Proclaiming South Australia's Christian foundation

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from an 1857 painting by Charles Hill

PROCLAMATION

BY HIS EXCELLENCY JOHN HINDMARSH

Knight of the Royal Hanoverian Guelphic Order
Governor and Commander-in-Chief of
HIS MAJESTY'S PROVINCE of SOUTH AUSTRALIA

In announcing to the Colonists of His Majesty's Province of South Australia, the establishment of the Government, I hereby call upon them to conduct themselves on all occasions with order and quietness, duly to respect the laws, and by a course of industry and sobriety, by the practice of sound morality, and a strict observance of the Ordinances of Religion, to prove themselves worthy to be the FOUNDERS of a great and free Colony.

It is also, at this time especially, my duty to apprize the Colonists of my resolution to take every lawful means for extending the same protection to the NATIVE POPULATION as to the rest of His Majesty's Subjects, and of my firm determination to punish with exemplary severity, all acts of violence or injustice which may in any manner be practised or attempted against the NATIVES, who are to be considered as much under the Safeguard of the law as the Colonists themselves, and equally entitled to the privileges of British Subjects. I trust therefore, with confidence to the exercise of moderation and forbearance by all Classes, in their intercourse with the NATIVE INHABITANTS, and that they will omit no opportunity of assisting me to fulfil His Majesty's most gracious and benevolent intentions towards them, by promoting their advancement in civilization, and ultimately, under the blessing of Divine Providence, their conversion to the Christian Faith.

- *The Proclamation* read to South Australia's pioneer colonists by the Governor's Secretary, near the Old Gum Tree, at Glenelg, on 28th December 1836

The sovereignty of God over South Australia

The Proclamation is South Australia's founding document, and a key source of evidence for the proudly Christian purpose for this part of the continent. In fact South Australia's foundation is part of God's plan for placing people:

> *From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him ...* (Acts 17:26-27).

God's purpose for Britain colonising South Australia related to respecting, helping and evangelising the Aboriginal people. So they were declared within *The Proclamation* as *equally entitled to the privileges of British subjects*. This reflected Britain's deep concern for the welfare of all, as shown by the release of all slaves in the Empire in 1833. While a less enlightened colonial power may have sought to murder the aborigines, Britain's colonial ideals extended *the same protection to the Native Population as to the rest of His Majesty's subjects* and Governor John Hindmarsh gave his firm pledge to punish *all acts of violence or injustice* directed against aboriginal people.



Britain provided remarkably enlightened principles of good government, based on a thousand years of constitutional and social thought which reached a pinnacle in South Australia, whose 1855 Constitution was the most democratic of any in the Empire. Upholding principles symbolised by the Crown, the Provincial main street and the city were named to honour **King William IV** and his wife **Queen Adelaide**.



A Christian who typified the enlightened ideals of that era, Queen Adelaide held a deep faith that prompted her to care for the poor and cope with the terrible loss of all her seven babies. She helped raise the ten children already fathered illegitimately by the king, and her gentle influence served to moderate his behaviour. The people's love for her helped restore respect for the civic system in controversial times.



While much history has been lost, in 1983 Adelaide's National Basketball League team was re-named as **The Adelaide 36ers**, to honour the year 1836 when provincial government was established.



South Australia - a centre of freedom and outreach

The province of South Australia was formed to provide freedom for people who were disadvantaged by their beliefs. In England, for example, those who did not conform to the Church of England (the "Established Church") could not attend university or join Parliament, and many sought a place to serve God without such difficulty. Accordingly, many Christians served to establish the new Colony of South Australia as a centre of freedom and outreach. So



George Fife Angas (1789-1879), who is called the Father of South Australia's religious liberties, stated:

My great object was, in the first instance, to provide a place of refuge for pious Dissenters of Great Britain, who could in their new home discharge their consciences before God in civil and religious duties without any disabilities ... that South Australia will become the headquarters for the diffusion of Christianity in the Southern Hemisphere. - Pike, D. *Paradise of Dissent*, Melbourne Univ Press, 1967, p130, 138.

Further, a group of about 500 persecuted Lutherans fled Prussia and found freedom in South Australia in 1839. So their leader **Pastor August Kavel** (1798-1860) described their desire to serve their new monarch Queen Victoria, under whom they were free:



... On our arrival here, we hailed this hospitable shore as a place of refuge to worship God without disturbance of our consciences .... We have found what we have been seeking for many years - religious liberty: we hail that sovereign under whose direction we are now placed: we consider her and her Government as ordained of God, and with all our hearts we are desirous of being faithful subjects and useful citizens.

- David Schubert, *Kavel's People. From Prussia to South Australia*, 1997, p102.

The pursuit of freedom made great gains. For example, Morris Marks, a Jew, joined South Australia's first Parliament (in 1857) when no Jew could be a member of Britain's Parliament; in the 1870s South Australia became the first part of the Empire outside Britain to legalise trade unions; in 1895 it became the first place in the world to allow women to stand for Parliament.

God's blessings over the Province of South Australia



Writing in 1848, **Captain Charles Sturt** (1795-1869), who was one of Australia's great explorers, described the blessings that God had given to South Australia:

When I went into the interior, I left the province with storm-clouds overhanging it, and sunk in adversity. When I returned, the sun of prosperity was shining on it, and every heart was glad. Providence had rewarded a people who had borne their reverses with singular firmness and magnanimity. Their harvest fields were bowed down by the weight of grain; their pastoral pursuits were prosperous; the hills were yielding forth their mineral wealth, and peace and prosperity prevailed over the land.

- *Expedition into Central Australia* Vol I, 1848, p39.



Several tokens of blessing that were noted by Captain Charles Sturt may be seen upon the **Coat of Arms of South Australia** - wheat, barley, citrus fruit, vines, a miner's pick, the cog wheels of industry, and the rising sun. A further link between the Coat of Arms and Sturt is the State Flower named after him.

Writing about the role of *Providence* (the word often used instead of *God*) Captain Charles Sturt hoped that God's blessing would remain on the people. His Christian reflection is worthy of contemporary application:

> *May the inhabitants of South Australia continue to deserve and to receive the protection of that Almighty power, on whose will the existence of nations as well as that of individuals depends!* (p39).



John Hindmarsh



HMS Buffalo

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