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A Society within the Methodist Church of New Zealand

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**'Ha'amonga-'a-Maui'**

Niutoua village – "...at which is situated the remarkable trilithon of immense coral blocks, Set up as an arch. Its origin is lost in antiquity ... the pillars are about 14 feet wide, eight feet deep and three feet wide. (see [A trip to Tonga.](#))

## FOREWORD

This Journal concentrates on the Pacific area; the Centenary Celebrations in the Solomons and the mixed fortunes of the Methodist Church in Tonga.

We are indebted to Phil Taylor for his encouraging assessment of the situation in the Solomons based on his on-the-spot experiences in Bougainville and subsequent visits and contacts until his participation in the New Zealand group which attended the celebrations.

A major undertaking by the Wesley Historical Society in support of the commemorations, the book *Ever Widening Circles*, edited by Alan Leadley, contains 22 articles by Solomon Islanders and ex missionaries. The contribution from Mareta Tahu arrived too late for inclusion in the book, so we publish it in this Journal.

Concerning Tonga, Rugby Pratt's diary recording his visit there in 1922 prompted an explanation of the context in which it was written, supplied by Allan Davidson in the form of a well researched chronicle of events in Tonga from 1831 to the present day.

Additionally, we reprint from *Touchstone*, Marcia Baker's interesting item about Women's Missionary Union gifts sent to Missions in the Pacific.

Thank you to all who have freely given time and effort to enable production of *Journal 2002*. Your cooperation, diligence and patience are greatly appreciated.

*Bernie Le Heron*



## SOLOMON ISLANDS REVISITED

### A Hundred Years On

*Phil Taylor*

A party of ten from New Zealand, led by President Aso Samoa Saleupolu, spent an enriching fortnight with the people of the Solomon Islands. At the last minute the NZ High Commissioner granted permission for us to travel. The United Church General Secretary, Wilson Gina, had flown especially to Honiara to see him, telling him, "that they had this rather elderly group coming from New Zealand. The Church would take special care of them when they arrived at Honiara and see them safely to Munda, far away from the ethnic troubles". There were also leaders of the church from Tonga; including President Dr Mone, the former president of the Uniting Church of Australia, the Rev John Mavor- and Papua New Guinean, Canadian and British leaders.



**Rev. Phil Taylor**

The celebrations of the 100 years since missionaries brought the good news of Jesus Christ to the Western Solomons were lavish. Thousands of people gathered from islands remote and near. I suspect that more than half had never travelled as far as Munda before, such is the expense of travel. They had brought most of their food for the ten days. In the 35 years since our family were in Bougainville the *Three Self Theme* brought by the Jubilee party in 1952 has taken root. They are self-propagation, self-governance and self-supporting. Being amongst the poorest peoples of the Pacific they are struggling with self-support.

I would liken all the effort and planning and money put into this important milestone as similar in meaning to their sense of community as the Indian 'potlatch ceremony' described by Bob Smith, former Moderator of the United Church of Canada. Potlatch is an occasion when the community put all their efforts in working to gather their crafts, food and other assets into one place to be given away. When the authorities imprisoned Indians for having a potlatch because it seemed wasteful to European eyes and also tried to ban other cultural activities the First People of the Nation slid into drunkenness, HIV and early death. Potlatch is now restored and the United Church of Canada has for the last 16 years been working through what it means to apologise for their involvement in these acts. For our part we were glad to carry a gift of money gathered from around New Zealand as a sign of our support.

Davinia and I can look back over the fifty years to the time when *missionaries from overseas* were thought to know best to this year of 2002 when the enlightened transfer of authority of today is seen in action. Actually the missionaries did not hear the *Three Self* message in 1952 any more than the New Zealand church of that day saw the need for sharing decision making with Maori. When we arrived back in Bougainville in 1957 Quarterly Meetings could be noisy occasions but by and large the local members had little voice. If there were stirrings of discontent the experience was that overseas missionaries brought better health and good education and often a small trade store with reasonable prices for basic goods and of course the Gospel. We felt we were needed - our children were spoilt and picked up and world around us felt safe and secure with no hint of the storm clouds on the horizon. Sadly we didn't take account of how patronizing our behaviour was and how much power we had in our sphere of influence.

It was a wakeup call when Silas Eto leading the Christian Fellowship Church broke away from the Methodist Mission. Calling himself the Holy Mama he declared that Mr Goldie would return and restore his former close relationship with the *hangara* (chiefs) who together would make the Mission decisions as of old. This movement gathered up many on the island of New Georgia including some of the villages close to Munda head station. This took place in the early 1960s. In a sense this movement came out of a desire to go back forty years when Goldie benefited greatly by working through the leading men. They couldn't understand why they were no longer consulted. The missionaries who followed Goldie were more inclined to work with pastor teachers and Quarterly Meetings. But regardless of this particular movement's roots we became aware that life would never be the same again and change must happen immediately.

In 1962 at the annual synod we passed a motion to this effect, "*Henceforth we seek out forty men or women with the necessary gifts and graces and challenge as ministers*". With the Australian mission districts in Papua and New Guinea the Raronga Theological College and the Mamaluian Lay Training Institutes were set up. We were working ourselves out of a job!

The Rev. Rua Rakena used the term 'pot plant' Christianity with reference to the best efforts of missionaries. We did our best but it was not what was required. The first generation of converts had responded with enthusiasm as they moved away from the fearsome world controlled by the spirits of their dead forefathers and the violence of neighbours into a world created by a gracious loving God. Their children, who were close to both world views, willingly followed. In the 1950s and 60s with most people still attending worship we faced congregations filling up with the third generation, removed from the pioneering days, whose eyes appeared listless and indifferent. It was expedient that the Gospel be taken out of the missionaries' pot and planted in the soil of Melanesia. Yet another reason that it was time for us to come home!

When in the 1980s I returned for the opening of the Tonu High School I was aware that there was more life and vigour in church services. The moderator of the United Church of PNG commented, "At any given time, somewhere in one of our districts there would be a revival taking place, and that's very good!". In 1996 at the inauguration of the United Church of the Solomon Islands a few had slipped out of war ravaged Bougainville to share in the occasion. One, the Rev. Meshach Taruravu, spoke with great enthusiasm of the revival he was involved in around the Kieta area. WTien all other life supports were crumbling around them, their clothes were rotting on their backs, medical aid posts non-existent as the blockade denied them medicine, and a decade of children growing up without schooling there was the church, represented by loyal pastors like Meshach still, proclaiming the love of God and in the midst of suffering bringing hope.

The United Church of the Solomon Islands is young and vibrant. Throughout the daily services there was much clapping and when choruses were sung the young people came alive, often with hand, foot and body movements. Visitors such as us tried to follow, our clumsy efforts being hopefully appreciated. In the meantime there is no sign of the church aging.

On the day of the centenary, 23 May, the landing of the missionary party was re-enacted. Most days there had been dramatic presentations of important occasions from the history of the church. Goldie often featured wearing his floppy cloth sun hat. On the wharf pranced a much photographed warrior in a minimum of clothing with spear, shield and axe. The former mission boat *Ozama Twomey*, hired for the day, being challenged by men in a tomoka (war canoe), tied up. As we turned to follow the missionaries up the wharf I was struck by the mass of young people standing either side intently absorbed in the drama.

Goldie faced the challenges of 1902 as a rugged individualist with the pluses that gave him the ability to confront danger with a smile and the negatives he brought in his colonial baggage built on generations of European conquests. The challenges today are for the life and well being of the youth in a population aged mostly under twentyfive. Drugs and promiscuity are tempting for those who have little hope of

meaningful occupations. Through radio and videos they are exposed to the glamour of a rich decadent western society where money seems to be there for the taking.

John Mavor, the preacher for the youth day service, spoke of the change the Gospel brought.



**Re-enactment of Goldie's arrival 23 March, 1902**  
- former Church vessel, *Ozuma Twomey*, being challenged by tomaku (war canoe).  
*Photo: Phil Taylor*

Around 1902 the chiefs from the Roviana lagoon where Munda is situated had gone to the Marovo lagoon about 50 miles away and brought back the heads of Marovo people.

Amongst the victorious warriors would have been the father of the Rev. John Bitibule now aged 95. John Mavor recalled being at a service where a deaconess from Marovo served holy communion to John Bitibule whose ancestors took her ancestors' heads. Such is the change the Gospel brings.

To the young people in front of him he pulled no punches in saying, "Today despite the ethnic tensions you must stand for the Solomon Island nation. Though you are a small country the rest of the world will know of the good things you are doing. If someone says bad things about a person of another island, you are called to speak up against such ignorant slander. Education is very important. Do your best - though only some will become doctors. Educate yourselves in crafts and gardening. Be good family persons and good church people. Education is for life. Plan to make a life for yourself beyond formal education. Be a good follower of Christ in your community".

With no government grants this year Goldie College has been forced to charge fees of \$1200 for forms 1 to 5 and \$1729 for form 6. Where does a subsistence villager get that kind of money for one child let alone three or four? Since fees were charged

pupils have reduced in number to 368, and an excellent staff of twentyfour will be under-employed. Three of the teachers, including the principal the Rev. Joseph Cherian, are from the Church of North India, appointed through the Council of World Mission.

One of the most thoughtful dramas was presented by the youth from around Munda where they have been most exposed to the outside world. In peaceful times a consistent stream of the well off of the world landed at Munda to swim off the reefs and view their beautiful coral and fish. A bumpy truck ride away is the Noro fish factory with its deep-water harbour giving employment. These young people are at least a step or two removed from the simple village life. The play was new to me and I later found had been written by a Solomon Island ambassador to the European Union. It was called, *Want the Things I Hate!* It tells of the tension in the minds of youth who know all about a world they can never visit unless they have done well at school or are sponsored by a friend. They are being pulled many ways.

On the stage was this one youth being tempted by prostitutes, glamour, riches and wild music starkly portrayed by the actions of the people flaunting themselves at him. I suspect that some of those around me in the darkened building, like myself, having not heard of the play, didn't know what to make of it. This drama did not end as did other dramas with a victory of good over evil. It faithfully portrayed where many Solomon Island youth stand or fall in this global world. There is no easy answer.

So the battle is on for the hearts and minds of this present generation in one of the poorest countries in the Pacific. If you were able to read the Hturgy prepared for their services you would know how much they are aware of the negative effect of global forces. They do not want us to give answers - only share God's closeness with them.



**Welcome at Honiara Airport from members of Wesley Church, Honiara, 14/5/02.  
New Zealanders from left - John Roberts, Aileen George, Jim Cropp, Phil Taylor, Suesau  
Strickland, Lyn Sadler, Doug McKenzie, Aso Saleupolu, Leone McK-enzie.  
Photos: Phil Taylor**





**Welcome at Honiara Airport  
From left - Lyn Sadler, Rev. Jim Cropp,  
Rev. John Roberts, Secretary of Mission and Ecumenical,  
and Rev. Aso Saleupolu, President.**

# THE STORY OF MY LIFE IN THE CHURCH MINISTRY

**The Rev. Mareta Tahu**

I am the first woman to be ordained as a minister of the United Church of Solomon Islands. I come from Arariki village located on the Island of Wagina, Choiseul Province, in the Western Province of Solomon Islands. I am a Micronesian by race and Kiribatian by birth but migrated to Solomon Islands in the early 1960s. The name 'Mareta' is a Kiribati version of 'Martha'. I am married with three children - Mary, Atenia and Mereta. Currently, I am an assistant town minister of the Honiara United Church congregation as well as the United Church chaplain to prison and hospital. My husband, Atabani Tahu, is also an ordained minister of the United Church. He is lecturing in Religious Education at the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education, the only government institution in the country responsible for the training of teachers. Our three children are continuing with their secondary education.



**Rev. Mareta Tahu**  
*Photo- Phil Taylor*

## **Cultural and Education Background**

I am one of ten children, seven boys and three girls, born at Phoenix Island in Kiribati on the 12th of May 1957. I was the first born daughter in the family and my upbringing was according to a very strict discipline. As a five year old I used to wake up at 4.30 every morning and prepare everything - boiling water with local firewood, sweeping the surroundings, carrying water from the well, washing dishes and clothes,

and cooking - before everyone else would wake up. There was little time to talk to others and even to socialise with my friends.

My upbringing may sound cruel but this was the way in which children, especially girls, were brought up in the Kiribati culture where mobility was greatly restricted and closely monitored. Gender roles and relationship clearly drew some lines of inequalities often to the disadvantage of females. Women were confined to do the housework while males went fishing, gardening and interacted with the outside world. Women were subordinate to men and their lives were traditionally restricted and limited by men. This was approved and allowed by every element of Kiribati culture, be it in language or bodily movements, myths or eating practices, time concepts or the siting of village buildings.

When I migrated with my parents to Solomon Islands in the early 1960s, I found that the culture of Solomon Islands resembled Kiribati culture in many ways, except that in Solomon Islands women are a source of wealth to their families through the payments of bride-price as well as primarily responsible for food production such as gardening, gathering reef foods, and even fishing, while men are engaged in various cash economic activities. For survival purposes, the Kiribati migrants had to adjust to the Solomon Islands cultural context which had already gone through a lot of changes as a result of modern socio-economic development, thus extending the work time and increasing work load for Kiribati women.

In this changing multi-cultural context I entered primary education (Standards 1 - 4), at Wagina primary school between 1966 and 1969. In 1970 I was transferred to Sasamuqa primary school on Choiseul to attend standards 5 and 6. I returned to Wagina in 1972 to complete my standard 7, the highest level of primary education during the British colonial days. I was fortunate enough to be selected for secondary education at Goldie College in 1973 although the selection and enrolment in secondary schools were limited as the number of standard 7 students exceeded the number of places available. In 1978 I completed the fifth form after which I decided to enter ministerial training instead of looking for government employment.

## **Ministerial Training**

There were some underlying reasons motivating me to enter the ministerial training of the church. An initial contributing factor to this was the enlightenment and empowerment given to me by the Lord Jesus Christ through my grandmother, Neirina, when I was preparing for my secondary entrance examination at Standard 7 in 1972. When the examination day was drawing near, I felt nervous and of course hopeless as I knew very well that I was then a student whose intelligence was well below the average. For this reason, I went to my grandmother and shared my problem with her. It was to my relief that she referred me to the verse from Psalm 121, "T look up to the mountain and where will my help come from; my help comes from the Lord". Just before the day we sat the examination I woke up very early in the morning at about 4 o'clock and went into the church building and prayed earnestly to the Lord to help me

with my examination. I sat the exam filled with joy and happiness and later when the news broke that I was selected for the secondary enrolment at Goldie College I fell on my knees and gave the Lord my joyous and sincere thanks and gratitude. From there on my desire to serve the Lord was slowly beginning but surely coming.

This inspiration to enter the ministerial training was further enhanced during my school years at Goldie College where my faith in God was growing. Fundamental to my school success was the sitting of Form 3 entrance examination in 1975. There were 96 students in Form 2 and only 30 students would be selected to enter Form 3. This particular event was indeed another challenge to me as I was often ridiculed by some students who sarcastically told me to pray to God to help me have access to Form 3. The more I was ridiculed the more I got on my knees and prayed. When the result was read out towards the end of the year I was among the 30 students selected for Form 3. This was another miracle and motivating factor to serve God.

I was further motivated and encouraged by the pastoral and counselling services I rendered to most of the students as well as some staff members. These services were revealing to me that God was preparing me in his ministry so when I passed out at Form 5 in 1978, I confirmed my decision to enter the ministerial training of the United Church.

With the encouragement, support, and assistance given to me by the late Rev Joe Qaqurae who was then the principal of Goldie College, my name was enlisted for the ministerial training by the 1978 synod of the Solomon Islands Region. However, the synod further recommended that I should have more experience in life before taking up the ministerial training. For this reason I was posted at Helena Goldie Hospital in 1979 as a chaplain, responsible for running hospital religious activities and doing some nurse aid duties.

In 1981 finally entered the ministerial training at Rarongo Theological College in the East New Britain Province of Papua New Guinea. As part of the training programme I did one year practical ministry in the Papuan Islands Region in 1982. In 1983 I returned to Rarongo Theological College and continued with my training. Towards the end of the same year (1983), I decided to get married to Atabani Tahu who was finishing his final year at the same institution. At the time I felt very strongly that I needed to get married to a person of the same profession so that my participation in the ministry would be secure and continue in the long run. For this reason, I and Atabani Tahu went back to Solomon Islands where our wedding was conducted by the then Bishop Leslie Boseto, who had returned from Papua New Guinea where he had been Moderator of the United Church of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. In 1985 we both returned to Rarongo and completed our theological training.

In 1986 we were posted at Choiseul Bay Provincial Secondary school as chaplains until mid-1987 when I was given the assistant town ministers post at the Honiara town congregation. My husband was appointed Religious Education lecturer at the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education. In 1995 when Atabani Tahu was doing his

further study at the University of Sydney, I was given an opportunity to further my training in psychology and pastoral counselling at the Australian Uniting Church Theological College in Sydney. When we returned to the Solomons in 1996 I continued to be the assistant town minister until 2001 when I was recommended to be the United Church chaplain to the prison and hospital.

## **My Ordination and Ministerial Participation**

Both Atabani Tahu and myself received our ordination from Bishop Leslie Boseto in 1987 at Choiseul Bay Provincial Secondary School. In real terms, our ordination marked the beginning of my active involvement in the church ministry at local, regional, and international levels.

The kind of work I was doing at Choiseul Bay involved arranging student outreach programmes to nearby villages, providing pastoral care and counselling to both staff and students, teaching Christian education syllabuses (Forms 1 - 3), being a matron to female students, and acting as a nurse aid to school community members.

When I was appointed assistant town minister in Honiara in 1987, the ministerial work I was engaged in included preaching and conducting Bible studies, conducting the sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion, taking funeral and wedding services, visiting hospital sick patients and prison inmates, teaching Christian education in primary and secondary schools, and representing the superintendent minister in official openings and giving keynote speeches to non-government organisations and at other important government events. Besides this my ecumenical involvement included being a member of Solomon Islands Christian Association (SICA) in a Religious Committee, the Bougainville Awareness Programme, World Prayer, Ministers Fraternal, and Seamen Religious Services.

Over the last fourteen years I have been invited to many regional and international conferences, meetings and consultations to participate, to give papers and to lead Bible studies. These have included: representing Pacific Women at the women's international conference in Dallas, Texas in 1988 on Global Peace; at conferences associated with The Fellowship Of The Least Coin in Caringin - Bogor, Indonesia in 1990 and in Nairobi in 1991; taking a United Church youth group to Auckland in 1990 to dramatise the story of Simesi Nau, the first Tongan missionary to the Lord Howe Islands; giving papers and Bible studies at a number of Pacific women's meetings, attending the United Nations' Women's Conference in Beijing in 1995.

## **Challenges**

Following my graduation at Rarongo Theological College at the end of 1985, I was grappling with a question as to whether or not I would be considered for ordination because of both my status as a married woman as well as the cultural status of women in Solomon Islands' society. However, these preconceived assumptions did not have much weight on 1986 Synod's decision on my ordination.

My ordination in 1987 had been strongly recommended by the 1986 Choiseul Circuit's Meeting whose members were mostly men. This recommendation was primarily based on the ministerial work I was doing at the school, thus contributing to the Choiseul Circuit. Basing on these contributions, this recommendation was accepted by the 1986 Synod with no objection. For this I wish to acknowledge my gratitude to the United Church of Solomon Islands for the recognition of ordination of women in the Church.

However, there have been instances of cultural bias towards women and these are really challenging to my participation in the ministry as a woman minister. At one synod meeting, I was told by one of the lay men to minimise my talking because as a woman I was supposed to be quiet and leave the talking to the male ministers. In this particular incident I was forced by a male minister, who was also a chaplain to the Synod, to make an apology for talking against the suggestion to delay the ordination of one of the male probationers. I apologised for cultural reasons, but men do not apologise to women. Presumably, in so doing, it would degrade the status of males in society.

Another instance relates to a time when I took a women's outreach group to a circuit where the male minister who was responsible for the circuit spread rumours that I had defected from the United Church and become a member of the Moonist Unification Church. Although I clarified this misunderstanding with the congregation, the underlying motivation to this rumour was to undermine my active involvement in the outreach ministry of the church as a woman minister.

As a woman minister I have been disregarded in terms of benefits in the church. Since 1987 I have been labelled 'assistant town minister' while the titles 'town minister' and 'superintendent minister' have been male entitlements. Although I have been appointed by the United Church Assembly to be a chaplain for the prison and the hospital, this appointment is still in a state of confusion and has not been well received by the male town minister as he still wants me to work under his authority.

Up till now, I have been excluded from the church benefits such as a housing allowance, gas, electricity, and water which are normally paid for by the church congregation. The male ministers are enjoying these benefits while I have to bear the pain simply because I am a woman.

Sometimes increasing workloads and family commitments are a real challenge to my physical and mental strength. Besides the normal church duties, other responsibilities such as hospital and prison visiting, liaising with the media to provide church news and devotions, preparing women's outreach programmes, and taking schools' religious instruction, are seen as duties exclusively for myself for which I receive very little assistance from the male ministers. Because of my pastoral care work and counselling, along with family and household commitments, time constraints have made it difficult for me to do more. However, I am grateful for my husband who, besides his teaching load, has been a great help to my ministry. With his educational background in

theology, teaching, and psychology, he has been a silent adviser for my counselling and teaching ministries as well as presentations at regional and international levels.

The increasing demand for my ministry as a woman minister is a challenge. As Solomon Islands is going through rapid change from subsistence to a moneyed society, the impact of unemployment, urbanisation, pressures on education and the environment, migration and population increase, and the wantok system have resulted in more damage than healing to individuals and families. People are flooding my counselling room with problems, especially women and young boys and girls, who naturally feel more comfortable to share their problems with me as a woman minister. My night rests are often disturbed with phone calls to attend homes and hospitals because of different types of problems. People from different denominations and different walks in life are calling for help and this means that more women ministers are needed in the ministry of the church.



## TONGAN METHODISM

*Allan K Davidson*

The visit of the Rev. Major Albert Rugby Pratt to the Kingdom of Tonga in August and September 1922 was made at a critical time. After nearly forty years of division, the two branches of the Methodist Church in Tonga were looking, as they had on a number of other occasions, at the possibility of reunion. Rugby Pratts account of his visit provides a unique insight into the life of Free Church Methodism in Tonga as he experienced it. This account was originally published in six articles in the *New Zealand Methodist Times*<sup>1</sup>



Rev. Dr. Allan K. Davidson

The articles reflect very positively on Rugby Pratt's experience and do not try to account for or interpret at any depth the complex issues which led to the Methodist division in Tonga. As a result of his visit the author looked forward optimistically to reunion, which in fact was to be fraught with further conflict and division. What this

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<sup>1</sup> M A Rugby Pratt, "A Trip to Tonga", *New Zealand Methodist Times*, 14 October 1922, pp.12-13; 28 October 1922, p.7; 11 November 1922, p.13; 23 December 1922, p.15; 6 January 1923, p. 11; 3 February 1923, p.6. These are reproduced here from the frail carbon copy originals now in the possession of his granddaughter, Miss Elizabeth Norton of Christchurch. Joycelyn A Pratt transcribed them and the Rev. Sylvia Akau'ola-Tongotongo checked the Tongan spellings.



introduction seeks to do is to place Rugby Pratt's account of his visit to Tonga within its wider historical context.

Pratt was invited to visit Tonga by the Rev. Jabez Bunting Watkin, President of the Free [Wesleyan] Church of Tonga.<sup>2</sup> As his Christian names indicate, Watkin was born into Methodism and named after the dominating leader of English Wesleyanism in the second quarter of the nineteenth century. Watkin's parents, James and Hannah, were Methodist missionaries who arrived in Tonga in 1831 and were caught up in the religious revival which led to the conversion of many Tongans. Pratt, in an article in the *New Zealand Methodist Times* in 1922, referred to how James Watkin had "an immense sanctuary... erected for him at Lifuka" in Ha'apai where "he preached from a pulpit whose stairs were adorned with disused war clubs, and administered the sacred emblems at communion rails fashioned from carved spear shafts that were surrendered by erstwhile savage warriors". In 1837 James Watkin was relocated to Sydney and then in 1840 he was appointed to New Zealand where he commenced the first Christian mission station in the South Island at Waikouaiti. He later had appointments in Australia where he died in the fifty-sixth year of his ministry aged eighty.<sup>3</sup>

Three of James Watkin's sons became Presidents of Methodist Conferences. The most unconventional of these appointments was the one held by Jabez as President of the Free Church of Tonga for forty years. Born at Lifuka, 31 March 1837, Jabez Watkin returned to Tonga as a Methodist missionary in 1866. Watkin was caught up in the bitter dispute between the Rev. Shirley Waldermar Baker and the Rev. James Egan Moulton. In the 1870s when Baker was Chairman of the Tongan District questions were raised over Baker's involvement in politics and his personal behaviour.<sup>4</sup> Watkin initially sided with those critical of Baker, writing in 1877 that "There is a lack of spirituality about him which is calculated to have a very harmful effect upon younger men".<sup>5</sup> Moulton had a high regard for Watkin, writing in 1879 that "Although we differed on many important points, yet a better missionary the Friendly Islands has scarcely seen".<sup>6</sup>

What Baker had achieved as Chairman was the financial independence of Tongan Methodism, and what he and the King wanted was its full independence. But Baker

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<sup>2</sup> While it was commonly known as the 'Free Church', the word 'Wesleyan' did appear in the title used in its 1885 constitution. See A H Wood, *Overseas Missions of the Australian Methodist Church. Tonga and Samoa*, Vol. 1, Melbourne: Aldersgate Press, 1975, p.204.

<sup>3</sup> M A Rugby Pratt, "The Rev. James Watkin", *New Zealand Methodist Times*, 2 September 1922, p.6.

<sup>4</sup> For fuller details on Baker see Noel Rutherford, *Shirley Baker and the King of Tonga*, Auckland: Pasifika Press, 1996 and Noel Rutherford, "George Tupou I and Shirley Baker", in *Friendly Islands: A History of Tonga*, ed. Noel Rutherford, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1977, pp. 154-72.

<sup>5</sup> Wood, *Tonga*, p. 143.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 168.

was recalled in 1879 by the New South Wales and Queensland Methodist Conference, which had jurisdiction over Tonga. Watkin was appointed Chairman in his place. In 1880 Baker returned to Tonga without Methodist authority and was appointed as Premier by the King, Taufa'ahau Tupou I. Baker had already won the Kings confidence, in part because of the part Baker played in drawing up the 1875 Tongan Constitution and the medical help which he dispensed to the King and his family Moulton, who had made a great success as founding Principal of Tupou College, was appointed Chairman of the Tongan District in 1881 to replace Watkin who was recalled to a circuit appointment in Australia. The King was annoyed and Watkin was also "estranged from the Church in Australia" by this decision. According to Rutherford, Watkin was withdrawn from Tonga because of his "perceived indulgence towards Baker and the King".<sup>7</sup> Rutherford also argues that the Board of Missions by imposing "a severe punitive measure" on Watkin drove him "into the arms of Baker".<sup>8</sup>

The General Conference in 1881, in response to Tongan pressure for more autonomy, gave the country "District status, freedom from the Mission Board, [and] full financial control". At the time this seemed to meet all the Kings demands.<sup>9</sup> Moulton also secured the retention of Watkin in Tonga, although in moving him from Nukualofa to Ha'apai, Moulton incurred the Kings wrath.<sup>10</sup> As a result Watkin remained in Nukualofa. There was increasing tension between the King and Moulton.

Bakers interference with the church, the taking over of the Wesleyan village schools by the government, and Baker's setting up of Tonga College as a rival to Tupou College, provoked Moulton who was also unwise in some of his dealings with Baker and the King.<sup>11</sup> Moulton, by aiding and abetting those Tongans and Europeans who were opposed to Baker, was thereby seen as opposing the King and 'his man'.

Baker brought charges against Moulton in 1884 and Watkin chaired the District Meeting at which they were heard. While the District found Moulton guilty on some of these charges the New South Wales and Queensland conference acquitted him and allowed him to remain in Tonga. The New South Wales and Queensland Conference censured Watkin for showing a lack of impartiality.<sup>12</sup> The King and Baker both wanted Moulton removed and they requested the General Conference to attach Tonga to New Zealand. The Conference refused to remove Moulton and set up an investigating committee to look at the second request.

In January 1885, without waiting for the New Zealand delegation to investigate the possibility of Tonga relating to New Zealand, Baker declared the independence of the

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<sup>7</sup> Rutherford, Shirley Baker, p.238.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p.239.

<sup>9</sup> Wood, Tonga, p. 169.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 170-71.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p.171.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 173-77.

Free Church. In doing this he tied love and loyalty towards the King together with joining the King's Church so that the Free Church emerged as "both completely self-governing and a "chiefly church". Having taken this initiative Baker then secured the King's approval and "it was publicly proclaimed that all Wesleyans were expected to join the new Church".<sup>13</sup> The King made Watkin President of the Free Church on 15 January 1885 and appointed him as Royal Chaplain. In resigning from the New South Wales and Queensland conference Watkin declared that as the King was "fully determined to secede from the Wesleyan Church" and because "several thousands of [the] natives in Ha'apai and Vava'u [had] already joined the King in the secession movement he felt it his "duty to accept the position and assist in conducting it to a successful issue". The Church, according to Watkin, was "thoroughly Wesleyan in all matters of discipline and doctrine" and he somewhat disingenuously declared that he had been motivated to join it to prevent many of the seceders "drifting into Popery".<sup>14</sup>

Harold Wood refers to the way in which "For more than two years after the formation of the Free Church and with only a few intermissions, many Wesleyans suffered floggings, deprivation of office, damage to property, heavy fines, long terms of imprisonment and banishment".<sup>15</sup> Tongan hostility towards Baker and his government resulted in an assassination attempt against him in January 1887. Although this was not directly connected with the Wesleyan Church it resulted in a backlash with severe persecution and the 'virtual extermination' of the Wesleyans on Tongatapu.<sup>16</sup> A number of Wesleyans, including the King's daughter, Salote, went into voluntary exile in Fiji. Sir Charles Mitchell, the High Commissioner for the Western Pacific, investigated the Tongan troubles in 1887. Among his conclusions was the statement that:

*The Constitution ... has been utterly set aside, and the king's will substituted therefore. The theory of freedom of worship, so clearly laid down therein has been practically a dead letter from the moment the king determined to support the Free Church.*<sup>17</sup>

In response to Mitchell's recommendations, the King promised to grant an amnesty, to restore freedom of worship, and to look sympathetically on the proposed plan for reunion with the New Zealand Conference.<sup>18</sup>

The 1886 New Zealand Methodist Conference received the report of the Deputation to Tonga appointed by the General Conference and regretted that "their attempts to heal the unhappy breach that has taken place in Tonga proved unavailing". The Conference

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<sup>13</sup> **Ibid., p. 179.**

<sup>14</sup> **Ibid., p.180.**

<sup>15</sup> **Ibid.,p.184.**

<sup>16</sup>**Ibid., p. 188.**

<sup>17</sup> **Ibid.,p192.**

<sup>18</sup> **Ibid., pp. 192-93.**

deplored "the disastrous division" and sympathised "with those who have suffered persecution for their attachment to the Wesleyan cause" and prayed harmony would soon be restored.<sup>19</sup> The following year the New Zealand Conference proposed "the holding of a friendly Conference" of the interested parties that would promote the 'organic union' of the two churches in Tonga, "the proposed United Church to be constituted an Annual Conference for the Friendly Islands, of the Australasian Wesleyan Methodist Church".<sup>20</sup> This overture was unsuccessful. A deputation to Tonga from the New South Wales and Queensland Conference in which George Brown, the General Secretary of Methodist Mission Overseas, was a prominent member was also unable to heal the breach.<sup>21</sup> The point of tension was not the issue of giving Tonga Conference status but whether Moulton should be removed from Tonga.

At the General Conference in 1888, after a two-day debate, Moulton reluctantly agreed to retire from Tonga. George Brown was sent by the Conference to Tonga as a Special Commissioner with the task of trying to find the best way of bringing about reunion. The conciliatory approaches of the Conference and Brown towards the Free Church, the King, and Baker, were rejected. Wesleyans were still being persecuted and Mitchell's recommendations had not been put into effect. Brown reported that there was "no real desire for union on the part of Mr Baker and Mr Watkin.... They simply wish to absorb our people and have no wish for anything else".<sup>22</sup> Baker, however, had created a strong and growing party against himself made up of both Tongans and Europeans that led to Sir John Thurston, the High Commissioner for the Western Pacific, on 5 July 1890 to order Baker's removal from Tonga for two years. Tragically the bitterness engendered by Baker over twenty years, which was fuelled by Moulton's reaction, had resulted in a divided church, which could not be easily reconciled.

The Free Church was modelled very much along the lines of the Methodist pattern with an annual conference. This was presided over by Jabez Watkin who was reappointed each year as President. The Free Church in 1898 officially became the state church. Its ministers were much better paid than their Wesleyan counterparts. The Wesleyans, although small in size by comparison with the Free Church were held together by their 'spiritual strength' and 'denominational loyalty'.<sup>23</sup> As part of the Australasian Conference some of the Wesleyans became involved in the Methodist

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<sup>19</sup> **Australasian Wesleyan Methodist Church. New Zealand, *Minutes of the thirteenth Annual Conference held at Christchurch January 19 to February 2, 1886, p.73.***

<sup>20</sup> **Australasian Wesleyan Methodist Church. New Zealand, *Minutes of the Fourteenth Annual Conference, held at Auckland, January 18 to February 1, 1887, p. 69.***

<sup>21</sup> **Wood, *Tonga*, p195.**

<sup>22</sup> ***Ibid.*, p. 199, see pp. 197-98.**

<sup>23</sup> ***Ibid.*, p.204.**

missionary outreach in Melanesia and made an outstanding contribution to this.<sup>24</sup> In contrast, the Free Church was very much a national church lacking in outside stimulation. Apart from Edwin Harkness, who worked for the Free Church for ten years before transferring to New Zealand, Watkin was its only European minister.<sup>25</sup>

While Watkin was supported by Baker during the period he was Premier, Watkin was not a great admirer of Baker. In 1898 when Baker returned to Tonga to live Watkin opposed his appointment as minister in Ha'apai. Baker's approaches to the Free Church Conference for backdated salary were rejected. Exploiting tension within the royal family over the marriage of King Tupou II Baker sought to set up the Church of England in Tonga and tried to have himself ordained as a minister. This backfired on Baker and led to his rejection by the small proto-Anglican community who invited Alfred Willis, formerly Anglican bishop in Hawai'i, to become their leader.<sup>26</sup> When Baker died in 1903 none of the churches wanted to have anything to do with the former Methodist chairman. Premier of Tonga and founder of the Free Church, and as a result his funeral service was conducted by an itinerant Seventh Day Adventist missionary.<sup>27</sup>



Rev. J. B. Watkin  
Photo: NZ Methodist Times

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<sup>24</sup> See for example, Allan K Davidson, ed., *Semisi Nau: The Story of My Life. The autobiography of a Tongan Methodist Missionary who worked at Ontong Java in the Solomon Islands*, Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, 1996.

<sup>25</sup> Wood, *Tonga*, p.211.

<sup>26</sup> Allan K Davidson, ed., *Tongan Anglicans. From the Church of England Mission in Tonga to the Tongan Anglican Church*, Auckland: Diocese of Polynesia, 2002.

<sup>27</sup> Noel Rutherford, *Shirley Baker and the King of Tonga*, Auckland: Pasifika Press, 1996, p.226.

Little has been written of the history of the Free Church under Watkin's leadership. As Royal Chaplain Watkin lived in a house supplied by the royal family next to the palace.<sup>28</sup> He played an important role as chaplain, conducting services on significant state occasions such as funerals, coronations, royal marriages and baptisms. For example, in 1917 Watkin led the marriage service for Princess Salote and Tungi Mailefihī. In 1918 he took the burial service for Salote's father, Tupou II, and later in the same year he crowned her Queen. He also baptised her three sons.<sup>29</sup>

The Australasian and later the Australian Conferences attempted over the years to initiate reunion negotiations between the Wesleyans and the Free Church. In 1913 the General Conference wrote to Watkin requesting him to bring the question of union before his next Conference, with the assurance that Free Church ministers and members "would be welcomed to the fellowship and brotherhood of the Australian Church". They suggested that if union with the Methodist Church of New Zealand, which had gained its independence in 1913, was preferred, this could be considered. Watkin in his reply indicated that "There are still grave difficulties in the way The benefits of union would be very great but a forced union would greatly increase the difficulties".<sup>30</sup> Rodger Page, who went to Tonga in 1908 as Chairman of the Wesleyan Mission, worked tirelessly for reunion.

Elizabeth Wood-Ellem has questioned whether the move to reunite the Free Church and Wesleyans in 1923 and 1924 was a 'religious cause' or primarily a political one. For the Queen the issue was one of "reuniting the kingdom". Ironically the Free Church, which "had virtually belonged to Tupou I... had become a bastion for those who opposed not only the Tupou dynasty but also the hereditary estateholders appointed by Tupou I". In Wood-Ellem's opinion, the Free Church in the early years of Salote's reign "was now run for the benefit of a corrupt clergy and dominated by lesser chiefs who were members of the 'Reactionary Party'".<sup>31</sup> The Queen's husband, Tungi, was a Wesleyan so that the question of the royal family's identification with either church was fraught with political implications. The unwillingness of Watkin and his clergy to "recognise Salote as temporal head of the [Free] church" was a challenge to "the legitimacy of her accession to the titles of Tu'i Kanokupolu and sovereign".<sup>32</sup>

This was the immediate context in which Rugby Pratt visited Tonga in 1922. He reflects little insight, in his account of his visit, into the complex political intricacies underlying the relationships between the leading players in the moves to bring about

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<sup>28</sup> Elizabeth Wood-Ellem, *Queen Salote of Tonga: The Story of an Era 1900-1965*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1999, p. 80.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p102.

<sup>30</sup> Wood. *Tonga*, p.212.

<sup>31</sup> Wood-Ellem, *Queen Salote*, p. 102.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* p.103.

Methodist reunion in Tonga. That is perhaps not surprising because Pratt was the guest of the President of the Free Church, who in 1922 seems to have been uncertain as to the direction he should take with regard to the reunion issue. Aged eighty- five, Watkin, who had been the only President of the Free Church since 1885, was now faced with the question as to who would succeed him.

Rugby Pratt was an ideal person to visit the Free Church and encourage the possibility of reunion. He was described in a fulsome tribute in the year of his visit to Tonga as:

*Magnanimous, generous in praise and appreciation of others, features cast in resolute mould, a faint suspicion of iron fashioned into forcefulness of character by the flowing warmth of genial personality, instinct with method and genius for detail; inheriting from his gracious mother the best refinement of cultured speech and deportment, observant and prescient, an industrious worker, loyal friend and devoted pastor.*

Born in Gisborne in 1875, Pratt grew up in Tasmania where his grandmother had attended the first Methodist service there in 1820.<sup>33</sup> Trained at Queen's College, Melbourne, after a brief ministry in Australia Pratt moved to New Zealand in 1902 and held a succession of appointments until 1927 when he was appointed Connexional Secretary for the Methodist Church of New Zealand. He was to make a significant contribution to ecumenical understanding in New Zealand, helping to found the National Council of Churches in 1941.<sup>34</sup>



Rev. M.A. Rugby Pratt

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<sup>33</sup> W H E Abbey, "Rev. M A Rugby Pratt: An Appreciation", *New Zealand Methodist Times*, 10 June 1922, p.6.

<sup>34</sup> Colin Brown, "Major Albert Rugby Pratt", in *The Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, volume 4, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1998, p.416.

The New Zealand Methodist Conference endorsed Pratt's visit to Tonga. He was asked to convey the Church's greetings through the Wesleyan Chairman "and also to convey a personal message to the Rev. J.B. Watkin", President of the Free Church of Tonga, assuring him of "the affection and appreciation with which his father's life and work in the early days of Methodism in New Zealand are remembered by us in this Centenary year".<sup>35</sup> By evoking the personal connection it was hoped to encourage the process of reunion.

In his account of his *Trip to Tonga*, Pratt writes very appreciatively of Tonga and its peoples, the welcome and hospitality extended to him and the venerable and benevolent leadership of Jabez Watkin. Pratt writes very warmly about the impression that Queen Salote made upon him as "a young woman of culture and of regal grace". He was impressed by the quality of the Free Church buildings and the generosity of Tongans in their giving to the church. In the company of Watkin, Pratt was feted wherever he went, including his visits to the Ha'apai group and Vava'u. His "deepest impression" was "of the vigour and vitality of the spiritual experience of the Tongans". At his final service before returning to New Zealand Pratt reminded the congregation of their approaching centenary in 1926 and his "prayer and hope... that Wesleyans and Free Church... would as one people celebrate the one great event". In describing his farewell Pratt refers to Watkin as "the loved and honoured leader whose guest I had been" who said to Pratt, "Your visit is of God and more may come of it than you foresee". Pratt's visit, according to Colin Brown, "was generally regarded as helping to create the climate in which reunion was later effected".<sup>36</sup> It would be going too far, however, given the difficulties which emerged over the next two years, to claim too much for the influence of Pratt's visit.

The New Zealand Methodist Conference held after Pratt's visit passed six resolutions relating to Tonga. They acknowledged the contribution of Tongan missionaries in the Solomon Islands, they prayed for closer ties between the Churches in Tonga and themselves, they greeted Jabez Watkin and the Free Church welcoming their cooperation in missionary activity, they empowered the Board of Missions to promote 'cooperative action' in Tonga, Rugby Pratt and E S Harkness were added as corresponding members to the Board, thanks were conveyed to Rugby Pratt for his report, and a letter of greeting was sent to the Queen of Tonga.<sup>37</sup>

The Queen had to overcome the resistance which Watkin put in her way as she tried to bring about reunion. In 1920 Watkin had refused her request to produce and publish the Constitution and Law of the Free Church, which had never been printed. At the very time that Pratt was visiting Tonga, some nobles and chiefs petitioned the Queen

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<sup>35</sup> **Methodist Church of New Zealand, *Minutes of the Tenth Annual Conference (Centenary) held at Auckland 1922*. p. 124. (Hereafter referred to as MCNZ, Minutes [year].)**

<sup>36</sup> **Brown, "Major Albert Rugby Pratt", p.416, see p.34.**

<sup>37</sup> **MCNZ, *Minutes 1923*, p. 122.**



arguing against the control of the Free Church by its President and ministers declaring that "this church should be under the protectorship of Your Majesty and Your Majesty's Government". In May 1923 Salote "asserted that since Tupou I appointed Watkin as President of the Free Church in 1885, it followed that she (as Tupou's heir) had the same power". The nobles, having been 'rebuffed' by Watkin, in July 1923 appealed to the Privy Council accusing him of usurping "full reign and authority and that together with the clergy he had extorted 'money from the people' and they had distributed it 'without proper authority, for their own benefit'".<sup>38</sup> At the 1922 Conference of the Free Church greater respect had been shown towards Watkin than towards the Queen.<sup>39</sup>



Queen Salote

*Photo: NZ Methodist Times*

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<sup>38</sup> Wood-Ellem, *Queen Salote*, p. 104.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, p.105.

In September 1923 the Queen summoned Free Church clergy to meet nobles and chiefs from the Free Church in the Royal Chapel. She pointed out that they had come together in response to her "authority as head of church and state" and indicated her preference to settle differences by "mediation and reconciliation".<sup>40</sup> Having finally obtained a copy of the Free Church Constitution and Law the nobles and chiefs demanded its publication along with other reforms, including an audit. When the audit was completed it was found that "no financial statements had been presented to the annual Conference since 1885 ... [and] that at least £30,000 of the church funds were unaccounted for, and the church heavily in debt". There had been no theological training for the ninety-two ministers Watkin had ordained.<sup>41</sup>

It was at this point, according to Wood-Ellem, that Salote was asked by some of the Free Church chiefs to commence reunion negotiations with the Wesleyans. While the Wesleyans had supported the idea of reunion in the past, when they were faced with the reality of it they somewhat reluctantly agreed to go ahead with discussions. As a minority Church they faced the prospect of being swallowed up by their former rivals. The Queen played a significant role in preparing for reunion discussions through her travels, discussions, speeches and letters.<sup>42</sup> In response to criticisms of his leadership, Watkin on 8 January 1924 indicated to the Queen and the nobles that he was willing to resign as President in one year's time. This offer was not taken up.<sup>43</sup>

The Queen summoned representatives of the Free Church and Wesleyans to a meeting on 20 and 21 February 1924 in the royal Chapel under her leadership. It was agreed to make amendments to the Free Church Constitution which would bring the two churches together in May under the name of the Free Wesleyan Church. It was agreed that the Church would remain financially and organisationally independent with its own annual conference but would establish a formal link with the Methodist Australasian General Conference. To those in the Free Church opposed to union this implied that "the reality was that the members of the Free Church were joining the Old Wesleyans". Watkin 'wavered' between joining and staying out of the reunited Church. While he was initially a signatory to the joint Constitution, "When he realised finally that the Queen did not intend him to be the first President of the reunited church, he resiled from the proposal".<sup>44</sup>

The road to reunion and its aftermath was by no means a smooth one. Tongans and Europeans both took sides and legal action over church property was bitter and

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<sup>40</sup> **Ibid.,p.105.**

<sup>41</sup> **Ibid.,p.106.**

<sup>42</sup> **Ibid.,p.107.**

<sup>43</sup> **Ibid.,p.108.**

<sup>44</sup> **Ibid., p.108.**

divisive.<sup>45</sup> Watkin in April 1924 "made no secret of the fact that he wanted the deposition of the Queen", preaching sermons on the German Kaiser's abdication, the Russian Czar's murder and "the advantages of democracy". Some nobles pressed for Watkin's deportation. The Queen's offer to Watkin of a pension and continued residence in the house next to the palace in return for his resignation as President of the Free Church was rejected by Watkin. When the Free Church met for its last Conference the Queen now demanded Watkin's resignation. On 22 April the Queen attended the Conference and indicated that the original conditions of Tupou I for an independent Methodist Church with its own Conference would be met by the union proposals. She handed a letter to Watkin dismissing him as President.<sup>46</sup> Watkin, together with twenty-seven ministers, and lay members, left the Conference which "elected a new president and passed the union proposals unanimously".<sup>47</sup>

The reunion of the two churches officially took place on 22 May 1924. Setaleki Manu was elected as the first President of the Free Wesleyan Church serving from 1924 to 1925. In 1925, Rodger Page, the former Chairman of the Wesleyan Methodist Mission District, who along with the Queen played a crucial role in bringing about the union, was elected President. He was elected each year to this office until his retirement in 1946. The New Zealand Methodist Church at its 1925 Conference recorded "its high appreciation of the efforts of Her Majesty Queen Salote to bring about" the reunion, and "its admiration of the statesmanlike qualities exhibited by the Rev. Rodger Page, in forwarding the interests of Christian Union in the Friendly Islands".<sup>48</sup>

Those who seceded from the Free Church took legal proceedings over the ownership of Church land. The outcome of this was that the Land Court found "that the anti-union party constituted the Church and was entitled to its property". The decision was appealed to the Tongan Privy Council, which unanimously reversed the Land Court's decision and decided 11 September 1924 that "All the disputed property is now in the legal possession of the union church".<sup>49</sup> These proceedings were influenced in part by political motives and the desire on the part of some to exercise power. For Queen Salote the promotion of national unity and the acceptance of her leadership were critical issues in the reunion of the two churches. Rodger Page, who was to become the queen's "most trusted confidant and friend",<sup>50</sup> noted that "An observer cannot but

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<sup>45</sup> For a full account of this see *Ibid.*, pp. 118-21 and Elizabeth Wood-Ellem, "Salote of Tonga and the Problem of National Unity", *Journal of Pacific History*, 18.3, July 1983, pp. 163-82.

<sup>46</sup> Wood-Ellem, *Salote*, p. 112.

<sup>47</sup> R C C Page, "Tongan Church Union", *New Zealand Methodist Times*, 24 Oct. 1924 p.6.

<sup>48</sup> MCNZ, *Minutes 1925*, p.106.

<sup>49</sup> R C C Page, "Tongan Church Union", *New Zealand Methodist Times*, 24 Oct. 1924, p.6.

<sup>50</sup> Wood-Ellem, *Salote*, p. 118.

admire the purpose of queen Salote in seeking to unify her people, in the interest of the nation as well as of religion".<sup>51</sup>

Jabez Watkin died on 23 January 1925. He had ministered in Tonga for nearly sixty years. His death seems to have gone unnoticed in either the *New Zealand Methodist Times* or the New Zealand Methodist Conference. There is no question as to his commitment to Tonga or to Tongan Methodism. Sadly he had not been able to rise above the conflicts and personalities that had engendered division within Tongan Methodism. He became so identified with this division that his own personality contributed to the difficulties experienced during the reunion in 1924. The Free Church, which Watkin continued to lead until his death, split in 1928 into the Free Church, or 'Church of the President', and the Church of Tonga, or 'Church of the Chiefs'. This split indicated the way in which Methodist institutional division was now rooted within Tongan sociology.<sup>52</sup> A H Wood and Elizabeth Wood-Ellem concluded that "Religion in Tonga has been, unfortunately, too easily expressed in a party spirit unrelated to beliefs and doctrines. There were divisions caused by differences between families, according to rival school loyalties, or even personal prejudices".<sup>53</sup> The division which had emerged in the 1870s and 1880s as primarily a conflict between European missionaries and found expression through the King's desire for Tongan ecclesiastical independence and autonomy had become part of the fabric of Tongan history and life.

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<sup>51</sup> R C C Page, "Tongan Church Union", *New Zealand Methodist Times*, 24 Oct. 1924, p.6.

<sup>52</sup> Wood-Ellem, *Salote*, p. 120.

<sup>53</sup> A H Wood and Elizabeth Wood-Ellem, "Queen Salote Tupou III" in *Friendly Islands*, ed. N Rutherford, p. 199.

*In August and September 1922*

***Rev. Major Albert Rugby Pratt,***

*was invited by*

*Rev. Jabez B Watkin,*

*President of the Free Church of Tonga, to visit Tonga.*

*This visit was undertaken with the encouragement of the*

*Rev. Roger Pine, Chairman of the Wesleyan Methodist*

*Church of Tonga and was deemed a most helpful*

*encouragement which later led to the union of*

*those two Tongan Methodist Churches.*

*During that journey MA Rugby Pratt kept a detailed diary*

*describing people, places and events. These articles were*

*originally published in the Methodist Times,*

*the Connexional newspaper of The Methodist Church of*

*New Zealand. A frail carbon copy of this document is now in*

*the possession of his grand daughter,*

*Miss Elizabeth Norton of Christchurch.*

*This material has been reproduced so that it is preserved for*

*future generations. This task was undertaken by*

*Joycelyn A Pratt. We are thankful for her effort.*

*Also thanks is offered for the Tongan language proof reading*

*that was undertaken by Rev. Sylvia Akau ola-Tongotongo.*

*The cover has been constructed from*

*Tongan tapa cloth.*

***The above is from the Introduction to  
A TRIP TO TONGA by Rev. MA Rugby Pratt –  
a detailed diary of his visit in 1922.***

*The tapa-cloth-covered book was published in 2001 by Courtney Publishing,  
15 Highbury Bypass, Birkenhead, North Shore City.*

## **A TRIP TO TONGA August and September 1922**

*Rev. M A Rugby PRATT FRHS (London)*



**Rev. Major and Mrs Ruth Rugby Pratt**

### **FIRST ARTICLE**

About twenty degrees away to the north of New Zealand, scattered about the Pacific Ocean, are some 150 little islands constituting an archipelago that was discovered by Tasman in 1643, and some 130 years later designated by Captain Cook, the 'Friendly Islands'. These islands are now more generally called the Tongan Group. There are three principal clusters of islands, most of them low-lying and of coral formation, though a few are of volcanic origin, and one of these rises to a height of over 2700 feet. The main cluster is Tongatapu and here is situated the capital, where reside the Tui Kanokupolu, the present reigning dynasty. The next cluster is Ha'apai, of which the principal, although not the largest island is Lifuka, and here the main town and port is Pangai which nestles among a forest of graceful coconut and banana palms. The most northerly cluster is named Ha'afuluhao, but is better known as Vava'u from the name of its largest island, the chief town of which is Neiafu.

The harbour of Vava'u is one of the finest and most picturesque in the world. Its shores for miles are of transcendent beauty, with a wonderful succession of bold headlands, receding bays, glistening beaches, and enchanting grassy plots. Behind these lie natural orange groves, plantations of graceful coconut palms and of bananas, and a tangle of luxuriant tropical growths of exquisite variety and of brilliant colours.

The climate of Tonga, though humid, is less trying than in most of the South Pacific groups, and malarial troubles are practically unknown. Many of the islands are mere sand banks on tiny patches of coral, but even these are prolific and can produce almost

any variety of tropical fruits and roots. Only about 32 of the Tongan islands are inhabited and the total population is scarcely more than 25,000. The Tongan people are well-built, finely proportioned and of pleasing features. Their complexion is a light brown. They are dignified and courteous in bearing and carry themselves with a chiefly grace that excels the manner of most of the Polynesian peoples. Just how long they have held these islands and whence they came it is not possible to say with certainty but it is not unlikely that the Tongans and the Maoris had a common source.

The mild, peace-loving Tongan of today is very different from his ancestor of three generations ago. Cook never erred more greatly than when he called the home of the Tongans the 'Friendly' Islands. They merely simulated friendliness to gain an opportunity to club him. Later they massacred, with two exceptions, the entire crew of the ship *Port au Prince*, and also murdered three of the members of the staff of the London Missionary Society, which in 1797 began the first Christian mission amongst them. Again, when the Rev. Walter Lawry in 1822 resumed the effort to evangelise them they despoiled his house of its possessions and compelled the second abandonment of the attempt to bring to them the blessings of the gospel. The Rev. John Thomas came amongst them in 1826 to make another effort to Christianise the Tongans in the name of the Wesleyan Missionary Society. He encountered such opposition and met with so much persecution that he was on the point of abandoning the field when reinforcements arrived, and soon after, tokens of success began to be manifest. Space forbids telling the tale of the conversion of *Taufa'ahau* and of the great revival of 1834 in which thousands were led to abandon heathenism. From that day the church in Tonga has never looked back, and the whilom savages who dwelt under club law have grown, under the Divine blessing, into a race of virtuous, Christ-loving people, with a strong desire to aid in evangelising other races still amid the murk of paganism. The success of the Wesleyan Mission in Tonga stood for years as one of the bright achievements of Christian effort in the nineteenth century.

Into the story of the secession of 1885 and the circumstances of the formation of the Free Church of Tonga it is not my purpose to enter in detail. Suffice it to say that as a consequence of their successful struggle upwards from barbarism to Christian nationhood the Tongan people aspired to become self-governing, as they were a self-sustaining church. The ultimate aim of mission work is so to train the people who are being evangelised that they shall become both independent of all external monetary aid and capable of controlling all their own affairs. That aim had been secured and there arose the inevitable demand for self-determination. The refusal of the home church to concede as much as was asked for, led, in 1885, to the secession of the bulk of the people from the Wesleyan Church and to the formation of the Free Church of Tonga. Today the Free Church counts 17,095 followers who are served by some seventy-eight Native ministers and a staff of 1,454 local preachers and 1,445 class leaders. They have fine churches in every one of the 141 villages of Tonga and possess a fleet of ten cutters constantly engaged in missionary work. It is the proud boast of the Free Church that it has never received a penny of assistance from the

outside world since it began its independent career in 1885 without a foot of land, a stick of building, or a penny in its exchequer. Today it enjoys a large measure of material prosperity. It has large and valuable properties throughout the group, possesses a very substantial general fund, has an aggregate credit balance of over £40,000 in its various Trust Funds and has not one penny of debt on any of its buildings or other interests.

The Parent church, still known as the 'Wesleyan Church', has four white missionaries on its staff, 16 Native ministers and 17 catechists. These are assisted by 358 local preachers and 348 class leaders, whilst the attendance on public worship at its seventy-eight churches scattered through the group number 4,354. Both churches have preparatory day schools and the Wesleyans a college for higher education. The Free Church has 136 Sabbath schools, in which are gathered 3,022 children and young people who receive instructions from a staff of 905 teachers. The older church counts 71 Sabbath schools, 884 scholars and 134 teachers. Enrolled in full church membership are 1,389 Wesleyans and 6,221 Free Church people. The Wesleyans have 74 members on trial and the Free Church 578. Of catechumens the parent body claims 71 and the Free Church 136. Throughout the Friendly Islands the Roman Catholics have an attachment of some 3,000 people; Mormons and Adventists have merely a dwindling handful, and the Anglicans have a few white people who, since the recent withdrawal of a European missionary, have been under the pastoral care of a diligent Chinese minister.

It was my good fortune to visit Tonga as the guest of the President of the Free Church, a circumstance that gave me exceptionally favourable opportunity for seeing all that these interesting islands have to exhibit. I went with the goodwill of our New Zealand Methodist Church and with the full understanding of the Methodist Church in Tonga, whose Chairman, the Rev. Rodger Page, a brother of the Leader of the Country Party in the Federal Parliament of Australia, showed me every courtesy I went too, with the hope that my visit might do something to draw the Free Church closer to New Zealand Methodism and thus bring nearer the day when there shall be but one Methodist Church in Tonga. But of this more anon.

The President of the Free Church of Tonga is the Rev. Jabez B Watkin. He was born in the house of King Taufa'ahau, the enlightened ruler of Tonga, some eighty-five years ago, whilst his father was in the midst of that missionary revival known as 'the Pentecost of Tonga'. He came to New Zealand as a child of three when his father, the Rev. James Watkin, began the first Christian Mission in the South Island of New Zealand in May 1840. In this country he spent his youth and early manhood. Here he became a local preacher and here too, he preached his trial sermon in Durham Street Church about sixty years ago. Received as a probationer in our Methodist ministry in 1863 he served some three years in Queensland and in 1866 returned to the islands of his birth as a missionary. There for fifty-six years he has laboured amongst the Tongan people and there for the thirty-seven years of its existence he has been the President of



the Free Church. Of that Church and his association with it, as well as of my experiences in Tonga, I shall write in later articles.

## SECOND ARTICLE

Nothing could have exceeded the cordiality of my reception upon my arrival at Nuku'alofa, the capital of the Tongan Kingdom. I was met by the Rev. J B Watkin and a company of a dozen native ministers of the Free Church wearing their long black lustre coats. Native attendants took possession of my luggage and I was escorted to the Mission House for breakfast, and allotted a room overlooking an enchanting scene. The picturesque town is composed of two villages, Kolomotu'a, or the old town, established long ago under the Tu'i Tonga dynasty, and Kolofo'ou, the newer settlement that sprang into being some eighty years ago as a result of the wars when Tongatapu was invaded by the conquering forces of Ha'apai and Vava'u groups. The Mission House is framed in a setting of graceful palms, gorgeous croton trees, and flaming hibiscus. Landward it overlooks one vast plantation of coconut palms, orange groves, banana plantations and a tangle of tropical growths. Looking seaward through the drooping branches of the ironwood tree and the denser growth of banyans and mangoes, and the cedar-like 'ovava - the sacred tree of Tonga that is found nowhere else in the Pacific - one can see the placid ocean stretching to the horizon. No breath of air disturbs the foliage and no ripple breaks the smoothness of the sea.

I soon found that my hospitable host had planned for me a wonderfully varied programme. No-one knows the Friendly Islands as does he, and holding as he does the love and confidence of the people to whose interests he has unsparingly devoted his long life, he ensured for his guest a wealth of honours and a variety of experience altogether exceptional. Novel experiences amid new scenes were my daily portion throughout the period of my stay, and I was privileged to witness events and share in ceremonies from which the casual tourist is barred, and that few of the white residents in these interesting islands ordinarily witness.

On the day of my arrival I was most cordially welcomed by the Premier, Tu'ivakano, who assured me that all of good I might see in the islands was due to the message of the missionary. A similar assurance was given me the following day by the Queen, a young woman of culture and of regal grace with whom I had several interviews and from whom I received much kindness and several marks of distinction during my stay in her realm. The Queen received me in the State Room which is well furnished and adorned with pictures of former occupants of the throne. At the head of the room are three elevated regal chairs each surmounted with a crown. The Queen, however, sat not on the dais, but on a chair beside me and opposite to my host. She stands erect and measures over six feet in height. She dresses with exquisite taste and is greatly devoted to the three little Princes who are the life of the royal palace. Within an hour of stepping ashore at Nuku'alofa I was the recipient of a present that was the fore-runner of scores during the next few weeks. The Native ministers called me from breakfast to receive their welcome gift in the form of four roast sucking pigs, and a

quantity of 'ufi, or yams, and some coconuts. Next morning at about 7:30 some 40 native ministers who had assembled from the villages in Tongatapu, and were clad in their attractive native dress, came to tender their formal greeting and to lay at my feet a dried kava root and some score of chickens and other good things. Gifts of food always accompany a formal visit to a chief and a kava root is an essential part of the presentation to him on all ceremonial occasions. In the heathen days the kava root was also accompanied by the offering of a human sacrifice. No Tongan ever comes to visit a chief empty-handed, and how generous the natives are was demonstrated repeatedly during my visit.

Two days after my arrival at Nuku'alofa I was present at the ceremony of laying the foundation stone of a new church in the Village of Hofoa, a little settlement of some 120 people some three miles from Nuku'alofa. In their celebration they were joined by some friends from two adjacent little villages. Our arrival was signalled by the playing of a selection by the Nuku'alofa Free Church brass band, and we were escorted to a temporary palepale nofo anga, or shelter, under which we sat amidst beautiful floral decorations. A table weighted with good things was laid before us and when we had partaken of a bountiful repast, the general presentation of food was made. Parties of men, women and children arrived and placed their gifts in regular rows before us. The gifts included fifteen green kava roots, 29 roast pigs, 1 roast calf, 91 baskets of food 36 loaves of bread, 160 taro and bread-fruit puddings, and a great quantity of fruit and vegetables. This was subsequently divided according to need amongst the assembly who regaled themselves on the good things abounding. One feature of the actual stone-laying ceremony that was full of significance was the placing of a *Bible* on the foundation stone which was laid by the President who gave a fine address on the subject of "The Indestructible Church and the Imperishable Word".

The Tongan people are full of grace and charm and possess a simple and natural dignity. They are clean, well-behaved, and courteous, and have a delicacy of deportment and refinement of manner that seems inborn. They are handsome like the best of the Maoris. They are vivacious and their faces are full of life, but also full of content, whilst the marks of goodness are unmistakable. Their religion is real and deep and is the chief interest in their lives. This is manifest in their liberality to the causes of the church and the kingdom of God. For example at Nuku'alofa the Offering at a recent missionary meeting totalled over £2,000. The gifts were made by families and no offering was smaller than £15 whilst some presented as much as £100. In its Trust Fund the Nuku'alofa Free Church has a credit balance of over £6,000 for the erection of a new church when such should become necessary. At the village of Pangai on the island of Lifuka in the Haapai group where the church was destroyed by a hurricane some two years ago, a new church is to be erected at a cost of £4,000. Half that sum was contributed in a single collection and it is anticipated that the building will shortly be opened free of debt. On the little island of Haafeva a mere sand bank on a coral patch  $1\frac{3}{4}$  miles long and  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile wide, dwell not more than 400 men, women and children and this small community recently gave over £1,200 at a

missionary meeting. The tiny village of Havelu which counts only a few families recently contributed £400 to the missionary collection. These generous monetary gifts represent only part of the offerings of the Tongan to his church. He has been trained to give and his pride is that he sustains the work of God in his own islands and does something towards wider world evangelisation.

In every village in Tonga there is a Free Church and in 78 of them a Wesleyan church as well. A notable feature of church life in the Friendly Islands is the singing of the people. Their 'po hivas' or night singing services are quite an institution. Every village church has its own choir and some of them have two, three, and four choirs drawn from the different parts of the villages. These take their turn in leading the service of praise, and at frequent intervals they combine with choirs from adjacent villages for a night of song. The choirs occupy the centre of the church building and for their accommodation the churches are larger than is needed to meet the requirements of the local people. Sometimes I have attended a po hiva in which six choirs sang three anthems each. The items are unannounced. The front choir starts off and those behind follow in regular order. When the first round is complete the front choir starts on its second effort and so on. All this singing is without the aid of any instrumental accompaniment whatever, and the singers use no printed score or printed word. The music is a sheer piece of memory work. There is always a good balance of voices and some of the individual voices are of marvellous quality, and wonderful in range and power. On several occasions I heard the "Hallelujah Chorus" and such compositions as "Glorious is Thy Name" sung in a fashion that would shame most of our Dominion choirs, whilst the rendering of selections by Tongan composers left me marvelling at the musical capacity of the composer and the singers. But now I must turn to the novel things I saw and the new experiences I passed through.

### **THIRD ARTICLE**

During my stay in the Friendly Islands I saw everything that makes the Tongan group attractive to the tourist and much that the average tourist never sees. Nuku'alofa, the capital, is full of historic interest. It has been the scene of many a stirring tribal encounter, and the scene where the conflict between heathenism and Christianity often raged with fierce intensity. It was here that the valiant old warrior, Finau, won some of his triumphs at the dawn of the nineteenth century. It was here that two Tahitian teachers sought to spread the Gospel, and here too, that the Rev. Nathaniel Turner in 1828 made his attack upon heathenism in Tonga. It was here that King Tupou turned to Christ and here too that King Taufa'ahau, when visiting Turner, received his first impulse towards Christianity. One reminder of a vanished idolatry survives in the Wesleyan College at Nukualofa in the form of a black volcanic stone, weighing some 60 pounds and of a pyramidal oval shape. This stone is called Tui-ahau, which means the "king of-Ahau". For long generations it was the sacred object associated with the worship of Tahai Tupou, the god of the Tui Kanokupolu, whose title is now borne by the Royal House of Tonga. It was supposed to be possessed of miraculous powers and

was one of the things cast to the bats and the moles when Tonga renounced heathenism. My treatment at Nukualofa was in direct contrast to that received by the early missionaries, I was treated with royal honours, was feted. 'garlanded' times without number, received by the Queen, the nobles and chiefs, and loaded with gifts brought in the two forms of presentation known as "kaitunu" and "koloa".

Some seven miles from Nuku'alofa is the interesting village of Kolovai, adjacent to Hihifo, where the saintly John Thomas resumed the forsaken mission to the Tongans in 1826. It was at Hihifo that the London Missionary Society landed its agents in 1797, agents who shed martyr blood to win the Natives, and shed it apparently in vain. It was here, too, that the chief Ata exercised his harmful influence a century ago and it was here that the first convert of the Tongan mission was baptised in January 1829. Kolovai is approached along beautiful avenues of coconut and banana palms which run through numerous picturesque villages. Just before reaching Kolovai we passed the village of Poa where a ruined fortress tells the tale of one of the deadliest encounters in the modern history of Tonga. On the roadside near to the old fortifications lies a rusty old cannon. This weapon has done its share in the old-time conflict, having been taken from the wreck of some vessel and manipulated by a renegade Englishman who had adopted the life of the heathen aboriginals, and earned the name "Jimmy, the Devil".

On arrival at Kolovai we had a cordial reception and the inevitable presentation within a few yards of one of the most interesting sights in the locality. In the centre of the village are a few ironwood trees. These trees are the resort of the koe peka or vampire bat commonly called the flying foxes. We saw thousands upon thousands of these - foxes- suspended from branches of the trees to which they clung with their feet whilst their heads hung downward. The upper branches were worn bare of foliage and were literally fledged with flying foxes, whose weird cry somewhat resembles that of a child in grief.

From Kolovai we set out for Houma where are situated the wonderful blow-holes. On the way we passed a succession of villages, and at one of these Ha'utu, I was presented with a fine live specimen of the famous hermit or land crab known to the Tongans as the "unga" but commonly called the "robber crab". In shape it is not unlike an immense lobster. Its shell is suffused with blue and brown tints and its legs measured 13 inches long whilst the claws, supplied with fearsome nippers, were nine inches long. The "robber crab" climbs the tall coconut trees, husks a number of nuts with its mighty claws and throws them down, regaling itself on the kernel of the broken nut. The crab is a rare table delicacy, which, by the way, I did not sample, though I did taste the toli-toli, or tremendous sea crab that abounds in the more northerly islands.

At Houma an awe-inspiring sight greeted us. The action of the sea has undermined the rugged coral cliffs of the coastline. As the rolling wave approaches the shore it disappears for a moment, and then with a sudden roar and a loud hissing sound, all

along the coast scores of columns of water shoot like geysers through the vents and blowholes that perforate the rock. The columns rise to a considerable height and then falling, gracefully shower into pools that have been hollowed by their action in the surface of the coral. Here too, as at the various villages we passed, we were laden with gifts of tapa, mats, coconut oil and other tributes from a grateful people to the value of the religion brought by the Christian missionary. A few days later our visit was returned by the villagers. On one afternoon over 300 persons from thirteen different villages came to pay their respects and offer their love. Roast pigs, with the liver, the daintiest or chiefly part of the porker; chickens, yams and such things as fans, necklaces, kava cups and bowl, and even a couple of ancient stone axes, told of the love of the Tongans, as the numerous kava roots told of their respect.

On August 29th I visited the village of Mu'a where the London Missionary Society had worked in 1797 and where the Rev. Walter Lawry landed on August 17th 1822. On this historic spot a dried kava root was presented to me for our own President, to whom the people sent their respectful affection and the assurance of their interest in and goodwill towards New Zealand, to which they felt themselves bound by many sacred ties. A tapa cloth was part of the presentation at this place and I have handed it to the Rev. A C Lawry as a reminder of his Grandfather's association with Mu'a. From Mu'a we had a triumphal progress, marked by many a banquet and many a presentation, and many a garlanding. At length we reached our objective, the village of Niutoua, at which is situated the remarkable trilithon of immense coral blocks, set up as an arch. The arch is called the Ha'amonga-'a-Maui. Its origin is lost in antiquity but it recalls the Druidical Arch at Stonehenge to which it is far superior in that the top piece is mortised into the uprights which are loftier than the Stonehenge supporting pillars. The pillars are about 14 feet high, eight feet deep and three feet wide. How, when, and by whom these immense rocks were hewn and by what mechanical means they were put in position is one of the mysteries of science, but they are truly a remarkable sight. Many langis are in the vicinity and these are supposed to be the burial places of the kings of the forgotten civilisation responsible for the erection of these interesting works. Some of these langis, which are enclosed spaces about 30 by 50 feet in area, rise in three and four terraces with a high mound in the middle. The terraces are each enclosed within slabs of coral. One of these slabs I measured and it was twenty-two feet long, nine feet high and two feet deep. Its weight is tremendous and the task of quarrying and transporting it must have been immense in that prehistoric age to which it belongs. Tradition says that the space around these royal tombs of the Tui Tonga kings descended from the gods was the scene of many a savage gladiatorial contest. In grief for their venerated ruler, they fought each other and lacerated themselves, so that they might witness in bloody scars their sorrow for the dead. Now my space is filled and I still have to tell of a sixteen-day trip in a ten-ton cutter in the stormy and reef-strewn waters of the Friendly Islands, a trip full of novelty and interest.

## FOURTH ARTICLE

Not the least interesting period of my stay in the Friendly Islands was a sixteen-day cruise in the *Fetu'u-Aho*, a smart little ten-ton cutter and one of the Free Church fleet of ten boats that are constantly engaged in missionary work in the storm-swept and reef-strewn Polynesian waters. Our ship's company numbered twenty-six including Mr Watkin, his son, his daughter-in-law, three Native ministers and the Hon. Fakafanua, a Tongan noble and local preacher.

In calm weather on the morning of August 11th 1922 we left Nuku'alofa for the Northward. A little distance on our bow lay the ruins of the ship *Knight of St George* piled on the reef outside the port. Away in the distance we could discern the island of Tau on which the mission ship *John Wesley*, the first of that name, was wrecked in the sixties during a fearful night when earthquake and tidal wave wrought havoc in the low-lying Tongan group. Conspicuous among the islands, and separated by a narrow strait from Tongatapu, rose the island of 'Eua which is of different geological formation from the rest of the group and is said to be the oldest piece of land in the South Pacific and probably the remnant of a lost Southern Continent. As we danced over the sun-kissed waters we passed Fafa, Malinoa and a succession of other islands decked with graceful palms and fringed with glistening white coral-sand beaches. A smart run of eight hours brought us off the island of Nomuka. Anchoring inside the reef, Mr Watkin, his daughter-in-law and I were being rowed ashore in a dinghy when some twenty Natives rushed into the water, laid hold of the boat, and bearing it aloft, carried it across the sands that had been trodden long before by the feet of Captain Cook, up over the greensward, and never once did it touch the ground until it was deposited alongside the verandah of the mission house, some 120 yards from the water's edge. Time and space forbid the telling of the experiences crowded into sixteen hours that we spent on Nomuka, a historic island that is a veritable orange grove.

Leaving Nomuka we set sail for the Ha'apai Group. In a rapid run we passed many interesting islands. One of them was 'Uiha, a former burial place for Tongan royalties, whose tombs, built of great coral slabs cut from the reefs, lie near the beach beneath the shade of a giant toa, or ironwood tree. Not far distant from the course rose the two lofty volcanic islands, Kao, with its cloud-capped summit, and Tofua, which is not now inhabited, but is interesting as being the island where Bligh located himself after the mutiny of the *Bounty*, and whence he set forth on his remarkable voyage in an open boat. From these two islands come the hard stones out of which the "toki-toga" or Tongan axes, are made. Hence too, come the hard stones used for crushing the kava root, and also the kilikili, or small black volcanic pebbles that adorn the graves right through the Friendly Islands.

Six hours sailing brought us to our objective, the port of Pangai, the capital of the Ha'apai Group, situated on the island of Lifuka, the principal, though not the largest island in this cluster. The combing waves were breaking in impressive grandeur over

the encircling reef as we dropped anchor. At once a large boat manned by native ministers advanced to take us ashore. As soon as we got into shallow water the crew leaped overboard, and with some thirty stalwart Tongans who had rushed into the waters to greet us, drew the boat far up the beach towards the mission house. After the formal reception and food presentation we were welcomed by the Mayor, Mr Siaki Lolohea, and were then shown to our quarters by our kind Tongan host, the Rev. Sione Tualau. My room was furnished in a fashion that would shame many a manse in Maoriland. A large iron bedstead with spring mattress and mosquito net curtains, marble-top wash-stand, wardrobe and duchesse with bevelled edge mirrors and all that I might need down to the detail of a new tooth brush and a tube of fragrant dentifrice were in evidence.

Lifuka which is only about ten miles long and less than half a mile wide is densely covered from end to end with coconut and other palms and a wealth of tropical vegetation. It was here that, in 1806, William Mariner escaped death when the natives took and burnt the French vessel, the *Port au Prince*, half whaler and half privateer, and massacred the ship's company. It was here that the Rev. James Watkin, during the days of the Tongan Pentecost, preached in a great sanctuary, the altar rails and pulpit stairs of which were adorned with carved war clubs and disused spear shafts that had been surrendered by erstwhile savage warriors. It was here, too, that my honoured host was born eighty-five years ago, in the house of King Taufua'ahau, whilst a hurricane raged that threatened to destroy the frail mission house. It is here that there reside in quiet seclusion the four daughters of the late Rev. Shirley Baker whose name is intertwined with so much of the modern history of Tonga.

To Lifuka came, from the islands around, many a deputation to bid us welcome and to proclaim their devotion to the lotu. Public meetings, preaching services, po hivas and presentations filled the hours of our stay, and whilst we remained in the mission house we were serenaded by the Free Church brass band and by the choirs from both church and school singing their songs both in Tongan and in English. From the islands of Foa, Ha'ano and Felemea came gifts of pigs, fruits, and nuts including bunches of the "ta'okave", a species of small coconut containing about half a pint of delicious milk, a nut that is ordinarily presented to the chiefs and guests of honour. From Ha'afeva, an island in the western part of the Ha'apai group, came the gift of a great live male turtle, called the "ikata'ane". It measured sixty-two inches from head to tail and thirty-eight inches across the back. A large fish weighing about thirty pounds, a "valu", that had been caught by one of the native ministers as the "Fetu'u'aho" ploughed the waters, was also presented to the "faifekau papalangi" or the "foreign minister" as I was not infrequently called. In the "kaitunu" or food baskets were large numbers of "feke" or octopoda. The octopus, it may be said, is a dainty dish in Tonga. After being sun-dried it is fried in a rich coconut cream. Its piquancy I took for granted, as I did also that of an immense stingaree, or "fai" that had been cooked in banana leaves for my delectation and that of my Tongan visitors. Let me at once say that there was abundance of food deliciously cooked in the best English fashion wherever I went.

Plum puddings, custards, cakes and pastry were everywhere in evidence and perfectly done they were. Many of the tropical vegetables such as the 'ufi or yam, both white and heliotrope, make an instant appeal to the European palate, whilst the salad known as "otai" and prepared from orange and grated coconut, and the stew called "fakaovaka" and made by steaming in the umu, or stone oven, a preparation of orange, coconut shallots and mummy-apple, are both deliciously refreshing in hot weather.

We left Lifuka before five o'clock on the morning of August 15th for the Vava'u Group, the most northerly and the most picturesque of the Friendly Island clusters, some ninety miles distant. Away from the shelter of the Ha'apai cluster and its reefs we struck rough weather on the open ocean, showers of spray and heavy seas constantly breaking over our little cutter. Within twelve hours we had come abreast of several of the Vava'u islands and were entering the approach to Neiafu, the principal town of Vava'u. Encountering a stiff head wind we were compelled to tack to and fro for four hours as we beat up the glorious harbour. Arrived at Neiafu we became the guests of the Rev. Paula Fonua, and immediately there began a succession of deputations and presentations that did not cease until we left Vava'u some six days later. The Hon. Isaia Veikune, Governor of Vava'u bade us welcome, as did also Tapueluelu the venerable Mayor of Neiafu and numbers of chiefs. From over thirty villages in the various islands of the Vava'u Group the people gathered to show their love to their aged missionary and to do honour to his guest. Many and strange were the gifts they bore.

There were quantities of "uo" or crayfish from the distant island of Hunga near the North Passage to Samoa. From Feletoa, the site of the ancient capital of Vava'u where old Finau is buried and where still remain many traces of the fort that played so important a part in the conflicts of other days, came a present that included some live "toli-toli" a species of sea crab that measured ten inches across the back. From the island of Ofu came two large baskets of fish, one of "koango" somewhat resembling schnappers, and another of "ma'ava", a fish somewhat like a perch in shape but of an exquisite blue colour. From the village of Falevai, near the famous Swallow's Cave on the island of 'Otea, came gifts including fourteen immense white-shelled clams of the tokanoa and matahele varieties. A unique feature of this presentation was the tendering of the welcome by a woman. She was the village bard and custodian of tribal traditions. After speaking gracious words of welcome she broke into a recital which was given with marvellous rapidity and fervour. The recital was emphasised with a keva stick she had picked from the ground. It recounted the principal events that had touched Tongan life within historical times, embracing the visit of Cook, the coming of the missionary, the succession of kings, the happenings of war, the course of politics and so on. The story was received with evident approval and was regarded as a remarkable feat of memory. To me it was of interest as showing how in earlier times the memory of great events was preserved and passed on by oral tradition, a method that is still useful in islands where no newspaper chronicles the events of the passing hour.



## FIFTH ARTICLE

Whilst at Vava'u it was my privilege to see on two occasions the making and dispensing of kava carried out by experts with all the ancient accompaniments of that interesting ceremonial. This method of making kava is called "milolua", a word that is also employed to describe one way of straining or 'clearing the kava. The full ceremonial observance of this function is now rarely seen in Tonga and in consequence of the rarity of the use of the complete ritual associated therewith, it is becoming forgotten by the Natives, who in many cases scarcely know to-day the right positions to take up at the ceremony. On the first occasion I saw the ceremony it was at Ha'alaufuh, a village some eight miles from Neiafu. On the second occasion it was at Holonga, a village through which I was passing, and at which the leading chief, one George KUDU the brother of the late Queen Lavinia and uncle of the present Queen Salote had it enacted for my entertainment. For a full account of the function I must refer those interested to an early copy Journal of the Polynesian Society for which I have described the whole ceremony in detail. I may mention here, however that at Holonga the kava making was preceded by the singing of an ode of welcome by a male choir. The ode had been originally composed and sung to welcome to Holonga the late King George Tupou II. several years ago.

No visit to Vava'u is complete that does not include a trip to the Swallows Cave. Thither we went by motor launch from Neiafu on August 18th. The cave is situated on 'Otea island not far from the village of the same name, and adjacent to the villages of Kapa and Falevai. It lies several miles down the harbour. The shores en route are clad with trees to the water's edge. Graceful coconut palms lift their heads above orange trees laden with fruit. The entry to the cave is a long Gothic archway about thirty feet high and as we entered, the light of the setting sun streamed directly through the majestic doorway. The cave is like a natural cathedral. Its dome is about seventy feet high and the walls and ceiling are adorned with stalactitic curtains festooned with fringe. There are many grottoes and recesses. In one of these there rises from the water a giant coral 'tooth' which, when struck with an oar resounds like a sweet-toned bell. There is a fine chancel and at its entry is what looks like a stall for an ecclesiastical dignitary. The water within the cave is a lovely blue and is singularly clear whilst the coral cave itself is decked with all shades of red and brown and green and heliotrope and the rest.

Returning home I found over 300 people assembled on the malae, or courtyard, to greet and bid me welcome to the group. They had come from several surrounding villages, each person bearing a gift, mostly of food. Cooking preparations were afoot as many had travelled far. Over a charcoal fire a sucking pig was being roasted. This was done by passing a pole through the pig from mouth to tail. One end of the pole rested in the fork of a stake driven into the ground. The other end was held by the cook who kept the pig ceaselessly revolving over the glowing embers for several hours, at the end of which time it was perfectly cooked. Other food was cooking in the

umu or native oven. This oven is prepared by burning wood on a heap of stones. When these are hot the unburnt wood is removed and the stones are spread around the hole that contains them, leaving a depression in the centre. The pigs are placed in position, chickens wrapped in banana leaf, fish similarly treated, and the vegetables are laid around the pig. 'Ufi, or yams, are prepared. Some of these are cut diagonally and some perpendicularly, but those for the chiefs are always cut horizontally. Then there are talo, and kape and other vegetables. These are placed on the outer edge of the oven. Over them banana leaves are laid. On top of the banana leaves are placed coconuts so that the milk might be served hot. More banana leaves are added and on top of these, to prevent the steam escaping, a thick layer of large lepo leaves is laid. These are covered with sacks and on top of all, more leaves are placed, and the meal is left for a couple of hours, in which time everything is usually beautifully cooked, although at times the larger pigs need extra roasting to suit the palate of a papalangi.

Of the magnificent scenery and beautiful church buildings in the Vava'u group one can only speak in superlative terms. Every village has its own building dedicated to the worship of God. The buildings are larger than the village itself requires, so as to provide accommodation for the visiting parties from other villages who combine for the song services. A string of contiguous villages is marked by a succession of fine churches, all paid for by the local people and none burdened with a penny of debt. Every church has a fine pulpit and each one has a large sweet-toned bell. Some of the churches are of wood but many are of stamped steel inside and outside. All are strongly built and girt with steel to resist the force of the hurricanes. The windows are often of stained glass but more frequently of muranese glass in delicate colours. The churches, at Holonga with its artistic design, at Feletoa with its four spires, and at Makave with its seven towers, all of which I visited in a single morning, put the structures in many of our best circuits completely in the shade. Some of the older churches retain the rounded ends and the thatched roof but these are being rapidly superseded. A feature of these older buildings is the graceful supporting columns fashioned from stems of the coconut palms, and the beautiful coconut-wood latticed ceilings all tied and laced together with cinnet rope that has been wrought into symmetrical designs. Not a nail is used to hold the ceiling together. These churches are centres of real spiritual influence and stand for the enrichment of life for all in the islands.

We left Vava'u at ten o'clock on the evening of August 21st after a great farewell gathering in the Neiafu church. A retinue of ministers accompanied us to our boat and a crowd gathered for a hand-shake. As we drew away from the wharf they shouted their "Alu a" and we replied "Nofo a". Amongst the Tongans every voyage is begun with worship. As we set out before a light breeze and glided gently down the harbour, the sky was studded with stars and the sea phosphorescent. Two boats that had come from the islands of 'Otea and Falevai bore us company for a few miles and to the sound of song and prayer floating over the placid waters I composed myself to sleep with a mat beneath me and only the sky for a covering. Next morning the trip gained

added interest from the sight of several schools of Hying fish that visited us, and from the close proximity of some hump-backed whales busily spouting and one of which was lashing the waters with its tail. Near at hand were several smaller whales, or black-fish, called "ikamamu". One convoyed our little craft for several miles. It was some thirty-five feet long and several times spouted within ten feet of our boat.

Two absorbingly interesting days were spent at Lifuka after which we set sail on August 24th for the lower part of the Ha'apai group to visit the island of Ha'afeva. Ha'afeva, which is the central island amidst a picturesque cluster, is really a sand-bank on a coral patch. It is composed of a single village of some 400 people to whom the Rev. Setaleki Havea ministers. His guest I became and after a full day laid my head to rest on an embroidered pillow bearing the legend "Pea 'ofa aipe ke tau toe fe'iloaki", which, being interpreted, means "We hope that we shall meet again", a kindly sentiment for a pillow to express to a weary head.

On arriving at Ha'afeva a crowd of some sixty men and three women rushed into the water to meet our dinghy Bidding our oarsmen jump out, as many as could get a hand on the boat lifted us bodily, and, shouldering our boat, bore us off to the mission house. One of the three women who thus met us was, to my surprise, a white woman of some twenty-two summers. I wondered by what strange turn in Fortune's wheel this girl, with skin as white and hair as flaxen as any in this country, had been cast upon this remote coral patch in the south Pacific where she seemed to share so completely the life of the Tongans. I later discovered that this was one of those rare cases of albinism, and that this white girl with light grey eyes that peep between flaxen lashes, was a full-blooded Tongan whose dark-skinned parents live on the island of Kotu whence she had come to join in the Musical Festival in our honour.

While on this lonely little island in remote seas we received, by a cutter from Nuku'alofa that had intercepted us, the first news of the outside world we had had for a fortnight. It was a sheaf of wireless messages telling of some of the world-happenings of recent days. At Ha'afeva I was presented with three more live turtles, one being a full-grown female called "fakafefine", another a young female called "alaleifua". Many duties filled the day spent there and it concluded with a "po lotu" which lasted three and a half hours, and during which fifteen anthems were sung and six speeches were delivered. The little island of Ha'afeva had two choirs with eighty members, and there were visiting choirs from the adjacent islands of Kotu, Tungua and Fotuha'a. The rest of the journey back to Nuku'alofa I must pass over and conclude my story by telling of the work and position of the church in the Friendly Islands.

## SIXTH ARTICLE

The children of Tonga are favoured with good educational facilities and it is a delight to see the young people in their schools. They show an alertness and an interest that do credit alike to themselves and their teachers. It is claimed by the Tongans that every person in the little kingdom can both read and write. For many years the work of education was in the hands of the churches but today it is for the most part carried on by the Government. In the preparatory schools conducted by the Wesleyan and Free Churches some 1000 children are receiving instruction. The rest are found in the Government schools. It is generally conceded that the standard of instruction in the church schools is higher than in the State institutions, and many feel that better results from the standpoint of equipping the citizen of tomorrow, are produced by schools under religious control. Much depends upon the administration of the State Department of Instruction and at present this is very satisfactory.

Tupou Wesleyan College has long played an important part in the life of Tonga and has done much to sustain true educational ideals. It was my privilege to present certificates of matriculation to ten students of this College who had graduated in the Kau Matematika and thus won the coveted distinction of wearing a 'trencher'. The work of the Free Church primary schools came under my review in the three groups - Vava'u, Ha'apai and Tongatapu. At the Neiafu School, in the first-named group, I put the children through a rather searching test in the spelling of English words and not one failed. I also gave a number of tests in mental arithmetic which revealed the well-known aptitude of the Tongan for mathematics. The various classes read in English from a series of "Insular Readers" published in the United States for use in the Philippine Schools. As each sentence was read in English it was at once translated into Tongan. An hour or two after my inspection of the school concluded, I was waited upon at the Mission House by some 45 scholars each bearing a bunch of oranges that they had gathered on Olopeka Hill, which is said to produce, and I can well believe it, the sweetest oranges in the Pacific. I never tasted better. No bunch had in it less than twenty oranges. The children expressed a hope that I might be able to carry some of the fruit to my children in Dunedin, but the Customs regulations did not allow of their export. I did get some cases back to Nuku'alofa and later saw the little princes at the Royal palace regaling themselves upon some of the fruit. Next morning they were sent across by the Queen to pay me a visit.

At Pangai, the chief port in the Ha'apai group, there is a splendid school. The evening we reached there from Vava'u the school choir serenaded us and sang a number of hymns in their own tongue and several, including "Jesus loves me" and "Jesus is Tenderly Calling thee Home", in English. Next morning at "Bethany" school the session opened by first reciting and then chanting the Lord's Prayer in the English tongue. To the accompaniment of music played by the school brass band a score of boys went through their physical drill. Their rhythmical movement, the stamping of bare feet on the wooden floor, and a double slap of the hands at each change of

exercise created a very fine effect. The Tongan children early show the possession of the gift for music that is characteristic of their race, and singing is a regular part of their school curriculum. Such printed and manuscript music as is used is transposed from the staff notation into a special adaptation of the tonic sol-fa. The familiar notes of the "modulator", doh, ra, me, and the rest, include amongst them a rather large range of Tongan swear words, consequently the various notes are differentiated in figures and fractions ranging from three to nine, with the usual bar lines, semi-colons, colons and hyphens of the sol-fa system. At Pangai school the children without one moment's hesitation wrote on their slates the numerical values of several notes that were sung, and when a line of music in the staff notation was written on the blackboard they immediately transposed it into their own notation. It was a fine performance.

Equally good were the school exercises in shorthand, or "fonokalafi" as it is called in Tonga. The system employed is an amplification of the Pitman method with which I was perfectly familiar. That system has been adapted to the needs of the Tongan tongue by Miss Beatrice Shirley Baker with whom I discussed the matter. The Tongan speech is rich in vowels. Of the eighteen letters in their alphabet five are vowels. Clear enunciation of the vowels is essential to a correct understanding of the language. The five vowels have no less than eleven distinct sounds. These vowels are never silent though in some cases they coalesce and form diphthongs of which there are about ten. Many words consist entirely of vowels and such of these, for example, as the interjection "Oiaue" (Alas!) would puzzle the average Pitmanite to express in phonographic symbols. Those difficulties have been solved in the Tongan system. The older scholars wrote from rapid dictation Psalms 1 and 23, and when their instructor wrote several Tongan sentences in shorthand on the blackboard, they performed the double feat of translating them and transcribing the result into English longhand, and almost immediately handed the work to me for inspection.

At the Nuku'alofa Free Church school I saw similar work done and heard a number of recitations, including one by half a score of brown-skinned little maids, who recited in quaint fashion "Ten Little Nigger Girls". The children of this school, assisted by their teachers, arranged an excellent concert for my entertainment. In addition to such items as physical drill, and such songs as "Larboard Watch" and "Gipsy Countess" several interesting playettes were given. The outstanding items were the enacting of the parable of the Prodigal Son and the parable of the Ten Virgins. This latter, carried out in fine detail, was a most moving performance and few eyes were dry and few hearts unstirred at its conclusion. In arranging the programme, Mr Fred Watkin was warmly supported by the Queen who showed her interest by making the 'best robe' for the returned prodigal, a garment of rich crimson satin trimmed with an imitation of ermine. The concert concluded by the singing of the Native National Anthem. The Queen who sat with the Rev. J B Watkin and myself on the dais, did an unusual thing by remaining after the conclusion of the anthem to bid me farewell and express gracious words of appreciation and goodwill.

Many things impressed me in the Friendly Islands, but my deepest impression is of the vigour and vitality of the spiritual experience of the Tongans. Evidence of the depth and reality of the religion of the Native abounded. Traders and planters testified to it and the very atmosphere proclaimed it. The Queen, the British Consul, the Premier, Nobles and chiefs all assured me that all that is good in the life of Tonga is due to the religion of the Lord Jesus. Tonga is a crimeless land. There are petty offences, and there are moral lapses and many imperfections but serious criminal offences are non-existent. The generous gifts of substance and of service to the church, manifest a real devotion to the -lotu The sermons and speeches, the prayers and testimonies of the preachers and people are vibrant with the joy of a vital religion. On the hundreds of occasions when I addressed meetings and deputations the people never once failed to respond to the spiritual note. They honour God the Father, God the Son God the Holy Spirit, and they attribute the Divine blessing upon their church to the emphasis they place upon their own experience of the personal presence of God among them by His Spirit. I believe that explanation is the true one just as I believe that one chief reason for the success of the Church of Rome amongst us, despite her manifold errors, is her emphasis upon the real presence of our Lord in the sacramental emblems. We are too apt to forget the reality in condemning the error.

Amongst many notable gatherings three stand out prominently. The first was the customary service at six o'clock one Wednesday morning when Mr Watkin preached at N eiafu to some three hundred people on the words Hereby do we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments (1 John 11,3). The sermon was delivered in a tone of quiet impressiveness that carried us along and won a vow of readier obedience even from one who listened to the appeal in a tongue largely unknown,. The second was the monthly fellowship meeting held on a Sunday afternoon at Nuku'alofa when some eight hundred persons attended. Never had I been in such a remarkable meeting. It carried me back to the days of early childhood when my Mother took me to the Love Feasts' in Hobart Five choirs from different villages were present and each was to sing an anthem but there was only time for three. After the first anthem twelve persons gave their testimony, and after the next eighteen rose to speak of their religious experience, but after the third, which stirred every heart, fifty-eight persons rose in quick succession and told of the grace of God in their lives I knew only a word here and there. But there is a language of the soul and my heart could interpret every word that was said. Mr Watkin asked me if I would like to speak. I replied that I had been itching to get on my feet. I then told the people how my heart had been strangely moved as I listened to their testimonies of the grace of God to redeem, to comfort, to sustain, how I had heard them speak of the transformation the Gospel had brought to Tonga how I had noted their faltering words of confession and their ratification of vows of consecration. I quoted some of the words of witness they had expressed and everyone felt that deep was calling unto deep. Many afterwards expressed surprise that I had not only understood their words but had reproduced their idioms. It was a wonderful meeting. It lasted for two hours and not even the little children showed a sign of restlessness.

The third of these notable meetings was one with Mr Watkin and thirty-one of the Native ministers of Tongatapu on the morning of Saturday, September 2nd. It was held in the Nuku'alofa Free Church a few hours before my departure for home. I spoke to the ministers with a candour that was not possible at the great public gatherings and told them of my hope that my visit might do something to draw closer the ties that unite Tonga to New Zealand and all Tongan Methodists to each other. I spoke of the fact that, though it was already 100 years since Walter Lawry had begun his work in Tonga they would celebrate their centenary in 1926, the one hundredth anniversary of the resumption of the mission under John Thomas. I spoke of the way in which we in New Zealand had prepared for our own re-union over ten years ago and said that my prayer and hope were that Wesleyans and Free Church folks would as one people celebrate the one great event. I told how we in New Zealand in pre-union days had tried to think well and speak well of each other; how we had prayed for and with each other; how we had met together at the Lord's Table where all men are equal; and how we had sought opportunity to take common action in the interests of the Kingdom of God. Mr Watkin replied with gracious words of appreciation and of goodwill towards New Zealand. He said they all felt that God had led my steps to Tonga and that His good Spirit had prompted my words. He then handed me a love gift that had been spontaneously offered by the seventy-seven Native ministers throughout the Friendly Islands. As I stood within the communion rails the thirty-one ministers present filed past, each gripping my hand and reverently kissing it. When they had filed back to their seats the two oldest supernumerary ministers led in prayer. The feeling was intense, and a stifled sob here and there was heard as these brethren prayed for me, my family, my safe return, for the great and good Church of New Zealand to which I belonged, for the Free Church of Tonga, and for their brethren in the Wesleyan Church of their own land. Not an eye was dry as we rose to our feet. In silence we left the building and as I was thinking over all the evidences I had seen that the Spirit of God dwells in the Tongan Church, the loved and honoured leader whose guest I had been, leaned upon my arm as we went homeward, and said "Your visit is of God and more may come of it than you foresee". God grant that so it may prove!



Plaque marking spot of Cook's landing in 1773. Photo: B Le Heron 1977



Dorothy, Alan, and Donald Pratt sitting among some of the gifts that their father, M A Rugby Pratt, brought back from Tonga in September 1922. The tapa cloths are deposited in the safe keeping of the Canterbury Museum, Christchurch.





**Blowholes of Houma "The action of the sea has undermined the rugged coral cliffs of the coastline. As the rolling wave approaches the shore it disappears for a moment, and then with a sudden roar and a loud hissing sound, all along the coast scores of columns of water shoot like geysers through the vents and blowholes that perforate the rock." Photos: B Le Heron 1977**



**Ha'amonga-'a-Maui at Niutoua village - the remarkable trilithon of immense coral blocks, set up as an arch. It indicates the seasons by reference to the sun's rays over the crosspiece.**



Royal Chapel and Palace, Nukualofa, Tonga  
Photo: NZ Methodist Times 1924



## 'BOX ORGANISER' A LABOUR OF LOVE

*Marcia Baker, Archivist*

Way back in the 1830s when ships were the fastest mode of transport, women in England decided it would be a great idea to send 'boxes' to New Zealand, providing wives of missionaries with some of those special 'extras' which may be useful. They were soon advised, however, that ready-made garments would be more helpful than pin-cushions.

As early as 1906 a Communion set and other articles were sent to Rotuma. In 1922, a Box department was formally established by the NZ Women's Missionary Union and articles were collected for those working in mission, both here and overseas. The Dominion organiser from this beginning until her death in 1945 was Mrs Ada Smethurst of Auckland. She was outstanding. For 23 years she allowed her home to become a gathering, sorting and packing depot. Her husband Mark was chief courier, and when there were too many parcels to transport to rail or ship by car, he hired a truck. Goods for overseas included medicine such as cough mixture, olive oil, epsom salts, vaseline and quinine, old linen for bandages, writing materials and balls. Sometimes sewing machines or bicycles were despatched. In 1927 Thames Auxiliary sent a Christmas parcel including among other items 77 lead pencils, 52 cakes toilet soap, 12 whistles and 2 dozen fish hooks. Clothing sent to the Maori Mission was sold and proceeds put towards Deaconess travelling and other expenses.

In 1935 goods worth £225.6.8 were sent overseas, and by rail, ship, boat and bus went 12 boxes, 24 sacks, 10 sugar bags and 1 tin trunk of clothing, 1 set of communion glasses and 1 wire rope for a church bell as gifts to Home Mission work. Maybe this prompted the requirements in 1936 that "all goods sent must be guaranteed British and only essential items sent"! During the 2nd World War it was felt that money may be more practical than goods, but people still preferred the personal touch and sent both. In 1945 there was no report at the Annual M.W.M.U. Conference. An era had come to an end.

Mrs Smethurst had written many fascinating reports over the years. These contained information, challenges, and a quotation to think about. "Do not worry", she wrote. "Fretting is somewhat like a rocking chair - a great deal of agitating without getting anywhere." "Don't be one of those who would hear a mouse squeak rather than a lark sing."

Sister Edna White, Mrs Dolly Gibson and Sister Effie Harkness were others upon whom the mantle of Box organiser fell. On the receiving end there were funny incidents. In Papua New Guinea Highlands, answering a request for patchwork materials, some individual groups cut these into 4 inch squares, before posting, and there was never a shortage of plastic bags after one worker requested 50 as a one off - each Fellowship responded! Caring still continues in the 2000s as individual churches gather shoe boxes of sewing and writing equipment to send to war-ravaged Bougainville.

[Reprinted from *Touchstone*, October 2001.]

## **PUBLICITY for THESES**

From time to time we review or publish extracts from theses relating to New Zealand and Pacific Methodism. If you know of a thesis of this nature that merits wider publicity beyond the universities please advise us so that we can follow it up.

## **RECORDING of TRIBUTES**

The information in eulogies can be of great assistance to the authors of historical accounts - if they are available. We urge all who provide tributes at funerals or valedictory occasions to please send a copy to the Archives in Christchurch or Auckland.

## **MEMBERSHIP NEWS**

### **The following members have died since Annual General Meeting 2001:**

Alan Armitage, Christchurch,  
Lester Armstrong, Christchurch  
Rev. Graham Brazendale, Papamoa  
Ian Crabtree, Wellington  
Alison Cundall, Cambridge  
Eric Heggie, Lower Hutt

**Note** - We aim to publish obituaries for Alan Armitage and Graham Brazendale in Journal 2003.

### **New Members since AGM 2001:**

Marie Hall, Roskill  
David McGeorge, Howick  
Rev. Diana Tana, Taha Maori  
Alec Utting, Beach Haven

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## ANNIVERSARIES FOR 2003

### 1853 150th ANNIVERSARIES

None.

### 1903 100th ANNIVERSARIES (CENTENARIES)

- 1 Feb. Drummond Church (Southland) opened.
- 10 April Canvastown Church opened.
- 3 May Helping Hand Mission opened in Foresters Hall, Newton, having moved from Pitt Street.
- 18 June Carrington Road Church (New Plymouth) – stonelaying (Opened on 6 August)
- 17 July Otorohanga Church opened.
- 19 July Roxburgh New Church opened.
- 6 August Waitoa Church (Upper Thames) opened.
- 13 August Mayfield Church (South Canterbury) stonelaying.
- 1 Nov. Mayfield Church (South Canterbury) opened.
- 5 Nov. Waitara Church stonelaying. (Opened 10 February 1904)

## ANNIVERSARIES FOR 2004

### 1854 150th ANNIVERSARIES

- 16 April High Street, Christchurch - first Church opened.
- 14 Dec. Maori Chapel, Wellington - second Chapel opened.

### 1904 100th ANNIVERSARIES (CENTENARIES)

- 10 Feb. Waitara Church opened.
- 4 April Buckland Church (Manukau) stonelaying.
- 7 April Avondale Church (Auckland) stonelaying.
- 30 April Mornington New Church (Dunedin) opened.
- 30 June Eitham Church stonelaying.
- 17 Sept. Crofton (Ngaio) Church (Wellington) stonelaying.
- 2 Oct. Brightwater (Nelson) Church opened.
- 19 Nov Johnsonville Church (Wellington) stonelaying.
- 11 Dec Crofton (Ngaio) Church (Wellington) opened.