

James Moore Hickson's 1923 Western Australian Mission: Media Reception of a Globe-Trotting Anglican Healer

by PETER ELLIOTT
Alphacrucis College, Perth
E-mail: peter_elliott@aapt.net.au

In the wake of World War I and the Spanish flu epidemic, the Anglican layman James Moore Hickson embarked on a five-year international healing ministry. What circumstances contributed to his positive reception by the public and the press, and how did he gain episcopal support and private audiences with the archbishop of Canterbury? Hickson's ministry in Western Australia near the end of his global tour sheds light on some of the reasons why his ministry was so widely accepted.

In the early twentieth century, attitudes within the Anglican Church towards divine healing varied from openness through suspicion to outright hostility. Fuel for the latter end of the spectrum included memories of the English Civil War period that linked charismatic gifts with social dissent, and therefore associated divine healing with quacks, Quakers and rabid millenarians. During the nineteenth century, the Tractarian movement within Anglicanism, in attempting to reclaim some of the Church's spiritual *gravitas* which they felt had been lost due to the Reformation, embraced the openness to healing of the first *Book of Common Prayer*, noting that the Eastern Church and the Church in Scotland had always been open to the practice.¹ In the broader religious context, developments such as Mormonism, Christian Science and spiritualism cast further doubt on the whole issue. Therefore, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the Anglican Church included those completely rejecting divine healing

¹ E. B. Pusey, *An eirenicon*, New York 1866, 98–9.

as well as differing degrees of acceptance, depending on their identification with Evangelicalism, theological liberalism or Anglo-Catholicism.

These trends resonated in broadly similar ways in Australia, at the furthest reaches of the Anglican empire. Ian Breward points out the many similarities between the outlook of the Anglican Church in England and Australia in the early twentieth century, with most Australian bishops and many clergy being British-born and educated.² Stuart Mews has suggested that at the dawn of the twentieth century, the social background of bishops was an additional factor predisposing the Anglican leadership to reject any form of faith-healing.³ Nevertheless, groups such as the Guild of Health were established (1904) to counter what was seen as an overly positive view of the spiritual value of sickness within the Anglican communion.⁴

James Moore Hickson was born in 1868 near Mansfield, Victoria, into a large Anglo-Irish family.⁵ His mother was devout, and Hickson experienced prayer for the sick from a young age, including praying for two cousins who were instantly healed. Working as a bank clerk and accountant, Hickson married Emily Harrison in 1891 and moved to England eight years later. He was soon mixing in Anglo-Catholic circles which had an openness to divine healing for a combination of liturgical and missiological reasons. His healing ministry gained significant respect in these circles, and through them reached Episcopalian networks in the United States.⁶ With this widespread support, and in the context of the global influenza epidemic that erupted at the end of World War I, Hickson launched an international healing mission in 1919 that was to last for five years. Australia and New Zealand were the last two stops on a trip that included the United States, the United Kingdom, Europe, Egypt, Palestine, India, China, Japan, the Philippines, South Africa and Rhodesia. How did an accountant from rural Victoria gain such global influence within Anglicanism?

A year after the Guild of Health was established, Hickson founded the Society of Emmanuel, attracted support from some clergy and nobility and began ministering healing in the poorer areas of London.⁷ The

² I. Breward, 'Anglicanism in Australia and New Zealand', in J. Morris (ed.), *The Oxford history of Anglicanism, IV: Global western Anglicanism, c.1910–present*, Oxford 2019, 331.

³ S. Mews, 'The revival of spiritual healing in the Church of England, 1920–26', in W. J. Sheils (ed.), *The Church and healing* (Studies in Church History xix, 1982), 300–1.

⁴ *Ibid.* 310.

⁵ This short summary of Hickson's life is derived from Mark Hutchinson's article, 'Hickson, James Moore (1868–1933), Anglican healing exponent, accountant, bank clerk', <<http://webjournals.ac.edu.au/ojs/index.php/ADPCM/article/view/9476/9471>>.

⁶ Hutchinson's article goes into depth about the network of relationships and influence supporting Hickson, which cannot be explored fully here: *ibid.*

⁷ Mews, 'Revival of spiritual healing', 312.

richness of Hickson's network within the upper echelons of Anglicanism has been well documented by Mark Hutchinson. It included Charles Gore, Percy Dearmer, the duchess of Bedford, the bishop of London, Arthur Foley Winnington-Ingram, and the bishop of Bombay, Louis George Mylne.⁸

In 1903 Randall Davidson was appointed archbishop of Canterbury, thereby inheriting the Anglican diversity of opinion on divine healing. Coming from a Scottish Presbyterian family and twenty years Hickson's senior, Davidson had studied at Oxford University where he had become friends with Craufurd Tait, the son of Archbishop Campbell Tait. Craufurd had been acting as his father's private secretary, a role Randall took over from him in 1877.⁹ In 1878 Craufurd died and Randall became the archbishop's son-in-law when he married Edith Tait. Davidson's presence at Lambeth Palace brought him within the circle of Queen Victoria, and on Tait's death in 1882, Davidson discussed the issue of the archbishop's successor with the queen. The following year, the queen appointed Davidson Dean of Windsor and her personal chaplain.¹⁰ Ordained a bishop in 1891, Davidson served first in Rochester and then in Winchester before becoming the logical successor to Canterbury on the death of Archbishop Temple.¹¹

Davidson presided over the 1908 Lambeth Conference, which received a report from a committee appointed to consider ministries of healing. Amongst its conclusions were that '[The committee] believes that sickness has too often exclusively been regarded as a cross to be borne with passive resignation, whereas it should have been regarded rather as a weakness to be overcome by the power of the Spirit ... the full potency of corporate intercession has been too little realised, and that the confidence in the efficacy of prayer for restoration to health has not been sufficiently encouraged.'¹² Various *caveats* were, of course, put in place, but the tone of Lambeth 1908 set a sympathetic environment for the ministry of Hickson, who had been in London for nine years by this time.

It was probably the combination of his high-level connections and his ministry activity that brought Hickson to the attention of Archbishop Davidson, who met Hickson several times in 1909, just a year after Lambeth's declared openness to divine healing. It seems that the archbishop's initial impressions were not overly favourable. He reflected that Hickson showed 'shrewd commonsense' blended with a 'certain amount

⁸ M. Hutchinson, 'The Worcester circle: an Anglo-Catholic attempt at renewal in the 1920s', <<http://academia.edu/345662>>.

⁹ M. Hughes, *Archbishop Randall Davidson*, London 2018, 104; G. Bell, *Life of Archbishop Randall Davidson*, Oxford 1952, 10–12.

¹⁰ Bell, *Davidson*, 16.

¹¹ *Ibid.* 28.

¹² R. Davidson (ed.), *The six Lambeth conferences, 1867–1920*, London 1929, 391.

of nonsense'.¹³ Hickson continued his ministry accompanied by an undercurrent of opposition from Harold Anson, who led the Guild of Health from 1909 to 1928, an opposition which appears to have been motivated as much by jealousy as by theological differences.¹⁴ Nevertheless, Hickson would have benefited from the sympathetic attitude of Lambeth 1908 to divine healing.

The outbreak of World War I with its resulting physical and emotional devastation magnified the need. At the beginning of the war in 1914, Davidson's chaplain, George Bell, had instigated a Conference of Christian Ministers and Laymen, which included representatives from the Nonconformists.¹⁵ Despite differences amongst the representatives about the justification for the war, there was an awareness that the breadth of problems that were emerging would require efforts on a scale that was beyond the capabilities of any single denomination. As the war progressed, controversy arose within Anglicanism about the issue of prayers for the dead, and although Davidson was personally opposed to this, he recognised the need for an appropriate response to the pastoral demands.¹⁶ The end of World War I was followed immediately by the catastrophe of the Spanish flu that left millions dead.¹⁷ In this atmosphere, spiritualism, Christian Science and Theosophy flourished, fuelled by the grief of those left behind. The 1920 Lambeth conference addressed concerns about each of these groups and discussed the most important issues for the Anglican Church at the time.¹⁸

At Lambeth 1920 clergy were encouraged to train parishioners in prayer for healing.¹⁹ There was also acknowledgement that the Holy Spirit could bless ministries other than those episcopally ordained.²⁰ Michael Hughes has described the decision at Lambeth to encourage all Christians to strive for visible unity as its 'most far-reaching move'.²¹ There was clearly an atmosphere in which pastoral concerns were seen as sufficiently overwhelming to require a greater recognition of both lay ministry and the organic unity of the Christian Church as a whole. Lambeth 1920 called for 'Instruction both of clergy and laity so that the corporate faith of the Church may be stimulated and the power to heal may be released'.²² The decision at Lambeth to appoint a committee to investigate spiritual healing was to demonstrate ongoing divisions amongst leading Anglicans

¹³ Davidson manuscript, quoted in Mews, 'Revival of spiritual healing', 313.

¹⁴ Mews, 'Revival of spiritual healing', 311 ff.

¹⁵ Hughes, *Davidson*, 104; Bell, *Davidson*, 744.

¹⁶ Hughes, *Davidson*, 99.

¹⁷ Estimates are 50 million worldwide for the Spanish flu, and a minimum of 16 million for the war. ¹⁸ Lambeth Conference 1920, resolutions 55, 65, <<http://www.anglicancommunion.org/acns/archive/1920/in1920.htm>>.

¹⁹ Ibid. resolution 61, <<http://www.anglicancommunion.org/acns/archive/1920/in1920.htm>>.

²⁰ Hughes, *Davidson*, 124.

²¹ Ibid. 113.

²² Davidson, *Lambeth conferences*, 125.

on the issue.²³ There are indications that by the time of Lambeth 1920 and in keeping with its general tone, Davidson had become more open to Hickson's ministry. Certainly Morris Maddocks, bishop of Selby, wrote that Davidson 'commissioned and blessed' Hickson, described him as 'like the patrol of an army', and promised that in his role as archbishop, he would 'lead the main body forward'.²⁴ This account though, seems somewhat too sanguine in light of Davidson's general caution on the topic. A. F. Farley has documented that, at Lambeth, the American bishops lobbied for support for Hickson's world tour, which had already begun in their country.²⁵

Hickson had arrived in the United States with letters of support from international Anglican worthies, but little financial backing. The months he spent there showed that he had solid Episcopalian support and provided much of the finance for his extended tour.²⁶ His early success in New York resulted in near-celebrity status, with the press reporting on his most recent ministry and advertising his itinerary.²⁷ As was frequently the case, Hickson's ministry stimulated much local interest in prayer for healing and subsequent debate over the issue. There is no doubt that the broadly positive American press coverage set the tone for the remainder of Hickson's global tour. Was this maintained during his 1923 visit to Western Australia, towards the end of his marathon healing campaign?

Even before Hickson formally began his Australian ministry, the press showed a keen sense of positive anticipation, which contrasted with their limited reporting on nascent Australian Pentecostalism²⁸ at Melbourne's Good News Hall and recent international Pentecostal healers such as Smith Wigglesworth. It was apparent that the international press coverage of Hickson's tour to date had stimulated this sense of anticipation. The Perth *Daily News* noted that Hickson had arrived in Albany on 14 December 1922 (even though he headed immediately to the eastern states):

²³ Lambeth Conference 1920, resolution 63. The tensions in the committee are documented in Mews, 'Revival of spiritual healing', 319ff.

²⁴ M. Maddocks, *The Christian healing ministry*, London 1981, 103, 100ff, quoted in Mews, 'Revival of spiritual healing', 299.

²⁵ A. F. Farley, 'A spiritual healing mission remembered: James Moore Hickson's Christian healing mission at Palmerston North, New Zealand, 1923', *Journal of Religious History* xxxiv/1 (2010), 6.

²⁶ R. J. Cunningham, 'James Moore Hickson and spiritual healing in the American Episcopal Church', *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* xxxix/1 (1970), 5–6.

²⁷ *Ibid.* 7.

²⁸ Although early Australian Pentecostalism was well aware of American healing ministries, and it was something of a two-way relationship (cf. John Alexander Dowie), Hickson's ministry developed outside the Holiness-Pentecostal nexus. The comprehensively Anglican nature of Hickson's ministry is one of its most distinctive features.

Few people will deny the miracle of faith in whatever department of life it may be exercised. To do so would be to admit a blindness greater than the physical defect which robs man of his sight Were [Hickson] a fraud he would not have been engaged for 22 years in such a work. He says that Divine power has its limitation in the capacity of men to believe and receive. His call is to the churches to make ready for his mission in Australia. Until that has actually commenced most people will not be prepared to accept report from afar. Yet there are thousands of cases. [The article details some.] Mr Hickson's Australian mission will be watched with intense interest, and the churches would do well to apply themselves diligently to the preparatory organisation.²⁹

A fortnight later, the same newspaper printed a Hickson sermon verbatim, but without indicating where it had been preached.³⁰ As Hickson's mission moved through the eastern states to a generally favourable reception, the anticipation in Western Australia grew. Early in March 1923, *The West Australian* reported on the thanksgiving service in St David's Cathedral at the end of Hickson's ministry in Hobart. It took three-quarters of an hour to read out the details of those healed, which included many who were well-known, and was fully endorsed by Dr Hay, bishop of Tasmania.³¹ *The West Australian* provided a short but positive account of Hickson's healing mission in Adelaide,³² as did the *Kalgoorlie Miner*.³³ Katanning's *Great Southern Herald* published an endorsement of Hickson's ministry in Bathurst by Dr Long, bishop of Bathurst in New South Wales, who claimed that, even before Hickson began his ministry, 'God gave manifestations of the power wrought through prayer in and upon the bodies of people.' The article continued to give examples: the healing of a woman whose foot had been declared incurable by her doctor; the healing of someone who had suffered with eczema for sixteen years; the straightening of a crippled boy's leg.³⁴

As Hickson's ministry continued around Australia, the Western Australian newspaper coverage increased. In early June 1923 the *Tambellup Times* had a lengthy article covering the meetings in Sydney the previous month,³⁵ and the *South Western Advertiser*, focusing on

²⁹ *Daily News*, 16 Dec. 1922, 8, <<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/83257913>>.

³⁰ *Ibid.* 30 Dec. 1922, 15, <<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/83261430>>.

³¹ *The West Australian*, 2 Mar. 1923, 5, <<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/23888951>>.

³² *Ibid.* 3 July 1923, 8, <<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/22619764>>.

³³ *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 4 July 1923, 5, <<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/93200829>>.

³⁴ *Great Southern Herald*, 11 July 1923, 3, <<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/146194054>>.

³⁵ *Tambellup Times*, 9 June 1923, 4, <<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/211147371>>.

Hickson's forthcoming visit to Bunbury, wrote that his ministry was 'exciting universal interest throughout the vast extent of this continent' and that, amongst the 'wonderful results',

Cures are recorded of blindness, deafness, infirmity of various descriptions and multifarious diseases, including tumour and cancer. The cures are attested to not only by the patients themselves, who have been healed, but also by the clergy who have been responsible for their admission to the services of healing. If the cures were fraudulent the public would have had plenty of evidence of this. There are usually a sufficient number of critics in a congregation to make such a fact known.³⁶

In mid-July, the front page of *The Sunday Times* confirmed the Hickson Perth meetings for 30 and 31 July and 1 August, and said that all three dates were completely booked by those who were seeking healing, so that there was no space for the general public.³⁷ These examples serve to indicate the level of positive anticipation that existed in Western Australia before Hickson arrived. Did the reality live up to the hype?

On 31 July 1923 *The West Australian* reported on Hickson's first meeting in Perth with the subtitle 'An impressive service' and set the scene well:

Before [Hickson] and behind him in St. George's Cathedral, seated in pews in the nave and chancel, propped up in invalid chairs or prone upon stretchers, were the sick, the lame, the palsied, the imbecile, and the blind – a thousand figures of pain. There could be no scene more poignant. Age, bent with the burden of years, was there; youth and maidenhood with prime denied; and childhood disinherited of joy. Intercessors filled the side seats at the rear of the Cathedral. White gowned nurses and other helpers, drawn from every section of the Protestant Church, stood in the aisles.³⁸

The same article continues: 'There have been many rumours of marvelous recoveries as a result of yesterday's service, but it is of course impossible at this stage to provide definitely authenticated information regarding specific cases', while mentioning one anyway.

On the third day of the Perth mission, the paper reported that 1,200 sought healing (bringing the total to 3,358) and continued to give several detailed accounts of healing, including the full names and addresses of those involved.³⁹ Two days later, the paper printed further detailed accounts of healings from Hickson's visit, again giving names

³⁶ *South Western Advertiser*, 1 June 1923, 4, <<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/149632746>>.

³⁷ *The Sunday Times*, 15 July 1923, 1, <<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/60009144>>.

³⁸ *The West Australian*, 31 July 1923, 6, <<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/22621690>>.

³⁹ *Ibid.* 2 Aug. 1923, 7, <<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/22628734>>.

and addresses.⁴⁰ The *Daily News* followed suit, identifying healings amongst Fremantle residents who had attended the cathedral meetings.⁴¹ The *West Australian* reported on Hickson's separate meeting with 'a large number of clergy and ministers about carrying on the work begun by the healing mission'⁴² and later concluded that the Hickson meetings were 'the most remarkable in the cathedral's history'.⁴³ The *Sunday Times* carried a major article (with accompanying pictures) and names and addresses of those healed under the headline, 'The great spiritual healing mission, afflicted and suffering humanity gather from all parts – some remarkable cases of relief':

Crowds of the curious and morbid-minded, as well as the casual citizen, gathered around the barriers and watched the procession of halt and blind entering the Cathedral, carried or wheeled, or struggling on crutches, and waited to see a proportion of these human wrecks walk out with the friends, radiant with gratitude and thanksgiving. For three days the great drama of pathos – and shall we say mystery – proceeded, and then the healed and the unhealed melted away leaving a lasting vision of something more than matter, something that was divine.⁴⁴

The *South Western Times* published 'An ode of welcome' to Hickson on the eve of his Bunbury visit.⁴⁵ Another publication reviewed Hickson's international ministry, including 'authentic physical cures' of 'many thousands' in the United States, noting that his services 'observed the utmost reverence and decorum. There was not the least sign of hysteria or sensationalism'.⁴⁶ Hickson's low-key manner seems to have been a significant factor in his widespread acceptance. The preliminary service of intercession at St Paul's Cathedral in Bunbury saw the seating 'taxed to its utmost', and when the healing mission began the next day at Bedford Hall, the crowds not only filled the hall, but overflowed onto the surrounding lawn and laneways so that 'Such an immense concourse has never been seen in Bunbury.'⁴⁷

⁴⁰ Ibid. 4 Aug. 1923, 11, <<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/22625552>>.

⁴¹ *Daily News*, 3 Aug. 1923, 17, <<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/78073734>>.

⁴² *The West Australian*, 3 Aug. 1923, 10, <<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/22620170>>.

⁴³ Ibid. 11 Aug. 1923, 12, <<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/22634136>>.

⁴⁴ *The Sunday Times*, 5 Aug. 1923, 7, <<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/6009933>>.

⁴⁵ *South Western Times*, 4 Aug. 1923, 2, <<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/210776121>>.

⁴⁶ *Southern Argus and Wagin-Arthur Express*, 3 Aug. 1923, 3, <<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/206570049>>.

⁴⁷ *Bunbury Herald and Blackwood Express*, 7 Aug. 1923, 3, <<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/87061997>>.

As in Perth, admission to the healing services was restricted to those in need who had booked in advance (apart from nurses, clergy and stewards). Hickson's second Bunbury meeting saw 'an exceptionally large crowd' and 'not a vacant seat', and that evening a special train from Narrogin brought an extra 250 people to the meeting.⁴⁸ As in Perth, the local press reported much of the content of Hickson's sermons, as well as a surprising amount of mundane detail. Thus, at one moment, we see Hickson saying, 'If God took away from us the possibility of our doing things to bring sickness or disease, He would have to take away our free will' and a few lines later, we read that '[The] Methodist Guild dispensed free of charge egg flips, Bovril, soup, tea, coffee, sandwiches and cake.'⁴⁹ In all, 988 sought healing during Hickson's three days in Bunbury and, apart from various Christian groups, the Anglican Church expressed its gratitude to railway officials, police and ambulance officers.⁵⁰

Hickson proceeded to Kalgoorlie for two days of meetings attended by five hundred 'patients', with 'numerous cures' being reported, including that of a well-known news vendor who had been crippled for a 'score of years', but after the service was able to walk with only 'slight assistance'.⁵¹ The local paper printed details of thirteen testimonies of healings and summarised: 'Of the fifty-four testimonials received nine were from people suffering from deafness, nine from people suffering with eye-trouble, eight from paralysis, five from rheumatism, and the remainder from one or another of various ailments.'⁵² On the same page as its Kalgoorlie coverage, *The West Australian* reported the thanksgiving service at Fremantle, referring to numerous healing testimonies, including relief of blindness, deafness and rheumatoid arthritis.⁵³ It also reported on the thanksgiving service at St George's Cathedral in Perth, where hundreds of written healing testimonies had been received, about a quarter of which were read out during the service and reported in the paper.⁵⁴

What, then, was Hickson's message and method in his services? Let us begin by examining his verbatim sermon referred to earlier.⁵⁵ This

⁴⁸ Ibid. 10 Aug. 1923, 3, <<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/87064474>>.

⁴⁹ *South Western Times*, 7 Aug. 1923, 3, <<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/210776584>>.

⁵⁰ Ibid. 11 Aug. 1923, 4, <<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/210775457>>.

⁵¹ *The West Australian*, 16 Aug. 1923, 10, <<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/22618691>>.

⁵² *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 5 Sept. 1923, 1, <<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/93297187>>.

⁵³ *The West Australian*, 16 Aug. 1923, 10, <<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/22618646>>.

⁵⁴ Ibid. 16 Aug. 1923, 10, <<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/22618625>>.

⁵⁵ *Daily News*, 30 Dec. 1922, 15, <<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/83261430>>.

sermon, published before his arrival in Australia, emphasised the importance of preparation in the form of intercessory prayer. Healing itself was not highlighted in the sermon, although reference is made to Christ's compassion and love for the physically ill. Perseverance in prayer is advocated, and it is admitted that we may fail, in which case Hickson points us back to dependence on God. As we continue in this, 'in time, your prayers will go forth with dynamic force, guided by His wisdom'.⁵⁶ There was, therefore, a close link in Hickson's concept of healing prayer between individual perseverance and divine blessing.

Perseverance speaks of an attitude maintained over a period of time. This element resurfaces in newspaper reports of Hickson's first service in Perth: 'You come forward. You need help. We unite with you in prayer. We will do all we can to help in bringing you to Jesus Christ. But the issue is with you. Do what you can. He will do the rest.'⁵⁷ While this sounds very much like 'God helps those who help themselves', Hickson continued to emphasise that Christ is the healer and that his desire to heal the sick is even stronger than the desire of the sick to be healed. At this point in the sermon, the question of 'God's will' regarding healing appears to be answered firmly in the affirmative, but then the sermon takes an interesting turn: 'Of course', he went on, with slow emphasis, 'all are not healed. The healing of the body is very often like the healing of the soul, gradual. Nevertheless, the spirit of God is working. Do not be discouraged if you do not realise at once new health and life in your body. Press on, pray on, hope on' – the knuckles of his hands were white as he gripped the pulpit – 'and know that God has begun the good work in you, that He is not only healing your body, but your soul. So many people give up because they do not feel better the next day or the next. They say it is not God's will to heal them.'⁵⁸

After a lengthy story about a woman being healed of curvature of the spine, Hickson returned to the stance of healing, not sickness, being God's will. So, what are we to make of those who are not healed? The clear implication of the quotation is that lack of perseverance is certainly a cause.

The Hickson healing mission had a significant impact on the Western Australian community, and it was also predominantly treated with respect by the local press. As would be expected, however, not everyone was supportive. The Perth-based *Truth* had an article titled 'Parade of wrecked and wretched beings. Scenes of sufferings that seared and shocked. Crash of self-styled "cure-all". How long, Oh Hickson! How long?', which claimed there was not one 'authenticated cure'. To this anonymous alliteration-addicted author, Hickson was a 'prosperous and

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ *The West Australian*, 31 July 1923, 6, <<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/22621690>>.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

plethoric mystery manipulator', and the churchmen supporting him were gullible and superstitious.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, given that the State Library of Western Australia describes the *Truth* as specialising in 'salacious topics' such as 'adultery, murder, scandal and gossip', it is appropriate to regard the paper and its perspective with a certain degree of suspicion.⁶⁰

From a more formal theological perspective, there was also disagreement, such as that from Canon Wise, but this focused predominantly on the fact that Hickson was a layman and that healing, seen as a sacramental act, should be restricted to the clergy. One of the intriguing aspects of Wise's article is that he is so clearly at odds with many of his fellow Anglican clergy, which grieves him. This is further evidence of the widespread support Hickson enjoyed in Australian Anglican circles.⁶¹ Just how extensive this support was emerged the following year when a pastoral letter on the subject of healing and the recent healing mission was signed by four archbishops and sixteen bishops. It is worth quoting at some length:

We desire in the first instance to bear our thankful witness to facts within our own experience. Those facts are manifold. There are facts of physical healing, complete or partial, immediate or incipient, – facts observed, unquestioned, which for our present purpose need no more precise definition ... The Christian Healing Mission is passing now into the ministry of healing which it was the aim of the mission to revive. The mission broke through the crust of traditional churchmanship and conventional Christianity, and opened the eyes of the Church at large, and in part of the world also, to something more of the Gospel and the mind of Christ. Now the time has come for the more normal method of healing ministrations to individuals and to little groups in the ordinary course of parochial life ... There may be lay persons conscious, like Mr. Hickson, of a gift of healing influence, who may desire to have such a gift consecrated to spiritual purposes by the sanction of the Church. This question we leave to be faced in the light of growing experience. But we are convinced that it is a normal function of the ordained ministers of the Church to use the prayer of faith and the sign of blessing in their pastoral care for the sick.⁶²

At the time of launching his tour, Hickson published a book on the healing ministry.⁶³ In the introduction he wrote, 'It is my great desire to see the Church, under the guidance of her Bishops, carrying on once more this

⁵⁹ *Truth*, 16 June 1923, 9, <<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/207435459>>.

⁶⁰ <<https://slwa.wordpress.com/2015/11/23/adultery-murder-scandal-and-gossip-more-than-thirty-years-of-the-truth-newspaper/>>.

⁶¹ *The Australian*, 20 Apr. 1923, 4, <<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/210255221>>.

⁶² *Geraldton Guardian*, 1 Apr. 1924, 4, <<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/66924367>>.

⁶³ J. M. Hickson, *The healing of Christ in his Church*, New York 1919, <<https://archive.org/details/healingchristinoohickgoog/>>.

part of her mission as the instrument of our Lord's Ministry of Healing, and I feel the great importance of the first steps.'⁶⁴ As a loyal son of the Anglican Church, Hickson had no desire to undermine episcopal authority, as this quotation makes very clear.

As Hickson's worldwide healing ministry drew to a close, the committee in London was still divided in its opinions on its validity. Flamboyant international Pentecostal healing ministries had arisen during the same years as the Hickson tour, and they attracted frequent criticism. However, the committee now had the opportunity to reflect on the results of Hickson's five-year effort. It was apparent that some were unnerved more by the size of the meetings than any underlying theological concerns. Other bishops were keen to have Hickson minister within their dioceses. Davidson himself reflected that 'nothing had happened in Australia which was discreditable to Hickson or his methods' and noted that Hickson had 'rare spiritual power'.⁶⁵ Whatever initial hesitations Davidson may have had were ameliorated by the widespread success of Hickson's global tour. Hickson's ministry made a significant contribution to the widespread yearning for a demonstration that God cared for the suffering. Controversy over the appropriate involvement of the Anglican Church in spiritual healing continued for some years. Hickson died in 1933 and his work was continued by John Maillard, and today the Crowhurst Christian Healing Centre, East Sussex, remains a healing community drawing from Hickson's legacy. There are, however, numerous ways in which Hickson's worldwide ministry influenced subsequent participants in the healing and charismatic movements.⁶⁶

The remarkable reception of James Moore Hickson's healing mission to Western Australia (and globally) rested on several factors.⁶⁷ Historically, it rested on the tenacity of the belief in divine healing in the Christian Church generally, and communities within the Anglican Church in particular, made explicit at Lambeth 1908. Secondly, it rested on the broad support Hickson had from the Anglican hierarchy wherever he ministered, which in turn rested on the established respectability of the Anglican Church within Australian society: no other Australian divine healing practitioner benefited from such support. Third was the contribution of Hickson's own public *persona*, which was the very opposite of flamboyant and confrontational. Fourth, there was little emphasis on finances, and

⁶⁴ Ibid. 3.

⁶⁵ Mews, 'Revival of spiritual healing', 326.

⁶⁶ For example, in his unpublished PhD dissertation, Paul Egan has traced Hickson's influence on Agnes Sanford, and through her on the ministry of Canon Jim Glennon of Sydney's St Andrew's Cathedral: 'The development of, and opposition to, healing ministries in the Anglican diocese of Sydney, with special reference to the healing ministry at St Andrew's Cathedral, 1960–2010', Macquarie University 2012.

⁶⁷ The response to Hickson was broadly similar across Australia.

fifth, the broadly positive newspaper coverage included many accounts of healings (with names and addresses) which gave further credibility to the mission. Finally, and probably most importantly, it is hard to envisage Hickson having the success he did without the combination of the consequences of the First World War, the Spanish influenza pandemic and the prestige and influence of his supporters. This confluence of global events, theological tensions and individual personalities led to the irony that one of the most well-respected and influential ministers of divine healing in a time when early Pentecostalism was highlighting this charism was a composed and devout Anglican accountant with episcopal support.