

Baptist Historical Society of NSW Inc

# *The Recorder*

Issue No 126 Interim Editor Bruce Thornton



A Report of the Special Anniversary Event  
held at the

*Eternity Playhouse*

(former Burton Street Baptist Church)

Cnr Burton and Palmer Streets, Darlinghurst NSW

Saturday, May 24, 2-30pm

**THE BAPTIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
OF NEW SOUTH WALES INC.**

**Inc 989579**

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Meets at Morling College the second Saturday of February, May, August, November at 2-30pm. Mail to The Baptist Historical Society of NSW Inc., Care Morling College, 120 Herring Road, Macquarie Park NSW 2113. Telephone: 9878 0201.

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**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 published several books by or about Rev G.H.Morling, Principal, Baptist Theological Collee of NSW (now Morling College) 1923-1960. These are- ***George Henry Morling - a Definitive Biography* (Greenwood Press 2014)**

***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 available through BHS, Care Morling College, 120 Herring Road, Mac-quarie Park, 2113, Telephone 9878 0201 or

[www.baptisthistory.org.au](http://www.baptisthistory.org.au). click on Shop



The “old” Burton Street Baptist Tabernacle

## THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**The 2014 Annual General Meeting of the Baptist Historical Society of NSW Inc was held in an unusual place - probably the first time it has been held away from Morling College. The May issue of this journal referred to the acquisition by the Sydney City Council of the (former) Burton Street Baptist Tabernacle and its rebirth as the new Eternity Playhouse.**

**The May issue of the Together Magazine which is distributed to all the churches contained a major article on it.**

**The Society was pleased to welcome Rev Professor Dr Ken Manley and his wife Margaret who were visiting for the occasion. Ken was the founding President of the Society (1974) and served as such until his departure from NSW to become Principal of Whitley College, Melbourne in 1986. Ken had kindly consented to bring the major address.**

**The previous issue of this magazine contained a comprehensive Fortieth Annual report detailing the commencement of the Society and its developments over the years. Readers are encouraged to read this report which refers to the many people who have contributed to the work of the Society over the years.**

**Officers who were elected at the Annual General Meeting are named on the page opposite. Appreciation was expressed to Mr Wayne Hollins who did not seek reelection as Treasurer for the coming year.**

**People with an interest in history are encouraged to become members of the Society. Details are elsewhere in this magazine.**

The “new” Eternity Playhouse



## Book Launch

# GEORGE HENRY MORLING

‘Our Beloved Principal’  
A Definitive Biography

by E. Ron Rogers

The Annual General Meeting featured a major book launch: *George Henry Morling - Our Beloved Principal*, by the (now deceased) Principal Emeritus E. Ron Rogers, with major editing by Dr John Stanhope (the Society Archivist).

It is surprising that although a couple of smaller works have been written about the legendary “GHM” this is the first detailed definitive biography and is unlikely to be surpassed (it has 531 pages and over 1500 endnotes and references!).

The book was launched by the **Rev. Dr Ross Clifford**. He was especially asked to launch the book for reasons which become apparent in his address, which follows:

“It is a privilege to launch this book as the current Principal of Morling College. I can’t recall having ever met G.H.M. but we have one of his sermons on the Morling website which is a blessing to listen to.

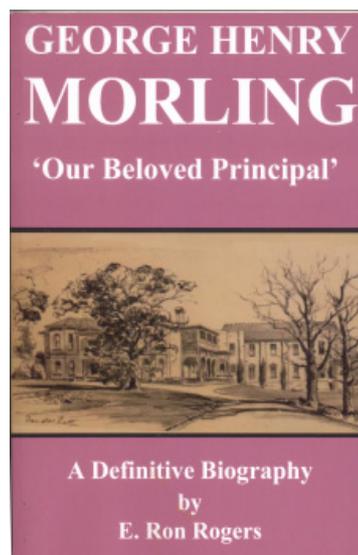
It’s special for me to launch the book at the old Burton Street Baptist Church. My father was the secretary of this church for many years and at least one of his letters as church secretary about a former Principal of Morling College is in the archives. I remember sitting on the knee of Arthur Stace. I also recall one Sunday morning a Jaffa lolly rolling from the back to the front of the church and the revered Lyle Thompson crying out “whoever dropped that Jaffa leave the church and see me in my vestry”. (the culprit turned-out to be his son!).

There is a disconnect between being a Principal in G.H. Morling’s day and our day. Today we are much more taken up with accreditation issues, course development, faculty/staff evaluations and lawyers. I received a job description recently for the Principal of Spurgeon’s college and I responded to the chair of their Board firstly who would *want* to do the role and secondly who *could* do it?! That’s how much the role has changed. However having said that when one reads this text we are reminded that theological education is all about students and their personal and spiritual formation as well as equipping them for ministry.

There is, however, a strong connect between the ministry of G.H. Morling and our ministry today. He was missional before the current missional movement was born. He was an evangelist at Dungog as well as someone who took the gospel into the marketplace at Hornsby by the means of a public meeting in a community hall. He was certainly in his early days an apologist. Also his focus on the ministry of the Holy Spirit would very much connect with today’s emphasis on transforming communities and churches.

In one of his final talks GHM spoke of his 40 years at the college. “...I trust that I have helped to create an educational consciousness in respect to the ministry. NSW Baptists have passed beyond the stage of believing that uninformed zeal suffices for the ministry of Christ. I am sure that the Theological College is now firmly established. Establishment, in any realm, takes time and patience. I think that firm foundations have been laid so that a greater superstructure can now be erected. I think I can say that a distinctive tradition has been created. I have enunciated it as a positive, forthright, balanced, evangelical tradition. I expressed the hope in committee as I was about to leave the College that two things would be kept in mind; that the tradition would be maintained, and that it would be maintained at an increasingly high level of culture.” What G.H. Morling expressed here he did achieve and still lives on. And this is the heart of Morling’s vision. I trust NSW Baptists continue to have the zeal for training people for the ministry of Christ. When one reads the text one realises that structures may change but the values and principles of G.H. Morling live on today.

It is my pleasure to launch Ron Rogers’ book, *George Henry Morling, ‘Our Beloved Principal’ A Definitive Biography*.



## *Guest Speaker - Rev Dr Ken Manley*

### **In this lecture, Dr Manley, reviews the work of the second Baptist minister in the colony, Rev John Saunders (1834-1848) among the Aborigines -**

For the privilege of sharing in this celebration of 40 years since the BHS began in 1974 I am honoured and most grateful. I remember with appreciation those few who helped form the society and the many others who have contributed to the growth and success of our society. On behalf of the Victorian society, and on my own behalf, I gladly extend my warmest congratulations to the present leaders and members for all that the society has accomplished and is achieving today: an impressive and growing list of publications, a flourishing and valued archive and the promotion of the value of history for our contemporary mission as Australian Baptists. To gather in this lovely and historic setting, close by Woolloomooloo Bay and linked with 'Eternity', for some reason brings me special delight.

One significant NSW Baptist figure who has featured more than once in the papers presented to the society is John Saunders (1806-59). As Barbara Coe and I have just completed what we believe is a comprehensive study of his work it seemed appropriate for me in this paper to take a fresh look at one aspect of his ministry, a role that has been increasingly acknowledged by historians: his advocacy on behalf of Aborigines. What follows is an abridged version of a chapter from our new book.

The affirmation that John Saunders was full of the 'goodness of grace', as the colonial poet Charles Harpur wrote, should not be weakened to imply a lack of courage and timidity of spirit. His advocacy skills were never more clearly evident than in his determination to fight for justice for Aborigines. From his earliest letters home he revealed a natural curiosity as he met with Aborigines in Sydney or on its fringes and his sense of compassion was aroused:

Poor things I really pity them; & as pity is akin to love I almost love them. Indeed, they are so far from being the degraded creatures represented, that they show a great deal of natural ability. The morning as I was driving Elizabeth to south head a group of blacks was on the road. The chieftain's Jin or wife was a fine looking girl; they asked a gratuity & who standing on the land which we dispossessed them of could refuse! ... I longed for the gift

of tongues to tell them of Christ in their native language.<sup>1</sup>

A series of tragic events in 1838 provoked Saunders to a prophetic proclamation and a flurry of activity in the cause of seeking justice for Aborigines who had been devastated by what he described as the British invasion of their homelands. This was perhaps his finest hour but one that also unleashed a virulent hostility towards him.

Sharp divisions and tensions in the colony were exposed during this dramatic period which, it has been argued, 'formed a discernible moment in the development of a distinct myth of white Australia, which began with a burgeoning and distinctive colonial identity, one that moved beyond a British identity but was not yet Australian'.<sup>2</sup>

The immediate catalyst for the public activity of Saunders was the infamous Myall Creek massacre.<sup>3</sup> On Sunday, 10 June 1838, on the far north-west frontier of the colony, a party of 28 Weraeraai people, elderly men, women and children preparing to settle for the night, were rounded up by a group of armed white men. Tied together with rope the helpless Aborigines were dragged to a clearing and massacred. They were shot and hacked to death, their bodies dismembered and burnt. In the following November at the Supreme Court in Sydney two consecutive trials were held and after the second trial seven were found guilty of murder and sentenced to death by hanging. Although white men had been tried in Australia before for killing Aborigines, it was highly unusual. The trials of the Myall Creek men were sensational events in the colony. Many, perhaps a majority, supported the guilty white stockmen and certainly were opposed to their execution. Several religious and humanitarian leaders who advocated that justice should be applied equally to all murderers, white or black, were vilified and, in Saunders's case, threatened with legal action by powerful forces.

The year 1838 was a pivotal one in the New South Wales colony, fifty years since the landing of the first convicts and only two years before the end of transportation. This was the time of rapid expansion as squatters competed for some of the 'empty' land

lying beyond the Nineteen Counties where land sales had been controlled.

This speedy expansion of the frontier is one aspect of the context in which the trials took place. Shepherds were working far beyond the boundaries of settlement and the squatters gained legal recognition after regulations were passed in 1836 which meant they had to pay an annual licence fee or rent to the Crown for the right to occupy their runs. The squatters were a contentious group, despised by officialdom and the more elite of the city. For their part, the squatters regarded themselves as 'pioneers, deserving support for their work of dispossession, resentful of control and reluctant to concede to any "law" that did not fit their interests'.<sup>4</sup> One aspect of their activity was the harsh treatment of Aborigines which they justified in part by degrading them as mere brutes and less than fully human. The violence of the frontiers, seen most dramatically in the Myall Creek episode, was sanctioned by the squatters and gained the sympathy and support of powerful representatives in the colony. The year 1838 witnessed these acts of dispossession reach new heights of violence.

But just as the squatters gained recognition and support, a counter-balancing humanitarian movement was gaining impetus in the colony. In Britain the Evangelicals and other humanitarians were greatly encouraged by the success of their abolitionist crusade in 1833 and the anti-slavery lobby then turned its attention to the treatment of Aborigines in British colonies. They wanted policies which emphasized 'protection, civilisation and Christianisation' and were increasingly influential in the Colonial Office. In 1836-37 a Parliamentary Select Committee investigated British actions towards Aborigines and produced a damning report which claimed that treatment of Aboriginal people in New South Wales was 'dreadful beyond example, both in the diminution of their numbers and in their demoralization'.<sup>5</sup> The report called for the establishment of Protectorates designed around humanitarian principles. A Protector would watch over allocation of land, keeping a small portion for the use and benefit of Aborigines.<sup>6</sup>

The new Colonial Secretary, Lord Glenelg, was a humanitarian as was Governor Gipps. In 1838, soon after his arrival, Gipps announced that the killing of Aborigines in the frontier was to be understood as murder and punishable by law. Indigenous people were to be protected. 'Justice and humanity' were ordered.

The colonial Governor was in a hard place. Whilst supportive of the humanitarian policy being advocated in a distant Colonial Office, Gipps was also besieged by local squatters who claimed that it was they who needed 'protection' from marauding 'savages' and threatened to 'levy war' against Aboriginal people. Edward Deas Thomson, the Colonial Secretary of New South Wales, on 23 June 1838 wrote on behalf of the Governor that the squatters needed to maintain British rule and protect Aborigines but that the government would also do what it could to protect the squatters. This stance attempted to appease the distant humanitarians in London on the one hand and the rapacious squatters on the other. 'The gap between government policy and frontier practice was vast, even more so when the policy emanated from offices in Whitehall thousands of miles away and communication was hindered by the length of sea voyages'.<sup>7</sup>

The trial of the Myall Creek assailants took place at the same time that a Protector was appointed. These 'two interconnected events ... triggered heated debate in the colony'.<sup>8</sup> For humanitarians both in the metropole and in the colony the Protectors were meant to defend Aborigines and their land from settler acquisitiveness and cruelties. However, some colonists, and especially the squatters, understood that 'protectors' were to look after them and their families and safeguard them against Aboriginal attacks by having a proper police force.

This is the background against which the work of Saunders and other humanitarians at the time of the massacre and subsequent trials must be placed. George Augustus Robinson (1788-1866) had been appointed by Governor Arthur to make contact with the remaining Aborigines in Tasmania and to settle them at a specially designed reserve.<sup>9</sup> Lord Glenelg appointed Robinson as Chief Protector for Aborigines in the Port Phillip district. The hope was that the remaining inhabitants of Flinders Island could be transferred to the new settlement at Port Phillip.

With four assistants Robinson arrived in Sydney in August 1838 to prepare for his new post. They arrived just as the furore over the Myall Creek murders was erupting and must have been astonished at the fury that was directed towards their projected task. On 3 September the *Monitor* published a sneering attack on the Protectorate system which, it claimed, had been established for the 'especial purpose of scrubbing the black population of Her Majesty's dominions to the Albescency of an albino' though the actual result would be instead to 'impose upon

the white population the colour which characterizes the Aborigines'.<sup>10</sup>

Robinson met with Governor Gipps and then with a Legislative Council committee chaired by Bishop Broughton but this became a great frustration to the new Protector.<sup>11</sup> On 11 September the missionary brig *Camden* arrived in Sydney with John Williams and nine other families aboard on route to Samoa and this group offered support to Robinson and others seeking to assist the Aborigines.

Robinson also met with Dunmore Lang who had recently written a scathing attack on the work of the former LMS missionary, Rev Lancelot Threlkeld, at his mission for Aborigines in the Wellington Valley. Not that Lang's sympathy for Aborigines was in question. He believed Aborigines were human and he was ashamed that both convicts and free settlers had ruthlessly murdered the hapless Aborigines. He was critical, however, of the missions arguing that they had proceeded on the wrong principle of trying to civilise the heathen before converting them. He insisted that Christianity would inevitably bring civilisation along with it. He was harsh in his attacks on Threlkeld, believing him to be ignorant, inefficient, greedy and self-seeking. The missionary was offended by the criticisms and sued Lang, claiming £1000 in damages. This trial in March 1836 excited much public interest. The jury eventually decided in favour of Threlkeld but assessed the damages at a derisory one farthing.<sup>12</sup>

After Robinson had met Lang on 8 September he went to see Saunders who encouraged him and suggested some 'powerful writing' in the press was needed in support of the Aborigines. Robinson noted in his diary that Saunders declared that the blacks did not have equal rights and their 'affirmation' was not admissible before a court of law.<sup>13</sup>

Things moved quickly. On 14 September *The Herald* launched what became a bitter campaign against the Protectorate and all those humanitarians who supported this cause. The blacks were committing crimes all over the colony 'with absolute impunity' and all the government could do was assert that they should be treated as British subjects before the law. The editor deplored the sentimental ravings of 'a parcel of European "canters"' whose 'saintly liberalism' would simply deliver the whites to the will of 'the most degraded barbarians known to exist on the face of the earth'. *The Herald* did not advocate that blacks should be indiscriminately slaughtered, but unless 'absolute' protection was provided from

their 'outrages' 'an exterminating war' was inevitable. The colonists could assert their rights in the jury-box by refusing to convict any white charged after 'collisions' with the blacks, 'except upon the most conclusive evidence of wanton cruelty'.<sup>14</sup>

A group of squatters presented a memorial to Gipps on 18 September which advanced claims for protection and tabled a supposed list of persons who had been attacked by Aborigines in the northern districts of the colony. They claimed fifteen whites had been killed. Denied official protection, it was natural that whites would be 'driven to their own resources'. The threat of further violence against Aborigines was unambiguous and the implications for the trial of the Myall Creek stockmen was apparent.<sup>15</sup>

This campaign was stimulated by a vitriolic letter from 'Anti-Hypocrite' in the *Herald* of 19 September. Violently opposed to missions to 'the blacks' he objected to the colony's funds being used for this purpose and warned that 'the Missionary Hydra will crush us all'. 'Before they are made Christians you must make them men – they can only be classed in the order of creation, as the first great link, which connects in its chain, man with the brute'. Every 'man of common experience in the Colony' and common sense indicated that:

... the aboriginals of my native country are the most degenerate, despicable and brute race of beings in existence, and stand as it were in scorn 'to shame creation' – a scoff and a jest upon humanity – they are insensible to every tie which binds man to its God. They stand unprecedented in the annals of the most ancient and barbarous histories, as a nation notorious for the anti-civilizing propensities they put forth in opposition to every attempt made to reclaim them from their present wandering, abject and brutal mode of life.<sup>16</sup>

His tirade continued to assert gross sexual immorality and cannibalism; they are 'the most abject beings on earth'. This letter, though extreme, was only one of several newspaper articles that criticised the whole silly idea of a Protectorate and decried the absurdity of trying pioneer stockmen for defending their stock and livelihood.

The Legislative Committee tabled its report on 12 October in which it resolved to oppose the removal of the Flinders Island Aborigines to the mainland.<sup>17</sup> Those advocating justice for Aborigines were faced with an increasingly hostile situation in the colony.

The Myall Creek prisoners had arrived in Sydney on 16 September and the squatters had marshalled forces to lobby Gipps.

On the evening of 1 October 1838 a group met at Saunders's home in Princes Street to consider the propriety of adopting some means for bettering the condition of 'these miserable children of the forest'. Lang was appointed to the chair and yet another society was born: the 'Aborigines' Protection Society' (APS), adopting the status of an overseas auxiliary of the British and Foreign Aborigines' Protection Society which had been established in Britain two years previously. A provisional committee of sixteen was elected which included Lang and Saunders, along with Robinson and his assistants.<sup>18</sup>

On 5 October the *Herald* launched yet another attack on the whole Protectorate system. What was needed was 'an efficient itinerating mounted police force' to preserve the property of the settlers from being destroyed by these 'interesting creatures' as the 'canters' called them and not 'a whole tribe of protectors' squandering public revenue.<sup>19</sup> This vehement onslaught prompted the APS to arrange for a public meeting at the School of Arts on Tuesday evening, 16 October at which the friends of the blacks would announce their commitment to the cause.

Thus, it was at this crucial junction in the public tensions about the Aboriginal question that Saunders delivered his powerful sermon on this issue on Sunday evening 14 October 1838. This sermon was published in *The Colonist* and announced Saunders as a leader among the philanthropic and humanitarian advocates of justice for the Aborigines.<sup>20</sup> He soon incurred the full wrath of powerful opponents. Reading his sermon against the background of the feverish discussions in the colony helps to appreciate just how apposite were his words.<sup>21</sup>

Described by a modern reader as 'a fire and brimstone' sermon,<sup>22</sup> spoke the Word of God directly into the situation of his times. He justified addressing this topical question as being true to his ministerial calling since it dealt with Christian morals and Christian doctrine. At this time, when the question of justice occupied 'both public and private attention', Christians should 'think rightly, speak rightly and act rightly'. His main appeal was to his listeners' sense of justice as he drew on his selected text to outline 'a principle of vindication' in Providence. They were invited to 'try the question by the evidence of conscience and before the tribunal of God'.

Drawing on his remarkably relevant text from Isaiah 26:21, Saunders mounted a persuasive case for justice: 'Behold the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth shall disclose her blood and shall no more cover her slain'. No listener could have doubted just whose iniquity was in mind. The sermon was not only about justice for the Aborigines but about retribution for the white settlers; indeed justice for Aborigines demanded such a punishment.

In the midst of so many conflicting opinions, Saunders based his strong evangelical position on the Word of God which should be 'an unerring guide' in considering the conduct of the colonists towards 'the original proprietors of the soil'. Of course he had chosen this text although he argued that it unfolded a theme found throughout the divine revelation. Drawing not only on his knowledge of the Bible but the relevant contemporary literature, Saunders developed a powerful and logical case in favour of justice for Aborigines and warned of judgment for those who had spilt innocent blood. This was the finest example of his training as an advocate.

His text prompted Saunders to stress that nations which have 'a mere civil and temporal being' are judged on earth and that the shedding of blood was the supreme act that demanded swift and severe punishment. Many sins in Australia deserved punishment but there was one sin for which the whole colony was answerable: 'our injustice to the Aborigines'. The nation was impeached, 'for whether in ignorance, or with a guilty knowledge, we certainly have been culpable in our neglect and oppression of this despised and degraded tribe of our fellow-men'.

Saunders then addressed a question which to the modern mind sounds incredible: some denied that Aborigines were fully human. Humanitarians and believers like Saunders answered this assertion from Scripture and rejected a form of quasi-scientific racism which some had used to justify dispossession, just as some in America used it to support the institution of slavery.<sup>23</sup> Saunders insisted that the Aborigine was 'neither monkey, ape nor baboon' and was not 'an intermediate link between man and the brute'. He concluded:

The Aboriginal native is a man; and being a man, with what sublimity does he rise before us; he is the august possessor of a moral and intellectual nature, the owner of an immortal soul ... He is our fellow creature – the

descendant of a common ancestor – our brother upon earth ... He then becomes invested with all the natural rights which belong to humanity, and is entitled to all the charities which man is bound to show to man.

What had British settlers done? Their influence had been ‘deeply fatal to the black’. They had ‘robbed him without any sanction, that I can find either in natural or revealed law’ and invaded his territory ‘and took possession of the soil’. Then they had brutalized them, brought ‘the art of intoxication’ and other evils. Worst of all, ‘we have shed their blood’, not just from the occasional clash but ‘wholesale, in cold blood’. All of this meant that the colony should ‘dread the visitation’ of God which could come in any one of a number of ways as Saunders suggested: ‘... parch us with drought, scatter our commerce, pinch us with penury, and lower us with disease; the plague, the tornado and famine ... he could weary us with civil dissension, with the miseries of an overflowing wickedness, or with the power of a hostile sword’. The sermon then moved to advice as to what might be done in the face of these alarming possibilities. Scripture suggested a threefold response: repentance, reformation and restitution. This last was (and has remained) the most contentious: ‘It is our duty to recompense the Aborigines to the extent that we have injured them’. Here he addressed the immediate controversy about the Protectors by proposing that we should share Christianity ‘and the numerous comforts which flow from it’ with them. ‘You must secure to him civil rights, you must send to him the glorious Gospel of the blessed God’.

Modern historians acknowledge the clarity and power of Saunders’s sermon. Sally Warhaft included Saunders’ sermon in her collection of *Speeches that made Australia*. Henry Reynolds describes it as ‘one of the most eloquent presentations of humanitarian doctrine ... It was a passionate, eloquent defence of human equality’.<sup>24</sup> But Reynolds notes that Saunders ‘had few practical suggestions’: ‘He had little to say about land rights, reserves, financial compensation, education or health’.<sup>25</sup> This is somewhat misjudged and anachronistic. Saunders could not be expected to advance a whole range of possibilities in one sermon although he had certainly spoken about rights to the land, compensation and protection and by his activity in support of Robinson and the Protectorate advocated the idea of reserves and education for Aborigines.

Saunders’s sermon was the climax of the campaign the philanthropists had been waging in the fortnight since they decided to launch the APS. Their

opponents were concerned as several leading men had joined their ranks. Governor Gipps was known to be supportive and he called a ‘Day of General Fast and Humiliation’. A fortnight later rain showers swept the town although a fearful influenza epidemic led to the deaths of ‘great numbers’ of the young, infirm and elderly. Was this a manifestation of the wrath of God on a sinful society, such as Saunders had warned might follow?

The *Herald* launched another major offensive. Ostensibly an attack on the government ‘Estimates’, it soon became a virulent attack on the ‘canters’, complaining that colonists would be saddled with the expense of maintaining a new set of officials termed ‘Protectors of aborigines’.<sup>26</sup> What more ‘protection’ did they need than was already legally granted? What settlers needed was the facility to bring black offenders to justice, just like ordinary white offenders:

... thus while a white man is sent to take his trial, perhaps for his life, for aggressions on the blacks – the savages who may have provoked these aggressions by plunder, probably by murder, flee to the wilds and defy all attempts (even if they should be made) at capture ... The lonely stockman, or shepherd, in the interior may be deprived of life by these black brutes, with almost a certainty of their escaping unpunished, while, on the other hand, should a man so situated happen to kill one of them in defence of his master’s property, or of his own life, he stands a chance of being hanged. Such is the *equal law* dealt out to black and white British subjects.

The *Herald* complained that there was ‘one law for them, and another for whites’. With the Myall Creek trial still a month off, Ward Stephens of the *Herald* was urging potential jurors to acquit their fellow-whites:

Much can be done by *passive resistance*. The Colonists must do their duty in the jury-box – they must refuse all protection or countenance to public robbers of whatever grade – and they must sustain each other in every effort to rout the Glenelg minions.

A large crowd gathered at the Mechanics’ School of Arts in Pitt Street on the Tuesday evening when McLeay was appointed to the chair. Among the speakers was the missionary John Williams, Lang, Robinson and Saunders. The evening proceeded amidst great enthusiasm. McLeay adjourned the

meeting to the following Friday evening when the remaining speakers could be heard.

A reportedly even larger crowd assembled for the next meeting on the Friday. Robinson spoke for no less than three hours on what he had done for the blacks of Van Diemen's Land but, as Milliss comments, Robinson found himself 'eclipsed' by Saunders. Though the hour was late - Saunders began with the old speaker's device, as the *Australian* records, of placing his watch on the table in order to allay the fears of his audience but then ignoring it - he did not hesitate to say all that he wanted to declare. The most controversial feature of Saunders' statement was his comment on the colonial newspapers which he thought pandered to a 'particular taste'. 'One print' had published a denunciation of the blacks that was disgraceful to the colony and appalling to Christianity. That same paper had claimed that 'no murderous spirit was abroad'. He invited his listeners to consider the 'nauseous article' in the *Herald*. After an interjector shouted out, 'Read the article', Saunders quoted extensively from the editorial. What did the writer mean by calling Aborigines 'brutes'? Saunders insisted that the paper's plan to destroy Aborigines without compunction was 'a monstrous proposition' for any enlightened country, let alone part of the British Empire. His listeners should 'gag the mouth' of the 'mercenary' writer. Their call amounted to a sanctioning of murder. 'Oh writer! Bearing the impress of the Deity but with the heart of a demon, who could picture to himself four or five hundred of his fellow creatures driven like hares before the hounds!' 'The writer affected to be hateful of cant and hypocrisy, but did the writer know the meaning of 'cant'? It simply meant a song - 'the strain of a party'. There was the cant of malevolence as well as of benevolence and the writer had 'well used a term which was applicable to his own vile production'. This was a superstitious cant, Saunders alleged:

... the *old* colonial chant - the very cant of the West, and now slavery is to be abolished and the old tyrannical spirit of the colonies is struggling in the agonies of death, it is to be brought to life again by the *Herald* in free Australia.

Saunders pleaded with the meeting to 'join in the proposed work of humanizing the blacks, and the land would become guiltless of blood, and free of its stain for ever'.<sup>27</sup>

'Tremendous applause' had punctuated his address. Clearly Saunders was caught up in the excitement

and fervour of the gathering; as Milliss rightly observes, 'It was Saunders's finest hour'.<sup>28</sup>

Ward Stephens was furious with what he called 'a violent tirade' against his paper. His angry editorial on 22 October entitled, 'Black Advocates and Trading Missionaries', was directed against the Baptist pastor. This speaker's manner was 'exquisitely theatrical' and he drew 'a good deal of applause from decent-looking persons'. In exhorting his hearers to 'trample upon the parties whose hireling he said we are', he had suited the action to the word - 'tramp, tramp, tramp, upon the floor, like a maniac'. Mr Saunders and his 'canting crew', the editor ominously warned, 'shall not come off scot-free - that we promise them'.<sup>29</sup>

Then the much-awaited trials began. At the first trial, which ended on 15 November, the accused Myall Creek men were acquitted but on 26 November they were rearraigned. Eventually seven men were found guilty on 29 November, sentenced to death and hanged in Sydney Gaol on 18 December.

The trials had inevitably intensified feelings about the whole question of relations with Aborigines. In its editorial of 14 November The *Herald* challenged 'any clerical libeller' (Saunders) to prove that it or any 'respectable settler' had ever suggested that blacks should be ill-treated, let alone murdered. Saunders accepted this rather easy assignment which was published in the *Colonist* on 17 November 1838. His conclusion was memorable, challenging Stephens to give his gloss on 'SHOOT THEM DEAD'. On the same day that this response from Saunders was published, Stephens served notice on the *Gazette* and *Australian* that 'criminal information' would be filed against them for 'a gross libel' for publication of Saunders's speech.

The editorial in the *Herald* of 19 November was absolutely scathing towards Saunders. No summary is adequate to convey the hostility it revealed, but the *Herald's* attack is notable for several reasons. First is the characterisation of Saunders: he is 'a very *Reverend* gentleman', 'a stamping fanatic', 'this 'Baptist priest', 'a libeler and utterer of falsehood' 'a politician as well as a fanatic priest' and 'a clerical libeller'.

Second, his supporters are of a lower class, mere 'traders', unlike the landholders and people of influence in the colony.

What appears for the first time in this attack is a sequence of specific slurs based on his identity as a Baptist and Dissenter. ‘We tell him that not all the water in the baptismal font of his Chapel can cleanse him from the imputation’ (of being a libeller).

The Reverend orator is only a very silly man, after all. He knows neither his own position in society nor the position of his adversaries. It would be laughable, were it not for the impudence of the thing, to hear the minister of a mere section of a sect (well-meaning people, no doubt) but possessing no influence in a public point of view ... to see this man standing up in the School of Arts, and addressing such people and a few isolated members of other sects, as the *Colonists*.

In a criticism regularly launched against ‘meddlesome priests’, Stephens threatened Saunders:

Let him keep to his pulpit, and attend to the narrow circle of his own congregation: for should he persist in assuming such airs of importance as he has lately assumed ... he may rest assured that we will drive him back to his proper position in society. Let him, if he wishes to become a mob orator, take himself off to England, where he will find occupation enough in that line, by joining some sectarian ranters, in bellowing loudly on the grievance of a church rate. There is no field of display for him in this colony.

Moreover, his position as a Dissenter makes his conduct ‘the more grossly scandalous’. Protestants in England and Scotland, even Roman Catholics, have many learned men but Saunders dissents ‘from the great body of religionists’: Mr Saunders ‘must think himself *superlatively pious*’.

There was also an economic threat against his middle-class supporters:

You had the applause of some few Sydney traders ... but even such an audience as that would soon cease to encourage your furious bigotry and libels ... if the landholders of the country would evince a determination to put you and them down by supporting those traders only who will support the interests of the landholders and stockowners – whose lives and properties you would leave to the tender mercies of your interesting blacks.<sup>30</sup>

After the trial and execution of the seven men the agitation for justice for Aborigines seems to have

faded from prominence. Lang wrote one last piece promoting the cause for the *Colonist* on 16 January 1839 but left soon after for his fifth trip to Britain.<sup>31</sup> Milliss comments, ‘Without his guidance, the *Colonist* soon lapsed into a confused ambivalence towards the Aborigines rivalling that of the *Monitor*. John Saunders too appeared to have lost all interest in them’.<sup>32</sup> He also suggests that ‘Stephens’s legal and economic threats appear to have the desired effect, for – with the exception of one speech in January 1839 in support of the Moreton Bay Mission – Saunders dropped out of the public spotlight on the Aboriginal issue’.<sup>33</sup> Certainly Saunders had been outspoken at that meeting for the ‘German Mission’. Alluding to the Myall Creek event, he admitted that ‘he scarcely dared to trust himself, for it was impossible for a being possessed of the feelings of a man to view the heartless and cold-blooded comments which had appeared on that subject’.

But, in fact, Saunders did continue to speak and act in support of Aborigines. On 16 December 1842 he spoke at a meeting in support of the German Mission at Moreton Bay and sounded familiar notes. He ‘deprecated in strong terms the usage which the blacks had received at the hands of the sheep farmer and the stockholder’. They were men ‘of the same species as ourselves’ and urged supporters to help teach them the saving truths of the gospel.<sup>34</sup> Early in 1843 Saunders wrote a letter to the *Herald* in reply to ‘A Squatter’ who had attacked the German missionary Rev KW Schmidt who had reported cases of Aborigines being poisoned with arsenic.<sup>35</sup> In the following October Saunders again spoke at a meeting when the German Mission had to be abandoned because government support was withdrawn. He had lost nothing of his fire, lamenting that the Aborigines had ‘waned’ because of ‘the civilization of ardent spirits’, the ‘civilization of disease’ and ‘alas! by the civilization of the bullet, and too often by the treacherous civilization of poison’. He insisted that governments should provide for ‘their civilization and Christian instruction’. Governor Gipps had proved their best protector, even though the scheme of protectorates had failed. Saunders in particular urged that Aborigines should be able to give evidence in the courts, a right denied them.<sup>36</sup> These public speeches confirm that Saunders had not lost his vision and empathy for Aborigines in their lack of justice at the hands of settlers.

Did Saunders lose some heart for this cause in 1839, as Millis suggested? Was he temporarily intimidated by the threats of powerful people in the colony? Did some of his congregation resent the public notoriety

which had drawn unfavourable and embarrassing attention to the Baptist Church? Had he become too emotional and unwise in his style, leaving himself open to the bitter satirical attacks of the *Herald*? But his speeches at meetings in 1842 and 1843, as noted, reveal Saunders had lost none of his zeal for his cause. Of course he had numerous other responsibilities into which he threw himself, the economic times became tougher and during 1839 his wife became pregnant. His uncompromising views about the unjust treatment of Aborigines had been well and truly demonstrated but the humanitarian movement that was seeking justice for Aborigines lost much of its momentum. And the aftermath of the Myall Creek murders? As Rebecca Wood has argued, the way in which the *Herald* wrote about the trials was significant. Its populist stance on behalf of the idealised ‘settler’ found a ready response. The ‘dominant discourse’ turned against the humanitarians, the experiment with the Protectors failed. ‘The frontiers expanded, the continent was tamed and the dispossession of the Aborigines continued unabated’.<sup>37</sup> In the *Herald*’s fevered presentation, protecting the Aborigines and protecting frontier families were incompatible. Ironically, it was the *Herald* after a decade passed, and with new owners in Charles Kemp and John Fairfax, that hailed Saunders so enthusiastically at the time of his farewell and, even later, after Saunders’ death, initiated a fund to bring his wife and daughter back to the colony.<sup>38</sup>

In the longer term, serious crimes against Aborigines were simply driven underground. On the frontiers attitudes towards Aborigines hardened. Poison was adopted as an alternative to gunshot and knife. In the wider community, the ‘cult of disremembering’, what WEH Stanner called the ‘great Australian silence’ dominated popular white Australian history.<sup>39</sup> As Robert Foster expressed it, ‘the undeclared war of the Australian frontier produced a culture of secrecy, ensuring that much of what happened would be clothed in euphemisms, and the knowledge transmitted with all the accuracy of a Chinese whisper’.<sup>40</sup>

In 1845 Baptists in Melbourne, led by Rev John Ham, Saunders’s successor at Bathurst Street, began a school for Aborigines at Merri Creek.<sup>41</sup> Across succeeding decades Baptists have played a small part in missions and worked for reconciliation with Aboriginal peoples.<sup>42</sup> Baptists along with so many in Australia, still struggle to understand and admit the horrors perpetrated upon the indigenous peoples of Australia. But Saunders’ courageous sermon and his leadership against the populist anti-Aborigines’

propaganda have brought inspiration and a renewed vision for social justice as integral to Christian mission.

When the new Parliament House was opened in Canberra in May 1988 busloads of Christian Aborigines joined with other believers in a ‘national gathering of Christians’. At one point a group of Aboriginal Christians carried forward a cross made from what was thought to be the corral at Myall Creek. White Christians asked for forgiveness from God and from Aboriginal Christians for the sins of the nation’s past. A representative group of Aboriginal leaders, including Neville Bonner, first Aboriginal senator, offered forgiveness to the white Christians. When the Baptist Union of Australia celebrated its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2001 a booklet honouring Saunders and his 1838 sermon was published.<sup>43</sup> The foreword was by a leading Aboriginal Baptist woman Dr Lowitja O’Donoghue. Baptist Union of Australia President Rev Tim Costello observed, ‘Saunders and his ilk may not have had the impact they sought in the 1830s, but they now have become ‘beacon lights’.<sup>44</sup>

A poet helps us recapture the atmosphere and attitudes of those troubled days:

The squatters, lyrically, from Sydney  
are fanning out to *make the nation*;  
their sheep and drays, their hapless  
shepherds,  
are vanishing in westward haze,  
the smoke fires of the myall blacks  
a distant colouration.<sup>45</sup>

To show grace and goodness when ‘the smoke fires of the myall blacks’ were becoming a ‘distant colouration’ was a costly challenge for John Saunders, advocate for justice for Aborigines.

#### (Endnotes)

<sup>1</sup> See Letter 24 above (Saunders to Harriet Saunders). See also letter 23.

<sup>2</sup> R Wood,

‘Frontier Violence and the Bush legend: The *Sydney Herald*’s response to the Myall Creek massacre trials and the creation of a colonial identity’, *History Australia* 6.3 (2009), p. 67.1.

<sup>3</sup> There is a wide range of literature on the Myall Creek massacre. A brief factual account is in *Australians 1838*, pp. 54-60 but the most comprehensive account is R Milliss, *Waterloo Creek The Australia Day massacre of 1838, George Gipps and the British Conquests of New South Wales* (Ringwood: McPhee Gribble, 1992).

- <sup>4</sup> H Goodall, 'Authority under challenge: Pikampul land and Queen Victoria's law during the British invasion of Australia' in M Daunton and R Halpern (eds), *Empire and Others: British Encounters with Indigenous Peoples, 1600-1850* (London: UCL Press, 1999), p. 262 as cited by Wood, 'Frontier Violence', p. 67.4.
- <sup>5</sup> A Curthoys, 'Indigenous Subjects' in DM Schreuder and S Ward (eds), *Australia's Empire (The Oxford History of the British Empire, Companion series)*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 88.
- <sup>6</sup> See E Elbourne, 'The Sin of the Settler: The 1835-36 Select Committee on Aborigines and Debates over Virtue and Conquest in the Early Nineteenth-Century British White Settler Empire', *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 4.3 (2003).
- <sup>7</sup> McKenna, *Looking for Blackfella's Point: An Australian History of Place* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2002), p. 55.
- <sup>8</sup> Wood, 'Frontier Violence', p. 67.4.
- <sup>9</sup> For Robinson, see (for example), J Harris, *One Blood. 200 Years of Aboriginal Encounter with Christianity: A story of Hope* (Sutherland: Albatross, 1990), pp. 91-93, 155-60, 542.
- <sup>10</sup> *Sydney Monitor*, Monday 3 September 1838, p. 2.
- <sup>11</sup> For details of Robinson's time in Sydney, largely based on Robinson's diary, see Milliss, *Waterloo Creek*, ch 12.
- <sup>12</sup> DWA Baker, *Days of Wrath. A Life of John Dunmore Lang* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1985), pp. 111-15.
- <sup>13</sup> Milliss, *Waterloo Creek*, p. 390.
- <sup>14</sup> *Sydney Herald*, Friday 14 September 1838, p. 2.
- <sup>15</sup> For the text of the Memorial, see *HRA*, xix, pp. 704-5. It was published in the *Gazette* (September 20) and the *Colonist* (22 September).
- <sup>16</sup> *Sydney Herald*, 19 September 1838, p.
- <sup>17</sup> The report is in *Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Council* October 1838.
- <sup>18</sup> *Sydney Herald*, Wednesday 3 October 1838, p. 3; Milliss, *Waterloo Creek*, p. 438.
- <sup>19</sup> *Sydney Herald*, Friday 5 October 1838, p. 3.
- <sup>20</sup> *Colonist*, 17 October, 20 October, 31 October 1838.
- <sup>21</sup> Kevin Blackburn has noted that early nineteenth century Evangelicals saw the Aboriginal societies that they encountered as nations because their view of the world was based on the Bible, in which it described how God had divided the world up into different nations. George Robinson sought to map the various Aboriginal nations but there is no evidence that Saunders was concerned with this question: K Blackburn, 'Imagining Aboriginal Nations: Early Nineteenth Century Evangelicals on the Australian Frontier and the "Nation" Concept', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 48.2 (2002), pp. 174-92.
- <sup>22</sup> Milliss, *Waterloo Creek*, p. 457.
- <sup>23</sup> Reynolds, *This whispering in our hearts* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1998), p. 24.
- <sup>24</sup> Reynolds, *This Whispering*, pp. 24-25.
- <sup>25</sup> Reynolds, *This Whispering*, p. 45.
- <sup>26</sup> *Sydney Herald*, Monday 15 October 1838, p. 2.
- <sup>27</sup> *Colonist*, Wednesday 31 October 1838, p. 4; *Australian*, Tuesday 23 October 1838, p. 2; *Sydney Gazette*, Tuesday 23 October 1838, p. 2.
- <sup>28</sup> Milliss, *Waterloo Creek*, p. 468.
- <sup>29</sup> *Sydney Herald*, Monday 22 October 1838, p. 2.
- <sup>30</sup> *Sydney Herald*, Monday 19 November 1838, p. 2.
- <sup>31</sup> *Colonist*, Wednesday 16 January 1839, p. 3; Baker, *Days of Wrath*, pp. 149-54.
- <sup>32</sup> Milliss, *Waterloo Creek*, p. 602. <sup>33</sup> Milliss, *Waterloo Creek*, p. 865, note 30.
- <sup>34</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 December 1842, p. 2.
- <sup>35</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, Thursday 19 January 1843, p. 2.
- <sup>36</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, Thursday 19 October 1843, p. 4.
- <sup>37</sup> Wood, 'Frontier Violence', p. 67.15.
- <sup>38</sup> The *Herald* became a daily paper in October 1840. Stephens sold the paper to Frederick Stokes in that year and in February 1841 he sold it to Charles Kemp and John Fairfax, whilst Ralph Mansfield wrote leading articles: Walker, *The Newspaper Press*, p. 35. For the support of Saunders and his widow, see chapter 7.
- <sup>39</sup> Stanner spoke of this in his 1968 Boyer lecture series of 1968. See McKenna, *Looking*, p. 62.
- <sup>40</sup> R Foster and A Nettleback, *Fatal Collisions: the South Australian Frontier and the Violence of Memory* (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 2001), p. 8.
- <sup>41</sup> See Manley, *From Woolloomooloo*, pp. 43-44.
- <sup>42</sup> Manley, *From Woolloomooloo*, pp. 634-40
- <sup>43</sup> J Sutton (ed), *Rev John Saunders: a beacon light and some Baptist reflections* (Canberra: Baptist Union of Australia, 2001).
- <sup>44</sup> J Sutton (ed), *Rev John Saunders a Beacon Light* (Canberra: Baptist Union of Australia, 2001), p. 11.
- <sup>45</sup> Geoff Page, 'A Classic Text', as cited by McKenna, *Looking*, p. 84.

# letters

At the launch of George Henry Morling 'Our Beloved Principal' Dr John Stanhope presented a copy of the book to Hon. Trevor Morling, QC who, with his wife Ruth (nee White) was present. Trevor is the last surviving member of G.H.Morling's family.

The following letter was subsequently received -

233 MACQUARIE STREET  
SYDNEY 2000

28th May, 2014

Dear Bruce

I write to thank you and the Historical Society for giving me a copy of my fathers biography, and to congratulate you and all the other members of the Society's team who made such an effort to make last Saturday's event such a success. I would be obliged if you would pass on to Ron Robb and John Stanhope in particular my thanks and appreciation for their efforts.

I am reading the biography with much interest and pleasure. The launch of it on such a splendid occasion was a great tribute to my father's legacy.

*With warmest regards*

*Trevor*

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Rev. Bruce Thornton,  
Editor (Acting),  
"The Baptist Recorder"

Dear Bruce,

A note of thanks for the *Recorder* No. 125 received on exchange this morning. We were sorry to miss the recent "Eternity Playhouse" meeting due to another commitment.

The published obit. on Ridley Smith took us into our own architectural records here at the Ferguson, and we found records of his involvement with diverse projects associated with the Presbyterian Church over the years, including:-

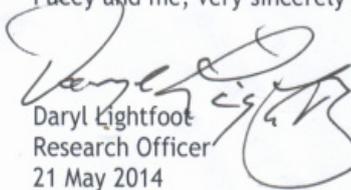
The Presbyterian Ladies' College, Croydon; the former Scottish Hospital (Paddington - now an aged care programme); the Presbyterian Theological College, Burwood; Allowah Hospital, Dundas Valley; Ashfield (Pitt Wood Aged Care programme); Churches and related structures at Woy Woy, Surry Hills (The Chinese Church), Ashfield, Kogarah, and Forestville.

We have established a biographical file on Ridley Smith and added references to his broader work, together with the obit. from the *Recorder*, to our subject file on church architecture and architects.

We also hope to join you for the coming meetings on the "Forward Movement of 1937" and its subsequent impact on the Baptist Church. Similar Movements are referred to in the records of both the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches at various times in the earlier 20<sup>th</sup> century, and it seems that in Britain the concept of the Movement had its origins in Methodism around 1870 under the influence of Hugh Price Hughes.

An American influence is also evident in a mission to Sydney in 1913 by Fred B. Smith and Raymond Robins of the "Men and Religion Forward Movement, and we were recently referred to a history by Hopkins under the title *The Rise of the Social Gospel in American Protestantism 1865-1915*.

With best wishes for the Society's ongoing work, and kindest personal regards from both Sue Pacey and me, very sincerely yours,

  
Daryl Lightfoot  
Research Officer  
21 May 2014

## *Future Meetings ...*

### **THE NEXT MEETING - SATURDAY 9<sup>th</sup> AUGUST at 2.30 pm**

The next meeting of the Society will be historic: it will be the first of our regular events to be held on the second Saturdays of February, May, August and November at 2.30 pm (but still at Morling College as before). Meetings will be preceded by light refreshments. After more than a year's survey of members and organising by the Committee this day and time is the one most likely to suit younger families whose week is taken-up by work commitments, older folk who do not want to drive at night and is more benign in Winter than our previous August meetings.

The 9<sup>th</sup> August meeting was to be the first of two which would commemorate the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the practical start of the *Forward Movement* which actually had its genesis by Dr Waldo (the then General Secretary of the Baptist Union of NSW) in the late 1930s. The 'Forward Movement' has been one of only about two successful major reorganisation and growth plans which have taken place so far in the NSW Baptist churches. Circumstances have transpired to require a postponement of this plan which was to be the founding of Bedford College. At this stage that presentation will be next May.

We have, however, been able to secure a worthy replacement for this meeting. The Rev. Michael and Mrs Meg Dennis will present one of the occasional *This is My Story* series, except that in this case it will be an *Our* story one. This couple needs no introduction to most of our members but what might not be known is their unusual backgrounds. Meg, in particular, is a champion athlete in an unusual sport; all will be revealed at the meeting.

### **NOVEMBER MEETING**

This will be one of the *Forward Movement* 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary presentations. What began as the NSW *Baptist Homes Trust* with an older ladies' home ('Waldo') at Carlingford in 1952, largely staffed and supported by volunteers has now grown to one of Australia's major welfare providers with a full-time staff of thousands and still a huge number of volunteers. The name was changed in the 1980s to *Baptist Community Services* and has recently changed again to *BapCare*. It is now a multi-million dollar incorporated company with centres all around NSW and ACT providing care and assistance to all sorts of needs and all ages. The Chairman of the Company Board, Dr Mervyn Henderson, the CEO, Mr Ross Low and the Honorary Historian, Mr Jim Mallice, will be the speakers and this will be a historically important event. It is hoped that the first Homes Trust Secretary, Mr Ron Robertson - now 96 years old - will be attending.

### **MEETINGS FOR 2015**

The 14<sup>th</sup> February will feature the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the highly successful *Support an Orphan* movement, part of Baptist World Aid. It was founded many years ago by the Rev. Alan Prior and has become a highly respected activity by Australian Baptists, many of whom are personally involved. If you are such a person, or know somebody who is, or know somebody who would like to know more about it - this meeting will be important. Mrs Janine Prior, Alan Prior's daughter-in-law is organising the event and she herself has played a major part in its growth - so much so that she was made a Member of the Order of Australian with the award of an AM.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> May Bedford College, one of the outcomes of *The Forward Movement*, will be featured. Bedford College started in 1944 during WW2 in a spare room in Central Baptist Church using borrowed typewriters and a staff of one to train young women in clerical duties. Today it has two modern campuses with a large staff training over 500 students in a Christian environment and a reputation for excellence. Students - which may be young women or men (even adults if any wish) - can articulate into universities at the second year level in business, commerce, finance, law or early childhood teaching without a TAR, or even having passed the HSC. The College turns over millions of dollars and has modern highly advanced

computer systems with distance connection. A feature is personalised tuition in small classes. This is a major Baptist success story worth hearing about.

The 8<sup>th</sup> August meeting is tentatively planned to commemorate the golden jubilee of *The Young World Singers*. This was one of Australia's most successful youth choirs; it was big, professional, always played to packed houses and travelled to other places in the world. It grew out of the fondly remembered *Baptist Youth Fellowship* founded by the legendary Rev. John Drakeford as a monthly Saturday night event in Central Baptist Church - packed out every time. Older folk will recall the 'glory days' (and evenings!). Former members of the choir will be present (will we have any of the incredible Petterson trumpeters? Let's hope so!).

We need to acknowledge the generous and helpful support of Morling College in many of our Society activities. The success of our meetings and the spectacular growth of the Archives could not have achieved a fraction of its advance without the invaluable support of the Morling College Principal and staff. Mrs Anusha DaSilva prints *The Recorder* for us and is a vital link in its production.

## **VOLUNTEERS**

The NSW Baptist Archives is now a very busy activity and is the largest Baptist Archives in Australia, Calls are increasingly made by the the Baptist and other denominations, Morling College, churches, individual people, municipal bodies, legal and architectural firms and many others for information and advice. There are currently seven volunteers but more are needed. Contrary to what might be expected the work is interesting and by no means dull and boring. Most staff become so absorbed that they often take work home. The facility is air conditioned so a good place to be in unpleasant weather. It has just been re-equipped with modern computers. Morning tea and lunch are provided (no cost). A knowledge of NSW Baptist history is helpful but not essential (you'll soon get to know it anyway). Computer literacy is an advantage but not a requirement - in fact it's a good place to gradually pick-up some basic computer know-how and it is not difficult to learn the internet for research tasks. Most volunteers give at least one day a week but some give more. Voluntary Workers insurance is held.

If you think you could be interested come in and have a tour. First time visitors are usually a bit surprised at what goes on and what material is available. A look at the website is a good introduction.

Contact the Archivist, Dr John Stanhope on 9878 0201 (xtn 129) on Mondays or Wednesdays, or e-mail at [archives@morling.edu.au](mailto:archives@morling.edu.au)

### ***WITH THE LORD***

With great sadness we report the recent passing of **Rev Dr Geoffrey Blackburn, OAM**. Geoff, who was a graduate of Whitley College, Melbourne served in pastorates in Victoria, then on the Board of Christian Education and Publication. He was Secretary and President General (now National President) of the Baptist Union of Australia. His most recent assignment was as Minister of Pastoral Care at Scots Church, Melbourne, Victoria. He was a warm hearted, pastoral person who will be greatly missed.

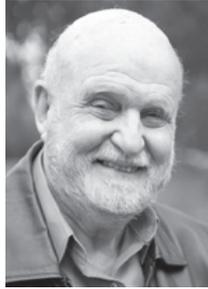
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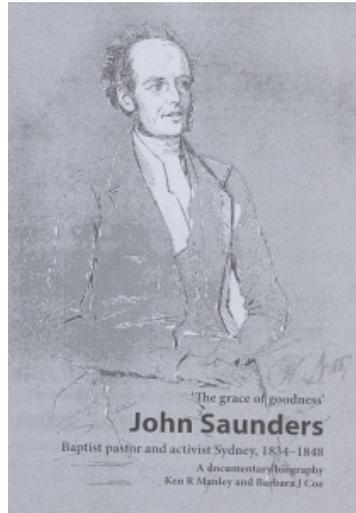


Ken R Manley and Barbara J Coe, 'The Grace of Goodness' JOHN SAUNDERS - Baptist Pastor and Activist, Sydney 1834-1848. Greenwood Press in association with Baptist Historical Society of NSW Inc.2014

Rev John Saunders (1806—59) was the pioneer Baptist pastor in Sydney from 1834 to 1848. As well as establishing the first Baptist Church at Bathurst Street in 1836 he became a leading figure in the religious and moral life of the colony. A leading figure in the temperance movement at a time when alcohol was still a major scourge, he was also a courageous and outspoken critic of the treatment of Aborigines by many British settlers at the fevered time of the trial of white men for the Myall Creek murders. Henry Reynolds called his sermon on this theme 'one of the most eloquent presentations of humanitarian doctrine' from that period.

The special feature of this book is that it not only tells the full story of Saunders' numerous activities on behalf of missions, philanthropic, scientific and moral issues, but for the first time publishes a comprehensive and carefully edited collection of his fascinating letters, written whilst he was travelling as chaplain to female convicts aboard the *George Hibbert* and after his arrival in Sydney.

Contemporary colonial poet Charles Harpur described the 'grace of goodness' in John Saunders and this documentary biography demonstrates why not only fellow-religionists but many others greatly valued this attractive figure.



*This is a wonderful piece of writing incorporating biography, marvellous descriptions of colonial Sydney and exhaustive historical research into how Rev John Saunders tackled the burning issues of the early settlement of Australia (Rev Tim Costello)*

**THIS BOOK WILL BE LAUNCHED  
AT THE NEXT MEETING**

available from <http://www.baptisthistory.org.au> click on shop

### ANONYMOUS APPRECIATION

Congratulations on a wonderful afternoon yesterday at the Eternity Playhouse. It was a great credit to those who organized the event, particularly Ron. Thank you so much Ron for your expertise, over the time it has taken, in putting together the details for that very special occasion. Ken Manley and Ross Clifford were absolutely excellent in giving their addresses. It's a long time since we, meaning xxx & myself, have heard such interesting and excellent presentations. We thoroughly enjoyed the afternoon and I think I could say that xxxxt, who travelled with us would say the same.

Well done!!! ... and, just a question ... do we get a copy of their presentations? It would be so good to be able to read them.