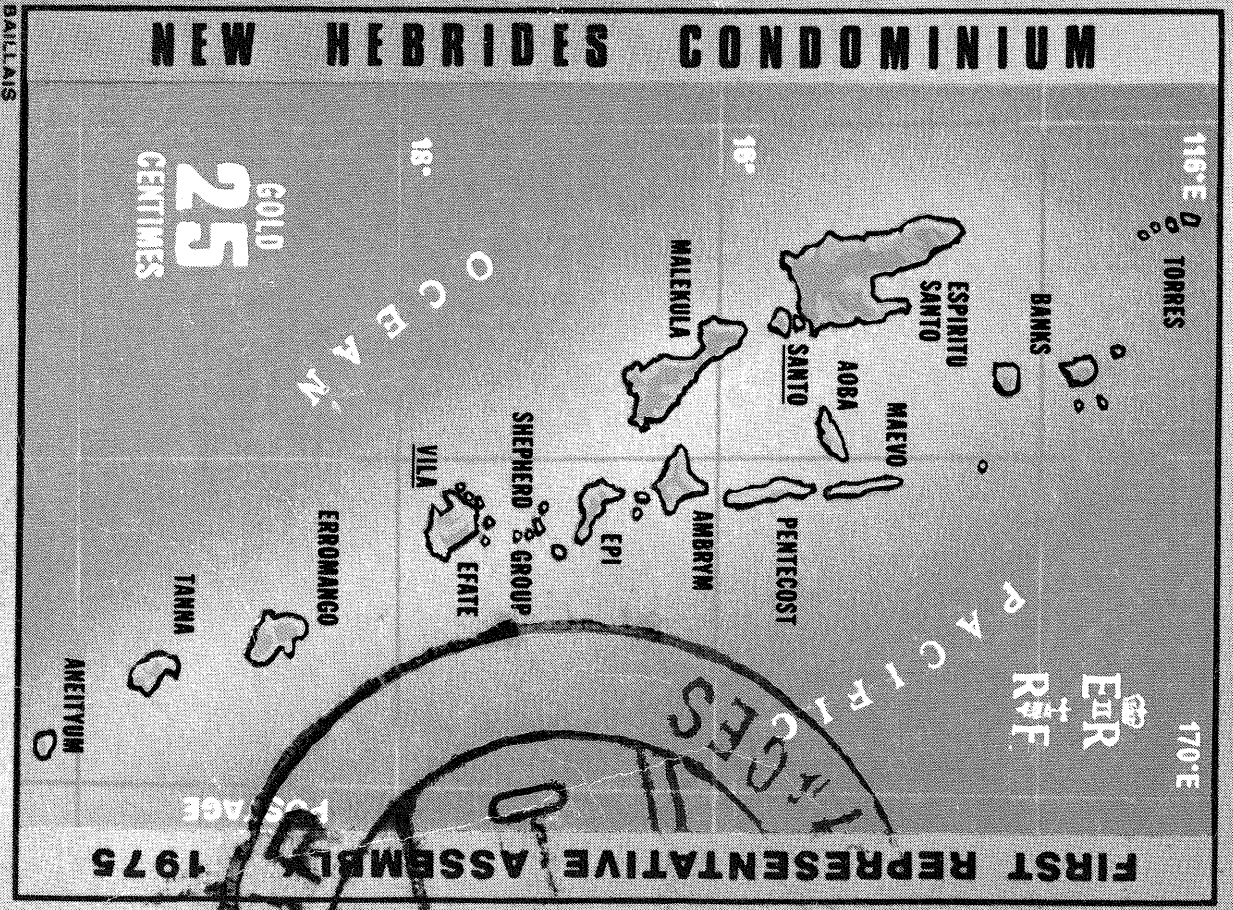
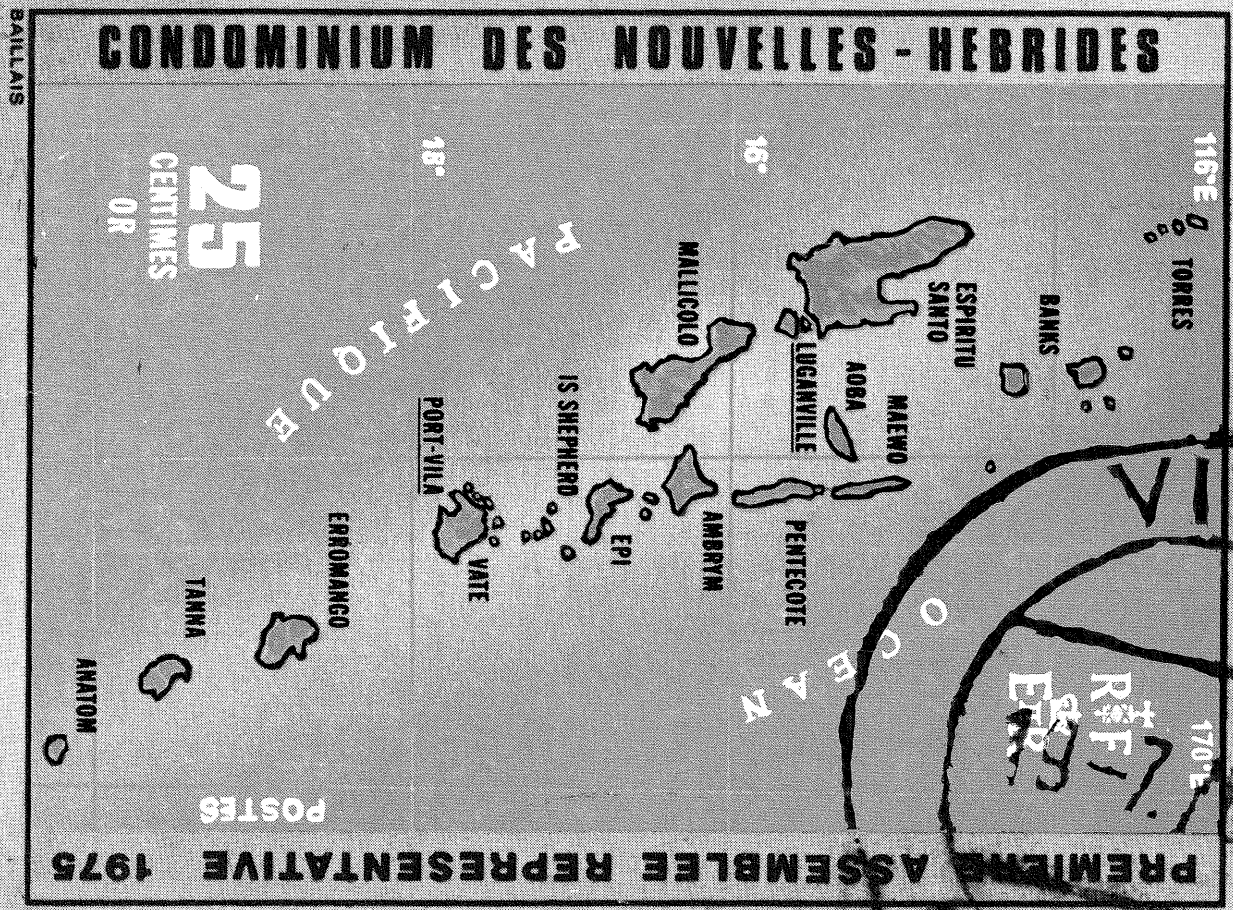


LIVE

J. Graham Miller



Book I J. Graham Miller

A history of Church planting in the New Hebrides, to 1880

Book I

BICENTENARY OF DISCOVERY



1774 - 1974



HMS Resolution

NEW HEBRIDES
CONDOMINIUM

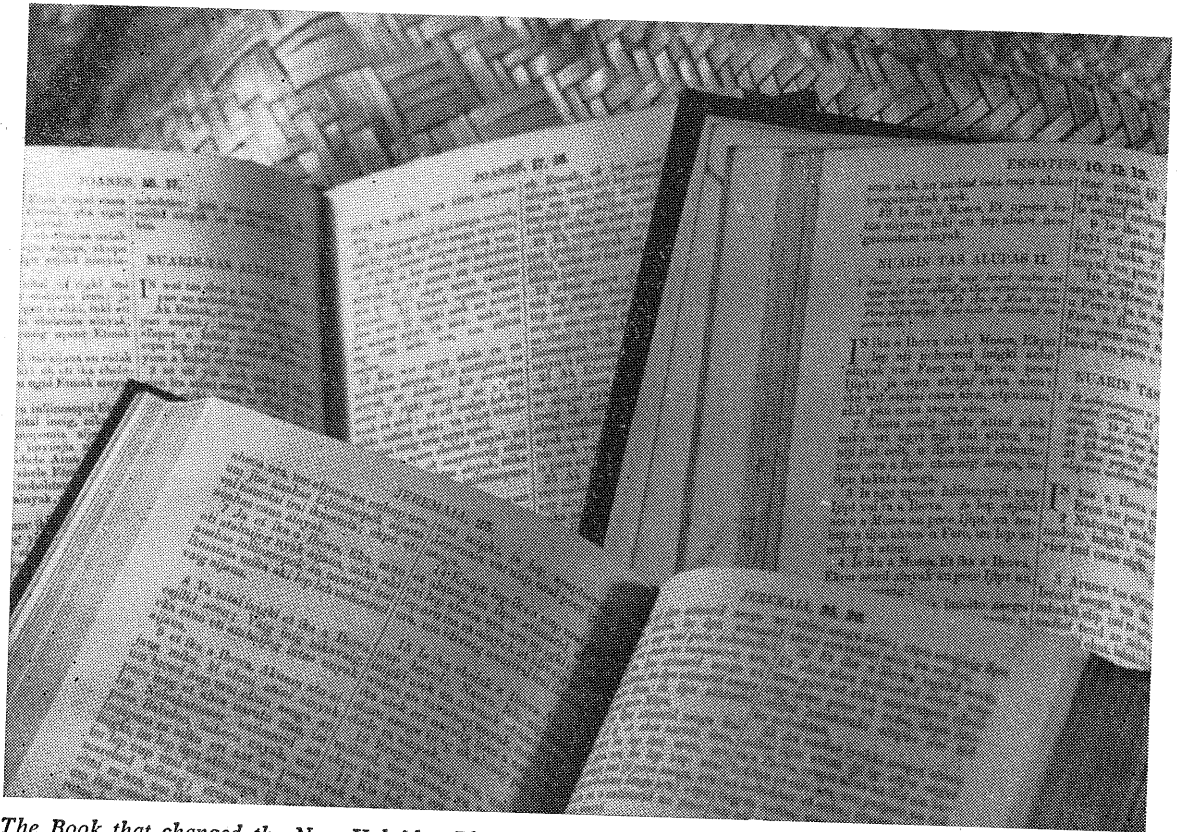


Capt. J. Cook

1.15
GOLD FRANC

The Voyage that changed the New Hebrides. Stamp commemorating Captain James Cook's voyage of discovery and naming of the New Hebrides in 1774.

LIVE



The Book that changed the New Hebrides. These three volumes represent the first complete Bible published in any New Hebrides language, Aneityumese (1863-1879) and the first complete Bible in any language of Melanesia.

LIVE
A HISTORY
OF
CHURCH PLANTING
IN THE
NEW HEBRIDES
TO 1880
Book One
J. Graham Miller



"Live" is published by the Committees on Christian Education and Overseas Missions of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia.

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Dedication

Islands of the New Hebrides

We remember
The silver moon,
The stormy wind,
The soft sunset
And the rush of rain on the forest's roof;
The rustling fronds of the palm,
The smell of copra,
Seasickness,
The scream of the *siviri*,
And the sudden trembling of the earth;
The night sky bright with wildfire,
The graves and the gardens
And the banyan's shade.

Friends of the New Hebrides

We have loved you
Since first we saw you
And you welcomed us ashore,
To live and serve together;
First as brother and sister
Now as father and mother.
Here our sons and daughters were born,
And they are proud of you.
Our love for you continues
In a distant land.
Thank you for your love
To us.

We shall not forget you

Nor cease to pray for you,
In Jesus Christ our Lord.
He has made us one,
He will keep us one,
He will bring us home
In peace, together,
To the Father's house;
Your Father,
And ours.

Graham and Flora Miller

Foreword

by MR. K. M. SHING

Headmaster of Onesua High School, New Hebrides

In "Live", Dr J. Graham Miller has enabled us to take a fresh and a good look into the beginning of the witness for Jesus Christ in these islands of the New Hebrides. No one is more qualified than Graham Miller to undertake the great task of reading through the many books and journals about the early days of the mission work in the New Hebrides and then writing down the story in the form that can be read and understood by even those with limited English education.

As well as being a missionary in these islands for many years, Graham Miller has a deep interest in the history of the mission work and a fantastic memory for detail. When meeting a village personality he would talk about some interesting event known to that person, interspersing the conversation with questions whose answers he would listen to with rapt attention.

In his book Graham Miller has not only shared his vast wealth of knowledge, but has given back to the indigenous people of the New Hebrides their Christian heritage which has been locked up for so long in archives and a few private libraries. We, the New Hebrideans, for many generations to come, will praise God for the privilege of looking back through Mr. Miller's writing and learning of the firm foundation on which the Christian Church of the New Hebrides was built.

To read through the historic events in this book is like reading the eleventh chapter of Hebrews: "By faith they conquered kingdoms, administered justice, received promises, won strength out of weakness . . . By faith 'they' still speak, even though 'they' are dead . . ." "By faith . . ." They had little else, but they had Jesus Christ and unshakable faith in Him.

May God bless and challenge all who read through this book so that, together, as "we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes upon Jesus, the Pioneer and Perfecter of our faith"

Kami M. Shing

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Commendation

I AM VERY honoured to have been asked in my dual capacity as Moderator-General and Convenor of the Overseas Missions Committee to write this commendation to this most instructive book on the life and work of the Presbyterian Church in the New Hebrides to 1830. It is the first of an anticipated four volumes.

To be able to write a history about a nation, a people, a church, one needs to have an understanding of all three; and, in addition, be able to express in clear, simple language what one knows about each of them. It is indeed fortunate when a book is written by such a competent person. Such a book is LIVE. I. The Rev. Doctor Graham Miller has all the necessary attributes for writing a history of the Presbyterian Church of the New Hebrides. As a principal, a preacher, a missionary, administrator, and a friend of the people, he knows the situation at first hand experience and therefore writes as a "witness of these things". He is a man possessed of a fine, sharp mind that is quick to assess a situation rightly; he also possesses that rare gift of impartiality that allows him to write objectively about it—he paints it "warts and all"; and, in addition, he has a great love for the people of the New Hebrides which allows him to write with a great depth of feeling, which is so essential if one is to move one's readers.

The accounts are discussed in a very readable, non-technical way, and work, faith and life, are throughout recognized as inextricably bound together.

Dr. Miller's affection for his subject is obvious as one reads this lucid account of the beginnings of the Presbyterian Church in the New Hebrides. It must be regarded as essential reading for those who want to know the background of what is now a great church. We look forward with keen anticipation to the second volume which, I am sure, will be studded with treasures as is this one.

I cannot commend this work too highly to you. When you have finished reading it you will be glad and thankful that God put it into the heart of His servant to record such events.

Rt. Rev. K. J. GARDNER,
Moderator-General,
Presbyterian Church of Australia.

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Preface

LIVE HAS BEEN written for the people of the New Hebrides. I have tried to piece together the story of how the Good News came to these islands. The story is written as a people's book, from the inside, by one who watched the church reach self-government in 1948-1949. The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of the New Hebrides in 1973 encouraged me to do this work. The dedication indicates one's sense of the privilege which was ours as missionaries on Tongoa from 1941-1947, as principal of Tangoa Training Institute 1947-1952; and later as the first principal of the Bible College, 1971-1973.

Three Missions have an important place in this story: the London Missionary Society, the Melanesian Mission and the New Hebrides Presbyterian Mission. But this book aims to be not so much a story of the Missions as of the churches which took root under the work of these Missions more than one hundred years ago.

I have tried to write from the standpoint of those many New Hebrides people of today who are eager to know their national history. For this reason references to the island culture and customs run through the story. The use of New Hebrides words, proverbs and place names, and of bislama, the trade language, should help the island reader to relate more closely to the story.

This book begins the story of the period 1839-1880. The second volume will deal with the latter part of the same period, uncovering the story of early church planting island by island. This history has never before been written in detail for the people of the New Hebrides.

Many friends have helped me, and their names appear in the story. The older records, diaries, reports and books are mainly found in libraries. I express my gratitude to the following: The Presbyterian Church of the New Hebrides for access to their records in Vila; the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau, Canberra, for access to microfilm copies of some of this material; the Cultural Centre, Vila; the Latrobe State Library of Victoria, Melbourne; the Mitchell Library, Sydney; the National Library, Canberra; the United Church of Canada archives; the Presbyterian Church in Canada archives; the Provincial archives of Nova Scotia and the Ferguson Memorial Library of the Presbyterian Church in NSW. To the Rev. Brian Burton of the Presbyterian Media Centre,

Sydney, I am indebted for photographic help in presentation of the illustrations, and to Mr. David Miller for the maps. Mrs. Loraine Tompson, great grand-daughter of John and Charlotte Geddie, encouraged my brother in his editing for publication of John Geddie's Journal, and has encouraged me with access to all her resource materials.

Warm thanks are due to Mr. K. M. Shing, a son of Aneityum, a former dux student of Tangoa Training Institute and until recently headmaster of Onesua High School, for his Foreword; to the Rt. Rev. K. J. Gardner of Brisbane, Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Australia, for his Commendation; to Dr. John Garrett and Mrs. Garrett of Suva for their reading of the manuscript and their suggestions and to Miss Betty Cochlin who typed the final manuscript for publication.

To the Rev. C. R. Thomas, the energetic Convener of the Christian Education Committee, I am indebted for the sponsorship of publication by that Committee and the Overseas Missions Committee of the Presbyterian Church of Australia, and to Mr. W. Dixon of Bridge Printery, Sydney, who gave to the printing and publication of this book his personal skill and enthusiasm.

Our lasting debt is to that gracious lady who funded the publication of this history and to our friends of the New Hebrides, past and present, who welcomed us in 1941, taught us much of their own culture and have made us feel that we belong to them still.

J. GRAHAM MILLER

St. Giles' Presbyterian Manse,
Hurstville, Australia, 2220.

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PART ONE The Preparation

CHAPTER ONE

How the Church Began

THE PEOPLE WERE almost all in darkness when John and Charlotte Geddie landed at Aneityum on 29 July 1848. On that day he began his journal. This journal is now the most interesting and valuable of all the early sources for a history of the Presbyterian Church in the New Hebrides. Here is part of John Geddie's first entry in the journal; he is speaking of Aneityum:

"This is truly one of the dark places of the earth, and all the abominations of heathenism are practised without scruple or remorse. Our hearts are sometimes tempted to say, 'Can these dry bones live?' But we know that the gospel must be 'preached to every creature', that Christ shall have *the heathen for his inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession*, and that all things are possible with God. May the time to favour this dark island soon arrive." [Misi Gete p. 31].

The words in italics are taken by Mr Geddie from Psalm 2:8.

These islands are certainly at the uttermost parts of the earth; far from the England which sent out John Williams, the Nova Scotia which sent out John Geddie, and the land where the Son of God lived and died and rose again. Geddie believed that the Son had asked His Father for the people of the South Pacific as part of His promised inheritance. He also believed that the inheritance which the Father had promised, and which the Son had asked for, would be granted.

This island church began in the heart of God. It was given by the Father to the Lord Jesus because He purchased it by His saving death upon the Cross. These islands belonged to God before the first Polynesian teachers came, before the coral islands and volcanic mountains of the Pacific were discovered, before the world was made by the power of the living and true God. This truth encouraged John Geddie, the leaders of the London Missionary Society, and the workers who followed them and lived and died in the New Hebrides. That is why they did not give up or leave this land in darkness and death.

In this history we shall see that many lives were laid down; the lives of men, their wives and their little children, of Polynesians and Melanesians, Samoans and Rarotongans, Scotsmen and Englishmen, Canadians and Australians, Loyalty Islanders and New Zealanders, Aneityumese and Aniwan, Efatese and Eromangans. Every island had its apostles and graves. The graves and the history have largely been lost. But the living Church grows by the power and purpose of God.

This book seeks to tell about that history which had almost been lost.

CHAPTER TWO

God the First Missionary

The High God

LONG BEFORE THE coming of the Spaniards, Quiros and Torres, in 1606, or the coming of Captain James Cook in 1774, the New Hebridean people knew about the High God. As far back as traditions go they speak of the High God whom the ancestors revered and to whom they made sacrifices.

When the Rev. T. Watt Leggatt landed at East Malekula in 1887 he found that the people around Aulua spoke of the High God as Bokoro, but they knew very little about him.

On Aneityum the High God was called Inhujeraing, the maker of heaven and earth. The Aneityumese believed that he had many children and grandchildren, but nobody knew who their mother was. The Makuran people of the central New Hebrides called the High God Nasum.

In the year 1947 some students of the Tangoa Training Institute spent a week with me in the bush villages of Santo. As we sat around the fire at Morokiripu one night Triev-matan asked the chief if he knew about God. The old man shook his head.

Then he asked the chief, in his language, if he knew who made the trees and the taro.

"Etaro," was the quick reply.

Triev-matan next inquired, "Do you know Jesus Christ, God's Son?"

The chief looked a little sad as he replied:

"Mifala harim we Etaro i stap on top. Be mifala no harim samtaen we Etaro i gat wan pikini!" ("I have heard of the High God, Etaro; but I have never heard that he has a son.")

The ancestors knew about the High God. But they knew nothing about his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, the heart of the Good News. Wherever I have inquired I have found that the New Hebrides people had a name for the High God.

Most of the islands have lost any clear understanding about who the High God was and what he did for his people. But we learn from a study of the culture of the Efateese tribes of the central islands that many of the ancestors had a traditional knowledge of who Supwe was and what he required of men.

They believed that Supwe was the creator of all things, the only living and true God. He was good to his people and created everything for their benefit, trees and wild-cane for their houses, yams and taro for their food, fows and pigs for their feasts. Supwe had placed healing medicine in certain trees and leaves. He taught the people how to use these in times of sickness and gave the people their arts and crafts, their skills with axe and fire, the irrigation of the taro, their songs and their sacred men. He was the fountain of life, giving them their babies, healing their sick, and giving their spirits life after death.

Supwe owned the land and set up the chiefs as *supwe ni naranua*, gods of the land, his rulers on this earth. The chiefs had to account to the High God for the proper use of all the land. The people must present to the chief their firstfruits and gifts so that the village might make its sacrificial offerings. These gifts were seen as payment of rent to Supwe for the use of his land. A man was guilty of a sin against Supwe if he ate the new yams before the chief had made the new yam feast to Supwe. Sin demanded sacrifice by the shedding of blood. Usually this meant the death of the transgressor of the chief's *tapu*. The chief was God's sacred man on earth. The blood of pigs became the sacrificial blood for private sacrifices, family sacrifices and village sacrifices. Sacrifices were also made for births and marriages, chief-making and death.

The name of the High God was in daily use. A pretty insect was called *lango ki Supwe* — God's flying insect. A graceful reed was called *tiko ki Supwe* — God's walking-stick. A cord round the waist of a little boy was called *natali ki Supwe* — God's sacred cord. Local proverbs, songs and culture were full of words about the High God.

Animism and Monotheism

New Hebrideans believed that their fathers' religion was higher than animism. Animism is the worship of the spirits. Animism

was like the bark of the tree of belief in the High God. Monotheism is the firm belief in one living and true God, and worshipping Him above all other persons or things. This understanding of the High God, which many heathen people have had all over the world, was spoken of by the apostle Paul when he addressed the heathen in the Asia Minor city of Lystra, in 46AD (Acts 14: 16-17).

We can understand why the Rev. Peter Milne of Nguna decided to use the Efateese name Supwe for God in his translations of the Bible. There are no translations of the Scriptures anywhere in the islands which have spoken so long and so well to the hearts of our people as the Nguna-Tonga translations. One of the reasons for this fact is the choice of the name Supwe, the High God, to translate the name of the living and true God of the Bible. God was here before any missionary came. He was the first Missionary to the New Hebrides. But where did these high ideas of God come from? How did the fathers in the New Hebrides know about God?

CHAPTER THREE

Where Did We Come From?

Tom Avusa's question

THE FIRST RESIDENTIAL Presbyterian district school of recent times was built by the Tongvan church at Ere, Tongva, in January 1942. The threat of Japanese invasion was real and few missionaries were left in the Group. The first prefect of that school was Tom Avusa, now Ti Poloa-mata, the chief of Itakoma and a former member of the old Advisory Council of the New Hebrides Condominium.

One night in 1942 he came up from group study to ask a question. He said that all the students had been talking about it. "Misi, what happened to the ten tribes of Jews who were taken away by the Assyrians?"

I was astonished to hear this question. It concerned a matter which some western people speak about as the British-Israel teaching. This is the teaching that the Anglo-Saxon people of the British Commonwealth and North America are the descendants of these ten lost tribes.

I could not think that Tom Avusa had ever heard about this theory. But to make sure I asked,

"Why do you ask me this question?"

"Because we believe that we are the descendants of these lost tribes."

His reply astonished me as much as his question had done.

Tongvan customs

In those first six years of our life in the New Hebrides we were largely cut off from the outside world and enjoyed learning the language and culture of the people of the Shepherd Islands. One of the first facts that came clearly to me was the understanding of Supwe as the living and true God. Gradually other things began to enlarge upon this central idea of the High God.

Where Did We Come From?

I remember the first time I saw a circumcision-tree beside the bush track on Tongva. No one had told me what all those sharpened sticks meant which I saw thrust into the trunk of the tree. I thought, "This looks as if our people have just had a circumcision ceremony." Later I found that circumcision was common to most of the islands of the New Hebrides.

Soon after we reached Tongva, in July 1941, the people came from one village after another with large gifts of yams, taro and sweet potatoes. At first I thought that this was simply a very kind gift. The Tongvans had suffered severely from a hurricane in 1940 and food was not plentiful.

Meat was rarely eaten as few animals could be spared. But I observed that each gift of food was accompanied by a gift of meat, a piece of beef, or pork, or a few fowls, or even a large fish. No village brought only vegetables. Why was this? I began to think there must be a reason for these gifts. After reflection I was sure that the new yam festivals of the fathers were a combination of two of the Hebrew festivals of the Old Testaments — the feast of first-fruits (Num 28: 26-31) and the day of atonement (Lev. 16).

The new yam feast

On Tongva in olden times the new yam feast began with a day of atonement for the whole village. Public and private sins were confessed through the mediation of the village priest, just as the sun was setting in the west. The priest climbed into the fork of a great *namalau's* tree. He turned his back to the setting sun as he confessed the sins the people had committed during the year that was closing. Each time he made a confession he hurled a throwing-stick over his shoulder into the dense bush, as if getting rid of that particular sin.

The people then returned from outside the village to the earthen ovens. The food was taken out. The *atawi* or priest ate a little of the sacred yams and blew a portion towards the sky, with the words "*Angi Supwe ni elangi!*" "For the High God!" He next blew out a portion to the ground saying, "*Angi Supwe ni navunua!*" "for the God of the land!" — the village chief. Pigs had been killed and by this ceremony the people's sins had been put away. All were reconciled to God and to one another. This

feast was probably the most important event of the year to the forefathers on Tongoa. It meant that they could have the continued favour of the High God and the renewed friendship of those in the tribe who had been on bad terms with them.

There are other customs which closely parallel the Old Testament and the religion of the Hebrews. Together they may help to indicate an answer to the question, "Where did we come from?"

From the Ancient East to the Pacific

CHAPTER FOUR

SOME OF THE people believed that their ancestors came from the ancient East, the cradle of the human race. It seems unlikely that traditions of such a migration should linger on in the New Hebrides, but I have found the results of my own inquiries verified by those of older and earlier scholars among our island peoples.

Ti Tongoa-roto was the chief government assessor on Tongoa when we arrived in 1941. He told me of a place on his island named Mitiken. He said that the name Mitiken was the same as the Midian of the Old Testament (Exodus 2:15). The people of Pele on Tongoa have a sacred stone which, they say, was brought all the way from the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11: 1-9). They prove this by writing on it with another stone and then rubbing the writing off without leaving a mark. They say this is proof of what God did to the nations at Babel!

John Geddie, in his journal, quotes a passage from the writings of the Rev. Walter Lawry, first Wesleyan missionary to Tonga in the Friendly Islands, in 1822. Lawry wrote these words about the people of the South Pacific after visiting both Tonga and Fiji one hundred and fifty years ago:

"The general expression of their countenance and the dress are Asiatic: so is their language. . . . Some of their customs seem to be Jewish, such [as] circumcision, the feast of the first fruits, and the cities of refuge; which show that from whatever part of the eastern family they spring, Jewish rites are strongly impressed on their national character. . . . Might it not be possible that the ten Tribes, who broke off in the days of Rehoboam, and went towards the east carrying with them some of their neighbours the sons of Ham from Africa and proceeding by way of Hindostan (India) might reach the Malayan sea, and thus people the Pacific Ocean? . . . The Malay language and the language of these seas have relation to each other." [Misi Gete p. 139, 140].

These early ideas of Mr. Lawry were the subject of careful study by Geddie's son-in-law, the Rev. Dr. Daniel Macdonald who settled at Havannah Harbour, West Efate, in 1872. He finally wrote two scholarly books, "The Asiatic Origin of the Oceanic Languages" (1894) and "The Oceanic Languages" (1907). Dr. Macdonald's books seek to show the development of our languages from the family of languages of which Hebrew was the best known, through Malay, to the Pacific and the New Hebrides.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Winds and the Waves Obey Him

WHEN WE SPREAD out a map of the world, with the Pacific Ocean in the middle, we quickly see how far we are from the countries which sent the first missionaries.

From England and Canada

From England they came in sailing ships by way of the Cape of Good Hope and Australia. From Nova Scotia, on the eastern seaboard of Canada, they came by way of Cape Horn and Hawaii. Some of the Nova Scotian missionaries found it better to cross the Atlantic to England and then travel by the Cape of Good Hope. These were long, uncomfortable and often dangerous journeys.

From Samoa

The Polynesian teachers who came from Samoa and the Cook Islands also depended upon the wind. The first of them came to the New Hebrides on the sailing ship "Camden" in 1839 with the Rev. John Williams. They continued to come to help until about 1871. A few teachers came in the 1870's from the Loyalty Islands near New Caledonia. All depended upon the winds and the sea, and above all on *tokolau*, the faithful trade wind of the South Pacific. I can find no reference to any early missionary teacher from Polynesia or from the West who lost his life at sea. God seemed to take them under his wing and bring them to Melanesia in safety.

From Scotland

The winds of the Spirit were blowing across the west of Scotland in the late 18th century and early 19th century. Some ministers and many of the common people began to pray and work so that the Good News would go out from Great Britain to the ends of

the earth. They gave warm support to the London Missionary Society when it was formed in 1795.

Many of the early missionaries of this Society were Presbyterians from the smaller Presbyterian denominations which broke off from the Church of Scotland in the 17th and 18th centuries. Three of these denominations of Presbyterians who sent us missionaries were the Reformed Presbyterian Church, the United Secession Church and the Relief Church. Later on the Free Church of Scotland also sent men. None of these early Scots missionaries came from the Church of Scotland. The "old kirk" refused to commence a Foreign Mission for many years after 1795. In that year Dr. John Erskine sought unsuccessfully in the General Assembly of the Established Church of Scotland for such a work to be commenced. At that time missionaries and evangelists found no official encouragement in that Church.

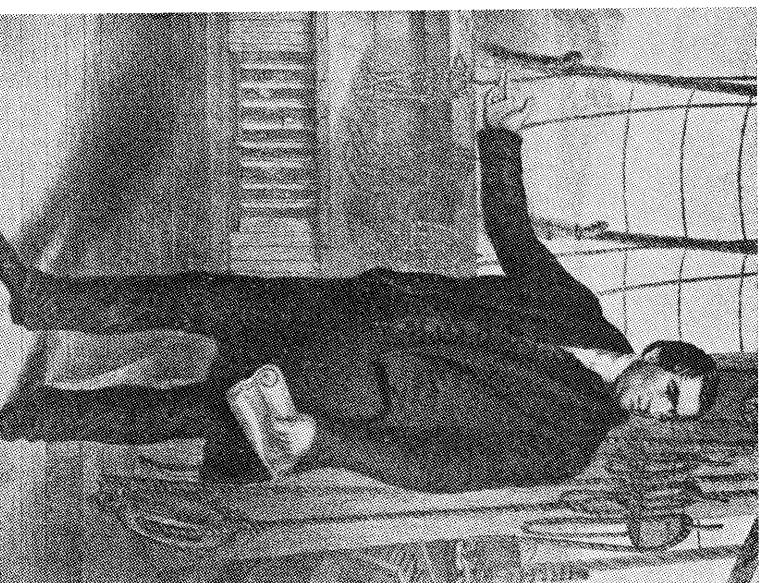
The English Baptist Missionary Society was formed in 1792 to support William Carey in India. Carey's missionary zeal was fired by his reading of James Cook's discoveries in the Pacific.

The London Missionary Society (LMS) was the parent of the New Hebrides Mission. The LMS was formed in Great Britain to give Presbyterians, Congregationalists and other non-Baptists a chance to work together in world-wide missionary outreach. In 1796 the LMS sent its first ship "The Duff," to the Eastern Pacific to begin its main mission on Tahiti.

John Williams

The Rev. John Williams joined the LMS in 1817. He proved to be God's key man in the evangelization of the South West Pacific. As a youth he worked in a hardware store in London. He was converted to Christ at the age of seventeen, began his training at eighteen and was ordained at twenty. He then married a bride of nineteen and they sailed for Polynesia.

Williams proved to be good at languages. He was friendly with the people and a man of courage, vision and faith. In 1818 he settled at Raiatea in the Society Islands. The Christians grew rapidly in number and began to set about the evangelization of other heathen islands. God blessed this work and gradually the Polynesian evangelists of the LMS advanced across the islands of central Polynesia. From 1823 to the time of his death Williams



THE PIONEERS OF THE L.M.S.

John Williams on the L.M.S. ship "Camden", 1839.

made voyages to the Cook Islands, Samoa and Tonga. Last of all he sailed to the New Hebrides where he was killed in 1839.

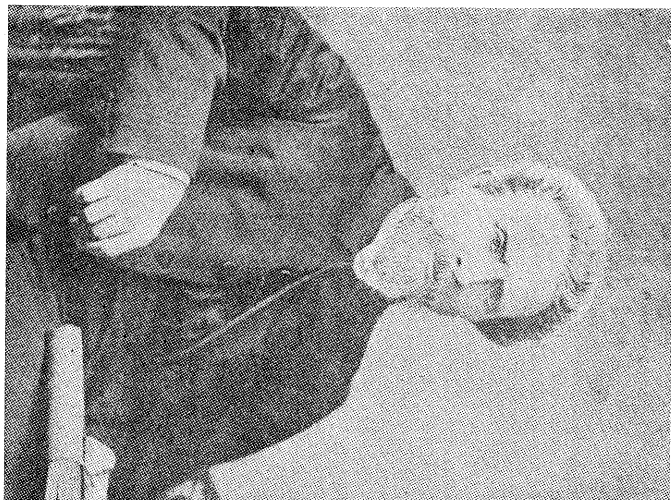
The Polynesian teachers

Williams achieved this rapid expansion through the use he made of the new converts as co-workers. First he evangelized an island. He taught the people to read. He thus brought each new area to literacy and the knowledge of the Scriptures. Then he trained leaders for missionary outreach as evangelists to other islands. When Williams sailed from Samoa in 1839 he was burdened for the savage islands of the New Hebrides. He brought

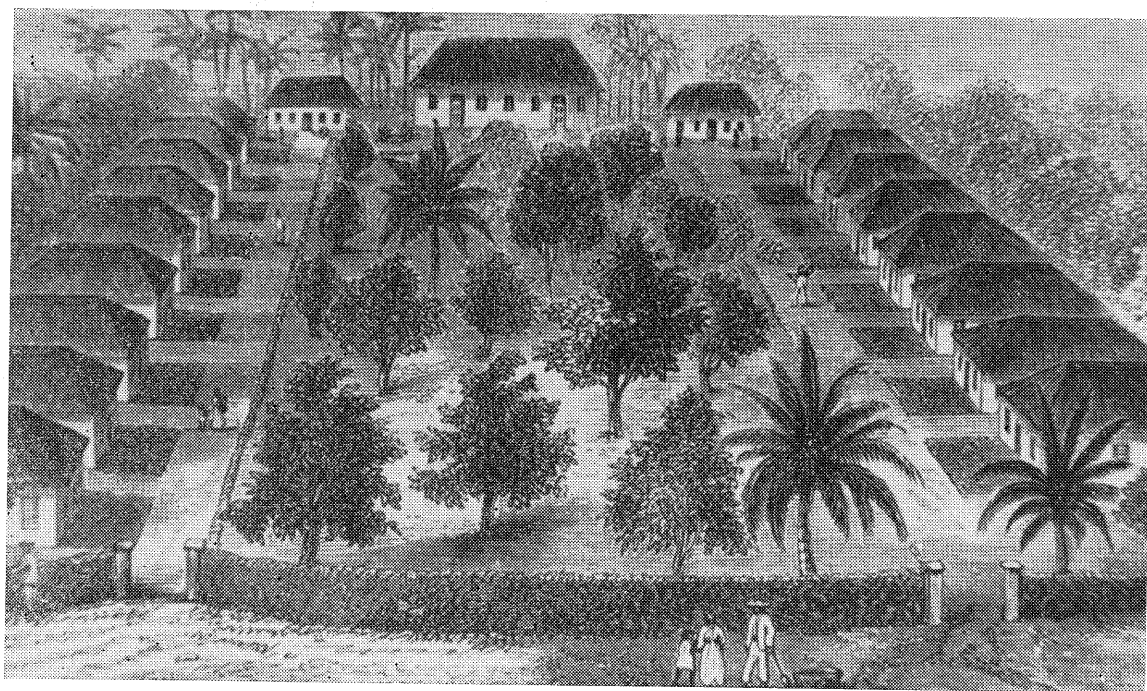
a team of twelve Samoan evangelists. When he was killed others were ready to carry on the task.

Training institutions were begun in Samoa and Rarotonga. From these a steady and eager stream of evangelists flowed out to other islands. They were the pioneer bearers of the Good News to the New Hebrides.

There are true stories of Polynesian canoes which have been blown more than a thousand miles across the South Pacific and have made landfalls in the New Hebrides. Descendants of some of these people are found in such Polynesian areas of the New Hebrides as Makatea on Emae, and Fila and Mele on Efate. Others have mingled with the Melanesian inhabitants to form the cultural groups that we find on Tanna, Tongoa, Paama and elsewhere. Here is the true story of one of these canoes which was blown to our islands about the year 1820.



Dr. George Turner who, with Henry Nisbet and their wives, were missionaries on Tanna 1842-1843. Later he was head of Malua Training Institution, Samoa.



Malua, where many of the Polynesian missionaries to the New Hebrides were trained, and some New Hebrideans. School and students' houses, 1850s.

home islands. He told them, through a Maori interpreter in his crew, that the worship of the old gods had ceased on Samoa. The worship of Jehovah had been everywhere received with joy. A new day had broken for the whole of Samoa. Sualo and his Samoan friends were excited. They asked Captain Lewis to try to get some Samoan teachers for Efate. Sualo promised the captain that he would assist the teachers to spread this message on Efate.

First Samoan teachers, 1845

The "John Williams" sailed to Efate, reaching Pango Bay on 1 May 1845. The missionaries found Sualo. Pomare the chief of Erakor promised to protect the Samoan teachers. Four teachers were landed. Two commenced work at Erakor and two at nearby Pango village. Pomare, the chief, remained strong and faithful through all the ups and downs and opposition of the heathen. He died in the epidemic of 1861, a Christian. This was just before the Erakor church was constituted.

Sualo goes home

Sualo was less firm. Perhaps he grew a little jealous of the growing influence of the Samoan teachers. In 1854 he asked to be taken home to Samoa and was given a passage on the "John Williams." At that time the Christian mission to South Efate was in ruins. Sualo may have felt that all was lost. He was probably about sixty when he left. The centenary of the coming of the teachers was observed in 1945. Every year the anniversary of the arrival of these teachers is remembered with thanksgiving by the churches and villages of South Efate. [On Sualo see William Gill, Gems from the Coral Islands, 1855 p. 55ff].

CHAPTER SIX

The Winds Blow Sualo to Erakor

The canoes from Samoa

A FEW YEARS before the Good News reached Samoa a defeated war-party of about one hundred Samoans left their island for Tonga, over five hundred miles to the southwest. Contrary winds took them out of their course. Many of the Samoans died before the canoes reached land in the New Hebrides. The survivors went ashore at Tongoa opposite Ewose Island. Fighting drove them away. They tried to sail east to Samoa, but the wind forced them back. They finally came ashore on Efate near Erakor.

Sualo at Erakor

Efate was then populated by many warring tribes. Sualo and his friends were tall, strong and experienced warriors. The chief of Erakor received them and adopted the Polynesian title Pomare, written as Bomal in the local language. Sualo soon became respected among the bush tribes of South Efate as a powerful fighting man. Pomare gave Sualo his daughter for his wife. Thus the Samoan warrior gained power and influence on South Efate at a time when there were many people. He was still a heathen. He had not heard about the Lord Jesus Christ.

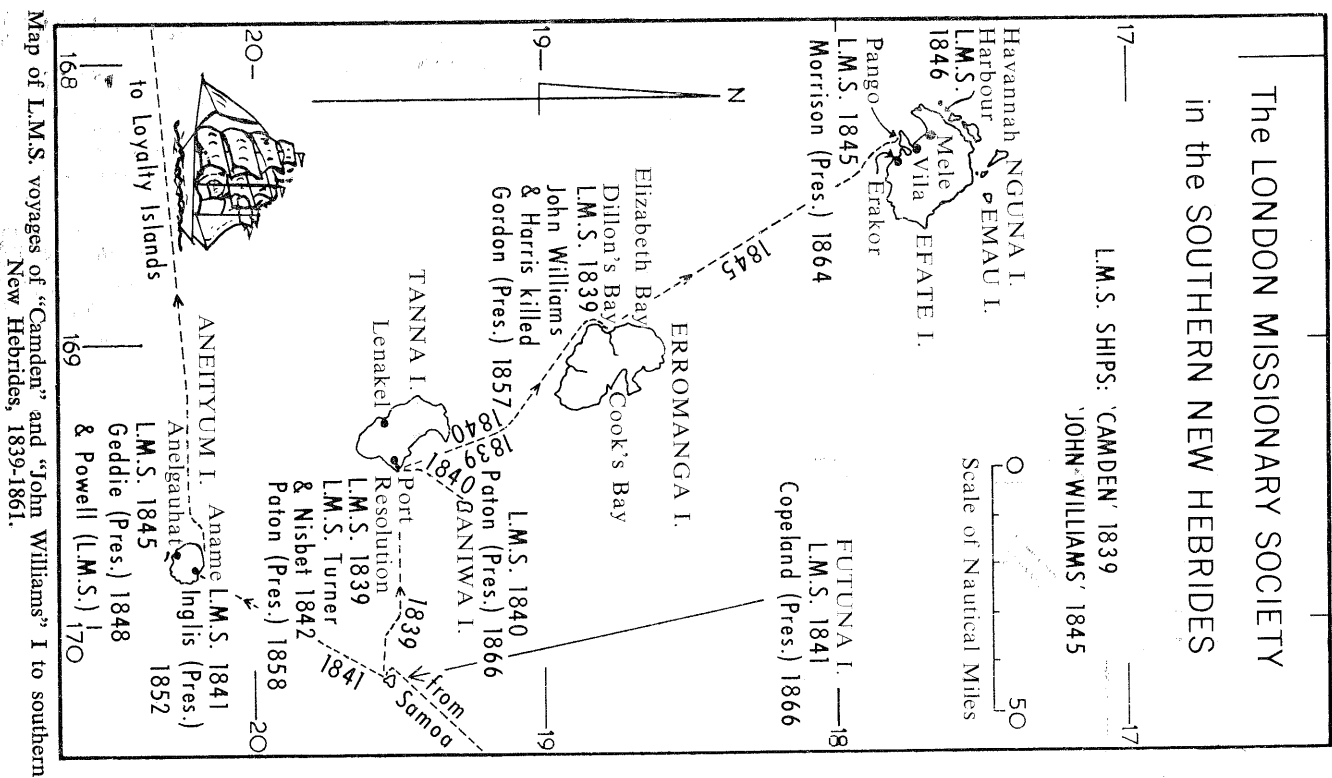
In 1845 the LMS ship "John Williams" lay at anchor at Dillon's Bay, Eromanga. The ship had hoped to place Polynesian teachers on Eromanga. This was the kind of outreach that John Williams would have wished for. But because of the lawless sandalwood trade the position was too risky. The LMS missionaries were wondering what they should do. Just then Captain Lewis of the small sandalwood vessel "Ariel" came on board the "John Williams."

He told the LMS missionaries of some Samoans at Erakor who wanted Christian teachers. Captain Lewis said that he had spoken to the Samoans about the new religion which had come to their

PART TWO

**John Williams and the London
Missionary Society**

The LONDON MISSIONARY SOCIETY in the SOUTHERN NEW HEBRIDES



Map of L.M.S. voyages of "Camden" and "John Williams" I to southern New Hebrides, 1839-1861.

CHAPTER SEVEN

John Williams in Scotland

SCOTLAND HEARD the stirring addresses of John Williams in 1836, while he was on furlough in Britain. The Christians of the smaller Presbyterian denominations were greatly encouraged and began to plan their obedience in the support of Christian missions.

The United Secession Church

The United Secession Church gave Williams five hundred pounds — a large sum of money in those days — to secure for that church a mission field in the Western Pacific. New Caledonia was then suggested to them and the idea stuck in their minds. But later the Church chose a field nearer home in West Africa. They transferred their interest in the Western Pacific to their daughter Presbyterian Church in Canada, called the Church of the Lower Provinces of British North America. This Church had a growing missionary interest because of the vigorous work of a young minister the Rev. John Geddie. Geddie was then in his first parish in Prince Edward Island. Geddie's family had close links with the LMS. Geddie read the Society's magazines with interest. We shall learn later how God called him as the first missionary of that church to the New Hebrides.

The Reformed Presbyterian Church

The second Scottish church to feel the impact of John Williams' visit was the Reformed Presbyterian Church. That church had been prepared by missionary-minded ministers from 1828 onwards. In 1838 the Rev. Alexander Duff of the Church of Scotland was home from India and stirred up the Scottish churches for foreign missions.

The Reformed Presbyterian Church agreed in 1838 to commence such a mission. They chose the Maoris of the Manawatu district of New Zealand as their field. James Duncan was their

first missionary and John Inglis was their second. In 1852 Inglis was transferred by his Church to the New Hebrides Mission, the first of many excellent men from the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland. The best known of them was John G. Paton who reached the islands in 1858.

The Relief Church

The third Scottish Church to feel the impact of John Williams' visit was the small Relief Church. Two of its students for the ministry offered for service with the LMS. They were Henry Nisbet and George Turner. Both proved gifted, devoted and long-lived men, in the service of the LMS in the Pacific. The LMS in London appointed Nisbet and Turner to Tanna. They and their wives landed on Tanna late in 1842, making their station with the Polynesian teachers at Port Resolution. After a few months the opposition became so severe that all were forced to escape by sea. They were taken to Samoa on a whaling ship, the "Highlander." Turner became the Principal of the Training Institution at Malua, Samoa, and kept a close link with the New Hebrides through the men he trained as evangelists to our islands. Both he and Nisbet came back from time to time as missionary deputies to see and encourage their Polynesian teachers in the New Hebrides.

The Polynesian teachers

We now turn to the most remarkable work of all those early years. This was the eager and costly service of Samoan and Cook Islands men and women as evangelists to the New Hebrides. It was largely through the devoted lives and deaths of these new converts from the Polynesian islands that the people saw, for the first time, the meaning of the Christian life. They saw that Christians could live well and die well. The Polynesians were bigger and stronger than our people, but refused to fight to preserve their lives. They trusted their God in every trouble and loved and cared for the people of the islands. They were the brown angels of the Western Pacific.

CHAPTER EIGHT

After the Death of John Williams

EARLY ONE MORNING in 1943 old Tom Maraki of Tongoa came up to see me at our home at "Ere." He was sobbing with grief. I was silent for a while and no words were spoken. Then he showed me an old crumpled picture. It was a drawing of the murder of John Williams by the chief Auwi Auwi at Dillon's Bay, Eromanga. There was Williams, falling at the mouth of the river, struck down by a club. Tom Maraki's heart was heavy because the first missionary to come to us was killed by us. He seemed to feel a personal sense of shame and sorrow, more than a century after Williams' death. God used the death of John Williams to awaken the churches to their missionary duty. In other parts of the world people heard of the distant New Hebrides and began to pray for the conversion of their people. Young men like Geddie, Turner, Nisbet, Inglis, Gordon and Paton had their thoughts turned to the South Pacific and to the New Hebrides.

The first Polynesian teachers

Nearer at hand, in Polynesia, the leaders among the first generation of believers on Samoa had begun to train for Christian service. They were ready to go as evangelists to heathen islands, or as teachers among their own people. These men had all known the power of darkness and the liberty of their new life in Christ. When they heard of Williams' death they longed to go and launch the work in the New Hebrides, the Loyalty Islands and New Caledonia.

The following chapters will tell briefly the long-forgotten story of these faithful, brave, unselfish Samoans and Rarotongans, both men and women.

Look first at the map of the southern islands of the New Hebrides (p. 20). This shows the direction from which the LMS ships "Camden" and "John Williams" came to us from Samoa. The

date is given for the year in which the first Polynesian evangelists landed on each of these islands and on Efate.

From 1839 to 1861, with the help and guidance of a few missionaries, these men and women sought to carry the Good News to Tanna, Aniwa, Eromanga, Futuna, Aneityum, Efate, Epi and Santo. More than one hundred of these men, most of them married, came to help. Most were experienced men who had completed their studies and served for a time in their own islands. They were physically strong, socially mature, stable in character and well-established in their Christian faith and life. They needed these qualities in the testing and discouraging conditions which they met in these islands. They had many advantages over European missionaries. They could live in island conditions without much difficulty because they were accustomed to the food, houses and climate. They understood local thinking and customs. They thus avoided mistakes and were able to respect the *tapus*.

Their difficulties

Some of them learned the language of their islands. Others failed. All faced a problem of health because of malaria. They had no resistance to this disease, common in the New Hebrides. They quickly caught fever. Many of them died. Others were so weakened that they could do little work for long periods of time. Very few gave in to these conditions. They struggled on in the face of the most terrible privations. Dr Inglis of Aneityum says that by the year 1856 the number who had died was more than fifty. A few were murdered; some were injured for life with clubs and other weapons. Some were killed by the superstitious heathen when they saw the teachers delirious with malaria.

A famous convert to the Christian faith during the Roman persecutions of the Church in the second century, Tertullian, saw that the Church cannot be destroyed by persecution. He wrote, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church." This was to prove true many times over in the savage New Hebrides.

The LMS ships

The Polynesian evangelists did not work alone. They had the guidance, encouragement and practical help of the Samoan Mission. The LMS missionaries took it in turn, usually two at a time, to accompany their ship on its visits to the Western

Missions in the New Hebrides, the Loyalties and New Caledonia. On these visits the missionaries brought the evangelists food and other supplies. They removed any who were ill or in need of a change, placed new teachers where there were openings, and closed stations where work was no longer possible.

The LMS missionaries

The LMS missionaries were able and sincere men, well-skilled in the Polynesian languages and customs. They had a deep sympathy for the teachers in all their perils, loneliness and suffering. Through their careful record of all that took place we can now picture the lives and work of the Polynesian evangelists clearly. The Rev. A. W. Murray's books are "Missions in Western Polynesia" (1863) and "The Martyrs of Polynesia" (1885). Earlier than this the Rev. William Gill of Rarotonga published "Gems from the Coral Islands" (1855). These three books give accounts of many of the early Polynesian stations and martyrs in the islands.

We shall now follow the order in which the LMS ships first made contact with the New Hebrides, and carry the story of the LMS as far as 1861, when the New Hebridean Church was strong enough to supply most of the evangelists and teachers. A few Polynesian and Loyalty Islands men continued to help until the 1870's. In 1903 Dr. H. A. Robertson of Aneityum and Eromanga paid tribute to The London Missionary Society as "that noble society which began the New Hebrides Mission and then generously passed it over to the Presbyterians." [Eromanga The Martyr Isle, London 1903]. The following chapters are the tribute of the Presbyterian Church of today to the London Missionary Society and all its devoted workers.

boat. The chief asked to be taken aboard the "Camden." There Williams was able to talk with the chief by using Samoan and Rarotongan words. The chief promised to look after any teacher who might be settled on Futuna. The people on shore refused to allow any of their number to go off to the ship. Williams felt that the visit had done good.

He wrote in his journal:

"Although we were not rich enough in teachers to spare two for this island, it will be occupied as soon as possible, and indeed we gave them to understand that we should visit them again shortly . . . to settle teachers as soon as we can possibly spare them."

[Memoirs of Rev. John Williams, Prout, p. 382, 383].

John Williams never saw the island again. Three days later, on 20 November, he was killed on Eromanga. The LMS leaders remembered his pledge to the Futuna chief, and honoured it.

Teachers landed, 1841

In March 1841 the "Camden" returned to the New Hebrides with the Rev. A. W. Murray on board. He was to have a long association with the New Hebrides Mission and was to write the history of the LMS work in Western Polynesia. On board were two Samoan teachers for Futuna, Apela and Samuela. They were settled on the north-west of Futuna among the Imounga people. The chief of this tribe was Kautiama. He promised to look after the teachers and protect their lives. He also offered to go with the "Camden" to Aneityum and help the LMS to settle teachers there. A crowd of Futunese took this rare chance to make a quick trading trip to Aneityum. There they bartered their mats and baskets for food. The "Camden" was successful in settling teachers on north Aneityum and was back at Futuna a few days later. The teachers seemed safe and well, and the ship sailed away.

When the "Camden" returned in June 1842 it brought Samuela's wife and daughter to join the mission party on Futuna. All looked promising and the teachers were content to remain. The tide soon turned against them when sickness broke out on Futuna.

Meanwhile the ever-expanding mission of the LMS in the South Pacific required a better ship. In 1842 the "Camden" was sold and a fine new ship, the "John Williams," took her place, named after the martyr of Eromanga. These delays meant that no LMS ship called back to Futuna until 1845. In the meantime tragedy had overtaken the work on Futuna.

CHAPTER NINE

Futuna, Island of the First Four Martyrs

John Williams' visit on the "Camden," 1839

JOHN WILLIAMS HAD made plans to visit the New Hebrides in 1830. Not till 1839 did he have the ship to make his mission to the New Hebrides possible. When the "Camden" sailed from Samoa in 1839 John Williams seemed to feel that danger and death lay before him. His wife felt the same way and tried to persuade him not to go on this voyage. He preached a farewell message from the words of Acts 20:36-38 and lingered over the passage about the Ephesian elders "sorrowing most of all for the words which he spoke, that they should see his face no more." All were deeply moved. At midnight he said goodbye. He seemed to know it was his last farewell.

Just before the ship reached Futuna, the most easterly island in the New Hebrides, Williams wrote in his last letter:

"I have just heard dear Captain Morgan say, that we are sixty miles off the Hebrides, so that we shall be there early to-morrow morning. This evening we are to have a special prayer-meeting. Oh, how much depends upon the efforts of to-morrow! Will the savages receive us or not? . . . I brought twelve missionaries with me; two have settled at a beautiful island called Rotuma; the ten I have are for the New Hebrides and New Caledonia. The approaching week is to me the most important of my life."

[Memoirs of Rev. John Williams, Prout, p. 381].

John Williams' missionaries were all light-skinned Polynesians. The "Camden" reached Futuna on Sunday morning 17 November 1839. Canoes came off from the rocky island, but their occupants would not go on board the "Camden." The "Camden's" boat was lowered and Williams' men pulled towards the shore. A canoe came alongside and a Futuna chief leaped into Williams'

A high sea was running when the "John Williams" approached Futuna in April 1845. The ship stood in as close as possible and lowered her boat. The boat's crew attempted to land at Imounga. There were armed crowds on the shore, and no women or children about — a bad sign. When the crew asked where the teachers were they were told that the teachers were busy in their gardens.

The murder of the teachers

There was nothing for it but to sail on to Aneityum. There the crew learned the full story. When sickness struck Futuna the Polynesian teachers were blamed for it by the *tapu* men of the island. Some Tanna men visited Futuna at that time and told the Futunese how the Tannese had stopped the sickness on Tanna by killing the LMS teachers. This advice seemed to confirm the thoughts of the Futuna people of the Imounga tribe. They decided to kill their teachers.

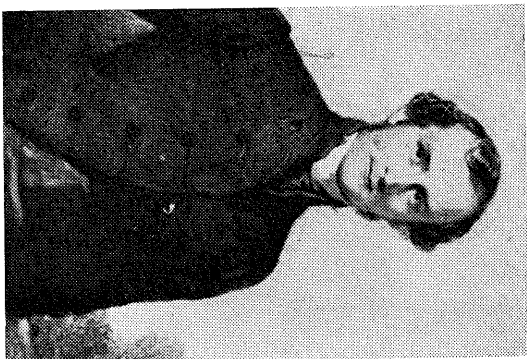
Apela and Samueta and his daughter had gone off to their gardens in the morning, leaving Samueta's wife at home. The people of Imounga, armed with spears and clubs and shouting their war cries, attacked the three in the bush garden. Samueta was speared; then he and Apela and the girl were clubbed to death.

Excited warriors rushed to the house where they found Samueta's wife alone. The leader of the murderers, Nasaua, offered the woman her life on the condition that she become his wife. She refused and tried to satisfy the men with gifts. Kautiana, the chief of Imounga — the chief who had promised to protect the teachers — then took the club from Nasaua's hands and struck her down.

The bodies of the four martyrs were cooked but the Futunese did not like the taste of their flesh. They then buried the bodies in the sand and later used the small bones for fish hooks. All the teachers' goods were taken and their house burned. In defiance of the Christians the people of Futuna used to deck themselves at their heathen dances in the clothing of these Christians.

We honour the memory of these four martyrs, the first LMS evangelists to lay down their lives at the violent hands of the New Hebrides people. The deaths on Tanna were all from

THE ANGLICAN PIONEERS



The Right Reverend George A. Selwyn of England, first bishop of New Zealand, who first visited New Hebrides in 1848. Portrait at the time of his consecration at the age of 31.



The Rev. John Coleridge Patteson of England whom Selwyn trained as his successor in Melanesia; consecrated first Bishop of Melanesia in 1861 at the age of 34.

sickness, which the heathen Tannese said was caused by their gods.

The Imounga chief, Kautiama, by his leading share in this murder, undid all the good he had done in 1841 by welcoming the teachers to Futuna and by helping to prepare the way for the teachers on Aneityum. The Rev. Dr. William Gunn said many years later that the district of Imounga became one of the hardest places in the New Hebrides to win for Christ. Kautiama lived and died a heathen.

The Melanesian Mission

The Melanesian Mission grew out of the missionary vision and voyages of Bishop George Augustus Selwyn, first Bishop of the Church of England in New Zealand. He and his successor Bishop John Coleridge Patteson will often appear in these pages as close friends of the New Hebrides people and of the missionaries of the LMS and the Presbyterian Mission.

In 1851 Bishop G.A. Selwyn of the Melanesian Mission called at Futuna and obtained two lads for training in New Zealand. They were Saliva and Yarai. When he brought them back at the end of the year the two lads refused to return to New Zealand. Saliva later went to Fiji where he was killed in a fight. Yarai remained on Futuna to help the work of God. He was a slow learner but assisted the work in two ways. He sold land to the first missionary, the Rev. Joseph Copeland, for a mission station. Later Yarai was the first Futuna man to give up an important heathen ceremony.

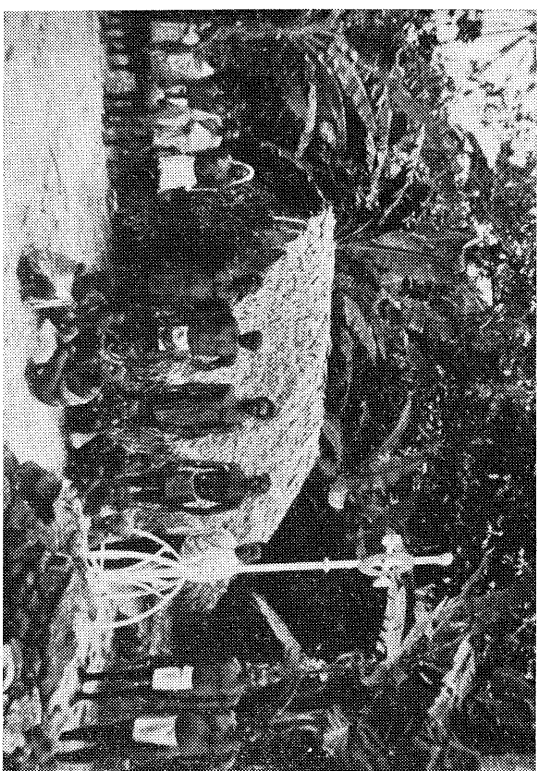
The Aneityum church sends teachers

In 1853 a new attempt was made to take the Gospel to Futuna, this time by the Presbyterian Church on Aneityum. This young church began its missionary outreach by sending Waihit and Iosefa to Futuna. They were placed on the island by the "John Williams" and were later strengthened by other Aneityumese and LMS teachers.

We know the names of two of these later Polynesian teachers. One was Kakita of Rarotonga. Another was Ru, whom the LMS in 1859 placed at Ipa'u, near the north-eastern point of Futuna. The people stole his chest of personal goods and would have killed him. But Konafia, the heathen priest of Ipa'u, and his son

Popoina, pleaded for Ru's life to be spared. These two Futuna men then joined the worship and Popoina became the first Futuna man to profess his faith in Christ, in the time of the Rev. Joseph Copeland. Mr. Copeland first visited Futuna in 1860. He resided on this island from 1866 to 1881 with two breaks due to his wife's illness and death.

The full story of the mission of the Aneityum church to Futuna is told in chapter twenty-two.



Memorial Cross, Nukapu, Santa Cruz Islands, to commemorate the place where Patteson was killed in 1871.