

Bishop Bugnion, the Mennonites and Australia: The Immigration-that-never-was, 1873-1880

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On the 7 April 1876 the premier of South Australia, James Penn Boucaut, outlined a new policy to develop South Australia's Northern Territory. At a political meeting he announced that his government and the Right Reverend Bishop Bugnion had signed an agreement to permit the Bishop's followers to settle in the Territory. These he identified as Mennonites, supposedly a branch of the "Greek" (i.e. Orthodox) Church of which Bishop Bugnion "is the founder." Mennonites, were "like the Quakers, [who] object on principle to fighting", and as they "found the military service in Russia hard upon them ... their Bishop ... had sufficient influence with the Russian Government to get the concession made that his co-religionists might emigrate". Some had already moved to Canada where it was too cold and so they also wished to come to Australia. Boucaut reported that "the Almighty" had revealed to Bishop Bugnion the Northern Territory as a place of religious freedom and his government would support the immigration of 40,000 Mennonites.¹

The premier's comments surprised his listeners and would have surprised contemporary Mennonites if they had known about the agreement. In the 1870s, however, most Mennonites were too busy immigrating to Canada or the United States or negotiating with the Russian government to contemplate Australia. While plans for a Mennonite migration to South Australia under Bishop Bugnion's leadership have been discussed by Australian historians, most seem unaware of the disjuncture between Mennonite awareness of such an enterprise, and the faith Australian governments placed in the Bishop's schemes.² This article attempts to explain this strange affair.

François Louis Bugnion

Some details on Bugnion's life appear in contemporary sources and his 1872 memoirs.³ A recent biography provides important additional information.⁴ Born in 1822 in a French speaking area of Switzerland, Bugnion first qualified as a teacher and in 1843 accepted a position in a Swiss colony of wine producers founded in 1822 at Chabag (today Shabo) in Bessarabia, then a Russian province. Two years later he returned to Switzerland, retrained as a Reformed (Calvinist) minister and went back to Chabag. Attracted to the teachings of the Swedish philosopher, theologian and mystic Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) he appears also to have been influenced by pietism and mysticism.⁵ His views divided the Chabag community and were considered unorthodox by Reformed church leaders in Russia.⁶ Bugnion's Swiss wife left him and, although not divorced, he remarried a Lutheran in Odessa. Denounced as a bigamist, in 1858 he fled Russia and eventually emerged on the French island of La Reunion in the Indian Ocean and the adjacent British colony of Mauritius where he became a British subject in 1859. Representing himself as a minister and missionary he became involved with a local branch of the New Church whose religious ideas were based on Swedenborg's teachings.⁷ As in Russia, he soon formed his own community, some former members of the New Church, but also met opposition from ministers and Catholic priests.

The Indian Ocean islands lay on important sea routes between Europe, Asia and Australia, their economies based largely on trade and commercial sugar cultivation. This was grown on plantations and required a large labour force, mostly recruited from South Asia; in 1860 Indians constituted over 60% of Mauritius' population.⁸ These South Asians were indentured labourers, just one an example of many who, during the nineteenth and early twentieth century, signed contracts to work in British colonies in Asia, the West Indies, Africa and, closer to Australia, Fiji, particularly on plantations. In 1864 Bugnion began

to operate in India ostensibly as a missionary but he also hoped to found a plantation to settle his followers.⁹ Practical as well as religious concerns may also have prompted his move as his family had increased and in Switzerland his first wife took legal action for alimony.¹⁰ He purchased a fertile hill station inland from Madras intending to grow coffee.¹¹ Here he was joined by his brother, Marc-Francois, who later followed him to Australia.¹² An Indian report, later reprinted in Australia, claimed his Indian venture ended tragically with the death of his wife and two of his children after he refused them medical aid.¹³

Following these events Bugnion travelled to Europe and America. In Britain he established contacts with the New Church and with William Cowper-Temple, a member of parliament and the illegitimate son and later heir of Lord Palmerston, who, with his wife, was active in unorthodox religious and cultural circles.¹⁴ In the United States Bugnion contacted Thomas Lake Harris at his religious community located near New York.¹⁵ He also travelled in the post-Civil War southern states and in Tennessee claimed to railroad agents that he represented intending Swiss immigrants.¹⁶ Bugnion seemed to be seeking a place to settle himself and his followers and after returning to Mauritius in the early 1870s, he turned to Australia.

South Australia and the Northern Territory

Accompanied by two daughters, Bugnion arrived in Sydney, New South Wales from Mauritius in early October 1873.¹⁷ Later in the month he contacted officials in Adelaide, South Australia and explained that erroneously he had thought that New South Wales controlled Australia's Northern Territory. He continued: "Several people belonging to the New Church at the Mauritius, India and Russia desired me to undertake a travel to the Northern Territory with the view of securing some land fitted for agricultural purposes, & to take some prearrangement for the erection of some mission station there."¹⁸

He enclosed a reference from Cowper-Temple, enquired as to how land could be acquired in the Territory and requested aid to visit Adelaide and discuss the matter.

Recent developments probably attracted Bugnion's attention to this region of Australia. In 1863 South Australia acquired control of a vast area to its north, previously part of New South Wales, known as the Northern Territory. South Australia, established in 1836 by reform-minded British settlers, was never a penal settlement for British convicts, unlike the other Australian colonies.¹⁹ The Territory's coast faced the Arafura Sea and islands of the Dutch East Indies; its arid centre bordered South Australia proper. Situated mostly north of the

Tropic of Capricorn, its coast is subject to a marked wet and dry season associated with monsoonal conditions. Away from the coast, however, the land becomes increasingly arid. Although by 1872 an overland telegraph line linked the Territory's new capital, Palmerston (today Darwin), to South Australia's capital Adelaide, the major transport route between capitals involved a long sea voyage around Australia.²⁰

The acquisition of the Territory at first promised much but soon came to be viewed as an economic liability by many in South Australia.²¹ In the 1870s the Territory had few European settlers and was largely inhabited by Aborigines; new settlers were needed. Although gold was discovered in the Territory in 1871, unlike the gold-rush in Victoria in the 1850s there was no massive influx of population. Pastoral stations did not require large numbers of labourers but plantation agriculture did; if sugar and other tropical plants were to be cultivated many would be required, others would follow and economic development sustained. The preference in most Australian colonies was for "white" settlers, British or other Europeans but it was widely believed they could not survive as labourers in hot, tropical climates. Models from other British colonies suggested that South Asian labour would be suitable; Chinese and Japanese immigrants were also considered. But the preference for white settlers was also informed by prejudice and demands that large-scale, non-European settlement be limited or even prevented. In the early 1870s, however, plans for non-white settlers in the Territory were actively pursued although Boucaut later admitted that one reason why he had entered into an agreement with Bugnion for Mennonites was because it was "better to have Russians ... than Chinese" in the Territory.²²

In 1872 the South Australian parliament passed a land act intended to develop the Territory that included a section on commercial plantations and a new general immigration act to attract settlers.²³ Sections of the land act relating to plantations were printed separately and sent to regions with similar agriculture, including Mauritius and India, and labour issues were discussed with governments in Mauritius and Ceylon.²⁴ Bugnion may have been encouraged by these activities to come to Australia. Local press reports had also identified Mauritius; before he died in 1869, the founder of the New Church in Mauritius, a South Australian, promoted Mauritius' land tenure system as an example for the Territory's development.²⁵

While awaiting a response from South Australia, Bugnion established himself in Sydney. A leading bookstore advertised copies of his *Memoires*, published in Mauritius in 1872, and he began preaching including to followers of the New Church.²⁶ Bugnion presented a strange figure. Some years later a correspondent discovered him "holding forth" in an obscure Dancing Academy" in Sydney; "tall, and

very dark, his beard black and shaggy, [and] his manner as angularly gesticulative as a Frenchman's," preaching in "very broken" English and "arrayed in a violet coloured cassock worn under a white surplice" waving "two massive rings which he took no pains to conceal."²⁷ An important contact in Sydney was John Le Gay Brereton, a homeopathic doctor of Quaker background associated with the New Church; Brereton's wife translated Bugnion's *Catechism* from French into English and it was published in Sydney with the help of the New Church.²⁸

In the preface Bugnion gave a more spiritual explanation of why he had come to Australia than he provided the South Australian government.²⁹ Announcing that "We are Christians, but not Swedenborgians," he declared that a "Brotherhood of the New Life" would arise, "established in the North of Australia." Here it would become "a powerful lever in the hands of the Lord to direct the influx of the New Jerusalem towards those whom Providence has prepared to cross the narrow passage which separates the two ages." With America, Australia was one of "*the two arms* of our globe" which would "of necessity have a large share in the present movement for its renovation, until the African race can take the eminent place which its destinies reserve for it." The Brotherhood would become "*the central point of the habitable world*" with "*Australia* beneath its feet, *America* on its right, *Africa* on its left, and in front of it *Asia*, with *Europe* for back ground!"

This prediction, and perhaps the idea of a Brotherhood, shows the influence of Thomas Lake Harris. In his *Arcana of Christianity*, Harris assigned Africa and Africans a special role in the future of the body of the world as "the spirits of African nations [are] in her brain, of European nations in her lungs, of Mahommedans in the loins, and of Asiatics in the principal organs of the viscera; the Anglo-Saxon race in Australia and America in the right and left arms."³⁰

Bugnion views clearly had apocalyptic overtones. The role of the Brotherhood in future events was central as during "the 6 times 7 years of crises which must follow in order (1858 – 1899) ... the New Church will have time to establish everywhere her pivotal stations."³¹ Bugnion's role was to establish a station of the Brotherhood in northern Australia, not necessarily as a singular place of refuge, but one of many.³² In an appendix addressed to Brereton, Bugnion provided a history of Christianity that led through the early church and the Reformation to Swedenborg and Harris. But in the final paragraphs Bugnion states that due to "spiritual perversions" the "Pandemonium" had now begun and they were in an "epoch" of "infernal worlds," of the "obsessing spheres" of various hells. "Victory," however, belonged to the New Church. He declared that Satan would "be cast back upon Hell" but though "small in number the New Church men, led by their Divine Joshua, will overleap the narrow passage that divides the two

ages.” Bugnion ended with two Biblical passages, God’s promise of new heavens and a new earth (2 Peter 3: 13) and how all things would be made new when God triumphed (Revelation 21: 3-5).³³

The South Australian government’s initial response to Bugnion was polite but non-committal. So Bugnion set off for the Territory, arriving in Palmerston in late February 1874. At that time the Territory’s capital was a small frontier settlement where government officials had only recently moved to roughly constructed buildings from tents on the beach of Port Darwin, Palmerston’s harbour. The hotel in which Bugnion probably stayed resembled a barn more than a hostelry.³⁴ Although “polite” society was at a premium among local bushmen, prospectors and adventurers, Bugnion established useful contacts which included Paul Foelsche, a German immigrant and head of police. Three years later a local recalled Bugnion as “a gentleman in manners and education, a linguist in the highest sense of the term, able to converse in most known languages,” who preached “in German French, and English” in the “fine robes of the Greek Church,” even if “his services and doctrines were apparently of his own creation.”³⁵

Bugnion explained to the local newspaper that he intended to “explore the country, and ... secure a suitable portion of laborable land wherever fresh tidings reach me.”³⁶ He hoped to bring settlers from “Bessarabia, [the] Moldavian portion of Russia” as law changes in Russia now forced them to emigrate. These would be “families which may have sufficient means to reach Australia and buy the land allotted to them” as in Australia “there is no entirely free grant, as in America” and “the inducements to European settlers” offered by the government were insufficient “to compete with America.” But if “liberal terms were offered ... it would be an easy matter to secure a tolerably extensive immigration for the Northern Territory.” However, he still hoped that “a portion of this immigration shall reach Port Darwin,” but warned that “no definite tidings can be expected before seven or eight weeks’ time”.³⁷ Bugnion then visited a number of possible settlement sites.

In June, as he departed the Territory, Bugnion expressed hope that “the authorities will have settled matters” and he could purchase land.³⁸ He returned to Sydney and indicated he intended to visit Adelaide “to get land on as liberal terms as those of America.” Commenting on Bugnion’s letter, the local paper suggested that officials in Adelaide needed to give proper effect to the Territory’s Land Act. It asked rhetorically, who would come to grow produce in the Territory if they could not obtain the land?³⁹ A local meeting also protested the administration of the Act and it was suggested Bugnion had “came to get land for his countrymen; but it was locked up by the Government.”⁴⁰

Protests over the Land Act also came from another, more informed source. The Act was critically reviewed in a letter to the Territory’s

newspaper in January 1875 by Thomas Reynolds, a former premier of South Australia and Commissioner for Crown Lands who had settled in the Territory. He noted that the sections in the Act on plantations were soon to expire without proper regulations for their implementation ever being formulated. If this, and related issues concerning immigration and benefits for those who secured settlers had been in force, "such men as Bishop Bugnion would have been able to make selections had the labor been here."⁴¹

Reynolds's use of the past tense suggests that Bugnion, unable to secure official support, had abandoned his plans. When Reynolds's letter appeared Bugnion had left Australia for Ceylon. Here he visited plantations probably in search of an alternative home for his settlement. Whether or not he intended to return to Australia is unclear, but his last sermons in Sydney were advertised as "farewell" sermons. In June 1875, however, Bugnion had offered his services as a salaried "independent Priest and Bishop" to the Sydney New Church, but this was rejected.⁴² By the end of 1875 he returned to Sydney and resumed preaching. During his absence from Australia, two things had changed. First, a new government had been elected in South Australia and secondly the Mennonite immigration to North America began to attract attention in Australia.

Enter the Mennonites

It appears that Bugnion originally intended his settlers would come from his followers in Mauritius, India and particularly Swiss colony in Bessarabia. So when and how did Mennonites enter his scheme?

Bugnion was undoubtedly aware of Mennonites before his arrival in Australia. Through his association with foreign colonists in Bessarabia he would have been aware of Mennonites in southern Russia and their reputation as farmers. Through his continued contacts with Russia he was also aware of proposed changes to the rights of all foreign colonists with regard to Russian military service and the concerns these caused. The Russian Mennonite's "privilege" to military exemption was merely an extension of similar rights granted all foreign colonists and many other colonists, fearful of conscription now considered emigration, including Swiss colonists in Bessarabia. In a letter to the local Territory newspaper in 1874 Bugnion mentions Russia's proposed new conscription laws and the Bessarabian colonists' desire to emigrate, identifying one its promoters as Charles Gander, a Swiss colonist from Chabag.⁴³ Nowhere, however, does he name Mennonites, although he refers to colonists immigrating to America from Russia, chiefly to Kansas.⁴⁴ Within months, however, the editor of an Adelaide German-language

newspaper, commenting on Russian reports of German colonists immigrating to America, noted that “a high spiritual leader of the Mennonites” (*ein höherer Geistlicher der Mennoniten*) had been in the Territory to investigate possibilities of immigration.⁴⁵

But Bugnion might have had Mennonites in mind before visiting the Territory. A month after he landed in Sydney, a leading Melbourne newspaper published a report on Mennonite immigration from Russia to the USA.⁴⁶ It not only explained who Mennonites were, but also suggested 40,000 potential immigrants might be involved. This figure, later given by Bugnion, would dominate accounts of a possible Mennonite immigration to Australia. During 1875 press reports from Britain and America on the Mennonite movement, reprinted in the Australian press, increased markedly as the Mennonite immigration to America got under way.⁴⁷ One, in a major Sydney newspaper, suggested Mennonites would prove “useful settlers in the Australian colonies.”⁴⁸ Articles on the topic also appeared in British journals, and were noted or reprinted in Australia.⁴⁹ All confirmed the significance of the Mennonite movement and their value as immigrants.

An Agreement and Public Reaction

In June 1875 a new administration headed by James Boucaut signalled major changes in South Australia’s official policies. It was Boucaut’s second ministry and he had ambitious plans for development, including construction of new railroads and ports, initiating free elementary schooling and other schemes. He personally took charge of crown lands and immigration and formulated new policies for the Territory. So when Bugnion met one of his ministers in Sydney in 1876 and outlined his ideas for settling his followers in the Territory, he received a favourable hearing.⁵⁰ Provided with funds to travel to Adelaide, he met with William Goyder, the Surveyor-General, famous for marking limits to agricultural settlement in the arid interior of South Australia. Between 1868 and 1870 Goyder completed a major survey of the Territory and recommended the site of the Territory’s capital.⁵¹ Goyder was also a member of Adelaide’s New Church as his father had been a minister of the Church in Scotland.⁵² Bugnion could not have encountered anyone more sympathetic to his ideas.

Goyder’s report to the premier on the feasibility of Bugnion’s plans dated 16 March 1876 included lengthy quotations from a positive account of Mennonites, their emigration from Russia and value as immigrants published in the London *St James Magazine*.⁵³ Goyder concluded that “if an arrangement can be made to secure a considerable number of Mennonites and others equally fitted for settlers upon

the soil of the Northern Territory – what is at present a doubtful problem will be solved and the successful future of that section of the Province will be assured.” Bugnion merely requested travel funds to contact potential immigrants and these costs were small compared with the potential advantages to “ensu[r]e the success of the Northern Territory.” Goyder then outlined Bugnion’s plans to settle 40,000 people (or 8000 families) on land with different qualities and purposes. Most of Bugnion’s intended immigrants were to come from Russia, a fourth from Mauritius and “least from India.” It was intended to settle them in separate communities; Mennonites were to receive the largest area – 500,000 acres of good land in one locality and 100,000 acres of “fair average quality.” Immigration would occur gradually but once settled rapid progress was expected. With “little modification” the scheme was consistent with existing legislation on immigration and settlement. Goyder hoped it would be “favourably and promptly considered” as costs were “small compared with the important result likely to be obtained by the enterprise being carried to a successful issue.”

The government responded quickly and by March 28 had drawn-up an agreement for Bugnion to introduce into the Territory “a large number of persons holding the same religious faith” as the Bishop. Couched in legal language, the agreement required Bugnion to proceed “as soon as he conveniently can to such places in Russia, Mauritius, America, India or other countries” where intending immigrants might be located and arrange for their direct passage to Port Darwin. Bugnion’s expenses were to be fully covered and as an agent of the government he was given authority to appoint agents and provide financial support to immigrants. The number of immigrants was limited to 40,000 (point 16), to be introduced at a rate of 1000 a month for six months and after that, 3000 (point 2). Other sections (points 4-7) detailed conditions for the payment of immigrant’s passage money, areas to be selected and settled, the terms for rental payments and how land ownership could eventually be secured. If successful, Bugnion would receive a free grant of 600 acres (point 8). Finally it noted the agreement would require ratification by parliament through the passing of an Act before the end of 1876; if this did not occur, Bugnion could keep the money provided to cover his expenses (point 16).⁵⁴

The agreement was finished after Bugnion returned to Sydney so he dealt with the government’s local solicitors. He requested the church’s name changed from the “Greek” to the “Lords Church,” a name he used before arriving in Australia.⁵⁵ He explained that his “people is [sic] more Protestant than anything else, for the Bible is our only basis.” Although he complained to Boucaut that the agreement “extends further than the one agreed upon when in Adelaide,” he signed it.⁵⁶ He also reported sending messages to his agents – actually members of his

flock – in Mauritius (Camille Francois) and India (John Nicholas) - and now intended to travel to America then Europe, “to come out with the first batch of immigrants, and to look after the establishment at the very *debut*.”⁵⁷

Nowhere in the text of the agreement are Mennonites mentioned by name, even though they formed the basis of Goyder’s report and later the premier’s public announcement. However, much of the subsequent discussion and debate around the agreement identified Mennonites as the bulk of Bugnion’s potential immigrants.

News of the agreement created a sensation but polarised opinion. The number of proposed immigrants seemed absurdly high when the entire white population of the Territory in 1876 was less than 750, 600 being male.⁵⁸ Questions about costs and the organization of such a movement were also raised, especially given the lack of resources in the Territory. A major issue was whether Mennonites could work and survive in the Territory’s climate. Boucaut sought further advice on this issue. Goyder expressed his own doubts and reported he had raised the issue with Bugnion who had assured him Mennonites lived in hot summer conditions in South Russia.⁵⁹ A former government administrator of the Territory, however, supported the notion that Mennonites could survive, based on personal experience of the Territory and Russia.⁶⁰ Others remained sceptical.

An abbreviated account of Bugnion’s life in a leading Adelaide paper was widely republished.⁶¹ Its author drew heavily on Bugnion’s *Memoirs* which they described as “one of the most confused books I ever read.”⁶² After reprinting the account, a Tasmanian editor concluded that Bugnion was a “somewhat fickle character ... a dreamer in the literal sense of the term” and suggested that “led away by many ‘a wind of doctrine,’ ... there is no telling what faith he may belong to before the close of his earthly career” adding that “for all that is known at present, the Mennonites have not signified their desire to follow him to Australia.”⁶³

The issue of Bugnion’s credentials was raised. Asked whether the government had checked the Bishop’s *bone fides*, the Chief Secretary reported they had; Bugnion was “very highly thought of by many of the leading men of Europe” and their Agent-General in London stated that Cowper-Temple “had the highest confidence in Bishop Bugnion.”⁶⁴ In Australia, however, Bugnion’s varied claims to be an Orthodox priest, a Bishop, an ordained New Church minister, a Swedenborgian and leader of Mennonites, caused confusion. An Adelaide minister of the New Church questioned the legitimacy of his ordination, as leaders in Mauritius had previously.⁶⁵

Bugnion’s credibility was further challenged by reports that while in the Territory he had communicated with angels who informed him

of events in distant lands.⁶⁶ In Adelaide he apparently claimed to have seen a “female angel with a jewel, indicative of purity, on her breast.”⁶⁷ Bugnion’s writings and sermons contain numerous references of his communication with angels, a reflection in part of Swedenborg’s concerns. In a later episode, it was reported that “revelations are made to him periodically for wise purposes” and often his prophecies were confirmed.⁶⁸ To some, however, such reports were immaterial. One writer suggested that even “were he a dancing Dervish I would welcome him again with open arms as long as he fulfilled his promise and brought the desirable Mennonites, of whom all accounts speak so highly, to settle in and colonize that unfortunate Northern Territory.”⁶⁹

Following Boucaut’s announcement there was a scramble to discover more about Mennonites, or as they appeared in various newspapers, Mammonites, Mnennonites Mnnennonites and even Muenenites. One writer complained of correspondents who had never heard of Mennonites rushing to “some musty book-stall” in order to get “as good a description of the present living race as ... would be afforded of ourselves by digging up the bones of our ancestors and exhibiting them.”⁷⁰ Some reports managed a reasonably accurate account of Mennonites based on sources such as Hommaire de Hell and articles in leading London journals.⁷¹

Elsewhere confusion reigned supreme. The main Territory newspaper confused Mennonites with Moravians settled along the Volga River, not in southern Russia.⁷² The emigration from Russia was muddled with earlier reports of Mennonite emigration from Prussia.⁷³ Mennonites were identified as a branch of the Orthodox Church with Bugnion as their head, living not only in south Russia, but also in America, India and even waiting in Mauritius for Bugnion to lead them to Australia. The idea of group settlement by Mennonites led by a religious enthusiast drew comparison with the movement of Mormons to Utah and their charismatic founder Brigham Young.⁷⁴ Inevitably, some press reports now confused Mennonites with Mormons raising questions about whether they practised polygamy.⁷⁵ The editor of the local *Neue Deutsche Zeitung*, claimed Bugnion did not represent Mennonites and that the name was a “misnomer” as his people were “Russian Evangelical Christians,” sectarians from the Orthodox Church at odds with the Russian state.⁷⁶

Mennonite non-resistant principles excited little comment. One editorial suggested that if Aborigines attacked a Mennonite settlement “they would likely meet with a reception that would be, to say the least, rather sultry;” it suggested, however, that Mennonites might change their beliefs with regard to non-resistance.⁷⁷ Some “wags” even suggested that Mennonites might “prove to be Russian soldiers in disguise.”⁷⁸

The affair was widely subjected to satire. A regular columnist wrote that if “forty thousand Mnenonites [sic], should ... ever arrive at Port Darwin,” they “will certainly ... have to change the outlandish name of their tribe,” and suggested instead “Ammonites ... a name familiar to most Saxon ears.” But it might be “more convenient to call the whole company collectively by the cognomen of their worthy founder,” and if “the spot [the Northern Territory] where South Australia so long has felt the shoe pinch should at last become the gathering place” of the South Russian Mennonites, they should be called “forty thousand Bunions.”⁷⁹ He then suggested a five verse national anthem for Bugnion’s “New Canaan” to be sung to the air, “Trelawney:”

Strong hands to work, new homes to raise,
Brave hands to conquer, too,
The land shall learn, ere many days,
What Mennonites can do.
And what, though every voice unites
Port Darwin down to cry,
Here’s forty thousand Mennonites
Will know the reason why.

Another particularly morbid satire appeared as a simple account sheet in the public notices of an Adelaide newspaper. It estimated the “import” costs for each immigrant with interest over three years and then subtracted their funeral expenses for the same period adding a small credit entry for each body as “manure,” valued at six pence a head.⁸⁰

Negative comments on the agreement included terms such as illusion, hallucination and chimera. In the Territory, however, European residents were overwhelmingly supportive and reacted against negative comments in South Australia. A report of a meeting, mainly of miners, to discuss the proposal to settle “Russians” in the Territory, passed a motion in its support. The first speaker spoke of Mennonites but the second of Moravians, “or whatever they might be.” Another, after indicating the immigrants might “enliven the aspect of the country by pleasant gardens,” also hoped they would “do what would please the young stalwart miners of the Territory still better” and “bring with them their wives and families, including their marriageable daughters.”⁸¹ With so few women in the Territory the last point was met with cheers.

Politics and the Fate of the Agreement

After signing the agreement in Sydney, Bugnion sailed to San Francisco where he organized a shipping agent to transport any immigrants to Australia before he set off across America by train.⁸² Bugnion appears to have visited Kansas and Nebraska and possibly met Mennonites, newly arrived from Russia, but on this issue his letters to officials in South Australia are ambiguous.⁸³ He claimed Mennonite immigrants were dissatisfied with the United States government but later reported their concerns were with the rail company that settled them in Nebraska. This indicates he was aware of the local situation.⁸⁴ In Sutton, Nebraska – a supply centre used by Mennonites – news of Bugnion’s scheme reached a recently immigrated Lutheran colonist from South Russia, Ludwig Hildebrand, who wrote directly to the South Australian government offering his own services as an immigration agent.⁸⁵

After spending little time in areas of Mennonite settlement, Bugnion travelled to Memphis where his contacts dated back to the 1860s. He hoped to receive confirmation from Adelaide that the agreement had been ratified but finding no news he travelled to New York, visited the great Philadelphia Exhibition, and then sailed on to London. In England he stayed with the Cowper-Temples from where he wrote to Inspector Foelsche in Palmerston complained of the lack of news concerning the agreement, announced his American trip a success and indicated that he intended to travel “to the East.”⁸⁶ He got no further east than Geneva where he published a pamphlet on his scheme with a parallel text of the agreement in English and French. Strangely, as with the agreement, Bugnion nowhere mentions Mennonites by name.⁸⁷ But in a letter from Geneva he claimed that the outbreak of war between “Turkey and Servia” prevented him travelling to Russia and any emigrants leaving.⁸⁸ War had indeed broken out, but Bugnion risked arrest if, while in Russia, he was suspected of promoting emigration; such activity was illegal, a fact the British ambassador in Russia pointed out to the Colonial Office and the South Australian government on learning of Bugnion’s scheme.⁸⁹

While abroad, Bugnion maintained a regular correspondence with Boucaut and other officials, providing updates and seeking news on the agreement’s progress.⁹⁰ He was blissfully unaware not only of the public debates on the agreement in Australia, but also that its ratification had become ensnared in South Australian politics.

One reason for Premier Boucaut’s surprise announcement of the agreement with Bugnion was because his administration was in trouble. His ambitious programme of public works had been strongly opposed in some quarters and his hold on power was slipping. By

April 1876 a number of his ministers had resigned or given notice and Boucaut was faced with the difficult task of replacing almost his entire ministry. Parliament was in abeyance and he needed to announce a new team and new policies before it was recalled. A noted feature of South Australian governments in the latter half of the nineteenth century was their “chronic instability;” in the first thirty-six years of its existence from 1856 to 1893 the province had forty seven governments, with ten changes alone in the 1870s.⁹¹

Opposition to Boucaut and his policies involved a previous premier and former members of his own administration. Among these were John Coulton, government treasurer, who ostensibly had resigned to return to business, and Boucaut’s former close friend and protégée, Ebenezer Ward. Parliament was recalled in late May and, in response to the frenzy of public debate on the agreement, Boucaut was forced to publish official correspondence with Bugnion. Shortly after, Boucaut and his new administration were defeated and on 6 June Coulton formed a new government that included Ward. Although concerns over the agreement with Bugnion did not precipitate this change in administration, they were involved in events.

Ward, while plotting the premier’s downfall, had raised concerns over the agreement before parliament was recalled. Others also objected, arguing that British immigrants rather than Mennonites should be supported, suggesting Mennonites would not survive in the tropics. But it was pointed out that if Mennonites were unsuited to the climate, so would British immigrants, the quality of which was often poor: “young men from shops and offices ... unused to hard manual exertion ... [who] had unsuitable food, and in many instances probably indulged in the excessive use of stimulants.” Mennonites, in contrast, “are used to work; they are frugal and temperate; they are prosperous, and can introduce capital into the colony.”⁹²

Coulton’s new administration promised to continue the previous administration’s reform programme but this did not include settling 40,000 Mennonites in the Territory. In answer to a question at the end of June in the House of Assembly, Coulton announced that his administration would not seek ratification of the agreement. He considered the agreement “exceedingly loose and incomplete” as well as “injudicious and improper.” Such a large-scale settlement of Mennonites could prove a “disaster” due to a lack of provisions and accommodation in the Territory. Ward later claimed the agreement was rejected on its cost, projected as high as a million dollars. A shipping firm had estimated it would cost \$25 a head to move a minimum of 500 immigrants from Odessa to Port Darwin as there was no cargo to pick-up after the immigrants were landed and ships would return empty.⁹³ Coulton also claimed only Bugnion would benefit from the agreement, a man he

described as an “enthusiast” and “visionary,” lacking business skills. Coulton, however, did not entirely dismiss possible government support for a much smaller Mennonite immigration but indicated that responsibility for this would be handled by their Agent General in London.⁹⁴

Reaction to the decision not to seek ratification was generally negative.⁹⁵ Some argued an opportunity to develop the Territory had been lost and one writer compared the Queensland government’s policies to develop its tropical regions with South Australia’s failure.⁹⁶ Another argued that if the House was not prepared to endorse the entire agreement, it could sanction an experiment “on a scale sufficiently large to be a fair test” because Mennonites obviously “move in masses” and too small an offer would “virtually put an end to the project.”⁹⁷ In the Territory the decision not to proceed was met with disbelief, with reports of meetings “held through every part of the district for the purpose of passing resolutions urging the Government to carry out the proposed plan.”⁹⁸

Although government support for the agreement had been withdrawn, by its terms the House could still ratify it before the end of 1876. George Hawker, who as Chief Secretary signed the original agreement, repeatedly questioned the government on the issue and requested Bugnion’s correspondence with officials and ministers be tabled in parliament.⁹⁹ The correspondence raised serious questions regarding the government’s actions: they had failed to inform Bugnion of the withdrawal of their support and the Agent-General in London, believing the government wished to re-negotiate the agreement, had advised Bugnion to return to Australia.¹⁰⁰ On his arrival in Adelaide in early October, Bugnion told the press that while “disappointed” by the non-ratification of the agreement, he remained “sanguine of the success of his scheme if the present Government will take the matter up.”¹⁰¹ Having failed to secure immigrants, Bugnion now announced that the people he wished to settle in the Territory were “not Mennonites, but members of my own flock.”¹⁰²

Embarrassed by Bugnion’s return and questioned in the House, the government met with Bugnion to see if the agreement could be salvaged. Bugnion moved discussion away from the 40,000 promised Mennonites as “I had only 2 of their colonies within my jurisdiction,” now insisting they were only a “small number” of those he intended to settle in the Territory. He also suggested that as war had broken out in the region and the cost of hiring neutral ships was too high, it was perhaps better that the agreement had not been ratified.¹⁰³ Ward’s interview with Bugnion, recorded in detail, focussed on the identity of his intended immigrants. Bugnion was evasive but discussion centred on immigrants from Mauritius with no mention of Mennonites. Bugnion claimed his followers there were British subjects and Creoles,

totaling 300 families or 3000 people, and were “petty farmers or working people” of limited means able to support themselves for only six months. Bugnion was asked to submit a new proposal and provide references in Mauritius and Egypt.¹⁰⁴ He also submitted a detailed statement of his expenses for the introduction of Mennonites into the Territory.¹⁰⁵ Hen then returned to Sydney believing the government had authorized him to go to Mauritius to further a new scheme.¹⁰⁶

In the House Hawker now asked whether it was desirable that a “fresh agreement” with Bugnion for a more limited immigration be submitted before the end of the session. This allowed Ward to make a detailed statement on the entire affair. After outlining the preceding government’s dealings with Bugnion, he detailed why the House should not ratify any agreement. First, it placed too much power in Bugnion’s hands while obligating the government; secondly, the costs of “importing a certain number of Mennonites” were far too high with estimates of a million pounds and “no guarantee as to their fitness to settle” except hearsay. In spite of repeated requests Bugnion had failed to supply the Agent General in London with details on the immigrants. Ward then reported he had met and interviewed Bugnion but he been “unable to elicit any definite statement” on his intentions. However, Bugnion had indicated he could introduce 700 families but he needed to “draw orders on this government to the extent of £70,000” on his own authority but without any official oversight; this Ward had refused and “declined to proceed any further.”

Ward described replies to his request for details on possible immigrants from Mauritius as “very vague and indefinite.” Bugnion had indicated that 300 families in Mauritius were members of his church. A member of the House asked, “What Church is that?” Ward said Bugnion called it the “Lord’s Church,” but personally he had never heard of such a church, adding to cries of “hear, hear” that “generally speaking, all Churches were the Lord’s Church.” Further questioning had revealed that Bugnion’s followers were mostly Creoles and “petty farmers.”¹⁰⁷ The original agreement required immigrants to support themselves but when asked if these Creoles could, Bugnion replied that “those who had means” would share their resources. This Ward considered “unpractical,” so he asked Bugnion to name referees on Mauritius and indicated he would also request information from the government of Mauritius.

Ward told the House no new agreement could be drafted and presented for ratification before the end of the session. While Bugnion might still introduce a “suitable class” of immigrants to the Territory, the government had received other offers to settle immigrants in the Territory. Someone asked rhetorically, “Are they all Bishops?” Ward replied no, but named one Hildebrand in Nebraska as “a dignitary

of the Church in America;” whether he thought Hildebrand to be a follower of Bugnion or a Mennonite is unclear. In fact Ward barely mentioned Mennonites in his speech. This reflected Bugnion’s shift to emphasising Mauritius as the source of his immigrants. However, during the debate on Hawker’s motion references to Mennonites continued, although not without continuing confusion. When it was suggested British and German immigrants were to be preferred to Russian Mennonites, members of German descent were called-upon to confirm the good reports of Mennonites as if they were Germans. One speaker believed some Mennonites were already in Mauritius so unlike those still in Europe, might be better adapted to the climate. Another argued reports suggested “Mennonites were very narrow in their views” and might not be of economic benefit as they “did all their trade among themselves.”¹⁰⁸

In reply, Boucaut criticized Ward’s comments on Bugnion’s beliefs: “where a man had great influence over a particular sect, and we had reason to avail ourselves of his influence and prejudice, it mattered little as to his religious views so long as he succeeded in bringing people into the Territory.” On the name of Bugnion’s church, Boucaut reminded the House that, “without reference to their doctrines,” Mormons were “to be commended for making a horrible desert into an earthly paradise,” and Mennonites had “formed themselves into two or three of the most thriving and frugal communities on the face of the globe.”¹⁰⁹ It was not a question of 40,000 Mennonite immigrants, or even 10,000, but “the business they would bring.” He suggested Mennonites if they came would encourage trade, encourage further European immigration, increase government revenue and provide a market for South Australian wheat. But Boucaut seemed to believe Mennonites were settled in Mauritius as he suggested it was immaterial what the Island’s government thought of their leaving; if Mennonites wanted to come to the Territory, they should be permitted just as the Puritans had left England to colonize America.

At the end of the debate, Hawker withdrew his motion. There would be no new agreement and no Mennonites for the Territory. Press reaction was surprisingly muted given the earlier furore and the government’s move to check the “truthfulness” of Bugnion’s statements by taking-up his references was supported. The government received a letter from a person knowledgeable on Mauritius, William J. Day, who rejected Bugnion’s statements on Creole labourers.¹¹⁰ From the Territory came expressions of “indignation;” government in Adelaide had “given-up” on the region and people who had only remained in the hope that Bugnion’s Mennonites would arrive, would now leave.¹¹¹ One correspondent referred to a “Mennonite fiasco” for which Bugnion had been well-paid and continued: “Well, goodbye, my dear Mennonites;

we shall never meet in the Northern Territory, but perhaps we may in Jericho!" He then offered, at half price, the Russian grammar he had purchased "in anticipation of the arrival of the 40,000 sheep belonging to the flock of the worthy Bishop."¹¹²

In January 1877 Bugnion made one, final approach to the South Australian government in response to news that Japanese settlers for the Territory were being considered. Bugnion claimed that a "Christian community" of no less than 10,000 was needed to offset a flood of "Mongol" Chinese and Japanese heathens and again offered his followers.¹¹³ The file containing this offer has a cover note stating that no further negotiations would be entered into as replies from his referees in Mauritius had proved negative. Ward made this public in June when in reply to a question in the House on whether government was still in contact with Bugnion, he stated all offers from Bugnion had been rejected on receipt of information from Mauritius.¹¹⁴

However, the political implications of the agreement and the promised Mennonites continued for some time. In 1878 it became an issue during the election of a new South Australian government. In a campaign speech Boucaut expressed regret that the agreement had not been followed through, but his statement was criticized by his opponents. One stated that Bugnion, "worthy man as he might be – was a self-constituted bishop who... held sway over the Mennonites," or so "the people of this colony have been led to believe."¹¹⁵ Some editorials supported Boucaut citing reports of successful Mennonite settlement in Canada. But one election notice headed "MENNONITES," announced the candidate opposed "spending a single shilling on getting them out," and described Bugnion as a "rank imposter."¹¹⁶ By this time, however, Bugnion was in Queensland.

Bugnion and Queensland

Queensland's origins were very different from South Australia. Until its formation as a separate colony in 1859, Queensland had been part of New South Wales. Its early history is one of considerable violence with brutal convict settlements and the killing of Aborigines as the frontier expanded.¹¹⁷ Parts of Queensland are tropical and subtropical, have soils suitable for plantation agriculture and beyond the coastal mountains there are extensive areas of pastoral land; rich mineral deposits are also abundant. What attracted Bugnion to Queensland is unclear but it was a better option for settlement than the remote, under-developed Northern Territory.

Bugnion's agreement with the South Australian government was noted in Queensland; one newspaper suggested it could be of

significance to Queensland's Gulf region.¹¹⁸ When it seemed the agreement would fail, however, a leader in a Rockhampton newspaper was unsympathetic both to Bugnion and the actions of the South Australian government.¹¹⁹ The same newspaper, however, would soon support Bugnion and his plans for their district. By February 1877 Bugnion was in Brisbane, the capital of Queensland, and reported that he intended to travel to north Queensland "to place himself in a position to report upon the climate, soil, etc."¹²⁰ The first major settlement he visited was a port town, Rockhampton, situated on the Fitzroy River which provided access to Central Queensland, a region exploited by miners, pastoralists and plantation farmers. Bugnion was attracted by the town and proceeded no further north.¹²¹ He preached in a number of non-conformist churches and made contact with local planters and journalists.¹²²

One paper published a letter written by Bugnion ostensibly to a contact in Peru, in which he extolled the virtues of Australia, Queensland and Rockhampton in particular. He described Rockhampton as "magnificent, with a delicious climate and already vivified by a railway of nearly a hundred miles in extent."¹²³ He encouraged his correspondent to publicize his letter and immigrate to Australia before "communism" prevailed in Peru. Another letter followed, addressed to a Russian landowner and government minister in St Petersburg, "Ivan Nikolaiowitch Valooyof." Addressing Valooyof as an old acquaintance, Bugnion quoted from reports that praised Rockhampton and, as with his Peruvian correspondent, encouraged Valooyof to settle in Queensland and discover "rich and fertile plains, without stump or stone" where you have just have to "stick in your plough ... [to] increase, and replenish the earth." He also indicated that if the government would grant him land, he would settle in the region, build a house and chapel and "call some people round me."¹²⁴ Bugnion had discovered a new site to bring together his scattered flock.

In 1878 Bugnion published a new liturgy for "Sion's Church," printed in Rockhampton.¹²⁵ The name "Church of Sion" first appeared in a pamphlet he published in Sydney in 1875.¹²⁶ Included with the liturgy were hymns, a creed and a historical appendix; the latter was based on his *Catechism* published in Sydney in 1874 expanded to include further autobiographical detail. The overall tone is less obviously apocalyptic than the earlier *Catechism*. Whereas he had previously identified with the New Church, Harris' Brotherhood of the New Life and briefly, "The Lord's Church," Bugnion now claimed that the formation of the Church of Sion had been preceded by four divinely-informed events. These he listed on the *Liturgy's* title page. The first involved Harris's vision on the "Eastern Day" of 28 March 1869 that a Brotherhood of the New Light would be organised in the east under Bugnion's guidance.¹²⁷

March 28 was identified in "Sion's Calendar" as the "Anniversary Day" of the Resurrection which, by "Providential Dispensation," coincided with the "Birthday of Sion."¹²⁸ The Brotherhood was eventually founded on the 28 March 1875 in India while the following November Bugnion claimed he had accepted "direction" of the Church in Sydney. The next important event occurred on the 28 March 1876 in Adelaide, although Bugnion did not explain its significance. The final event, again on the 28 March 1877, was in Rockhampton when Bugnion chose the site for Sion and established "a select country seat within the boundaries of the elected Zone," identified as extending "from Port Darwin – previously visited – to Rockhampton, this including the region of the Carpentaria."

His thirty years of ministry and his abstentious life were preparation "to begin the Seventh State, the Sabbath of my career here below" in "the country chosen by the Angel of himself, in the North of Australia."¹²⁹ Guided by "Providence ... to bridge over the gulf between the African and Anglo-Saxon races," he had established "on earth," the Church of Sion (Revelation 14: 6, 7) which he described as "a Brotherhood and Sisterhood," a "perfect equality between husband and wife, as it was in the beginning." His ministerial experience gave him the right to claim the role of a pivotal man in the Church.¹³⁰ But now he had found "a sort of home," he could no longer attend his "scattered flock" around the world.

In Rockhampton he built "cottages" and a little chapel and was joined by a "few souls" from Australia and India whereby "India and Australia became tied by a spiritual cable."¹³¹ One was Bugnion's brother, Marc-Francois who in 1877 leased land close to Rockhampton to grow crops "best adapted to the soil and climate." Another was Bugnion's long-time agent in India, John Nicholas, who with his family joined Bugnion on a "small estate" the Bishop had purchased eight miles from Rockhampton. Here Nicholas' wife, aided by one of Bugnion's daughters, established a school for "young ladies."¹³²

Sion's community could now be realised. "Sion's Chapel" advertised regular services from the end of December 1877.¹³³ Shortly after, a report described the chapel as "circular in form," able to seat 35 people.¹³⁴ In the 1980s, in response to enquiries from Bugnion's Swiss biographer, the chapel's foundations were discovered: round pillars aligned on a north-south axis with three more at the north edge set at a right angle, facing west.¹³⁵ The circular form probably drew on Swedenborg's fascination with circles and circular structures although its arrangement may also be related to the four cardinal points printed on the title page of "Sion's Liturgy." These are matched with the four significant events and places leading to the culmination of Bugnion's ministry: north, 1869; west, 1875, south 1876 and east – the direction of the dawn and resurrection - 1877 the year of Sion's realisation.

A similar concern with circular form also informed Bugnion's plans for the lay-out of his proposed colony. Writing in 1879 he suggested that "each of the 80 acre homesteads" of his immigrants might converge "towards a common centre" so they could enjoy "the benefits of church, school, and store-house." A diagram accompanied Bugnion's statement but unfortunately has not survived; however, the editor described it as "showing thirteen selections radiating from a central area in which the public and private buildings are placed," from which he concluded that the community would contain "thirteen families, holding amongst them about 1000 acres."¹³⁶ All Bugnion now needed to fill Sion's colony were his followers, but this required government support for their immigration.

Mennonites and a New Agreement

The prospect of Mennonite settlement in the Territory may have failed, but the Australian press continued to report on Mennonites in Russia and North America, sometimes with reference to Bugnion.¹³⁷ Most of the reports were derived from foreign news sources and concentrated on the success of Mennonite immigrants in North America. The visit to Manitoba Mennonites by the Governor General of Canada, Lord Dufferin, and his address to them, was widely reported.¹³⁸ Mennonites appeared overwhelmingly as excellent immigrants, and many writers expressed regret that Bugnion's scheme had been rejected, sometimes with expression of hope Mennonites might still come to Australia with, or without, the Bishop's assistance.

Rockhampton newspapers carried a number of reports on Mennonites which they linked with Bugnion's name. One by a visitor to the Manitoba Mennonites was republished because it "enhanced by the presence of Bishop Bugnion in Rockhampton."¹³⁹ Bugnion's new proposals were closely associated with Mennonites almost to the exclusion of most other groups he earlier offered the South Australian government, so little mention was made of Creoles from Mauritius, or Indians from the sub-continent. In public discussion of Bugnion's plans Mennonites predominated, but now without any prospect of them moving on from America; instead they were to come directly from Russia, or more precisely Bessarabia. In Queensland, however, opposition to non-European immigration was even stronger than in South Australia and British immigrants were favoured over Germans, Russians and other whites. In 1877 the government legislated to restrict and exclude Chinese. Unlike other sugar producing colonies, Indian labour was not used in Queensland although Melanesians, often "kidnapped" from their island homes, worked on plantations.

With his South Australian scheme in doubt, it was reported that Bugnion approached the New South Wales government which “discouraged” his proposal.¹⁴⁰ In Queensland Bugnion was received more favourably. When he initially contacted Queensland officials is unclear, but on his first trip to Brisbane it was reported that the Attorney General had offered him a free pass on state railroads.¹⁴¹ Then Bugnion encountered John Douglas, secretary for public lands and from March 1877 premier of the colony. A landowner in the Rockhampton area, Douglas had been Queensland’s Agent General for Emigration in London, so Bugnion received a sympathetic hearing.

In August 1877 newspapers reported Bugnion had asked the Queensland government for a land grant of 8-9,000 acres in Central Queensland to settle a “steady influx of immigrants from Europe” who, “like the Mennonites in America,” would improve the land. Bugnion claimed that while hostilities in Europe continued Mennonites could not leave Russia, so instead he offered European refugees from Egypt.¹⁴² By September reports suggested Bugnion and the government had reached an agreement to settle 700 immigrants around Rockhampton and in the Bowen region – an area further north in tropical Queensland.¹⁴³ At the end of the month it was reported that Bugnion intended to base himself at Alexandria in Egypt to direct immigrants to Queensland as Mennonites were “at present beyond reach;” the number of paying immigrants also was to be clarified with officials.¹⁴⁴

Bugnion was certainly in contact with members of government. A reply he wrote to Douglas in October concerning immigration discussed 40,000 potential immigrants and refugees from the Serbian war living in Egypt. Bugnion told Douglas he now had an “opportunity ... to populate at once the whole of Central and Northern Queensland with a suitable people, laborious and simple, and thus to prevent the flood of a Mongolian exodus from setting towards these shores.”¹⁴⁵ While he did not mention Mennonites by name, the 40,000 immigrants obviously referred to them, and his reference to “Mongolians” played to anti-Chinese sentiments. Mention of Serbian refugees, however, caused a negative reaction as reports of atrocities in the Balkans raised doubts about any of Bugnion’s immigrants, including those from Bessarabia.¹⁴⁶

An editorial also expressed concern over Bugnion’s intention of forming a contiguous group settlement.¹⁴⁷ It questioned whether government had the legal right to hand over large portions of land “for the sole use of foreigners” who refused to emigrate without first “securing a large area of land in one block – or in contiguous blocks.” It suggested that to give “exclusive privileges” to one community, however valuable they might prove, was contrary to recent land law. However, Bugnion’s scheme and his immigrants were not totally

dismissed. Quoting favourably from Wallace's account of Mennonites in Russia, it suggested that if a large area of, say, 50,000 acres was purchased, Mennonite group settlement might be possible. It also dismissed any problem with Mennonite non-resistant principles, suggesting that the "only fighting to be done in Queensland is against occasional bad seasons and rapacious marsupial hosts."

Negotiations between Bugnion and the government continued into 1878 without reaching an agreement. In April, however, reports appeared of "a definite proposition" to bring out "one shipload" of Mennonites with the government defraying half their passage.¹⁴⁸ But the announcement proved premature. In the Legislative Assembly the opposition asked questions of Douglas over reports his government had reached an agreement with Bugnion for "the importation of a cargo of Mennonites." If so, they demanded the agreement be tabled. Douglas denied any agreement existed, but he acknowledged corresponding with Bugnion, and offered to table their exchanges.¹⁴⁹ The correspondence appeared in early May, but did not include all exchanges since 1877 as it consisted of just three letters dated April 1878: a proposal from Bugnion to Douglas, comment on it by an immigration agent, and Douglas' reply in which he informed Bugnion that cabinet had rejected his proposal as "impracticable" even though aspects of his scheme were not "in themselves objectionable." Douglas stated that "some of our sober-going folk would imagine ... we were going into partnership with the Devil if we had anything to do with you or with anyone connected with the Greek Church," views he attributed to "silly Russophobia," which he personally rejected, and suggested Bugnion he might convert his colleagues from their "darkened" views.¹⁵⁰

The publication of the correspondence caused some amusement, with the premier receiving a "slating" in the Legislature.¹⁵¹ Little concern was expressed over Bugnion's proposal but instead on the odd way he addressed the premier and Douglas' reference to the Devil and his colleagues.¹⁵² One report suggested that the Queensland premier, like Boucaut in South Australia, had been "mesmerised" by Bugnion.¹⁵³ Many felt, however, that in rejecting Bugnion's proposal an opportunity had been lost. One article, quoting extensively from a favourable report of Mennonite settlement in Dakota, lambasted the government for its failure to develop Queensland's far north.¹⁵⁴

This was not the end of the matter, however. In January 1879, following an election, Douglas' government was replaced by one headed by Thomas McIlwraith. Whereas a change in government in South Australia had sunk Bugnion's earlier agreement, the change in Queensland saw his plans revived. McIlwraith, eager to further Queensland's economic development, was a keen promoter of immigration. In September Bugnion personally delivered a new proposal to

the government, releasing copies to the press on the day he submitted it.¹⁵⁵ Bugnion now proposed the introduction of 50 families, roughly 250 adults, from Russia's southern colonies like "the well-known Mennonites," to form agricultural settlements in Central Queensland "under the Crown Lands Alienation Act." He proposed the Queensland government pay half the cost of their fare from Europe, either from London or a Black Sea Port, which he calculated to cost £7 10s a head.¹⁵⁶ He also requested free passage on the Central Queensland Railway for the immigrants and their luggage. If his proposal were accepted, Bugnion would appoint agents to select land at no cost to government, and the first settlers could arrive for the "cool season" the following year. He claimed his proposal was just the start of an "experiment" that would initiate a steady flow of settlers and contribute "to the permanent prosperity of the beautiful colony of Queensland."¹⁵⁷

The Colonial Secretary replied on 11 October indicating the government felt "a desire to make a trial, as an experiment," of the number of immigrants proposed by Bugnion but with six conditions: (1), Bugnion was to "point out" a settlement site in Central Queensland, and if this was approved by government, "a temporary reserve of the quantity of land (say, about 10,000 acres)" would be made (2). On arrival, immigrants could select land as "contiguous homestead blocks or otherwise, under the existing land regulations" (3). The immigrants could travel directly from any Black Sea or "approved" English port "subject to strict quarantine regulations" instead of Plymouth in England like most assisted immigrants (4). The government agreed to pay half the cost of the sea passage as long as it did not "exceed the sum of £7 10s, per statute adult landed in Queensland;" no other expenses were covered and not "one shilling" would be advanced until they landed (5). Finally, the government agreed to free rail passage from Rockhampton (6).¹⁵⁸

Bugnion accepted the government's terms although they were very different from his earlier agreement with the South Australian government: it was more cautious, limited in scope and did not commit government to paying anything until the immigrants arrived, a point noted in the press. Unlike the earlier agreement Bugnion received no personal advantage. An important concession, however, was the government's acceptance of the idea of group settlement by a religious group. Unlike in Canada and the United States, such an idea was unknown in Australia, although a few years later, citing the precedent of the agreement with Bugnion, attempts were made to settle Primitive Methodists in Queensland with official assistance.¹⁵⁹

The public and political response to the agreement was also more muted than it had been in South Australia. One editorial questioned contiguous land grants and the idea of group settlement but also

acknowledged this would aid the integration of foreign farmers who were also to be preferred over British immigrants from urban, industrial backgrounds.¹⁶⁰ Another report, still confused as to the intended immigrant's identity, stated "no Mennonites or Bugnions" were wanted in Queensland where "[w]e are building ... a British nation with all its rights and privileges; and when that task is finished, we require no Inkerman or Alma or Redan to spoil the work that commerce has established."¹⁶¹ It was also claimed that by introducing Bessarabian Mennonites, Bugnion would introduce serfdom to Queensland, an argument quickly refuted by Bugnion who pointed out that serfdom had never existed in Bessarabia.¹⁶²

Mennonites, Fraud and Deception

Bugnion returned directly to Europe to collect his immigrants. Unlike earlier, he did not go via America to convince Mennonites to move on, and India and Mauritius were bypassed. By the end of March he intended his "Bessarabians" to be quarantined at a Rumanian port and then sail to Queensland.¹⁶³ Little more publicly was heard of Bugnion until July 1880 when a newspaper reported that the Colonial Secretary had given it access to Bugnion's correspondence with officials. This included a letter from Constantinople dated 21 April in which Bugnion reported he had arranged transport for 250 adults from Bessarabia who had been promised passes. But a letter from "Mr. Gander, the people's leader" stated that "at the last moment – the last hour – when everything is ready to start," the Russian authorities had prevented them leaving. The Russians, Bugnion said, were untrustworthy and now would persecute his followers for wishing "to share some of the British people's liberties." He had not given up, "but awaits that somewhat vague time when violent changes in Russia may facilitate the escape of his flock from the despotic rule of the Czar." Bugnion then detailed his "personal sacrifices" and solicited "a donation of £500," either from government or from a "public committee of citizens and well wishers." The newspaper doubted any committee would respond "to assist a scheme that is so manifestly 'played out'" as Bugnion had expressed it.¹⁶⁴ The same report included another letter dated 6 May claiming the Russian authorities had stopped "the Mennonites" leaving because of the threat of "great disturbances ... in and about Constantinople," a very "paternal" act on their part, as he put it ironically.¹⁶⁵

The April letter was Bugnion's final message. On 19 July Sydney's leading newspaper carried the following announcement: "The Rt. Rev. Bishop Bugnion died on board the steamship *Euxine*, on the

17th of May, off Naples.”¹⁶⁶ The exact circumstances of his death, however, remain unclear. Contemporary Australian reports state that he died either on board the ship or “off Naples,” but Bugnion’s entry in the *Swiss National Biography* suggests he “drowned in the sea near Naples (*bei Neapel im Meer ertrunken*).”¹⁶⁷ News of his death was widely reported in Australia. Rockhampton newspapers referred to his connection with the district and plans for a Mennonite settlement, concluding that Bugnion “was in some respects a mysterious-minded man and many people were in consequence unable to thoroughly comprehend his meaning.”¹⁶⁸ The *Brisbane Courier* reflected:

“How much of the genuineness of the enthusiast and the missionary, and how much of the finesse of the adventurer, prompted the actions of the projector of the Mennonite colony it is impossible for us to determine. The tone of the letters written from Constantinople inspired us with some doubt as to the Bishop’s *bona fides*.”¹⁶⁹

Questions about Bugnion’s *bona fides* had been raised much earlier in Australia’s press and parliaments. Was Bugnion a fraud? Did he knowingly misrepresent himself with regard to Mennonites?

Doubts over Bugnion had been expressed long before he came to Australia. His claims often seemed fanciful and often contradictory. For example, there were his claims that he had passed “through several gradations of ecclesiastical rank” and in 1862 been “created Right Reverend by his nomination to the office of General-Vicar for the Caucasus, the Daghestan, and Cossakenland, by the Viceroy of the Caucasus and the imperial consistory of Moscow ... afterwards elected Bishop by the New Churches of Bourbon and the Mauritius.”¹⁷⁰ One South Australian paper noted he appeared to have “received twelve different ordinations,” and wryly commented that if “a man is not a Bishop after all that laying-on of hands, I do not know what would make him one.” Bugnion, it seemed was as “adept at changing his religious views as Mr. Boucaut is at changing his political principles and his colleagues, [so] it is only natural to enquire to what extent his authority extends and how long it is likely to last.”¹⁷¹

As well as parading his titles, Bugnion liked to draw attention to his social connections. The Cowper-Temple links can be verified but in India he was reported to have been well-known to “Sir William Denison (formerly Governor of New South Wales) and Sir John Lawrence, “both of whom warmly expressed themselves in his favour.”¹⁷² He also told Lutheran missionaries he enjoyed the “esteem” of members of the Prussian Royal family and was “well known” to Prince Bismarck and “other German notables.”¹⁷³ A contemporary observer wondered

whether such comments were made “merely to produce a favourable impression.”¹⁷⁴

Although many contemporaries expressed admiration of Bugnion’s learning and facility with languages, his surviving unedited letters in English show only a basic grasp of the language. He spoke of translating pamphlets on the Northern Territory for foreign immigrants, but why translate them into Russian for his alleged Mennonite followers when at the time most Mennonites spoke Low German and used High German in religious and secular communications?¹⁷⁵ Whether Bugnion chose to add Mennonites to his list of followers or they were merely wished upon him by an eager press, will probably never be known. But once connected he never denied reports of his status as a Mennonite bishop or countered numerous reports that identified him and his schemes with Mennonites. Occasionally in reported statements and letters he qualified his association stressing they were not the only immigrants he intended for Australia. In 1876, after returning from America and Europe, he was reported to have stated the Mauritius immigrants “are not Mennonites, but members of my own flock,” and Mennonites “form only a very small portion” of the Russian colonists affected by the law changes.¹⁷⁶

In his final proposal to the Queensland government Bugnion spoke of “fifty families of Southern Russian colonists, the *same class of men as the well-known Mennonites*” but then identified the colonists as those who had “founded prosperous settlements on the bare steppes of Taurida, Ecatherinoslav, Kherson, and Bessarabia.” Although Mennonites were mainly located in the first two provinces he named, none were settled in Bessarabia. But after switching from Mennonites to all colonists in southern Russia, Bugnion returned to Mennonites stating his intended immigrants “have already formed prosperous settlements in Canada, Kansas, Nebraska, and other places,” pointing to Lord Dufferin’s favourable comments.¹⁷⁷ Mention of Dufferin could only refer to Mennonites and suggests a clear deception. In reality the only people he could guarantee to bring from south Russia were a few families in Chabag who had remained loyal to him since the 1850s.

It is surprising that none of the governments in South Australia or Queensland apparently enquired whether or not Bugnion had Mennonite connections in spite of this issue being raised in one newspaper.¹⁷⁸ They may have been blinded by the numerous favourable reports on Mennonite immigration to North America, but the South Australian government did check Bugnion’s Mauritius references and the replies eventually led them to reject his scheme. Later Australian scholars have also failed to examine the validity of Bugnion’s Mennonite connections. Many assume that Bugnion’s Mennonites existed as he presented them with him as their leader. The failure to secure

valuable Mennonite immigrants is attributed either to government or to Bugnion, or a combination of these factors.¹⁷⁹ Some have contacted Mennonites in an attempt to locate information on Bugnion's elusive connections, but even when nothing can be found, they have assumed that this might be for a lack of sources, not that Bugnion's Mennonites did not exist.¹⁸⁰ One account which checked on Mennonite connections still assumed that in the 1870s they were in Mauritius, were British subjects, Creoles and so acclimatized to the tropics they would have made suitable immigrants for the Territory.¹⁸¹

Bugnion died intestate, so in October 1880 the Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction of the Supreme Court of Queensland placed his affairs in the hands of a Rockhampton solicitor.¹⁸² The official announcement, and subsequent legal notices, described Bugnion as "late a Bishop of the Christian sect called Mennonites." Bugnion, however, was never a Mennonite and in spite of reports to the contrary, he had little or no contact with Mennonites. The strange case of Bishop Bugnion, Mennonites and settlement in Australia really was an immigration-that-never-was.

Notes

In writing this account we acknowledge the assistance of James Gregory, Constantine M. Hotimsky, Campbell McKnight, Thomas Mitchell, David Norton, Eric Richards, John Thiesen, Michael Walsh and William W. White.

Abbreviations: *BC* – *Brisbane Courier*; *MB* – *Morning Bulletin* (Rockhampton); *NTTG* – *Northern Territory Times and Gazette*; *PDT* – *Port Denison Times*; *Qld* – Queensland; *RB* – *Rockhampton Bulletin*; *SA* – South Australia; *SAA* – *South Australian Advertiser*; *SACWM* – *South Australian Chronicle and Weekly Mail*; *SAAP* – *South Australian Parliamentary Papers*; *SAPD* – *South Australian Parliamentary Debate*; *SAR* – *South Australian Registrar*; *SMH* – *Sydney Morning Herald*.

¹ The full text of the speech appears in *SAR*, 7 April 1876, 5.

² Recent Australian accounts include: Thomas Mitchell, "God, colonialism and the end of the world," *Journal of Northern Territory History* 14 (2003): 25-34; and Jack Cross in his *Great Central State: The Foundation of the Northern Territory* (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 2011), 301-11; "Bugnion, François Louis (1822-1880)," *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (Canberra: National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, 1969), accessed 21 October 2013, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/bugnion-francois-louis-3106/text4613>. None critically examine the Mennonite aspect of his activities.

³ J[ames] Nicholas "Preface" to F. L. Bugnion, *Address from the Right Rev. Bishop Bugnion to the Inhabitants of India* (second edition). (Madras: Adelphi Press, 1866), iv-xii; François-Louis Bugnion, *Memoires de l'évêque F. L. Bugnion*

- (Mauritius: Imprimerie de L. Channell, 1872); see also Bugnion, *Sion's Liturgy* (Rockhampton: 'Bulletin' Machine Printing Office, 1878), especially, 70-75.
- ⁴ Jean François Mayer, *L'évêque Bugnion ou les voyages extraordinaires d'un aventurier ecclésiastique vaudois*. (Lausanne: Editions 24 heures, 1989); see also Bugnion's entry in the *Historisches Lexicon der Schweiz* at <http://www.hls-dhs-dss.ch/textes/f/F44373.php>.
 - ⁵ Mayer, *L'évêque Bugnion*, 23-24.
 - ⁶ *Ibid.*, 36.
 - ⁷ Cornelius Becherel, "Historical sketch of the New Jerusalem Church Society in Mauritius, from 1858 to 1918," *The New-Church Review* (1919): 536-59; on Bugnion see 538-39; on the Church in general, see Ian Sellers, "The Swedenborgian Church in England," in *Reinventing Christianity: Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, ed. Linda Woodhead (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), 97-104; in America it was known as Church of the New Jerusalem.
 - ⁸ Marina Carter, *Servants, Sirdars and Settlers: Indians in Mauritius, 1834-1874* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995).
 - ⁹ *Address from the Right Rev. Bishop Bugnion to the Inhabitants of India*; see also "India," *Intellectual Repository and New Jerusalem Magazine* 13 (1866): 90-92.
 - ¹⁰ An appeal for donations for Bugnion's "mission" reported his family numbered six, C. P. Francois, "Bishop Bugnion's Mission to India," *The Monthly Observer, and New Church Record* 6 (1862): 124-25.
 - ¹¹ Mayer, *L'Eveque Bugnion*, 104-107.
 - ¹² See "Byfield," *MB*, 11 July 1921, 5.
 - ¹³ Report in the *Times of India*, 2 December 1879 reproduced in the *SMH*, 27 January 1880, 5; *BC*, 31 January 1880, 5; *MB*, 3 February 1880, 2; Bugnion's brother denied the report, *Capricornian*, 14 February 1880, 16; *MB*, 11 February 1880, 3; see also Mayer, *L'Eveque Bugnion*, 106.
 - ¹⁴ On the Cowper-Temples, including their connections with Bugnion, see James Gregory, *Reformers, Patrons and Philanthropists: The Cowper-Temples and High Politics in Victorian England* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 119-20, 13.
 - ¹⁵ In his *Mémoires* Bugnion implies he co-founded Harris' community but Harris' biographers report this is untrue as he spent only a few days at the community, see Herbert W. Schneider and George Lawton, *A Prophet and a Pilgrim* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942), 154, 239-40; later, however, Bugnion strongly identified with Harris and his ideas.
 - ¹⁶ *Public Ledger* (Memphis Tennessee), 8 April 1869; *Memphis Daily Appeal*. 8 April, 5; and 6 May, 1869.
 - ¹⁷ A number of local newspapers noted his arrival; see *Empire* (Sydney), 6 October, 1873, 2.
 - ¹⁸ Letter, 24 April 1873, State Records of South Australia. GRS 24/6 1693/1873; a later report stated Bugnion's purpose had "been suggested by residents of Mauritius interested in sugar and cotton growing." *SAR*, 8 May 1874, 5.
 - ¹⁹ Australia became a single sovereign state in 1901 when its colonies agreed to confederate and become states, retaining their own legislatures with a federal parliament and senate based today in Canberra.
 - ²⁰ A rail link, long planned and only partially completed, was not completed until 2004.
 - ²¹ See Cross, *Great Central State*, 237.
 - ²² Spoken during a House of Assembly debate on limiting Chinese immigration, 18 July 1877, quoted in *SACWM*, 21 July 1877, 7.
 - ²³ South Australia. *An Act to Regulate the Sale and other Disposal of the Waste Lands of the Crown in that Portion of the Province of South Australia commonly styled the Northern Territory*. 35 and 36 Vic., No. 28, 1872; *An Act to provide for Immigration into the Province of South Australia*. 35 and 36 Vic., No. 29, 1872; both received consent on the same day and are obviously interconnected.

- ²⁴ Cross, *Great Central State*, 202.
- ²⁵ G[eorge] H[erbert] Poole, "Land in Mauritius" [Letter], *SAR*, 28 April 1868, 2; on Poole's role in founding the New Church in Mauritius see Becherel, "Historical sketch of the New Jerusalem Church Society in Mauritius," 536.
- ²⁶ See the advertisement in *SMH*, 9 October 1873, 1.
- ²⁷ "Leaves from my Note Book," *The Singleton Argus and Upper Hunter General Advocate* (NSW), 5 November 1879, 2.
- ²⁸ *Bishop F. L. Bugnion's Catechism: for the use of Christian believers in Mauritius, Bourbon, India, the Southern States, Cuba, Russian and Australia* (Sydney: New Church Publishing Society, 1874); later it was suggested the Bereton's were "sweet somewhat off balance by the suavity and the ingratiating personality of the 'Bishop'," I. A. Robinson, *A History of the New Church in Australia 1832-1980* (Melbourne: New Jerusalem Church, 1981), 103.
- ²⁹ *Bishop F. L. Bugnion's Catechism*, iv-vii; dated 4 October 1873, obviously a symbolic choice, as it is the date he arrived in Sydney.
- ³⁰ Thomas Lake Harris, *Arcana of Christianity: An Unfolding of the Celestial Sense of the Divine Word*. Part 3, volume 1: *The Apocalypse* (New York: Brotherhood of the New Life, 1867), 43; Bugnion claimed Harris also instructed him to form his community.
- ³¹ See the discussion in Mitchell, "God, Colonialism and the End of the World."
- ³² He later claimed, however, that his Brotherhood would be the "crown of Churches," F. L. Bugnion, *The Celestial Church of Zion, being a Brotherhood of the New Life* (Sydney: Henry Solomon, 1875), 1.
- ³³ *Bishop F. L. Bugnion's Catechism*, 114.
- ³⁴ See photographs of the period in Cross, *Great Central State*.
- ³⁵ *SAA*, 13 July 1876, 13.
- ³⁶ The editor indicated he had omitted Bugnion's "theological" views as "we gather that he believes in everything which is good, and objects to everything which is evil." *NTTG*, 20 March 1874, 2.
- ³⁷ *NTTG*, 20 March 1874, 2; "Russian Immigration to the Northern Territory," *SAR*, 12 June 1874, 7.
- ³⁸ *NTTG*, 5 June 1874, 2.
- ³⁹ "Northern Territory," *SAR*, 15 July 1874, 4 Supplement.
- ⁴⁰ "Up-Country Jottings," *NTTG*, 24 July 1874, 3,
- ⁴¹ T. Reynolds, "The Northern Territory Land Act," *NTTG*, 23 January 1875, 3; shortly after Reynolds was drowned when the ship returning him to Adelaide sank.
- ⁴² Robinson, *A History of the New Church in Australia*, 104; the Sydney church indicated it did not want to be placed under his "Episcopal control."
- ⁴³ In the 1880s some Ganders and other families immigrated from Chabag to Queensland (see below).
- ⁴⁴ *NTTG*, 20 March 1874, 2; also *SAR*, 12 June 1874, 7.
- ⁴⁵ *Süd Australische Zeitung*, 23 June 1874, 2.
- ⁴⁶ *Argus*, 6 November 1873, 5.
- ⁴⁷ Regular reports and substantial accounts were reproduced; see "The Mennonites," *Capricornian*, 16 January 1875, 4; *RB*, 11 January 1875, 3; "Canadian Immigration Experiments," *Maitland Mercury & Hunter River General Advertiser*, 28 December 1875, 3.
- ⁴⁸ "Immigrants from Asia Minor," [Letter] *SMH*, 16 March 1875, 6.
- ⁴⁹ "The Emigration of the German Colonists of Russia," *BC*, 14 November 1874, 7; reprinted from the *London Spectator*.
- ⁵⁰ Bugnion met Samuel Way, Attorney General in Boucaut's administration, soon to be Chief Justice, a man possibly sympathetic to the New Church; see David Hilliard, "Emmanuel Swedenborg and the New Church in South Australia," *Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia* 16 (1988): 83.

- ⁵¹ Cross, *Great Central State*, 145.
- ⁵² Hilliard, "Emmanuel Swedenborg and the New Church," 77; the Adelaide church was the first established in Australia in 1844.
- ⁵³ South Australian Archives GRG 35/1/341/ 1876 printed in "Correspondence with Bishop Bugnion," *SAPP* 2, 1876, 1-3; "A Nineteenth Century Exodus," *St. James's Magazine*, August 1874, 486-90.
- ⁵⁴ See *SAPP* 2, 1876, 3-6; the agreement was published in local newspapers, see *SAR*, 21 April 1876; Bugnion later published an edited version in French and English, *Bishop Bugnion's Colony in Australia* (Geneva: Ramboz and Schuchardt, 1876), 6-15.
- ⁵⁵ Without consulting the government the solicitors accepted this change as they considered it "immaterial," see telegram in *SAPP* 2, 1876, 6.
- ⁵⁶ The solicitors reported that Bugnion said the agreement "is different from his original arrangements, but he will endeavour to carry it out."
- ⁵⁷ Bugnion to Boucaut 5 April 1876 in, *SAPP* 2, 1876, 6.
- ⁵⁸ Based on the official census, see the Australian Historical Census and Colonial Data Archive (1834 - 1901) at http://hccda.ada.edu.au/pages/SA-1876-census-02_9.
- ⁵⁹ Goyder Memorandum dated 29 April 1876 in *SAPP*, 2, 1876, 7.
- ⁶⁰ B. T. Finnis to Boucaut in *SAPP* 2, 1876, 7; see also C. H. Hardy "The Mennonites and the Northern Territory," *SAR*, 1 May 1876, 5.
- ⁶¹ "Francois Louis Bugnion," *SAR*, 14 April 1876, 5-6.
- ⁶² "Francois Louis Bugnion," *SAR*, 21 April, 1876, 5.
- ⁶³ Editorial in *The Mercury* (Hobart), 26 April 1876, 2.
- ⁶⁴ *SAR*, 27 May 1876, 6; Cowper-Temple also stated that Bugnion was a "visionary" who "might be fanciful" in how he sought to achieve his ends, in "Correspondence with Bishop Bugnion," *SAPP* No. 160, 1876, 2.
- ⁶⁵ E. G. Day, "Bishop Bugnion and the New Church," *SAR*, 17 April, 1876, 5; 20 April, 1876, 6; on Day see Hilliard, "Emmanuel Swedenborg and the New Church in South Australia," 77-78.
- ⁶⁶ A Quondam Northern Territorian, "Mr. Boucaut and Bishop Bugnion," *SAA*, 8 April 1876, 3; widely reprinted.
- ⁶⁷ "South Australia," *The Argus*, 25 April 1876, 6.
- ⁶⁸ *Capricornian*, 5 January 1878, 10; his claim to have predicted the date and time of the fall of an Ottoman fortress to Russian forces was widely reported.
- ⁶⁹ *SAR*, 2 May, 1876, 6.
- ⁷⁰ "Cosmopolitan," *SAR*, 13 April, 1876, 6.
- ⁷¹ "The Mennonites," *SAR*, 12 April 1876, 4 using Xavier Hommaire de Hell's *Travels in the Steppes of the Caspian Sea: The Crimea, the Caucasus* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1847); see *SAA*, 13 April, 1876, 4-5, for a reprint from the *Pall Mall Budget*.
- ⁷² Leader in the *NTTG*, 29 April, 1876, 2.
- ⁷³ *SAA*, 8 April 1876, 4.
- ⁷⁴ *SAA*, 8 April 1876, 4, 5.
- ⁷⁵ A South Australian politician of German descent, Friedrich Krichauff, corrected such misunderstandings, see 'The Mennonites,' *SAA*, 8 April, 1876, 5.
- ⁷⁶ Wm. Eggers, "Bishop Bugnion and the Northern Territory," *SAR*, 13 April 1876, 6; Eggers also addressed his letter to the premier, see *SAPP* 2, 1876, 6.
- ⁷⁷ *The Wallaroo Times and Mining Journal*, 3 June 1876.
- ⁷⁸ "The Mennonite Movement," *Gippsland Times* (Victoria), 29 April 1876, 4.
- ⁷⁹ Geoffrey Crabthorn, "Echoes from the Bush," *SAR*, 11 April 1876, 5; Crabthorn was the non-de-plume of the editor and part owner of the newspaper, John Howard Clark. A New Zealand paper made a similar suggestion: "So singular a colony can be nothing else but an excrescence on the extremity of one of the South Sea sisters. It will have to be named. What better name can be given it than Bunion-land," *Daily Southern Cross* (Auckland), 22 April 1876, 1.

- ⁸⁰ SAR, 8 April, 1876, 2.
- ⁸¹ "Russian Immigrants: Meeting at the Union, Northern Territory," SACWM, 5 August, 1876, 17.
- ⁸² An English journalist on board described Bugnion as "a courteous, earnest, and devout gentleman; a total abstainer, and a vegetarian; a pleasant, but somewhat eccentric enthusiast ... [with a] firm faith in the success of his mission, and ... [an] earnest belief that the Northern Territory was directly revealed to him by God." J. A. Langford, "John Chinaman in Australia and the West," *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 1876, 327.
- ⁸³ SAPP 3 (1876), 160, 2; Bugnion speaks of sending messages to Mennonites but reports no actual meetings; to date, no mention of a meeting or even his name has been located in any Mennonite source.
- ⁸⁴ SAR, 14 October, 1876, 5; on the disputes see John D. Unruh, Jr., "The Burlington and Missouri River Railroad brings the Mennonites to Nebraska, 1873-1878," *Nebraska History* 45 (1964): 177-206.
- ⁸⁵ SAPP 3 (1876), 160, 3.
- ⁸⁶ Letter of 2 June 1876 in NTTG, 30 September 1876, 2.
- ⁸⁷ Addressed to "the faithful of BESSARABIA, and the SOUTH OF RUSSIA and to their friends in Europa and America", *Bishop Bugnion's Colony in Australia*; the introduction was published in Australia, see NTTG, 7 October 1876, 2.
- ⁸⁸ See SAPP 3 (1876), 160A; also in SAR, 7 October 1876, 2; war between Serbia and the Ottoman Empire began in June and relations between Russia and the Ottomans were strained.
- ⁸⁹ South Australian Archives, GRS 1 164/1876; the ambassador, Lord Augustus Loftus, expressed similar concerns about the activities of Canadian officials, see James Urry, "A Matter of Diplomacy: The British Government and the Mennonite Immigration from Russia to Manitoba, 1872-1875," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 87 (2013): 225-49.
- ⁹⁰ Published in SAPP, 3 (1876), 160, 160A.
- ⁹¹ P. A. Howell, "Constitutional and Political Development, 1857-1890," in *The Flinders History of South Australia: Political History*, ed. Dean Jaenesch (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 1986), 108, 110.
- ⁹² "The Edithburgh Banquet," SAR, 18 May 1876, 1 Supplement.
- ⁹³ Ward in the House of Assembly, 3 November 1876, SAPD, 1876, 1964; also in SAR, 4 November 1876, 6.
- ⁹⁴ Debate reported in detail in SACWM, 24 June 1876, 8-9.
- ⁹⁵ Editorial comment in SAA, 13 July 1876, 15.
- ⁹⁶ W. B. "The Northern Territory," SAR, 3 July 1876, 6.
- ⁹⁷ SAR, 23 August 1876, 5.
- ⁹⁸ SAA, 4 August 1876, 6; dated 6 July.
- ⁹⁹ SACWM, 19 August 1876, 7; published in SAPP Vol. 3, 16 and 16A.
- ¹⁰⁰ The government insisted the Agent-General had acted alone, SAPD, 3 November 1876, column 1965.
- ¹⁰¹ SAR, 11 October 1876, 4.
- ¹⁰² SAR, 14 October 1876, 5.
- ¹⁰³ Bugnion to Ward's secretary, George E. De Mole, undated (probably November 1876), South Australian Archives, GRS 1/475/1876.
- ¹⁰⁴ South Australian Archives, GRS 1/474/1876 dated 3 November; Bugnion also offered to bring "Nubians" from Egypt, Bugnion to Ward, South Australian Archives, GRS 1/474/1876.
- ¹⁰⁵ South Australian Archives GRS 4575/1876; Cabinet approved the balance of £700 giving it "full release" from any future claim.
- ¹⁰⁶ Bugnion to De Mole, [undated c. 2-3 November 1876] South Australian Archives, GRS 1/475/1876.

- ¹⁰⁷ See the statement in SACWM, 11 November 1876, 8, which reported the Creoles were Mennonites.
- ¹⁰⁸ Canadian reports noted that Mennonite immigrants first spent money to re-establish themselves but then kept money within their communities.
- ¹⁰⁹ One newspaper (the SACWM, 11 November 1876) recorded Boucaut's words as "Mennonites had established themselves in Southern Russia and North America, and...proved themselves to be one of the most industrious and frugal communities known on the globe."
- ¹¹⁰ Day to Ward 4 November, South Australian Archives, GRS 1/476/1876; his letter also appeared anonymously in number of newspapers, Observer, "The Northern Territory," [Letter] SAA, 7 November 1876, 2; Day, "Late Stenographer to H.M.'s Commission of Enquiry to Mauritius" had long advocated the use of labourers from Mauritius in the Territory.
- ¹¹¹ SACWM, 25 November 1876, 6; SAA, 28 November 1876, 5.
- ¹¹² NTTG, 2 December 1876, 2.
- ¹¹³ Bugnion to De Molle, 27 January 1877, South Australian Archives, GRS 1/35/1877; see also "Colonisation of the Northern Territory," *Queenslander*, 10 February 1877, 19; on the Japanese plan, see Cross, *Great Central State*, 311-17.
- ¹¹⁴ SACWM, 16 June 1877, 4.
- ¹¹⁵ "The General Election," SAR, 3 April 1878, 1.
- ¹¹⁶ SAR, 1 April 1878, 2.
- ¹¹⁷ Raymond Evans, *A History of Queensland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
- ¹¹⁸ "Curious Colonisation," *Warwick Examiner and Times*, 20 May 1876, 1 Supplement; the Gulf of Carpentaria lies between the Territory and the Cape York Peninsular.
- ¹¹⁹ RB, 7 December 1876, 2.
- ¹²⁰ *Queenslander*, 10 February 1877, 19.
- ¹²¹ The more northerly *Port Denison Times* expressed regret at his decision and hoped he would not "overlook" their region, reported in RB, 10 March 1877, 2.
- ¹²² Most notably, the amateur French botanist Anthelme Thozet (1826-1878) who helped establish agriculture in the area.
- ¹²³ "Bishop Bugnion on Queensland," RB, 27 February 1877, 2; addressed to a person in Callao, a guano port in Peru, and widely reprinted; a previous report (RB, 13 February 1877, 2) claimed Bugnion had travelled to Australia via Peru, for which there is no evidence.
- ¹²⁴ "Bishop Bugnion on Central Queensland," RB 16 March 1877, 3; widely republished.
- ¹²⁵ Bugnion, *Sion's Liturgy*; the preface is dated with the symbolic date 28 March, but a review indicates it had been published by January.
- ¹²⁶ Bugnion, *The Celestial Church of Sion*; his 1876 Geneva pamphlet also used this name.
- ¹²⁷ Bugnion claimed that Harris had told him he had "a new and secret name," that "seven Angels have be appointed to attend upon you," and that the divine spirit instructed him "Go on to Victory!" Bugnion, *Sion's Liturgy*, 71.
- ¹²⁸ *Sion's Liturgy*, vi.
- ¹²⁹ *Sion's Liturgy*, 75; he quoted favourable references of his service in Switzerland. South Russia, the Caucasus and Volga, Mauritius, Bourbon, India and America, 71-74.
- ¹³⁰ "Pivotal man" was an idea derived from Harris who used it to claim Divine status.
- ¹³¹ *Sion's Liturgy*, iii.
- ¹³² BC, 15 November 1877, 2; RB, 26 December 1877, 1; Nicholas later established a mining agency with his son-in-law, subsequently fleeing to India with his family leaving behind considerable unpaid debts.
- ¹³³ RB, 27 December 1877, 1.
- ¹³⁴ "Review - Sion's Liturgy," *Capricornion*, 5 January 1878, 6.

- ¹³⁵ Mayer, *L'évêque Bugnion*, 161-62.
- ¹³⁶ "The Mennonite Experiment," *MB*, 4 November 1879, 3.
- ¹³⁷ These included excerpts on the Mennonite colonies from D. Mackenzie Wallace's volume on Russia (1877), see *SAR*, 6 June 1877, 5.
- ¹³⁸ "The Mennonites in Manitoba," *RB*, 19 December 1877, 2; *Capricornian*, 22 December 1877, 14; reprinted from the *London Times*; "A Word for the Mennonites," *MB*, 14 January 1878, 2; *Capricornian*, 19 January 1878, 12; "Mennonite Enterprise," [Report from the *Winnipeg Free Press*] *Northern Argus* (Clare, SA) 22 August 1879, 4.
- ¹³⁹ "A Mennonite Settlement," *RB*, 14 February 1877, 3; written by John W. Down a Canadian immigration agent in an English newspaper, it first appeared in Australia as "Colonization and the Mennonites," *SMH*, 3 February 1877, 7.
- ¹⁴⁰ Reported in the *RB*, 8 February 1877, 2.
- ¹⁴¹ *Queenslander*, 10 February 1877, 19.
- ¹⁴² *Capricornian*, 11 August 1877, 11.
- ¹⁴³ *Capricornian*, 1 September 1877, 11 quoting a report in the *PDT*.
- ¹⁴⁴ *RB*, 22 September 1877, 2.
- ¹⁴⁵ F. L. Bugnion, "Immigration to Queensland," [letter including Douglas' correspondence] *RB*, 3 October 1877, 3; the "white" Serbians apparently replaced the "black" Nubian plantation workers he had offered South Australia in 1876.
- ¹⁴⁶ *BC*, 21 January 1878, 2; Editorial in *BC*, 23 February 1878, 4.
- ¹⁴⁷ "Bishop Bugnion's Immigration Project," *Capricornian*, 17 November 1897, 2; *RB*, 19 November 1877, 2; on the racial danger of "Bessarabian" immigrants see "The Coming Race," *Clarence and Richmond Examiner and New England Advertiser*, 7 May 1878, 3.
- ¹⁴⁸ *Capricornian*, 20 April 1878, 11.
- ¹⁴⁹ Queensland. *Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly during the session of 1878... Volume 1*. Brisbane, Government Printer 1878, 14, 27, 31, 42.
- ¹⁵⁰ Queensland. Legislative Assembly. *Bishop Bugnion and the Immigration of Mennonites*. 14 May 1878.
- ¹⁵¹ *SMH*, 15 May 1878, 5.
- ¹⁵² *Australian Town and Country Journal*, 25 May 1878, 18.
- ¹⁵³ *The Argus* (Melbourne), 22 May 1878, 9; *The Queenslander*, 11 May 1878, 168.
- ¹⁵⁴ "The Mennonites," *PDT*, 28 September 1878, 2.
- ¹⁵⁵ *MB*, 30 September 1879, 3; *BC*, 30 September 1879, 2; *SAR*, 1 October 1879, 5.
- ¹⁵⁶ Fully supported, British immigrants cost about £20 a head, *MB*, November 1879, 2.
- ¹⁵⁷ Bugnion's proposal reprinted as "Mennonite Immigration," *BC*, 17 October 1879, 3.
- ¹⁵⁸ "Mennonite Immigration," *BC*, 17 October 1879, 3; some papers published only the government's response and not Bugnion's proposal, see "From the Colonial Secretary to Bishop Bugnion," *Capricornian*, 25 October 1879, 13.
- ¹⁵⁹ See the overview by W. Allen, "The Special Agricultural Homesteads Bill," [Letter] *BC*, 18 December 1901, 2. Another cited the North American Mennonites as a successful example of group settlement, H. Rooke Jones, "Village Settlements," [Letter] *BC*, 18 February 1889, 6.
- ¹⁶⁰ Editorial in *MB*, 4 November, 1879, 2.
- ¹⁶¹ *Western Star and Roma Advertiser* (Toowoomba, Queensland), 2 October 1879, 2; the places are battles in the Crimean War.
- ¹⁶² Bugnion in the *MB*, 4 November, 1879, 3; serfdom had been abolished in other Russian provinces in 1861.
- ¹⁶³ *BC*, 28 October 1879: 2.
- ¹⁶⁴ *BC*, 12 July 1880, 2; "The Mennonite Colonisation Scheme.," *Queenslander*, 17 July 1880, 85.

- ¹⁶⁵ "Mennonite Colonisation in Queensland," *Riverine Herald* (Echuca, Victoria), 10 August 1880, 3; from the *Brisbane Telegraph*.
- ¹⁶⁶ "Family Notices," *SMH*, 19 July 1880, 1.
- ¹⁶⁷ *Historisches Lexicon der Schweiz* at <http://www.hls-dhs-dss.ch/textes/f/F44373.php>; the parallel French and Italian entries, however, do not state this.
- ¹⁶⁸ *MB*, 27 July 1880, 2.
- ¹⁶⁹ *BC*, 26 July 1880, 2; the *Couriers'* comment was widely reprinted.
- ¹⁷⁰ *The Intellectual Repository for the New Church and New Jerusalem Magazine*, 1869, 105; by the 1870s New Church Members rejected his claims; see also Cross, *Great Central State*, 309.
- ¹⁷¹ *Kapunda Herald and Northern Intelligencer*, 14 April 1876, 3.
- ¹⁷² "Francois Louis Bugnion," *SAR*, 14 April 1876, 6.
- ¹⁷³ *SAA*, 13 April 1876, 4.
- ¹⁷⁴ A Curious Observer, "Bishop Bugnion and the Northern Territory," [Letter] *SAR*, 15 April, 1876, 5.
- ¹⁷⁵ *NTTG*, 19 August 1876, 3; translating these into Russian was part of his agreement with government.
- ¹⁷⁶ "Settlement of the Northern Territory," *SAR*, 14 October 1876, 5.
- ¹⁷⁷ "Mennonite Immigration," *BC*, 17 October 1879, 3; my emphasis.
- ¹⁷⁸ Editorial comment in *SAA*, 7 April 1876, 4; "We presume the Government have satisfied themselves as to the *bona fides* of Bishop Bugnion, and that they have taken every precaution to protect the interests of the colony."
- ¹⁷⁹ A. Coghlan, *Labour and Industry in Australia from the First Settlement in 1788 to the Establishment of the Commonwealth in 1901*, vol. 3 (London: Oxford University Press, 1918), 1310; Stephen H. Roberts, "Northern Territory Colonization Schemes," *Report of the Seventeenth Meeting of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science Adelaide*, 1924, 422; F. H. Bauer, *Historical Geography of White Settlement in Part of Northern Australia: Part 2 The Katherine - Darwin Region*. Canberra, CSIRO, 1964, 127; P. F. Donovan, *A Land Full of Possibilities: A History of South Australia's Northern Territory* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1981), 170; Eric Rolls, *Sojourners: The Epic Story of China's Centuries-old Relationship with Australia: Flowers and the Wide Sea* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1992), 247.
- ¹⁸⁰ Cross, *Great Central State*, 310.
- ¹⁸¹ Desmond O'Connor, *No Need to be Afraid: Italian Settlers in South Australia Between 1839 and the Second World War* (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 1996), 43.
- ¹⁸² See *BC*, 23 October 1880, 7 and other newspapers.