

# Adelaide's Wineskin

Author: Annette Thomas<annette@httn.net>

Just as people have destiny and God given purpose, so too cities and nations have destiny and God given purpose. When a city is birthed and founded God has a plan and identity for that city, just as He does for His children and we can often see an indication of that destiny within its industry, demographics and economies. But because the prince of this world robs and destroys, most cities have had their identities stolen and their prophetic purpose distorted and adulterated.

George Fife Angus, a founder of Adelaide, said, "My great object was 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 that South Australia will become the headquarters for the diffusion of Christianity in the Southern Hemisphere." (Paradise of Dissent, page 95). Not only does Adelaide and South Australia have an incredible heritage but also an incredible future, as well as an obligation to this nation and the nations beyond. Sadly, over time the foundations that the city was founded on have been eroded until now we see a city that is far removed from the original blue print.

Adelaide is colloquially known as the "City of Churches" because of the many churches that were erected throughout the city. "Within 10 years over half the population of the state were attending two of the denominational churches and further church buildings were necessary." (Paradise of Dissent) In today's terminology we would call that revival! So at the very outset the majority of Adelaide's residents were godly people, committed to building a city and state that were for His glory. The original wineskin was full of new wine.

But like Matthew 9:14-17 says, an old wineskin that is brittle will lose the new wine and itself be destroyed in the process. In the same vein, it's no good patching an old garment with a new patch because the same would apply. 15 One day the disciples of John the Baptist came to Jesus and asked him, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples don't fast?" Jesus responded, "Should the wedding guests mourn while celebrating with the groom? Someday he will be taken away from them and then they will fast. 16 And who would patch an old garment with an unshrunk cloth? For the patch shrinks and pulls away from the old cloth, leaving an even bigger hole than before. 17 And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. The old skins would burst from the pressure, spilling the wine and ruining the skins. New wine must be stored in new wineskins. That way both the wine and the wineskins are preserved."

We understand from the natural that there is a new wine season every year, yet why are we reticent to apply that to the spiritual? We understand that clothes in the natural need to be replaced because they wear out and become stained, so when the Word instructs us to put on robes of righteousness, holiness and praise we need to take off the old garments and put on the new. This transaction needs to take place regularly because we become contaminated and sullied by sin and humanistic thinking.

Adelaide and the church of Adelaide need to also have a new wineskin and righteous, holy garments. We are far removed from the original blue print and God is calling us to return to the ancient paths. We have deviated from the plan and become staid and useless, not only to ourselves but to those around us. By and large we have not been a pilgrim people who have followed the Holy Spirit's leading and prompting but instead have built edifices to ourselves, edifices that have locked out the Holy Spirit's moving; not moving from glory to glory but instead resting on our laurels. Yet still in the heart of God beats the prophetic purpose of this city and it is this heartbeat that some are beginning to feel resonate within their own being, causing them to cry out for the movings of the Holy Spirit again.

Adelaide has produced globally impacting businesses, medicinal and scientific research, as well as sporting and military prowess. Many great men and women hail from Adelaide, a small city by Australian and world standards. The inventor of penicillin Lord Howard Foley, media mogul Rupert Murdoch, WW2 hero Sgt Thomas "Diver" Derrick and tennis star Leyton Hewitt are a few

of the outstanding individuals who hail from Adelaide. The destiny of this city is one of global impact, both naturally and spiritually. These four examples testify to that prophetic destiny. Penicillin has saved millions of lives and revolutionised the world of healing, so too God desires that in the spiritual. Love him or hate him, Rupert Murdoch is a brilliant man who capitalises on opportunities for the extension of his empire. George Angus' desire to see Adelaide become the headquarters for the diffusion of Christianity in the southern hemisphere is yet to be fulfilled but in the natural Rupert Murdoch shows us the prophetic nature of George Angus' desire to see God's kingdom extended. Sgt 'Diver' Derrick was a humble man who showed great courage in saving the lives of his platoon. Not a great military commander but a rank and file soldier who showed great courage, going above and beyond the call of duty, earning him the Victorian Cross. Leyton Hewitt is a young man who is at the top of his sport, full of dedication, skill and zeal. God has within Adelaide those who are motivated by a great love and passion for not only the body of Christ but also a sick and dying world. God has not forgotten Adelaide or South Australia, He is even now calling the church of Adelaide to put on new garments and have a new wineskin so that this season's new wine will not be lost.

An example of what God desires Adelaide's wineskin to be like can be found in the company General Motors Holden. A brief history reveals a company that has grown, merged, changed, faced difficulties and above all has been resilient.

1856 James Alexander Holden immigrated from England at the age of 20 and established a saddlery and leather goods business in the centre of Adelaide.

1885 Merged with Henry Frost, who had a carriage building and trimming business, to form a new company, Holden and Frost.

1908 Began a workshop to produce carriage hoods for motor cars.

1914 Manufacture of side cars for Harley Davidson motorcycles began.

1917 Agreement with Cheney Motor Company, Dodge dealer, to build a full scale body building plant. Bodies were built for imported chassis. The first new car was unveiled in 1917.

1928 Lion and stone emblem adopted.

1929 Due to down turn in car sales, production of fruit crates, golf club heads and filing cabinets were included.

1931 Merger between American General Motors and Holden.

1944 Australian government called for proposals for an indigenous Australian car.

1946 First Holden prototypes were released (48-215 FX Holden).

1954 First export to New Zealand.

2004 Australia's largest exporter of vehicles and vehicle components to a global market.

This is a company that has responded to a changing society, economics and opportunities. Theirs is a story of challenge, adjustment, change and progress without succumbing to idealism or excessive patriotic pride. God is now calling for a wineskin that is suited to the climate and conditions of the time, just like the Australian government called for a car company to produce an indigenous car suited to the Australian roads and conditions, as well as there being a need at the time for increased employment for World War 2 returned servicemen who had learnt motor skills and desired a car of their own.

Australia has been in a spiritual war and there are now people in Adelaide and South Australia who are looking for a wineskin that is responding to what God is doing and saying currently. A wineskin that is not only domestic but international in influence and one that has the Lion of Judah as its head and the stone of revelation as its foundation. Just like James Holden had a decision to either stick rigidly to ideals and traditions or to be resilient and embrace the changes society brought to bear, the church of Adelaide is now faced with the same decisions.

James Holden accepted and embraced outside investment and partnership and as such his company not only survived but thrived. We also need to accept and embrace those which God brings to our shores. They will bring with them the truth and life of the Holy Spirit. All throughout scripture we see that God brought in outsiders to challenge and adjust the nation of Israel. We cannot afford to be parochial in our understanding of spiritual principles and dynamics.

When James Holden brought his son into the company he brought with him new ideas and planning. James had the foresight and wisdom to know when to release him and trust the new direction the company would take. Among our ranks are our sons and daughters waiting to be released. They may be young, they may be old, but God has been preparing and readying them for such a time as this. Wisdom and foresight needs to be exercised by the city elders to facilitate the release of these people into our midst, trusting and facilitating what God reveals through them. They will bring with them the new wine of the Holy Spirit into our midst. The local as well as the outside ministries working together towards the building up of the church till it comes together as one, truly becoming a New Testament city church.

A wineskin or garment is not permanent by nature. Matthew 9:14-17 describes the process by which a wineskin is renewed or a garment changed ? prayer and fasting. There is the call to return to our first love and the ancient paths, abandoning that which is perishable and man's own kingdom building and embrace that which builds God's kingdom. Our bridegroom is no longer walking this earth with us and as such prayer and fasting should be part of our Christian walk till once again we walk with Him - lovesick worshippers of Jesus abandoning themselves to knowing and serving Him. This is the wineskin that the Holy Spirit can work powerfully in ? holy, righteous and totally dependent on Jesus.

This is a call to the church of Adelaide to return to its first love and to once again follow the ancient paths. We have a wonderful heritage but now is the time to seek God's face with prayer and fasting and allow the Holy Spirit to convict, change, modify and mould us till our collective wineskin reflects God's kingdom and as such is ready for the infilling of the Holy Spirit. Our sons and daughters of this city, this state, this nation and the nations beyond depend on how we respond in this hour.

*Bibliography:*

*Pike, Douglas, Paradise of Dissent: South Australia 1829-1857, 2nd ed., Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1967*

*Stinger, Col, Discovering Australia's Christian Heritage, Col Stringer Ministries Inc. 1999*