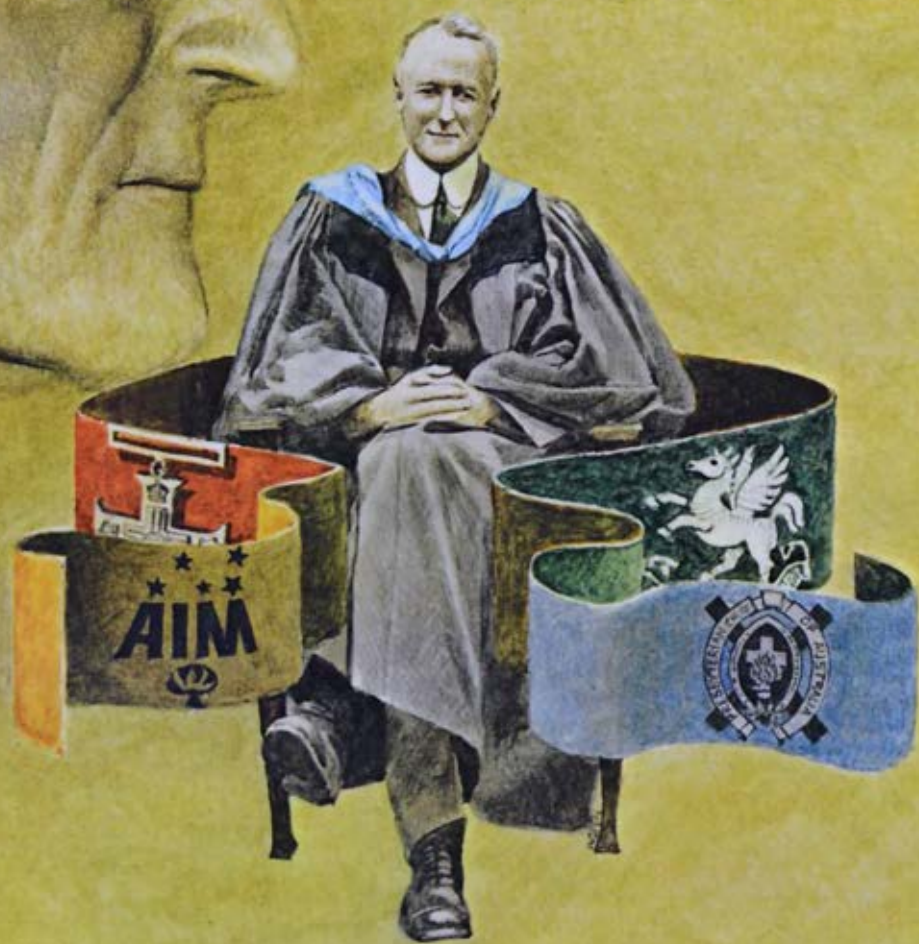


# The Lives of FRANK ROLLAND

*B. R. Keith*



FRANK ROLLAND was a remarkable Australian who devoted each of his several 'lives' to serving fellow-Australians. Early this century, as a young minister, he could look forward to a comfortable career assured by family connections and personal abilities. Instead, he chose a life of gruelling Outback hardship. This period inspired actions which led, indirectly, to the creation of the Australian Inland Mission and the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

Rolland then tried to settle in a country parish, but soon answered a call to Broome. In the strange and romantic pearling port he worked for the benefit of all who needed his services.

In the first World War, he served as an army chaplain on the Western Front. His self-sacrificing courage, recognised by the award of the Military Cross, won the respect of the tough Diggers. In the appalling conditions of that war he risked his life many times for the sake of the fighting men.

After the war, he was offered the post of Headmaster of the Geelong College. He was not trained as a teacher but he accepted the challenge and revitalised the college. The most unconventional of headmasters, he proved himself an educationalist far ahead of his time.

His service to Australians did not end with retirement. As Moderator General of the Presbyterian Church, and in many other ways, he continued to give of himself in a manner always coloured by his unique personal charisma.

In this book, B. R. Keith presents a fully-rounded portrait of a rare personality, remembered by thousands of Australians with every degree of emotion from exasperation to admiration. For those who knew Frank Rolland the book will awaken memories of a man who was an almost mystical blend of dreamer, builder, leader and inspirer. For those who did not know him, *The Lives of Frank Rolland* will introduce one of the greatest Australians of his generation.

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*Jacket design by Robert Ingpen*

## Foreword

Many of the impressions I have of Sir Francis Rolland came from other people. As a child I sensed the respect and hero-worship given to him by my mother. He had been the leader of the young people at the Noorat Presbyterian Church: Mr Rolland was Minister and my mother a member of the congregation. Mr Rolland performed the marriage ceremony for my parents. He baptised me.

Another impression at Noorat came from Miss Margaret Dennis, who was one of the devoted band who encouraged Mr Rolland to go to Broome for mission research. She was one of the group who knitted garments for the soldiers at the front in the 1914-18 war. More than one returned soldier had stories to tell of Padre Rolland. He was remembered with a touch of awe and veneration.

Then came personal impressions for me when a student at Geelong College with Mr Rolland as Head. Few of the senior students will ever forget the Head's bible periods.

In later years, as a fellow Presbyterian Minister, I saw him as a great and wise leader. When he spoke, all listened to his words. His inspiration, his humour, his insights, his modesty endeared him to all.

At Sale (when I was Minister there) other impressions came from a brother, nephews and nieces. He was always a figure for admiration.

Now Mr Bert Keith has given us his impression which comes after long and painstaking research. To Mr Keith we owe a great debt for what he has revealed in this overall picture.

Frank Rolland was a great Australian, a great Christian, a great man. The word 'great' belongs to every one of his 'lives'. His



greatness was felt by statesmen, by writers, by churchmen, by soldiers, friends and children.

This biography is a fitting tribute to this great man.

Thank you, Mr Keith.

(Rt. Rev.) G. A. Wood

MODERATOR-GENERAL

Presbyterian Church of Australia

## Preface

Although I worked for nineteen years as a member of 'Mr Rolland's' staff, I see now that I did not really know him then. My research into his whole life has been astonishing, enlightening and most stimulating. The man and the material are much greater than pen can tell in full, but it is hoped that this volume may present sufficient evidence for the conclusion that there moved among us a unique, noble, unforgettable character.

The component parts for the story have come from a multitude of sources. Most documentation is listed in the Bibliography. Many good friends have offered personal memories, a letter, an anecdote; they have added realism and lustre to the portrait. However, there are some who have contributed in large measure either biographical material or direct assistance to the writer, or both, to the extent that a special indebtedness must be acknowledged. Such are the Rolland family, especially the Rev. W. M. Rolland; the Council of the Geelong College, especially Messrs D. G. Neilson and R. R. Ingpen; the Right Reverends Fred McKay and G. A. (Pat) Wood, Moderators-General in succession of the Presbyterian Church of Australia; the Reverends E. C. McLean, A. C. Eadie, J. C. Alexander and M. J. Both; Sir James Darling; Mr. D. D. Davey; the late Mrs L. Weatherly; Dr Alan Marshall; Mr R. W. Gleeson and Dr E. L. French, of the Council for Christian Education in Schools.

Thanks also to those excellent people who expressed interest; the little encouragement a writer often needs.

B. R. KEITH