

WALTER LAWRY  
and the Wesleyan  
Mission in the  
South Seas

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The Reverend Walter Lawry. Portrait by William Gush painted in 1840.

## Foreword

I first became interested in Walter Lawry twenty years ago, when working over the Mission Correspondence seeking material for the centenary brochure of Wesley College, Paerata. The Lawry reports and letters stood out from the rest. It was clear that his position and personality made an immediate impact on the Mission, and especially on its relations with the Government. He lifted the status of the Wesleyans and helped the early stages of transition from a Mission to the Maoris to an indigenous church. Why then the unhappy end? This story attempts to set the events in historical focus, and to explain why things happened as they did. It may even have something to say to contemporary Methodism.

The bare facts are there for anyone to dig out of official minutes and reports. But the light and shade, the details that bring the story to life, come from papers and old letters, and from oral tradition handed down among the members of the gregarious Lawry clan, who shared freely with me. I am especially grateful to the family of the late Rev. A. C. Lawry for permission to use their great-grandfather's Journal for the years 1818-1825.

My thanks are also due to Mrs Lucy Marshall of Henderson who, as a trained research worker, has followed every trail and knows more about her great-great-grandfather than any other person does. She has been most generous with her help. I wish also to thank the Mitchell Library, Sydney, for extracts from the 1851 Journal.

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President, N.Z. Wesley Historical Society.

## CHAPTER ONE.

### The Early Years

Walter Lawry was born on August 3rd, 1793, at Rutherin Bridge, near Bodmin in Cornwall, and was brought up on a farm called Tregarten, in the parish of Gorran near Mevagissey in the same county. The family has been traced back to the late 17th Century, and there were Quaker elements in his ancestry. Walter's father was Joseph Lawry, a farmer and 'captain' (i.e., foreman or manager) of a mining gang. Our Walter was the only surviving son, but he had plenty of relatives, including nieces Emily and Martha Vercoe, later married respectively to Thomas Russell, solicitor, of Auckland and London, and to John Grigg of Longbeach, Canterbury.

His grandparents were Anglicans, though there were family links with the Wesleys going back to the middle of the 18th Century. (His father was a cousin of William O'Bryan, founder of the Bible Christians). We do not know when his parents joined the Connexion, but we do know that in the year 1814 Walter and Joseph Lawry applied to the Bishop of Exeter for permission to build a chapel at Gorran. Walter was a family name. Joseph's younger brother, Samuel, had a son, also named Waiter, who emigrated to Canterbury, New Zealand, in 1862. His son Samuel was the Rev. S. Lawry, well known as a minister in the New Zealand Conference. Anyway, the chapel at Gorran was built, and opened for worship in May, 1816. It seats about 120 people, and is still used for worship, being known today as Gorran Highlanes Methodist Church. It recently celebrated its 150th anniversary.

The Lawry family were not poor. They belonged to a class well represented among the Wesleys of that generation, the enterprising vigorous "new" men who had the wit and the industry to exploit the opportunities of the times. To these Methodism made a strong appeal. It gave a powerful moral and emotional centre to their lives, and at the same time made them free of chapel society, where they were relatively independent of squire and parson.

That young Walter was an only son would improve his financial prospects. His father was a farmer, in a time of high prices, who like many others of his kind in Cornwall spent the off-season in mining ventures. These were often small affairs employing only a few men on a share basis, but they could be very profitable, especially in time of war. So we may assume that by the time Walter reached manhood his father was prosperous. It is clear that the son had money at his disposal when he arrived in New South Wales, even before his advantageous marriage. He was a young man who moved confidently in the Wesleyan circles of the day. His background was secure.

**Walter Lawry and the Wesleyan Mission in the South Seas by E.W.Hames**

In his obituary in the "*Methodist Magazine*" it is stated that he was converted early in life, and began to preach soon afterwards. As a preacher he was remarkably popular, attracting large congregations while still a youth. We know very little about his education, only that he spent a period at an "Academy". This was at Plymouth, under the Rev. Mr Burgess, and was intended to fit him for the Wesleyan ministry. In later life he read widely, and was able to express himself fluently and clearly on paper as well as in the pulpit. He had a gift for words. His letters and reports are models of what such things should be. He thought clearly and expressed himself plainly. He could sum up a man or a situation in a phrase.

Letters to his parents, which have survived, show that in 1816 he was engaged in the Redruth Circuit, under Richard Treffrey as Superintendent Minister. He appeared to have his headquarters at Falmouth. He was employed as what we would call a Home Missionary, while he tried out his capacity for the work of a travelling preacher. In the Minutes of Conference for 1817 we find his name among the preachers "received on trial". In the Station Sheet, under Foreign Missions II Asia (they were aware of our essential link with the East 150 years ago!) we read:

12. New South Wales Samuel Leigh, Walter Lawry.

On the 23rd December, 1817, Lawry sailed for Port Jackson as Chaplain on the convict ship *Lady Castlereagh*. He arrived at his destination on May 1st, 1818.

## CHAPTER TWO.

### New South Wales 1818-1822

The Wesleyans first gained a foothold in New South Wales in 1812, when a Mr Bowden came from London to Sydney as school-master, at the request of Samuel Marsden. He was "a pious Wesleyan" who had been a class leader in London. Bowden speedily gathered a few like-minded people together, and soon there were two classes at Sydney and one at Windsor. The little company appealed to the British Conference to send a preacher, with the result that Samuel Leigh was designated, and arrived at Port Jackson on 10th August, 1815. The Colonial Office had expressed itself as willing to undertake his support if he would accept a position as schoolmaster, but the Wesleyan authorities preferred to maintain him as a missionary, and so retain control.

On arriving in the new country, Leigh was cordially received by Governor Macquarie, and found the Anglican chaplains reasonably co-operative. He quickly organized a Circuit round, appointed preachers and class leaders, and began working towards the provision of chapel facilities. His circuit extended 150 miles and took ten days to cover, with preaching at fifteen places. He needed help. He asked for four assistants and received one. This was Walter Lawry who, as we have seen, arrived in the Colony in May, 1818.

Lawry's voyage out in the Lady Castlereagh took a little over four months. The young chaplain occupied himself with improving his reading, going through some sixty volumes. He records preaching to the convicts on February 22nd, when the weather permitted, the text being: "Godliness is profitable unto all things". A loaded cannon was trained on the congregation, just in case. "I hope some good was done," he comments. His diary contains lively descriptions of life at sea interspersed with the pious reflections that the Wesleyans of the day found it necessary to introduce on all occasions. Through it all runs a strong vein of common sense. Summing up the effects of four months on a convict ship, he reflects with wry humour that he had "improved his knowledge of the wickedness of the world".

He was cordially received by Leigh on landing, and settled immediately into a full routine of work. The first round of the Circuit took him a fortnight. His early impressions of the Colony were most unfavourable. "The Methodist interest very low," he writes. At Parramatta he records several hearers but no society. At Windsor a small society, "well accommodated". At Wilberforce and Portland-head no society, i.e., there was preaching but no members in class. At Richmond, "tolerable accommodation". At Castlereagh, a little society. Liverpool, Hosking's Farm, Hassall's and Upper Minto, no society. He was unhappy and homesick.

He wrote his report to the Secretaries in London, speaking appreciatively of his Superintendent's work; but at the same time the entries in his diary are gloomy. On his second round, he slept only one night in a bed. On Sunday he rode thirty miles and preached three times . . . nothing to a seasoned colonial but wearing to the new chum used to English lanes and villages. He had dysentery. He says in self-examination: "I want more stability and meekness". But the work was developing. One piece of good news was that the Governor had made a grant of land in Macquarie Street which would allow the Wesleyans to build a worthy headquarters in Sydney.

Then Lawry fell in love, and immediately the tone of the diary changes. "August 8th. For three or four days past strongly followed by the image of Mary Hassall. What will be the consequence I do not know." But his preaching immediately takes on a new confidence, and he stops complaining about the country. "Preaching with all my might." "My heart enlarged." He found his love and found his feet in the Colony at the same moment. This is not surprising, when one remembers that he was a vigorous young man twenty-five years of age.

On October 14th letters arrived from England. A week later Lawry had breakfast with Marsden, who talked of a mission to New Zealand, and urged the Wesleyans to take up the former interest of the London Missionary Society in the Friendly and Society Islands. On November 3rd the Wesleyans at Sydney held a love feast. Things were warming up. On November 6th he was in company with Leigh and Miss Hassall at Windsor, where the Superintendent laid the foundation stone of the first regular Methodist chapel in the Southern Hemisphere.

On his arrival Lawry wrote, "Mr Leigh is everything I could wish in a colleague." He was "a prudent man". But within a few months there was tension. They were strongly contrasted types. Leigh was an intense, single-minded missionary, something of an introvert, almost a fanatic by modern standards. Unless his biographer has done him an injustice, he was quite without humour. He was passionately interested in missions, and could rouse others to a like enthusiasm, but he showed little executive ability. Lawry on the other hand was country-bred, robust and cheerfully extrovert. He considered himself cheerful to a fault in certain company. He takes himself to task for his levity, and writes in his journal, "I have some charms." "My chief and greatest danger is from ladies." A good thing he knew it! "I am not sufficiently spiritual in company. This last has ever been my failing." No doubt the tailing endeared him to the younger Sydney Wesleyans, whatever their elders thought.

I am told that among the family the late Rev. A. C. Lawry was regarded as his grandfather all over again. Now A.C. was for a generation the authorized humorist of

the New Zealand Conference. He was irresistible. Compare the legend that when Walter Lawry was living in Emily Place, Auckland, he came home unexpectedly one day to find the soldiers from the barracks carrying out his furniture to burn it in the yard. It appeared that, following certain encounters with the Maoris the rumour had gone round that they ought to be called "The Scarlet Runners". The soldiers attributed the joke to Lawry, and resented it. Lawry denied responsibility and made his peace with the redcoats; but it is significant that the pun was attributed to him. There is no doubt that young Walter was lively and very good company. Also there is some suggestion that the Sydney congregation found the bright young man a more attractive preacher than Leigh. It is not surprising. Leigh was tired and ill, badly needing a rest, while Lawry was developing powers which in a few years were to win a thousand converts in one circuit.

There was another more tangible reason for the uneasiness between the two. Lawry tells us that Leigh had made advances to Mary Hassall, and been rejected as a suitor. Then the Probationer appeared, and was preferred to his superior! In the early stages no doubt Lawry was unaware of the delicate ground he was treading, and his confident and successful approach must have been gall and wormwood to the older man. Mary Hassall was of course a prize for any man. It was no easy matter finding a suitable bride in the colony in those days, especially in evangelical circles. There were not enough suitable women to go round. In addition to this, Mary Hassall was an heiress in a small way. She was the daughter of Rowland and Elizabeth Hassall. Her father left England in 1796 with the London Missionary Society expedition that attempted to evangelize Tahiti. Two years later they were driven out, some of the party losing their lives. The Hassalls settled in Parramatta, where Mary Cover was born in December 1799. Hassall became a storekeeper and merchant, and acquired grants of land. By now he was a substantial citizen.

The course of true love did not run quite smoothly at the beginning. Walter and Mary soon reached an understanding; but Mr Hassall was more difficult. He was a convinced Calvinist and did not want to further the Wesleyan interest in New South Wales directly or indirectly. Yet this Lawry fellow was a well-set-up young man with some prospects, and Mary had quite lost her heart to him! He had better consent to the marriage and then try to bend Lawry his way! The diary for November 27th reads, "At Mr Hassall's they pay me every attention." 28th, "Negotiating matters with Miss Hassall. I begin now to think very seriously of this affair." November 30th, Discussing plans for a chapel at Parramatta (Marsden had given them a site.) In private Lawry sets out his arguments for and against marriage, tabulated at great length after the fashion of the day. He returns to Sydney and hopes for a clearer mind. On December 23rd Leigh arrived from the back settlements, after his turn on circuit, "I think in rather a poor temper." Lawry puzzles over his colleague, who doubtless has just heard

the gossip about his young helper and Mary Hassall. On January 1st, 1819, Leigh laid the foundation stone of a chapel at Macquarie Street, which was to give the Wesleyans a worthy headquarters in the city.

On January 3rd it was Lawry's turn to take the country round. This time he "declared himself to Miss Hassall". But he was worried about (1) Hassall's ignorance of Methodism, and (2) He still had two years of his probation to run before he was entitled to marry; and he had no house to live in. On March 7th Leigh opened the first Wesleyan chapel in Sydney, Princes Street, and on the 17th he left for New Zealand. Marsden offered him the trip, on which he might hope to regain his health, on condition that he visited and reported on the Church Missionary Agents and Stations there. Leigh was already "impressed with the desire to do something for the natives of New Holland." On March 22nd Lawry writes, "I now have the whole Colony to myself." He records on May 12th that he has now been in the Colony for a year, having preached 124 sermons, and ridden round the settlements once a month. The Wesleyans were building three new chapels, and the congregations were much increased. Hassall's farm, he notes inconsequentially, is called "Macquarie Grove".

But still the way was not clear for marriage. However, on June 28th he has letters from his parents, and from the Missionary Committee, announcing that another Agent is to be appointed to New South Wales. He writes to London asking permission to marry before his Probation is completed, and announcing his intention of assuming permission, because the reply to his letter could not reach him in time in any case! (This was not as impudent as it looks. The rules were frequently relaxed in favour of men overseas, and Lawry referred to his year of service in 1816, which, he said, would have been counted if illness had not prevented his candidature. His request was granted). July 2nd, "Purchased premises at Windsor for £270." i.e., a house for his new colleague, the Rev. Benjamin Carvosso. August 11th. He worries about money. "Mr Scott repairs his house for us at £200 expense, for which the Mission is answerable." He finds it difficult to reach common ground with Leigh, who is back in Australia. Also Hassall at Parramatta is proving difficult. "Our hymns are not sung and the place of worship is not upon the plan." August 11th, "Mr Leigh is evidently ill-disposed towards my plans and my peace." September 2. The Chaplains (Church of England) prevented them from preaching to prisoners at the barracks. "I believe the parsons would hang us if they had their way." October 20th, "I opened my mind very freely to Mr Leigh, re the melancholiness of our disunion." Apparently at this time there was a full reconciliation between them.

(But in a letter to his parents, Lawry makes caustic references to Leigh's health). Leigh sailed away to England, with the double aim of restoring his health and of persuading the Missionary Committee to send agents to New Zealand. On November 22nd Lawry

married Mary Hassall. The Rev. John Cross performed the ceremony and one of Marsden's daughters was Mary's bridesmaid.

Lawry now had the field to himself again, this time for six months. Leigh was on his way to England, and his relief Carvosso was on the way out. The entries in Lawry's diary are less frequent. One may assume that he was exceedingly busy, but happy and successful. On March 20th, 1820, he writes quite firmly to Hassall that he will not consent to his suggestion of a Dissenting chapel at Parramatta, for the use of all non-Anglicans. Lawry has the whip-hand, because as he points out, the land was deeded by the Governor to erect "a Wesleyan chapel" and a Wesleyan chapel it shall be. On April 10th a batch of mail arrives via Van Diemen's Land. The Missionary Committee informed him that a brother was on the way to help him. On April 16th he waited on the Governor and received a £10 donation towards the Parramatta chapel, with £5 from the Secretary. Early in May he was still begging for the chapel funds. He had about £250, and for the rest was laying out his own money, hoping to be reimbursed later.

Then Carvosso arrived, on the ship *Saracen*, and shortly afterwards, the Rev. R. Mansfield. Garvosso was ordained and senior to Lawry. Mansfield was just beginning his probation. For the time being Mansfield, a brilliant preacher, was left in Sydney town. Carvosso went to Windsor, and Lawry remained at Parramatta to build his church. But these arrangements were temporary. Lawry and Carvosso got on splendidly. They were from the same county and were old friends. So while Leigh was trying to persuade the British Wesleyans to undertake a Mission in New Zealand, his colleagues were making themselves felt in New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land. On April 10th, Lawry received two letters from Hobart. One was from Noakes, the classleader there, the other from Corporal George Waddy, who was apparently a convert of Lawry's. He writes, "It is by your converts that the church is established at Hobart Town. I thank God that He ever sent you to Sydney."

In May the Lawrys moved to Windsor. In June Walter completed a tour of the outstations with Carvosso. On August 19th Mary was delivered of a child, a little girl, who lived less than a fortnight. In October Lawry was again at Bathurst, 150 miles from Sydney, where he conducted service in the Court House, the first Methodist service west of the Blue Mountains. Sometime that year Rowland Hassall died. From him Mary Lawry inherited stock, with house and garden at Parramatta and 200 acres of land at Pennant Hills. Lawry reckoned it worth about £1450 sterling, quite a tidy sum in those days, which could be counted on to bring in about £300 per annum properly farmed. Whether he liked it or not, he was involved in business affairs. It is evident that this circumstance caused some comment in Cornwall, for Jos. Taylor of the Mission House, London, wrote to the Rev. Arch. Sibley of the Methodist Chapel,

St Austell, Cornwall, refuting a charge that Lawry was too much interested in farming and too little in souls! The same letter states that Lawry requested to be sent to the Friendly Is. This Lawry himself strenuously denied.

Against the suggestion that Lawry may have been neglecting his ministerial duties to attend to his farm, must be set the undoubted fact that the Wesleyans were going through a period of revival. Corporal Waddy was not converted and inspired under the ministry of a man who had lost his heart to the world. There was no sign of that. Work and witness were going forward vigorously.

In March 13th, 1821, he writes to his parents, expressing great surprise that he is appointed to the Islands. He interpreted this as an attempt by Leigh to get rid of him. He states that Leigh had made advances to "my dear Mary" prior to his (Lawry's) arrival in the Colony, and been turned down. Hence "his sweetheart has been sour ever since." So Leigh turned sulky and on his return to England sought to have Lawry moved out of the way! Here he is almost certainly unfair. Leigh's mind was set on missionary service. And it is true that Lawry had expressed interest in Tonga, and in the Islands generally as a mission field. Marsden had tried to turn his mind that way. He had discussed it with friends, especially with Mr Shelley, who landed in Tonga in 1796 with the L.M.S. party, and subsequently escaped to New South Wales. His active practical mind was ranging over all the possible fields of service within reach. It was characteristic of him to think in large terms. But he had no personal interest in work among the Island peoples. In any case, Mary did not feel committed to missionary service, and he had promised his mother that he would return after six years abroad.

On Good Friday the new chapel at Parramatta was opened. The young minister had laid out more than £300 of his own money on the building, without much hope of getting it back, "by which we are much straitened ourselves". By this time they had become reconciled to the Conference appointment to Tongatabu, though they realized they were taking their lives in their hands.

We now come in sight of a controversy which was to further widen the breach between Leigh and his colleagues, and do great harm to the infant Wesleyan cause in New South Wales. It may have been unavoidable but it was certainly unfortunate, and the young men were largely to blame, i.e., Carvosso and Lawry. When Leigh arrived in Sydney he had instructions to respect the position of the Anglican chaplains and to walk warily in his relations with the Establishment. This was necessary, since a hostile Governor could make his position quite untenable. (It had happened to the Agents of the Wesleyan Mission elsewhere). Leigh had obeyed instructions, and had maintained good relations with the Anglicans by not challenging their position in any way. He avoided holding services in Church hours and required the members of the Wesleyan

Society to attend the Anglican sacraments — a position which was twenty years out of date in England. But his young colleagues were not so humble. One may sympathise with their objective; but foolishly they changed the policy during Leigh's absence. They may have acted quite thoughtlessly, not realizing the importance of what they were doing. They encouraged the now properly housed societies to regard themselves as churches in their own right, and administered the sacraments in them.

As it turned out, the Governor didn't mind at all. Probably he rather welcomed the Wesleyans as a small counterpoise to the Anglican chaplains, who could be arrogant and grasping enough. It is on record that about this time he gave Lawry 600 acres of land, "which I can sell for £300". It was the recognized way of rewarding public men at the time. But the effect on Anglican-Methodist relations was bad. Marsden, who had hitherto been quite paternal to the Parramatta chapel expostulated when they opened a Sunday School (though, said Lawry, he had no room for more children in his own) and complaints went to the Missionary Committee in London. Leigh was angry, one imagines on account of the prospects of the New Zealand Mission rather than for personal reasons, and persuaded the Committee to order Lawry to New Zealand for twelve months, to prepare the ground for Leigh, after which he was to go on to Tonga. Lawry promptly refused, on the grounds that (1) New Zealand was in an uproar at the time. The tribes, which had obtained muskets, were engaged in exterminating their enemies. Tribal warfare had assumed a more savage character. (2) He went to the Colony not as a missionary but as a chaplain. This was true in fact, though not in the terms used to describe his appointment. Lawry had made no claim to a call to the cannibal islands. He was convinced that Leigh was just trying to get him out of the way, and said so to his parents. He joined with others in the colony in protesting against "undue subservience to the clergy of New South Wales". Then silence fell. Something went wrong with the mails, or the Committee didn't know what to do, and withheld judgment till Leigh was back on the spot to sort the matter out. But the proposal to send the Lawrys as an advance party to New Zealand was quietly dropped.

Meantime work in the Colony prospered. The Wesleyans held their first Love Feast at Parramatta, with 22 present. A chapel was planned for Kissing Point. The Macquarie Street building in Sydney was completed and opened with great joy. Mansfield particularly was preaching with great power, the revival continued, and the older "Church" Methodists could make little headway without Leigh. On August 3rd, 1821, Lawry was twenty-eight years old. His probation was over. He was admitted to full connexion with the British Conference. Life was full and exciting. The little Kissing Point chapel was opened on September 10th. On the 18th Leigh and his wife (he married in England) together with a new recruit, the Rev. W. Walker, arrived in Sydney. Walker was designated as a missionary to the aborigines. On December 6th all the Wesleyan ministers — Leigh, Carvosso, Lawry, Mansfield and Walker, in

order of seniority — waited on the new Governor, Sir Thomas Brisbane, at Parramatta.

On December 14th Mary had another child, a little boy this time. He was christened Henry Hassall.

Leigh was now in charge. He could not do much to put the clock back, ecclesiastically; but from now on there were two parties among the Sydney Methodists. Carvosso as the man chiefly responsible for the innovations was banished to Hobart. Mansfield and Erskine, a new man who closely followed Leigh to the Colony, were appointed to handle the established work in and around Sydney. Leigh himself was to go to New Zealand, Lawry to Tonga. It was, perhaps, magnificent. It was hardly statesmanlike. At all costs, one strong administrator should have remained in Sydney. As it was, the city was left to the Probationers (perhaps because they could not administer the Sacraments?) while the experienced men sailed into the blue. Undoubtedly Leigh should have left either Carvosso or Lawry in Sydney, even if they were angry young men who had exceeded their instructions. Leigh was General Superintendent, with considerable discretion with regard to filling appointments; and he might have done something of the sort. But his eyes were on Tonga and New Zealand.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Mission to the Friendly Islands

It was one thing for the Conference to appoint Lawry to Tonga, but quite another to land him there. In planning, neither Leigh nor the Committee seem to have worried about transport problems, and apparently there was no special provision for the necessary expense. Leigh was back in Sydney and had set up the new stations in September, 1821, but it was June of the following year before Lawry could secure passage to the islands. At first he tried to purchase a passage in the usual way on some trading vessel or else to charter a boat. But the islands had a bad reputation — in spite of their name — and few were prepared to venture there. In the meantime the Circuit round went on. In January he made another trip over the mountains to Bathurst. At the end of the month he received young Hassall, his brother-in-law, into the Methodist fold.

He waited some weeks for the return of the brig *Tonga*, only to find that the captain refused absolutely to make another voyage. So in April he began seriously to consider buying a vessel as the only means of reaching his station, a couple of thousand miles away over the ocean. Accordingly, on April 9th, he purchased the *St Michael*, a vessel of 150 tons, with his own money. He was alarmed at his own temerity, but consoled himself with the reflection that if he was compelled to retain ownership, he might get his money back with one really profitable voyage! Two months later, on the eve of sailing he was still worried about the heavy debt incurred. In a letter to his parents he explains that Captain Beveridge had taken a third share, and his brother-in-law, young Hassall, another third, but Lawry himself was still involved to the amount of £600. His arrangement with his partners was that if the ship had a good trading trip the Mission party would travel free. Otherwise they would pay the usual charges.

As we view these manoeuvres, we must not forget that it was essential, not only to get to Tonga, but to keep communications open afterwards. The party did not want to be marooned one thousand miles from anywhere — if New Zealand was anywhere — and then forgotten, since their chances of a welcome or at least survival by favour of some leading chief depended entirely on prospects of trade. Lawry was wise to do all he could to secure his line of communication.

On June 13th he wrote to the Missionary Committee of the Conference, heading his letter: *Ship St Michael, Port Jackson, New South Wales*. He explained that he was sailing at last. He had been forced to purchase a ship in order to make the journey at all, but had shifted the burden of the purchase price from the Committee. He expected to visit New Zealand and land there the goods he was taking to Leigh, and then go on

to Tonga to observe the situation. If the tokens were favourable he would remain; if not he would return and report. He was taking with him a carpenter, George Lilley; a blacksmith, Charles Tindall; and a servant, Thomas Wrihr, who had some agricultural experience. The Governor had shown much interest in the project, he said, and put some stock on board and gifts for the Tongan chiefs; also the venture was very much in the public notice.

The *St Michael* got away on the 16th, and on the 18th he writes up his diary again. He complains of the heavy debt "the purchase of the ship has involved me under". July 11th. It was a boisterous voyage. Lawry himself was seasick. Mrs Lawry proved an excellent sailor, while the infant H.H. was reputed to enjoy every minute of it. No doubt the sailors spoiled him. On July 12th they came to anchor in the Bay of Islands, at Rangihoo. (i.e., Rangihoua Bay, on the shores of which the Marsden Cross now stands at Oihi.) Ruatara, whom Lawry would probably know by reputation, came out in a welcoming canoe. Captain and Mrs Beveridge and the Lawrys dined on shore with Mr and Mrs Hall and Mr and Mrs Leigh. The conversation round the table turned on the "sinful and unnatural" relationships of Messrs Kendall and Butler with native girls. On Sunday the 14th Leigh preached on board the *St Michael*. In the afternoon Lawry wrote again to the Committee, reporting progress to date. He was about to sail on to Tonga. "New Zealand is in my opinion a very dismal place. The natives have killed and eaten many people since our arrival, and in sight of our ship". They would hoist the heads of their victims on poles, he said, in savage triumph.

On the 28th they visited "Kiddie", (Keri Keri), where things looked rather better than at Rangihoo. On the same day they left the Bay of Islands. There is a tradition in the Lawry family that as the *St Michael* was leaving the Bay, she met Hongi Hika returning with a victorious war party from a raid on Rotorua, with many prisoners of war. The chief, who was in a boisterous good humour, sailed his leading canoe under the counter of the pakeha vessel. Lawry threw a present of ship's biscuit into the canoe, whereupon Hongi, not to be outdone, seized a captive small boy from his mother and flung him on to the deck of the *St Michael*, before paddling away. Of necessity the child went on to Tonga with the party. On the return trip to Sydney eighteen months later, so the story goes, the Maori boy was left in charge of little Henry Lawry, who was asleep in a coil of rope on the deck. An unexpected wave broke on deck and washed the child overboard, upon which the Maori jumped into the sea and supported the child till another wave washed them both on board again. On arrival in Sydney, the Maori was handed over to Marsden and educated in his school. Later he returned to New Zealand in the service of the Anglican Mission, and he is identified with the Manihera (Maunsell) who lost his life at Rotorua in 1847, a martyr to the Gospel. He was a great-uncle of the Rev. R. Tahupotiki Haddon, well known to the older generation of New Zealand Methodists.

Lawry's 29th birthday was observed at sea. On August 12th they sighted Eooa, and on the 16th they reached Tongatabu. The first person they spoke to was Wm. Singleton, an Englishman who had lived on the island for sixteen years, since the "cutting-off" of the vessel *Port au Prince*. Singleton took Lawry to present himself before Palau, the principal chief of the island. The following day he landed for a ceremonial kava drinking. Palau, "the biggest man I have ever seen," received him with dignity and friendliness, but Lawry was cautious about allowing his party ashore, remembering the fate of the L.M.S. agents twenty-five years earlier. He traded a few axes for hogs, and looked about him for a suitable site for a station. He expressed himself as "pleased with Palau" so he "opened to him the object of the mission". He fixed on the site of the chief's residence at Mooa, where he purchased six acres of land and the native house for "1 axe, 1 plane and 5 chisels". He then landed the sheep, cows and a bull, and prepared to establish himself. He was already planning an extensive head-station, to be named "Cokevernal", to perpetuate the name of Thomas Coke, father of Methodist overseas missions! By September all the party were established on shore.

The next day he waited on Palau "to hear the wisdom of a man who professed to be inspired by the atua of his god". On the 8th he preached to the little company on shore. It was all very strange. The native feasts and ceremonies were alarming. It felt as though they had reached the ends of the earth, as indeed they had. But they were all very busy with their hands, while the missionary tried to pick up what he could about the islands. He reflected on the need for a closer liaison between New South Wales and Tonga. The mission could not hope to succeed, he considered, without the support of a virile base. He wondered about using converts from Sydney to staff the mission "which could be done at a fraction of the expense of bringing men from England". He continued to meet with native chiefs, Singleton interpreting, so as to learn what he could about his surroundings. He gives a description of a nine-days feast among the natives, which, he says, resembled a harvest festival. Already he was planning for a school and schoolmaster. At the end of October the *St Michael* sailed for Port Jackson, promising to return in six months.

With the departure of the mission vessel the party were entirely at the mercy of the Tongans, who showed themselves well aware of the fact. Palau continued to protect them — they were his property — but in his absence there was insolence and threats and stealing. Lawry was greatly dependent on Singleton, though somewhat suspicious of his motives. "His beliefs are those of a savage." But he was quite a useful savage and a loyal one as it proved, since his watchfulness foiled two plots against them. The real trouble was that he was living unmarried with a native woman, which the evangelical of that day could in no wise condone.

As the season advanced the heat became intense. The men toiled at the station buildings and developed the garden, but they made little impact on the natives. "The climate is uncongenial to my health." "I have hitherto done nothing towards the conversion of the heathens. I cannot speak the language." It became clear that the party were living among the Tongans on sufferance, merely because of their trading value, and not really making contact. The year ended in despondency, loneliness and reaction. Early in January the ship *Kent*, Captain Gordon, touched the islands. Lawry was able to send off a dozen or so letters direct to England. He was very annoyed that Tindall and Singleton, who went on board, did not take opportunity to buy stores, although the ship had plenty.

In the middle of the month the entire party suffered from some unspecified indisposition, which was severe enough to "set his thoughts upon death". They went on toiling in the torrid atmosphere, pre-paring the mission compound against the arrival of the *St Michael*. One of the party had a haemorrhage. On February 1st he quarrelled with Singleton, not for the first time. The next day he narrowly escaped from a shark when bathing. He was still plodding away at the native language, a not very apt pupil. He was amused when the natives asked Singleton if King George could show warriors like theirs! Then Mary had a miscarriage. On March 1st the ship *John Bull* of Liverpool, Captain Corlett, touched at Tonga, bound for Van Diemen's Land. Lawry was delighted to discover that the captain was acquainted with Methodism (he had heard Adam Clarke, Robert Newton and Richard Watson). Two deserters from English ships came to the house, and were "suitably exhorted". "The natives are not in love with us," said Lawry.

On the 27th March they moved into "Cokevernal". This was a proper house with stores, blacksmith's shop, garden and orchard. The cattle and poultry were suitably housed. But the human flock were intractable. He could not gather them into either congregation or school. He made very slow progress with their tongue, finding them sullen and opposed to his approaches. "Your religion very good for you, and ours very good for us."

It is possible that Lawry was not, in fact, a very good missionary. He would have made an admirable Director of Missions, which is a different matter. He was an evangelist among his own people; but he lacked the imaginative gift which might have put him en rapport with his dusky parishioners. He was not a patient man. In fact we know that he had no call to his task. He was there only because the Missionary Committee sent him, against his will; and he was trying to be loyal. He seems to have approached his task much as Marsden did in New Zealand, expecting the natives to recognize his superior civilization, accept his teaching, and so come to adopt

Christianity. It was all rather naive, and not too complimentary to the Polynesians, as we may see today. But Lawry was a much more attractive character than Marsden.

When the station was open, they tried to persuade Singleton to leave the native quarters and join their party. When he refused they "abandoned him as incorrigible". This was too bad, since he had twice saved the station from being sacked, or worse, by a minor chief during Palau's absence. They were in a tricky situation, where they needed every friend they could muster. Singleton exhibited something like the Christian virtue of forgiveness, and continued to keep an eye on them. (One presumes that he was living with a woman of some rank, and had access to the native grapevine. Some years later he professed conversion.) Their supplies were running out. There was no soap and no sugar, and thieves were active among the stores. At the same time Lawry's active and ambitious mind was at work on the larger problems of the South Pacific. He made real attempts to learn about the sacred places of the Tongans, and estimated the best location for other mission stations. He also discussed in his journal the needs of Samoa (Hamoā) and Feejee (the old spelling of Fiji).

In May the cooler season brought some relief; but the little party was disturbed by rumours of inter-tribal conflict, which might all too easily upset the precarious balance on which their safety depended. Lawry received a letter from Captain Hunter of the brig *Governor Macquarie*, which was in the vicinity, informing him that the *St Michael* would not arrive with supplies for two months at least. Leigh had not yet moved to his permanent station in New Zealand, so the *St Michael* was required to call at the Bay of Islands and see him settled before returning to relieve Lawry at Tonga. A week or two later Lawry had the opportunity of discussing with the local chiefs the death of the L.M.S. agents 27 years before. As far as he could, he discussed religion with them, and tried to probe their minds. By the end of the month the mission party were short of clothes and food, and also of trading goods to exchange for native supplies. Most of their tools had been stolen. At the end of June Lawry enters in his journal a reference to Margan, a convict escaped from Botany Bay, whom the natives declared the first white man to live in the islands. He came, they said, several years before the L.M.S. party, and they suggested that he had something to do with the killings. Perhaps they were prudently shifting suspicion from themselves.

July 5th. Singleton wanted to get away, being afraid Lawry might use his authority to take him back to Port Jackson. The Tongans, who had been troublesome, now showed a change for the better, probably because the vessel was at last expected. On the 12<sup>th</sup> she arrived. Lawry attended a kava drinking to welcome back a native, Footocava, who had made the round trip to Sydney, and who astounded the people with his account of the power of the white man — so much so that Palau said, "Why do not these white people go away? Some day warriors will come and kill us all."

Most serious from Lawry's point of view were the letters that came to hand from the London Committee. This was the first word he received from them since leaving Sydney, and they made unpleasant reading. He was accused of doing many things he ought not to have done, and threatened with a vote of censure and removal to Van Diemen's Land (evidently a place of correction for erring Methodist agents, as well as for unruly convicts). The *St Michael* went on to the Haapai's to pursue her trading concerns, promising to return in a month. Lawry was left brooding over his correspondence. The letters covered the period December, 1821, to July, 1822, and they reviewed his conduct in a most unfavourable light. He had been "foremost in irregularity and disobedience to rules". They were back on the old strife about relations with the Church party in Sydney, which must have seemed ancient history to Lawry by now. He was blamed for:

1. Establishing a Sunday School at Parramatta.
2. Advising the administration of the Lord's Supper.
3. Cherishing a spirit of opposition to the colonial clergy.
4. Flouting the decision of the colonial committee, in refusing to go with Leigh to New Zealand.
5. Together with Carvosso and Mansfield he was specifically charged with:
  1. Acting in dissension and discord with the clergy.
  2. Departing from the principles recommended by the Committee.
  3. Wilfully transgressing the Committee's instructions and speaking contemptuously of their authority.
  4. Extravagance and profusion in expenditure.
  5. Doing less in combined exertions than Leigh did alone.
  6. Indulgence in personal ease and pleasure.
  7. Combined opposition to the Committee's authority.
  8. Placing the Committee in difficulties by drawing bills on them for the debt on the Macquarie Street chapel.
  9. Drawing other irregular bills.
  10. Confusion in the Society accounts.
  11. Establishing services in Church hours.
  12. Calling Leigh to account for not disobeying the Committee's rules and instructions.

By way of punishment, the Committee declared:

1. He was considered very blameable in the matter of the Sunday School, in that he did not consult Marsden.
2. A copy of this resolution was to be sent to Marsden.
3. He was not to be allowed to proceed on the mission to Tonga, but stationed at Van Diemen's Land, there to await the Committee's pleasure.
4. His conduct was so bad as entirely to forfeit their confidence, etc.

He was also threatened with non-payment of bills, etc.

It is evident that Leigh had been very busy with his pen, destroying the reputation of his colleagues. However, Lawry was tough enough to stand up to his General Superintendent: He hits back: re Marsden affair.

1. Marsden was not in the colony at the time, and could not be consulted. His place was supplied by a young clergyman "who displayed much more solicitude about hunting kangaroos than about the prosperity of the Sunday School".
2. The letter of complaint from Marsden was dictated by his daughters and the young clergyman, and was in the writing of a daughter.
3. Marsden was not well-estimated by the brethren in New South Wales. He was much feared as an opponent, known to be vindictive and not much coveted as a friend. He was not a warm friend of Methodism, and was deeply involved in worldly affairs.

re his refusal to go to New Zealand

1. He had no inward call to missionary service. He never consented to go to New Zealand or to Tonga under such circumstances.
2. The Committee in London appointed him. There was a committee for South Sea Missions in N.S.W. He laid his case before this committee (of which Leigh was chairman) and the committee unanimously recommended that he go not to New Zealand but to Tonga, to ascertain the practicability of establishing a mission there. But still he was censured for not going to New Zealand!

(It may be wise to interpolate a note here concerning the charge of "extravagance and profusion in expenditure." The official History of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society makes two points. First, that the committee in London made no allowance for the fact that the cost of living was high in the Colony. Second, that conditions there required the missionaries to keep up a certain standard, without which they would have lost caste, and been classed with ticket-of-leave men and irresponsible elements in the population. Australia was not a democracy in the 1820's — far from it. The missionary committee was of course attempting the impossible in trying to control the mission in detail from London.)

On consideration, Lawry decided to return to Sydney. Mrs Lawry had to go in any case, for health reasons. Lawry had intended remaining in Tonga himself; but in view of his appointment to Van Diemen's Land he did not know what to do. It seemed best to return to Sydney, pending further word from London, for the following reasons, set out in his own words:

1. This is not my regular station.

2. Remaining there would be considered contumacious by the Committee.
3. The only inducement to stay was to keep the door open.
4. George and Charles (the carpenter and the blacksmith) were willing to remain and would look after the Mission interest and property.
5. There was little good to be served by remaining in Tonga at this stage.
6. He was not sure he had the nerve to bear up without the support of his family.
7. He might have to answer all the bills drawn on the committee.
8. He must remain under censure, or proceed to Great Britain to clear himself.

Finally, we have his reflections on leaving Tonga, as he recorded them in his Journal:

1. It had been a matter of doubt whether it was possible to enter Tonga. Our residence has effectively removed that doubt.
2. It was vain to attempt the mission without regular communication between New South Wales and the Islands. The natives attached importance to the missionary only because he was visited and replenished, and they sensed the powers behind him. But the Society had made no such provision in his case; he was forced to do it for himself.
3. A big step forward had been made. They now possessed mission house, workshop, garden, etc.
4. For himself, he had no clear inner call to any place but New South Wales. For the rest, he had an outer call only. Results would depend on mastery of the language. Christian missionaries had been in New Zealand for eleven years, and could show no fruit as yet.
5. There appeared to be a "sign of providence" in bringing him to the land.
6. By returning to Australia, he could help. The mission to New Zealand had been "begun in the dark". It would be an expensive business, inevitably, and his experience would help there.
7. "The frown of the Committee is on me, while I have a conscience void of offence. This must be principally laid to the charge of S. Leigh, who has given way to an uncharitable spirit against W.L. and his brethren. Poor man!" i.e., Lawry felt it his duty to rescue mission and missionaries from misrepresentation.

Just how much of this Lawry communicated directly to the Mission House in London we do not know. Whatever he wrote would be an edited version. But by the time the *St Michael* returned, his mind was made up.

It was not so easy to get away. As usual, everything was behind schedule. In September he was able to prevent a human sacrifice. Later he notes that Mrs Lawry was due to be confined in November, and it looked as if the event might take place at sea. He writes a description of the bay and the gardens, as if to fix these things in his memory. At last on October 3rd, 1823, the last of the baggage was sent off to the *St Michael*, while the weeping natives gathered round. On the following day they set sail

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for Port Jackson, "with very mixed feelings with reference to the two young men left on the island". He was also very worried about Mary, "who expects to be confined the day we reach Sydney". The voyage was stormy, with contrary winds, and they were both "dreadfully sick". Captain and Mrs Beveridge were not as obliging as they might have been. After five weeks on the ocean, they arrived safely in Sydney on November 7th. On the 11th "Mary was brought to bed of a fine girl". We are glad to learn that it was a quick and easy delivery.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Ministry in England

Lawry and his family stayed in New South Wales for nine months before returning to England. He was anxious to re-establish himself in the good graces of the Missionary Society, and no doubt hoped that further mails might bring a more favourable answer to his protests. He had an Australian wife and Australian property to consider. He also had many friends in the Colony. But the little Wesleyan Society in Sydney was grievously divided. Leigh had left New Zealand broken in health, having spent sixteen months with the Anglicans and six weeks actually at Whangaroa, before returning to New South Wales. He left more effective men behind him. His presence in Sydney at this stage was an irritant. Later he returned to England where he fulfilled a useful ministry; but his presence in the Colony at this moment served to keep alive the "Church" party among the Wesleyans.

Among the Lawry papers in Auckland there is a copy of a letter in the form of a confidential journal, written to the missionary in Tonga from a devoted friend and disciple, a convert of Mansfield's, in Sydney. The writer is Robert Howe, who describes himself as Government Printer, and who may be identified with the printer of the Preachers' Plan for the Sydney Wesleyan Circuit in 1821. He was a son of George ("Happy") Howe, a London newspaper man who was transported for theft. In 1802 George Howe was appointed Government Printer. A year later he undertook to edit the Gazette, the first newspaper in the Colony, while still a convict. His son inherited the position of Government Printer, together with some of his father's abilities; but he was an unstable character. After a dissolute youth he was converted; but continued stumbling into libel actions through his newspaper activities. He was drowned a few years later. This Robert Howe was a warm partisan of the Carvosso, Lawry, Mansfield faction — if that is not too strong a word — who had promised to keep Lawry posted as to events in New South Wales while he was in Tonga. He laments that he had been unable to witness Lawry's departure, since the night before he was stabbed in the street by an unknown assailant! He was wounded in the chest, but his life was spared. He retails administrative and chapel gossip. He records the refusal of the Missionary Treasurers in London to accept bills for payment for the Macquarie Street chapel, and the consequent distress of the Trustees. Leigh has the ear of the Committee, and the views of the local people count for nothing! Erskine (a new missionary) had arrived, and promised well. Howe tells that he had become a father. "I am now legitimately a father." The child was christened Robert Mansfield. He already had an illegitimate son named Charles, whom to his great relief and gratitude his wife has accepted into the family.

On December 28th Howe went aboard the *St Michael* on her return from her first visit to Tonga. He is critical of Captain Beveridge, as Lawry was later. Two Tongans who were on the vessel were kindly treated by the Governor. There was trouble over accounts for the purchase and outfitting of the *St Michael*, young Hassall "being in great straits thereby" There is much controversy over the question of the sacraments in the chapel. A letter came from Leigh, reporting that there was every prospect of good being done by Lawry in Tonga, and hoping that "the report spread by the crew of the *St Michael* is untrue, which says that Lawry is procuring much gold and silver at Tonga, under cover of looking after the mission". (Actually Lawry was losing heavily on the vessel, which he need not have bought if Leigh had done his job.) Howe goes on: "Let our enemies write, brother, and I will print — I will print on every occasion, the Truth. Charity almost fails me." So on it goes. One has the impression that Howe would be more dangerous as a friend than as an enemy. The preachers reverse their decision, and the sacraments are restored in the chapel. Howe himself has libel suits on his hands. Life was not dull in the Colony in those days! "But thank God, the Governor is my friend." He has been called to sit on the bench of magistrates. The Howe journal reveals the bitterness of the controversy in Sydney Methodism. It also shows how effective the revival had been during Leigh's absence in England.

It was into this situation that Lawry returned at the end of 1823. For a time he hoped to hear of some favourable response to his letters to the Committee, but when the Minutes arrive, still carrying his appointment to Tonga, he decided that he must return to London to plead his case in person. Carvosso and Mansfield urged this course, and asked him to represent them, since they were all involved! Accordingly he set his own and his wife's affairs in order, and took passage on the ship *Midas*, Captain Thompson, embarking on August 18th, 1824. "The captain," he remarks, was "unkind and tyrannical, and the mate worse." There were various delays and a rough passage round Cape Horn. His previous experience in a convict ship had not prepared him for the necessities of a private passage. He makes the following notes, by way of advice for others.

1. Either diet yourself, or have a detailed agreement.
2. Only pay half beforehand. If possible go by ship with a poop.

He remarks that he had not kept his journal for twelve months, having been so harassed by Tongan Mission affairs. He had no incentive to go abroad again. He would stay a travelling preacher, or a local one! He goes on to reflect that he had been married five years to this day. He had two fine children, a boy and a girl; and one was not. On the last day of the year they sighted Ushant, and on the New Year's Day, 1825, they landed at Portsmouth.

On 4th January they travelled by coach to London. Mrs Lawry was fascinated by the country, even under its winter dress. The following day there was a stormy meeting with the Secretaries, Morley, Taylor and Mason. On the 8th he met them again. "Why did you come home?" "You Cornish are never wrong!" The only question for the Committee, he notes, was his coming home. (Apparently he means that they were not prepared to reopen the whole matter of the rights and wrongs of their actions in Sydney). After much talk, it was decided to "settle matters in private", "to save poor Leigh who must be sacrificed if the whole is to be opened again before the Committee". This was agreed. For the rest, they were satisfied. In effect they swept the whole thing under the mat, which was probably the best they could do for all concerned. On the 15th Lawry met the full Committee, giving his reasons for being "absent without leave", which were accepted. He was now free to take a Circuit under the British Conference, which was what he wished. The subsequent favour of the Committee showed that they fully accepted his representations.

Summing it all up, he reckoned that his six years overseas left him out of pocket by £1343, made up as follows:

Ship St Michael, two voyages	£992
Cash advance on Parramatta chapel	£300
Articles supplied Tongan mission	£51
	£1343

This did not allow for other losses in clothes and books.

After making things right with the Committee, he stopped one Sunday in London, to hear Adam Clarke preach. Then he took wife and children home to Cornwall.

It seems worthwhile to dwell at some length upon the disputes between the Missionary Committee, Leigh and Lawry and his young colleagues, because they illustrate a problem which was to plague the Australasian Mission for twenty years, and to lead finally to Lawry's return to the Pacific. The problem lay in the control of the Mission from London, at a time when mails were slow and uncertain, and the Mission Committee itself was still inexperienced, and ignorant about the lands it served. For instance, no one on the Committee apparently knew or cared that the cost of living was high in New South Wales, making the usual allowances inadequate. Headquarters might propose, but inevitably hard facts disposed, on the other side of the world. The Committee was of course well-intentioned, but ill-informed about many things. Communications were disastrously slow and uncertain. This meant that willy-nilly the men on the field had to disobey orders at times, exercising their discretion. Moreover, there was constant bickering over finance. A lot of money was wasted, or not properly accounted for. (We have all heard about Leigh collecting enough goods to keep the

New Zealand Mission for five years. In the event, the goods had all vanished in twelve months). This was nobody's fault; or at least it did not mean dishonesty, merely muddle.

The Mission Treasurers naturally wanted everything tidy; but they just could not have it that way. Not all the agents employed were wise or really competent. They were devoted and brave; but for the most part they were limited in outlook and education. The more intelligent ones learned the hard way. The others never learned at all.

Normally the problem was met by the appointment of a General Superintendent, which was the Wesleyan term for a colonial Bishop. Leigh himself had the title with reference to New Zealand and Tonga, though he was the wrong man to carry executive responsibility. After him the office fell into abeyance in Australasia, until it was revived under Waterhouse, and continued by Joseph Orton and William Boyce in Australia, and by Lawry in New Zealand. Men such as these knew the mind of the Mission Committee, and could be trusted to look after its interests on the spot. They could adjust Stations in emergency, and deal directly with Governments. Above all, they could hold the purse strings. This was the arrangement during the decade before the independent Australasian Conference was established in 1855.

In 1825 Lawry began a career in English Circuits which was to last eighteen years. He served successively in St Austell, Gwennap, Falmouth, Helston (from where he advised James Buller to go to Australia), Exeter, Dudley and Burslem. In all but the first two places he was the Superintendent of the Circuit, and he was Chairman of the Exeter District. This was rapid promotion for a young man in those days. He speedily established himself as a powerful preacher and evangelist, and a trusted administrator. (It is on record that he had one thousand converts in his first circuit). He was also employed as a missionary advocate by the Committee which had been so critical of his behaviour. By his late 40's he was a person of consequence in the Wesleyan hierarchy, and destined no doubt to go further.

One heavy blow fell at the end of his first year in England. In December, 1825, his daughter Mary Australia was born in Cornwall.

Fifteen days later — on December 27th — the mother died. Four-year-old Henry carried all his life the memory of a ride through the snow on the front of his father's horse, to his new home after his mother's death. It must have been a shattering blow to the father. All the evidence goes to show that he and his Mary were deeply attached.

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It is understood that the children went to the grandparents. Then in 1829 Walter made a second marriage, to Mrs Eliza White (nee Molyneau) of Falmouth, a widow. The impression left in the mind of the son Henry was that it was a marriage of convenience, a matter of providing a home for the children. Certainly no one took the place of Mary. Walter's father died in 1832, his mother in 1841. There were no children of the second marriage.

In 1843 Lawry was recalled to the service of the Missionary Society. We have already spoken of the inconvenience and inefficiency that attended the control of the Australasian Missions directly from London. It was bad enough when only two or three men were involved; but the Mission now employed nearly fifty ministers in the South Pacific, besides catechists and other helpers. There were fourteen in the Australian States, sixteen in New Zealand, nine in Tonga and seven in Feejee. The work was divided into Districts under Chairmen, but there was no unified control. The Wesleyans of the day were missionary minded in the extreme, but they lacked experience in world affairs.

The centenary of Methodism in 1838 was marked by a wave of enthusiasm. It was ardently hoped that the second century of the Connexion would match the first in zeal and expansion (as indeed it did). Funds were raised and men recruited. The missionary zeal was largely directed to the South Seas, and now at last the Conference did what it should have done at all costs twenty years earlier. It determined to appoint a competent man as General Superintendent to the Society's Missions in Australasia and Polynesia. The choice fell on John Waterhouse. (In Trinity College, Auckland, there is a steel engraving of the time, depicting the Centenary Missionary Meeting at Oldham Street Chapel, Manchester. John Waterhouse is in the chair, and various notables are on the platform. A little man is standing on a seat at the back, to get a better view. We are credibly informed that he represents the original Chubb of Chubb's locks and safes. He cared enough about missions to come over from Birmingham for the meeting. His son, a very loyal and generous Wesleyan, pint founder of Wesley House, Cambridge, died a member of the House of Lords. There is a century of social history in the story).

Waterhouse arrived in Hobart, which was to be his headquarters, at the end of 1838, and made a good beginning. He visited New Zealand and the Friendly Islands, and began to put order into his huge diocese; but unfortunately he fell ill and died in 1842. (John Bumby, who acted as his lieutenant in New Zealand was drowned in 1840).

In 1843 the New Zealand District Meeting at Mangungu asked for the reappointment of a General Superintendent, but the Committee of the Missionary Society already had the matter in hand. Lawry was approached to take the place of Waterhouse. With a

better appreciation of the distances involved and the vastness of the task, he pointed out that with the extension of the colonies in Victoria, South Australia and West Australia, the Australian field was enough for one man to oversee. It was indeed! Accordingly, other arrangements were made for Australia. Lawry consented to the appointment to New Zealand as Chairman of District and General Superintendent of Missions in New Zealand, and Visitor of the Missions in the Friendly Islands and Feejee.

In view of later developments, we ought to note the reasons that led the New Zealand District Meeting to recommend the appointment of a General Superintendent. These were (a) The Stations were so scattered that it was impossible to unite them all in one District. A single head was necessary to hold the Mission together. (b) "Again, the case of Methodism begins to assume a very different relation with respect to the Church of England in this land than heretofore, and we have reason to anticipate many things arising out of this circumstance requiring consummate wisdom and prudence on our part, and therefore deeply feel the necessity of having at our head a minister of long standing, experience, and known ability in our connexion." In plain terms, the arrival of the "popish" Bishop Selwyn had upset the friendly relations and the co-operation between the C.M.S. agents and the Wesleyans. Selwyn's strict churchmanship led him to question even the baptisms of these schismatics, which in turn led to confusion and distress among the Maori people. There was also some danger that the Governor might take his cue from the Bishop, and exclude the Wesleyan Mission from consideration.

Lawry left England to take up his new appointment on October 2nd, 1843. He travelled on the ship *Bacephalus* together with Mrs Lawry and the two girls. They arrived in Sydney on the 20th January, and after a month in New South Wales the party sailed for Auckland in the *Tryphena* arriving on the 17th March. Lawry was then within a few months of his 50th birthday.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### The General Superintendent 1844-1854

Temporary accommodation was arranged for the party, and Lawry immediately set about procuring a suitable permanent residence. He was able to purchase a property just below Government House, in Emily Place, between Short Street and Parliament Street, with a partly finished dwelling on it. The house was completed to his satisfaction, the whole property costing the Mission £400. (It was sold for £2000 in the late fifties). Governor Fitzroy donated a section alongside, valued at £300. The position close to the Governor's residence was not without its tactical advantages. For many years the site was marked by two Norfolk Island pines, which had a history. They were given to Lawry as seedlings in Sydney by an ex-convict whose life he had been instrumental in saving, and brought across the Tasman in tubs. The house stood roughly on a site between Short Street and Parliament Street.

At the same time Fitzroy granted the Mission half an acre in Official Bay, with a water frontage, on which a storehouse was erected. This was essential since Auckland was now to be the distributing centre for the Mission.

The Superintendent took over the services in the High Street Chapel, built the year before. He preached in gown and bands. The membership doubled in a few months, the finances were organized and a European Circuit established. He wrote: "Our little chapel is crowded, so far, by the most respectable, as well as by the humbler classes." The congregation even installed a small pipe-organ, that status symbol of the Methodists. It came from Sydney, and cost £100.

Six weeks after his arrival, a famous gathering of the Maori people took place at Remuera. The tribes came together on the Governor's invitation to meet him, and to receive the purchase price of the Hauraki lands, some £25,000. Morley tells us that the provision included 100 tons of potatoes and 20,000 dried sharks. Representatives of 17 tribes were present, accompanied by their European missionaries as advisers. The gathering enabled Lawry to meet some of his colleagues for the first time, and also to hear the testimonies of several of the leading Maori Christians. It is on record that as a counter-attraction to the race meetings and other frivolities organized by the Government, the Wesleyans put on a tea-meeting!

On July 24th he set out to visit the most important centres of the Wesleyan work in New Zealand, and to preside at the District Meetings. These were held in two sections, one at Hokianga, the other at Kawhia. They went North first. Lawry was appalled at the hardships of winter travel. He was wet and exhausted for days on end. "In the next

world a faithful New Zealand missionary will be no ordinary character." "No earthly consideration would induce me, at my time of life, to engage in such violent and wasting travels." After five days of close attention to business at Mangungu he returned to Auckland. On August 18th he and Thomas Buddle ordained John Aldred to the work of the Christian Ministry. A few days later they were on their way to the Waikato. The first night they spent wet and weary, "lost on the banks of the Tamaki". The party went down the Manukau and then overland to the Waikato. Then by canoe up the Waikato and the Waipa as far as the Kopua station. From there it was "a fearful struggle" to Kawhia. Monday to Saturday, twelve hours a day, they spent in District Meeting. Then over to Waingaroa, where chief Jabez Bunting turned up with a couple of horses, and saved the situation. So back to Auckland, over the hills, down the river, and across the Manukau, accompanied only by the Maori brethren. Fortunately his sense of humour did not desert him for long at a time. "During this journey I had ... as my fellow-travellers in flood and field a rare assemblage of ancients and moderns — mostly men of renown: there were Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. David Saul and Samuel, Nicodemus, Matthew, John Peter and Paul. Adam Clarke, Richard Watson, Jabez Bunting, Robert Newton, Wm. Taylor, Wm. Barton . . . etc." He paid heart-felt tribute to the honesty and helpfulness of these Maori Christians.

From the report he sent Home to the Mission Secretaries several main points emerge:

### **1. Organization.**

Lawry was appalled at the distances and the wide spread of the Mission. Some stations were so far away that if a man attended District Meeting as he should, he might be out of his charge for six months of the year. Otago should never have been opened, at least as a European station. Many of the missionaries were so isolated that it was impossible to keep an adequate check on their work. They were a law to themselves. This led to confusion and extravagance. The missionaries he had met were, he was sure, devoted and honest men who deserved well of the church; but there was muddle and confusion everywhere.

### **2. Finance.**

The General Superintendent had been chosen in London to reorganize the New Zealand Mission so that expenditure could be kept within bounds. He found general agreement among the men on the field that the barter system under which they had been working was wasteful and obsolete. (One good brother who objected to the use of tobacco was vainly striving to induce the Maoris to accept soap instead). Consequently the various agents were put on cash allowances, and the District Estimates kept within £4,500 p.a. which was all the Missionary Society could afford. The previous year they had spent no less than £8,000, of which Hobbs had managed to get through £2,316, mainly through lavish hospitality. It must be said that this reform was put through by general

agreement, the missionaries accepting allowances they regarded as adequate under the circumstances.

### **3. Training of Maori Pastors.**

It was obvious to everyone that the only hope the Mission had of evangelizing the scattered and rather mobile native settlements was by using native agents. Lawry himself had made that point when in Tonga twenty years before. Therefore the Mission must regard the training of native leadership as the priority.

In view of later misunderstandings, it must be said that Lawry did not try to grind down the allowances of the missionaries. He was given a limit and had to work within it. Neither then nor later did he betray the interests of the men on the field. Again and again in his reports he insists that the men on the stations were devoted and dependable. He did as a good Chairman should, and fought for his men, where they had no voice of their own. They were "poor, self-denying men." "There may have been negligence, but not delinquency." The best of them were very good in his eyes. "They are not all teetotallers, but few drink anything but water or milk." They and their wives and families lived bare and hard lives, for the sake of the Gospel. They deserved the respect and confidence of the Church, and its loyal support. All this he says to the Treasurers over and over again.

On his return from Kawhia, Lawry waited on the Governor, and secured from him immediately a grant of six acres of land in Grafton Road on which to establish a Native Institution, with hints of further support later if required. The property was not formally deeded to the Mission till the following year, but already in October of 1844 the builders were at work and students were gathering under the care of Thomas Buddle. The speed and ease with which the matter was set in hand illustrates the advantages of unified control. As always, the Government preferred to deal with a bishop, rather than a committee. "The Governor will treat only with me." Already he "has an eye on a farm for the Native Institution".

It was his intention to visit the Islands in 1845, but events ruled otherwise. There was "a deep haze" over public affairs. The Governor had "no money and no power". Then Hone Heke began cutting down the flagstaff at Russell. There was a good deal of apprehension in the capital as refugees arrived from the Bay of Islands. For his third attempt to keep the flag flying, Fitzroy had to borrow the ensign of the Triton, because he had run out of flags. In March, Russell was sacked. In the middle of these things, Lawry was trying to sort out the affairs of the South Pacific. "I was never involved in so much secularity as I am here. I am a banker and orders come here to me from the whole of New Zealand, from Tonga and Feejee. Also I am a merchant, and furnish supplies for most of the stations. Think of us for good before the mercy-seat, for here

we are greatly perplexed." It was a great satisfaction that the cost of the Mission for 1844 proved to be only £4,000, half that of the previous year. The Committee in London provided £200 special grant towards the Native Institution, which was in good heart.

Towards the end of the year he took advantage of the presence of the *Triton* in New Zealand waters to visit the Bay of Islands. He then rounded the North Cape and went South to Taranaki, where he inspected Turton's station, and then on to Wellington and Nelson. On his return he recommended that Wellington, Nelson and Otago be constituted a Southern District with Watkin as Chairman. Aldred was doing well in Nelson. The rest could meet annually in Auckland.

About this time he began advising the London Committee to give him authority to dispose of the *Triton*. She was, he said, unsuitable for work in the tropics, and was becoming due for expensive repairs. It would be better to get rid of her for what she would fetch. Meantime the vessel concerned sailed for the Islands. In October the District Meeting was held at Auckland. Arrangements were made for the employment of Native Teachers at £5 per year, with £10 for men trained at the Institution. He wanted the Missionary Committee to seek a qualified teacher, who together with his wife might take charge of an enlarged Native Institution. At the same time he raised the question of education for the children of missionaries in New Zealand and the South Seas

He pointed out that a number of the best men in the area under his control were talking of applying to return to England, in order to provide for their families. Their children, they said, were running wild with native companions, without any prospects of earning a living by any "respectable" occupation in the future. Lawry's suggestion was that a school should be provided in Auckland, where these children could be accommodated at not too great a distance from their parents, and where they might hope afterwards to find honourable employment in a civilized community. He pointed out to the Committee that a missionary did not reach his maximum usefulness until he had been several years in his appointment overseas, and had become expert in the language and local customs. This was just the point at which he began to worry about his family.

The only answer was a boarding school, and Auckland was the place for it. The children could travel on the Mission vessel, as she moved round the Islands with supplies. Lawry reckoned there were some fifty children of suitable age among the families concerned, and other paying pupils might be accepted.

Accordingly he worked out a scheme which proved financially practicable. The missionaries received fairly generous family allowances, in addition to the usual educational grant. In this way the Missionary Society tried to help them. Lawry proposed that the parents should take out a £20 share for each child they proposed to send to the school, for capital purposes, and then devote the children's allowance to their maintenance. In this way they might hope to establish "a little Kingswood" in the South Seas. (H. H. Lawry had been at the original Kingswood school). The school would belong to the missionaries, or to the Connexion, as the Treasurers preferred. It should maintain itself, especially if they could squeeze a little special support from London, and above all, if they could get the right man to run it.

He writes Home for an iron box with a lock by Chubb. He needs a safe place for documents. (The iron boxes are still at Pitt Street Church). He wants two barrels of wine, one red, one white. Not that he drinks much himself, but he must have some for visitors. He is more cheerful about the future of New Zealand. It is "the England of the Southern Hemisphere". He is greatly concerned with staff problems in Tonga. He complains that the missionaries seem to think they have the right to travel round the world at the Society's expense, whatever goes wrong. He has to balance the interests and rights of the men concerned against the cost to the Society. It was often difficult to know whether to cut their losses and send an un-profitable servant home to England at once, or give him a second chance in another environment. He wishes that some of the rejects would accept their discharge in Auckland or in Sydney, instead of demanding always to return to England. They had more chance of a decent living in the colony. Again and again he warns the Committee that it was a shocking waste of money to send men of in-different personality and attainments to occupy lonely stations far from supervision. Only the best men were good enough for the demands of the mission field. He was delighted with Governor Grey, who had taken over a difficult situation with "a firm and competent hand. He has a grasp of principle."

In April, 1847, the new Mission vessel, the *John Wesley*, arrived in Auckland. She was not as well adapted to use in the tropics as Lawry had hoped. These Englishmen thought they knew everything, and would not take advice from the man on the spot! But she was a great improvement on the *Triton*. The latter was sold promptly for £900. "Things are brisk in New Zealand, every secular interest thrives." The Wesleyans were building their new brick chapel in High Street. Then in May, Lawry went aboard the *John Wesley* to make his long-delayed visit to Tonga and Feejee.

After a couple of weeks at sea, they arrived in Tonga, approximately where Walter and Mary had landed twenty-five years earlier. He revisited the remains of his old home, and met natives who remembered him. He sailed round the stations and noted with great disapproval that the agents tended to move round from tribe to tribe,

whereas they should certainly have taken root in one place. The itinerancy didn't apply to mission stations! Thomas, the Chairman, was a faithful brother who occupied his chair solely by seniority, and was not very intelligent. He was hindering the efforts of younger and abler men to educate the natives and provide the Scriptures in translation. He would have to be persuaded to go, or be removed.

In September he went on to Feejee (as he always spells the word) where he was impressed by the quality of the staff. They needed better facilities for training native agents. They must educate to elevate the native race. The key was in education. As for the Mission children, many of them were suffering from the climate. He urged his plan for a school in Auckland. Lawry was back to Auckland by December, with assurance of solid support for the Wesleyan Seminary from all parts of the field. He determined to proceed with the scheme without delay. If necessary he would put his son in charge temporarily; but he made the strongest representations to the Committee for immediate action. On his return he had found a note from one of the secretaries, which seemed to deprecate the whole idea. Why bring London into it? Could they not find a schoolmaster in Auckland? The answer was a vehement "no"!

"You cannot but see that we cannot find a suitable person or persons here, and yet ... we must have education for our little ones . . . or you will find several of your men soon in London . . . and they will set up the case of their children as the reason why they broke through all law and came Home ... at this moment Wallis, Whiteley, Ironside, Watkin, Rabone, Wilson, and I believe Lyth, wait only to know that you will afford no assistance to a school in New Zealand, and they will cease to be numbered among your foreign missionaries ... I am quite concerned about it. I have succeeded in pacifying them in the Islands by the assurance that I am persuaded you will prefer lending a little assistance for the education of their children out here to the greater trouble and expense of every year having a number of children sent home . . . and very soon they will find their way after them. Mr Jagger is only staying on this ground ... and the same is also true of Messrs Lyth, Williams and M. Wilson. These men have the language and are tried men, will you drive them away and send men that will be almost useless for two or three years . . . and withal untried? ... the Feejee Minutes give the plan almost entire ... but I will just set it down again:

We purchase the land; erect the building, to be settled as our chapels are ... if you desire it, and the sums allowed for the education of our children will go to support the establishment.

You send out a Master and Mistress well qualified. Allow me £100 a year for two years to set us going. Send out all things needed ... as books and school apparatus. If you can send bedding for 80 children all the better.

Having laid this matter, once more, fully before you, the case is entirely in your hands; only I shall probably receive by the *Wesley* the next time she comes up from a dozen to a score of children for this very school . . ."

No sooner was this peremptory demand sent off, than a vessel arrived bringing news that the committee had accepted his proposals for the school. In return, Lawry reported that Governor Grey was offering generous grants to the Missions for Maori education. This was a great opportunity, but it added to secular cares. For the first time, he complained of overwork. Then there comes the curious story of the Millers.

"One of our catechists, Mr Miller of the Kawhia, died lately with clear light and holy hope in the Saviour. His widow is here with four children. Our brother Miller of Tonga has lost his wife, and I believe the two Millers are not unlikely to form a partnership. The negotiation is in my hands. She is of Manchester." Five weeks later: "Mr Miller of Tonga had commissioned me to get him a wife, and I have done so ... the two Millers will now be in partnership. I think the arrangement a very good one. Some of the matches made at Home are not the very best." Our fathers were curiously matter-of-fact about some things, and perhaps all the better for it.

The big event of the autumn of 1848 was the commencement of building at Three Kings, on land which had been given for a farm in 1845, to supply food for the Native Institution. The move from Grafton was consequent upon the Government grant, and the necessity to provide for greatly increased numbers. Sir George Grey laid the foundation of the first block on April 5th. Lawry wrote to England again, asking this time for a trained teacher to conduct the Institution. He was having trouble with Thomas again over Tonga, and asked for a definition of his powers. He was sure that Thomas should leave the field, but was doubtful of his right to insist upon it. Thomas insisted that the Visitor had no power over the Chairman. Lawry advised that Thomas should be required to leave the field, making way for younger and more progressive men. This surely was the sort of situation the Visitor was expected to report on.

Almost every letter he writes about this time complains of weariness. In a personal letter to Dr Beecham he says he will never see him again, unless the *John Wesley* should go Home for a refit; and he dreads the voyage.' The argument about Thomas went on for months. In October the new brick chapel in High Street was opened. It cost £1350, and was mostly paid for by a truly generous people. He applied to the Secretaries for material for the schools, as well as trained teachers. In July he was able to report the purchase of five allotments of land in Upper Queen Street for the Seminary, costing £432. (Part of this land is still held on behalf of the church as a school trust by the Prince Albert College Trustees). His plans for the school were

going forward successfully, but he complains of the burden. In November the Wellington chapel was destroyed by an earthquake. It was a sad blow, but the Europeans would have to carry that loss. Early in 1849 the *John Wesley* arrived from Feejee, with news of the death of John Hunt. His wife and children must be cared for. In February, 1849, the *John Wesley* was in port again, so Lawry took the opportunity of running down to Taranaki and Wellington. The schools were very much on his mind. Fortunately Alexander Reid and Joseph Fletcher arrived in April, and this transformed the situation. Reid, who had been trained as a teacher, took charge at Three Kings. Fletcher, a clever young man with a good college record, took over the seminary. Lawry was pleased to be able to arrange for Joseph Waterhouse to be transferred from Sydney to Feejee. In November, after the District Meeting, he went to Sydney to confer with Boyce, the General Superintendent in Australia, about finding further staff for Feejee. From the beginning he had been concerned at the cost of staffing the Islands from Britain, especially if the agents were not prepared to spend a long term in their stations. It would obviously be economical, he thought, to recruit missionaries in Australasia. He was back in Auckland before Christmas.

In January, 1850, in a letter to Beecham, we receive the first hint of bad relations with some of the staff. He says that his authority had been questioned at the District Meeting. "My office is not liked, and will be opposed both here and elsewhere." The first open clash came over the Superintendent's suggestion that if one of the New Zealand brethren was left without a station, as seemed possible, and there was a vacancy in Feejee, he would transfer the brother concerned to that District. Immediately he was asked for his authority to do anything of the sort. He replied that he was appointed to meet such emergencies; but the majority of the brethren would not accept his ruling. He suggests that the Committee should either support him or supersede him. Watkin, he says, wants a change from Wellington, and he thinks that it would be a good idea to exchange him with Buddle, "who is anything but my cordial colleague". That was the position when Lawry left for his second Island visitation, April, 1850.

There is no point in following his progress from one island station to another. He was concerned mainly with staff problems. He wanted trained schoolmasters, two for Feejee, two for Tonga, and another for New Zealand. "We must educate, or our past work is never to be ripened for the full and complete harvest". The *John Wesley* was due to return to England for a refit in 1851, and the General Superintendent was coming to the conclusion that he would go Home with her, to talk things over at Headquarters. He needed "to confer on matters of economy and discipline". But he dreaded the long sea voyage.

Matters came to a head at the District Meeting held in Auckland soon after his return from the Islands. As the last act of the Meeting, a resolution was adopted, over the head of the Chairman, recommending the abolition of the office of General Superintendent. The resolution was supported by all the experienced men except Buttle, who was absent (but would have supported Lawry), Whiteley, who was stubbornly loyal to his chief all the way through, H. H. Lawry, who naturally voted with his father, and Smales, who was only a probationer. The weight of the District was with the resolution.

Within a few days Whiteley had written a spirited protest to the Mission Secretaries in London, on behalf of the minority. In reply, on December 19th, Buddle wrote a reasoned and moderately phrased statement of the majority view. He said that he and his friends were not factious, but fully loyal. It was true that the Northern Section of the District Meeting had requested such an appointment in 1843, but that was to meet a special situation. They had since had experience of the working of the office, and were persuaded that "the interests of the work would be promoted by its abolition", for the following reasons:

1. The powers of the office had never been defined, which enabled the person holding the office to act arbitrarily.
2. It implies that power and funds are safer in the hands of one man than in those of the District Committee, which they denied.
3. It is unnecessary. All they required was a Chairman of District.
4. The mode of supplying its expenditure is "highly objectionable.

It creates an invidious distinction, for the expenses of the General Superintendent are the only expenses which are not inspected and controlled by the District Meeting".

In a personal communication to Beecham, he asked also for advice about the propriety of asking high rates of interest. He did not mention Lawry by name, but no doubt has him in mind. Hobbs and Wallis wrote in a similar strain. No direct charges were made, but the inference was unmistakable.

It is not much wonder that Lawry decided to go to England with the *John Wesley*, and lay the whole case before the Committee of the Missionary Society, to which he was directly responsible. Correspondence relating to the journey has not survived, but the general sequence of events is clear enough. Lawry must have reached England in time to meet the Committee and convince them of his case, before the Conference in July. On the recommendation of the Committee, the Conference reaffirmed his appointment. On September 23rd, the Secretaries wrote jointly to the missionaries in the New Zealand Districts, informing them that the Conference had re-appointed the General Secretary. They made the following points:

1. The General Superintendency was not to be dealt with lightly, as if it were a novelty. It had been part of the regular practice of the Connexion, before the office of Chairman of District was known, and was an established institution in many parts of the field overseas.
2. The office had not become unnecessary in New Zealand. It was essential that someone should have the power to act in emergencies, in matters far beyond the competence of any District Chairman. For example, (i) readjustment of stations, when a minister died or was ill. (ii) Carrying out the financial regulations in the District, (iii) Visitation of Circuits. The General Superintendent was given extraordinary powers of visitation, which no Chairman enjoyed. Home Circuits were self-supporting and therefore independent, but mission stations were entirely dependent, and must therefore submit to inspection.
3. The Committee had not received any accusation against Mr Lawry from any quarter whatever. They could not take account of anonymous accusations.

On the matter of interest charges, the Committee refused to be drawn. They said it was a commercial question, to be settled by the law or respectable usage of the country.

Then a few days before Lawry's departure from the old country, a most damaging article appeared in a periodical called *The Wesleyan Times*. It stated that it was based on information received from an Agent of the Missionary Society in New Zealand, which had "accidentally" reached the hands of the editor. It went on to say that Lawry used the *John Wesley* as a pleasure-yacht; that he appropriated to his own use gifts in kind sent to the field; that he had enriched himself at the expense of the Society by receiving a large and unknown salary; that he had made profitable and extensive speculations in the purchase of lands, and by receiving, as a great money-lender, exorbitant interest, which is said to have made the name of the man stench in the land; that he has smuggled his son — who is said by the writer to be "a very lame brother" — into the ministry at a sectional District Meeting without his having passed a Quarterly Meeting, and in spite of the remonstrances of his ministerial brethren; that he does not preach more than once a fortnight, attends no week-night services, and opposes himself to general usefulness, and sneers at the more useful of the brethren. The article was intended to injure the Missionary Society and its Secretaries. The writer cared little or nothing about Lawry, but was using the accusations against him to attack the Committee.

The reader must understand that during the 1840's the Wesleyan Connexion in England endured the most wide-spread and indeed the only serious internal convulsion in its history, after the settling-down process that followed the death of Wesley. During the early decades of the 19th century, the Connexion made phenomenal progress under the paternal government of a Conference which was dominated by a

succession of very able preachers. The Wesleyans were pietistic and Tory; i.e., they emphasized the duty of man before his Creator, but mistrusted talk about human "rights" which seemed to them to suggest atheistic French republicanism. The word "democracy" was almost a subversive word to most Methodists in the 1830's. At this stage the Conference was dominated by Jabez Bunting. Bunting was an extraordinarily able and devoted man, but he was domineering and made enemies. He was not so conservative in his ideas as has been represented, but he became a target for envious men who were no more democratic than Bunting himself, only less scrupulous. By the 1840's the slowly-awakening democratic sentiment of the Wesleyan public was being vigorously exploited in an attempt to overthrow the ruling oligarchy of the Conference. Since Bunting was Senior Secretary of the Missionary Society, the Society itself became the target of scurrilous attacks. It was the biggest single enterprise of Methodism, romantically interesting to the rank and file of the members. To discredit the Society was to discredit Bunting. The attack was pressed home with unscrupulous venom, mainly in pamphlets and hostile periodicals. As a result the missionary income suffered, and retrenchment followed. This was the reason for financial stringency in the New Zealand Mission, and for the premature withdrawal of support from England in the 1850's. But so far as the editor of the "*Wesleyan Times*" was concerned, accusations against Lawry were just so much mud to sling at the Committee. One can entertain very little sympathy with the men behind the Fly Sheets and the attacks on the Mission House.

It looks as if the article referring to Lawry was meant to appear just after his departure, when he would no longer be present to answer it; but the plan miscarried. Sailing was delayed at the last minute, and Lawry had the opportunity to answer the charges one by one. These points were repeated in a pamphlet published in London on September 29th, entitled: *The Rev. Walter Lawry and His Slanderers*.

But before Lawry or the letters reached New Zealand the editor of the "*Wesleyan Times*" returned to the attack by revealing the source of his information. It came from a private letter written from Auckland to a friend by Joseph Fletcher. How this letter came into the hands of the editor was not stated. Certainly both Fletcher and his friend had been careless and irresponsible. The letter should never have been written as it was, and certainly never passed on. But now the damage was done. Definite charges had been made against Lawry by a member of his staff, and they must be investigated. The whole complexion of the case changed. The sub-committee which had handled the matter before was called together on November 26th, with the Ex-President of Conference in the chair. They had before them:

1. The accusations of the "*Wesleyan Times*".
2. The minutes of the earlier meetings, at which Lawry had given explanations of the principal matters referred to.

3. The resolutions of the brethren in New Zealand with respect to the General Secretaryship, both for and against.
4. An address signed by the Surveyor-General, the Collector of Customs, the Colonial Secretary, the Colonial Treasurer, and thirty-five other gentlemen, all belonging to other religious denominations, supporting Lawry.
5. A letter from Lawry in which he replied to the principal allegations against him in the anonymous publication.
6. The reply cited above, in which the Secretaries had reaffirmed Lawry's appointment.

From enquiries made of his father, it appeared that the letters were indeed written by Fletcher. The Committee censured him for doing things in an underhand way. Either he should have spoken openly, or not at all. They considered recalling him; but reflected that the claims of justice would not be met without a full investigation of his allegations. Should both Fletcher and Lawry be recalled? That would leave the New Zealand Mission without a head, and the Seminary without a Principal, at a moment when it was particularly important to secure expert oversight of staff matters in Tonga and Feejee. The argument developed into an overall review of the situation which was to have far reaching results. Was not this the time to throw New Zealand more upon its own resources, as they were already proposing to do with Australia? Consequently the sub-committee set out the following points:

1. That Foreign Missions cannot always be kept in a state of infancy, etc. They must be made to provide to a great extent for them-selves.
2. That, if this does not happen, they will become permanently dependent, to their own great hurt.
3. That the difficulties of managing these Colonial Missions are greatly increasing because of immigration.
4. That the method of bringing details of mission expenditure in every District under the direct control of London was no longer practicable.
5. That the missions in Australia and Van Diemen's Land were now too extensive to be profitably comprised in one District.
6. That the above Missions in Australia were ready for a new status. Hence the sub-committee of review recommended: That instead of a deputation being sent out with the sole purpose of investigating the case of Lawry and Fletcher — a course which would lay too much emphasis on it in public estimation — the case afforded an opportunity for sending a Deputation which might review the state of the Society's Missions in the whole of Australasia.

Accordingly, the sub-committee recommended that two competent people should be sent out, first to adjudicate in the Lawry-Fletcher case; then to review the whole situation in Australasia, with a view to the independence of the area.

Eventually Robert Young was chosen to represent the Society, to join William Boyce, the General Superintendent in Australia, and these two men made up the deputation to New Zealand.

Lawry arrived back in Auckland in January, 1852, after a tedious voyage of four months, without touching at any port. He complains that a cataract has come over his eyes, and his medical adviser forbids reading or writing. He cannot recognize friends in the street. He is threatened both with the loss of his sight and with the end of his working life.



**A comprehensive view of early Auckland, showing High Street Church and the Wesleyan Seminary, later Prince Albert College.** Reproduced by kind permission of Auckland Public Libraries.

In writing to the Secretaries he refers to a detailed statement of the case for his removal in the Minutes of the District Meeting, held in his absence. He defends his financial administration in strong terms. As to "temptations to secularity", he acknowledges these, but thinks the brethren might have recognized that when complaint was made, he immediately arranged to convey his property away. He acknowledges that he has been irritable, saying sharp things which afterwards he regretted. In this he was not the only offender.

"I am envied by certain of the brethren, and who can stand before envy?" He asked to be relieved of duty and allowed to retire as soon as may conveniently be arranged. It is probably too late to appoint a successor for 1852, and by 1853 it will be clear whether his loss of sight is permanent, so he does not quite clinch the matter.

At about the same time Buddle, Fletcher and Reid wrote to the Secretaries, largely identifying themselves with the charges Fletcher had made. What happened was that the *Watchman*, a conservative paper taking the official establishment line, had reprinted the article on Walter Lawry and his Slanderers, as a complete answer to the detractors. The three missionaries, all stationed in Auckland, dissociated themselves from the "vile slanders" in the *Wesleyan Times*, but went on to say that any defence against them must be firmly based on truth; and that some of the accusations were correct, notably those relating to extensive financial dealings, which had caused adverse comment. Buddle added a letter on his own account, in which he maintained on the basis of his experience as Financial Secretary that the District could manage its financial affairs quite well with-out a Superintendent, and that the brethren strongly resented the fact that all their accounts were scrutinized, but that the General Superintendent's were submitted direct to London.

It must have been a very unhappy year for the Auckland Wesleyans. If the gossip could not be kept from London, it could hardly be suppressed in the High Street Chapel. Buddle and Lawry were compelled to work together, while thoroughly distrusting one another. Buller was out of it in the Kaipara, but he wrote an unhappy letter to London, supporting the rebels, although he was under great obligation to Lawry personally. Fletcher called on Lawry, and did his best to soften the impact of his folly. He said that only the condemnatory remarks had been taken from his letter, and the rest ignored! In April Lawry wrote again to the Mission Secretaries, welcoming the news of the appointment of the Deputation. He declares that except for a piece of land on which he intends to retire, he has no property in Auckland. "Mr Fletcher is a fine young man whom I sincerely respect and love. How he could have fallen into this unhappy predicament is very strange, and no man feels it more than himself. You must make every allowance, for there has been betrayal, and who among us is prepared for the exposure of every whisper and every secret thing." He declares that he is free from any sense of guilt, except in the matter of some expressions used in the heat of the moment. He can now neither read nor write with com-fort, and must retire in any case. Fletcher wrote to London, putting the best face on things, and protesting, quite sincerely one feels, that he was fond of Lawry, who had purged himself completely of the financial pursuits that were arousing comment, and that he differed from the Superintendent only in the matter of the office. This without rancour. But on the whole one feels that the London office must have dreaded the arrival of mails from New Zealand.

The Deputation duly arrived, and met the brethren of the Auckland and Northern sections of the New Zealand District on September 12th, 1853, at 10 a.m. By 1 p.m. the business was over, which is something of an anti-climax, suggesting that the real difficulty lay in personal animosities, rather than in matters which required much argument. Fletcher was forgiven, after an abject apology. The brethren all protested loyalty to the Conference and the Missionary Society. Lawry explained that his

property came from his father and from his first wife. It had always been invested in Australia, and he left it there in 1844 when he came to New Zealand; but later he had been asked to transfer it to Auckland by friends, who wished to make use of it. (One cannot but suspect Thomas Russell here. He was a Methodist Lay Preacher and a lawyer, and married to Lawry's niece. He was also an astute, and some would say, an un-scrupulous financial operator. The family have no cause to love him. He lost a large part of H. H. Lawry's patrimony in mining ventures.) Returning to Lawry's defence. He said that he had not suddenly become rich by speculation, but such land purchases as he had made were for a definite object. For example, one thousand acres had been purchased as alleged but he bought them on behalf of the Vercoes. He made no profit on them. As to lending money at high rates of interest, he had never sought such business, but it sought him. Knowing he was well-to-do, people came and asked accommodation, and were charged the usual rate on such transactions. When he found that this was giving offence, he ceased at once. He had never squeezed any man financially, nor was he aware that any were dissatisfied. As to the matter of H. H. Lawry's candidature, there was no Quarterly Meeting in Auckland nor at Hokianga at the time, so that he could not be brought before what did not exist. The brethren accepted the judgment of the Committee with regard to the General Secretaryship, and Fletcher apologised handsomely to Henry Lawry for calling him "a lame brother". All was sweetness and light. Lawry was exonerated. But it is probable that if he had not been so obviously forced to retire on grounds of health, the debate would have taken a different direction.

The remaining months were easier. One thing only was on the old man's mind. He was fully exonerated and allowed to retire, but he saw clearly that under the circumstances this would be interpreted by the public as a veiled censure, unless there was some open declaration that he had been cleared of the charges made against him. This was never made, and he felt it keenly. We can only guess at the reasons. Perhaps the Deputation thought he had been foolish to allow his reputation and the reputation of the Mission to be compromised, and that he deserved some veiled censure. Perhaps they felt the less said the better. Let sleeping dogs lie. New Zealand Methodism became part of an independent Australasian Conference in 1855, and there was no more talk of General Superintendents. Lawry retired to a cottage of his own at the end of his term in 1854. He wanted to be near Henry. A year later, when Henry was removed from Auckland to Hokianga, his father went to Sydney. He lived in Parramatta, where for some years he was a familiar figure in church and town, till his death in 1859. He was buried in Parramatta. His widow returned to Auckland, where she lived for some years until her death.

## CHAPTER SIX

### Conclusion

The unfortunate end to Lawry's career left a certain bitterness behind it, though it made no difference to the family loyalty to the Wesleyan connexion. Walter himself seems to have accepted the situation. He was old and tired. He accepted that he was partly to blame. He wanted to end his days in peace with all men. But his son always believed that his father had been badly treated, and that this was due to the financial retrenchment he had been required to carry through at the command of the Missionary Society.

It is no doubt true that the necessity to cut down on what must have been extravagance in some areas at least, made it more difficult for the General Superintendent to maintain cordial relations with his staff. The overall expenditure was halved in his first year. The figures speak for themselves. Something had to be done; and could anyone less than a bishop have brought Hobbs down to earth? It was not Lawry's fault that he had to work within a strict budget, but almost of necessity it made him unpopular in certain quarters. It was not unreasonable that he should be paid direct from England, instead of through the local channels, as Buddle had protested. After all, he was appointed by the Committee and was responsible to them, not to his New Zealand colleagues. His allowance as a missionary was in fact the same as that of other ordained men. If he lived better than they could afford to do, it was on his own money, not on an inflated stipend. Any advantage he had was in his central position and his authority. But in that era, the fact that he lived as a person of consequence had a bearing on his influence with the Governor over the way. It was difficult to brush a man like Lawry aside as a mere sectary. He was too sure of himself and what he stood for. There is a family tradition to the effect that Grey at first tried to eliminate the Wesleyans from serious calculation, but changed his mind when Walter put his case. The day had gone by when a colonial governor could ignore the Wesleyans without bringing awkward comment in the House of Commons. It should be noted too that Lawry was generous with his money. At one critical year in missionary finance he made a gift of £500, a considerable sum for those days. It was two years stipend. But men with families who are harassed financially are not always reasonable, and they may be envious. One feels sure that he would have found it easier to carry his colleagues along with him if he had been as poor as they.

Both the General Superintendent and his critics complained that his powers had never been exactly defined. Lawry was disturbed because as "Visitor" to the Island Districts he was hardly in a position to override Thomas, the Chairman in Tonga. But he had no doubt of his mandate to rule in New Zealand. By birth, temperament and training he belonged to the older authoritarian school of Wesleyan Superintendents. They were responsible to no-one but the Conference. However, the winds of change were blowing even among the conservative Wesleyans, so that the younger generation were

not so ready to accept direction from above. (It is ironic to reflect that a generation earlier, Lawry had been a rebel himself, and Leigh the Superintendent). It is inevitable that we connect Buddle's demand that Lawry should be responsible to the District Committee, with the wider currents in contemporary Methodism. For good or ill, the English and Colonial Methodists were to have no more bishops. (The immensely successful American Methodist Church of course retained them). Both Buddle and Buller came to their majority under the Reform Bill. They expected to be heard, and they were strong men. Even Fletcher's foolish letter was part of the pattern. Writing to London, Buller gave his opinion. "There were too many experienced missionaries to allow the scheme of the General Superintendency to work. It might have worked in a District composed chiefly of young and inexperienced men."

Neither of these things alone would have forced Lawry's retirement. There is no reason to doubt Boyce's judgment in his official report. He said, "The mystery seemed to be how men so thinking of each other ever came to quarrel! This mystery I can explain, as I have been behind the curtain since I came here.

(1) Lawry has sinned grievously with his tongue, and as men feel insults even more than injuries, we cannot wonder at the un-popularity of his office and person.

(2) He has not done his own work, but has laid all the burden on Buddle, who has been de facto General Superintendent, etc., keeping all the accounts and this has prevented his doing his work as Auckland preacher; hence Lawry lost influence and respect and it was supposed that all his time and attention were devoted to his own affairs: but the truth is, he is physically incapable of attending to the duties of his office, but of course is quite unconscious of this himself! (words underlined by Boyce).

(3) This state of affairs of course led to everlasting surmisings, evil speakings, parties and faction among preachers and people also, and hence the whole matter has been a commentary upon "Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth".

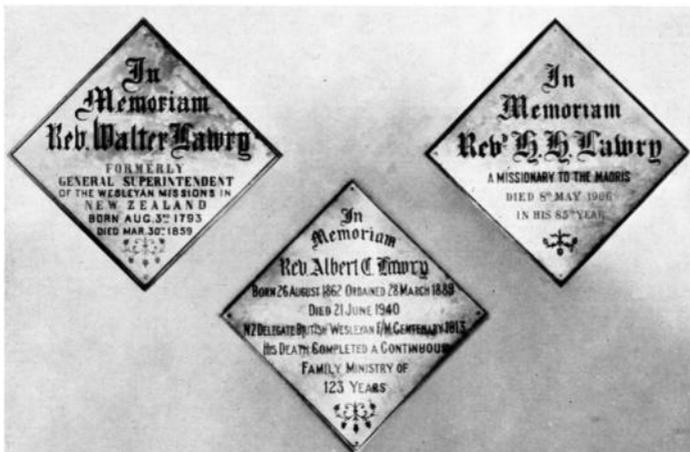
It is possible to fix exactly the point at which this physical decline first showed itself. It was on his return from his first island inspection. That would be the end of 1847. He suddenly complains of being tired. Every letter is the same. He is burdened with work. He is loaded with secular cares. He also acknowledges that he is irritable and testy. This is not like the Lawry we have known, who was genial and companionable, and full of life. One almost wonders if he may have suffered a slight stroke. From this time on all the buoyancy is gone. He still writes a clear and forceful letter. His judgment is good, his grasp of principle clear. But the lift has gone out of the man.

All the actors in this little drama are, of course, dead long since. Apart from the ample records in the Mission Correspondence it would be very difficult to uncover the facts. But it seems clear that Lawry was an unusual man, and that he did a remarkable work

In many ways he seems ahead of his time, at least among his Wesleyan contemporaries.

(1) It is remarkable that as an Englishman (if Cornishmen will allow the designation) in an age when the average missionary clung very closely to the home connection, Lawry was ready to see the South Seas in fresh colonial terms. He wanted to seek and use colonial volunteers in the Islands, partly because they were near and comparatively cheap, but also because he saw it as their job. He saw the South Pacific in South Pacific terms, which is more than most of his ecclesiastical contemporaries did.

(2) He recognized the overwhelming importance of education in the missionary programme. It was the business of the European missionary to train local leadership, and expect it to complete the task. What both New Zealand and the Islands needed, in his opinion, was a limited number of first-class missionaries. The rest the natives should learn to do for themselves. Lawry was not a widely educated man himself, though he was a reader and could write clear and forceful English. He shared the outlook and prejudice of his age and class. But he could be surprisingly radical on occasion, and he could pick out the points that mattered. In New Zealand he pulled a straggling and confused situation into coherence and order. He raised the status of the Mission with the Government. He founded two educational establishments in Auckland, and helped others in the Islands. He has earned a principal place among the honoured names commemorated by our Historical Society.



Plaques in Pitt Street Church, showing a total of 123 years' ministry —  
The Reverends Walter, H.H., and Albert C. Lawry.

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**Walter Lawry and the Wesleyan Mission in the South Seas by E.W.Hames**

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