

The Final Report of the Mission to the Aborigines New South Wales, Lake Macquarie 1841

During my seventeen years of sojourn amongst these tribes, cruelties have not been so numerous or extensive as to account sufficiently for the decrease of the Blacks, or to alter the opinion that the diminution of people, or of the prosperity of nations, is from the wrath of God which is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of Man. The Mortality amongst the Inhabitants of the South Sea Islands places them in a similar melancholy position with the Aborigines of this land, and ere a few years elapse they likewise will become extinct, or amalgamated with Emigrants from European shores.

The termination of this Mission places me in another of those peculiar situations which have so often been my lot in past years. In 1814 The London Missionary Society accepted my services as a Missionary to the Heathen, and my passage was taken for Africa. This destination was changed, and in 1815 **William Ellis** and myself were ordained as missionaries and embarked for Tahiti. The sickness and death of my first born detained me a twelvemonth at Rio de Janeiro which occasioned the introduction of stated public worship amongst the protestants and it has been continued ever since in that city.

In the following year four missionary colleagues touched at Rio on their way to the Islands, with whom we embarked touching at V.D. Land and this colony. After a short stay here, and being joined by other companions, who were waiting for conveyance, we sailed for the South Sea Islands and landed on Eimeo [[Mo'orea, Tahiti]] November 1817. In 1818 the late lamented **John Williams** [446] joined me to form a first missionary station at **Raiatea** where for nearly seven years it pleased God most abundantly to bless us and the united labour of the Brethren in the overthrow of Idolatry in other Islands, and in directing the Raiateans to

walk as became their profession of faith in the Gospel of Christ. But, in the midst of unprecedented success in these modern times, it pleased God to remove the wife of my bosom and I was left with four children in a foreign land.

At this time the Deputation from the London Missionary Society, consisting of **Daniel Tyerman**, a minister and **George Bennet**, a private gentleman, were proceeding to New South Wales, and I accompanied them to Sydney on my way to England intending to return to my family in the Islands. Having married in the colony, I was about to return to Raiatea, when **Sir Thomas Brisbane** the then Governor intimated through the Attorney General Saxe Banister Esquire to the Deputation, a wish that something might be attempted in behalf of the Aborigines and ultimately I was requested to undertake the mission, and the Society would send a substitute to my station at Raiatea. I was promised on the part of his Excellency a House, Rations for myself family and servants, if I would go to Moreton Bay and form a missionary establishment thus leaving a very small expense to be borne by the Society: to this proposal I cheerfully consented.

Shortly afterwards it was intimated that the Government had declined to fulfil that which was held out as an inducement to establish the mission, and it remained for the Deputation to determine whether now that the whole of the expense would fall on the Society it should be attempted or not, they [447] decided in the affirmative and ultimately **Lake Macquarie** was fixed upon as a site for the Mission, Government reserving ten thousand acres of land in trust for the Aborigines.

The mission was thus commenced in **1824** and the natives who assembled were taught, clothed, fed and employed; but, the annual expenditure accumulating to a larger amount than the London Missionary Society thought suitable with other claims to appropriate towards this mission to the Aborigines, led to unpleasant correspondence and our distance prevented personal explanation, which terminated my connection with the London Missionary Society.

Having made some progress in the acquirement of the **language** it did not appear to be my duty to relinquish the work, there being at

that time several Aborigines living about our habitation, and therefore trusting in the Providence of God I continued the Mission on a grant of land from His Excellency General **Darling** in acquainting him with my intention of remaining in the Colony rather than avail myself of the passage home which was tendered by the Society, the which Grant was confirmed to me according to the usual existing regulations.

At this period a few generous friends to the Aborigines kindly afforded pecuniary assistance to aid me in the enterprise. Shortly afterwards Sir Ralph Darling applied, unsolicited, to the Right Honourable the Secretary of State for the Colonies on my behalf, who in **1831** was pleased to sanction His Excellency's arrangement of salary and allowances; but, the Missionary station, house, and improvements, reverted to the Crown, agreeably to a clause in the deed of Trust consented to by the Deputation. I then removed to the very opposite side of the lake to prevent a supposition that I was personally benefited [448] in any way from that which was derived from the funds of the London Missionary Society.

The object, the acquiring of a knowledge of the native language, was steadily pursued, and various parts of Scripture translated, besides arranging a grammar, copies of which are printed at the joint expense of the Colonial Government and Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge. His late Majesty King William the IV was graciously pleased to accept from the Society a copy of the work for the Royal library, but the circulation, otherwise, has been strictly private, there being no encouragement to publish in this Colony. It is a melancholy fact that although much has been done in the way of translation, there are now scarcely any Aborigines left to learn to read, and the few who remain appear determined to go on in the broad road to destruction.

It has ever been my practice regardless of results, faithfully to record the aspect of the Mission in the annual reports leaving the event with God. Circumstances, which no human authority could control, had brought the Mission to the present crisis, and whilst it was my duty steadfastly to wait for the manifestation of God's

Providence in this discouraging mission, I could not conscientiously relinquish the engagement whilst the smallest hope of benefiting the Aborigines could be fairly entertained. This Mission to the Aborigines has ceased to exist, not for want of support from the British Government, nor from the inclination of the Agent, but, purely from the Aborigines themselves becoming extinct in these part, and in leaving this scene of much solitariness, privation and trial it is earnestly hope that He who fixes the [449] bounds of our habitation apparently in Sydney for a season will guide our feet through life to his Glory, and provide support for a numerous family so that the ministry not blamed.

Believing that the Divine purpose of God in establishing Governments is that the Government of every nation should have a parental regard to the welfare and interests of its subjects, is the Apology for minutely stating past events and my future prospects respecting employment and provision. As a Minister with liberty of Conscience, I trust to be ready to every good work. But, with respect to provision for myself and family, the Ravens are fled from the Wilderness, the Brook has dried up with the Stream.¹ No widow is commanded to sustain in the city. Yet beneath our very feet there is now just opened a coal mine which with the blessing of God will sustain us in our duties through life.

Tendering my sincere acknowledgements for every prompt attention from Her Majesty's Government in this Colony, to the interests of the Aborigines whenever duty compelled me to apply on their behalf, and with fervent prayer that His Excellency the Governor may long be spared as a Father to the inhabitants of this Colony, Her Gracious Majesty the Queen, a nursing mother, that Heavenly wisdom may direct, and Divine Blessing abide upon the United Kingdom with all her numerous Colonies, I must respectfully and most unfeignedly subscribed myself

Your Obedient Servant
Lancelot Edward Threlkeld

Transcribed by Jeremy Steele, Wednesday 15 November 2017

¹ And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there. [1 Kings xvii.4]