

From Chapel to Church: Nonconformist Building in Launceston

Dr Eric Ratcliff

Defining the subject is not as simple as it might appear. The historic terms *Nonconformist and Dissenting* strictly should be applied only to those Protestant Christians who refused to conform to the Church of England by law established in the *Acts of Uniformity* in 1559 and 1662. Their sects were variously named, but by the time of the British settlements in Van Diemen's Land, the main denominations were known as Independents or Congregationalists, Baptists, and Unitarians. We might call the members of these groups the *old Nonconformists*. The Quakers, who first appeared in the seventeenth century, were perceived as distinctly other than these. Later sects with many similarities to the *old Nonconformist* denominations arose during the first half of the nineteenth century, including the Plymouth Brethren, the Catholic Apostolic Church, and the presumptuously named Church of Christ. In the second half of the nineteenth century the Salvation Army marched in.

Roman Catholics, although in serious dissent with the Churches of England and Ireland, were not classed as dissenters.¹

Wesleyan Methodism arose in the eighteenth century as a holiness movement within the Church of England, and many Methodists continued to regard themselves as members of the national church, while also attending meetings of their Societies. The breach that began when John Wesley, not being a bishop, took it upon himself to ordain ministers for the American Colonies, eventually led to the growth of the separate Methodist church, effectively the first important denomination of what we might think of as *new Nonconformists*. At the end of the eighteenth century, a division within that denomination produced the Primitive Methodist Connexion.

The Church of Scotland was effectively the established church in that country, but Scots Presbyterians threw up at least twelve major dissenting sects in the three centuries after the Scottish Reformation. The first Presbyterians to establish congregations in the colonies usually laid claim to being the true Church of Scotland in that place, whatever their formal connection or disconnection with the General Assembly of the national church. The Scots' settlers in Otago who founded Dunedin in 1848 were Free Church members, and Archibald Macarthur, in 1822 the first Presbyterian minister in Van Diemen's Land, was from an earlier Secession Church. After his disgrace, John Dunmore Lang took the opportunity to drag the Hobart Town congregation back into what he held to be the *official* fold. The last great secession, the Disruption of 1843 that gave rise to the Free Church of Scotland, was soon imported to the Colony, and two of its buildings were named after Thomas Chalmers, who led the secession. One of them still stands in Launceston.

Now that you are thoroughly confused by the presence of two national churches, both claiming to be *established*, both having given rise to dissenting bodies, and all subject to dissent within dissent, you might have some idea why there are so many chapels and churches within this old town. Old photographs of Launceston reveal that there were several more than there are now, and there are at least two that have not been identified with any particular sect or denomination, one of them still standing. Perhaps there was once a congregation of Ember Day Bryonites, the fictional but representative minor sect invented by that connoisseur of chapels, the young John Betjeman.² The surprising thing is that the buildings of the various congregations show more fundamental similarities than differences.

The similarities extend to the buildings of the only non-Christian congregations in Van Diemen's Land. When the Jews raised their Synagogues, it was to Gentiles that they had to turn for their architects and building contractors. Apart from the exotic decorative style that was chosen for them, the two Synagogues are remarkably similar to the Nonconformist chapels of comparable date, differing only in the arrangement of their liturgical furnishings and seating.

The character of Nonconformist chapels in England has been encapsulated memorably by John Betjeman in his essay on *Nonconformist Architecture* published in *First and Last Loves*:

Despised by architects, ignored by guide-books, too briefly mentioned by directories, these variegated conventicles are witnesses of taste in industrial Britain. They try to ape nothing. They were anxious not to look like a church, which held them in contempt; nor like a house, for they were places of worship; nor like a theatre, for they were sacred piles. They succeeded in looking like what they are – chapels, so that the most unobservant traveller can tell a chapel from any other building in the street.³

One thing that the various Protestant dissenters and the assorted Presbyterians held in common was a serious belief in the statement attributed to Jesus Christ in the *Gospel according to St. Matthew*, chapter 18, verses 19 and 20:

I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

These words are recorded in the context of other verses held to be concerned with the foundation of a body of believers, a church, so the corollary is that God can be worshipped by any group of Christians in any place; there is no need for the interposition of a priest between God and man, and no need for a consecrated place of worship. Consequently, Presbyterian and Dissenting ministers are not priests, and their places of worship have no sanctuary, no holy place, unlike Church of England, Roman Catholic, and Orthodox buildings.

The Nonconformists' requirement was for a building to shelter the congregation, with good enough acoustics for the preacher to be heard, and simple liturgies to be both seen and heard. For that purpose, the pews had to face more or less in the same direction, and the most economical way to do that was to place the pulpit and communion table at one end of a rectangular space, and arrange the congregational seating across it. There were other arrangements, but these remained exceptional until relatively recently. The Margaret Street Methodist Church of 1889, designed by Peter Mills, is one of those exceptions, with its external front to Balfour Street, and its internal front at right angles to that, on one of the longer walls.

In most chapels, the pulpit was elevated above the common floor level, but had only a flat wall behind it. Exceptionally, the little Paterson's Plains Methodist Chapel in Station Road, St Leonards, has a small apse at the pulpit end, expressed both inside and outside, but then its architect, William Archer, was a devout Churchman and honorary architect to the Diocese of Tasmania. The large churches built in the later nineteenth century, Paterson Street Methodist (now Pilgrim Uniting), Christ Church Congregational (now Baptist), the Launceston Baptist Tabernacle in Cimitiere Street, and the Henry Reed Memorial Church in Wellington Street were all built with large arched recesses at what we might think of as the *liturgical end*, but these were to contain pipe organs, and not altars. Indeed, a Hindu entering Paterson Street Methodist Church before its internal rearrangement might have thought that the chief object of worship was the huge pipe organ that outgrew its recess in 1911 and still dominates an interior which would be quite spectacular even without it.⁴ It often has been said that *Methodism was born in song*, due to the hymns of John and Charles Wesley, and many Methodist church interiors have been dominated by their

instruments, leading young and liturgically-minded Methodist parsons of my youth to coin the satirical phrase, *O come, let us bow down and worship the Organ!*⁶

Most chapels, however, if they were not the property of sects who sang only psalms, and permitted no instrument beyond their precentor's tuning fork, contented themselves with a smaller organ placed to one side, or perhaps a harmonium, or a hybrid with both reeds and small pipes called an *American organ*. Many chapels made use of a choir to lead the singing, and generally they were seated at the front on the platform, facing the congregation or the pulpit, or in diagonal pews to face both.

The Baptists took their name from their belief in *believers' baptism*, and hence their practice of re-baptizing grown-up people who had been baptised as infants. Very early in their history, they came to believe that baptism must be by total immersion, symbolising death and resurrection, and they used rivers and ponds in the open air for this purpose. When they came to build their chapels, they found it more convenient to include a *baptistry*, not for them a space containing a font, but a structure like a small swimming pool, with steps at least at one end, large enough for the minister, submerged to the waist, to immerse the recumbent candidate. Generally baptistries were built into the platform at the pulpit end, and when not in use were covered with hatches forming part of the platform floor. In the earlier chapels, the baptistry was commonly of brick lined with cement render, but later and larger churches had them lined with glazed tiles and floored with sandstone to prevent them from being slippery, just like the municipal baths built at about the same time. The largest Baptist churches, at least from early in the twentieth century, preferred to have an *open baptistry* forever on display, and when the former Congregational Christ Church came into the hands of the Baptists, one was built there.

Recently, renovations to an old house in Balfour Street near High Street found it to include a chapel-like building that today has had its story elucidated for us by Laurence Rowston. It stood on land once held by one of the Solomons, so there was a legend that once it might have been another Synagogue, but when the floor was taken up, there was a cement-lined baptistry! It was not built for the Ember Day Bryonites but for a dissident congregation who had separated from the York Street Baptist Chapel.

When a congregation grew too large for its building, either through an increase in population or an increase in enthusiasm, there were four things that could be done: these were, in order of expense, build a gallery, lengthen the building, widen the building, and build a new building. John West's St John Square Chapel (now Milton Hall) underwent two such expansions – the gallery in West's time, and the lengthening under his successor, the Rev. William Law – before the decision was taken to build Christ Church alongside. The Lawrence Vale Methodist Church of 1882, on a constricted site, was compelled to double its length in the first decade of the twentieth century. On many urban sites, there was no room to expand sideways, and it was structurally difficult because the side walls were usually the main support for the roof, but this was done by the Church of Christ in Margaret Street after it had acquired the building from a defunct Catholic Apostolic (Irvingite) congregation. The result has the external profile of a liturgical church with a nave and flanking aisles.

Chapels, like theatres, have a front – and a front. On the outside, the front normally faces the street, and is treated to the majority of the external *architecture*; inside, the front is the end where the pulpit is, usually in the middle and *high and lifted up* in the nineteenth century, with the *communion setting* below and in front of it, which has led some observers to think that preaching had been more important than the sacrament. This is arguable: for most Nonconformists the sacraments were performed in obedience to reputed commands of Jesus Christ, but were not believed to be essential to salvation. Proclaiming the Word was very important, took up much more time, and was often much more emphatic. The majority of the service in a chapel was generally

conducted from the pulpit; there was not a great deal of liturgical walking about, as in Anglican and Catholic services.

Congregationalists and Baptists adopted the later Presbyterian arrangement of a communion table with chairs for the presiding minister and the elders or deacons behind it, facing the congregation.⁶ Methodists continued the Church of England practice of placing the table against a back wall, or the pulpit platform while that remained in the middle, and serving the communicants at a communion rail. The Quakers dispensed with communion tables altogether, holding that all meals taken with like-minded people meant the same thing.

Baptist, Congregational and Methodist pulpits, wherever placed, were typically open at the back, but the Presbyterians had a tradition of closed pulpits. There used to be one in the former Free Church, Chalmers in Launceston, and one can still be seen at the former Presbyterian (now Uniting) Church at Evandale. In the past, the minister was locked in by an elder for the duration of the sermon, not to be released until any questions from the congregation had been answered satisfactorily.

During the times when Dissenters were actively persecuted in England, they improvised meeting houses from former dwellings, or built to resemble them from the outside. We might recall Samuel Pepys in his diary relating how, on his way from church, he saw "several poor creatures carried by, by constables, for being at a conventicler", a meeting of Dissenters that had been raided by the authorities, and his remark, "I would to God they would either conform, or be more wise, and not be caught!"⁷ Being more wise meant meeting discreetly, in discreet buildings.

The later period of active persecution, after the *Act of Conformity* of 1662, coincided with the beginning of the belated revival of Roman architecture in England that grew into the Georgian style. If there were sufficient tolerance to permit a chapel to be built, it could not be conspicuous, or purport to be a church, so it was built in a version of the prevailing domestic style, and that was generally quite plain, with any decorative details derived from Classical architecture. When the Established Church built anew at this time, it was also generally in Classical styles, for this was the age of Wren and Hawksmoor, Archer and Gibbs, but their churches often were placed prominently and given conspicuous towers.

The *Toleration Act* of 1689 permitted Dissenters to worship in licensed meeting houses in England, provided they believed in the doctrine of the Trinity; in Scotland, dissent from the church of Scotland was proscribed until 1712. Unitarians had to wait another century, until 1812, to achieve similar toleration.

Under these conditions, a style of Nonconformist chapels developed, particularly in the towns, that was discreetly different from the surrounding houses, and it was this type of building that the Colonial Nonconformists raised as soon as they could afford to.

That affordability was greatly accelerated in the Colony by the policy of Lieutenant-Governor Arthur of subsidising clergy of any Trinitarian denomination who would minister to the convicts, and by the passage of the *Church Act* of 1837 that allowed for government financial support for Nonconformist and Roman Catholic clergy, because of their importance to the reform of the convict population and the moral well-being of the whole community. Some churches, notably the Independents, insisted on the *voluntary principle* and refused state aid.

The early chapels were built of the materials most readily available in their districts: in Hobart Town and from Ross to the South of the Colony in stone or brick; in Launceston and the surrounding districts, predominantly of brick and stucco. In most cases, the Launceston chapels had exposed brickwork at the sides, and stuccoed fronts bearing the majority of the architectural decoration.

The earliest that still stands in Launceston is the Paterson Street Wesleyan Chapel, designed by Samuel Jackson and completed in 1836, the year the architect moved to the new Port Phillip settlement.

The Methodists, after holding their first service under the trees on Windmill Hill, already had built a chapel in Launceston in 1826, undoubtedly the earliest non-Church of England building in Launceston. At that time, St Johns was unfinished, but had been used for worship since the previous year. That first chapel stood on part of the land now occupied by Holy Trinity Church. It was of brick, rectangular with a low-pitched hip roof, and of almost domestic appearance. After the failure of the first Methodist congregation in the town, the government took over the chapel and used it for an elementary school. As the schoolroom for old Holy Trinity Church, it lasted long enough to be photographed.

The second coming of the Methodists to Launceston was much more successful, and their new chapel much larger, designed by Samuel Jackson and built in 1835-6. A *Gothick* style was chosen, for the followers of Wesley had no need to avoid a style that might invite association with the Established Church, but it was applied as decoration to a building that was in other respects a simple Regency chapel of Nonconformist type. The exposed brickwork at the sides has decorative features, and the windows have simple Gothic tracery in stone, and rendered label-mouldings above them. The front has more decoration, but the unusual feature, as far as the Southern Hemisphere is concerned, is the Tudor Gothic panelling in the reveals of the front door. Very few buildings were built in the Australian colonies with just this transitional mixture of Regency Gothick with a *k* and Gothic Revival features. The only other one still standing, although considerably altered, is St Francis Roman Catholic Church in Lonsdale Street, Melbourne, and that was designed by the same Samuel Jackson after he decamped to Port Phillip, and built in 1841. Another was the Wesleyan Chapel in Queen Street, Melbourne (1840), designed by John Jones Peers, the first independent builder in Melbourne, another émigré from Launceston, and the design was clearly taken from Paterson Street, with a few more emphatic, and consequently incongruous, Gothic pinnacles added. To a lesser degree, Jackson self-plagiarised in his 1841 design for the first Scots Church in Collins Street, Melbourne. For the brief time that Melbourne was a colony of Launceston, it was also an architectural colony of Launceston.

In 1839, a parsonage was built next door to the Paterson Street Chapel with a plain stuccoed Regency front, having a stepped parapet like a stripped version of the one on the Chapel. The building still stands as *Wesley Chambers*, but the Federation front was added to it in about 1910.

Another Methodist cause arose in Launceston with the setting up of a Sunday School in a *very much neglected part of the town in 1835*, and a chapel was built in Margaret Street on land given by Isaac Sherwin on the slope of the hill below his house, 'Alice Place'.⁸ The Colonial Georgian brickwork of the sides still is to be seen, but the front was refaced with stucco to the Victorian Italianate designs of Peter Mills in 1858. No images of the unaltered building have been found, but it probably looked very like the Primitive Methodist Chapel that used to stand in High Street, Longford.⁹

In the limited space available, it is possible only to consider the churches and chapels of the Nonconformists and those who built similarly. Some of these denominations also built schools, and more of them built residences for their ministers, although these showed no remarkable difference from other dwellings of comparable date, except when they were part of a chapel building.

Their peculiar terminology, however, is worth a digression. Baptists and Congregationalists housed their ministers in *manses*, like the Presbyterians, using a word for an ecclesiastical dwelling that the Scots had used since 1524. The former

Chalmers Manse, somewhat altered, still stands beside the former church facing Princes Square. *Manse* meant a dwelling, or a parcel of land sufficient for the support of a family, and it might be that the origin of the usage lay in the latter meaning. Methodists housed their clerical personages in *parsonages*, preserving an obsolescent Anglican usage; the austere brick parsonage of Margaret Street still stands beside the Sunday School. The Church of England increasingly named its residences according to their occupants: vicars inhabited *vicarages*, rectors are to be found in *rectories*, deans in *deaneries*, and bishops in *palaces*, or in Hobart in the more modestly titled *Bishopscourt*.

Another Methodist chapel of much importance in the history of Australian architecture was built at Paterson's Plains, now St Leonards, in 1846. *The Examiner* for 5 December 1846 noticed that the chapel, "though small, is a particularly neat specimen of the Italian style, and was designed by Mr William Archer, Junior, of 'Woolmers', who kindly presented the plan". The little building could claim to be the earliest Victorian Italianate building in Australia, where the style was to become so prevalent that it hardly excites notice today. At 'Woolmers', Archer had designed additions to his father's house in a transitional Williamane¹⁰ Italianate style, but this was the first essay in a fully developed Victorian style.

The first Independent Chapel in Launceston was built for the Rev. Charles Price in Tamar Street in 1837, on land granted to him by Lieutenant-Governor Arthur the previous year. Its architect is unidentified, but the building is known to have been inspected by the Colonial Architect and Engineer, John Lee Archer, as Price so far had breached the *Voluntary Principle* of his denomination by seeking Government aid for its construction.¹¹ It had a schoolroom and vestries on the ground floor at the back, with the minister's residence above that, all contained within the same roofline as the chapel proper, an arrangement that still can be made out in the former Independent Chapel at Kempton. The Tamar Street Chapel was brick with a stuccoed front, the detailing a curious mixture of Georgian and Grecian elements: Roman Doric porch with unfluted columns, trapezoidal windows with eared architrave mouldings, antae as pilasters supporting a Doric entablature and a pediment surmounted by a structure like a misplaced chimney, but with a flat triangular profile between two semicylindrical acroteria. The only other trapezoidal windows in the Colony belong to the two Synagogues and John Lee Archer's nave of St George's Church, Battery Point.

The coming of the Rev. John West to Launceston resulted in a division in the congregation, fully discussed in Patricia Ratcliff's *Usefulness of John West*¹², and there was soon a need for a second Independent chapel. St John Square Chapel was opened in 1842, originally four bays long, with brick sides, tall round-arched windows in recessed panels between broad piers, and a stone string-course at the springing of the arches. The front is a tetrastyle portico with broadly-spaced unfluted Doric columns of stone supporting a pediment of timber and stucco. This last might not have been original; Frederick Strange's watercolour panorama of the town in about 1850¹³ shows the columns and a hipped roof, and the needs of economy might explain the naiveté of the front when compared with the sophistication of the sides. The architect is unidentified, but a case can be made for attribution to Richard Lambeth, the architect of the Launceston Synagogue. Later the Chapel was extended by one bay in darker-coloured brick, joining it to the old schoolrooms at the back, which had been separate buildings. With the opening of Christ Church alongside in 1885, it was renamed *Milton Hall*, and for a time until 1913, it housed the Launceston High School.

In 1848, the Wycliffe Chapel off York Street was built for the Rev. Charles Price at his own expense, and probably to his own design. It was ostensibly a *chapel of ease* for those too infirm to make their way to Tamar Street, but it also can be seen as Price's built response to the split in his congregation that resulted from the coming of the great John West.¹⁴ Alone of the early Launceston chapels, Wycliffe does not have a

stuccoed front, the side walls are not articulated with piers, and it was entered from one side. The windows, which are on one side and the one end only, are arched, and the arches projected outward slightly and sprung from simple imposts of single bricks. Now that its windows have been replaced with featureless later glazing, the only remaining item of distinction is the carved datestone, an escutcheon of sandstone that still announces the name and date of the building from the middle of the gable. It did not retain its Independent congregation for long, but the chapel became invaluable to other sects in their early years, at various times sheltering the seceders of the Free Church of Scotland, the infant Primitive Methodist congregation and the Plymouth Brethren. Also it has housed a printery, an electrical repair shop, an art gallery, and now more appropriately the clubhouse and chapel of God's Squad.

The Particular Baptists, with Rev. Henry Dowling as minister, opened their chapel in York Street in 1840, and it still stands in mutilated form, with some most interesting features. My attribution of its design to the elusive Richard Lambeth rests on somewhat stronger ground than my speculations concerning St John Square Chapel. Anyone interested should read my paper *Here I Raise My Ebenezer* in the *THRA Papers and Proceedings*¹⁵, but the suggested chain of influence runs from Sir John Soane, whose peculiar *antefixae* that Sir John Summerson has dubbed *Soane's knobs*, were imitated by his pupils, including the West Country architect, George Wightwick, who became the partner of the eclectic John Foulston, who influenced Lambeth before he departed for Van Diemen's Land in 1837.

In 1810 the Primitive Methodist Connexion resulted from the expulsion of two Staffordshire enthusiasts because the Methodist Conference disapproved of their revivalist practices of a kind that had originated in North America. A family of Primitive Methodists arrived in Launceston in 1854, and the congregation formed around them met first in private houses and then in the Wycliffe Chapel. The Launceston congregation was reinforced by missionaries from Britain in 1860 and, in that year, the chapel at Young Town was built.¹⁶ This plain little chapel still stands in Victoria Street, still bearing its carved and bordered datestone. Like the others, it has an exposed brick back and sides and stuccoed front.

By 1862, the town congregation no longer could squeeze into Wycliffe Chapel, so its members moved into the Temperance Hall in York Street while they awaited the completion of their striking new chapel in Frederick Street later that year.¹⁷ This was to be the last of its tribe in Launceston: the brick chapel with the stuccoed front. It is much more elaborately detailed, both on front and sides, than anything built since the Paterson Street Chapel of 1835. It has been since 1942 part of the Launceston City Mission, and is intact externally.

Two other buildings that were entirely in the early nineteenth century chapel tradition, but were not primarily chapels, appeared in Launceston. One became the Infant School in 1836, and is still in similar use – by far the oldest continuously-used schoolhouse in Australia. The Infant Schools Society appears to have acquired an existing building; it is not recorded that it was built for them. Like the chapels, it has plainer brick sides and a stuccoed front, but examination of the architecture of that front suggests that it was not finished as intended – the gable is so much plainer than the lower part, and the piers look set to support an imposing stepped parapet that never eventuated. It is possible that it was intended to be a chapel rather than a schoolhouse, but if so, whose? Those Ember Day Bryonites again? John West's congregation, having left Tamar Street, used the Infant School for its earlier services before acquiring a moveable building and putting it higher up Frederick Street. The building later became the scene of important meetings leading up to the formation of the Anti-Transportation League. It is one of the most historic buildings in Australia, an important site in the history of education, democracy and national aspiration. It has

been miraculously preserved through the long penury of the Education Department, and deserves to be treated as a National treasure.¹⁸

The other chapel-like building has a simpler history. The Temperance Hall in York Street was built in 1849 almost next door to the Particular Baptist Chapel. Temperance in Launceston at first meant what it said: moderation; but eventually it was taken over by the total abstainers, a movement much associated with Non-conformists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Like the chapels it had plainer sides and parapeted front with gestures to Architecture in the little pediments over the door and windows. It later acquired an elaborate Edwardian front in red brick and render that probably originated in the office of the remarkable Anglican architect, Alexander North, who designed Holy Trinity and the newer work at St. Johns and the Church of Apostles. All has been obliterated by a piece of 1960s commercial work.

As the nineteenth century advanced, the principal Christian denominations decided that enlargement of old Colonial chapels no longer would meet their needs, and resolved to build anew. The Paterson Street Methodists were the first. Fuelled by the fortune generated by Henry Reed *in absentia*, and his local agent John Crookes, they commissioned the Melbourne firm Crouch and Wilson to design a new church to be built beside their venerable chapel. The result was the impressive Paterson Street Methodist Church, now the Pilgrim Uniting Church, a building of polychrome brick and *patent hydraulic stone* in the Gothic Revival style that Professor Miles Lewis had dubbed *Crouchian*.¹⁹ It was opened in 1866. Patent hydraulic stone is concrete, moulded to form artificial stones that then were set in mortar as if they were stones cut from natural rock. The huge spire is of brick, rendered on the outside. It sits atop a tower that is visually slightly narrower than is comfortable to the eye; it looks as if the spire might slip down over it and split like a stick of celery, but it never will, for it was too well built.

The roof has two pitches, suggesting the ancient division into nave and aisles, and this is expressed on the inside by slender columns of wood and iron that do not greatly interrupt the internal preaching-space. From the outside, there appears to be a short chancel, but it contains vestry, choir room, and the great organ recess. The building has been made to look like a liturgical church from without, but a space for Methodist preaching and singing within.

The Independents, now preferring to be called Congregationalists, were building their great new Christ Church beside John West's old chapel in 1883. The design was by the Melbourne firm of Grainger & D'Ebro²⁰; the Grainger was the father of the more famous Percy. It was externally Gothic Revival, in red brick and grey *patent hydraulic stone*, mercifully still exposed and not painted as at Paterson Street. Again, the external appearance is contrived to look like a liturgical church; but in this case, the internal space is unencumbered by columns. A division in the roof to provide ventilation gives the appearance of nave and aisles, but inside there is a great curved ceiling lined with beaded tongue-and-groove pine boards, over a large preaching-space, a hundred feet long and forty-six feet wide, with a theatrically sloped floor. There is a polygonal *chancel* on the outside, but again it contains only the organ recess and the vestries. The breadth of the interior was not conducive to an appealing Gothic verticality, so Grainger and D'Ebro gave Christ Church a false front, cleverly placed between the tall tower and spire and a little gabled wing that faces to one side, and tucked the vestibule, stairs and gallery into it.

The Methodists and the Congregationalists had made Launceston an architectural colony of Melbourne, reversing the flow of influence that went to Port Phillip with Samuel Jackson and John Jones Piers. But there was still work for local architects.

At the same time as Christ Church was being built, the Baptists were building their Launceston Baptist Tabernacle in Cimitiere Street. The Particular Baptists had faded, and their remnants made common cause with the General Baptists, and in 1883, with substantial endowment from the Gibson Family of Perth, commissioned the design for the Tabernacle in Cimitiere Street from Henry Conway, one of the two leading architects of Victorian Launceston. The building was fundamentally a very large traditional chapel of dark Launceston brick, but from the outset it had a gallery and a sloped floor like a theatre, and the front was treated to some very fine stonework. Victorian bluestone (vesicular basalt) basement courses supporting fine sandstone Corinthian pillars and pilasters, and a cement-rendered entablature and pediment.

Christ Church looks Gothic, but encloses an uninterrupted preaching space. The Baptist Tabernacle in an Italianate Classical style contained an almost identical space, ninety feet long and fifty-seven feet wide under a flat plaster ceiling. The Congregational nine-hundred-seater cost £7,000; the Baptist one £5,719, both in 1883-4.²¹

The Congregationalists and the Methodists generally continued to go Gothic, with the notable exception of Peter Mills' Baroque *Mexican cathedral* built in 1889 facing Balfour Street. The Baptists mostly stayed Classical, until the twentieth century when they showed a belated interest in neo-gothic. Their exception is at Elphin Road.

The Methodist Henry Reed's money financed the beginnings of the Christian Mission in England that grew into the Salvation Army. Returning to Launceston in his old age before the adoption of the uniforms and the brass bands, he set up a Christian Mission to the poor in Launceston. He bought an old pub in Wellington Street and commissioned a mission hall behind it, a building with a preaching space and a huge soup-kitchen downstairs and classrooms upstairs, built in 1880, using dark brick, stone and hydraulic stone.

His widow had him commemorated by the huge Memorial Church, completed in 1884, superbly built of brown brick and cut stone, with a flat plaster ceiling inside that has been said to be the largest in the Southern Hemisphere. It was in Methodist Gothic style, with a belfry on the gable. For both buildings, the chief suspects are Crouch & Wilson, with Terry & Oakden, a Melbourne architectural firm with strong Tasmanian connections, as possible runners-up.

Launceston retains a remarkably complete collection of buildings to illustrate the history of chapel and church building in the nineteenth century British world. It has been possible on this occasion only to mention most of the architecturally interesting chapel-like buildings and their successors within the city of Launceston, but at the cost of ignoring the suburbs and the hinterland, and the remarkable works designed for the Roman Catholics, the Scots and the Church of England.

Among the congregations who dissented from those churches that claimed to be national or universal, the general nineteenth century progression was from buildings that were humble to buildings that were polite, and then to buildings that sought to dominate the street, if not the sky.

¹ Catholic worship was generally tolerated after 1688, but Catholics remained under substantial civil disability until 1829 and did not begin to restore their hierarchy in England until 1850. Resentment at the *papal aggression* led to the *Ecclesiastical Titles Act* of 1851 which prohibited Catholic bishops from assuming territorial titles in the United Kingdom, but it is notable that the Bishop of Hobart Town had been consecrated nine years earlier than that.

² John Betjeman, *Lord Mount Prospect in London Mercury*, 1929, reprinted in *The Best of Betjeman*, Penguin Books & John Murray, Harmondsworth, 1978, pp. 121-132.

³ John Betjeman, *First and Last Loves*, John Murray, London, 1952, p. 104.

⁴ B A Clark & J M S Johnson, *Pipe Organs of Tasmania: A brief history*, Hobart: Hobart Guild of Organists n.d. [c.1972], p. 50.

⁵ The comment was evoked from Brian Lister c.1962 by the Albert Street Methodist Church in Brisbane, about the same size as Paterson Street, but with a considerably smaller organ.

⁶ The more ancient Scottish practice was to have a long table down the middle of the church, at which the whole congregation of communicants could sit. The practice is sometimes commemorated by *extension of the Table*, placing linen caps on the ends of the pews to match the white tablecloth used on Communion Sundays.

⁷ Samuel Pepys, *Diary*, 7 August 1664.

⁸ G Ikin and Lewis E Barnard, *Margaret Street Methodist Church Centenary 1838-1938*, Launceston, 1938, p.6.

⁹ Opened in 1861 and demolished in about 1975 after being used by the Presbyterians for many years.

¹⁰ *Williamane* is a term introduced by the British architectural historian Timothy Mowl to denote the transitional styles between Regency and Victorian; he named it for the brief reign of King William IV, but the styles appeared during the Regency and the reign of George IV, and continued to appear throughout early Victorian times.

¹¹ Patricia Fitzgerald Ratcliff, *The Usefulness of John West: Dissent and Difference in the Australian Colonies*, The Albemarle Press, Launceston, 2003, pp. 88-9.

¹² Ratcliff, *The Usefulness of John West*, chapters 16, 17, 19, 21 *passim*.

¹³ Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston.

¹⁴ Ratcliff, *The Usefulness of John West*, pp. 272, 389.

¹⁵ Eric Ratcliff, 'Here I raise My Ebenezer: Two Transient Architects in Van Diemen's Land and Tasmania', in *Tasmanian Historical Research Association, Papers & Proceedings*, vol. 54, no. 2, August 2007, pp. 89-93.

¹⁶ Rev. M J Allen, *Highlights of One Hundred Years*, published on the occasion of the Centenary of the Young Town Methodist Church, November 1959.

¹⁷ M E J Stansall, R E Hingston, D J Miller & R J Anderson, *Tasmanian Methodism 1820-1975: Compiled at the time of the last Meeting of Methodism prior to Union*, Methodist Church of Australasia, Launceston, 1976, p. 17.

¹⁸ Recently privatised, but still continuing its role in infant education.

¹⁹ Miles Lewis, *A Typology of Style*, in Lewis (ed.), *Victorian Churches*, National Trust of Australia (Victoria), Melbourne, 1991, p. 30.

²⁰ Plans held at Queen Victoria Museum & Art Gallery, Launceston.

²¹ *Cyclopedia of Tasmania* Vol. II, Maitland & Krone, Hobart, 1900, p. 38.