughter whom they named Adelaide Maud, was born at home on 7 December 1879.¹³ Thomas and Selina had five children, three girls and two boys.¹⁴

Local Church Ministries

Recalled to Collingwood in mid-1881, he ministered there until 1 October 1883, when he accepted an engagement with the church at Bulleen, later renamed Doncaster. The church held a tea meeting to celebrate his appointment on Wednesday 10 October 1883 even though Bates had intimated that he would be unable to begin for some six weeks, as he was under an engagement to labour for the church at Waratah, Tasmania.¹⁵ He arrived in Launceston aboard the *Mangana* on 27 October¹⁶, and the local newspapers noted his presence recording:

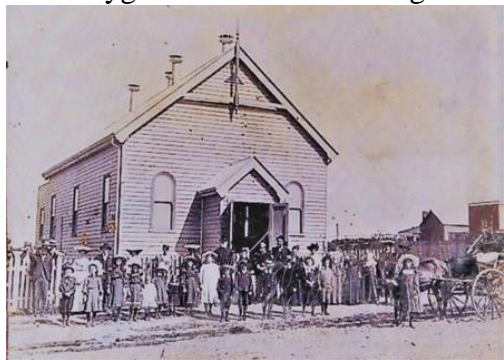
We have with us Mr. T.H. Bates, of Collingwood, a Disciple of the Church of Christ. He has been holding services in the Mechanics’ Institute, and is daily gaining a large congregation. Mr. Bates is a most able speaker. Next Saturday he will lecture at the Mechanics’, the subject being ‘The Life of the late James Garfield’. Your telegraphic correspondent made an error some time back in reporting Mr. Bates as a representative of the Salvation Army. Had he been so, I have no doubt he would have enlisted a number of recruits.¹⁷

The ‘late James Garfield’, the subject of his talk, was a former President of the United States (assassinated on 4 March 1881) and a conscientious member and sometime preacher of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). In 1856 he became a teacher at Hiram College—a Disciples of Christ Liberal Arts College—then its principal. Garfield was a classical scholar and taught Greek and Latin. It is probable that Bates met him during his College days in the United States.

Bates commenced at Doncaster mid-December and had a very successful and fruitful ministry. The services attracted large audiences leading to a decision to enlarge the chapel in 1885.¹⁸ Bates declined an invitation extended to him by the church at Cheltenham, the reason being that the members at Doncaster wish to him.

With the consent of the Doncaster church, he placed his services at the disposal of the Home Missions Committee during September 1885, for an evangelistic effort in the Maryborough district.¹⁹ Besides preaching twice each Sunday, he preached three or four times during the week, and delivered two lectures in the first month. As he put it, ‘Some fruit has been gathered, and much good seed sown.’²⁰

While Lygon Street was awaiting the arrival of John Strang to take up the ministry there Bates



First Doncaster Chapel

did much of the preaching in the interim, in addition to carrying on the work at Doncaster, where the gospel service was held in the afternoon. It was a successful interim with confessions of faith and several old members restored to fellowship.²¹ Strang closed his ministry at Cheltenham in the middle of August, and begin the work in Carlton about the middle of September.²²

When the lights went out on the year 1885 Bates was exhausted. He needed time for refreshment so he took a three months holiday. He was welcomed back at a tea meeting at which Charles Thurgood and Frederick Illingworth gave addresses to which he responded. He congratulated the Cheltenham church on the speed with which they secured an evangelist to replace Bennett, and he heartily welcomed the new preacher, James Edwards, from USA. He referred to his previous connection with the church at Langridge Street, Bates' home church, and hoped that the church, and not only the church, but the whole Victorian Brotherhood would treat Edwards well, make him feel at home and treat him as the Americans had treated him when he was there.²³

In June 1886, the *Australian Christian Standard* reported that the 'Doncaster brethren are about to lose their preacher. Bro Bates will leave for his new field of labour at Hindmarsh, SA, sometime this month.'²⁴ After four good years at Doncaster, he received and accepted an invitation from the Hindmarsh church,²⁵ and advised confirmed that he would be with them in June.²⁶ He duly arrived and took up the work.

There was a tea meeting welcome on 22 June 1886, and he began ministry at a very active church.²⁷ The Hindmarsh church had established a cause at York, and Bates ministered to both congregations. He had quite a spectacular start: four additions at Hindmarsh and twelve at York in the first two months of his ministry.²⁸ He certainly had 'his hands full' as the editor of the *Australian Christian Standard* wrote of him in 1887. When Theodore Arthur Thomas Bates was born on 21 March 1887, his father was 44 and his mother, Selina Ann was 26. Theodore married Grace Alida Twin Scribner on 28 September 1910. They were the parents of at least a son and two daughters. Theodore remained in Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, when his parents moved to Canada in 1905. He died on 31 December 1973, at the age of 86.



The Old Chapels, Hindmarsh

In May of that year, Bates suffered a severe illness being unable to leave his bed; most likely caused by over-work. However, he was back in full swing by October when he conducted a very successful series of meetings with the church at York. The meetings continued for three weeks, resulting in twenty conversions. After that he accepted and extension of twelve months to his contract with the church at Hindmarsh.²⁹ On 13 September, at the Annual Conference of Churches of Christ in South Australia, he had the privilege of delivering what was called the

Conference Essay. His theme on that occasion was “How Can We Best Advance the Cause Throughout the Colony?”³⁰

Go West Young Man

Bates was the Conference President for South Australia in 1889, and as such he convened a meeting to consider the establishment of a church in Western Australia. The proposal was referred to the first Intercolonial Conference in Melbourne in October where it was agreed that ‘the cause’ should be established in Western Australia. Three noted leaders in South Australia, Joseph Verco, Thomas Gore and Thomas Magarey were appointed as a committee to give effect to the decision ‘by raising funds in all of the Colonies and securing a suitable man to undertake the work.’³¹ The task of securing ‘a suitable man’ proved to be a difficult one and a year passed with no appointment. Bates had been giving much thought to the matter and, after consultation with the committee, offered himself. His suitability for the task was noted in both the *Christian Pioneer* and the *Australian Christian Standard*. In the *Christian Pioneer* it was written of him:

He is well known and has laboured with some of the principal churches with much success. In the prime of life and the enjoyment of robust health, and with twenty years’ experience as an Australasian preacher, he should be well fitted for so important a work’.

In a letter to the *Australian Christian Standard* he wrote:

It will be remembered by the brethren that the Federal Conference which met in Melbourne last year formally passed a resolution affirming that ‘the time has arrived for planting the cause in Western Australia’. A committee was also appointed to carry out the resolution but, so far, nothing has been done towards evangelising that part of the continent referred to. I have been thinking a good deal about this matter of late – have written to the committee appointed – consulted with prominent brethren in Victoria, with the result that I feel authorised to put the matter to a practical test. It is therefore my intention to proceed to Western Australia and lay the foundation for future effort. I expect to leave Melbourne about the middle of October and take the field in Perth or Fremantle as soon thereafter as possible ... Your servant for Jesus’ sake. Thos. H. Bates.

Accordingly, in 1890, Bates became the pioneer evangelist to Western Australia. He arrived in Perth alone on 21 October, the day on which Self-Government was proclaimed for the colony, with twenty years’ experience as a preacher in two of the largest churches in Victoria and South Australia. Immediately he gathered a group of eleven disciples, three of whom were Baptists, and on Sunday 2 November met for the first time ‘to break bread in memory of our risen Lord’. The meeting was held in the Veryard Temperance Hall,³² and a gospel service was held in the evening at which fifty attended. Baptisms took place in the Swan River at what he advertised as Riverside Services.³³ His energy, fine preaching and organising ability provided Churches of Christ in Western Australia a sound beginning. He was very soon listed in the Government Gazette among the ministers in Western Australia and as a marriage celebrant.³⁴ His letters to



Veryard Temperance Hall

the *Christian Pioneer* and *Australian Christian Standard* record the beginning and early progress of the Restoration Movement in that State.³⁵

Bates was pleased with progress as is seen in this report from him:

Seldom, I think, has a missionary movement been made more opportunely than in the present instance nor with greater promise of permanent success. Seven weeks of labour have confirmed me in the belief that Perth will one day contain one of the largest churches in the colonies ... I am glad to confirm the report [in the *Daily News*] of the 'novel ceremony of baptising in the Swan River and of 'the large crowd of spectators' who witnessed it ...³⁶

An early convert was Albany Bell who was baptised in the Swan River in March 1891. The local newspapers took note of this particular baptismal service recording that

At 4 o'clock, Mr. T. H. Bates held an open-air service by the riverside, in the presence of an immense concourse of spectators [c. 500] ... He then led the young man out a distance into the river and immersed him in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, after which both gentlemen retired to the boat building shed of Mr. Lawrence, where they attired themselves in fresh garments and then left for their respective homes.³⁷

Bell's contribution to the churches in Western Australia is incalculable. Owner-manager of a large confectionary business and a chain of city restaurants, he committed his success to the Lord and gave liberally to many church projects. His generosity was legendary. Keenly interested in the indigenous population he gifted a valuable Roelands property for ministry among them.³⁸

Selina Bates and the children arrived in Perth aboard the *Nemesis* in early March 1891 and the family took up residence in Hay Street West, Perth.³⁹ Later Bates purchased a splendid villa residence at Claremont, on a corner block, with six good rooms, a wide veranda at the back, good well water, on nearly half-an-acre of land, with the whole surrounded with a 5 ft. picket fence.⁴⁰

The Government held a census in 1891. Bates wrote a letter to the *Western Australian* with regard to the religious column stating that those belonged to the churches. of Christ would simply list themselves as Christian. The letter provoked a number of responses, one of which misunderstood his position and reads

SIR, Although I sympathise with Mr. Thomas H. Bates to some extent, and quite think with him that it would be a good thing for the colony if there were more people who not only called themselves Christians, but tried to act up to the principles of Christianity, yet I think that Mr Bates should see, after a moment's reflection, that considering Roman Catholics, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Wesleyans, Baptists, &c., are all "Christian" so called — a census placing all these denominations in the same category, would be a most useless return for statistical purposes

He advertised the services that continued to be held in the Temperance Hall until January 1892 when they were relocated to the upper room of the Working Men's Institute.⁴¹ Perhaps the most whimsical advertisement he placed was the one that read 'WANTED. ADDRESS of Gentleman who EXCHANGED UMBRELLAS with me yesterday.'⁴²

Bates preached the first anniversary sermon on 1 November 1891.⁴³ As his reports show the work was regarded as a mission and it was not until 4 November, 1891 that officers were appointed. 'Everything in connection with the spread of primitive Christianity was working



Working Men's Institute 1893

harmoniously'. He was also becoming known on the wider church scene. He was among other church leaders who graced the platform at a temperance meeting in May 1891; participated in a meeting called by the Mayor of Perth in response to an appeal made by the Lord Mayor of London in aid of the sufferers by the disastrous fire which recently occurred in St. John's (Newfoundland), and spoke at an ecumenical service in connection with the YMCA.⁴⁴

The addition of members attracted to Perth from the eastern Colonies strengthened the mission. One of the most notable of them, Frederick Illingworth, became a member of parliament and as such strengthened the social standing of Churches of Christ. His son, Arthur

Illingworth, was one of the leading ministers in Western Australia, New South Wales and Victoria.

In March 1893, Bates stopped advertising the services. It appears that this was occasioned by two factors: some church difficulties arose which resulted in two congregations being formed which seriously weakened the church's influence.⁴⁵ Unfortunately, internal trouble arose over questions concerning 'open communion,' and receiving money from the unbaptised.⁴⁶ The other was that Bates took himself off to the goldfields, whether to evangelise or prospect is unknown, but it was more than likely a combination of both. The latter is quite possible as the depression was beginning to bite and the little church was having difficulty paying the rent on the Working Men's Institute, let alone their preacher.

In October, 1893, eleven members from the two Perth congregations met for worship in the Protestant Hall in Fremantle. Soon the church was advertising a gospel service with Herbert Ford as the preacher.⁴⁷

Shortly after his return from the goldfields, the land on which the Working Men's Institute stood was required for railway purposes so Bates undertook the responsibility of paying rent on the Town Hall. He gave a brief address there on 'Lessons from the Goldfields' in which he showed, from his experience, the great prospects of the field, and predicted that the export of gold from the colony would in less than ten years cause that of Victoria to look very small. Speaking of the Divine Wisdom in placing the gold in remote parts, he said that the discovery of the gold caused the interior to be explored and populated.⁴⁸

The congregation continued to grow and reached a size where a choir was formed which he called 'The Christian Choir'.⁴⁹ Bates worked assiduously to unite the two Perth congregations which occurred on 24 November 1894 when representatives of the two congregations met and agreed upon a basis of union, which was adopted two days later, and on 2 September 1894, they united as a new church. This is the birthday of the present church in Perth.⁵⁰

When the great financial depression spread over Australia, the missionary funds languished, and after Mr. Bates had exhausted his private means he had to seek fresh fields. In June 1894,

he tried unsuccessfully to sell his Claremont home for £500. He had purchased Perth Suburban Lot 364 intending to move closer to the city centre.⁵¹ He tried to sell again in September, this time adding ‘to let’ to the advertisement. He was now living in Ellen Street, Perth.⁵² His property affairs were not finally settled until after he left the Colony. Dr W. T. Moore, of the Christian Commonwealth, London, invited him to England, and secured him the post in Cheltenham.⁵³

Churches of Christ were fortunate in having Bates as the first evangelist in Western Australia. He possessed an optimistic spirit and showed drive and initiative in a pioneering enterprise which needed all of those attributes. A man of courage, he was not daunted by the size and difficulties of the undertaking but being strong in faith, he saw the need of the young colony and its possibilities for the gospel.

Ministry at Cheltenham Spa, Gloucester

In late December 1894, when a number of Churches of Christ had become established in Western Australia, Bates proceeded to England to the church at Cheltenham where he remained until November 1901. Cheltenham, only 150 kilometres from his birthplace, was a small town on the edge of the Cotswolds in Gloucestershire, which became a health and holiday spa town following the discovery of mineral springs in 1716.

Recognition services in connection with the settlement (contract arrangements) in Cheltenham of Bates as minister, of the Church of Christ, Corn Exchange, were held on Saturday, 18 May 1895, and on the Monday night there was a tea and public meeting. A number of the luminaries of the English Churches of Christ scene were present, among them John Coop (Southport), George Walden (West London Tabernacle) and H. Milner Black (Liverpool). It was a rather joyous welcome summed up by Eli Brearly’s promise to Bates that he would find in Cheltenham a loving-hearted people. He went on to say:

It was said that Cheltenham pretty, poor and proud (laughter); pretty the town and the surrounding country undoubtedly were, but he denied the truth of the two other allegations (applause). A spirit of mutual help and sympathy subsisted between pastor and people, and Mr Bates would also find that the people who formed the Cheltenham Church were real, and that they tried to be what they professed to be.⁵⁴

H Milner Black (Liverpool) spoke of Bates’ work in Australia, with which he was personally acquainted, and then read a loving greeting from the Liverpool congregation, in which it was remarked that there was a special bond of union between the two congregations, as two Cheltenham ministers afterwards ministered at Liverpool. George Walden, a fellow graduate of the College of the Bible, Lexington, Kentucky also spoke. The *Gloucestershire Echo* summary of his message, which was frequently interrupted by applause, reads:

Mr Geo. T. Walden, pastor of West London Tabernacle, gave a charge to the Church, and commenced by saying that he was glad to be present at that wedding (laughter and applause). He believed in homoeopathy, theologically as well as physically; and they must regard him an hygiene lecturer — teaching them how they might retain their good health, for he was sure from their looks that they all enjoyed good. Not believing in “proxy religion,” he exhorted every member of the Church to do his duty. Each could do something; the example of a Godly life was in itself a great thing. With faithfulness on the part of brother Bates, prayerfulness on theirs they must have a successful time. He urged them to cultivate the bump

“philoprogenitiveness,” [love of offspring] and to practice self-denial for the sake of the spiritual children they were endeavouring to bring to a knowledge of Christ (loud applause).⁵⁵

A reporter for the *Cheltenham Chronicle* noted of Bates that he had a ‘ready, pleasantly distinct, and impressive delivery, and his scriptural references and quotations are generally very felicitous.’ He also observed that Bates taught Christ, eschewed unscriptural forms and ceremonies, and preached Scripture as the sole basis for belief and practice. Hence, he noted, that he witnessed two adults baptised by total immersion, the profession of faith being simply a public declaration of belief that Christ is the Son of God. His final comment was that ‘it is indeed difficult for the ordinary layman to differentiate the doctrines of this sect from those of the Baptist denomination.’⁵⁶

Bates aroused some controversy just three months after his arrival when he preached to parents and teachers in the East End Tabernacle on ‘The Sin of Infant Baptism.’⁵⁷ However, he did take his place in community affairs, serving at one stage on the County Grand Jury.⁵⁸ The produce from the church’s annual harvest thanksgiving services in September 1900 was distributed among the poor of the city. However, on that day owing to the sudden contraction of an attack of influenza Bates was unable to fulfil his duties.⁵⁹

The Annual Conference of Churches of Christ in Great Britain convened in Gloucester in September 1899 and Bates spoke on ‘The Pastor, his duty and privilege.’⁶⁰ The Conference was able to make use of the ‘new and beautiful place of worship’.⁶¹ It was, in fact, a restoration of Handel Hall and served the congregation for many years.⁶²

What appears to be the most successful mission ever held in Cheltenham concluded with a meeting for testimony, thanksgiving, and consecration. Nearly all the over 300 converts attended, and the church was crowded. Bates was among local ministers who delivered messages. The mission was sponsored by the Free Church Council.⁶³

Under the auspices of the Cheltonian Lodge, No. 924, a coffee social and reunion was held in Handel Hall on 15 November 1900, over 70 members and friends being present. T. H. Bates presided, and welcomed all present on behalf of the lodge. The lodge was a chapter of the International Organisation of Good Templars which was, and still is, a non-masonic fraternal organisation which is part of the temperance movement, promoting abstinence from alcohol and other drugs. Each quarter the lodge held a devotional night which Bates regularly led.⁶⁴ He last led the session on 10 October 1901 when he was heartily thanked for his past services to the lodge, and best wishes were expressed for success in his new sphere of work in Lancashire.⁶⁵

Bates preached farewell sermons on Sunday 3 November 1901. A more bracing climate being necessary for the health of his wife, he arranged to change places with the James Versey, at Moorlands Tabernacle, Lancaster. His new church was not a larger one than that at Cheltenham. He had been in Cheltenham six years and eight months, and when he arrived there were 39 members worshipping in the Corn Exchange. At a recent revision of the membership roll the church had 62 members. The church was also losing the musical abilities of the Bates’ two eldest daughters. He made many friends in the Garden Town, and the congregation on the Sunday evening was probably the largest ever seen at Handel Hall.⁶⁶

Ministry in Lancaster, Lancashire

The first major event of his Lancaster ministry was the annual Christmas treat for the Sunday school over which he presided, when 160 children, teachers and friends sat down to a substantial tea. He spoke of his work with children in America, New Zealand, and Australia, and expressed his pride in the school at Lancaster. He complimented the officers and teachers on having 140 scholars, while the membership of the church was only a little over 50. An excellent program was rendered by the children, which included Myra Bates. Selina gave two recitations, and Adelaide Bates sang.⁶⁷

Then on 2 February 1902 he held an afternoon and Lantern evening service at the Palace Theatre. The interesting aspect of the advertisement for the services is the line ‘children must bring parents.’⁶⁸ Bates became heavily involved with the Lancaster and District Sunday School Union. At the Union’s Annual Prize giving in 1902 he gave the occasional address, remarking that though he could not compliment the Lancaster people on an increase in Sunday school attendance, he thought they had grounds for hope in the future. It was a growing work and he believed that as the years came and went they would find it more and more appreciated. Bates expressed his restoration principles by saying that he was

one of those who longed for the time when the unhappy division of the churches would cease, and they would all be one body, and it was probable that Sunday school work would by one of the means used by the Almighty to bring about that state of unanimity and peaceful feeling, and thus they might realise the truth of that prediction ‘a little child shall lead them.’⁶⁹

A highlight of his ministry in Lancaster occurred on 29 October 1902, when he performed the wedding service for his eldest daughter, Adelaide Maud, to Albert Charles Frank Waghorne.⁷⁰

Settling in Canada

In April 1905 an American journal, the *Christian Standard*, reported:

Thomas H. Bates, a native of Australia and a graduate of the College of the Bible, who has done efficient service for the Master in Australia and in England, contemplates coming to America in the spring, and desires to secure work with any church that is looking for a preacher of experience who is not afraid of hard work. Bro. Bates will come with the highest commendations of his brethren in Australia and England.⁷¹

Bates, in fact, relocated to Summerside, Prince Edward Island, Canada. The change was most likely due to the influence of Thomas Capp, his fellow student at Lexington. Capp’s first ministry was at Summerside where he met and married Ella Baker. Not long after his marriage he accepted a call to a ministry at St. John, New Brunswick, Canada, where he spent eleven fruitful years (1881-1892). It has to be more than a coincidence that Bates began his Canadian ministries in 1905 at a church at which Capp had served.⁷²



Entrance to Summerside Church of Christ 1905

Summerside is a county seat, situated on Northumberland Strait, which separates the Island from New Brunswick. It was the point where Island ferries docked. Its Christian Church is the

first and oldest Protestant church in the town. Apparently, the Disciples in the Maritimes—a region of Eastern Canada consisting of three provinces: New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island—moved toward the towns earlier than occurred in Ontario. The church first met on September 1, 1858 in Brown’s Hall where it remained for two years. A church building was later erected but was burnt down in 1906 during Bates’ tenure. Its records show that from the time of organisation until March 11, 1891, ‘the church worked through many trials and much opposition.’ In assessing the Summerside congregation it is important to recognise that owing to economic influences it arose among a comparatively small migratory population.⁷³

In November 1906, Bates conducted a mission for another Australian, J.F. Floyd, at St. John, New Brunswick. Bates and Floyd formerly ministered in Melbourne at the same time.⁷⁴ He travelled to Kent, Ohio, where another Australian, Gersh Bennett, a student at Hiram College, was the preacher.⁷⁵ Bennett had only been there two months before Bates’ visit. A newspaper clipping describes a birthday surprise party for Bates, attended by 130 members and friends. An elegant couch was presented to him, Bennett making the presentation.⁷⁶

He moved again in 1908. The *Australian Christian* reported that ‘Thomas H. Bates, well known to many of our older readers, has accepted an engagement with the church at Port William, Nova Scotia, Canada.’⁷⁷ The cause was styled as ‘Cornwallis’ until the building of the third church when the name was changed to Port William. The church was organised in 1838, and re-organised in 1858. Bates ministered there from 1908 to 1910. Reuben Butchart notes ‘the familiar name of Thos. H. Bates as pastor, well-known throughout Ontario for his character and work.’⁷⁸ While there he served on the Advisory Committee of the Maritime Christian Missionary Society, and in 1909 was president of the society.⁷⁹

From December 1915 Bates ministered in St. Thomas, Elgin Co., Ontario. The church’s long and well-kept records place the origin of the church as being in 1864. The language used in the foundational documents of the church has significance: ‘The church thus organised recognises Jesus Christ alone as its Head and Lawgiver, meeting to observe His ordinances under the name of the congregation of Disciples of Christ.’⁸⁰ St Thomas was his last ministry, he retired at the end of June 1917, and settled in Brantford, Ontario.

Charles Grinstead, evangelist of the Church of Christ, Marshville, Ontario, in a letter to the editor of the *Australian Christian* wrote in 1917: ‘I had a chat last week (June 1) with T.H. Bates. A fine old man, 82 or 83, erect, white hair, rich voice.’ The editor commented that many will be glad to hear of a veteran preacher well known in Australasia.⁸¹



The older T.H. Bates

The *Canadian Disciple* announced that ‘Thos. H. Bates, well known to many of the older Australian members, passed away at Brantford, Ontario, Canada, on 28 July 1925.’⁸² He was buried in Guelph alongside his wife, Selina, who had predeceased him by three and a half years (28 January 1922).

His pioneering contribution to the movement in Australia has largely been forgotten, but must never be undervalued. His evangelistic fervour lived on in his children. It is noteworthy that in 1914 (or slightly earlier) in Norwood (Manitoba), Adelaide Maud



Gravestone: Thomas and Selina

1914 (or slightly earlier) in Norwood (Manitoba), Adelaide Maud

Waghorne, the eldest daughter of Thomas Bates, lived too far from the Home Street church to attend. With the aid of two missionaries she formed a Sunday school, beginning at first in her home and later moving to a hall.⁸³

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- ¹ See Hayward, H.E. 'The Strange Case of John Strang' on <https://ccnswact.org.au/leaderships/history-archives/?search=strang>
 - ² *Australian Christian Witness* April 1883, 129.
 - ³ *Australian Christian Witness* January 1883, 31.
 - ⁴ *Christian Pioneer*, 20 September, 1870.
 - ⁵ *Otago Daily Times* 28 May 1873, 2.
 - ⁶ *New Zealand Herald*, 19 June 1873, 2.
 - ⁷ *Saturday Advertiser*, 17 June 1876, 11.
 - ⁸ *Southland Times*, 20 November 1876,
 - ⁹ Maston, A.B., *Jubilee Pictorial History*, Melbourne: Austral Publishing, 1903, 360.
 - ¹⁰ *Star* (Christchurch), 20 February 1875, 2; *Otago Daily Times*, 13 September 1873, 2, 14 March 1874, 2.
 - ¹¹ Maston, A.B., *Pictorial Jubilee History*, 373.
 - ¹² *Nelson Evening Mail*, 27 March 1878, 2; *Colonist*, 28 March 1878, 3.
 - ¹³ *Star* (Christchurch), 8 Dec. 1879, 2; *Lyttleton Times*, 1 January 1880, 4.
 - ¹⁴ Adelaide Maud Waghorne (1879–1973), Gertrude Mary Price (1881–1973), Herbert Errett (1884–1968), Theodore Arthur (1887–1973), Myra Ford (1890–1978).
 - ¹⁵ *Australian Christian Witness* October 1883, 337, November 1883, 371.
 - ¹⁶ *Daily Telegraph* (Launceston), 29 October 1883, 2.
 - ¹⁷ *Launceston Examiner* 13 November 1883, 3.
 - ¹⁸ *Australian Christian Witness* March 1885, 85.
 - ¹⁹ *Australian Christian Standard* November 1885, 78.
 - ²⁰ *Australian Christian Standard* December 1885, 101.
 - ²¹ *Australian Christian Standard* September 1885, 23.
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 - ²⁴ *Australian Christian Standard* June 1886, 258.
 - ²⁵ *Australian Christian Standard* April 1886, 221.
 - ²⁶ *Australian Christian Standard* May 1886, 250
 - ²⁷ *Australian Christian Standard* July 1886, 280; August 1886, 321.
 - ²⁸ *Australian Christian Standard* October 1886, 369.
 - ²⁹ *Australian Christian Standard* May 1887, 102; November 1887, 250.
 - ³⁰ *Australian Christian Standard* October 1887, 261-263, 282-283.
 - ³¹ Maston, A.E., *Jubilee Pictorial History*, 81.
 - ³² Renamed in the 1920s as the Rechabite Hall.
 - ³³ *The Western Australian*, 10 January 1891, 2.
 - ³⁴ *The Western Australian*, 26 January 1891, 3; 22 January 1892, 6.
 - ³⁵ Ewers, Gordon A., *A Century of Worship and Witness 1890–1990*, 142.
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 - ³⁷ *The Daily News*, 16 March 1891, 3.
 - ³⁸ Ewers, Gordon A., *A Century of Worship and Witness 1890–1990*, 143.
 - ³⁹ *Inquirer and Commercial News* 18 March 18901, 3.
 - ⁴⁰ *Western Australian* 5 June 1894, 5.
 - ⁴¹ *Western Australian* 16 January 1892, 4.
 - ⁴² *Western Australian* 2 July 1891, 5.
 - ⁴³ *Daily News* 31 October 1891, 2.
 - ⁴⁴ *Western Mail* 9 May 1891, 17; 1 October 1892, 3; 12 December 1892, 4.

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- 46 Brown, John T., *Churches of Christ*, Louisville, KY: J.P. Morton & Co., 1904, 126.
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- 51 *Western Australian* 5 June 1894, 5; 19 July 1894, 8.
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- 58 *Cheltenham Chronicle* 8 April 1899, 6.
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- 60 *Gloucester Citizen* 3 September, 1899, 2.
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