

The Spiritual History of Australia

Jerm 29:4-13 “seek the peace & prosperity of the city to which I have carried you ... I know the plans I have for you ... then I will listen to you ... and you will find me”
 (Are you only here for a while, on the way home, then pray!!!)

Num 13: 17 – 20 & 27-28 “It does flow with milk and honey but there are giants”
 (Is this your inheritance, the place God prepared for you, then pray)

Three key events that have negatively affected this Nation.

1. **Capt Cook's instructions about the Indigenous inhabitants.**
 → not terra nullius, illegal taking of the land.

Extracts from a letter from Lord Morton, the President of the Royal Society, which had organised the Endeavour's government-funded voyage. Lord Morton wrote to the leaders of the Endeavour voyage when they were preparing for their voyage to the Pacific to look for this continent:

“...have it still in view that shedding the blood of those people is a crime of the highest nature. They are human creatures, the work of the same Omnipotent Author, equally under his care with the most polished European, perhaps being less offensive, more entitled to his favor.

They [the Indigenous inhabitants] are the natural, and in the strictest sense of the word, the legal possessors of the several Regions they inhabit', and 'No European Nation has a right to occupy any part of their country, or settle among them without their voluntary consent".

Cook's secret instructions from the Admiralty told him to "cultivate a Friendship and Alliance" with the 'Natives', "shewing them every kind of Civility and Regard... You are also with the Consent of the Natives to take possession of Convenient Situations in the country in the name of the King of Great Britain... If you find the Country uninhabited take possession for His Majesty... as first discoverers and possessors." (Additional Instructions for Lt James Cook, 30 July 1768).

#Much innocent blood spilled on the soil.

2. The corrupt Soldiers and the Rum Rebellion

→ deep mistrust of Authority

The **Rum Rebellion** of 1808 was the only successful armed takeover of government in Australian history. During the 19th century, it was widely referred to as the Great Rebellion.

The Governor of New South Wales, William Bligh, was deposed by the New South Wales Corps under the command of Major George Johnston, working closely with John Macarthur, on 26 January 1808, 20 years to the day after Arthur Phillip founded the first European settlement in Australia. Afterwards, the colony was ruled by the military, with the senior military officer stationed in Sydney acting as the lieutenant-governor of the colony until the arrival from Britain of Major-General Lachlan Macquarie as the new governor at the beginning of 1810.

They marched on Ebenezer Church to stop the Christians opposing the rebellion.

#Rebellion sow into the soil

3. The Abuse & Cruel treatment of Convicts

→ Violence and sexual abuse

When the first fleet left England in 1787 there were six transport ships full of convicts (775 in all). One of those ship, the Prince of Wales, contained 180 women. Sailors made a secret hole into their quarters and raped them often while at sea for 9 months.

On Wed 6th Feb 1788 the female convicts were sent ashore for the first time. At five o'clock this morning, all things were got in order for the landing of the women, and three longboats came alongside us to receive them. By 6pm the last of them had been transported to shore. They were dressed in general very clean, and some few amongst them might be said to be well dressed. The men convicts got to them very soon after they landed, and it is beyond my abilities to give a just description of the scene of debauchery and riot that ensued during the night

#Sexual abuse & Violence sown into the soil

Three key Holy Spirit moments

1. The 1784 Prayer gatherings in England → A Nation birthed in Prayer

On Sunday 3 Feb 1788 the Colony's chaplain **Rev Richard Johnson** conducted the first Christian service held on Australian soil. He was a man hand picked for the job and recommended to the Prime Minister, William Pitt, by none other than John Newton and William Wilberforce. Rev Johnson preached his first message on Australian Soil from Psm 116:12 " What shall we render to the Lord for all His goodness toward me"

In Johnson's mind he wasn't a prison chaplain on a prison Island but a missionary, a Minister of the Gospel, sent by God and the **praying believers of England** to spread the Gospel to the ends of the earth. The evangelical awakening was in full swing in England at the time Australia was settled. Wesley & Whitfield had preached up a revival storm and England was full of missionary zeal. Some would argue that Australia was settled to solve the problem of crowded prisons in England. A more considered opinion was that England wanted a base in the Pacific to block the expansion of the France and Holland and to keep the Spanish/Portuguese interests in the Pacific confined to their 17th Century holdings of the Spice Islands and the Philippines.

However it seems more than coincidence that in 1784 (4 years before the first fleet) a group of Evangelical christians in the English midlands began meeting for an hour on the first Monday of every month **to pray for revival** which would spread the Gospel to the most distant parts of the globe. This was the start of the greatest missionary impulse, apart from the Book of Acts, that the world had ever seen. Names like, Methodist Missions (1786), William Cary and the Baptist Missionary Society (1792), the London Missionary Society (1795), The Scottish Missionary Society (1796) the Church Missionary Society (1799), the Religious Tract Society (1799) and the Bible Society(1804) were but a few raised up at this time. Could it be that God was planting the seeds of the Gospel in a land that the Spanish had called "The southern Land of the Holy Spirit" in 1606.

Listen to **Rev Johnson** understanding about Australia, "from the very beginning, God's sovereign purpose has been clear. There is a destiny for this nation"

2. Rev Samuel Marsden's prophetic word over the Nation → Missionary Nation

Listen to the words of **Rev Samuel Marsden**, the second chaplain to NSW, " In the sight of the unwise the decision to found a settlement at Botany Bay was motivated by the need to find a receptacle for the criminal population of Britain, He who governs the universe had another view; because the time has drawn near for the poor heathen nations of the South Seas to be favoured with the knowledge of divine revelation" "It is my opinion that God will ere long visit New South Wales with His heavenly Grace. Out of these stones He will raise up children unto Abraham"

3. Rev John Watsford's ministry

→ First home grown minister → First revivals.

Revival in Parramatta 1840

"The first revival in Parramatta that I know of was in 1840. Religion had been in a low state. The minister of the Circuit was a good man, but old and nearly worn out. He was greatly opposed to noise, and marked the men who were very much in earnest. It was the custom then to call by name a few persons to pray in the prayer meetings, and any who were at all noisy were never asked. Two of our most excellent and devoted local preachers, who were always seeking to save souls, were placed on the list of persons not allowed to take part in the prayer meetings. Very soon I was added to the number.

One day the two brethren to whom I have referred said to me, 'We are going specially to pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the revival of God's work, and we want you to join us.'

This is our plan: Every morning and evening and at midday to spend some time in pleading with God to pour out His Spirit; to observe every Friday as a day of fasting and prayer; to sit together in the meetings, and, though not permitted to pray aloud, silently to plead for the coming of the Holy Ghost.' I think they were a little afraid of me, as they gave me this caution: 'Now mind, you must not say a word against our minister, or have any unkind feeling toward him, because he does not allow us to take part in the meetings. He knows what he is doing, and has his own reasons for it. If we complain, or speak against him, the Lord will not hear our prayers.' We carried out our plan for one, two, three weeks, no one but God and ourselves knowing what we were doing.

At the end of the fourth week, on Sunday evening, the Rev. William Walker preached a powerful sermon. After the service the people flocked to the prayer meeting, till the schoolroom was filled. My two friends were there, one on each side of me, and I knew they had hold of God. We could hear sighs and suppressed sobs all around us. The old minister of the Circuit, who had conducted the meeting, was concluding with the benediction, 'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God'....here he stopped, and sobbed aloud. When he could speak, he called out 'Brother Watsford, pray.' I prayed, and then my two friends prayed, and oh! the power of God that came upon the people, who were overwhelmed by it in every part of the room! And what a cry for mercy! It was heard by the passers-by in the street, some of whom came running in to see what was the matter, and were smitten down at the door in great distress. The clock of a neighbouring church struck twelve before we could leave the meeting. How many were saved I cannot tell. Day after day and week after week the work went on, and many were converted. Among them were many young persons." (1)

Sydney 1858

While stationed at Goulburn I (*John Watsford*) went one year to our District Meeting in Sydney, and was appointed to preach in Bourke Street Church on the Sunday evening. The praying men had been pleading with God for the outpouring of the Spirit, and they did not plead in vain. The church was crowded, and the mighty power of God came upon the people. Fifty persons professed to find Christ that night, and many others were in distress. It was announced that I would preach the following evening. To a congregation which packed the building I preached from "Quench not the Spirit." What a time we had! The whole assembly was mightily moved, the power was overwhelming; many fell to the floor in an agony, and there was a loud cry for mercy. The police came rushing in to see what was the matter; but there was nothing for them to do. It was impossible to tell how many penitents came forward; there must have been over two hundred. The large schoolroom was completely filled with anxious inquirers. How many were saved I cannot say, but the number must have been very large. We announced that a prayer-meeting would be held the next morning at seven o'clock, but long before that hour there were scores at the door in great distress. In the evening I preached the "District Sermon" at York Street Church, and we had a glorious time. It had been arranged to have the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, but that had to be delayed for an hour or more as so many persons were in great trouble, and we had to pray for them. The next evening I conducted a meeting in the Y.M.C.A. room. People were there from all the Churches, and we had a blessed meeting. At its close I said to Mr. Cuthbertson, an Independent minister, "I am sorry that so many of our Methodists prayed, leaving no time for members of other Churches." He replied, "Oh, we do not think whether we are Independents or Methodists with this glorious power on us." [1]

What do we do with this information in Prayer?

Confess the sin → Cleanse the Land of defilement.

Cry out for Revival → it has happened before, it is in the soil.

A brief anthology of the work of the Gospel in early Australia

1. An introduction and an anthology of Australian Christian Life from 1788 by Iain H. Murray. Well researched, the first few chapters are an excellent starting point
2. Discovering Australia's Christian Heritage by Col Stringer ; covers a wide range of topics without going into too much depth. Presents a solid argument, if a little disjointed, for Australia's foundation on Christian principles.
3. Early Evangelical Revivals in Australia by Robert Evans ; (available on the web) very inspiring and has many solid theological points for consideration, a must read.
<http://revivals.arkangles.com/docs/EarlyEvangelicalRevivalsInAustralia.pdf>
4. Glorious gospel triumphs, as seen in my life and works by John Watsford 1900. A very lively, first hand account of the revivals that broke out in the early colony. Inspiring!
<http://webjournals.ac.edu.au/authors/john-watsford/>
5. Convicts, Clergyman and Churches, Attitudes of convicts and ex-convicts towards the churches and clergy in New South Wales 1788-1851 by Allan M. Grocott; Very well researched, depressing but enlightening about Australian attitudes to the Church, a must read.
6. They came to care, Pastoral ministry in Colonial Australia by Graham M. Griffin; Insightful into the heart attitudes of the early ministers
7. A short History of Australia by Manning Clark; recognised as the premier historian of Australia; important to read this secular work as much is written about the influence of evangelical Christians in the foundation of this nation.
8. The Fountain of Public Prosperity (Evangelical Christians in Australian History 1740 – 1914) by Stuart Piggin & Robert D. Linder. A masterpiece of historical research, it gives the big picture as well as exciting details of the strong Christian heritage in this nation. A must read.
9. Firestorm of the Lord by Stuart Piggin. This book sets out a thoroughly Trinitarian theology of revival. Solidly grounded in the scriptures and filled with great Australian stories of revival. Again a must read for any student of revival.
8. John Wesley Edited by Albert C Outler; one of the best theological books on Wesley, a must read if you want to understand the theological underpinnings of the early Methodist preachers and the profound impact they had in colonial NSW.
10. Praying together for True Revival (aka An Humble Attempt) by Jonathan Edwards. This book started the 1784 missionary prayer meeting in the English midlands which resulted in the Gospel coming to Australia, New Zealand, and the South Pacific. A very powerful analysis of the need for corporate prayer for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to revive the works of God.