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by
Mr Rob Hercus.

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*Visit the BHS Website
and bookshop at <http://www.baptisthistory.org.au>
click on Shop.*

NEXT MEETING
Thursday, 7th November,
2013

The Stewards Company
by
Dr John Stanhope

Morling College Lounge
7-30pm

DR JOHN MACKY HERCUS

A 19 year old girl went to a Christian rally in New Zealand where she saw a young evangelist, preaching; Harold Hercus. While watching, she believed she was going to marry that man.

Six weeks later they married. The planned honeymoon for Greta and Harold was cancelled at the very last minute as a ship going to India was leaving that day and they could gain passage.



Greta Hercus

They were not regular *Rev Harold Hercus* missionaries, as Harold was to pastor to missionaries in India on holiday leave, living an interesting life in a resort type of life style. Three children; Mackey, Margaret and John (1912) were all born in India. When WW1 started they were evacuated back to NZ to Dunedin and had 3 more children; Joy, Victor and Cathy.

Many fond memories were recalled as this family of 8 grew and a successful ministry was developed in Dunedin. With 6 children the house was always full of strangers, and a huge



Hercus Family

amount of love and generosity was given to anybody who knocked on the door.

In 1927 HG Hercus was called to Burton St Baptist Church in Sydney. This was a big church and he was well loved by many in this new role. Mackey had completed school and went to Sydney University, while Dad (John) started secondary school at Sydney High School.

It was at Burton Street that Dad started his heavy involvement in church life. He was a very shy, gifted boy who was launched into open air ministry, Sunday school, Christian Endeavour and many many other activities. He remembered being very busy while there.

At Sydney High Dad loved his cricket and became wicket keeper for the seconds. After school he often went across the road to watch the NSW and National teams playing and training at the SCG, as you can get into the last session of the day for free. He was a huge fan of the new young player for NSW, Don Bradman and had many stories where he saw Don in action. Standing behind Don while doing batting practice, the boys nominated where the next ball was to go. Don and the bowlers knew, but Don was always able to create a new shot to place the ball exactly where nominated. Dad loved his cricket and tennis and this was a wonderful part of his life.

Harold left Burton St and went to Drummoyne. The ministry move was due to pressure, as some believed he was not preaching what they expected. Previous ministers preached predominantly on the Second Coming. HG preached on too many other topics and was not accepted by all. Another point of difference was the stand Harold made on open membership. There was a strong belief by some in the church that only church members could take communion, while Harold believed all Christians could partake. I am sure history has judged these moves and the Baptist Union community would know the outcome. The Hercus family were regarded with suspicion, as the children were very bright and went off to university, regarded by

many as the place for the Devil, not a place for Christians. The three boys finally all became doctors, two of the girls married doctors and Aunty Margaret worked all her life as a highly qualified nurse.

The move was a good one for the family, as they settled into the new home in Drummoyne. Dad had a lawn tennis court in most of the homes he lived in while growing up, which was always an important social and Christian hospitality opportunity.

SYDNEY UNIVERSITY

He went to Sydney University, doing science. Dad was often encouraged to go into the ministry, but he never liked the idea nor felt a call.

At Sydney University his brother Mackay was a founding member of the Evangelical Union, which still exists. Mackay was the first president and when Dad started a science degree at university he was secretary of EU.

This was a very important time for his faith and his stand for truth. He was a very keen evangelist but also was heavily involved in standing up for what was right and for the good of all. The family never had any money and the depression had a huge effect on Dad, working hard to survive being a student. He worked at Mark Foy's in the optometry department while completing science. He also taught physics and chemistry at Trinity Grammar, which he loved. While at Mark Foy's the head of the department recognised how good he was and encouraged him to do optometry, which he did. He loved the science and maths and excelled. He later gave credit to this man for his decision to return to university to do medicine and to become an ophthalmologist.

He went through medicine with his younger brother Victor. Both were heavily involved in the Evangelical Union.

During this time at university the war started. Medical students were told to stay at uni, as this was going to be another long war. The course was reduced by a year, by removing all holidays, not reducing the course.

Dad joined the Army, Victor the Navy and their best friend Eric Bird the Air Force; all as doctors.



Eric, John and Victor

During the war Dad finally, after many disruptions and 5 years of engagement, married Marjorie Ormiston. Eric married Dad's youngest sister, Cathy, while Vic married Pat. Mum and Pat are the two surviving members of this generation, both well into their nineties. The war was a huge thing for them all. All the girls and wives living together in the home in Drummoyne, with the Hercus's. Many stories came from this time. Mum worked as a dietician in a hospital and the other girls all had jobs. This is when Mum learnt to cater for crowds, a skill used many times through her life.

Working as an Ophthalmologist during the war was a huge turning point for Dad in many aspects of his life. In Queensland, while working very long hours 6 days a week as the only Ophthalmologist for the 7th and 9th Divisions, he only had Sundays off. His chaplain encouraged him to play tennis on his day off, which he refused. After long discussions he changed his mind and played. This was not done lightly, as he first undertook a study of the Sabbath in the OT, his first serious look at theology and thinking through his beliefs. To his amazement he found the OT Sabbath was the one day off religion in a week; that the Sabbath was made for man, not

man for the Sabbath. It was not long before Christ that 1 day a week religion started. He then understood with much greater clarity what Jesus was teaching on the Sabbath. He not only played tennis but got much closer to God and his sovereignty, and started his questioning processes.

After the war ended Dad was in the Repatriation Hospital in Singapore to check and give medical attention to POWs before returning to Australia. This was huge for him, as he saw things and heard stories, directly from prisoners of war and fresh from battle fields, which the country was mainly protected from. He saw thousands of men with terrible wounds, starvation, beatings etc, many with poor eye sight. A life long career commenced of seeing people in all sorts of situations and again helping where possible, always encouraging and giving support. He never told people what to do, but observed and offered options they may pursue if they wished. He often stated a doctor is a teacher. If you want advice, go to a member of the clergy. This was his ministry which he continued right through until he died.

By the time Dad was relieved from military duty they had two children, Graham and Jocelyn. Many mixed feelings and some difficulties arose as the years went on for these and thousands of other war babies and young families, missing their Dad in such an important time of life. This was the start of his relentless mission to understand relationships and see God at work through all circumstances.

The Sabbath search was important for him, never to make decisions without seeking truth, which he was convinced can be found in scripture. This was God's revelation to us; if we look we will find. As a scientist, he realised that much of what he was taught in his father's church and from generally taught theology was wrong, so he continued on a life long search for Truth. God is not only the way and the life, but also the truth. This was a statement he made many times, believing that much theology or teaching does not seriously search for truth. This set him on a path of exciting, challenging pursuance of Truth. He was not popular with some people and some

teachers in the church, something which did bother him, but never stopped him. In the 1950's he started his search for understanding links between scripture, science, creation, evolution, relationships and faith.

If you see something and believe something, and the two do not agree, most probably what you believe is wrong. This was a challenging statement he often referred to.

For many years Dad mixed with the top theologians in Australia and later in the UK and USA. Many long discussions were held in our lounge room with men and women who were true intellectuals in our church in Australia and in our world. These were fantastic nights, with robust discussions, but always searching for truth. This is demonstrated in his memorial service where three Sydney Anglican Archbishops attended, along with many of the leading Baptist and other denominational leaders in Sydney, people we had met through our lives and who were all close friends, even when many disagreements on theology arose between them.

Through the 1960's Dad was involved in and later chaired the Sunday afternoon radio program, ISCF School Forum Of The Air, a Christian program on 2CH each month, where young people asked questions and a very bright group of men and women answered them. The most common question was Evolution v Creation. The panel met before each session and considered the questions and had long debates about the answers. Irene Young and Bill Anderson were two well known members of the panel.

He was always involved with young people, encouraging them in their life and their walk with God. Scientific academics were encouraged to not compartmentalise their lives but to stick with their science and to understand their faith. Many people were helped by Dad in this journey. Lately I have heard many Christians discussing and teaching Intelligent Design, some describing themselves as being theistic evolutionists. These were not terms Dad used, but possibly more in line with what he believed.

JOHN THE BUILDER

In 1948 Mum and Dad purchased a block of land in North Sydney, a waterfront on Neutral Bay. This was to be the home we all grew up in, with the family grown to 4 children; Graham, Jocelyn, Robert and Andrew. Jocelyn went to Abbotsleigh (mums old school) and the boys all were sent to Sydney Grammar, an interesting choice, as it was a non religious school. Dad was suspicious of Christian schools and happy to see the boys at Grammar. Oddly enough and to Dad's delight, Grammar had one of the biggest school Crusader groups in Sydney, which we were all heavily involved in.

Our home, 1 Clark Road, was built on a triangular site which a builder had left as too difficult to build on and of little value. He paid 4000 after he had discussed options with the



1 Clark Road, North Sydney

Chairman of the Maritime Services Board, a patient. He built a 3 story home, with a swimming pool, tennis court and billiard table which our friends later referred to as North Sydney Sports Centre. He built this in the time after the war when building materials were scarce, as a self builder, where he did most of the labouring and arranged all trades. This home became famous in Sydney, as up to 2000 people visited each year. These were from the church, IVF annual general meetings, Crusader and ISCF groups, the church cricket team for practice, ladies tennis group etc. We always had people there and Mum was

always cooking for them. The house was not seen as extravagant at all. It was very practical and always open. We loved those years and loved the home.

Once a month on Saturday night a group came from our church, Mosman Baptist, 16 to 30 year olds, who came to play tennis, play rounders in the park next door, have a sail, swim and always play some group games at night, including Murder In The Dark or continuous table tennis, before Mum fed them. A discussion in the lounge room followed, where we all sat and asked Doc advice, or discussed current affairs, or was told one of his stories he was writing or thinking about, mostly OT stories but always including our walk with Christ and connection to us here today. Every topic and event is always discussed in turn with our relationship to God and his control of the world.

The reason I am jumping between places, professional experiences, biblical stories, life issues, church, sport and family is that this was a very important aspect of Dad's life, his thinking and his theology. He always stressed there is no gap between theology, life, work, spirituality and play. God is always in the middle, always totally concerned for what happens to us and God is Love. Many times he used the term Total Concern to replace the poorly understood word love. In his writing he often put capitals or underlined words to emphasise them. LOVE, love, Love were all used.

If God cannot be understood in a situation, this is either due to poor theology, or maybe we do not understand God. Nothing happens without God's control. The All Things statements in Romans and similar statements throughout the OT and NT were quoted many times by Dad, as he insisted God is in control.

The next 25 years, while in that home, Dad excelled in many areas. I list them to show how he excelled in his career, the world and Christian communities.

INVOLVEMENTS

He was:

- President of the Ophthalmological Society of NSW
- Admitted entry into the Royal Society of the College of Surgeons
- Ophthalmologist for a Prime Minister, State Governor and Archbishops, all indicating his success in his vocation.
- A long time member of the Baptist Theological College Council of NSW.
- A founding member of the Christian Medical Fellowship of Australia
- Chairman of IVF Australia.
- He was a founding member of Graduates Fellowship, demonstrating his acceptance by the Christian Evangelical community of Australia
- He wrote articles for many Christian magazines
- Key Speaker for 5 IVF university missions
- Speaker at a Newman's Society House party (a surprise invitation, given because his biblical teaching was so relevant)
- Spoke at numerous Christian functions and churches.
- The choir master at Mosman Baptist for many years
- Always heavily involved in Mosman Baptist. Interesting to note he was never a deacon, but virtually held the position of church elder for the 36 years he was there. Most of the pastors involved Dad in any change or issue which required wisdom and careful insight. They also became close, life long friends with Dad.

Dad fiercely protected the church from adopting a constitution. He argued that a church is as good as the people in it and that the last set of business minutes held the current position of the church. This was maintained at Mosman until after he died.

- To add to his list of involvements, for over 30 years he was a member and later Master of the Masonic Lodge. This was controversial to many, but he found it a unique way to share the Gospel with men who had rejected Christianity, God or the church for many reasons; many of which Dad sadly conceded had a lot of merit, as they had been hurt, let down or rejected. He spoke into hundreds of lives in the lodge. When giving talks he opened the Lodge Bible and told his Biblical and life stories to the men, which he found was possible in the Lodge rules. He never smoked or drank, but loved the opportunity to share with them in a place they felt comfortable and were relaxed.
- This time in North Sydney was also when Dad did most of his writing. He was encouraged by friends to write what he was talking and thinking. His books are unique and still very well remembered.
- He published 5 books, all on Old Testament Characters, travelling to USA and UK on talking trips, telling his stories to thousands of people overseas and became very popular as a writer in all three countries.

REDEVELOPMENT

In 1977 Dad pulled down the home and built a 5 luxury unit development, as the land was far too valuable for the house it had on it. He wanted to sub contract the trades again, and passed a building licence test to do so. The licence tester was amazed at what he knew and he was granted the licence. Not many eye surgeons have building licences. Again he was heavily involved in the development, but this time he finally conceded

the project would take up far too much of his time and a building firm were engaged.



Clark Road Redevelopment

He was building a wall when the union representative told him he could not work on the site. The site manager reluctantly confirmed he could not work there any longer, because he was not in the union, so Dad joined the union and was able to continue with his wall. He had spent thousands of hours building walls on that site and wanted to join the Stone Masons Union, one of the original unions. He found they now came under the Miscellaneous Workers Union, which he joined at the age of 66. A proud union member and Ophthalmologist.

On the Clark Road site over his full time there Dad built 75m (250 feet) of retaining sea wall, another 50m of retaining walls including a wall supporting Clark Road. This was a mammoth task which took a huge amount of time and effort over 20 years. He was very strong, enabling him to operate on eyes for hours without using arm support, a benefit he saw as a great advantage over other surgeons. He virtually never hurt his fingers and hands while doing this rock work, while legs and arms would often be injured with little concern when he came in bleeding and bruised. It was building these walls when he did much of his thinking and planning for his books and theology. He loved being at home and knew he had the best place in the world.

SURGEON, TEACHER AND LISTENER

As an eye surgeon, Dad saw thousands of patients every year. This was an amazing mission opportunity. Every day he would speak to two patients for an hour, something he became quite famous for. He allowed God to show the two people to him and was always surprised and blessed by his chats. He stated many times that 1/3 of his income was from people who had nothing wrong with their eyes, nor their brain, but had regular head aches. They were sent by other doctors, often because they were not interested in their patients. The hour would be enough time for him to help the patient understand the reasons for stress headaches and have an opportunity to let them decide if they wanted to resolve the problem. Thousands of patients were helped by Dad. Many people thought he was a psychologist or psychiatrist, many left their jobs or changed their life style dramatically after such discussions, while others ignored the advice as the consequences were too hard to accept, a stand he always accepted.

These opportunities to mix with people, his love for the characters in the Bible and his love and wonder for his master, Jesus, were the base for his stories he told, books he wrote and people he helped. He helped people through death and suffering, always encouraging them with their faith, relationships and with purpose. Always, always talking about the Love of God.

Dad was a gentle man, never pushing his weight around, never lecturing people and never boasting. As our father, we were punished by a look of disappointment, never by any physical process or yelling. I respected him a great deal and was possibly the closest to him as a child. When building the last sea wall through the 60s he purchased two cranes to move the rocks around. This was the only job in all of these years he ever undertook that required someone else to give regular help. I was in my early teens, while my younger brother Andrew still in primary school and Graham was in senior high school years and starting work, leaving me as the best



John and Marjorie Hercus

available worker. I usually loved working with him and have many fond memories of near death situations which he calmly cruised through. I was the up coming engineer in the family and Dad was always an engineer at heart. He never had a serious injury; neither did any of us kids, which surprised many who knew what was going on.

Mum and Dad planned to live in one of the units. He sold the first unit for \$200,000, a high price for a unit in Sydney in 1978. The other units were all sold for even higher prices, and they lived in the bottom water front unit. There were two Mercedes, a Jaguar, a Ferrari and a Valiant in the owners' garages. Dad and his Valiant never really fitted into this scene. His great love in life was to come home from work, take off his suit and put on a pair of old worn out work shorts, and reluctantly put on a shirt for dinner, always requested by Mum. All the boys had to go and find a shirt for dinner in summer. The new environment did not suit them very much and they purchased a water front block in Addison Road Manly, where he built a fairly basic house overlooking Little Manly, the old Quarantine Station and North Head. He later found out from Sir Roden Cutler, a patient of his, that the block was the garden of the home he grew up in. The last 6 years of his life were in this home, which he loved. Still working in Macquarie Street a few days a week and travelling by ferry to work was a wonderful time. The young adults group still was meeting monthly in this home.

One day he was chatting to someone on his way down to the ferry after work, aged 74, and had to run to catch the Hydrofoil. As the boat was leaving Circular Quay he collapsed and died on board. The next day Mum received a call from a lady who said she was sitting next to Dad, who was looking OK, tilted his head forward and snored for a few loud last breaths. She found out who he was and wanted Mum to know he died very peacefully and that she had always been afraid of death, but after seeking him die, was no longer afraid. What a wonderful end to a life where death was always talked of as a friend, an opening to life and never to be afraid of. We were taught this all of our lives.

Over 400 people attended his Thanksgiving Service, similar to his mother's service. On 6/6/66 his mother's life was celebrated by a Thanksgiving Service, the first of its kind in Sydney, as it was an unknown type of service and could not be advertised in the Sydney Morning Herald, as it was not a Memorial or Funeral service. The editor of the SMH was a patient of Dad and finally agreed to run the add in the death column. Another first by him and now so common in our Baptist community.

IT IS NOT OVER YET

After his death we found about 4 manuscripts on his computer, most of which we knew of, because he was always talking about them. Ian Burnard, General Secretary of IVF and great friend and supporter of his work, told me Dad's hardest book to write was Moses, the last one he wrote, but never got to publish. Hard because it was his story. A brilliant mind and recognised by God, not for the attributes God gave him nor for his achievements but for his humility. Ian knew this was Dad, but a humble person would never say that. Dad was always humble but always on the leading edge. Many, many people have since commented how much he helped them in their career, marriage and walk with God. Ian also told me Dad was about 30 years ahead of his time in his thinking and theology.

Over the past 10 years my siblings and I have had discussions with many publishers who were

keen to re publish his books. They still are unique and have contemporary theology.

This has not happened, but maybe due to great timing by God, EBooks are possibly a unique opportunity to republish the original books and to publish the books on his computer when he died.

The Moses book is brilliant (my unbiased opinion) and been extremely well received by friends I have shared it with. I am happy to share it with interested people.

The manuscript on the nature of man is totally different to everything else he wrote. It was an opportunity for him to put onto paper many of the thoughts and beliefs he had been excited about for many years. Again totally based on scripture, but speaking against much common theology preached then and even today. Always with a passionate drive to find truth, not to accept blindly what has been taught, even if it is taught by most Christians. Truth is rarely found through democracy or opinion poles. He always backed up argument with scripture, logic and a passion to find the mind and will of God.

Sharing this today is not just to look at the good old days, but to ignite the possibility to republish John Hercus' books. You Tube, Facebook and the Internet are the technology of today and he was always excited about new technology and discoveries. We are looking at republishing his books and to publish for the first time Moses. Other manuscripts we have may be included. Young people today are hungry for a challenge and John Hercus certainly could give them something to chew on.

COMMENTS AND QUOTES

◆ Below are a few comments and quotes often made by John Hercus. These are not necessarily his quotes but certainly expressed how he thought. CS Lewis was a man Dad admired, but just missed out on meeting. You may see some similarities in thinking.

- ◆ If what you see is different to what you believe, there is a good chance that what you believe is wrong
- ◆ Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. We all teach he is the way and the life. Truth has not been searched for with the same passion.
- ◆ The word nice is not in the Bible
- ◆ Man is sex and aggression. God says this is spot on, exactly what he planned. Put your hand into the hand of God and he will walk with you. He will take that sex and aggression and use it wonderfully for his good.
- ◆ Those that claim to be Creationists and those that claim to be Evolutionists are both wrong.
- ◆ The life of a Christian cannot be broken up into compartments.
- ◆ God is in total control.
- ◆ The year I stop learning new thINgs, is the year I would hope to die.
- ◆ Often the things missing in scripture are what is important. Also many times so much is said in a word or two.
- ◆ Man keeps his sharpest, straightest arrow for his neighbor. The rest of his arrows are used for food. This is still the same today as it was thousands of years ago.
- ◆ Dad's favorite story on marriage and growing up. A man leaves mum and dad, goes into the jungle, finds a bear in a cave and kills it. He then goes and gets his girl and takes her to his cave.
- ◆ Marriage is the greatest institution God gave to us, and possibly the most abused.

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SECRETARY'S NOTES

THE RECORDER: We apologise for some mixed and missing pages in the last *RECORDER*. The big automatic photocopier we use has always been reliable; it prints a large number of copies, stapled, and the mailing team simply folds them and sends them out. However, on that occasion, we were soon alerted to a problem and it became obvious that the auto feed picked-up two pages at once so that some pages weremissed and others were out of order. With this edition of the journal you have received a new set of pages numbered 19-34 so please unstaple the July issue, discard everything after page 18 and staple-in the new set.

SOCIETY MEETING TIMES: Those who attended the last two meetings will recall that the Committee has been considering a review of the time and day for quarterly meetings. We are aware that many older folk are not keen to be out at night, especially in the colder months and a number of folk have from time-to-time indicated so. Thus, a daytime meeting seemed indicated. Some Members are still in full or part time employment so a weekday during the day appears unsuitable. An informal survey over some time suggested that Sunday would not be a popular day so we arrive at the only generally suitable day time being a Saturday.

That raises the availability of the College as a venue. Macquarie Park seems reasonably central and the College has informally indicated that is happy to continue to make its facilities available (we have been meeting there for 40 years!). We may occasionally have to use a classroom or the chapel as Saturdays are sometimes required for special events or Baptist Association (formerly the Union) committee meetings when the Faculty Lounge is needed. Some advantages of a Saturday afternoon come to mind: it would make the meetings available to those who are in full or part-time employment, cold weather would not be so much a drawback, folk would not have to face a late night return to their homes and it might be worth considering instituting a good afternoon tea before the meeting.

Comments are requested *as soon as possible*. Responses should go to the Secretary on gloron2@bigpond.com or, by mail to: The Secretary, NSW Baptist Historical Society, C/o Morling College, 120 Herring Rd, Macquarie Park, NSW 2113.

What kind of Baptists are we?

In the 1950s and 60s, the unofficial public theology of America was dominated by theologians associated with what we now call “the Protestant Mainline”. A public theology makes biblical teaching relevant to the pressing political, economic and social issues of the day; it gives the Church a public voice.

There was nothing particularly radical about the old public theology, but it gave voice to the “Christian realism” then in vogue. Management and labor should work out their differences amicably. The solution to the “race problem” was understanding and forbearance on all sides. Families and governments should live within their means. That kind of thing.

Those days are gone. America has a new public theology.

Theologians and judicatory officials associated with “the old mainline” denominations are still making the

When doctrinal purity is at issue, compromise is impossible.

I know what you’re thinking. The new public theology I have described is a minority report that fails to speak for the majority of religious Americans.

But just ask your average twenty-five year-old what “Christians” think about economics, social policy and the Bible. I suspect you will get something very close to the public theology I have described. Young people might not buy this perspective, and they might even see it as inconsistent with the teaching of Jesus, but it is viewed as the standard Christian view.

Let me get personal. I have two sons who are convinced that most Christians, at least those in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex, embrace the new public theology I have described. Moreover, they see my take on Christianity (more on that below) as an odd

A challenging article from an American Baptist. Demands reading, thought and reflection -

occasional moral pronouncement, but nobody is listening, least of all the folks in Washington. The new public theology is a product of the Religious Right and its central tenets are so well-publicized that there is hardly any need to lay them out. Free markets are God’s way of solving social problems and nothing else works. Ever. The role of government is to protect the nation from its enemies and protecting the free functioning of markets from excessive regulation. Because corporate America creates jobs and leads innovation, labor must bend to the will of management. The new American meritocracy places everyone on a level playing field so accusations of racism and sexism are just whining.

The new public theology begins with economics, moves to politics and ends with religion.

I could elaborate, but you get the idea.

The partial shutdown of the US government is rooted in our new public theology. Obamacare isn’t dismissed as bad public policy; it’s heresy. The free market provides the best of all possible health care systems and anyone who thinks government can make things better has rejected the revealed will of God.

anomaly. “Dad, nobody else thinks like you,” they tell me.

I submit that this conclusion is common, even standard, among young adults.

This problem is particularly acute for Baptists. “Moderate” Baptists can’t reveal the name of their congregation without appending a long list of disclaimers. “I’m a Baptist,” we say, “but not that kind of Baptist.”

The new public theology is viewed as the normative Christian position by default. Churches that identify with the Religious Right proclaim their public theology with vigor and without apology. Everyone else in the American Christian community is strangely silent. Sure, our well-educated preachers have nice things to say about theological abstractions like justice, love, peace and reconciliation, but they rarely tell us how these virtues impact the economic, political and social life of the nation we live in.

Silence is considered the wise, nuanced approach. “I’m not paid to tell my people how to vote, or how to think on policy issues,” preachers tell one another,

“I tell them what the Bible says, and it’s up to them to make the application.”

But “making the application” is what theology is all about. The Religious Right has the ear of the nation because they know what they believe and they spell it out for us. They make the application.

Churches that limp along without a public theology become practically and morally irrelevant to the larger society. They have nothing of substance to say to young adults who are eager (for a brief season) to devote their lives to a larger purpose.

Again, the problem is particularly acute for Baptists. If you’re not that kind of Baptist, then what kind of Baptist are you?

Why have we lost our prophetic voice?

First, there is the problem of the “messy middle”. Most congregations reflect the full ideological spectrum of American life. A pastor preaching to a mix of conservatives, moderates, liberals (and a growing number of libertarians) can’t address social, political or economic issues in a substantive way without enraging and alienating somebody.

Members of messy middle congregations easily assume that “most people in my church think like me”. But let real people start talking about real issues and this perception fades quickly. Why let that happen? Job security is a big issue.

Embarrassing theological questions emerge when we are forced to reckon with our diversity. If we are all taking our cue from the same Bible and we’re drawing such different conclusions, who’s got it right and who’s wrong?

More likely, we conclude that the Bible doesn’t have much practical guidance to offer, so we’re all free to make up our own minds. Diversity is hailed as the cardinal virtue.

But our loss of prophetic voice is only partially explained by the messy middle problem. Here’s the deeper truth: we know what Jesus says about money and it doesn’t take a seminary degree to grasp the economic, political and social implications.

We can take refuge in complexity, of course. The Bible is a very big book featuring a long list of authors responding to a crazy quilt of different circumstances. There’s some stuff in Leviticus, Joshua, and

Nehemiah that’s hard to square with the Sermon on the Mount. Right?

Right. But if we start with Jesus and the broad biblical traditions that shaped his message, the broad outline of a clear, prophetic theology is clearly discernible.

Our problem isn’t that the message is fuzzy; our problem is that the message is frightening.

If we take our cue from the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord’s Prayer and the Mary’s Magnificat where would that leave us? Outside the camp, on the margins, numbered with the sick, the sinners, the poor and the desperate. We’d have to ask where all these hurting people came from. We’d have to move from charity to advocacy.

Worse still, our churches would be transformed from mainstream bastions of respectability to counterculture communities living on the fringe.

We might gain a prophetic voice, but we would lose almost everything else.

Hence our silence.

But the question won’t go away: if we’re not that kind of Baptists, what kind of Baptists are we?

Alan Bean

Alan is executive director of Friends of Justice, an organization that creates a powerful synergy between grassroots organizing, civil rights advocacy, the legal community, the mass media and ultimately the political establishment.

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COMING EVENTS

Thursday, February 6, 2014

**THIS IS MY STORY -
Rev Norman Nix**

Thursday, May 1, 2014*

BHS 40TH ANNIVERSARY

Annual General Meeting, Launching of definitive biography of George Henry Morling written by Rev E.R.Rogers.

Speaker: Rev Dr Ken Manley
Founding President of the Society.

Thursday, August 7, 2014

**THE FORWARD MOVEMENT
and its enduring contribution to
Baptist work in NSW.**

Thursday, November 6, 2014.

Ninetieth Anniversary -

GRIFFITH BAPTIST CHURCH
Reflections on its ministry,

* These arrangements subject to confirmation

**Baptist Historical Society of NSW Inc
FINANCIAL STATEMENT**

1 March 2013 to 30 September 2013.

Balance b/f \$11860.67

<u>Receipts</u>		<u>Payments</u>	
Membership Fees	\$505.00	Postage	\$171.88
Donations	\$145.00	Dept. Fair Trading	\$49.00
Term deposit Int	\$244.47	Arch./ religious	\$50.00
Bank Int	.\$00. 46	Institutions Fee	
Book sales	\$49.00	Keith Bricknell	
		Travel Exp	\$200.00
Sub Total	\$943.93	Sub Total	\$470.88

30th September 2013 Balance \$12333.72

The societies funds are made up of the following:

General Fund	\$2304.61
Term Deposit NO. 11704	\$3829.65
Term Deposit No. 2219	\$4199.46
Term Deposit No. 3168	\$2000.00

**W.Hollins
Treasurer**

Total \$12333.72

**ARCHIVES REPORT
JULY-SEPTEMBER 2013**

Items received

John Maitland's papers (large collection, deceased estate)
Clatworthy reminiscences from a child in the Narrabri children's home
Glyn Clatworthy's comments on the preceding Obituary of Rev W Collier from Manildra newspaper 1919
Bedford College prospectus 1944
Copies of Hercus family photos

Inquiries received

Newtown Baptist Church land demarcation with St Stephen's Cemetery (from tour guide)
Dr Waldock's holiday home at Wentworth Falls (from present owner)
Macquarie BC history for 40th anniversary
Sutherland/Menai BC loan details 1981
Hay Baptist Fellowship early history
Braidwood BC marriage 1872
Advice *re* Women to Women records
Advice *re* Wallsend BC history publication
Info *re* interior décor of Burton Street (now a theatre)
Info *re* Thomas Pepper for family history
Islington BC papers for family history (we have very little)
Info *re* Bethel Nursing Home
Info *re* Anne Maria Ardill .

Other

Visit of Rev John Deane's son and daughter-in-law; Bathurst BC 150th anniversary (Elaine Fox doing her research here); Info and research request *re* John Dowie, an early Pentecostal preacher – passed on to AOG archivist; 19th century copy of Foxe's Book of Martyrs received.

John M. Stanhope - Archivist

The President, Rev Bruce Thornton
and Officers of the Society
extend

Christmas Greetings

to all readers of the Recorder
and wish for them and their families a
happy and a holy Christmas.

**BAPTIST HISTORICAL
STUDIES.**

Over the years the Baptist Historical Society (B.H.S.) has published various Historical Studies. The titles are

Harold E. Evans, *Soldier and Evangelist: The Story of Rev. John G. Ridley, MC* (1980)
Ken R. Manley & Michael Petras, *The First Australian Baptists* (1981)
Michael Petras, *Extension or Extinction: Baptist Growth in New South Wales 1900-1939* (1983)
Hubert Watkin-Smith, *Baptists in the Cradle City: The Story of Parramatta Baptist Church 1838-1986* (1986)
Michael Petras (Editor), *Australian Baptists Past and Present* (1988)
Kenneth J. Cable, *Religion in Colonial New South Wales* (1993)
Roy B. Henson, *And One was a Doctor: A Life of Rev. Dr. A.J. Waldock* (2003)
Michael Petras (Editor), *Australian Baptists and World War 1* (2009),
Jean Kelshaw and Bruce Thornton (Ed's) *Born to be a Soldier, War Diary of Lieutenant John Gotch Ridley, M.C. A survivor of Fromelles.* (2010).

MORLING BOOKS

The Society has also published several books by or about Rev G.H. Morling, Principal of the Baptist Theological College of NSW (now Morling College) 1923-1960. These are-
George Henry Morling, *The Man and His Message for Today* (Greenwood Press, 1995)
The Quest for Serenity (Young and Morling 1951, Second Edition Morling Press, 2002)
Living with the Holy Spirit (Morling Press 2004).
The Franciscan Spirit and other Writings (Baptist Historical Society of NSW, 2008).
The Upper Room Discourses (B.H.S. 2010)
The Incomparable Christ (B.H.S. 2010)
Journeys with God. (B.H.S. 2010)
The Romance of the Soul. (B.H.S. 2010)
Jesus and the Life of Prayer (B.H.S. 2010)
Faith and Works, (B.H.S. 2010)
Living in the Will of God, (B.H.S. 2010.)
The Acts of the Holy Spirit (B.H.S. 2011)
Amos/Hosea (B.H.S. 2011)

Copies are available through BHS, Care Morling College, 120 Herring Road, Macquarie Park, 2113, Telephone 9878 0201 or www.baptisthistory.org.au. click on Shop

SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP

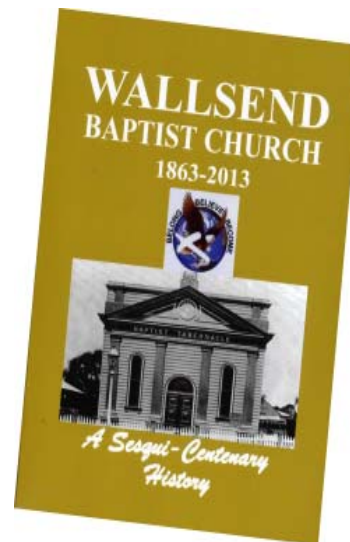
Membership of the Baptist Historical Society of NSW is open to persons and churches who make application.

Membership Fees are Ordinary \$20, Concession \$15 and for Churches and Institutions \$25. Membership Fees are due before the Annual General Meeting in May each year.

Cheques should be made payable to the Baptist Historical Society of NSW and sent to The Treasurer, C/- Morling College, 120 Herring Rd Macquarie Park NSW 2113.

For people wishing to pay via the internet please use the following BSB 704 922 Account number 100003072

NEW PUBLICATION



In December one of the oldest churches in the Baptist Union will celebrate its sesquicentenary. Phyllis Ezzy, one of the members has written a comprehensive history of the Wallsend church which was originally known as Plattsburg.

The Society has been pleased to have a part in making this book possible. It will be published by Greenwood Press and available before the end of the year.

THE BAPTIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF NEW SOUTH WALES **Inc 989579**

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Rev. I.B. (Bruce) Thornton, OAM

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JOURNAL EDITOR

(Vacant - Interim Editor Rev Bruce Thornton)

MEETS AT Morling College the first Thursday of February, May, August, November at 7-30pm.

WEBSITE: <http://www.baptisthistory.org.au>.

MAIL TO to The Baptist Historical Society of NSW Inc., Care Morling College, 120 Herring Road, Macquarie Park NSW 2113.

MEMBERSHIP FEES - send to The Treasurer, BHS, Care Morling College, 120 Herring Road, Macquarie Park, 2113. **OR** online A/c BSB 704 922 100003072

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