

AUSTRALIA AND THE BIBLE

THE BIBLE COMES TO AUSTRALIA

'IN HISTORY'S PAGE LET EVERY

STAGE ADVANCE AUSTRALIA

FAIR' - Australian National Anthem



The greatest 'Advance' to Australia's fair shores has been the arrival of the Bible, the Holy Word of God.

"The entrance of thy words giveth light" .
The Bible – *Psalms 119:30*.

"It is necessary for the welfare of the nation that men's lives be based on the principles of the BIBLE. No man, educated or uneducated, can afford to be ignorant of the BIBLE" .
Theodore Roosevelt.

On 3 February, 1788, Richard Johnson, Chaplain with the First Fleet, gathered all those who were willing under a great gum tree and read the first Scripture lesson from a large leather-bound King James Bible. This Bible now rests in St Philip's York St Anglican Church in Sydney.



First Fleet – picture courtesy of Shaw Library of NSW

**"WHAT SHALL I
RENDER UNTO THE
LORD FOR ALL HIS
BENEFITS TOWARD
ME?" PSALM 116:12
FIRST SERMON PREACHED
IN AUSTRALIA**

On 7 February, 1788, Arthur Phillip was sworn in over the Bible. As the first Governor of the colony, he delivered a speech to the convicts, advising them to embrace the Christian virtues of marriage and put an end to promiscuity.

Quire 200c, pp13-14



MORE INFO

**"Ngkukung ile Godowe
enggun winmit,
wiyirware, ruwe" -
Genesis 11 in Ngarrindjeri
"In the beginning God
created the heavens and
the earth".**

THE FREEDOM AND LIBERTIES BROUGHT TO US BY THE BIBLE

The Bible is God-given. Australia has a history of an awareness of God and His creatorial rights, both in early societies, and written into our Constitution:

"Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act - An Act to constitute the Commonwealth of Australia [9th July 1900]. WHEREAS the people of New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Queensland, and Tasmania, **humbly relying on the blessing of Almighty God**, have agreed to unite in one indissoluble Federal Commonwealth under the Crown of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and under the Constitution hereby established: ..."

The Australian Constitution.

Chaplain to the First Fleet, Richard Johnson, was charged by Arthur Phillip, the governor, with the task of improving "public morality" in the colony. Where would he find the means for this? The values upon which our nation is based are inherently Christian.

If you were to select values for a new society, which ones would you choose?



Richard Johnson



The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) states that all human beings are endowed with dignity, rights, reason and conscience, and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Notice how many of our 'human rights' derive from the Scriptures, the Bible!

Biblical Education Within the Colony

Almost 30 years later (1809), the colony of New South Wales was starting to become a collection of dwellings and houses, with a society in need of an education, so Reverend Samuel Marsden, successor of Richard Johnson as senior Church of England minister in New South Wales, started a lending library which included a section on 'Divinity and Morals'. The Bible was an important centre piece of this collection, and many of the donations made to the first lending library in Australia, have become part of our nation's treasures.

Parts of that library survive today, in the possession of Moore Theological College:



1. Hebrew scroll fragment. 2. Gospel of Luke in Latin. 3. A 1550 Tyndale New Testament. 4. Greek New Testament from 1568. 5. First Edition of the King James Bible. Images and information courtesy of www.treasures.more.edu.au and www.abc.net.au/diogen

The First Bible printed in Australia

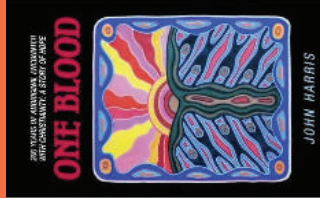
Most Bibles in Australia have been imported from UK and other countries. In 1864, Shayer Printers in Adelaide printed the first "Scripture selections in Ngarrindjeri". The Ngarrindjeri lands cover a section in South Australia from Murray Bridge to the Coorong and Cape Jervis. The first complete Scriptures published in Australia in 1827 were in the Maori language of New Zealand.

However, the first Bible **fully** typeset, bound, printed and produced in Australia was the Australian Bicentennial edition of the Good News Bible, published in 1988 by McPhersons printers in Maryborough, Victoria.

Sunderman B Harris. The Bible Society 2007

IN THE NAME OF CHRISTIANITY....

There has perhaps been nothing more detrimental to the cause of Christianity in Australia, than the historical ill-treatment of Aboriginal people. However, it must be noted that many acts which were done in the name of Christianity did not reflect Christ, nor do they reflect the teachings of Holy Scripture, the Bible.



One Blood, John Harris

"IT IS ONE OF THE GREAT TRAGEDIES OF THE RECENT HISTORY OF AUSTRALIA THAT TRUE CHRISTIANITY WAS FOR SO LONG, SO VERY DIFFICULT TO WORK IN THE LIFE OF THIS OUTCAST OF A DIGNITARY NATION WHICH CALLED ITSELF CHRISTIAN"

John Harris, author of One Blood

IN THE NAME OF CHRISTIANITY

Indigenous society was viewed in a very inferior way by the European immigrants: Samuel Leigh (Wesleyan Missionary): "described Aboriginal people as 'barbarians'".

Colonisation was implemented by those who called themselves Christian, but whose actions were anything but Christian: "Aboriginal people inevitably thought Christianity to be the religion of the British colonists" (Harris, p.89)

Many settlers treated Indigenous people in brutal, immoral and inhumane ways: Reverend Samuel Marsden (1765-1838) was also known as the "flogging parson", due to the severity of his punishments, administered in his magisterial role.

The missionaries did spread the message of the love of Christ, and fulfilled their great commission in Scripture. Many Christian missionaries contributed to anthropological and linguistic understanding of Indigenous Australians, witness to their tremendous efforts to connect with the Indigenous cultures.

The mission stations were often a refuge and escape from the harsh way of life, or mistreatment at the hands of the colonists. Aboriginal activist, Noel Pearson agrees that missions in our history "provided a haven from ...life on the Australian frontier while at the same time facilitating colonisation"

"FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD, THAT HE GAVE HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON, THAT WHOEVER BELIEVETH IN HIM SHOULD NOT PERISH, BUT HAVE EVERLASTING LIFE" -
John 3:16

BUT WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

"For there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" - *Romans 3:22-23*

"Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" - *Romans 8:9*.

"Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven" - *Colossians 4:1*.

"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel" to every creature" - *Mark 16:15*.

"But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again" - *Luke 6:35*.