USE OF THESES

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CONVERTING SALVATION: Protestant Missionaries in Central Australia, 1930s-40s

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CHAPTER FOUR: 'Bad Conscience and the Inexorable':
Charles Duguid, the Presbyterian Church, the strange Narrative of
Scottish money, and the Establishment of Ernabella Mission

The resonances of Levinas’ expressive title ripple through these next three chapters, if not through the thesis. ‘Bad consciences’ and the ‘inexorable’ were ever present in this narrative of the contestation of the mission site. Charles Duguid’s campaign for a Mission for Aborigines in South Australia, and his exposure of what he saw as the dishonourable misappropriation of funds originally intended for the ‘education and evangelisation’ of Aboriginal people was implacable; as he said, he would pursue the campaign within the Church or, if unable to persuade it, then outside the Church. 2 This was a strategy that JRB Love thought ‘unsound’: however critical he was of opposing views regarding Aboriginal people, a withdrawal from the Church, for Love, would have been unthinkable: he was both of the cloth, and a son of the cloth. 3 An ‘inexorable’ quality, however, existed in Love as well. His support for Duguid in the contest over Ernabella was probably crucial since his reputation by the mid to late 1930s within the Presbyterian Church was high: the exemplary missionary. Nevertheless, he remained his own man, retaining links to all parts of the Church, never cutting off relations entirely with the opposition as did the combative humanitarian, Duguid.

1 Emmanuel Levinas, "Bad Conscience and the Inexorable" in Face to Face with Levinas, ed. Richard A. Cohen (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986), 35-40. The inset photograph is the front cover of Charles Duguid, Doctor and the Aborigines (Adelaide: Rigby, 1972). Duguid’s autobiography reignited the controversy regarding the AIM’s treatment of Aboriginal people (and John Flynn’s attitude towards them) that had begun in the 1930s: see chapter 2.


3 Charles Duguid was elected Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of South Australia in 1935 (see below). Moderators in the Australian States held office for one year. Love’s comment that Duguid’s views were unbecoming of a former Moderator of the Church is in Presbyterian Church of Australia, "Board of Missions correspondence: ML MSS 1893 Add-on 1173/MLK box 2502/Folder 4/1937", (Mitchell Library: Sydney): Love to Matthews, 23 Nov 1937.
John Flynn plays a more shadowy role in these chapters. His cadres or surrogates in South Australia in the Australian Inland Mission (AIM) ‘Movement’ or ‘Family’ – it had become almost a sect or cult within (and, in a sense, outside) the Church, with its own revered, almost infallible Leader or Father – are the ones who mostly do battle with Duguid.  

But Flynn too was inexorable in his determination to create, maintain and develop the AIM for the benefit of the white people of Australia. There was, and still is, a debate about the extent to which Aboriginal people were excluded from Flynn’s imagining of the Australian community.  

For now, we note that Duguid at least was convinced from about 1934 onwards that Flynn’s attitude, and that of his organization, towards Aborigines was both ‘inhumane and unchristian’. Central to the Duguid narrative was the allegation that Flynn had warned him in 1934 that he was ‘wasting his time among so many damned dirty niggers’. In return, Flynn was

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4 The AIM became in many ways a sort of independent, almost secular body nominally within the Presbyterian Church but relatively autonomous in relation to its structure, its ‘content’ (the ‘Padres’ rarely gave Christian services or preached), and its propaganda and fund-raising activities. For the characterisation of the AIM as a ‘Family’, see McPheat, *John Flynn: Apostle*, p. 212. See also *John Flynn Papers: National Library of Australia: MS 3288* (Canberra).


6 Duguid, "Series 1: correspondence": Duguid to Perkins (copy), 2 Oct 1934.

7 Quoted in Duguid, *Doctor and the Aborigines*, p. 100. It was this comment in Duguid’s book that initiated the ‘furore’ of 1972: see chapter 2 above. Two points here: it is true that we only have Duguid’s word for this comment, but it has the ring of truth about it, because we know that Flynn privately spoke disparagingly of Aborigines. We have two impeccable witnesses to this ‘fact’: Howard Zelling and FW Albrecht. Duguid was certainly prone to hyperbole, and could be vituperative, but he was not, I think, a liar. Secondly, Brigid Hains in her recent book on Mawson and Flynn dismisses Duguid’s charge as being ‘nearly forty years after the event’: see Hains, *The Ice and the Inland*, pp. 125-126 (but see also Hains, ”Inland Flynn”: 31-34.). But within the Church, Duguid’s charge was well known at the time: he was not a quiet or reserved man. He even relayed the story in a letter to the head of the national Church Moderator-General MacKenzie in 1939: Duguid, "Series 1: correspondence": Duguid to MacKenzie, 25 Feb 1939. In relation to Zelling, we have his statement in the *Advertiser* (6 Sep 1972) that: ‘Whatever Flynn might have said on public platforms, he left no one in doubt in private conversations that his views were: (a) that the Aborigines were dying out and (b) they were lazy, shiftless good-for-nothings’. Albrecht, in a letter to Duguid, in 1971 wrote: ‘I knew only too well that Flynn had little time for Aborigines; in our talks he often told me that their outlook in life personally and as future citizens, was hopeless. He never pressed this view but made statements.’ But Albrecht also felt grateful to the AIM for ‘countless occasions’ when ‘a helpless Aborigine was picked up and taken to hospital, to return cured and well’. He considered that God used Flynn as a tool: ‘if Flynn had intended the Aerial Medical Service in the first place for white settlers, God had had His plans for the Aborigines, so that in real fact very many more Aborigines than white people, old and young, benefited from this service’: F.W. Albrecht, "Burns-Albrecht Collection: AA662", (South Australian Museum Archives, Adelaide): Albrecht to Duguid (copy), 28 Mar 1971.
said to have told the Secretary of the Board of Missions in 1936 that ‘(Duguid) should have had his head chopped off years ago’. Such were the polemics of Presbyterians. And one senses, even with the combative Duguid, some reluctance to take on Flynn directly and publicly, so powerful was Flynn of the Inland’s reputation by the 1930s, both within and outside the Church. Much of the contestation takes place in letters and reports, and at arms removed, over a pot of Scottish money invested with considerably more symbolic meaning than its mere value, even in Scot coinage. But a contest, over the terms of the discourse and direction of the Church regarding Aboriginal people as well as the more pragmatic matter of its treasury, does take place in the thirties and early forties, and Duguid, Love and Flynn are inextricably involved in that contest. That trial of strength, and the interaction and collision of discourses, is the narrative of these next three chapters.

**a magnificent obsession**

Dr. Charles Duguid was a man who loomed large in the small universe of the South Australian Presbyterian church of the 20th century. As we observed of Love, there are yet only ‘glimpses’ of him in the wider literature. A curious example of how little is known or understood of him is found in Nancy Cato’s well-known book on the 19th century missionary Daniel Maloga. In the exordium of her book, Cato quotes Duguid, but unfortunately calls our protagonist ‘Charles Duguid ‘of the Australian Inland Mission’’! Duguid’s opposition to Flynn was the great feud of his life, part of his Manichean view of existence. At one point in the early thirties, in fact, the combative humanitarian was a member of the South Australian Executive Council of the AIM, although it

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9 Hains, *The Ice and the Inland*.

10 The ‘glimpses’ are increasing in number. Reynolds, for example, refers to him as a ‘leading humanitarian’ in Reynolds, *This whispering in our hearts*, p. 234. John Harris in *One Blood* mentions Duguid in connection with his account of ‘the shameful story’ of the Smith of Dunesk Bequest, which we are about to examine; he also calls Duguid ‘that great supporter of Aboriginal progress’; and Duguid is of course associated with the establishment of Ernabella: Harris, *One Blood*, pp. 373, 638, 856. Although McPheat does not mention Duguid in the first biography of Flynn, Max Griffiths in a later work on Flynn refers to Duguid as ‘probably Flynn’s most outspoken and trenchant critic’: Max Griffiths, *The Silent Heart: Flynn of the Inland* (Kenthurst, N.S.W.: Kangaroo Press, 1993), p. 165.

is possible this was a tactical move on Duguid’s part, to shore up a position from which he could fire off his excoriating sallies. However, he resigned in 1936 over the organisation’s attitude towards Aboriginal people, continued to interrogate it fiercely on this matter, and to link him to the AIM, even by innocent mistake, is clearly to distort his positioning in the history of his times.

Duguid was born in Scotland in 1884 into a family of teachers and doctors, pillars of the Presbyterian Church and possessed of social consciences. The young Duguid distinguished himself academically at Glasgow University and became a surgeon. He migrated to Australia in 1912, the same year that John Flynn established the AIM. At first he practiced in country Victoria, in the Wimmera district not far from Moliagul where Flynn was born, but moved to Adelaide in 1914. He served as a Medical Officer in the Middle East in the Great War. Duguid later proved to be an inveterate joiner of organizations in South Australia, a President of the English Speaking Union, an active member of Legacy, associated with the Scottish clubs of Adelaide, founder of the Aboriginal Protection League, member of the Association for Protection of Native Races, as

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12 The minutes of the AIM Executive (SA) show that on 10 February 1933, Flynn provided information on the proposed ‘Medical Service’ of the AIM. He recommended also that a report be sent to AIM Head Office Sydney ‘that Dr Duguid considers the time is ripe to form an Aerial Medical Service Advisory Board in Adelaide’. This recommendation was adopted and three months later, on 16 May, the Executive resolved to invite Dr Duguid to join the Executive. On 28 August 1933, the Aerial Medical Service Advisory Committee was set up in SA with Duguid as Convenor: see AIM Papers (part of the Papers of the SA Presbyterian Church held in SA Mortlock Library), AIM Executive Minutes (SA), SRG123/14, SRG123/14/1 (2 volumes). The suggestion that Duguid saw a position on the AIM Executive as part of a political strategy is conjecture on my part; he did in fact have to be invited on to the Executive, he did not invite himself, although it seems he was prominent in suggesting an Advisory Board for the newly emerging AMS (later to be known as the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS)); and as a medical man, Flynn may well have been grateful for his assistance. Also, the events that formed part of the etiology of Duguid’s disillusionment with Flynn and the AIM did not preceed, but followed, his initial involvement with the organization. Yet it is still difficult to ignore the suspicion that, as well informed as Duguid usually was, he would not have heard the dogs barking over the AIM and Flynn’s attitude towards Aboriginal people, and thus have had some intuition that he might have to take a stand against the AIM. He may well have felt then that that stand would be more effective coming from an member – or at least an ex-member of the movement. A minor indication suggestive of this is that, after joining the AIM Executive (SA), Duguid (admittedly a busy man) attended only 6 of the 21 meetings prior to his resignation from the Executive in July of 1936. In any case, it is a matter of interest that in another aspect of the interlocking nature of the lives and discourses of our principals in this study, Duguid and Flynn, of all people, began their association as colleagues. It adds further piquancy to the point made below that the most bitter disagreements are often between those who have shared a similar ‘rhetoric’ or discourse: see chapter 6.

13 His father, for example, had been involved with a mission to the poor in Glasgow.
well as serving at various times on nearly all the main committees of the South Australian Church. He was also one of Adelaide’s leading surgeons.\textsuperscript{14}

Duguid’s first visit to Central Australia took place in 1934 amid general anger at the treatment of Aboriginal people in the notorious Caledon Bay or ‘peace expedition’ affair on the Arnhem Land coast, in which the application of European justice to indigenous people received national publicity and notoriety.\textsuperscript{15} The visit, with its further revelations of European mistreatment of Aboriginal people, engendered in Duguid a fierce commitment to assist their cause that lasted the rest of his long life: his magnificent obsession. Two significant issues for the Adelaide doctor emerged from the tour and its aftermath. Duguid found the antipathy to Aborigines as endemic in his own church as elsewhere: the attitudes of the AIM, as evidenced by Flynn’s alleged remark, shocked him and fuelled his later attempts to confine the influence of Flynn’s organisation.\textsuperscript{16} Secondly, Duguid met a small number of people who had some concern for Aboriginal people. Among these were two missionaries, Ernest Kramer and FW Albrecht. Duguid saw at close hand the Swiss faith missionary Kramer’s application of a simple, itinerant, evangelical ministry to indigenous people,

\textsuperscript{14} Sources for Duguid’s biographical details include: Presbyterian Banner (Editor: Mr. WJ Angus), Jan 1935 (Vol. XL, No.1); note that the Presbyterian Banner was the official organ of the Church in SA from 1901-1946; Scrimgeour, Some Scots Were Here; Duguid, Doctor and the Aborigines; Charles Duguid, No dyeing race (Adelaide: Rigby (Seal Books), 1978 (first pub. 1963)).

\textsuperscript{15} This affair was a complicated and tragic matter that began when Aborigines on the Arnhem Land coast killed five Japanese fishermen. When a police party went to investigate, a policeman was killed. To calm the hysteria and forestall a punitive police expedition, Church Missionary Society (CMS) missionaries arranged to send a peaceful expedition into the area to persuade the killers to give themselves up. This they did, after believing the Aboriginal version of events, which was that sexual assaults on Aboriginal women had provoked the killings. The missionaries believed the Aboriginal people would get a fair trial. Patently, they did not, although after a second trial, two were acquitted. The third, Dagiar (called Takiar in Duguid’s brief account: see Duguid, Doctor and the Aborigines, pp. 94-95) was sentenced to death by the notorious Judge Wells. There was a public outcry. The appeal went to the High Court, where the conviction was quashed. Dagiar was released from Darwin Gaol, but soon disappeared and was never seen again. John Harris notes ‘a persistent belief among Aboriginal people is that he was killed by the police’: Harris, One Blood, p. 750. Duguid himself wrote that ‘I have little doubt as to how he met his death’: Duguid, Doctor and the Aborigines, p. 95. See Harris, One Blood, pp. 737-751; also Mickey Dewar, The ‘Black War’ in Arnhem Land: Missionaries and the Yolgu 1908-1940 (Canberra: North Australia Research Unit, Australian National University, 1992 (reprinted 1995)). The whole affair made Duguid, according to his autobiography, sufficiently angry to ‘clench his teeth’ (p. 94). He clenched his teeth for the rest of his long and productive life.

\textsuperscript{16} See Duguid, Doctor and the Aborigines, chapter 10, and especially p. 100. The ‘Padre’ referred to there could only have been Kingsley Partridge, Padre of the Central Patrol, SA and NT, 1931-1952; the ‘Director’ was Flynn.
backed only at long distance by the Aborigines' Friends' Association (AFA). Duguid met Albrecht for the first time when he was asked by the Commonwealth Medical Officer in Alice Springs during his 1934 visit to investigate an outbreak of tuberculosis at Hermannsburg. This led to a long and fruitful partnership between the two men which began with a suggestion from Albrecht that, if Duguid wanted to do something for Aboriginal people 'before station-life overtakes them', then he should visit the Musgrave Ranges and the Pitjantjatjara people in far North-West South Australia: 'nobody's quite sure what's happening there'.  

The 'question' Love had posed on his visionary map of Australia was about to be answered.

**a cry in our ears respecting aborigines**

On his return from his visit, Duguid energetically took up the cause of the Central Australian Aborigines on a range of issues. He wrote to Minister Paterson about rations for those Aborigines who were not sick or aged or infirm (the criteria for rations) but who could get neither work nor rations. He was also concerned that conditions under pastoral leases reserving to Aboriginals rights of access to waterholes and natural fauna were impossible of fulfillment. In addition, the AIM was in his sights. Duguid had written forcefully to JA Perkins, Paterson's predecessor as Minister, about the need for a hospital for Aborigines in Alice Springs:

> The AIM Hostel [in Alice] is not suitable for more than giving social service to the white station people. Flynn, too, definitely told me it was not intended for 'the hobo white, the half-caste or the nigger.' I, a member of the executive of the AIM in Adelaide, am ashamed of the attitude of John Flynn and of Partridge, the missioner of the AIM for Central Australia

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17 Ibid., p. 104.
18 T. Paterson, Commonwealth Minister of the Interior, 9 Nov 1934-29 Nov 1937. To inform himself in relation to rations, Duguid got a copy of the 1934 'Instructions for Issuers of Stores' (applicable to the Commonwealth-administered NT) which directed that rations were only to be given to the sick, old, infirm and orphan children. All healthy, able bodied Aborigines were to be encouraged to provide for their own wants, although 'occasional supplies' may be given where there was reason to believe they were 'in want' and unable to obtain employment or procure their natural food: Duguid, "Series 1: correspondence": 1934 Instructions from Chief Protector of Aborigines for Central Australia: 'Instructions for Issuers of Stores' (copy).
19 Duguid, "Series 1: correspondence": Duguid to Paterson, n.d., probably late 1934, after his return from his Alice Springs visit.
towards the native problem. It is not human let alone Christian, and I not only tackled Flynn but brought the matter before the executive of the AIM.  

Duguid was busy finding facts, accumulating information, building a case. A request from the AIM for reimbursement of the cost of treatment of two Aboriginal boys at Birdsville was repeatedly criticized. He embarrassed the Federal Government and the bureaucracy by asking persistently for details on how much the Federal Government actually spent on Aboriginal people, and comparing the figures with expenditure on whites.

In early 1935, for the first time in Australia, a lay elder of the Presbyterian Church, Charles Duguid, was ‘elevated’ to the Moderatorial Chair of a State Presbyterian Church. A leading Presbyterian minister, the Rev. David Chapman, had conceived the idea of appointing a leading layman instead of a minister to the leadership position. Chapman’s progressive initiative proved ironic as Duguid immediately used the prestige of his position to move against Chapman’s great cause, the AIM, during his campaign for ‘a Medical Mission to the Aborigines in Far NW SA’. The ceremonial set pieces of conservative religious organizations tend to privilege protocol, pomposity and style over substance. The SA Presbyterian Church was little different. Each Moderator began his term with an address to the Assembly of the Church, usually on some relatively inoffensive subject. The subject of the indigenous people of the country had not been mentioned since the address of the Rev. Edward Rorke who in 1891, while calling in his address for the ‘land to be possessed’ and an agent or missionary ‘to

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21 Duguid, "Series 1: correspondence": Duguid to Perkins (copy), 2 Oct 1934.
22 Ibid., Hey to Chief Protector of Aborigines, SA; Duguid to Simpson (copy), 23 May 1935.
23 Ibid., Brown to Duguid, 2 Nov 1934; 13 Dec 1934. The Secretary of the Department of the Interior, HC Brown, was reduced to embarrassing generalities in his responses to Duguid: ‘There is no actual Grant but a considerable sum is expended for the benefit of Aborigines’; ‘it is difficult to ascertain the actual total cost of Commonwealth expenditure on Aborigines in the Northern Territory’ etc. The Secretary finally stitched together some figures for food, clothing, blankets, salaries of staff, including 5 Govt Medical Officers, the Chief Protector and other Protectors (nearly all mounted constables).
24 Papers of Presbyterian Church of South Australia, "Minutes of Proceedings of the South Australian State Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia (Blue Books)", (Mortlock Library: Adelaide): 1948, obituary of Rev. David Chapman.
minister to the scattered Presbyterians', had also heard 'a cry in our ears from Queensland and our own Northern Territory respecting the aborigines'25

**a physician to the whole Confederacy**

Duguid’s Address was a powerful attack on white Australian society and its treatment of Aboriginal people. He singled out employment conditions with poor wages and forced labour; the inequitable application of rationing, where able bodied but unemployed men were ineligible; the permeability of supposedly ‘inviolable’ Aboriginal reserves when something valuable to whites was found on the land; and the paucity of education efforts. Looking back on the history of the white man in Australia, Duguid argued that ‘no real and sustained attempt has been made by the Government of the ruling race to understand the native or to help these people to understand us.’26 He excoriated the systems of health and justice for indigenous people in Australia, and observed that contact with whites was usually deleterious for Aborigines: ‘the only hope is to get them away...as far as possible from contact with white men.’ To mark the approaching centenary celebrations of the beginnings of South Australia, Duguid proposed a scheme to establish a Presbyterian Medical Mission in the vicinity of the Musgrave Ranges, the area that both Albrecht and Love had already marked on their ‘maps’ of salvation. The characterization of the Mission as ‘medical’ gave it credibility, as did the combative humanitarian himself, being a ‘medical man’. The proposed mission fitted a typical Presbyterian model for missions that had historically focused on education, industrial training and medical assistance.27 In Australia, and for Duguid in particular, an underlying rationale for the new welfare, biomedical and educative ‘model’ of mission was the well-documented failure of 19th century missions that had generally confined their efforts to attempting to save Aboriginal souls with little understanding of their culture or beliefs.28 To help fund his ‘scheme’ Duguid offered to give £100 for three years ‘towards the salary of an approved Christian Medical Missionary, who had anthropological

25 See ibid., Moderator’s Address: 1891.
26 *Presbyterian Banner: The Organ of the Presbyterian Church in South Australia*, 1901-1946: vol. 40, no. 4, p. 8, in the Papers of the Presbyterian Church of South Australia (Mortlock Library: Adelaide).
28 See generally Broome, *Aboriginal Australians*, and Harris, *One Blood.*
training.' Duguid was cleverly cultivating the respected discourses of medicine and anthropology to reinforce the status of his project.

Duguid now charged the Church with a 'special moral responsibility' to the Aborigines of South Australia because, he alleged, a 'bequest' or 'gift' to the Presbyterian Church made in the 19th C by a Scottish woman, Mrs. Henrietta Smith, for 'the education and evangelisation of the aborigines of South Australia' had been used instead 'to start the Australian Inland Mission'. That mission, Duguid said, 'is, and always has been, for the white pioneer population; never at any time in the interests of the natives.' A Christian obligation now rested on the church to divert the money, still being utilized by the AIM, to its original purpose. That purpose was profound, and Duguid towards the end of his Address appealed to deep historical and religious roots in his listeners:

[I doubt] whether anything more alien to the spirit of Christ exists than the authorized and permitted treatment of the native of Australia by us white people. It is the bounden duty of the Christian Church so to rouse the people and keep them roused that our Government will be forced to treat the Aborigines as human beings. There was a time in the history of the Scottish Church when her Assembly was a more democratic and a more powerful body than the Parliament of the Nation. It is time something of the kind happened in Australia.

An interested onlooker at the new Moderator's induction was FW Albrecht: 'You will have noticed me in the church that evening. I had intended going up to meet you afterwards. However, there were many others around you who had first claim.' Albrecht told Duguid that his raising of the 'Aboriginal question' was 'a seed sown, and the fruit will come in time.' He offered 'every assistance' in establishing 'a Mission Station in the Musgraves'.

The editorial in the December 1935 issue of the South Australian Church newspaper the Presbyterian Banner praised the nomination of Duguid as Moderator, a man, it said, 'with a fine history of devotion to our Church, both

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29 Presbyterian Banner: vol. 40, no. 4, p. 10.
30 Ibid.
31 Albrecht, "Burns-Albrecht Collection": Albrecht to Duguid (copy), 28 Mar 1935.
here and in the Homeland'.  

It stated portentously that Vadianus, the man who presided over the great Council of Berne in the disputation that had inaugurated the Reformation, was also a layman and a medical man whom Zwingli had called 'a physician for both body and soul to the whole Confederacy'. Duguid now began to apply himself with passion to the Confederacy of his Church, where the State Churches were parochial and niggardly in their contributions to the national Church and its missions. In 1935-36, he travelled extensively in advocacy of his Mission to a number of the State Assemblies as well as the national General Assembly in Sydney. He was not assured of success.

**to awaken the conscience of the Church**

The Smith of Dunesk Gift became a battleground of the campaign to establish and maintain Ernabella. It came to represent, to a degree greater than its monetary value, a symbol and marker of the discourses of Presbyterians regarding Aborigines. With resources scarce in the later 1930s and 40s, after the Depression and in the context of war, the Smith of Dunesk funds became a significant point of division for the local Church. From the time that Duguid used it as the frontispiece of his Moderatorial Address, there was little doubt as to his interpretation: the history of the Gift was a example of the exploitation of the Aborigines. Presbyterian white people had taken something that did not properly belong to them and misused it for their own benefit and purposes. The AIM and

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32 Presbyterian Banner: vol. 40, no. 12. It may be noted that the December 1935 issue of the Presbyterian Banner gives an interesting insight into the mentality of the parochial, small-town, bourgeois and respectably religious Adelaide of the thirties. Interspersed between articles on the AIM, Too Tired to go to Church?, missions to lepers, Presbyterian history (the Union in 1865) and the current Licensed Victuallers' Bill in Parliament (which extended 6pm closing time: 'the most daring and shameless attack upon temperance reform in this State’s history’), are advertisements for Kelvinator refrigerators and MacRobertsons Chocolates, undertakers, cars (Chrysler Plymouth ‘Leader in the Low Price Field’), “Bidomak” (which ‘corrects the cause of nerve problems’), and Berger’s Paints (‘Keep on keeping on’).


34 It should be noted, however, that the Depression had made it more difficult to maintain levels of contributions.

35 Duguid, Doctor and the Aborigines, p. 116. HR Balfour heard a Duguid address in Victoria in May 1935 and relayed the information to the exemplary missionary in the remote Kimberleys, JRB Love; see chapter 3 above, n. 49.

36 Other terms besides ‘gift’, such as ‘bequest’ and ‘fund’, were also used during the controversy over the monies. In fact, technically it was not a ‘bequest’, which at law is a gift of personal property by will. Mrs. Smith’s transfer of property to the Free Church of Scotland was by deed of gift and was executed and came into force a number of years before her death.
Flynn had ended up with possession of the stolen property and it was incumbent on them to return it to its rightful owners.

It is not so much my objective here to find out the whole ‘truth’ behind the Smith of Dunesk Fund, even if that were possible, but rather to look at the ‘historiography’ of it, to catch the sort of marker it became, particularly for South Australian Presbyterians. Howard Zelling noted during the Flynn ‘furore’ in 1972:

It was left to Dr Duguid to awaken the conscience of the Church on the maltreatment and neglect of Aborigines. He drew attention to the fact that the Smith of Dunesk Trust was intended by Mrs. Smith to benefit Aborigines and the income was not being so applied. He met with opposition, not to mention, vituperation, for his pains. Flynn was Moderator-General during that controversy and he certainly did not use the weight of his high office to help Dr. Duguid’s struggle to get justice for Aborigines.37

On the other hand, publications of the AIM referred to ‘the devout lady’ in Scotland who was thinking of the ‘destitute religious condition of the outback settlers’ of South Australia’.38 Some misinformation came from the pen of Ion Idriess, who wrote the best-selling Flynn of the Inland in 1932.39 Although the Author’s Note disarmingly states that ‘this book is not a history; but it is a true story’, Idriess’s fictional account of the Scottish lad who perished in the Centre and the overseas mother who left her mite to found a Mission to help other mothers’ sons took root in Presbyterian and AIM narratives.40 In 1938, even after the ‘true’ story began to emerge, the Victorian Presbyterian paper The Messenger elaborated a fanciful story of a shrewd Scottish female investor in the Wakefield Scheme in colonial South Australia whose son migrated to inspect the land.41 In 1948, in a letter to the Adelaide Advertiser, the Rev John McLelland,
the Assembly Historian and Archivist, noted wryly that 'so much misinformation on the subject is now available that it is doubtful whether truth will ever overtake error.' In an equally sober assessment in 1986, Robert Scrimgeour, in his history of the Presbyterian church in South Australia, commented: The Smith of Dunesk story is one that does not reflect credit on the Free Church of Scotland nor on the Presbyterian Church in South Australia. Throughout its history the bequest has been accompanied by frustration, discontent, and controversy. It is also a narrative of intrigue, deception, and cupidity.

**the vicissitudes of the gift**

Since Marcel Mauss wrote his seminal essay on 'the gift' in 1923, anthropologists have been wrestling with 'the vicissitudes of the gift' in 'archaic' societies. One reading of Mauss sees the gift as part of a system of exchange in non-monetary communities that included three legal obligations; the obligations to give, to receive, and to return the gift in kind. Another sees the primary feature of the gift as the identification of the gift with the spirit of the donor. This part of Mauss's typology of the gift was derived from Maori potlatch systems where objects were infused with hau, or spirits, and it was because of the hau of the gift that the recipient was obliged to return it to the original giver. 'Gifts' could be, then, 'entangled objects' in a complex system of economic exchange, mutual obligations and 'spiritual' relationships between 'archaic' actors. In Western capitalist societies of contract and coin, the gift, while theoretically 'freely' given, without apparent obligations, remained subject to various social dynamics and expectations of reciprocity that undermined the notion of the 'pure' gift. While

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42 Letter to the Editor, *The Advertiser*, SA, 18 Feb 1948; also see Papers of Presbyterian Church of South Australia, "SRG123/377, Rev John McLelland, SA Assembly Historian and Archivist, correspondence re historical and legal matters", (Mortlock Library: Adelaide).

43 Scrimgeour, *Some Scots Were Here*, p. 106; see also pp. 106-118.


46 See Nicholas Thomas, *Entangled Objects: Exchange, Material Culture, and Colonialism in the Pacific* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1991) who, among other delineations of the colonial entanglements with Pacific Islanders, examines the permutations of the anthropological 'gift' through to 'commodity'.

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such societies often found it necessary to set up intricate legal frameworks to
govern the passage of the ‘free and pure’ gift from one person or entity to
another, the sense of the ‘spirit’ or hau of the giver behind the gift, even apart
from or despite the legal letter of the Deed, remained strong. Mrs. Smith’s hau
blew insistently down Presbyterian corridors of power in the 1930s and 1940s.

**believing they will not lose sight of the welfare of the aborigines**

It is undisputed that in 1839 Mrs. Henrietta Smith, a wealthy widow in Scotland,
formed an intention to buy land in the new colony of South Australia and utilize
moneys from the lease of the land to assist the Aborigines of the colony. The
land however was not purchased until the early 1850s. At around this time,
she received advice that the Aborigines of South Australia were dying out and
consequently, when she conveyed the land to the Free Church of Scotland in
1853, the deed of gift only committed the annual income of the property to be
applied ‘to promoting the cause of the Gospel in South Australia’. Along with
the deed, however, a letter from Mrs. Smith to the Colonial Committee of the
Church in Scotland, the trustees of the gift, indicated her original intentions had
been, and remained, that the proceeds ‘be entirely devoted to the evangelisation
and education of the Aborigines of South Australia’. While she had been
persuaded that circumstances had changed, she had conveyed the property to
the church ‘trusting and believing that they will not lose sight of the welfare of
the Natives for whom it was first intended, along with their other pious objects in
South Australia.’ Some limited assistance was given to Aboriginal causes in the
colony during the next 40 years or so: George Taplin’s Mission at Point McLeay
benefited, and in 1861, it was decided to pay £50 annually to the Aborigines’

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47 Six parcels of land of 80 acres each were purchased in 1851-1852: see Scrimgeour, Some Scots Were Here, p. 107. Note that Mrs. Smith’s ‘intention’ was formed only three years after the formation of the colony of South Australia, which means the history of the moneys (which were still extant in some form as late as the 1970s, as far as can be determined) is almost as long as the (European) history of the Colony and State itself.
48 It is not clear who in South Australia gave her this ‘advice’ that, while not altogether without some foundation (given the rapid depopulation of the Aborigines around Adelaide in the early years of the Colony), was clearly given from ulterior (and improper) motives, i.e. to divert monies going to Aborigines.
49 Quoted in Scrimgeour, Some Scots Were Here, p. 107.
50 Ibid., p. 107.
51 In 1859, the Church in SA, through its lawyers, was given power of attorney over the funds.
Friends’ Association (AFA). By 1871, as revenue was accumulating but not sufficiently distributed to Aboriginal causes, Mrs. Smith was concerned enough to write to the Colonial Committee, through her sister:

I...take the opportunity once and for all of informing the Colonial Committee of the Free Church my design in making the purchase was from the first and still is that the money accruing from it should be employed only in promoting the spiritual interests of the Aboriginal Natives. Any other application of it whatever is therefore directly at variance with my original intention. The land was devoted to God for the exclusive use of the poor Blacks in particular.

She wrote again, later, in stronger terms: ‘...all of it was solemnly given to God for the behoof of the South Australian Blacks alone, again I say not whites and no other colony has any right to a farthing of it.’ While the Scottish church made attempts to honour her wishes, it eventually fell in with the determination of the South Australian church, after that church had ‘rediscovered’ the fund after a period of quiet accumulation, to put the money to ‘other pious purposes’, relying on the fact that the Deed did not mention Aborigines.

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52 The annual payment out of the Smith of Dunesk moneys to the AFA continued, increasing to £100 (pa) until 1890, when the AFA asked for the grant to be increased. Instead, they were told it would be withdrawn. As it eventuated, the support was quickly phased out.

53 Quoted in Scrimgeour, Some Scots Were Here, p. 108.

54 Ibid.

55 As indicated, there were some initial attempts to persuade the South Australian Church to acceded to the donor’s wishes. For example, a letter of 8 May 1871 from Peter Hope of the Colonial Committee of the Free Church of Scotland to Rev James Henderson, Clerk of Presbytery of Adelaide: ‘Since I last wrote regarding the ‘Smith Fund’, intimating the cordial concurrence of the Colonial Committee in the suggestions of the Presbytery of Adelaide with respect to the disposal of said fund, we have had considerable correspondence with Mrs. Smith on the subject. She is extremely anxious that the whole of the Fund should be devoted to the Aborigines in SA, and especially to the Mission at Point McLeay, and though the original Deed which invests the trust in the Colonial Committee states that the Fund is ‘for the support of the gospel in South Australia’, the Committee have thought it right to defer to her wishes. She is a very old lady...and feels very keenly on the subject...Have the goodness to lay this communication before your Presbytery’ (Hope’s italics); see Papers of Presbyterian Church of South Australia, "SRG123/278 Assembly Historian and Archivist (J McLellan) - papers relating to Smith of Dunesk Mission", (Mortlock Library: Adelaide). After a bout of letter writing attempting to get the colonists to adhere to Mrs. Smith’s wishes, the Colonial Committee thought it had an agreement to divide the money between the Point Pearce and Point McLeay Missions. The South Australian Church simply did nothing, except increase the AFA allocation to £100, and in fact everyone (except the lawyers, who continued to send the annual amount to the AFA) seemed to forget about the matter of the six properties until 1889, when the Colonial Committee asked for information on the division of the money between the Missions. Rev William Main, a leading churchman in the South Australian Presbytery, handled the matter shrewdly if dubiously, apparently persuading the Scottish Church that the ‘Aboriginal Friends Society’ (sic) was so well financed by the Government and religious subscriptions’ that the £100 grant should be withdrawn, as it was (phased out over five years, ending in 1896), and that the money should be spent on financing the ‘church extension work’ among the settlers in the pioneering North as an ‘object’ under the Gift; see Papers of the Presbyterian Church of SA, "SRG123/278".
The church in South Australia wanted to establish a mission in the northern reaches of the colony among isolated Scottish settlers 'far from ordinances': 'church extension work' in the Presbyterian terminology. The rediscovery of a relatively large cache of money was too great a temptation.\(^56\) It was known, as the 1893 minutes of the General Assembly noted, that the money was intended 'for the forwarding of Christ's cause in South Australia, keeping in view the interests of the aborigines in this colony'.\(^57\) Discretionary powers needed to be requested from the Colonial Committee of the 'Home Church', still the trustee of the property and proceeds, to allow the local church to disburse the funds as it wished. The Committee was advised by letter that increasing population in the north meant that it would be 'most desirable for your Church to allow this Assembly an almost uncontrolled discretion' in the church extension work. As far as the Aborigines were concerned, the Scottish Church was assured that 'they have a just claim on our sympathy and aid; and it is earnestly hoped that you will put it in our power to help them, should it seem expedient to do so.'\(^58\)

After this letter was sent, its author, Rev. William Main, was appointed Moderator and in his 1894 Address noted, that despite the 'lack of pecuniary means', the Church was hopeful that 'we shall have a fund at our disposal which will enable us to provide for the spiritual needs of our scattered people in the northern portions of this province': no mention now of Aborigines to the home flock. These hopes were fulfilled when the Scottish Church provided the necessary authority to pursue the 'church extension work', and even the dry minutes of the 1895 Blue Books seem to glow with pleasure as they find it 'impossible to refrain from rendering thanks to God for His great goodness in placing such a fund at our disposal for the extension of His Kingdom in this land in which we live.'\(^59\) An appeal was sent out to the Presbyterian churches in the

\(^{56}\) £2263 capital accumulated plus annual rents in 1890: according to one publication, the 'cache' would have been equivalent to about $200,000 in 1993 dollars; George Wilson, The Flying Doctor Story: an authorised history of the Royal Flying Doctor Service (Sydney: Cygnus Press, 1993), p. 26.

\(^{57}\) Presbyterian Church, "Blue Books": 1893, Minutes, p. 8.

\(^{58}\) Ibid., 1894, Minutes, copy of letter from WF Main to Colonial Committee (sent Nov 1893).

\(^{59}\) Ibid., 1895, Minutes, p. 13.
colony in 1895 which codified the new ‘understanding’ or mythology of the Church regarding the Gift:

In the year 1858 the late Mrs. Smith, of Dunesk, Scotland, purchased lands in this Province, which she entrusted to the Free Church of Scotland, “for the spread of the Gospel in SA”. The rents of this property, and an accumulated fund, have now been handed over to the Presbyterian Church of this Colony for the purposes of the Bequest, with a view to meeting the spiritual needs of settlers in outlying districts.⁶⁰

So was born the Smith of Dunesk Mission, undertaken initially by the Reverend Robert Mitchell, working out of Beltana, travelling by horse and buggy from station to station, an outback, lonely ministry of prayers, worship (with a portable organ), and the distribution of literature and good works. According to a letter of Mitchell’s to the Scottish Committee, he was deeply interested in the scattered population of the Colony, and he was shrewd enough to add: ‘not excepting the much neglected Aborigines’. It may be, as Scrimgeour suggests, that Mitchell and his successors ministered ‘sometimes to Afghans and Aborigines’.⁶¹ If so, they are ‘much neglected’ in the considerable volume of the minutes of the Smith of Dunesk Committee and its reports to the General Assembly, filled with stories of travel adventures, shearers, services (marriages, funerals), the good men and women of the inland along with ‘the careless, godless, vicious, and drunk’. And always the accounting, the capital balance of the Smith of Dunesk Fund and the annual income from the rents, and how it was spent, and how much was left. Nothing of Afghans or Aborigines. Perhaps they were included among the godless and vicious.

**acquiesce in the appointment to a wider sphere**

In 1898, Mitchell became Convenor of the Smith of Dunesk Committee in Adelaide and kept a fatherly eye on the line of ‘missioners’ who succeeded him ‘in the field’. One of these, Rev. Frank Rolland, conceived the idea of stationing a nursing sister in the Mission area at Oodnadatta where in 1907 a Sister was

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⁶⁰ See in Papers of Presbyterian Church of SA, “SRG123/278”: a finely printed 1 page notice dated Adelaide, October, 1895, headed ‘Presbyterian Church of South Australia’, and under that, ‘Smith of Dunesk Mission. By William F Main, Convenor’.

appointed. A travelling missionary, and a nursing sister, bringing spiritual and physical health to the white Inland: it was a model that interested the minister who was appointed to the Smith of Dunesk Mission in 1911, John Flynn. Within two years, the Australian Inland Mission was born, out of the womb, as it were, of the Smith of Dunesk Mission.

Flynn had already become interested in ‘the Bush’ in Victoria, conducting two Shearers’ Missions and producing a popular booklet The Bushman’s Companion. In Beltana, before catching the train and boat to Darwin for his survey of the Territory, he built a medical hostel, inaugurated a quarterly paper The Outback Battler, and conducted services at Farina, Marree and Leigh Creek, where, as we know, he met the young schoolteacher, JRB Love. His vision, with his discourse, was already moving out from himself to take in panoramic and panoptical vistas:

We are running well. Let nothing hinder us. The best and the brightest, the purest and most beauteous will ever be found clustered round the Cross of Christ. Let our devotion be complete in ourselves, and let us take no rest until our privileges and blessings are shared by all our nation, and by the child nation displaced by us, yet still within our gates.

Flynn’s language is revealing here. The ‘we’ is ambiguous, and it is hard to resist the suggestion that, as well as the Church, it included himself, if unconsciously, as an engine of energetic ambition. The inexorability of ‘let nothing hinder us’ is striking. ‘Displaced’ normalizes and naturalizes the original dispossession of the ‘child race’: children, also, move aside for adults, a natural social gesture. And while they too should share in our beneficence and ‘privileges’, the twist is in the phrase ‘within our gates’, perhaps a characteristic rhetorical flourish but carrying some resonance with the notion of ‘the enemy within’, some impurity within the ‘pure and beauteous’ body politic. As he laid his plans before his

62 Rolland was later to become, as his father William before him, Moderator of the Victorian Presbyterian Church (1937-38) and Moderator-General of the Australian Presbyterian Church (1954-57).
64 See the discussion in chapter 3, above.
church for a transformative project for the white people of the Inland, Flynn’s ambivalence towards its indigenous inhabitants was apparently deepening.

In 1912, the Smith of Dunesk Mission and its Committee in Adelaide, led by the indefatigable Robert Mitchell, was forced, as its report to the State Assembly put it, ‘to acquiesce in the General Assembly’s appointment of Rev J Flynn to a wider sphere’\(^\text{66}\): they had only had time to hear briefly the sound of his engine of ambition as ‘the best and the brightest’ had hummed past toward bigger and better things. Mitchell and his Committee battled on, increasingly in the shadow of a burgeoning AIM. They had to accept the transfer of the Oodnadatta hostel and staff to the new organization; they appointed a new missioner, Bruce Plowman, but he too moved on in November 1913 to the AIM.\(^\text{67}\) In 1919, a scheme for a hospital at Beltana was revived: disquiet regarding the respective roles of the earlier, but smaller, Mission and the later, but larger, Mission was quickly resolved with Flynn’s politic suggestion that the AIM finance the hospital, to be called ‘The Mitchell Home’, while the Smith of Dunesk Committee acted as agents for the management of the hospital.\(^\text{68}\) In 1921, with its funds still flowing, the Committee was able to buy a car for the missioner, amid hopes that ‘a new day of prosperity will dawn’.

**neglecting the ‘much neglected’ Aborigines**

A proposal in 1922 to transfer the Smith of Dunesk Mission to the AIM was deemed ‘undesirable at present’.\(^\text{69}\) However, one year later, after the ‘painful experience’ of an unsuccessful 14-month search for a missioner, the Committee approved ‘an Overture to the AIM’ for ‘temporary cooperation’ between the two organizations.\(^\text{70}\) From 1930 there were continuing suggestions the AIM would take over the Beltana district.\(^\text{71}\) Arrangements for this were completed in 1933 when the AIM’s Southern Patrol ‘padre’ took over ‘patrol work’ in the old Smith of

\(^\text{67}\) Ibid., 1914, Report of Smith of Dunesk Committee, pp. 16-17.
\(^\text{68}\) Ibid., 1919, Report of Smith of Dunesk Committee, p. 46.
\(^\text{69}\) Ibid., April 1922 State Assembly, Report of Smith of Dunesk Committee.
\(^\text{70}\) Ibid., 1923, Report of Smith of Dunesk Committee, pp. 48-49: the cooperation was decidedly small-scale; the AIM was to have access to the Beltana Bomb, the missioner’s car.
\(^\text{71}\) In the meantime, the long-term Convenor of the Committee, and founder of the Smith of Dunesk Mission, Mitchell, died in 1929.
Dunesk geographical area around Beltana. All the proceeds of the Smith of Dunesk fund were now to be devoted to the work of the AIM. The local AIM Council was further integrated into the Assembly after David Chapman’s successful motion ‘that the AIM Council be made a Special Committee of this Assembly’. An Assembly historian eulogized the ending of the Smith of Dunesk Mission:

With this transfer, so passed from the South Australian Church, after a trusteeship of nearly 40 yrs, the Smith of Dunesk Mission, a designation now merely of historical significance, but nevertheless a worthy project which deserves the placing on permanent record of a noble attempt to serve its day and generation. It was a unique and sustained mission possessing (within the technological limits of its day) all the elements of the greater AIM which absorbed it in the year 1933.

Fine words, and there was a nobility about the sacrifices and determination of the Smith of Dunesk missioners. But, as with its successor, it was a mission almost exclusively to white people. It neglected the ‘much neglected’ Aborigines, and made no effort to minister to them, since at no time did it ‘seem expedient to do so’. It was founded and funded on deception, misappropriation and a deliberate refusal to follow the express wishes of the benefactor for the benefit of the Aborigines of South Australia.

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72 Ibid., 1931, Report of Smith of Dunesk Committee: see also Scrimgeour, Some Scots Were Here, p. 115. The Minutes of the full AIM Board of 1 March 1932 make the expectation clear that ‘shortly, the Smith of Dunesk Committee will make available to the AIM the nett revenues accruing from its properties’. The Board included, apart from Superintendent Flynn, the Reverends HC Matthews (later to be the Secretary of the Board of Missions and the principal point of contact with the Board for both Duguid and Love regarding Ernabella during the 1930s and 1940s) and D Chapman, and Dr G Simpson: Papers of Presbyterian Church of SA, "SRG 123/360 - AIM Papers - Minutes of the AIM Board and Executive (Sydney)" (Mortlock Library: Adelaide): Minutes of 1 Mar 1932. In a later meeting of the Executive on 31 May 1932, Flynn spoke of the trials of the Depression, which had made it difficult to maintain the organization’s services, but emphasized that ‘we had kept our flags flying throughout our vast territory’. In October of that year, he indicated some impatience with the process of merging the two organizations, saying it had gone on so long it had become ‘stale’, but was obviously keen to complete the process and was ‘anticipating’ the revenue from the SA source at £224. He hoped then that the ‘SA section of the AIM Family [would] march forward with us’: see ibid., Minutes of 31 May and 25 October of 1932.

73 Presbyterian Church, "Blue Books": 1931, Minute 35.

74 JM McLelland, a historian and archivist of the SA Church: see Papers of Presbyterian Church of SA, "SRG123/278".

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lift your eyes to the hills

So by 1935, at the ascension of Charles Duguid to the Moderatorship of his Church, the AIM, which had been partly developed from the model of the Smith of Dunesk Mission, had swallowed up the parent organization, taking along with it the car, the hospital, and the money. It was the money that now became the point of focus. It was hardly enough to be worth fighting over (although not inconsiderable at the time) but it came to represent the boundary between two opposing sides, two different discourses, one that privileged the white settler culture, the other that conceived an obligation to the indigenous peoples for past and present wrongs.

Immediately after his Address, the new Moderator got down to the business of securing the Smith monies for ‘the education and evangelisation of the Aborigines’ of Ernabella. The 1935 Blue Book duly notes: ‘Having called the Rev D Chapman to the Chair, Dr, Duguid introduced the subject of the will of Mrs. Smith of Dunesk.’ It was resolved that the Committee of the Smith of Dunesk Mission be instructed to investigate fully the matter of ‘the terms of the will’ of Mrs. Smith of Dunesk and her accompanying letter, and to report to the next Assembly. The Moderator was also officially thanked for his offer of a monetary contribution towards the salary of ‘an approved Christian medical missionary, who has had anthropological training’, and a Committee was appointed ‘to investigate the possibilities of the Medical Mission scheme’. The Report for that year of the Smith of Dunesk Committee, still in existence, extolled the work of the ‘new’ Southern Patrol of the AIM: the padre has ‘travelled over many miles of country through sand and rivers, taking to isolated settlers and their families a touch of sympathy and interest from the home base. In men’s huts, in woolsheds, in Managers’ homes, on the roadside, at little mining communities, he has brought home the truths of practical Christianity to everyone.’

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75 There is an argument that Flynn was already thinking of an organisation along AIM lines prior to moving to Beltana. This may have well have been the case but the Smith of Dunesk model of the ‘lone missioner’ or ‘padre’ as he became known, especially after the Great War, with his car, and his literature, passing out goodwill, good nature, spiritual and medical help (with the Sister and Hostel attached) is too coincidental for it not to have had some shaping impact on Flynn: see McPheat, John Flynn: Apostle, esp. chapter 6.
76 Presbyterian Church, “Blue Books”: 1935, Minute 85.
The Board of Missions in Melbourne, acting on behalf of the national church, reacted cautiously to Duguid’s proposal; they appreciated his ‘generous’ offer and set up a special committee to investigate the possibility of establishing such a Mission and Medical Patrol but would remind that committee of ‘the present obligations of the Presbyterian Church of Australia for missionary service to Aborigines’. ⁷⁸ HC Matthews, the Secretary of the Board, and, until 1946, the principal contact with the Board for Duguid and Love, explained the Board’s caution: it wanted to increase wages to missionaries, it needed a teacher and a nurse in North Queensland, money was short, the States’ contributions were ‘meagre’. Despite the Board’s hesitancy, Matthews did not himself think that the Presbyterian Church was doing all it should for Aborigines, and he indicated his support for Duguid by stating his hope that the Scheme would go through ‘triumphantly’. ⁷⁹ He noted that the ‘information on the Smith of Dunesk benefaction’ in Duguid’s Address ‘was a revelation to all of us’, and commented: ‘A fair proportion of that money should be used annually for the service of the Aborigines in some way or other. I cannot see how the AIM or the Smith of Dunesk Mission can continue to use it solely for the ‘other objects’.⁸⁰

Duguid was contemptuous of the Board’s cautious stance and his response to Matthews incandescently angry: ‘For God’s sake, the Church’s sake and the sake of the Aborigines, lift up your eyes unto the hills. Have we lost all faith, all adventure, all daring for Christ?’ He was impatient: ‘The urgent point is that Rome is burning.’⁸¹ Matthews had advised him of the necessity to go through the protocols of the Church, to get approval from the SA State Assembly, then the national General Assembly, which was not scheduled to meet until September 1936. An impatient Duguid threatened to go outside the Church if necessary: ‘I am afraid that I shall not wait until September 1936 for permission to go on...I made it clear in the South Australian Assembly that my offer was conditional; if these conditions are not met, I would go on with the work outside the

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⁷⁸ Passed 15 April 1935, copy in Duguid, "Duguid: Series 1: correspondence", Resolution of Executive of the Board of Missions, 16 April 1935.
⁷⁹ Ibid., Matthews to Duguid, 16 April 1935.
⁸⁰ Ibid.
⁸¹ Ibid., Duguid to Matthews (copy), n.d. but internal evidence suggests about 19 Apr 1935.
Presbyterian Church.’ He then brought in Love as an ally in the matter of the Scottish moneys: ‘Love certainly knew of what I said...so it was widely known among those interested in the Aborigines, if your Board was in ignorance.’

But, despite the initial asperity, Duguid and the Board, through Matthews, began to work together towards meeting Duguid’s objectives. After Matthews advised Duguid of proposed representations to the Federal Government ‘asking for unification of control of the Aborigines, the inviolability of their reserves, and a complete medical survey’, Duguid was himself now cautionary. He had met with Minister Paterson recently; a Scot and a Presbyterian, he was a charming man, Duguid relayed to the Board, but without actual contact with the native problem: ‘I am afraid he will be guided almost entirely by his permanent officers and they are not sympathetic to radical change’. Still, he wrote hopefully to Paterson, asking him to look at his Address and proposal, and pledging that ‘what influence and energy is mine will be given in the service of these unfortunate people’. He added, continuing the attack begun in the Address: ‘You, like myself, are a Presbyterian. It was my experience [in visits to the Interior] to find the native more contemned by John Flynn and Kingsley Partridge than by any policeman, administrator, station owner or manager whom I met’.

**an attitude of complete contempt towards the native**

In the context of the growing hostility between Duguid and the AIM, a brief and candid 1935 exchange between a leading AIM figure and the combative humanitarian is an example of a civil collision of differing discourses on Aborigines. Dr George Simpson, a long time associate of Flynn’s on the AIM, gently chided Duguid on the impression he had given in his Address that the Aerial Medical Service (AMS) had never rendered service to Aborigines. On the

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82 Ibid. Matthews’ response in turn takes Duguid up on his call to lift his eyes to the hills, but also confirms a point Duguid made in his letter about State parochialism (the Confederacy strikes!): ‘we in Victoria’ at any rate, pleads Matthews, have ‘walked by faith’ and ‘looked to the hills’ regarding missionary work in Victoria ‘lest any man should speak unadvisedly about the missionary work in Victoria.’ He does wish Duguid ‘God-speed in what you are doing’: ibid., Matthews to Duguid, 2 May 1935.

83 Duguid, "Duguid: Series 1: correspondence": Duguid to Matthews, 11 May 1935 (copy). As mentioned above, Paterson was Minister of the Interior from November 1934 to November 1937.

84 Ibid., Duguid to Paterson, 23 May 1935 (copy).

85 The AAS was the predecessor to the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS).
contrary, Simpson claimed that ‘...dozens of trips have been made to Aborigines’. Duguid thanked Simpson for his letter: ‘the first really friendly gesture I have received at the hands of anyone connected with the AIM since I have sponsored the cause of the natives.’ He insisted that he was not ‘against the AIM’; he had stressed their ‘magnificent achievements in the outback’ but he was opposed to the present attitude of the AIM towards natives as expressed by Flynn and Partridge. Simpson was also wrong to say that ‘the AIM has always treated all men, black or white’. Duguid had not found this to be correct. Again he appealed to Love, without mentioning him: “Nothing has been so hard to bear on the part of the missionaries to the natives as the attitude of the AIM to the native”: so said to me a seasoned Presbyterian missionary to the native.” Then a final plea: ‘Will you now please try to alter the attitude of complete contempt towards the native so general in the AIM in the field?’ In the end, Duguid and Simpson agreed to disagree on the matter of the AIM’s care of Aborigines. Simpson provided some statistics that he felt proved the AMS ‘does a very great service to aborigines’. His observations of the AIM in practice were that their attitude was ‘very sound and reasonable’: sick Aborigines always received the necessary treatment (‘I myself treated a number’); they were not always given beds in hospital but ‘I always thought they were better treated in their camps under natural conditions’. Simpson also added that he thought that ‘the half-caste problem’ was the greatest problem in the Centre: ‘I think the AIM gets at the root of the difficulty. By making the Inland safe for white women, as it does, the AIM offers a practical solution which other missions cannot.’ This exchange between two well-intentioned men, committed to their respective causes, shows the tendency of differing discourses to hold their proponents fast in their separate discourse streams.

86 Duguid, "Duguid: Series 1: correspondence": Simpson to Duguid, 10 May 1935.
87 Ibid., Duguid to Simpson, 21 May 1936 (copy).
88 Ibid.
89 Records were sketchy, Simpson admitted, but he felt he was able to establish 3 air trips (for Aborigines) in 1932, 4 in 1933, and 8 in 1934: Ibid., Simpson to Duguid, 26 May 1935. Duguid’s specific reaction to these figures is unavailable but it seems fair to assume they did not convince him.
90 In reference to ‘other missions’: Simpson gathered from published remarks of Duguid that ‘Hermannsburg was doing useful work now’; he was glad to hear that as ‘I was not much impressed when I visited there in 1927.’ He regarded ‘the outbreak of scurvy at Hermannsburg and an epidemic of whooping cough’ as very serious arguments against mission enterprise.’ He add, though, that he was ‘behind’ Duguid in his ‘doing something’: ibid., Simpson to Duguid, 26 May 1936.
the Master who demands absolute truth

Duguid, in the meantime, was using his authority as Moderator to build his case that the AIM was neglecting the care of Aborigines in the Centre. He wrote to the AIM Hostels at Oodnadatta, Innamincka and Beltana requesting comprehensive information on Aboriginal patients treated at the institutions. He received a variety of data from the Sisters at the Hostels, as well as a collated list from his nemesis and Convenor of the AIM Council, Rev David Chapman.91 This exercise eventually led to bad blood between Duguid and Chapman after Duguid, alerted later to problems with the figures from Beltana, discerned that the figures he had been given referred to ‘treatments’ and not ‘patients’.92 This ‘distortion’ of the figures may or may not have been deliberate; but Duguid angrily demanded public retractions.93 Chapman replied that he regretted the tone of Duguid’s letter and he had merely quoted what the Sisters had supplied: ‘Seeing it is a Common work for the Master in which we are all engaged, your stand is to be regretted.’94 Duguid’s response can be gathered from the draft notes he made on the back of the Chapman response: ‘Sorry that tone was regretted. Actually I have never written a letter with more sadness. Accept your statement. But you now know that the figures you quoted were not of patients but of treatments. Should say this publicly now. You speak of the Master. It is love for that Master which demands absolute truth. And a wrong impression left with a public meeting does not seem to me to be in that category.’ Chapman replied eventually that he had no objection to Duguid stating the figures he had but there was little purpose in making a statement at all unless correct figures could be supplied.95

91 Ibid., Chapman to Duguid, 14 Oct 1935: the data provided by Chapman, queried (initially) by Duguid in one respect, showed in relation to Aboriginals that overall they had provided 10.4% of ‘total patients’ treated at AIM hostels in the previous year.
92 Ibid., Sister Trevelion [?] [Beltana] to Chapman, 21 Nov 1935: re ‘your letter re no. of Abs and half-castes treated’: ‘I’m in total ignorance of it. I can find no records in the books of any full-bloods treated so I am sending the form back.’ Duguid somehow got a copy of this letter, alerting him to the fact that the figures might be ‘rubbery’.
93 The ‘official’ data for, for example, Beltana now changed from 11 Aboriginal ‘patients’ (actually treatments) out of 445 overall ‘patients’ (treatments) to 2 Aboriginal patients out of 150 overall: perhaps not a significant difference statistically, but giving a different ‘look’ to the figures from the perspective of care of Aborigines.
94 Ibid., Chapman to Duguid, 13 Aug 1936.
95 Ibid., Chapman to Duguid, 20 Aug 1936.

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the encroaching white man

Duguid, as Convenor of the Special Committee on the Medical Mission to the Aborigines set up by the 1935 State Assembly, had made another foray into the Centre in June 1935, this time to the far North-West of South Australia by car, with R.M. Williams as guide. Albrecht had written again, with some useful advice on travelling in the Outback. Albrecht intended to join Duguid on this journey into the Musgraves, and had received the permission of his Board to do so:

As you know from the map, it is quite out of the way...but the question is of such importance for the Natives of the Interior that I feel I would not do my duty if I missed this chance of bringing their cause under the notice of those who are interested and can do much for them.

In the event, Albrecht was unable to join the expedition but he had already done much to ‘bring the cause’ of the Musgrave Aborigines to Duguid’s notice. So, on this journey to the Centre, some one thousand miles from Adelaide, at Ernabella station, in the valleys and escarpments of the Musgrave Ranges, Duguid met the Pitjantjatjara people, in whose land he would found a Mission to ease their passage into modernity, and where, over fifty years later, his ashes would be buried. Ernabella was then a small sheep station, with some horses and camels, a lonely white outpost for ‘doggers’ making money from the sale of dingo scalps, often procured cheaply from Aborigines, to the Government. Duguid quickly saw its potential as a mission site: a haven for indigenous people leading

96 Duguid, Doctor and the Aborigines, p. 109. This was the same RM Williams who later became well known for his line of ‘outback’ clothes and boots. Duguid calls him ‘Reg Williams’. In 1942, RM Williams was on the SA Presbyterian Church’s Special Committee for the Aboriginal Mission at Ernabella, alongside Duguid, Rev. S. Martin, and Howard Zelling; see Presbyterian Church, "Blue Books": 1942, Minute 66. This Committee was to become known as ‘the Adelaide Committee’ and during JRB Love’s administration of Ernabella came to play a more interventionist role in the Mission’s affairs which Love found uncomfortable: see esp. chapter 11 below.
97 Albrecht, "Burns-Albrecht Collection": Albrecht to Duguid (copy), 11 May 1935.
98 Ibid., Albrecht to Duguid (copy), 24 Apr 1935.
99 Duguid, Doctor and the Aborigines, p. 110; for the early history of Ernabella, see Winifred Hilliard, The People In Between (Adelaide: Seal Books, Rigby, 1976 (first published 1968)); interestingly, the anthropologist Olive Pink had visited Ernabella, as Elkin had, in the years before it became a Mission site. Pink had gone there in 1930. According to Julie Marcus’ account, she purchased tjurungas, secret ceremonial objects, for the first time at the Ernabella site; she had immediate misgivings about the process, concerned at the possible cultural consequences of their devaluation and loss. She was disturbed later by the Hermannsburg practice of selling them to tourists and this ‘cavalier attitude to Aboriginal religious beliefs’ of Pastor Albrecht was apparently one reason for her well-known antipathy to missionaries: see Marcus, The indomitable Miss Pink: a life in anthropology (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2001) pp. 48-49.
traditional lives 'in their own country', relatively 'uncontaminated' as yet by white contact and the Mission Station acting as a buffer state between the Aborigines and 'the encroaching white man'.

In October 1935 Duguid had reported to the Board of Missions. As a result of his report and the challenge of his Moderatorial Address, the Board decided to sponsor the formation of the Medical Mission, and to recommend it to the General Assembly of Australia when it met in September in 1936. At the State Assembly in March 1936, Duguid, no longer Moderator, won the approval of the Assembly to recommend the Mission to the General Assembly as the Church's effort to mark the Centenary of the State.

He also managed to wrest a concession from the Smith of Dunesk Committee that:

> It was the intention of Mrs. Smith of Dunesk that the Aborigines of South Australia should benefit from her Gift, and therefore recommends that at least part of the revenue from the Gift be devoted to the education and evangelisation of the Aborigines of SA, provided that: (1) the particular mission providing such benefits be approved of by the Assembly; and (2) approval be granted by the Colonial Committee of the Church of Scotland.

The qualified nature of this recommendation, with its concession to Mrs. Smith's real intentions but its refusal to nominate how much of the revenue would go to the new Mission, suggests a compromise, probably due to the equal balance of forces on the membership of the Committee. Duguid had made progress, but the fight was hardly over.

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100 See Duguid, *Doctor and the Aborigines*, p. 115. While these quotes are from Duguid looking back nearly forty years in his 1972 autobiography, they are used partly to demonstrate the persistence of some missionary discourses, for this is exactly the kind of language used by missionaries and even anthropologists in the 1930s. Albrecht, for example, at this time is writing to Duguid in similar terms: 'I am now quite convinced that on these lines is to be found the solution of the problem here in the interior. Reserves, organized on these lines, counteracting the influence of civilization, will mean that the Myalls are retained in their respective districts: and there may develop on natural lines thus minimising the clash to such an extent that it will not be fatal as in the past': Albrecht, "Burns-Albrecht Collection"; Albrecht to Duguid (copy), 25 Jul 1935.

101 In May 1936 Duguid received official reconfirmation that the Board would support his proposal: 'Re assurance that the Board of Mission...is going to the General Assembly in Sydney in September to sponsor this Scheme as well as the 'urgent necessity' of a medical survey of the area and in its mission work provide for medical supervision of the Aborigines and white people in contact with them. The Board is recommending the inauguration of the Mission': Duguid, "Duguid: Series 1: correspondence": Matthews to Duguid, 22 May 1936.


104 The membership of the Committee was crucial. At this stage in 1935-36, it comprised 6 members, finely balanced at 3 pro-Duguid members, and 3 pro-AIM members (including the Convenor).