In the Land of Strangers
A century of European contact with Tanna, 1774-1874

Ron Adams
In the Land of Strangers
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Summary

The first century of contact between Europeans and the people of Tanna, in the group formerly called the New Hebrides and now known as Vanuatu, was characterized by mutual misunderstanding, distrust and hostility. To most European observers, the Tannese were something less than human — bestial and blood-thirsty. To the Tannese, the Europeans were something more than human — if not returned ancestors, at least in close call with the all-important spiritual realm. In terms of their preconceptions, each side was given ample proof of the other's treachery, and Tannese-European relations during the first hundred years revolved around attempts by each side to control the other. As this study shows, the result was inconclusive, and Tanna entered its second century of contact with Europe with a reputation as dark, but a spirit as unrepentant, as at any time in its past.
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In researching in an historically-specific way Tannese-European relations, I have always had in mind two broader questions: what do we mean by 'culture' in the context of 'culture contact' history? And what does it mean at the level of individual experience to say that 'cultures' come into 'contact'? I was fortunate in being guided towards some tentative answers — which I presented as a Ph.D. thesis in 1977 — by Greg Dening, Bronwen Douglas, Pamela Carswell, Inga Clendinnen, Roger Joyce, June Philipp, Tom Spear, Alex Tyrrell, Robyn Watt and Robert Watts. Norma McArthur and Dorothy Shineberg encouraged me to revise, and suggested how I might improve, the text for publication. I am indebted to all these people.

But my greatest debt is to the people of Tanna and to my wife Robyn, who each gave me encouragement and a sense of purpose in bringing the task to completion. To them I humbly dedicate what follows.

R.A.

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### Abbreviations

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<tr>
<td>Adm.</td>
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<tr>
<td>C.O.</td>
<td>Colonial Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>F.C.S.M.R.</td>
<td>Free Church of Scotland Monthly Record</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F.O.</td>
<td>Foreign Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.F.R.</td>
<td>Home and Foreign Record of the Presbyterian Church of the Lower Provinces of British North America</td>
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<tr>
<td>J.P.H.</td>
<td>Journal of Pacific History</td>
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<tr>
<td>J.P.S.</td>
<td>Journal of Polynesian Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L.M.S.</td>
<td>London Missionary Society</td>
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<td>M.L.</td>
<td>Mitchell Library, Sydney</td>
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<tr>
<td>N.L.A.</td>
<td>National Library of Australia, Canberra</td>
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<tr>
<td>R.P.M.</td>
<td>Reformed Presbyterian Magazine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sh.G &amp; S.G.T.L.</td>
<td>Shipping Gazette and Sydney General Trade List</td>
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<tr>
<td>S.M.H.</td>
<td>Sydney Morning Herald</td>
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<td>V.S.L.</td>
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I named the Harbour, Port Resolution after the Ship as she was the first who ever entered it. It is situated on the North side of the Most Eastern point of the Island and about ENE from the Volcano; in the Latitude of 19° 32' 25½" S and in the Longitude of 169° 44' 35" East. It is no more than a little creek running in SWW three quarters of a Mile and is about half that in breadth. A shoal of Sand and Rocks lying along the East side makes it still narrower. The depth of Water in the harbour is from 6 to 3 fathoms and the bottom is sand and mud. (James Cook, Journal, 20 August 1774)

Thus was a little bay on the other side of the world brought into relation with Europe. Fixed on a map 169 degrees, 44 minutes, 35 seconds east of Greenwich, the inlet with the native name of Uea was henceforth to carry the name of a British sloop, suggestive of the mettle of the men who sailed her. When he came to name the island — he called it Tanna on the authority of the naturalist Forster¹ — Cook was less Eurocentric, but no less presumptuous. If the island had a native name it was Ipari — the name given to it by the inhabitants of the surrounding islands.² The Tannese themselves had no such term, no such identity. The word tanna means simply 'land' or 'earth'; Forster made the mistake of assuming that when he pointed to the ground he was given the name of the island. For the group as a whole Cook reverted to another British analogy; and Quiros' Australia del Espiritu Santo, Bougainville's Great Cyclades, became the New Hebrides — though it is still not clear why Cook picked on the Hebrides to make new. After more than two centuries by that name, the New Hebrides recently became Vanuatu — our islands. But Uea is still Port Resolution, Ipari still Tanna — continuing memorials of the entry of the island and its people into European consciousness.

¹Cook 1961:489.
²Humphreys 1926:xv.
During the first century of this process a succession of images of Tanna was carried back to Europe by explorers and sailors, scientists and adventurers, traders and missionaries; images as different as the observers themselves. If to one visitor in the 1830s the Tannese were 'stout, good-looking negroes ... simple-hearted and honest ... children of nature', to another they evinced 'a treacherous disposition; their habits ... grovelling and their persons filthy'. The charge of treachery recurs time and again in the European descriptions of Tanna, betraying immediately the frustration and the hostility of the European unable to share the Tannese worldview, to comprehend the logic of Tannese actions. When he accused them of perfidy and unreliability, the European was really admitting that the Tannese had disappointed his expectations. But rather than concede that he did not know them, like Prospero he appropriated them into a private world, peopled by 'bad' Calibans, whom he first sought to civilize, but then rejected as too degenerate to be elevated.

The European did not discover his private world on Tanna, he brought it with him. In a sense, Tanna never really was a land of strangers, for any strangeness had been dissolved by the European's conviction that he knew the Tannese. Whether honest children of nature or treacherous followers of Satan, the Tannese as presented to the rest of the world were essentially projections of what the European expected to find.

The process reached its apotheosis with the missionaries, who fashioned the Tannese into 'beasts descending to the grave untaught of Life to come, unsanctified, unsaved'; turned them into the 'poor descendants of Ham ... lying in the lowest state of degradation, trodden down by the iron heel'; portrayed them like the heathen of old, as 'exceedingly ignorant, vicious and bigoted, and almost void of natural affection'. More than any other group of Europeans, the missionaries negated the distinctive features of being Tannese, incorporating them totally into their own scheme of things. To the evangelical missionaries of the nineteenth century, everything about the Tannese — past, present and future — was known. They were heathen who had strayed into darkness, and it was the missionaries' divinely-ordained task to bring them back to the path of righteousness. In fulfilling this task, some missionaries would stop at nothing: John G. Paton went to the length of calling in a British gunboat to bomb the Tannese into submission. The action was extreme and scandalous, but it was also consistent with the overall attempt of the missionaries to remake the New Hebrideans after their own image.

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3Jacobs 1844:236; Anon. 1839:603.
4Cf. Cheyne 1852:34; Turner 1842-3:8; R.P.M. 1869:21; Westwood 1905:15, 20.
5Gill and Stallworthy 1858; Inglis 1882:xxiv-xxv.
It is this which makes the missionaries, and Paton in particular, worthy of special attention: they stand as a paradigm example of the characteristic European attempt to dominate and control not only the Tannese and the Pacific Islander, but the whole of the non-European world.

The incorporation of the Tannese into European consciousness is, however, only half of the story which follows. The other half concerns the Tannese appropriation of the European. What emerges is that just as the European established forms of control over the Tannese, so too the Tannese simultaneously controlled the European, physically and ideologically. When Cook and his men sailed into the little bay of Uea in 1774 they were perceived by the Tannese as returned ancestors; and the Tannese responses to the European ranged from awe, with attempts to establish the correct form of ritual control, to contempt, with control being asserted through derision and ridicule. By the time missionaries settled at Port Resolution in the 1840s, Europeans, while no longer considered returned ancestors, were viewed — and manipulated — as intermediaries with the all-powerful spiritual realm. For the rest of the nineteenth century European trade goods and firearms, and above all European knowledge, were controlled and exploited by the Tannese in terms of their own conceptual and social relational frameworks. The frameworks changed over time, but only to the extent that was necessary to accommodate the European presence. Even into the twentieth century, with most of the island nominally Christian and seemingly under strict missionary control, the Tannese were still in charge of their own destiny. As the anthropologist C.B. Humphreys discovered in the 1920s, as far as the Tannese were concerned it was not they who were a lost tribe of Israel, but the Europeans who were a lost tribe of Tanna.6

6'The Origin of Things', Humphreys 1926:92-3.
Plate 1 A view on the island of Tanna. (Engraved by W. Woollett from a drawing by W. Hodges, in Cook 1970, pl.XXIX.)
Chapter 1

Tanna and its people

To the European visitor approaching from the open sea, Port Resolution was a welcome refuge, a place of promise. The more prolonged and hazardous the voyage, the more welcoming and promising it appeared (Plate 1). To the Russian explorer Golovnin it was extraordinarily beautiful, 'the declivitous shores of the bay ... edged by mountains covered with tropical jungle, and set against a high, sharp-pointed mountain ... while at night there rose from the crater of the volcano a sheaf of flame, which illuminated the bay with its crystalline waters'. To the trader Cheyne it was 'a pretty spot. The land around the village is well cultivated, and the vegetation most luxuriant'. To an unknown whaler, approaching from the northwest, it recalled his native Britain, with the country 'divided into farms where meadows, orchards, arable patches, intersected by race-courses, avenues, and foot-paths, seem to ape civilization'. The rest of the island, with its unknown, forbidding interior and exposed coastline, offered little welcome or promise to strangers. The hills in the north reach 500 metres and fall directly into the sea; towards the south they fan out into a series of ridges of about the same altitude, separated by steep valleys. A central plateau in the northern half of the island gradually slopes away to the west and east, continuing south until it reaches the high regions in the middle of the island. Further south is the depressed Siwi basin, with its lake and active volcano Yasur, bordered by a range of high mountains. The dominant feature of the chain is Mount Tukosmere (1084m), which forms the main foundation for the southern section of the island. Mount Melen (1047m), with its steep north and south flanks, extends towards the east in a low chain forming the background for the Port Resolution area (Map 1).

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1Nozikov 1945:81.
2Cheyne 1852:35.
3Anon. 1839:603.
Map 1 Island of Tanna showing main topographical features and places mentioned in text
Human settlement on Tanna conformed to the island's topography. During the nineteenth century, as now, the Tannese lived in several hundred small settlements, stretched across plateaux or along the tracks which followed the mountain ridges fanning out from the island's centre towards the sea. The nuclear family formed a distinct household, though it was usually linked with similar households belonging to the same patrilineage to form one settlement. Cook and Wales observed in 1774 a 'little Stragling Village' which consisted of twenty huts (about 10m by 4.5m) and which contained a 'prodigious number of Inhabitants'\(^4\). In 1842 the missionary George Turner noted that the villages around Port Resolution comprised eighty to a hundred persons, divided into eight or ten families. Thomas Neilson, a later missionary at the harbour, counted between twenty and thirty houses in the important Yanekahi village of Umpitoka, and he described another Yanekahi village, containing forty-eight men, as large. In the early 1950s the anthropologist Jean Guiart counted 233 hamlets spread across Tanna with an average population of twenty-nine.\(^5\) Groups of hamlets shared common territorial names — designating the name of the land plus the possessive suffix 'mene' — which Europeans have always called tribes. Guiart listed 115 such tribes, made up of from one to half a dozen separate lineages. It is not clear, however, just how much importance the Tannese themselves attached to tribal affiliation. On-going community life was tied to the more localized yimwarem — cleared spots in the bush which charted the social, as much as the physical, landscape of Tanna. These were sacred spaces, shaded by ancient banyan trees, where food was exchanged, pigs slaughtered and dances staged and, above all, where the men congregated each night to drink their kava. But even within the same yimwarem the men were divided into Numrikwen and Kauyamera, though possibly by the nineteenth century Port Resolution was exclusively Numrikwen. By then another division had formed between the bush dwellers and the various tribes around the harbour.\(^6\) There were also language divisions — the five major languages suggesting that Tanna was settled by different waves of people over a prolonged period of time. To the annoyance of the early missionaries who settled there, Port Resolution was on the boundary of two language regions.

Reacting to the island's difficult topography, fragmentation of settlement, variety of social groupings and multiplicity of languages, many early European observers concluded that anarchy and chaos reigned supreme on Tanna. Turner summed up the popular


\(^5\)Turner 1861:85; Neilson to Kay, 13 November 1868, 23 June 1869, R.P.M. 1869:228, 412; Guiart 1956:10-11.

European conception when he wrote that the Tannese had 'no political constitution of any value whatever'. They were at war two-thirds of the time and their 'treacherous spirit' made 'all jealous of the movements of their dearest friends'. The assumption of anarchy had a profound political implication, in that it justified European attempts to impose their own forms of order on the Tannese: they were even able to claim that actions which resulted in death and the destruction of the means of livelihood, such as the bombardments of Black Beach by H.M.S. Iris in 1858 and Port Resolution by H.M.S. Curacao in 1865, were both right and necessary.

Transcending physical, social and linguistic divisions, transforming apparent chaos into cosmos, was the ritual exchange of gifts — from the daily exchange of kava between men of the same village to elaborate exchanges of pigs, ceremonies and dances between super-tribal networks. Each night, a little before dusk, men all over Tanna would meet at their local yimwarem where one man would produce a root or two of nekawa — Piper methysticum — from which kava is made. The Tannese told Turner in 1842 that the precise format of the ritual was 'sacred' and if transgressed 'would be the cause of some great evil, if not death'. The person who provided the nekawa root in effect established a donor-receiver relationship with the other drinkers, who received his gift, as it were. Over time, as each man contributed his nekawa, the circle of reciprocal exchange would, in theory, close itself. But in practice, with no start or cut-off point in the provision of nekawa, the circle never closed; each donation altered the credit-debit status of each man and daily established a new set of obligations and expectations.

The same principle underlay the collective exchange of food, which could range from a simple exchange of yams or fowls within a village to an extravagant exchange of pigs and turtles between two or more tribes. As Turner wrote after five months at Port Resolution:

... In the marum [yimwarem] there are many friendly meetings for distribution of property, feasting &c. The chiefs and people of a district will erect in their marum perhaps fifty poles forty feet long — cover these from top to bottom with yams — bananas and taro — heap in other parts mats — native cloth, and as much foreign property as they collect — some fifteen or twenty pigs are also set apart for the occasion. A day is fixed on which all the tribes with whom that party is on friendly terms assemble, oiled and painted

7Turner 1842-3:6; cf. Gill and Stallworthy 1858; Belcher 1843: 60-3; MacGillivray, Journal, 3 December 1854; Cheyne 1852:34.
8Turner 1842-3:8; Turner 1861:85.
in their best style, and every one gets something. Similar distributions of property are taking place all the year round, but the greatest one is the yam season, and about this time they are followed by dancing. We landed here just about their 'harvest time' and for several weeks there was a regular succession of these convivial meetings attended by dancing which was kept up sometimes from sunset till four o'clock next morning. They dance in companies of forty or fifty at a time, and while one party is going on another is resting close by and ready to jump up and celebrate.\(^9\)

The principle was the same as in the kava ceremony: to receive the gift entailed the obligation to repay at a future date, at which time the obligation to give would fall back on the other party. To deny the obligation to either give or receive was to repudiate the alliance signified by the exchange and to assume instead a hostile posture. It was possible to give a more potent nekawa root or an extra pig to establish kusus or superiority over the recipient. But it became part of the debt to be repaid at a future exchange when the host group might assert its dominance by an even grander gift. This 'one-upmanship' could be renewed repeatedly, perhaps years or even generations apart, on increasingly competitive levels, with individual and group prestige tied to the continuation of the exchange relationship. In functionalist terms, it was a system able to accommodate change and reallocate status and power with relative ease.

Europeans like Turner quickly came to see that gift exchange was central to Tannese social life, but they were largely blind to its political significance. Perhaps in part it was Scottish thrift which led Turner to complain that, in devoting so much time and energy to the preparation and celebration of exchange feasts, the Tannese were 'spending their time for nought'. Turner's companion, Henry Nisbet, looked to the day 'when this poor people shall have a more profitable way of spending their time than they have now'. John G. Paton maintained that while exchanges might seem 'to betoken a loving people', they 'laid not aside a single feud'. Perhaps John Inglis best summed up the typical missionary attitude when he wrote that such feasts were 'extremely unfavourable to industry and economy; as those who are most industrious and the greatest producers are expected, if not obliged, to contribute most to the feast'. Feasting involved 'much loss of time ... [and] great quantities of the provisions become unfit for use before they could be eaten'.\(^10\) What all the missionaries failed to see was that feasts, as exchange rituals, were important in maintaining political networks, activating and confirming alliances between individuals and groups.

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\(^9\)Turner 1842-3:7.

\(^{10}\)Turner 1842-3:7; Nisbet, Diary, 6 August 1842; Paton 1965:136; Inglis 1852:527.
The same principle of reciprocal exchange, with all its political ramifications, underlay marriage relations. Soon after birth girls would be set aside for a definite alliance, often between lineages of the same tribe but sometimes between different tribes. The match was not related to land distribution so much as to the establishment and maintenance of political alliances. Around Port Resolution in the nineteenth century regular marriage networks existed between the Yanekahi, Kaserumene, Neraimene and Nepikinamame tribes (see Map 2) — which may have contributed to, or reflected, the development of the Kwatahrenimin grouping. Any rights to land a woman may have possessed were lost when she married. As the Tannese would say: 'Men are rooted in the territory of their fathers, but women are like the birds; they come and go'. Come and go they did, as the acceptance of a bride entailed the obligation on the receiving line to provide a bride, and on the donor line to receive one, in the future. The exchanges established on-going affinal alliances, though most Europeans — especially the missionaries — were insensitive to the political dimensions of marriage relationships.

In a similar way, Europeans misunderstood the significance of cannibalism on Tanna. It had been supposed since the time of Cook — when one of his men claimed to have been invited to a cannibal feast — that the Tannese were all anthropophagous. But it was left to Turner to bring a true Ballantynian flavour to the subject, with his portrayal of the Tannese as a hoard of salivating savages, impatiently waiting to pop their next victim into the oven, to be served up with yams at the following meal. 'It would appear that although they invariably eat all slain in war', two visiting L.M.S. missionaries reported in 1858, 'the practice of eating human flesh is from habit preference and taste and not always merely for revenge but from the mere gratification which they enjoy in eating such as food'. Little wonder that the following year poor Paton felt obliged to sit a lonely vigil over his wife's grave, gun in hand, for ten days and nights — or so he claimed — to prevent the Tannese getting at her decomposing remains. In fact, for the whole island there were never more than twenty-eight families with the right to eat human flesh, and they confined themselves to the bodies of fallen enemies — whether to gain their strength or to heap indignity on them is unclear. What confused Paton and Turner was what they saw as a diabolical trade in corpses as they traced a path along ceremonial routes. Turner described their path in 1842:

13 Turner 1861–82; Gill and Stallworthy 1858; Paton to Kay, 1 April 1861, *R.P.M.* 1861:305; cf. Paton 1965:87; Meade 1870:249.
14 Guiart 1956:79; Gray 1893:663; Humphreys 1926:60, 83.
The people in our immediate neighbourhood ... when they were in the habit of bringing a victim from inland ... took it to the marum of the district next to their own, and exchanged it for a pig. The people who got it then carried it on to the next marum, and there again exchanged it for a pig, and after being carried through several marums in this way, it reached the district next to the sea, and as they could not carry it farther, there it was cooked and eaten.15

The dead man's journey ended when the corpse reached such a stage of putrification that the body fluids were breaking through the skin, and when a group which had a family or family line of cannibals decided to keep the body.16 The acceptance of the body entailed the obligation to send back in exchange one day the body of a killed enemy, following the same route but in the opposite

15Turner 1842-3:11.
16Guiart 1956:79.
direction. Invariably, it seems, pigs were exchanged for the corpse at each point of its journey. The Samoan teachers who were placed at Port Resolution in 1839 reported that they saw two bodies prepared for the oven, and that 'a compensation was demanded for these 2 lives, and a pig was accordingly given'. William Gill and Henry Nisbet noted in 1846 that a European's body was disposed of in a similar way. Paton reported in 1861 that 'a large fat pig' was given for each of ten bodies received. Years later Paton's son Frank wrote that when two men were killed on the east coast of Tanna their bodies were passed from village to village right across the island, till one of them was eaten at a village on the west coast. 'Heathen' attended from far and near, and pieces of the body were sent throughout the missionary's district.17 By such means alliances were established and confirmed, or repudiated, according to the same principle of reciprocity which underlay other Tannese rituals.

Even warfare, that most characteristic feature of European accounts of Tanna, signifying to European eyes social and even moral chaos, was essentially an exchange ritual. Battles were pre-arranged, depended on suitable weather, and had to fit in with the routine of daily life, such as work in the gardens.18 They could often be avoided by a gift to the aggrieved party, but failing that, fighting was conducted along what the missionary Gray described as 'well recognized war tactics'.19 Captain Erskine of the Royal Navy dismissed fighting between two Port Resolution tribes in 1849 as 'a war party marching out daily to the boundary-line to exchange a few spears or stones, without any very serious result'. A decade later, Paton described an altercation on the beach between the harbour tribes and an inland tribe as a grand sort of barbarous Homeric scolding match, where the protagonists exhausted their rage in javelins of reproach. Inglis noted that if one man were killed the battle concluded for the day, to allow the losing side to examine whether any one had breached any of their 'appointed observances', thus provoking the anger of the gods.20 A battle then, like any other exchange on Tanna, might be viewed as a ritual re-enactment of a theme passed down from the gods, investing reality with its mythic and sacred quality.

17Heath 1840:13; Gill and Nisbet 1846:13; Paton to Kay 1 April 1861, R.P.M. 1861:305; F.H.L. Paton 1903:218.
18Nisbet, Diary, 17 September, 16 December 1842; Turner 1842-3:26, 38; Neilson to Kay, 28 October 1874, R.P.M. 1875:148.
19Cf. Nisbet, Diary, 14-17 January 1843; Murray and Hardie 1849:7; Murray 1861; Paton to Kay, 6 January 1862, R.P.M. 1862:285-6; Neilson to Kay, 13 November 1868, R.P.M. 1869:228; Gray 1893:660.
20Erskine 1853:304; Paton 1965:93; Inglis 1852:525.
This supernatural quality pervaded every level of social action. As Turner wrote after six months among the Tannese: 'Connected with almost every word and action they have some superstitious ideas'. Like Melanesians elsewhere, the Tannese did not make a clear distinction between the physical and non-physical realms. They believed in powerful spiritual actors who controlled and affected their lives but who, in turn, could themselves be controlled if only the correct rituals were observed. Turner noticed that the Tannese men would pray aloud every night at kava-drinking to their aremha:

The word aremha ... signifies nothing more than 'dead man': so that when they speak of praying to aremha they merely mean that they pray to the spirits of their forefathers. Every district has its different aremha. Chiefs who reach an advanced age are the persons whose spirits are supposed entitled to religious homage. To these they present the first fruits of the yam, bread fruit &c naming them and saying a prayer such as this: 'Compassionate father! This is food for you — eat it — and be propitious to us on account of it. ... They say, 'we plant a banana and it grows — we plant a bread fruit and it grows — we plant a yam and it grows — our forefathers certainly cause all this'.

The ancestral spirits were believed to inhabit the subterranean world of Ipay, 'where they live much the same as here on earth, where they dig, plant, marry, and are given in marriage'. Primus inter pares among the spirits was what Paton called 'heroes', and William Gray, the first missionary at Whitesands, 'superhuman beings' — human monsters possessing superhuman attributes: 'the Noahs and Samsons of the Bible run to unlimited extravagance ... the heroes of Homer and Virgil'. Some were quite local, the ancestors of particular tribes. Others were known throughout Tanna; while the knowledge of some, such as Karapanamun, extended to the surrounding islands. One, Mwatiktiki, was known throughout the Pacific. There was also Kwumesan, simultaneously the founding deity and an abstract concept meaning the beginning: 'the great supernatural power or powers for that matter', wrote Gray, 'conceived of as a unity, behind all things'. The ancestral spirits, the heroes or superhuman beings, and later Jesus Christ, were napungi nanimen — intermediaries between the Tannese and Kwumesan, links with the underlying supernatural powers.

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21 Turner 1842-3:11-12.
22 Mrs Watt to [ ], 15 July 1872, R.P.M. 1873:96.
23 Paton 1965:73; Gray 1893:656.
24 Gray 1893:651.
Good and bad fortune, unexpected events, sickness and death, were all the work of the napungi namimen—though the spirits could themselves be directed by human intermediaries who possessed the knowledge of the ways of the spirits. Life's constant quest, as it were, was to ensure the napungi namimen worked for you, not against you. Every man was his own magician and had his preferred ways of propitiating the spirits. Gray, surprisingly sensitive for a Presbyterian missionary—a cultural relativist, in fact—realized and accepted that the Tannese had woven for themselves an intricate and seamless spiritual web which invested every object and every event with a transcendent, other-worldly, significance. Earlier missionaries, like Paton, even though confronted every day with the depth of the Tannese attachment to a spiritual realm, still proceeded as if that attachment were shallow; were unable or unwilling to see beyond their own caricatures.

It was the same at the political level. Like Europeans before him, Paton sought out the chiefs with whom to barter for goods, land or protection. The men usually singled out were the yeremwanu, distinguished by the impressive feathered head-dress—kayoo—which they wore on ceremonial occasions. There were always some who would come forward to receive the gifts and recognition, confirming the Europeans in their assumptions about chiefly power and authority. When H.M.S. Resolution called at Port Resolution in 1774, one of her landing parties identified a yeremwanu as the 'king' of Tanna on account of his 'solemn and benign' appearance—though Cook noted that, while the Tannese seemed to have 'chiefs amongst them, at least such have been pointed out to us by that Title, ... these ... seemed to have very little authority over the rest of the people'. John Reinold Forster, naturalist on board, was close to the mark when he wrote that the chiefs of Tanna were not generally distinguishable from their subjects 'by rank or authority, and seem to enjoy only an hereditary title'. As the missionary Turner was to discover, to give presents to seven or eight chiefs was to offend seventy or eighty 'petty chiefs'. He found that in a village of eighty to a hundred inhabitants there were at least one or two yeremwanu who, along with the 'heads of families', regulated local affairs, and whose authority did not extend beyond 'a gunshot from his own dwelling'. Unable to shake completely the belief that political relations ought to have been more ordered, Turner began a vain search for the real chiefs. Paton gave up any attempt at consistency, claiming that chiefs on Tanna really had no power, but at the same time accusing them of duplicity and cowardice when they failed to exercise it. A later missionary, William Watt, persevered in attempts to gain influence among the

25 Though European notions of chiefly power and authority on Tanna were often wide of the mark, I have retained the term 'chief', without comment, throughout the text as a matter of convenience.
Tannese by the traditional method of 'winning over the chiefs' long after his wife had noted, 'Chieftainship may be said to consist only in name. In a village of eight or nine men, six will claim to be chiefs'.

What exasperated missionaries like Turner, Paton and Watt was that the yeremwanu's right to wear the kayoo, though a significant privilege in a ritual-oriented society like Tanna's, did not correspond to a political role in the Western sense. Ultimate authority appears to have rested with assemblies where individuals would argue for hours and days until a consensus was reached. Those yeremwanu who were most influential in the assemblies appear to have exercised power and authority according to other social roles. Kuanuan, an influential Neraimene yeremwanu in the Port Resolution area, in addition to wearing the kayoo, could also feast on the head of the turtle and practise atmospheric and agrarian magic. He was also reputed to own large tracts of land — though, going by the situation today, where the yeremwanu tend to have smaller landholdings than ordinary men, the higher a man's ritual and magical status, the less he needed land to exist socially. Manuman, another important Neraimene yeremwanu, could practise nahak sorcery, and the two principal yeremwanu at Kwamera, to the south, were also renowned magicians. Kati, in addition to wearing the kayoo, had stones to control the sea, sickness, certain foods, the sun and the rain. Early in 1862 Kapuku, as a sign of his acceptance of Christianity, handed over to the missionary Matheson twenty sacred stones, including stones for war, the sea, sickness and storms. Nearly a century later, the anthropologist Guiart found that of Tanna's 472 yeremwanu, just 140 had only the privilege of wearing the kayoo: 235 could also feast on the head of the turtle, twenty-seven could supervise the cooking of the smooth pig, thirteen were masters of the nekawa topungu (a special variety of piper methysticum), three could take part in cannibal feasts, and 106 were magicians.

The early missionaries to Tanna were patronized by important yeremwanu like Kuanuan; but in times of unrest, such as the great epidemic of measles in 1861, they survived only by the intervention of the yani en dete or war chief, whose single material privilege as a yani en dete was a black and red penis wrapper. In times of peace, Turner observed, the war chief had little

29Guiart 1956:85.
influence over the 'common people', and worked in his garden 'just like common men'. But in times of war he was responsible for the group's safety. He was warned of threats, he knew the routes the enemy would follow, and he negotiated to ward off potential threats or confirm and strengthen alliances. If it were necessary, he decided the flight route, passing through the territory of allies of his choice. In the assemblies he was the last to speak, which meant that he had the final say in decision making. The war chief's skill and strength lay in determining at what point discussion could be finalized and the consensus summed up; his authority could be challenged by another person subsequently rising and disputing that the final position had been reached.

That the yani en dete summed up the group's collective will is suggested in the English term sometimes used to designate the person: the 'mouth-piece' or 'talking chief'. Frank Paton noted that Iavis, a powerful yani en dete of the west coast Loinio tribe, was 'the best talker in the whole district, he can go on all day and talk any number of Heathen down'. That is how the Tannese often got their way in the assemblies — by literally talking down their opponents:

On these occasions some of the orators chant their speeches, and all in delivering their addresses make the most savage gestures — brandishing their clubs &c. All keep walking too while they speak. The different tribes are all seated round the marum, leaving an open space in the centre. The orator rises from among his tribe, advances at a slow pace to the middle of the marum, speaking all the while, here he stands for a moment, and then returns in silence to his people. He sets out again with another paragraph — and goes on so until the close of his speech.

Another person would then have his say — rising and chanting his address and then stopping. 'This would be answered from another party — and so on'. The designation mouth-piece also suggests that the yani en dete's authority lasted only for as long as he expressed the tribe's collective will — a suggestion which is confirmed by events at Port Resolution in 1861, when the two principal yani en dete were unable to convince their fellow tribesmen of the need to go to war. Paton recorded:

A severe war inland, in which on some days as many as ten men have fallen and been feasted on, has forced

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31 Guiart 1956:86–90.
hundreds of people down from the mountains, and they have mostly taken shelter under Sirania and his people, and are active, mild, and friendly to me. Nauka once summoned all our people to join the inland war, but next morning he left for it with only one attendant, and becoming faint-hearted, he turned and came home next day. Last week Miaki summoned our people again to join the war, but next morning he left with his brother and six or seven boys; but as the enemy had heard of his desire, the night before they had surprised and shot two of his leading friends. On hearing this, he returned about midday with his boys, being laughed at by all our people, having universally refused to join him.\textsuperscript{34}

In these two cases traditional authority relations had been upset by European intervention: at other times the \textit{yani en dete} appears to have had a greater say in questions of war and peace. For instance, when a small girl was killed in a raid by enemies of the Loinio tribe (on the west coast) late in the nineteenth century, the victim's father did all he could to stir the tribe into a war of revenge. But Iavis, the \textit{yani en dete}, refused to sanction any fighting. So long as he was war chief, Frank Paton recorded, there could be no war; so the war party attempted to depose Iavis and put another man in his place. But no other name could command such authority and Iavis remained the War Chief of Loinio.

In a similar case Nemak, the old \textit{yani en dete} of the Iounmene tribe, declared strongly for peace after some tribesmen pressed for war against a traditional enemy. The only way that the pro-war party was able to prosecute the war was by shooting Nemak in an ambush.\textsuperscript{35} But even this example lends weight to the view that a \textit{yani en dete}'s authority depended on his ability to express and respond to the group's collective will.

This role is implied in the title \textit{yani en dete}, literally 'master of the canoe'. On the physical level it refers to the two sacred stones representing the hull and beam of a canoe, which the \textit{yani en dete} could, for example, rub with certain leaves to obtain a sign. But on the metaphysical plane the \textit{yani en dete} was thought of as the front of the canoe — the canoe in question corresponding to a social realm, the Tannese body politic. When, after the measles epidemic of 1861, Paton warned the Tannese that God would punish them further for their wickedness, the \textit{yani en dete} Miaki replied that such was their conduct: 'We and our fathers have loved such conduct, and if the worship condemns it, I say it is forbidden for you to condemn it ...

\textsuperscript{34}Paton to Kay, 6 January 1862, \textit{R.P.M. 1862}:286.

\textsuperscript{35}F.H.L. Paton 1903:99-100, 112.
heart is very good, and I hate your teaching'.\textsuperscript{36} To Paton's ears the claim rang out as a blasphemous contradiction. To Miaki, the front of the canoe, Paton was the blasphemer. But, faced with naval bombardment as well as divine retribution—which, as the measles epidemic had shown, posed a more profound threat to Tanna than any one individual's exertions—the helmsman found himself interceding with his own followers on the missionary's behalf. The double irony was that Paton interpreted his efforts as a ploy and called in the navy anyway.

Both in a metaphysical and in more practical ways, the group's destiny was tied to the master of the canoe. And as a rule there was only one such person in each tribe. But, again, it is difficult to point to a clearly defined political role. As Miaki's abortive call to battle in 1861 indicated, the yanī en ďete's authority could lapse if he misread the will of his followers; and even when he could count on his group's backing, it would appear that factors other than his position of office helped determine his influence. According to Turner, they were 'the principal proprietors of the soil'\textsuperscript{37}—though because they were spokesmen for the group on matters of land, it might just have appeared that way in the eyes of the European. Judging by Miaki, the important yanī en ďete had many wives.\textsuperscript{38} Many were renowned magicians—Miaki could bring rain and make the yams grow. Nowar, the yanī en ďete for the Nepikinamame could make the sun shine and the bananas ripen. Others could cook the smooth pig, eat the head of the turtle, take part in cannibal feasts.\textsuperscript{39}

Those who could take part in cannibal feasts provoked the most interest among Europeans—and were the most maligned. Though they set out to create the impression that they were surrounded by a nation of cannibals, significantly the early missionaries gave no specific references in their letters and journals to individuals who actually practised cannibalism. For the whole island there were never more than twenty-eight family lines with the privilege, and at most only one in each tribe. Its purpose clearly was political: to maintain exchange relationships between different individuals and groups. But, apart from William Gray, most missionaries had little inclination to look beyond their own caricatures.

It was the same with sorcery. After the cannibal, the sorcerer, or nahak magician, personified for the nineteenth-century missionary the utter degradation of the heathen Tannese.

\textsuperscript{36}Paton to Kay, 10 June 1861, \textit{R.P.M.} 1862:38.

\textsuperscript{37}Turner 1842-3:6.

\textsuperscript{38}Paton to Kay, 10 June 1861, \textit{R.P.M.} 1862:38; cf. Turner 1842-3:8, 1861:86.

\textsuperscript{39}Guiart 1956:108.
Following Turner, Paton perceived the 'disease-makers' as a confederation of sacred men who terrified other Tannese into a united opposition against the mission. In fact, the only recorded case of sorcerers banding together to oppose a missionary was when three of them pitted their collective magical strength against Paton. And that episode ended with two of them Paton's firm friends.\(^4^0\) Usu...
Possibly it was this network which gave rise to the missionary claims of a confederation of disease-makers.

The missionaries were not as obsessed with agrarian and atmospheric magics which, as one might expect in a subsistence economy, were practised by more people more openly. Every garden would contain a small, thatched shelter, housing the family's protective ancestral spirits. All adult Tannese, certainly all the men, performed private, individual rites to ensure the success of their crops. There were also rites performed by acknowledged specialists for the benefit of the group, in which case the ritual was usually more elaborate and the magicians had to observe a particular mode of conduct—such as abstaining from certain foods, kava and sexual relations—during the ritual periods. In return for their specialized magic the agrarian magicians might have the privilege of eating the first fruits brought by their fellow tribesmen, or of receiving some pigs and maka at a food exchange. Between magicians there appears to have been considerable rivalry. Karwick, an acknowledged Yanekahi agrarian magician during Paton's time, had a special stone called nukuma, with four holes representing north, south, east and west, which could affect the crops of surrounding areas. According to one of Guiart's informants, at one time each agrarian magician had a stone mvanwanii, which allowed him to stop the beneficial effects of his rites at the tribal boundaries; and Humphreys was told of rites being performed to bring down rain when an enemy's crops needed sun, or wind when an enemy was on the point of embarking in canoes for a voyage to another part of the island.

Less common and more secretive than agrarian and atmospheric rites, were the magics to make the songs and dances of the toka and nao cycles beautiful. There were also magics for fishing, hunting, fattening pigs, repelling or attracting sharks, causing invasions of mosquitoes, and increasing the proportion of male children. As well as magicians there were the more secular specialists—the men who could perform the circumcision operation, or cook the head of the turtle. Guiart found in the 1950s that more than two out of every three men on Tanna could lay claim to some such title—either magical or secular. There is no reason to believe that this was not also the case a century before. But, as the yani en date Miaki discovered when his tribesmen refused to follow him into battle in 1861, no dignitary benefited from a stereotyped role on all occasions. Given the number of dignitaries, it is difficult to find a system more

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44Paton to Kay, 6 January 1862, R.P.M. 1862:284; Gray 1893:650; Guiart 1956:36-51.
45Guiart 1956:45, 51; Humphreys 1926:73.
flexible and more democratic at the same time. Not surprisingly, in such a fluid social environment, missionaries failed to realize their goal of a closed theocracy.

Though some never stopped looking for them, Europeans inevitably were disappointed in their search for another Cakambau, Pomare or Kamehameha. Every second man seemed to be a chief, and a leader one day would be a follower the next — this one would practise magic to make the yams grow, that one would lead the people into battle, another would bring rain. If the yams withered, if the tribe suffered defeat, or if there was a drought, the failed dignitary's command of the group's allegiance would wane. Not only was there no stratified, pyramidal political structure transcending the different social contexts of Tannese life, but the lines of authority which did operate needed repeated affirmation through success.

If authority relationships did break down, however, not just anyone could assume leadership. As on the other islands of the group, dignitaries or magicians on Tanna were set apart from other men by the possession of navetimin, sacred stones, which had come down through the ages from Kwumesan. Each had a name according to the spirit which inhabited it. Unlike pictures of the suffering Christ for the Western Christian, the stones did not merely represent a sacred order to the Tannese — they gave concrete expression to it. Though they were objects of the natural world, they also manifested a transcendent reality which encompassed both the material and spiritual realms, revealing the true essence of life. Gray found in the 1880s, more than a century after their first contact with Europeans, that even Christianised Tannese still shuddered with terror when shown some nahak stones found by a local trader. To possess a stone was to be an intermediary between the human and superhuman spheres. It was this possession of navetimin, rather than genealogical placement which invested an individual with authority. However, because the stones were passed down within the patrilineage, succession to 'office' was in effect by patrilineal descent. Hence, Speiser and Capell could write of 'hereditary patrilineal chieftainship' on Tanna; Humphreys could claim that 'when a chief dies he is succeeded by one of his sons, in the classificatory sense'; and Guiart could describe the yani en déte or war chief as 'le représentant aîné le plus direct de la lignée traditionnellement détentrice de la fonction'. In cases where patrilineal descent did not operate, it is likely that navetimin

48 Gray 1893:655.
had changed hands. Yawiray (who did not come from a line of yani en dete) was a yani en dete at Enfinta owing to his possession of two stones which his ancestors had acquired from another line; and Guiart notes that his position was rendered 'relatively legitimate' by the extinction of the line with traditional claim,\textsuperscript{50} which suggests that the assumption of privileges by a new line was viewed as something like usurpation.

In so far as he possessed the means of influencing the ever-present spiritual powers, a navetimin-owner's opinion assumed some importance among his fellows. But to establish and maintain his influence, particularly in the tribal assemblies where important decisions were taken and where power was, as it were, given public expression, the navetimin-owner had to demonstrate the relative success of his methods, the distinctiveness of his knowledge — including knowledge of land boundaries, ancestral names, myths, magical techniques and, above all, knowledge of the spirits. To achieve status and power, he had to create for himself what a recent researcher\textsuperscript{51} has called a controlling middleman's position between a group of followers and the wider world, whether natural or supernatural.

The boundaries of the world, both natural and supernatural, were exploded with the coming of the European. After 1774, but more particularly after 1839, an individual aspiring to status and power — especially in the intensive contact area of Port Resolution — had to create a controlling middleman's position between a group of followers and the world of the Europeans. As the novelty and mystery of contact began to wear thin he had also to compete directly with Europeans — either by claiming to have incorporated their knowledge and rituals, or by demonstrating the superiority of his own. The history of the first century of European contact with Tanna is the story not only of the incorporation of the Tannese into the world of the European, but also of the Tannese attempts to establish control over the European and to exploit the world he brought with him.

\textsuperscript{50}Guiart 1956:93-4.

\textsuperscript{51}Lindstrom n.d.: passim.
Chapter 2

The discovery of Tanna by sailors and traders

Tanna came into contact with Europe when it was discovered by Captain Cook in August 1774. For the two weeks that his sloop lay at anchor in the bay he named Port Resolution, Cook and his men foreshadowed all that was to come in the next hundred years of Tannese-European contact; with each side reacting to its own limited and often distorted image of the other. Most of the contact in the century after Cook occurred after 1840 as hundreds of European trading vessels called at Tanna. After 1847, when the first of a string of trading stations was established at the harbour, Tannese and Europeans came into more intimate contact. As well, many Tannese lived alongside Europeans for weeks and months at sea in the cramped space aboard trading ships, some travelling as far afield as Sydney and Hobart Town. By and large, Tannese-trader relations were satisfactory to both sides: there were occasional clashes, and what the Tannese understood as exchange the Europeans perceived as trade, but overall each side was able to benefit from the relationship. Relations with the Royal Navy ran a greater risk of deteriorating into power contests as officers and men tried to enforce codes of behaviour dreamt up on the other side of the globe. With the officers in particular, the European assumption of superiority came easily, but ultimately it was always thwarted by the Tannese refusal to accept the inferior role cast for them.

When he came upon Tanna in 1774 Cook was midway through his second voyage around the world in search of the elusive southern continent. At the start of the year he had been sailing his ship as close as possible around the South Pole, turning north in the first week of February to escape the encroaching Antarctic winter. His plan was to 'get within the Tropicks and proceed to the west on a route differing from former Navigators, touching at, and settling the Situation of such Isles as we may meet with, and if I have time, to proceed in this manner as far west as Quiros's Land or what M. de Bougainville calls the Great Cyclades'.¹ He

¹Cook 1961:326.
Map 3 Vanuatu and Loyalty Islands showing route taken by Captain James Cook in July and August 1774
did have time, and after a sweep of Polynesia which took in Easter Island, the Marquesas, Tahiti and Tonga, he fell in with the Frenchman's Great Cyclades, picking up the east side of Maewo - Bougainville's Aurora - on 17 July. From there he sailed south through the group he was to name the New Hebrides - at least it became a group with his charting of it - landing briefly at Fort Sandwich, Malekula and Polenia Bay, Erromango before reaching Tanna on 5 August (Map 3).

For the Europeans on board H.M.S. Resolution, sailing west out of the relatively familiar world of Polynesia into the unknown world of Melanesia, it was contact with a new race of people quite unlike the Polynesian - or at least the European image of the Polynesian - in appearance, language and manner. The natives of Malekula were 'the most ugly and ill-proportioned people' Cook had ever seen, 'and in every respect different from any we had yet seen in this sea'. They spoke a different language: 'of about Eighty Words which Mr. Forster collected hardly one bears any affinity to the language spoke at any other island or place I have ever been at'. To the naturalist John Reinold Forster they were a 'small, nimble, slender, black and ill-favoured set of beings, that of all men I ever saw, border the nearest upon the tribe of monkies'. The Erromangans were a different race of people again, 'and seem'd to speake a quite different language'. Though more tolerable in appearance than the Malekulans, their behaviour was contrary and treacherous: after 'charming' Cook with a little gift they attempted to take his boat by force, attacking the crew with arrows, darts and stones. The sailors opened fire, killing one 'Indian'. The Tannese, it seemed at first, were a race somewhere between the natives of the Friendly Islands and those of Malekula, 'but a little acquaintance with them convinced us that they had little or no affinity to either except it be in their hair' (Plates 2 and 3). Their language was 'different to any we had before met with', leading Cook to conclude that they were 'a distinct Nation of themselves'.

Unlike the Europeans, the islanders did not really have a sense of coming into contact with a new race of people. True, the visitors were different in appearance, language and customs - but basically they were an extension of themselves. For the Malekulans, Erromangans and Tannese it was contact with an ancient world, with an old race of people, with their ancestors. At Port Sandwich, George Forster heard the word constantly repeated, 'Tomarr', Malekulan for ancestors, and Cook was given one small pig, half a dozen small coconuts and a little water - nourishment enough for ghosts. There was another propitiatory offering at Polenia Bay - 'a Yam and a few Coco Nutts' - followed by the

2Cook 1961:466-7, 480, 503-4; Forster 1778:243.
3Forster 1777:205; Cook 1961:462.
Plates 2 and 3: A woman and a man from the island of Tanna. (Engraved by J. Basire from the crayon drawings by W. Hodges, in Cook 1970, pl.XLV and XXVI.)
Erromangs' act of 'treachery'. Cook was not to know that the Erromangs believed the small islet explored by the crews of his boats for wood immediately before coming into Polenia Bay was inhabited only by bad ghosts. The Erromangs were in a confused panic about how to deal with the unwelcome visitors: appeasement and attack were both tried, with the loss of one man, Narom. 4

Next morning, at the east end of Tanna, in the inlet which was to become his Port Resolution, a more cautious Cook observed vast numbers of 'Indians' collecting on the shore. A great many of them were coming off in canoes and some even swimming. The 'Indians' too were cautious—keeping their distance, their arms in constant readiness. Insensibly growing bolder and bolder, eventually they came under the stern where they exchanged coconuts for pieces of cloth. The more daring tried to make off with the anchor buoys; undeterred by musket fire and only temporarily put off by a four-pounder—which they greeted with cries of 'Azur, Azur', their word for the volcano—they finally retired when the swivel-guns were fired over them.

During all this, one 'friendly old man', Paowang, in a small canoe made several trips between the ship and shore, each time bringing two or three coconuts, a yam, or a fowl. On his first trip he was observed to throw a coconut before him as he approached the ship, picking it up himself when it remained uncollected, advancing a little and repeating the action. When one young man in a canoe was fired on for cheating on an exchange, 'an hour Afterwards the Abovementioned old Man, was despatched off to us with Green boughs & other Ensigns of Peace, and a present of a large Bundle of Sugar Canes'. 5 Then, when Cook decided to land, there was Paowang, with two other elders standing by, inviting the visitors on shore (Plate 4). The people—thousands of them according to most of the accounts—were assembled in two groups on either side of the landing spot at the head of the harbour. In the cleared space between them was a line of four small reeds stuck in the sand, leading from the water to a few bunches of plantain laid out with a yam and two roots of taro. Cook was unable to establish the significance of the reeds—possibly they indicated that the food was tabu—but clearly the small quantity of food was something in the nature of a propitiatory offering, as at Malekula and Erromango. Suspecting another trap, Cook had muskets fired over the heads of the crowd on his right—i.e. to the west—but, if anything, it simply provoked them. He signalled the ship, lying in readiness broadside to the shore, to fire a few four-pounders over the crowd—which dispersed, enabling Cook to land and rope off a clear passage to the

4Cook 1961:478-9; Robertson 1902:18; Cheesman 1949:146-9.

Plate 4  The landing at Tanna. (Engraved by I.K. Sherwin from the painting by W. Hodges, in Cook 1970, pl. LIX.)
freshwater pool twenty yards from the beach. The old man, Paowang, alone among the Tannese, stood his ground. His name is not remembered today at Port Resolution, but his repeated pilgrimages out to the ship, and his subsequent dealings with the Europeans, indicate he was the only one among the Tannese confident that he could control these gods from beyond the horizon.

For the fortnight that H.M.S. Resolution lay at anchor in his bay, old Paowang played out the role of mediator. He led the way with his gift-offerings, trying to establish the most acceptable form of propitiation — he gave the Europeans the only pig they were offered at the island, and once he led a procession of twenty men each bearing a small gift of fruit and roots; he was the first to throw aside his weapons and he tried to convince his countrymen to do the same; he showed Cook which trees he might cut down and those he might not; he introduced the Europeans to the local dignitaries; above all, he reassured the Tannese that he could control the visitors. For their part the Europeans searched him out for advice and assistance — none more so than Cook, who could reflect after a week:

Thus we found these people Civil and good Natured when not prompted by jealousy to a contrary conduct, a conduct one cannot blame them for when one considers the light in which they must look upon us in, its impossible for them to know our real design, we enter their Ports without their daring to make opposition, we attempt to land in a peaceable manner, if this succeeds its well, if not we land nevertheless and mentain the footing we thus got by the Superiority of our fire arms, in what other light can they than at first look upon us but as invaders of their Country; time and some acquaintance with us can only convince them of their mistake.6

Following Paowang's lead, the older men adopted a consistently deferential attitude towards their visitors and seemingly were committed to controlling them through ritual means. But among the young — particularly those on the west side of the bay, the side Cook had fired on — there were some only too ready to test their mettle against the visitors with threats and expressions of derision. When the canoes first came off to the ship, it seems to have been the young men, waving their bows and arrows, who 'became very troublesome having much inclination to attack the ship'. When Cook had a musket fired over the heads of the crowd assembled on the beach, it was a young warrior on the western shore who turned his backside and beat it like a monkey — for which he was rewarded with a shot from Lieutenant Edgecomb. The following day 'many of the younger sort were very daring and insolent and obliged us to stand with our Arms

6Cook 1961:493.
in hand', and Edgecomb again found it necessary to fire at one. A few days later two or three boys threw stones from behind a thicket at a wooding party, 'for which they were fired at by the petty officers present'. But if Cook was 'much displeased' at that wanton abuse of firearms, as he put it, he was 'outraged' and 'astonished beyond measure' when, on their last day at the island, a sentry shot dead a young warrior after he — or possibly another — had presented his bow and arrow as if to shoot. 'This was no more than was done hourly', Cook wrote, 'and I believe with no other View than to let us see they were Armed as well as us'. Whatever the circumstances surrounding the event, the Tannese reaction was immediate. They were thrown into the utmost consternation, wrote Cook, and 'the few that were prevailed on to stay ran down to the plantations and brought Cocoa nuts &c and laid down at our feet, so soon were those daring people humbled'. Anders Sparrman and George Forster, returning from a botanical excursion at the time of the shooting, were 'avoided ... like bugbears' by the Tannese they met running from the beach. The younger ones ran and hid behind bushes, and 'none of the older men would stop and speak to us, but with sorrow and disgust clearly depicted in their faces, which were half turned away, they signalled with their hands that we should go on our way, as they wished to have nothing more to do with us'. A terrified woman offered the basket of pears she was carrying, if only they would leave her.7 For the rest of the day the beach was virtually deserted: Paowan, with promises to Cook of fruit on the morrow, was one of the few to appear. But there were to be no further offerings; by the appointed time the ship had put to sea, taking advantage of a favourable breeze. What happened to old Paowan, whose pacific policy had been unable to avoid at least one death, is a mystery.

Cook immediately had the sentry, Wedgebrough, a marine, thrown into irons; and he would have had him flogged too if Edgecomb, the Lieutenant of Marines, had not intervened (just as he had done five months earlier when Wedgebrough had been given a dozen lashes for easing himself between decks).8 But the damage had been done — according to Forster9 more or less deliberately at Edgecomb's behest, to spite Cook's pacific policy — and Cook sailed from his Port Resolution bitter with the knowledge that his efforts to establish amicable relations should have been undone by a single shot. It was his regret that a people

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7Forster 1777:283, 330, 351; Mitchel, Log, 6 August 1774; Sparrman 1953:145-51; Cook 1961:484-500.
8Mitchel, Log, 18-19 March 1774.
he had judged just days before to be 'Civil and good Natured' would look upon the British as 'invaders of their Country', determined to impose their will through their superior weapons.

As Cook had foreseen, it was the fatal shot which was remembered by the Tannese for generations to come – but not quite in the way he had feared. For the Tannese, the event assumed significance in terms of a different cultural framework; as it turned out, in political terms, it became an instance of their control over the European. Nearly seventy years after the event the missionary George Turner recorded the Tannese tradition of Cook's visit:

They, (the Tannese) were terrified for him, (Cook) especially when he fired upon them, and supposed that he was more than human. Seven, they say, were wounded, two of whom died and five recovered.... They say that he went up to a marum and saw a chief very ill and surrounded by people wailing over him, and on being told that certain persons were burning his rubbish and causing all the sickness he sought them out and fired upon them!... They point to one or two places and say 'there Kuke stood and talked'. They also point to a mountain where he cut an ironwood tree. They also say that he left them two Kangaroos and show us where they lived for some time. Bye and bye they became annoyed by the howling of the animals – and then they killed them and eat them.10

The transformation of Tahitian dogs into kangaroos provides something of an anecdotal aside on the process of culture contact (though it also carries a serious lesson on how oral tradition is not chrono-logic). The more profound element in the myth is the presumption that Cook sought out and killed the nahak sorcerers responsible for the chief's illness. It sums up, with an economy of words that comes from the absence of scepticism, the gap between what contact signified to the Tannese and what it signified to the Europeans. We know from Cook's Journal that on Monday 15 August he visited a 'little Stragling Village' on the east side of the bay, where the people, 'in whose neighbourhood lived our friend Paowang, being better acquainted with us than those we had seen in the morning [to the west], shewed a readiness to oblige us in every thing in their power'. The villagers made signs that a man 'slipt or was dead' in a small, fenced-off hut. Cook, curious as always to see all he could, prevailed on an elderly man to go with him up to the hut, though the man would not suffer Cook to remove the mats which covered the entrance. He was also unwilling for Cook to look into a basket containing a piece of roasted yam and some leaves which hung at one end of the hut. Fastened to a string around the old man's neck were a

few locks of hair for which Cook offered something in exchange; but he was given to understand 'this would not be done as they belonged to the person who laid in the hutt'. From his knowledge of funeral rites in Tahiti and New Zealand, Cook concluded that the person in the hut was dead; going by the oral tradition he was, rather, 'very ill'. It would have been clear to the Tannese that Cook took an interest in the matter; and when, four days later, one of his men fired upon and killed a warrior—quite possibly from the west side of the bay—it would have seemed that Cook, an ancestor, had sought out and punished the offending sorcerer. Perhaps it was the purpose of his visit for, the next day, after conferring with Paowang, Cook departed whence he came.

By the time Turner recorded the Tannese tradition of Cook's visit, two more Royal Navy vessels had called at Port Resolution. H.M.S. Favorite and Sulphur were not the first ships since Cook, however. That honour went to a Russian ship, Diana, which anchored in the bay for a few days in 1809. Commander Golovnin's relations with the Tannese were excellent: using the small dictionary compiled by Cook he was able to obtain all the water, firewood, coconuts, yams, sugar cane, figs, plantains and bread-fruit he could carry—though it was less useful when Golovnin tried to explain to the Tannese that the Russian state was spacious and powerful. Golovnin was followed by the Irish adventurer, Peter Dillon, whose ship, Calder, lay in the bay for a fortnight in 1825. The most notable occurrence of his visit was the shooting of a young warrior who made off with the ship's washing: the Tannese brought him back on board, indicating to the visitors that if they could kill they could also cure—an assumption which conformed perfectly to their etiology of illness. Dillon was followed in his search for sandalwood by Samuel Henry whose two ships, Sophia and Snapper were at Port Resolution in April 1829. Between 1828 and 1834 an unknown whaler made 'several' stopovers, and the merchant vessel Margaret Oakley, made one brief stop at the harbour. The stay of the next known visitor, in November 1839, was also brief: L.M.S. missionary John Williams stayed just long enough to set down three Samoan teachers to prepare the way for European missionaries. The next day he was clubbed to death at the neighbouring island of Erromango, and when news of his death reached Sydney Sir George Gipps, the New South Wales Governor, despatched Charles Croker in H.M.S. Favorite to recover the martyr's remains and to check on the safety of the three teachers on Tanna. The only references to Croker's visit are second-hand and indirect. He arrived at Port Resolution on 26 February 1840 and spent no more time there than was necessary to pick up an interpreter for Erromango and to take delivery of a

letter from one of the Samoans begging the missionaries at Samoa to relieve him of his post. Croker, who took a paternal interest in protestant missions, did all that he could for the Samoans—short of complying with Lalolangi's request to be repatriated—but came away from Port Resolution believing that the Tannese were not to be trusted.12

Croker's low opinion of the Tannese was shared by Sir Edward Belcher, who called at Port Resolution in June 1840 after a four year voyage of discovery in H.M.S. Sulphur. Belcher had the Tannese summed up even before he had made contact with them. He saw them coming off to his ship in 'some of the most miserable apologies for canoes that we have yet witnessed', after which it was inevitable that he would confront only his own caricatures. The few hours he spent taking on wood and surveying the bay were enough for him to conclude that the Tannese were 'very low in the scale of human beings ... filthy, ill-looking, insolent, and troublesome as a people ... monkey like' with a yell 'half-serious, half-comic', who, like all savages, could be reduced from insolence to abject fear 'by even pretending determination'. Although his first question on landing was for 'permission to open trade', Belcher found the Tannese 'little inclined to traffic', so he spent his time on shore strutting about pretending determination, marking out tabu lines around the observation instruments and ordering 'trembling' natives out of bounds. The Tannese, however, refused to play the little charade: having discovered that they could annoy Belcher by vibrating the ground when readings were taken, they 'commenced simultaneous poundings with billets of wood, and threw stones high in the air, which fell near and risked the instruments'. A landing party at the head of the bay collecting wood was also troubled by the Tannese throwing stones.13

Brief as it was, Belcher's contact with the Tannese— they might just as well have been natives anywhere—was significant enough to warrant nine pages in his account of his six year voyage. It is unlikely that his visit retained commensurate significance for the Tannese as scores of commercial vessels made contact with the island during the 1840s. When the next naval ship called at Port Resolution, in 1849, more than fifty trading vessels had been listed in the Sydney press as having stopped at Tanna.14 Many more would not have been listed. Most were sandalwooders whose interest had turned to the southern New

12 The Australian, 3 December 1839; Heath 1840; Heath to L.M.S., 30 March, 26 May 1840, L.M.S. South Seas Letters; Resolutions and minutes of missionary meeting held at Apia, 30 March 1840, L.M.S. South Seas Letters; Sydney Herald, 27 July 1840.
14 Shipping lists in the Sydney Gazette, Sydney Herald and Sh.G. & S.G.T.L.
Hebrides with the depletion of the more accessible Isle of Pines' wood in the early 1840s. L.M.S. missionaries reported two ships trading at Tanna in July 1842 and, according to the Samoan teachers, 'many vessels' had called at the harbour in the preceding year.\(^{15}\)

Tanna provided some sandalwood,\(^{16}\) but it was the safe anchorage and availability of fresh food and water which attracted most visitors to Port Resolution.\(^{17}\) In return for their pigs and yams the Tannese received tomahawks, axes, adzes, glass beads, scissors, various types of knives, scarlet cloth, assorted fish-hooks, saws and musket and pistol flints. Within a few years, however, tobacco had assumed pride of place among trade goods: Bishop Selwyn wrote in 1849 that he could not expect to match the popularity of the trading vessels at Port Resolution without the use of tobacco. In the same year the missionary John Geddie noted that the Tannese were 'most desirous' to obtain beads, iron hoops, tortoise-shell and files. The trader J.C. Lewis wrote in the following year that 'pipes Fish Hooks and Tobacco' were all that were needed for trade. When James Paddon established his sandalwood station at Port Resolution in 1852 his Tannese workers were paid in tobacco, though trinkets apparently retained some of their appeal: in 1853 Paddon sent a sample of shells and bracelets from Tanna to London to see if imitations could be made in China.\(^{18}\) Muskets, however, were not common currency in the early 'fifties and it was not until about 1856 that they became a major trading item. In 1859 Andrew Henry wrote to Towns, 'You can only get Pigs on tanna with Muskets shell powder & good tomahawks'. Henry specified \textit{good} tomahawks because he had been compelled to send back to Sydney a consignment of cheap ones which the Tannese would not even consider accepting for their pigs. 'We must study the taste of the Natives', he wrote Stewart, 'and without tortoiseshell & Muskets on Tanna we may [as well] give it up'. Inglis wrote in 1857 that tobacco and firearms were virtually the only articles sought by the Tannese. Some

\(^{15}\)Buzacott 1842; Nisbet, Diary 30 June, 1 July 1842; McLean to Murray, 27 December 1843, L.M.S. South Seas Letters.

\(^{16}\)Anon. 1839:603; Turner and Nisbet 1848.

\(^{17}\)Cf. \textit{Sydney Gazette}, 3 March 1825; Bennett 1832:128; Jacobs 1844:236; Shineberg 1971b:89; Cheyne 1852:35-6; Henry to Stewart, 9 May 1859, Towns Papers, item 89; Underwood to Towns, 16 June 1864, Towns Papers, item 91; Robertson 1902:38.

\(^{18}\)Towns to Brooks, 10 July 1842, Towns Papers, item 67; Selwyn to his father, 6 December 1849, Selwyn Letters; Geddie to Archibald, n.d., \textit{Missionary Register} 1850:40; Lewis to Towns, 19 August 1850, Towns Papers, item 91; Bowles, Diary, 31 October 1853; Paddon to Magniac & Co., 12 August 1853.
years later Captain Hastings remarked to the missionary Robertson that in the late 1850s the trade items most in demand at Tanna were muskets, powder, caps, tomahawks, knives, fish-hooks, red ochre, pipes, tobacco, shot, and tortoise-shell, an opinion confirmed by Paton.  

With the passage of time and the greater availability of European goods the Tannese became more selective about what they would accept for their produce. In 1840 they had been prepared to swap almost anything for 'shreds of handkerchiefs, old clothes, & sails — in fact rags', but by 1859 they refused even to consider exchanging pigs for what they claimed were inferior tomahawks. It is also significant that after years of European contact the Tannese used the traders' desire for pigs to obtain traditionally-valued items like tortoise-shell and red ochre. Thus by the time Paton arrived at Port Resolution in 1858 a European could not, as that missionary presupposed, easily buy favours with the cheap trinkets which had been prized years before.

It might be assumed that, of all the European additions to Tanna's material culture, firearms must have had the most revolutionary and devastating effect. The evidence, however, would suggest otherwise. Though the Tannese were aware of the musket's value as early as 1843 they had not mastered its use at that time, and it was still a rare commodity in 1850. In 1851, however, a ship's master at Port Resolution was obliged to pay a ransom of nine muskets and twelve pounds of powder for the release of four of his crew; and by 1853 the occasional musket was being traded on Tanna for pigs. As late as 1856 muskets were reported to be newly in demand on Tanna — as on Erromango — and even after that date there is a suggestion that they might have been collected as prestige objects: in May 1856 the yani en dete Miaki smashed two of his muskets as a sign of his earnestness to receive missionaries. By 1862 Paton (hardly an unbiased witness) could report hundreds of muskets in circulation around Port Resolution — but even if there were an influx of weapons at

19 Henry to Towns, 27 November 1859, Towns Papers, item 91; Henry to Stewart, 9 May 1859, Towns Papers, item 89; Inglis to Graham, 16 October 1857, R.P.M. 1858:155; Robertson 1902:37; Paton, Notebooks and Journals.

20 Heath 1840.

21 Cf. Paton, 'People in civilized christian lands', Notebooks and Journals.

22 Turner 1842-3:27; Nisbet, Diary, 25 November 1846; Turner and Nisbet 1848; Erskine 1853:304; Murray and Sunderland 1852; Bowles, Diary, 5 November 1853; Henry to Towns, 28 September 1856, Towns Papers, item 91; Geddie, Diary, 30 May 1856; Gordon, 'One year on Erromanga', Missionary Register 1859:39; Paton to Kay, 30 January 1862, R.P.M. 1862:244.
the end of the 1850s, it is by no means clear that there was a corresponding rise in mortality. After all, the firearms available were notoriously unreliable and inaccurate. In the light of the evidence, claims such as Guiart's, that the introduction of firearms on a grand scale from the beginning (sic) of the nineteenth century made warfare more murderous, and ended open, ritual battles on Tanna, must be viewed in the same light as Golovnin's conclusion that the Tannese drove their pigs inland when he arrived in 1809 as 'the result of the vile behaviour of the Spaniards, Portuguese, Dutch and English ...'24

This is not to claim that firearms had no effect. Undoubtedly there were shifts in the balance of power between those coastal tribes which were able to obtain European merchandise, including muskets, and the tribes which were not. It is possible that the migrations around Port Resolution commented on by missionary visitors in the 1850s 25 might point to the demise of the Numrikwen-Kauyamera moiety and the emergence — in the area of greatest European contact — of the super-tribal coastal grouping Kwatahrenimin. This would have enabled the coastal Tannese to monopolize and exploit the European presence vis-à-vis their inland cousins. If something like this did occur, it points not to passive islanders being manipulated by traders — the common missionary assumption26 — but to the Tannese organizing creatively and radically to control their European visitors.

In a sense, the very act of exchanging goods and services with the European was, from the Tannese point of view, a means of controlling him. For the Europeans the goods were economic commodities, the act of exchange a commercial transaction; but for the Tannese, whose social relations were characterized at every level by reciprocal exchange, they were what Lévi-Strauss27 would term vehicles and instruments for realities of another order — such as power, influence, sympathy, status and emotion. From this point of view, exchange on Tanna consisted of a complex totality of conscious and unconscious manoeuvres which served to gain security and to guard against the risks implied by alliances and rivalries. In exchanging cloth, tools, tobacco or muskets for

23Shineberg 1971a:61-82.
24Guiart 1956:94; Nosikov 1945:82.
26Cf. Geddie, Diary, 20 October 1849, 6 August 1851; Inglis 1852: 537-8; Paton and Copeland to Kay, 26 May 1859, R.P.M. 1859:360.
27Lévi-Strauss 1969:54.
pigs, wood or women's favours, Europeans operated within an existing Tannese ritual framework, in terms of which the Tannese were ideologically prepared for the influx of European traders from the 1840s.

In other respects, European trader contact profoundly affected Tannese mental horizons. Before the 1840s, apart from possible accidental voyages, Tannese contact with the other islands was confined to the southern New Hebrides. Regular trader contact from the 1840s increased the volume, frequency and especially the range of travel available. Between 1842 and 1858 over 100 vessels on their way to or from Australia are known to have called at Tanna. 28 Undoubtedly many more visits were not recorded. There was also a regular inter-island movement of small vessels attached to sandalwood stations — Geddie wrote from Aneityum in 1848 that he was able to communicate once a fortnight with the three Polynesian teachers at Port Resolution by means of Captain Paddon's vessels. In addition, from 1857 a small schooner belonging to the Presbyterian mission made several trips a year to the various islands of the southern New Hebrides. 29 But in terms of Tannese attitudes towards Europeans and European society the most important voyages were to the Australian colonies. It is impossible to estimate how many Tannese were involved. Twenty-six are known to have sailed to Sydney in the Velocity in 1847 to be employed as cheap colonial labour: they dispersed and made their way back to the islands when they realized that the object of the voyage was not simply to look at Sydney. Two Tannese (probably from the Velocity) were listed as 'passengers' on the Henry when it left Sydney in November 1847 and the Marian Watson carried eight Tannese to Sydney in August 1849. 30 With their high reputation for seamanship, there were certainly many more Tannese among the 483 islanders listed in the Shipping Gazette as having arrived in Sydney and the 520 listed as having departed thence between 1844 and 1858. Tannese crewmen were also engaged on Hobart Town whalers, though again it is impossible to establish the number involved. In September 1861 thirteen young Neraimene tribesmen were taken from Port Resolution by the whaler Southern Cross. They turned up in Tasmania in April 1862, and in the following month the people of Hobart, for the cost of one shilling, were able to see 'the thirteen Aborigines from

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28 Figures based on my reading of the various literary sources and the shipping lists printed in the Sydney Herald (later, S.M.H.), Sh.G. & S.G.T.L. and Sydney Mail.

29 Patterson 1882:118; Inglis to Graham, 23 July 1857, R.P.M. 1858:83; Inglis to Kay, 7 November 1859, R.P.M. 1861:13.

30 Sh.G. & S.G.T.L., 24 April, 13 November, 18 December 1847, 1 September 1849; Nisbet, Diary, 14 July 1848; Turner and Nisbet 1848; Inglis to Bates, 14 December 1854, R.P.M. 1856:133.
Tanna Island ... perform their corroboree, native songs and dances, at the Royal Polytechnic Bazaar ... By the kind permission of Captain Mansfield'. At least two of the men were still in the Australian colonies in 1865.\(^{31}\)

Besides serving aboard sandalwooders and whalers many Tannese were also shipped to various islands to cut and clean sandalwood. As one trader later remarked, 'for hard-working and steady station hands, the Tannese ... we always found good' — though not on their own island. Captain Hastings' opinion was echoed by a visitor to Port Resolution in 1853, who remarked that eight Loyalty Islanders could do more in a day at Padden's station than seventy Tannese.\(^{32}\) An unfortunate by-product of the use of immigrant islanders as crewmen and labourers was the clashes with indigenous populations. Sometimes Tannese were involved. Likewise, there were clashes on Tanna, with reports of immigrant islanders employed at the sandalwood depot being killed or wounded.\(^{33}\)

There were also Tannese-European clashes, though they were neither as frequent nor as fatal as some of the anti-trader literature would suggest. As Shineberg has argued,\(^{34}\) though the trade had its occasional psychopath it would be wrong to assume that islanders never initiated quarrels or that many clashes did not result from innocent mistakes on both sides: the evidence of Tannese-European clashes in the 1840s and '50s confirms that neither trader nor islander monopolized right or wrong. When two crewmen of the whaler Munford were beaten up at Port Resolution in July 1842, the Tannese told George Turner and Henry Nisbet, the two resident missionaries, that they had tried to take some property from the Europeans because they had stolen something. For their part, the crew believed that the missionaries had put the Tannese up to it. The next month a shore party from an American whaler was forced to flee to the boats after a scuffle

\(^{31}\)Paton to Kay, 11 October 1861, R.P.M. 1862:148; Hobart Town Advertiser, 23 April 1862; Mercury, 3 May 1862; Examiner, 18 September 1862; Mrs Paton to a friend, 17 October 1865, R.P.M., 1866:167.

\(^{32}\)Captain Hastings, quoted in Robertson 1902:40; Bowles, Diary, 31 October, 1 November 1853. For Tannese on other islands cf. Sh.G. & S.G.T.L., 21 August 1847; Lewis to Towns, 19 August 1850, Towns Papers, item 91; Mrs Henry to Towns, 25 December 1863, Towns Papers, item 91.

\(^{33}\)Sh.G. & S.G.T.L., 21 August 1847, 11 March, 29 July 1848; Erskine 1853:328-30, 344; Samoan Reporter 8, September 1848; Geddie to Archibald, c. July 1848, Missionary Register 1850:40.

\(^{34}\)Shineberg 1967:91-2, 214.
with some Tannese. Turner asserted that they had got hold of some native women and had done 'what the natives themselves would be ashamed of'; but Nisbet wrote in his diary that the women were used as a ploy to get hold of the Europeans' hatchets. The promise of women was used again in 1846 to decoy inland a boat's crew from the whaler Highlander. While engaged with the women the men's guns were seized and one crewman killed. When the survivors reached their ship the captain opened fire on the shore, with one Tannese reported killed. Two years later three Europeans from the settlement at Aneityum were killed 'a few miles' to the west of Port Resolution where they had gone to buy pigs and yams. The teachers reported that the desire for European property was the cause.\(^{35}\)

Occasionally there was a clash which had a profound impact on Tannese-European relations, such as the murder on board the Deborah in 1851 of the Yanekahi dignitary Gaskin. The first report of Gaskin's death to reach Sydney claimed that a quarrel with the ship's master followed Gaskin's refusal to allow the ship's crew to land, and when the captain attempted to do so anyway Gaskin struck him. Though Gaskin had a reputation for standing up against overbearing ships' captains,\(^{36}\) the newspaper report of his death had been gained second or third hand at Aneityum and was clearly inaccurate in some respects such as the name of the vessel.\(^ {37}\) The Deborah's captain was Captain White, of whom Erskine (citing the trader Rodd) wrote: 'Of a tyrannical and vindictive disposition, he was the terror of the natives, and had frequently been known to watch for days in the bush, for an opportunity of shooting one with whom he had a difference'.\(^{38}\) Four crewmen of the Hobart Town whaler Eliza who were ashore at Port Resolution at the time of Gaskin's death were seized by the Tannese and 'condemned to death two separate times', and would probably have been killed had not the Samoan teachers intervened and secured their release by the payment of nine muskets and twelve pounds of powder. A few days later the Rover's Bride called at the harbour unaware of what had occurred. The Tannese resolved to take the vessel to avenge Gaskin's death but the crew were warned in time by the Samoans.\(^{39}\) Gaskin's death is still today bitterly recalled around Port Resolution, and a

\(^{35}\)Nisbet, Diary, 28 July, 25 August 1842, 25 November 1846; Turner 1842-3:14; Gill and Nisbet 1846; Turner and Nisbet 1848.

\(^{36}\)Cf. Selwyn, Letters, 6 December 1849; Erskine 1853:316-17.

\(^{37}\)S.M.H., 26 January 1852.

\(^{38}\)Erskine 1853:393.

\(^{39}\)Murray and Sunderland 1852; Geddie, Diary, 5 January 1852; Home 1853:516.
local tradition maintains that the desire to avenge his death was still strong among sections of the Yanekahi and Kasawmene tribes many years later.

Notwithstanding the later claims of bitter Tannese resentment and a Sydney newspaper report at the time\(^{40}\) that the Tannese had vowed to kill the crew of the next ship to anchor at Port Resolution, the Europeans working on the sandalwood stations at the harbour seem to have continued in their friendly relations with the Tannese. Captain Richards had established the first station in 1847 for Sydney merchant John Kettle, and it was reported in July 1848 that he and two other Europeans were still there collecting and cleaning sandalwood. Early in 1849 Sydney entrepreneur Robert Towns wrote of opposing Kettle at Tanna, and by October 1850 he too had opened a station at the harbour. Around this time, Richards' station closed down. In 1852 Captain Paddon moved his sandalwood operations from Aneityum, forming an 'extensive establishment' in the southeast corner of the bay. It closed down in 1855. In 1857 another station was operating on the east side with a European agent trading in yams, copra and sulphur; and from 1859 to 1863 Captain Winchester managed a station at the harbour for Andrew Henry.\(^{41}\) Men such as these who depended not only for their livelihood but for their very lives on maintaining friendly relations with the local inhabitants, would have viewed with alarm actions like White's killing of Gaskin. Leonard Cory, in charge of one of the sandalwood stations at Port Resolution in 1849, told Captain Erskine that in the ten months he had resided at the harbour the Tannese had not stolen one article from his open sheds. When he was alone and delirious with fever the Tannese had 'tended him with brotherly care, forced open his mouth to give him food when he was senseless, and left all his property untouched'. A few years later, another ill trader, who had come over from Erromango for treatment at the hot springs, was left unmolested by the Tannese as he lay in a makeshift hut by the springs on the west side of the bay. Even after an outbreak of smallpox in 1853, which led to the disbandment of the mission, a visiting missionary was able to comment, 'The foreigners residing in this bay seemed in no danger whatever and have, evidently, a considerable influence over the natives ...\(^{42}\)

\(^{40}\)S.M.H., 21 January 1852.

\(^{41}\)Selwyn, Letters, 6 December 1849; Turner and Nisbet 1848; Towns to Lewis, 26 April 1849, Towns Papers, item 69; Towns to Collins, 20 October 1850, Towns Papers, item 68; Murray and Sunderland 1852; Sunderland and Murray 1853–4; MacGillivray, Journal, 4 December 1854; Hardie 1854; Geddie, Journal entry for 13 June 1857, Missionary Register 1858:85; Paton to Kay, 14 October 1859, 24 May 1860, R.P.M. 1860:68–9, 404; Shineberg 1967:251.

\(^{42}\)Selwyn, Letters, 6 December 1849, 17 October 1857; Erskine 1853: 303–5; Murray and Hardie 1849; Hardie 1854.
Captain Paddon exemplified the type of relations which resident traders could enjoy with the Tannese. In many respects sharing the traits of the typical beachcomber — from the time he settled at Port Resolution to his death in 1861 he lived with a native woman by whom he had four daughters — Paddon believed that one needed to be 'friendly but firm' with the islanders, to treat them fairly and expect fair treatment in return. He did not like to see the 'black fellows' with firearms and it is unlikely that he ever traded in muskets while at Tanna. From the diary entries of Thomas Bowles, who spent a fortnight with Paddon at Port Resolution in 1853, Paddon emerges as a man with a rough affection for the islanders. He was not apprehensive in moving among the Tannese and he was familiar with many of their customs, which he neither derided nor condemned. However, he was no sentimentalist about native superstitions (as he called them) and he looked forward to the enlightenment which increased commercial contact would bring. He had little sympathy for the 'civilizing' methods of the protestant missionaries and he thought that the Polynesian teachers placed by the L.M.S. at Port Resolution were 'hardly removed at all in point of civilization from the inhabitants of the island'. On the other hand, he had hoped that Bishop Selwyn would stay as a missionary at Port Resolution.43

There were other traders at Port Resolution who did not share Paddon's outlook or success. One station proprietor had to sleep every night with a loaded musket beside him to deter the Tannese from stealing. It may have been the same man who was killed at the station a year later. He was a Scotsman who had worked on various sandalwood vessels and stations and who had been forced to flee Erromango after shooting an islander. Apparently he was in the habit of firing at the Tannese too, and he had been warned by his employer that his recklessness would provoke the Tannese into killing him. He was killed by Nouka, an important yani en dite at Port Resolution, who defied his order to leave the station premises, whereupon the trader pulled down a musket and threatened to shoot him. The gun mis-fired and Nouka took up a piece of iron and threw it at the trader's head. He died a few hours later.44

Such incidents were seized upon by missionaries as typical of the sandalwood trade. Given the small proportion of such clashes relative to overall contact, the missionary view was

43Bowles, Diary, 28 October–9 November 1853; O'Reilly 1957:173-4.
44Inglis to Graham, 23 July, 16 October 1857, R.P.M. 1858:87, 155; Geddie to Board of Foreign Missions, Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia, 28 September 1857, Missionary Register 1858:276.
clearly distorted. However, it was shared by many naval officers, who assumed that the South Sea Islanders were usually provoked into committing atrocities by European misconduct. In response to pressure from both humanitarian and commercial interests for a greater naval presence in the southwest Pacific, Captain John Elphinstone Erskine, senior officer of the newly-created Australian Division of the Royal Navy's East Indies Station, inaugurated a plan for the regular periodic inspection of the region with his 1849 tour of Samoa, Tonga, Fiji, the New Hebrides, the Loyalties and New Caledonia. It was Erskine's practice to seek out the principal men at each island with whom to negotiate. He showed them over his ship, gave them food and other presents, inquired into any grievances they might have and explained to them the object of his visit. In the few days he was on Tanna, Erskine established cordial relations with the Tannese at Black Beach and Whitesands as well as Port Resolution. He distributed food and exchanged axes, tobacco, beads and whales' teeth for native products— which would have signified friendliness and peaceful intentions to the Tannese. At the trader Leonard Cory's request he removed from Port Resolution an Englishman, Stephens, who had involved himself in a local dispute. He interviewed the leader of the war party Stephens had joined and explained that the deportation of the Englishman was not designed to deprive him of an ally, but was to discourage other Englishmen from taking part in the islanders' disputes. He obtained from both war chiefs assurances that they would make peace. At Black Beach, Erskine heard of an affray which had taken place some months before between a local tribe and the crew of a sandalwood vessel in which three native crewmen, including one Tannese, were reported killed. Erskine believed that he knew the vessel involved, but, he complained, such was the secrecy preserved on all such topics by the traders that he was unable to procure any proof.

Erskine took his authority to intervene with British subjects residing or trading in the southwest Pacific from the 1828 Administration of Justice Act. But he found that British

45 'Proceedings at the South Sea Islands' 10 October 1849, Adm. 1/5606; Erskine 1853: passim.

46 Enclosure no.4, Erskine to Admiralty, 10 October 1849, Adm. 1/5606; Erskine 1853:308-14; Inglis 1887:303.

47 This had established the New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land Supreme Courts, with jurisdiction of 'all Treasons, Piracies, Felonies, Robberies, Murders, Conspiracies, and other Offences of what Nature or Kind soever' committed by any British subject or by the master or crew of any British vessel in any 'Island, Country, or place situate in the Indian or Pacific Oceans, and not subject to His Majesty or to any European State or Power'. 9 Geo. IV Cap 83 [25 July 1828], The statutes of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, vol. 11, 1829.
subjects in the islands believed that they were answerable to no one, and accordingly he urged Governor Fitzroy to issue a proclamation affirming the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court of New South Wales. He also instructed his subordinates that when investigating outrages committed by ships' crews against islanders, they should attempt to procure evidence sufficient to bring the offenders to trial in Sydney. As early as 1813 Governor Macquarie of New South Wales had acknowledged that the bad conduct of European crews in the south Pacific often provoked the islanders into seeking revenge, thus endangering the life and property of British subjects. But neither the Admiralty nor the Foreign Office was prepared to lay down guidelines for naval adjudication in such cases. In 1832 the Admiralty declared that ships' commanders had no authority to interfere 'in a territory not belonging to His Majesty and with the rulers of which he has no treaty'. Ten years later naval commanders were instructed to strengthen the authority of island chiefs by leaving the 'administration of justice' in their hands, rather than imposing, 'by peremptory menace, or a show of physical Force', British measures of justice. Such 'general forbearance', however, should not preclude naval officers from 'making firm and energetick efforts to obtain redress in cases of real grievance'. But as to precisely what constituted a case of 'real grievance', or just how 'firm and energetic' redress should be, were matters left to the discretion of individual officers.

On his 1849 tour of duty, Erskine was guided by a further Foreign Office pronouncement, 'Redressing outrages committed upon British Subjects and Property, and protecting British Commerce', which authorized the captains of H.M. ships to 'demand and exact redress from the ruling and responsible chiefs' on islands where British subjects had sustained wrongs. If the British subject had committed the wrong, he should be persuaded to make 'adequate reparation'; if he refused, 'the captain should tell the Chiefs, that if they should chuse, in the exercise of their own authority, to expel such British Subject, he (the captain) would receive him on board his Ship, and carry him away from the Island'. Again, this pronouncement did not specify whether British legal norms or native laws and customs would have precedence. In authorizing the captain to demand and exact redress from the

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48Erskine to Fitzroy, 24 November 1850, Erskine to Adm., 13 December 1850, enclosed in Adm. to C.O., 29 April 1851, C.O. 201/445; Erskine to Oliver, 14 March 1850, first enclosure, Adm. 1/5606.

49Shipping Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser, 4 December 1813.

50Adm. to C.O., 24 March 1832, C.O. 201/228; F.O. to Adm., 4 October 1842, Adm. 1/5525; Aberdeen to H.M. Consuls at Society and Sandwich Islands, cited in F.O. to Adm., 30 May 1843, Adm. 1/5534.

51As is clear from Erskine to Oliver, 14 March 1850, Adm. 1/5606.
'responsible chiefs', it embodied the principle of collective responsibility, but it left unanswered the questions of under what circumstances a captain could demand redress, what was adequate redress, and the methods by which it could be exacted. Similarly, it did not specify what means of persuasion could be employed to exact reparation from a recalcitrant British subject, nor what was to be done with any such person shipped from the island. In all of these areas of potential conflict the final decisions were left to the individual officers on the spot.

During the years following Erskine's 1849 cruise, some Europeans did stand trial in the New South Wales Supreme Court for offences committed in the islands, which led to complaints that the Royal Navy was indifferent to islander outrages.\textsuperscript{53} Perhaps in response to these charges, Sir Everard Home, after his 1852 cruise in H.M.S. \textit{Calliope}, stressed the need for frequent naval visits to the southwest Pacific, 'for the protection of the native inhabitants against the violent and unprovoked acts of Europeans, and the attacks not uncommonly made by natives upon white men ...'. Stephen Fremantle, who succeeded Home as Senior Officer in 1854, was instructed to 'give to the Natives an impression of the power and of the friendly disposition of the British Nation and whilst giving due weight to the representations of the British Consuls and missionaries and to strengthen their hands for good, ... [to] repress any tendency to undue interference or encroachment on the right of Chiefs & Natives'. At the same time, the Admiralty made it clear that Fremantle's primary role was to 'protect British interests'.\textsuperscript{54} The problem of how to balance British interests against islanders' rights was sidestepped by the Admiralty and again left to the personal discretion of individual officers.

The devolution of responsibility from the Admiralty to the officer on the spot sometimes worked to the individual commander's advantage by leaving him freedom of action. But often it transferred the ultimate responsibility of deciding upon a complicated issue to an officer who, in some ways (particularly in legal aspects), was not equipped for the task.\textsuperscript{55} In response to

\textsuperscript{52}F.O. to Adm., 24 February 1848, Adm. 1/5592.

\textsuperscript{53}\textit{S.M.H.}, 29 January 1850, 8 July 1851, 12 September 1853, 14 August 1854; \textit{Sh.G. \& S.G.T.L.}, 10, 17 May, 12 July 1851, 12 September 1853; \textit{Empire}, 14, 15 August 1854; Erskine 1853:478-86.

\textsuperscript{54}Home to Adm., 'Reporting proceedings amongst the South Sea Islands', 20 December 1852, Adm. 1/5617; Home 1853:449-60, 511-16; Adm. to Fremantle, 18 February 1854, Adm. 2/1697.

\textsuperscript{55}Bach 1964:217.
a public outcry over the massacre of the *Gazelle*’s crew at Woodlark Island in September 1855, the Foreign Office and Admiralty resolved that cases involving the safety of British subjects justified 'summary punishment', but before Fremantle could act on the *Gazelle* case, he was succeeded as Senior Officer by Captain William Loring, who informed the New South Wales Colonial Secretary that, as Woodlark Island was outside the Australian Station’s jurisdiction and as H.M.S. *Iris* was the only man-of-war at his disposal, he would not take any retributive action. He also commented (in August 1857) that he did not plan to sail to the South Seas until May 1858, when the hurricane season would have passed. However, Loring’s schedule was abruptly changed when news reached Sydney of the murder of two British crewmen of the *New Forest* at Tanna in October 1857. Governor Denison directed him to proceed directly to the New Hebrides and 'take such steps ... necessary to discover and punish the perpetrators'. Loring sailed from Sydney on 27 November 1857.

Until the deaths of the *New Forest* crewmen, naval attention had focused largely on European depredations on Tanna, and relations between naval officers and Tannese — even at the place where the *New Forest*’s crewmen were killed — had been uniformly amicable. But the murder of the *New Forest* men came at a time when the New South Wales Government was particularly sensitive to public charges of indifference to the fate of the Woodlark Island victims. In addition, parliamentarian Robert Towns, who had a bigger stake in the South Sea Islands trade then any other individual at that time, put his considerable political weight behind the move for swift naval retaliation. Towns warned Governor Denison that if a ship-of-war were not immediately

56Fremantle to Colonial Secretary, 12 November 1856; Crown Law Officers to Col. Sect., 22 November 1856, enclosed in Fremantle to Adm., 12 June 1857, Adm. 1/5684; Adm. to Loring, 13 October 1857, enclosing F.O. to Adm., 29 September 1857, Adm. 2/1614.


58Denison’s comments on Towns to Denison, 12 November 1857, N.S.W. Col. Sect., In-letters, 57/4551.


60Cf. 'Massacre at Woodlark Island', ordered to be printed by N.S.W. Legislative Assembly, 27 February 1857. Copy in Fremantle to Adm., 12 June 1857, Adm. 1/5684.
despatched to the islands, traders would be forced to take the matter into their own hands, after the manner of Captain James Ross who had had a Lifuan boy hanged during a fight with New Caledonians in 1854.61

The New Forest episode illustrates the mutual suspicion and ignorance which lay behind so many islander-trader clashes. A year before, the vessel had shipped seven Tannese from Black Beach. After a voyage of four months the men had jumped ship at Aneityum, where they remained for some months working occasionally for the New Forest's master. They then left Aneityum on a whaler under the impression that they would be returned to their own island. But they never reached Tanna, and when the New Forest called at Black Beach on 16 October 1857 her boat's crew was attacked to avenge the presumed death of the seven Tannese. Two of the crew (Spence and Hill) and one Tannese were killed. Three Loyalty Islanders serving on the New Forest were sent ashore to retrieve the dead seamen's remains but they were fired on as soon as they reached the beach. The accompanying boats returned the fire and pulled back to the ship, six miles off. The vessel continued trading along the coast the following day and then sailed to Aneityum, where its wood was unloaded and trade items taken on, after which it sailed again for Tanna. Before sailing, however, its upper portion was repainted.62 It anchored in Port Resolution for three days and (on 31 October) sailed again for Black Beach. There, according to Chief Mate Clerk's testimony:

They remained till next day without lowering their boats. Two Canoes made the attempt three times to come off to the Ship, but put back, and the third time they hauled up the Canoes and went away. There was little wind at the time, they came halfway and then put back again.

The next morning [November 1] they lowered their Boats, and put their trade in, and went away to the right or Westward — one boat to guard the other. They obtained a boatload of Yams and two Pigs, and returned to the ship at night — where they learned from the Captain that the Natives had been off in Canoes and had attempted to capture the ship but that he had got rid of them by promising the Boats should come and trade with them, and that he had not found it necessary to fire on them.

The next day the Boats were lowered again, and went to the Westward, but not until 9 A.M. Clerk was in charge of one of them.

62Geddie, Diary, 11 December 1857.
About noon they heard shots fired, and immediately returned to the ship where they found five Canoes, each containing about four men close to, and alongside of her, and they saw several more Canoes coming off from the shore. When these latter Canoes saw the Boats, they put back immediately — and the men in the canoes alongside jumped overboard.

The natives on the Beach fired at the Boats, and the Boats returned the fire. When Clerk got on board, the Natives continued their fire on the Ship, and he fired a swivel, and some musketry was fired, and the Natives went away.

He thinks it probable that one native was killed, and he says that it was supposed to be the native who killed 'Hill'.

'Nicholo', a Chief of the Island of Mare, serving at the time in the 'New Forest', and just then sick below, came on deck and jumped overboard after him and probably finished him.

Clerk positively states that the Boats of the 'New Forest' did not at any time after the day of the murder approach the Beach anywhere near where the murder had taken place.

The ship was anchored in from 9 to 11 fathoms water abreast of the 'Black Beach'.

The Tannese version was quite different. They told Commander Loring that four of their canoes had gone off to the New Forest and that two boats from the vessel had gone on shore with tobacco and other trade items. There was some confusion among the Tannese as to whether the vessel, which had been repainted, was indeed the same which had been at Black Beach two weeks before — those who believed it was, not daring to go to the beach to trade (which would explain the hesitancy of the Tannese to come off to the ship noted by Clerk). As soon as they were close to the ship, the Tannese claimed, they were fired on and five of their number were killed.63

The testimony of the two Tannese men concerning the return of the New Forest in November explained for Loring why the trader Henry had been evasive and anxious that Clerk should not accompany the Iris to Tanna. Certainly Henry had known that the New Forest had returned to Tanna where it was involved in some affray.64

In his report to Denison, Loring implied that Henry and the crewmen of the New Forest had conspired to ambush the Tannese


64Henry to Towns, 15 December 1857, Towns Papers, item 91.
and mislead his investigation. While the Tannese interviewed by Loring would have been anxious to avoid punitive action by H.M.S. *Iris*, there was sufficient inconsistency in the testimonies of Captain Mair and Chief Mate Clerk for Loring to doubt that the *New Forest* crew had acted purely in self defence. For instance, it must have struck Loring as odd that if the Tannese were intent on capturing the vessel on 1 November they were put off by the captain's promise of trade the next day. And if Mair did believe that the Tannese had tried to take his ship on that occasion why would he have despatched the boats the next day and risked a repetition? Also, if Nicholo were too ill to go with the boats to the beach on 2 November, how was he able to jump overboard and 'finish off' one of the Tannese (supposedly the very person who had killed Hill)? Together with the fact of the ship's repainting at Aneityum between its two visits to Black Beach, there was good reason to suppose that the men on the *New Forest* had set out to decoy the Tannese and avenge Hill and Spence's deaths.

As the traders apparently had already avenged the seamen's deaths, and unable to isolate the actual murderers, Loring did not feel justified 'in treating the two men who came on board the ship as murderers, nor did I think it right or advisable to fire, or to land, and commit indiscriminate slaughter and destruction on the Natives, who were eagerly offering their Cocanuts and Yams in a friendly spirit of Barter'. Loring surmised that Hill and Spence, or some other traders, had provoked the Tannese on a former occasion and (given the warlike reputation of the Tannese) had been foolish in venturing on to the beach at all. Accordingly, he let the Tannese off with the warning that 'should anything of the kind occur again at the same place, they must expect serious consequences'. Denison supported Loring's course of action and agreed with him that the non-return of the seven Tannese was the original cause of the attack on the British seamen.\(^6^5\)

Though perfectly justified, Loring's pacific policy was completely discredited by news which reached Sydney in January 1858 that the master and two seamen of the trading vessel *Anne and Jane* had been killed at Tanna within days of the *Iris*'s departure and at the very spot Loring had issued his warning. According to John Geddie, the unarmed men had gone ashore to purchase yams and had given no provocation.\(^6^6\) Whatever the motive for the attack, it lent credence to Mair and Clerk's contention that the Black Beach tribesmen were cold-blooded murderers, and gave Loring little option but to return to Tanna.

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\(^6^5\)Loring to Denison, 15 December 1857, including Denison's comments, 22 January 1858, N.S.W. Col. Sect., In-letters, 58/355.

and punish the tribe. Denison ordered him back to the island and H.M.S. Iris accordingly departed Sydney on 28 May 1858. By that time Loring coincidentally had received Admiralty directions to "take such measures as may be possible for ascertaining & punishing the murderers' of the Gazelle's crew at Woodlark Island in 1855, which he interpreted as justifying punitive action in other cases where the lives of British subjects were threatened.\

En route to the New Hebrides Loring called at the Isle of Pines, where the Anne and Jane had been lately wrecked on a reef. There he heard at first-hand from the survivors how their master and two crewmen had been 'barbarously and treacherously murdered by the tribe of Wagus'. He then sailed for Aneityum and thence Tanna where he was (in his words) 'very much assisted' by the men of the Terror, Hiromonde and New Forest. The traders seized Wau Attaway, the presumed chief of the presumed offending tribe, and sent him on board the Iris. Assisted by the crews of the three trading vessels Loring fired some shell into the crowd which had assembled on the beach and landed a hundred men who 'burnt the principal settlement, cutting down the Cocoa Nut & Bread Fruit Trees & destroying the Bananas &c. in the immediate neighbourhood of the Village of the Chief'. Because two marines who had strayed from the main party were ambushed and killed, troops were landed again the following day to commit further destruction. Wau Attaway was taken to Erromango and left there as a prisoner in the charge of the proprietor of a sandalwood depot. From Tanna Loring sailed north to Woodlark Island (which he had earlier considered to be outside his jurisdiction), where he landed troops to destroy huts and canoes in retaliation for the massacre of the Gazelle's crew. He then returned to Aneityum where he was able to persuade Geddie to accompany him to Tanna to aid him in any way that he could. Though Geddie argued that Loring's purpose was 'now one of mercy and not of judgment', it is likely that the Tannese assumed that Geddie was condoning the earlier naval action. The impression that the mission was somehow involved in the punitive actions of the Iris, Terror, New Forest and Hiromonde would have been strengthened by the arrival at Port Resolution in October of the Rev. John G. Paton aboard the last-mentioned vessel.

Neither Geddie nor his fellow missionary on Aneityum, John Inglis, believed that Geddie's association with H.M.S. Iris, or Paton's with the Hiromonde, would adversely affect Paton's reception at Port Resolution. They argued that Loring's actions

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67 Adm. to Loring, 13 October 1857, enclosing F.O. to Adm., 29 September 1857, Adm. 2/1614; Loring to Adm., 1 July 1858, Adm. 1/5696.

68 Loring to Adm., 6 September 1858, Adm. 1/5696; Geddie to Bayne, 21 August 1858, Missionary Register 1859:1-2.

69 Paton and Copeland to Kay, 26 May 1859, R.P.M. 1859:360.
would have a salutary effect and would increase the security of human life on Tanna; and that the mission's character and objects were by then so well known, anyway, that individual deviations would not affect the prevailing native perception.\footnote{Inglis to Kay, 7 November 1859, \textit{R.P.M.} 1861:24; Geddie to Bayne, 21 August 1858, \textit{Missionary Register} 1859:1-2.} It remains to be established, however, just what were the popular Tannese perceptions of the mission and missionaries at the time of Paton's settlement.
Chapter 3

The discovery of Tanna by men of God

'This is a memorable day', the celebrated missionary John Williams wrote in his diary on 18 November 1839, 'a day which will be transmitted to posterity, and the record of events which have this day transpired will be exist after those who have taken an active part in them have retired into the shades of oblivion'. For his followers, the day became memorable because it was their hero's last—he was clubbed to death the next morning on the neighbouring island of Erromango. For Williams himself, it was memorable because he had just placed three Samoan teachers at Port Resolution as the first step in the conversion of the whole of Western Polynesia, or what is now called Melanesia. More Samoans, and Rarotongans, were placed at the bay over the next two years; and in July 1842 two young Scottish missionaries, George Turner and Henry Nisbet, and their wives, were settled there to fulfil Williams' dream. But their mission was abandoned after only seven months, and no other European missionary lived on Tanna till John G. Paton and J.W. Matheson in 1858. For most of the intervening years it was left to Polynesian and, after 1854, Aneityumese teachers to keep up a string of mission outposts, stretching from Port Resolution down to Kwamera near Tanna's southern tip. More than the occasional visits by the L.M.S. brethren from Samoa and Rarotonga and the Anglican Bishop Selwyn from New Zealand, or the more frequent visits by the Presbyterian missionaries on Aneityum, it was the native teachers who determined the Tannese understanding of Christianity. The other important element was Turner and Nisbet, who provided the Kwamera-speakers with a corpus of religious literature in their own language and a model against which they could judge later missionaries: but even when Turner and Nisbet were at Port Resolution it was the teachers who maintained the more intimate contact with the Tannese, who took the Christian message into their huts and villages. What this Chapter will explore is how closely the message preached by those early missionaries, both

1Quoted in Gutch 1974:148.

2Resolutions and minutes of meeting held at Apia, 30 March 1840, L.M.S. South Seas Letters.


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islander and European, accorded with the message received by the Tannese.

When Williams called at Tanna, fewer than ten European vessels had touched at the island since Cook's landing in 1774. Williams' dealings with the Tannese passed without incident, apart from one episode when a large native made signs to Williams' companion Harris to open his mouth, at which 'the fellow immediately spat down his throat'. It would seem that the fellow took the unfortunate Harris to be a returned ancestor and was spitting— as was the custom — to protect himself from the sometimes evil power of the spiritual realm. It was unpleasant, but it did not affect the missionaries' otherwise amicable relations with the Tannese. They exchanged great quantities of scissors, calico and fish-hooks for yams and other produce — a practice Williams had used with good effect elsewhere in the Pacific.

When he landed the Samoans, Williams was presented with the return gift of some pigs. He tried to explain to the Tannese that the three teachers were 'chiefs of God'. It is impossible to know what the Tannese made of this. Perhaps they thought they were receiving magicians, possibly even demi-gods. Certainly they would have appreciated that the Samoans were a source of rare and valuable items: as well as leaving the teachers with some axes as presents for the chiefs, Williams indicated that he would return in four moons with more gifts.

Thirty Samoans had offered themselves as teachers to accompany Williams on his voyage into Melanesia — a display of missionary spirit, according to Thomas Heath, which had melted the missionaries' hearts. But missionary spirit was a poor substitute for adequate preparation and training. European missionaries had been in Samoa only since 1836, and most of their time in those early years was taken up with acquiring the language and establishing themselves in their host communities. Instruction of teachers was generally low on their list of priorities. 'Piety', rather than 'mental endowments for their work', was considered the most important attribute. In later years, teachers were subjected to time-consuming but largely irrelevant instructions, including a written translation of the whole of Dr Boyes' Divinity Lectures,
a written commentary on Isaiah and John's Gospel, an analysis of the Pentateuch, a written compendium of Old Testament History and Church History, geography, arithmetic, composition of sermons, and a course on the rise, progress, errors and evils of popery. Even at Rarotonga's Takamoa Institute, where the teachers were instructed in carpentry and furniture making, much of the senior students' time was occupied in drawing maps of Palestine with the journeys of the children of Israel.

The three Samoans placed on Tanna in 1839 were spared such instruction: the chief qualification of Lalolangi, Mose and Salamea was piety — though Lalolangi was not a church member. All three were married men and at least one of them, Mose, had children. All were probably titleholders with some authority in Samoa, though traditional rank counted for little once they were despatched to the isolated and virtually uncharted islands of Melanesia. The assumption being that they would readily adapt to Melanesian conditions, almost no thought was given to their needs and comforts. They were denied the company of their wives and children at Port Resolution. They were even left without clothing or shelter adequate for the colder climate. When H.M.S. Favorite called at Tanna three months after their settlement, Lalolangi sent a letter with Captain Croker to Samoa, begging to be allowed to return home. However, when the Camden returned to Port Resolution in May 1840 Thomas Heath decided that Lalolangi's 'going away would hurt the minds of his companions and therefore resolved to let him stay, at least for another year', which suggests that the other teachers too were not keen to remain on Tanna.

The teachers reported to Heath that the Tannese had behaved very well towards them, and that about thirty attended worship, including three or four chiefs whom Heath rewarded with some cloth and fish-hooks. He told them that when they had cast off their gods and worshipped Jehovah, white missionaries would come and live among them, at which the Tannese expressed 'great pleasure'. Most of Heath's report of his three days at Port Resolution is taken up with details of his barter of fish-hooks and rags for yams and native curiosities. He wrote that when he tried to leave for Aniwa he was urged 'still to delay and trade — and trade — and trade!' So preoccupied was he with the trading success that he ignored the plight of the Samoans. Nowhere in his report, or his letter to the L.M.S. Directors, is any mention made of the reasons for Lalolangi's discouragement and desire to return home.


10Chambers 1979: passim.

11Heath 1840; Heath to L.M.S., 26 May 1840, L.M.S. South Seas Letters.
Lalolangi now at least had the company of his wife who, like Salamea's wife, had been brought from Samoa to join the mission band. There were also two new teachers: Pomare and Vaiofanga, both from the island of Tutuila. Pomare had been a foundation member of the church there, a deacon and preacher, and a key figure in the Tutuila Revival which had erupted at the end of 1839. He enjoyed high rank, being the son — possibly the eldest son — of Maunga, high chief of Pango Pango. He had represented his father at the meeting of the missionaries on Upolu in 1836 and the missionary A.W. Murray had believed that he would succeed to his father's title. But when his father died in May 1839 Pomare was passed over, and within weeks he had offered himself for foreign mission work:

I have given my soul to Jesus to be saved by him: — it I leave with him, — and I now place my body at the disposal of the missionary. I am willing to go to any land of darkness to which he may send me. My desire is to die in the cause of Jesus who was crucified for me. I wish to do the work of God and I am willing to go to any savage land or to remain in our land. I leave it with the missionary; let him choose.\(^\text{12}\)

Pomare stayed on at Tutuila for almost another year, preaching at the village of Nuuuli and becoming one of the first Samoans to be caught up in Murray's 'awakening'. It was with great reluctance that the missionary agreed to part with his premier proselyte — 'the first fruits of my missionary labors, over whom I had watched with such intense interest and towards whom my bowels yearned'\(^\text{13}\) — and Pomare finally sailed with Heath to the New Hebrides in April 1840.

A month after Heath's visit, H.M.S. Sulphur called at Port Resolution and found Salamea dead and the other Samoans all low with malaria. Captain Belcher painted a miserable picture of their plight. They were literally imprisoned, he wrote, in their thatched hovel, being compelled to close the door immediately one entered or departed, to prevent the intrusion of the Tannese:

They appear to be very uneasy and unhappy, and painfully anxious to return to their native land. They enquired most anxiously and eagerly if we were bound to the Navigators; and although their stock of English was but scanty, we could plainly understand that they were in great fear from the natives, and much dreaded our departure .... I certainly

\(^{12}\)Murray (quoting Pomare) to L.M.S., 10 June 1839, quoted in Chambers 1979:56; cf. Gilson 1970:112.

\(^{13}\)Quoted in Chambers 1979:57.
felt a more than ordinary interest about these unfortunate beings, and the frequent repetition of 'Samoa, Samoa', from the sick within the hut, sounded like the cry of the condemned.\textsuperscript{14}

Belcher gave the Samoans a few trade items, some food and a blanket apiece. But so depressed and harassed were they that he thought their only chance of recovery was the return of the \textit{Camden} and their removal to Samoa.

But the \textit{Camden} did not return for another nine months, by which time Pomare too was dead. During the Samoans' illness there had been no public services, and by the time they were well enough to conduct worship they had lost their former followers. The reason for the Tannese desertion is clear. In not disposing of their food scraps by burying them or casting them into the sea, the Samoans were seen to have left themselves susceptible to \textit{nahak} sorcery. Their subsequent illness and deaths proved their powerlessness against the local sorcerers. As the survivors reported to A.W. Murray in April 1841, the Tannese thereupon claimed that Jehovah was less powerful than their own gods.\textsuperscript{15} The Samoans had probably contributed to this foolish fancy (as Murray called it) by presenting Jehovah as a contestant against the local deities, which was, after all, entirely consistent with their own view of the Christian god as \textit{superior} to the principal traditional Samoan deity Tagaloa,\textsuperscript{16} and only a slight extension of the typical evangelical perception of a world-wide battle between Jehovah and Satan.

Not only had the Tannese left off attending the teachers' services; they had also cut off their supply of food, which had forced them to devote most of their time to gardening. Only in March 1841 had a few Tannese again attended on the Samoans. This signified to Murray that the teachers were making some headway, and he wrote to the L.M.S. Directors that they had acquired some considerable influence among the Tannese and had even managed to reconcile warring factions. This optimism was not shared by the Samoans who, even Murray had to admit, had become somewhat discouraged. However, what the Samoans felt counted for little. After conferring with the supposed principal chiefs of the harbour, Murray concluded that there was no just cause for discouragement and left two more young men from Tutuila: Falease, a 'pious lad', and Apolo, 'one of the most efficient of the teachers whom we have now brought with us'. Lalolangi, 'owing to peculiar circumstances' (possibly sleeping with Salamea's widow), was taken back to Samoa.\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{14}Belcher 1843:58-9.
\textsuperscript{15}Murray 1841.
\textsuperscript{16}Chambers 1979:70.
\textsuperscript{17}Murray to L.M.S., 4 May 1841, L.M.S. South Seas Letters.
Murray returned to Samoa with the news that the chiefs at Port Resolution would be exceedingly glad to receive a European missionary. He noted their promise to prohibit stealing among their people, and their plans to build a house for a missionary and await his arrival. He urged the L.M.S. Directors to occupy the island at once with three or four men who had drunk deeply into the spirit of their Lord. If only men were sent, he wrote, whose hearts and souls were filled with the one great and glorious object of converting the heathen, to the exclusion of little trifles which merely affected their personal interests, Williams' dream would be realized and Tanna would become the hub for the conversion of the whole group.

The grand scheme was launched the following year, with the settlement of George Turner and Henry Nisbet and their wives at Port Resolution. Both men had been destined for India and a longer course of preparatory study. But, on receipt of the news of Williams' death the L.M.S. Directors cut short their studies at Cheshunt College and hurried them off to the South Seas to take up Williams' work as near as possible to the spot where he had been killed. For the sickly Nisbet it was a choice between acceding to the Directors' demands or being debarred from missionary labour anywhere, at any time. For the self-confident and assertive Turner it was a blow — he was sensitive to the social barrier between the godly mechanics of the South Seas and the more scholarly and gifted men who were preserved for India and the Orient. He argued for one more session at Cheshunt, but was overruled by the Directors who were anxious to prove to the benighted savages of the New Hebrides that the Saviour's friends would not yield to Satan's opposition.

In the L.M.S. records, Turner and Nisbet are almost invariably presented as a pair — as a composite personality. And, to a large extent, to read the history of the one is to know the history of the other. Both were born in Scotland in 1818 — Turner was slightly the elder — and both were brought up in the Relief Church, a broadly evangelical Presbyterian Church which held, like the English Independents, that the civil magistrate had no concern with religion, and which readily admitted to its communion members of any denomination. Both completed only

18L.M.S. Committee of Examiners, Minutes, 8 June 1840; Nisbet Diary, 28 March, 20, 22 April 1840.

19Nisbet to Arundel, 19 March 1840, Darling to Arundel, 17 June 1840, Conquest to Arundel, n.d. (c. June 1840), Nisbet — L.M.S. Candidates Papers; L.M.S. Committee of Examiners, Minutes 24 February, 8, 22 June 1840; Nisbet, Diary, 22 April, 4 June 1840; Turner 1861:3.

20Nisbet and Turner, L.M.S. Candidates Papers.
their primary education — though they continued with Sabbath school — before becoming clerks in Glasgow. Later, both were to marry ministers' daughters older than themselves. The early part of their lives, they wrote with all the pious hindsight of born-again seventeen year olds, had been wasted 'in caring for nothing but the pastimes and follies of youth'. Then, in their fourteenth year, when together attending a Young Men's Society for Religious Improvement, they became aware that they were destitute of spiritual life. They began to feel anxious for their eternal welfare. No single incident stood out in their conversion. Rather, they were brought gradually, though hardly gently, to the realization that they were surely heading for eternal damnation. Turner wrote that his conscience had previously been blinded and perverted, at no time burdened down with its load of transgressions. But once pricked, it rose in all its accusing forms and he came to feel the full horror of his indwelling sin. Nisbet went through a similar experience of self-revulsion, and was consumed (as he put it) by the ardent desire to rise out of the dust of self-abasement — to have the old man crucified within him and to be taken over by the new.

The language is suggestive: Turner's perverted conscience which, once pricked, rises in all its accusing forms. Nisbet's ardent desire to rise out of the dust of self-abasement, to have the old man crucified within him. Their description of conversion would seem to be at the same time confessions of the pleasure and pain of puberty.

More and more the two youths turned their backs on all they considered worldly. In each other's company and within the institutional confines of their church they began to experience more pleasure in the service of God than they had ever felt in the pursuits of this world. Within this restricted social environment, with its heady religious atmosphere, Turner and Nisbet became intoxicated with the fate of the heathen and, to compensate for their sins, together they pledged to sacrifice themselves to the foreign missionary's life of labour and suffering. To prepare for their vocation they commenced the study of Latin and Greek. Then when only seventeen years old, they were formally taken on by the London Missionary Society. They studied the classics together at Glasgow University and divinity at the Relief Church Seminary. In October 1838 they began attending Cheshunt College, outside London, a finishing school for missionary candidates who had received a good education elsewhere. Latin, Greek and Hebrew were taught at Cheshunt, but the central feature of its course was preaching practice. It was hardly part of the curriculum to broaden the mental horizons,21 so perhaps it did not really matter when the three year course of study was cut short by a year for Turner and Nisbet to be shipped off to the South Seas.

They got the necessary medical clearances — though the sickly Nisbet had to be touted around to three doctors before one was prepared to certify to his good health. Turner found an acceptable bride at short notice — Nisbet was told that conjugal obligations would be too taxing for his delicate constitution. As it turned out, the sea trip to Australia invigorated him and in Sydney he married Sarah Crook, daughter of one of the missionaries who had gone to Tahiti in 1796. The party spent some months at Samoa, learning Samoan, building the frame of a house and generally acquiring missionary experience. During the time the two women had still-births, and the more experienced brethren pressed Turner and Nisbet to delay a year or two while the suitability of Tanna could be more carefully assessed. Turner later wrote that the caution was well advised, but at the time they were anxious to carry out their instructions to 'make all practicable haste to commence a mission' on Tanna.  

After an uneventful voyage, the Camden came in sight of Tanna on Saturday 25 June 1842. But gale-force winds kept the vessel tacking off shore for some days, and it was not until the following Thursday that it reached Port Resolution. Safely anchored in the still waters of one of the group's most beautiful harbours, prospects appeared rosy. The Tannese who paddled off to the ship from all parts of the bay were not as wild looking as the missionaries had expected. The teachers reported that they had suffered no shortage of food, had been well treated, and had established a decent cottage on the land of Viavia, the local Neraimene yani en dete. Though there were no converts, many Tannese worshipped with the teachers and refrained from cannibalism and aggressive war — due to the teachers' influence, Aaron Buzacott reported to the L.M.S. Directors, though Thomas Heath wrote that the teachers had been totally ineffective.  

The local chiefs were assembled together on 1 July and closely questioned by the L.M.S. deputation as to how they would receive Turner and Nisbet. They were asked whether they would treat Mrs Turner and Mrs Nisbet with respect, protect the missionaries and respect their neutrality in the event of war, give land for a house, assist in the building of the house, protect mission property, attend worship regularly, and provide the mission with whatever food the island produced. With the advantage of hindsight, Turner wrote that the assembled chiefs 'seemed willing to say Yes or No to everything, just as they thought it would please

22 Turner 1861:4.

23 Nisbet, Diary, 30 June 1842; Buzacott 1842; Heath to L.M.S., 6 July 1842, L.M.S. South Seas Letters; Slatyer 1842; Turner 1861:4; Crocombe and Crocombe 1968:21.
us'. But at the time no one expressed any reservation about their answers. To the missionaries, who had decided beforehand on the precise questions to be put, the meeting was a formal conference, which would be binding on the Tannese. But quite apart from the language barrier—which must have been considerable in the period before trade pidgin had had a chance to develop—there was the problem of just what the missionaries' carefully worked out questions signified to the Tannese. What did treating a missionary's wife with respect mean for an islander who came from a culture in which attitudes to women could hardly be deemed respectful in middle class British terms, and who had probably never even met a European woman? How could an individual give away the land of his ancestors? Or, belonging to a society in which any alliance expressed mutual obligations, agree to protect a stranger in a unilateral fashion?

At the conclusion of the missionaries' formal conference, gifts were exchanged. For the missionaries, the exchange sealed a contract with the Tannese who would henceforth be obliged to honour to the letter the affirmation of intent they were presumed to have made. The gifts marked the detachment of the mission from Tannese politics. But, from the Tannese perspective, the gifts signified the incorporation of the missionaries into Tannese social relations; they initiated, rather than concluded, an alliance which placed as many obligations and responsibilities on Turner and Nisbet as it did on themselves. What those obligations might be could not be predetermined and set down on paper, but would arise in relation to specific circumstances.

The Tannese with whom the missionaries conferred and exchanged gifts were from the Nepikinamame and Neraimene tribes on the eastern side of Port Resolution. At the time the Neraimene followers of the yani en dete Viavia were at war with Yanekahi tribesmen, from the west side of the bay, grouped around Lamias. In the few months preceding Turner and Nisbet's settlement, five men were reported to have been killed, and anxious to avoid the impression of taking sides by settling under Viavia's protection, the missionaries sent for the Yanekahi tribesmen in the hope of effecting a reconciliation. Lamias when fetched 'looked very shy and afraid'. Later the same day:

We met them again and the subdued chief (Lamiasi) and tried to soften down the conquerors and to let the other know that we are the friends of all parties; but the poor fellow seemed very low spirited, and hardly to think that his assent was necessary to our measures.25

24 Turner 1842-3:6; Buzacott 1842; Buzacott to L.M.S., 7 July 1842, L.M.S. South Seas Letters.

The passage is suggestive of the webs of rivalry, alliance and intrigue into which the missionaries unwittingly had placed themselves by their association with Viavia and his followers.

The impression that the missionaries had joined forces with the tribes to the east of the bay would have been confirmed by their subsequent behaviour. Each Sunday they would travel from yimwarem to yimwarem in Neraimene and Nepikinamame territory, preaching and distributing small gifts to reward attentiveness. In the next day or two some yams or other produce would turn up at the mission house from the area visited on the Sabbath.26 Thus there was in operation a system of reciprocal gift exchange, from the Tannese perspective expressing an alliance between the missionaries and the people they visited. All that the missionaries perceived, however, was an unconnected series of kindly gestures.

For the first three months Turner and Nisbet, assisted by Thomas Heath, were preoccupied with erecting their house and acquiring the language. During this time they lived in the teachers' house — what happened to the teachers is not specified. They chose a site high on the hill on the east side of the bay for their weather-board cottage, but Viavia's brother objected and an even more prominent location (which Viavia claimed he owned) was acquired. Perhaps there was some dispute over its ownership as well, for the missionaries eventually settled on a spot at the bottom of the hill just above high-water mark, apparently given to them by the yeremwanu Kuanuan. Their first action — almost an obligatory ritual of European ownership — was to cut down all the trees, which undoubtedly infringed on the usufructary rights of a number of people. By Saturday 24 September, the building, comprising two bedrooms and a sitting-room, was complete; and on the following Monday the missionaries moved their furniture into the 'very snug and comfortable' cottage, as white and well ordered as their own intentions. One wonders what the Tannese made of its panelled doors and shuttered windows, of the rigid geometric symmetry of both dwelling and garden. To mark its completion, Kuanuan presented the missionaries with a cooked shoulder of pork, which he had received from someone 'from a distance'. Any political significance attached to the gift was lost on the missionaries who gave him something in return but also, rather ungraciously, informed him that they wanted live pigs.27

As well as working on the house, the missionaries devoted a good deal of time to educational and religious services. A school for adults was started, though it never met with much success, and Heath began a day school for the sons of chiefs — in order to 'make it more precious' he explained. Absenteeism was high and the class was suspended when all the scholars left

26Nisbet, Diary, 24 September, 29 October, 12, 14 November 1842.
27Nisbet, Diary, 2 July-27 September 1842.
in mid-August to take part in the war between Viavia and Lamias. A small group of girls was taught domestic skills by the missionaries' wives. But the missionaries always held that preaching was their prime concern, and from the outset there had been one mid-week and two Sunday services at the mission house. The first Sabbath service, on 3 July, had been attended by some 200 Tannese—all 'very still and attentive', wrote Nisbet. Only 100 attended the following week, and thereafter the numbers were much lower. On 18 July a short service was held at a local yimwarem, marking the beginning of a standard Sunday practice, with the missionaries itinerating farther and farther afield in search of congregations not only among the Neraimene but also the Yanekahi and Kaserumene. Initially dependent on the teachers to interpret for them, by mid-September Turner, Nisbet and Heath were all able to write short addresses and prayers and to conduct public worship in Tannese.\(^{28}\)

It was, however, extremely difficult—in some cases impossible—for the missionaries to find Tannese words to convey their religious concepts. 'We are in want of a good name to express the Deity', Nisbet wrote in December 1842, and he thought that arehma, which he described as the term for spirits of departed chiefs, might do.\(^{29}\) Eventually the missionaries retained arehma for dead people's spirits. They told the Tannese that their ancestors' arehmas did not hear their prayers and that those who prayed to them would 'live in the bad light forever'. Jehovah, however, would 'pick up ... the arehmas of men who worshipped the truth' and take them with him to 'live in the good life forever'. Another Tannese word, nanumun, meaning ghosts, was also used by Turner and Nisbet to refer to men's spirits. There were 'many good nanumun in the sky and bad nanumun on earth' the Tannese were told. Ekenan, meaning sacred or tabu, was added to nanumun to refer to the Holy Ghost, the nanumun fei Jehova:

He is in the sky and on the earth. Only we will look for it [i.e. not see it]. He is like the wind. He did not make the bad things. He made all the good things inside our hearts. He will sit inside the middle of people, where he makes the things. He will pour out the bad things and leave the good things to grow. Who prays the truth? Nanumun ekenan will stay forever. Who will ask about the word of Jehova? Nanumun ekenan will stay forever. Who believes in Iesu? Nanumun ekenan will stay forever. All of us who try to call Jehova, and who pray the truth [makuve parhain tukue], he will give his ghost to us. All of us who try

\(^{28}\)Nisbet, Diary, 4 July-4 October 1842; Heath to L.M.S., 22 July 1843, L.M.S. South Seas Letters.

\(^{29}\)Nisbet, Diary, 24 December 1842.
to call Iehova, and who pray the truth, he will give his ghost to us.  

The use of words like arehma, nanwun, and Nanwun ekenan would have strengthened the natural tendency on the part of the Tannese to evaluate Christianity in terms of their customary magico-religious framework. The tendency would have been strengthened by the contexts in which the terms were used — which conformed to the traditional patterns of spiritual intervention in human affairs. Thus, the nanwun fei Iehova, like the nanwun of any deceased dignitary, was invisible but always present. It could take possession of people. And it was active in the affairs of the world to the advantage of those who mafuace parhian tikue — prayed to it in the manner prescribed for the propitiation of the spirits.

The missionaries faced the same problem in their attempt to describe Iehova:

\[ \text{Iehova in arwmanu,} \quad \text{(Jehova is the yeremwanu,)} \]
\[ \text{In arwmanu asori,} \quad \text{(He is the chief yeremwanu,)} \]
\[ \text{In arwmanu parhain.} \quad \text{(He is the true yeremwanu.)} \]

The yeremwanu (arwmanu) was, of course, the designation for the fairly common Tannese dignitary who had the ritual privilege of wearing the kayoo, a large feathered head-dress, on ceremonial occasions. So, in using the term to describe Jehovah, the missionaries were drawing directly from the Tannese vocabulary of rank and status:

Who is Iehova? He is our chief yeremwanu. He has no body, only his spirit, and we cannot see his body. He made all the things above and below. He made the sun, the moon, and all the stars. There is no thing which grows by itself. Iehova made the sky, the sea, the fish and all the birds. Who shows us the way? Iehova shows us the way — he will do everything. He first made our bodies and after he made our spirits. He tells us in the good word that we will sweat for him. Let us make it straight, Iehova loves all of us, then we will live again. If we will not make it straight, he will get angry with us. All of us will die. We will pray to Iehova. He listens to us. Iehova is truth. He made all the good things, so we will wait for Iehova.

As for this yeremwanu's powers: 'He looks at every one of us ... He listens to everything that everyone says ... He knows everything in our hearts'. And where did the arwmanu asori of the Christians, this ghost which knew all that was said and thought,

\[30\] Turner 1845b; cf. Turner 1845a.
come from? *Ia neai* (*aneai*), which the missionary Paton later found to be 'the highest ... situated village on the island'.31

If the Tannese worshipped in the manner prescribed by the missionaries, Jehovah would pick up their spirits after death and take them to *neai*, where there was only health and happiness. But if they continued to worship their ancestral spirits Jehovah would be angry and throw them down below, where 'the fire burns them while they are still alive and they hear the cries of pain and bad things which Tiapolo has made'. The missionary presentation of an underground Hades would have been immediately meaningful to the Tannese at Port Resolution who lived almost in the shadow of an active volcano which was, and still is, a potent sacred symbol. Indeed, the *Yanekahi* people believed that the volcano's vent was the entrance to the subterranean world of *Ipay*.32 'Since missionaries have told them of the "lake that burneth"', Agnes Watt was to write in 1870, the Tannese 'have taken up the idea that their spirits are cast into the volcano'.33

The perpetual fire, the missionaries told the Tannese, was the home of *Tiapolo*, the *nanumum lelaha* or 'bad ghost'. Like Jehovah he had no body (*savan niupuran liuan*) and was to be found on all the islands (*In ramara pam e turhe tana pam*):

What does he do? He makes bad inside man's heart. He makes all the bad things. He lives in our hearts every day, he doesn't forget us, and on the road of the bad light many people will follow him ... All day he points to us [beckons to us] but his words are not good.

The Tannese already believed that they were in constant contact with the spirit world, that good and bad spirits determined the course of events on all the islands and that ghosts walked among them. It would not have been difficult for them to integrate a figure like *Tiapolo* into their existing conceptual structure. And that is exactly what they did as, over the next few years, *Tiapolo* became firmly identified by the Tannese in that region with the traditional hero Karapanamun.34

In the same way Jesus was able to fit into existing Tannese conceptual categories. He was:

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33Watt 1896:110.

Iehova and man ... He had a body like a man's ... There was one woman with a baby inside her, the sacred ghost went inside the woman and she had Iesu ... Iesu taught the people about Iehova's word, he took sickness from the hearts of people and they got better ... Bad people killed Iesu by hanging his body on a tree ... After Iesu died, the people put his body in a cave ... Iesu's body in the cave for three days. After three days Iesu came alive and went and spoke to the people ... He was dead like any man and then one day he became nothing and went up above ... where there was light - a good place.

For each of the elements of this missionary presentation of Jesus there were existing Tannese parallels. There were mythical precedents for half-person, half-spirit creatures, for women being impregnated by ghosts. The Tannese would have grasped the significance of Jesus teaching the people about Jehovah's word, for they themselves 'cherished many legends regarding those whom they had never seen, and handed these down to their children'.

Their own magicians interceded with spirits to take sickness from the hearts of people. They knew already that dead people's ghosts walked about and spoke to the living. As for Jesus's resurrection in the cave, the people of Whitesands, a little north of Port Resolution, believed that the entrance to the spiritual world of Ipay was in a cave at the north end of Tanna. In describing Iesu, or Iehova, or Tiapolo, Turner and Nisbet were unable to escape the problem - at least it was problematic from their point of view - of conveying meaning and significance in terms of existing Tannese beliefs.

The missionaries tried to avoid the reduction of some of their key religious concepts to the dimensions of local traditions by using Hebrew and Greek terms. Thus God was Iehova, Christ was Iesu, Satan Tiapolo, the angels aggeio. But as the Tannese did not have the missionaries' grounding in classical languages, this solution really begged the question. The Tannese (and the teachers) had still to establish the meaning of these foreign words according to their existing knowledge and experience.

This is not to say that Tannese knowledge and experience were not changed by the introduction of Christianity - simply that they were not overturned as the missionaries tended to believe. Just six weeks after landing at Port Resolution, Heath,

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35 Guiart 1956: passim.
36 Paton 1965:70.
37 Turner 1842-3:12, 33.
38 Gray 1893:650.
in one of his walks heard two prayers to Jehovah offered by two chiefs at different maraes [yimwarem] before eating. One at Lahi's the other at Pagisa's. They said that 3 or 4 districts prayed regularly to Jehovah — had given up praying to their former aitus.\textsuperscript{39}

The change signified to Heath that 'several intelligent chiefs and others began to understand pretty well the leading doctrines and facts of Christianity'. Similarly, when the Tannese displayed considerable interest in biblical stories such as Shadrack in the furnace and the crucifixion, Turner concluded they were beginning to embrace the tenets of Christianity at the expense of their pagan beliefs.\textsuperscript{40} But the Tannese magico-religious framework was quite able to accommodate the additional myths and characters presented by the missionaries — a point missed by the missionaries, who would not allow that 'mere heathen superstitions' provided answers to the ultimate questions of existence as much as biblical myths did for Christians. As a corollary to this process of accommodation the Tannese would have perceived the missionaries as magicians, or sorcerers, interceding with the spiritual realm for good or for bad.

In this context, even the most innocent missionary action could assume a bizarre and profound significance for the Tannese. When the Camden called at Tanna in October 1842 to pick up Heath, a party of missionaries twice went a couple of miles to the west of Port Resolution to visit the volcano — an interesting phenomenon to Europeans but a potent sacred site to the Tannese. On the first visit, Turner, Aaron Buzacott and Captain Morgan marvelled at the awful sight and drew a religious lesson about the Maker's power. The next day they re-made the pilgrimage accompanied by the wives and children. This time, 'contrary to the remonstrances of the natives not one of whom would follow', they descended on ropes into one of the volcano's chimneys, the better to inspect the bubbling lava. The terrified Tannese saw them disappear into the cavernous depths and reappear only seconds before an eruption from a neighbouring chimney spewed lava over the intruders' tracks. Thankful for their deliverance, they 'sat down on the edge of the crater sang a hymn and bowed in an act of solemn worship'. They concluded what must have appeared to the Tannese as some diabolical rite by filling their baskets with specimens of sulphur and solidified lava.\textsuperscript{41}

\textsuperscript{39}Nisbet, Diary, 13 August 1842; cf. Turner 1842-3:12.
\textsuperscript{40}Heath to L.M.S., 22 July 1843, L.M.S. South Seas Letters; Nisbet, Diary, 22 August, 21 November 1842; Turner 1842-3:12.
\textsuperscript{41}Buzacott 1843; Buzacott to L.M.S., 4 January 1843, L.M.S. South Seas Letters.
The Tannese would have grasped that the benediction on the volcano's rim was a ritual drama; for, like the missionaries, their lives were governed by ritual, by acts of propitiation, expiation and thanksgiving. Like the missionaries, they too invested the volcano, Yasur, with a sacred significance: a place of spirits and demons, the way into the afterworld. Because they shared a religious orientation to the world, both the Tannese and the missionaries interpreted all that the other said and did as expressions of a sacred reality. To the missionaries, the Tannese were degraded heathen, under the sway of the devil. To the Tannese, the missionaries were magicians and sorcerers, in constant contact with Jehovah, the yeremwanu asori of the Christians. Though they inhabited different mental worlds, each with its own assumptions, values and beliefs accepted as self-evident and exclusive truths, paradoxically both sides, by their reactions, acknowledged and sustained the integrity of the other's world view. The result was something like dialogue by accident.

In this situation of cultural double meaning eventual conflict was inevitable. It surfaced late in October 1842 when what the missionaries described as dysentery broke out among the Kaserumene and Yanekahi tribes. Even before the outbreak Nerairrene tribesmen had questioned Turner and Nisbet about the prevalence of disease since their settlement, which the missionaries had dismissed as all nonsense. After the dysentery appeared they were again closely questioned, this time by Kaserumene tribesmen, about the causes of disease. The missionaries blamed the 'moral maladies' of the Tannese which, given the Tannese etiology of disease, was in effect an admission of responsibility. The missionaries' attempts to relieve the sufferings of the sick with medicines only served to heighten the suspicion and hostility of the Tannese who believed that the sorcerer responsible for the malady was the one best able to cure it. What were for Turner and Nisbet acts of compassion were for the Tannese admissions of responsibility; and throughout November it was customary for the sick to send for the missionaries' medicine at the same time as they had conches blown to signify their readiness to propitiate the responsible sorcerer. During this time an unknown Kaserumene man tried to club Turner, and another Kaserumene tribesman, Ieteka, struck down and seriously wounded the teacher Jamie in Yanekahi territory. A Yanekahi dignitary later told Nisbet that Ieteka thought that clubbing the teacher would force the missionaries to return to Britain. At the time Neraimene and Nepikinamene, followers of Viavia, who had renewed their war with Lamias in mid-October, gave other reasons for the attack:

One would say — They [the Kaserumene] are a bad set of people don't have anything more to do with them — and then one would say — That party are confederated with Lamias' —

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42Nisbet, Diary, 20 August 1842.
and as we belong to the opposite party — they wish to kill us as a grievance to them — And then we were again told that since our coming coughs had been very abundant. — And that as we were considered the cause they would nasi us — &c. 43

These statements suggest various factors in the opposition to the mission: Turner and Nisbet's apparent involvement in the Viavia-Lamias dispute, an attempt by the Neraimene and Nepikinamame to turn the missionaries against the Kaserumene, and an attempt to rid Tanna of disease by forcing the presumed sorcerers to quit the island. Nisbet's reporting of the statements also suggests that he and Turner had at least a vague awareness that they had become enmeshed in a complex web of local alliances and rivalries.

Cutting across this awareness was the missionaries' disposition to perceive the world as a battle-ground for the struggle between good and evil. In particular, they singled out the Kaserumene nahak magicians as the ringleaders of a carefully orchestrated conspiracy:

These wily fellows begin to see that if X’ianity prevails, it will be an eternal death-blow to their craft, and seem determined if possible to exterminate us. They have made desperate attempts twice at our lives, but providentially were arrested.... Wherever we go we have to be on our guard against these fellows. The people all around [the harbour] are eagerly hoping that what we say is done, and that they may yet be freed from the shackles of these disease makers. 44

In a report he commenced on 19 December Turner wrote of the struggle between the priestcraft and the mission party. When he fled the island a month later he wrote that the 'monstrous'

Kaserumene priestcraft saw that if Christianity prevailed,

they should be sunk to the level of common men — should no longer be called 'sacred' and be propitiated as disease makers — should never again see multitudes daily approaching them laid with offerings to propitiate their favour and avert threatened evils. This they could not brook, and doubtless the attempt upon our lives at Iarofi was the first blow towards our extermination and the defence of the craft. 45

43Nisbet, Diary, 3 December 1842; cf. Turner 1842-3:29-30.
44Turner and Nisbet to L.M.S., 10 December 1842, L.M.S. South Seas Letters; cf. Turner and Nisbet to L.M.S., 1 March 1843, L.M.S. South Seas Letters; Nisbet, Diary, 18 January 1843.
45Turner 1842-3:30.
By the end of December the epidemic was affecting the harbour tribes, and the missionaries could count on support only in those few harbour settlements which had escaped disease. On 11 January Viavia approached Turner and Nisbet with a pig which he offered as a propitiatory gift to end the disease. He explained that before they had settled on the island there had been a similar outbreak of disease among his people, a propitiatory gift of a pig was accepted by the teachers and the disease had disappeared. Turner and Nisbet questioned the Samoans who said that they had thought the pig a gift to mark the completion of their house. Shocked at being identified with 'heathen customs', Turner and Nisbet refused to accept the pig and foolishly told the Tannese that 'they must look to God as inflicting it [the disease], and regard their sins as the cause of their sufferings'.\(^{46}\) The fact that they were the self-proclaimed servants of this same God would not have been lost on the Tannese.

Just three days after the refusal of Viavia's gift, four Kaserwrene men who had been loitering about the mission house suddenly died.\(^{47}\) This further strengthened the impression that the missionaries had power over life and death and were using their sorcery against the kaserwrene tribe. In the circumstances, with Turner and Nisbet perceived as sorcerers and yet refusing to accept any propitiatory gift to end the disease, the Tannese had little alternative but to get rid of them—either by expulsion or death.

The missionaries' position had become even less tenable in mid-December when Viavia's men ambushed and killed three women who were Kaserwrene by birth and Yanekahi by marriage. This consolidated those two tribes around Lamias in his fight against Viavia. Being closely identified with Viavia, Turner and Nisbet henceforth were unable to venture into Kaserwrene territory. Viavia's followers tried to enlist mission support by claiming that they were fighting 'Misi's war'. On one occasion, an excited Neratimene tribesman rushed into the mission house after a battle and declared that he had been fighting for the missionaries that day and would do so again the next. At the same time the Yanekahi-Kaserwrene side came to perceive their struggle directed as much against the mission as against Viavia. When Kuanuan suffered the indignity of losing his club in battle, Lamias's men boasted that they had secured 'Misi's club'. Turner and Nisbet contributed to the confusion by promising the mission's supporters that they would use guns if the mission house were attacked.\(^{48}\)

\(^{46}\)Nisbet, Diary, 4, 5, 13, 17 January 1843; Nisbet to L.M.S., March 1843, L.M.S. South Seas Letters.

\(^{47}\)Nisbet, Diary, 14 January 1843.

\(^{48}\)Turner 1842-3:32; Nisbet, Diary, 17 December 1842, 7, 17, 18, 31 January 1843.
They afterwards modified their promise, but before they were put to the test a whaler, the Highlander, sailed into the bay and removed them to Samoa.

When it became clear that the missionaries would quit the island, their former supporters 'began to cry out against Jehovah and in the most revolting terms to talk of their aremhas as invested with superior power and wisdom'. But at the same time they were fearful of Jehovah's wrath: 'If it is all true, if it is all true', they cried to Turner and Nisbet, 'don't blame us – don't cause any calamity to grow among us on account of these bad people'. The statements confirm that the missionaries were regarded as magicians, propitiating Jehovah as other magicians propitiated their gods. But for Turner and Nisbet they signified that the faith of some Tannese in their old superstitions was shaking:

They began to see that there was a great difference between the precepts of Christianity and their heathen practices ...
They saw that there is, in many respects, a broad line of demarcation between the Christian missionary and the general-ity of Europeans who visit this port.

While the Tannese might have viewed the missionary and the trader differently, it is by no means clear that they preferred the former. Skirmishes with traders were rare, and even when they did occur there is no reason to assume that the Tannese would not have distinguished between individual traders. In addition, most of the recorded disputes in the early 1840s centred on women, a traditional cause of conflict and as such at least comprehensible. In comparison, the missionaries' actions defied rational explanation. They settled among the Tannese, entered into exchange relationships with them, displayed the efficacy of their rituals and the power of Jehovah with perhaps the worst outbreak of disease in Tannese history to that time, and then refused to accept a propitiatory gift from their victims.

After the mission party fled Tanna, disease continued to rage among the Yanekahi and Kasereenune to the extent that, according to one report, they could not keep up with disposing of their dead. Possibly this discredited the mission's opponents, who 'began to dread the name of Jehovah, determined to give up war, and live in peace with the Christian party'. A small group of Tannese kept the Sabbath and a strict tabu was placed on the mission house and gardens – it being believed that anyone who broke the tabu and stole mission property, or who mocked those

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49 Turner and Nisbet to L.M.S., 1 March 1843, L.M.S. South Seas Letters; Turner 1842-3:38, 44.
who observed Christian rituals, would die.50

The Tanna mission was recommenced at the beginning of 1845 when Adamu and Iona fled Aniwa. Murray and Turner, who called at Port Resolution in April, reported that they were considered sacred and held in the highest respect by the Tannese. They were replaced by seven new teachers who were allocated to Yanekahi and Kaservumene territory as well as to the bay, to demonstrate that the mission was above tribal differences. Four of the new teachers — Ioane, Petelu, Pita and Tagifo — were Samoans (three from Tutuila) and accompanied by their wives. None had received any formal training though Pita, a tall impressive man, had been a teacher on Tutuila since 1838, and a foundation member of the church there when it was constituted in 1839. The other three teachers — Marugatanga, Upokumanu and Rangia — were Cook Islanders, pious young men who had been enrolled at the Rarotongan Institute at Takamoana without distinguishing themselves academically. One was placed at each of the three stations, possibly to oversee the work of the 'untrained' Samoans. According to Murray and Turner, the Tannese received the teachers 'with open arms and every expression of joy and gratitude'.51

The expressions turned sour with outbreaks of the disease in the second half of 1845, January 1846 and mid-1846. By the later date, the teachers on Tanna had been joined by two more Samoans, Lefau and Vasa. from Aniwa. The teachers who did not themselves die during the epidemics were accused of sorcery, and eventually Vasa — 'a plain man with no marked strength of character ... [but] to all appearance a sincere devoted Xitian'52 — was clubbed to death by two Neraimene tribesmen. It is likely that some of the survivors would have shared the same fate had not a whaler fortuitously called and removed them to Aneityum. Only Upokumanu, who had maintained the support of his protector, the Yanekahi yeremwanu Kapahai, showed any reluctance to leave his post.53

In February 1847 Kapahai sent his son to Aneityum to fetch back Upokumanu. Another Cook Islander, Tumataiabu, accompanied him; and they were joined at the village of Yunesefa by two more Cook Islanders, Kauí and his wife, when the John Williams called

50Information from the teachers Adamu and Iona to Murray and Turner — Murray and Turner 1845; Samoan Reporter, 1845; Turner 1861:373.


52Murray quoted in Chambers 1979:244.

53Stow to L.M.S., 27 December 1845, L.M.S. South Seas Letters; Murray (quoting letters from Pita, Petelu and Ioane) to L.M.S., 11 March 1846, L.M.S. South Seas Letters; Gill and Nisbet 1846; Nisbet, Diary, 25 November 1846.
in July 1848. By then, all sixty villagers at Yuneseafa were reported to be attending Christian worship; and sixteen children, ten boys and six girls, were attending school where they had made 'some little progress' learning to read from Turner's 1842 catechism and lesson book. Attendance fell off about May 1849, when a young woman was kidnapped as she was returning home from evening worship at the teachers' house. But the Sabbath services continued not only at Yuneseafa but also at Umplitoka, another Yanekahi village, where between sixty and eighty people attended. As well, services among the Kaserumene and Neraimene attracted between six and ten people. A visiting L.M.S. deputation in September 1849 reported that many Tannese around Port Resolution refrained from work on the Sabbath — possibly they were following the pattern of Europeans at the recently established sandalwood station near the head of the bay. Murray and Hardie also reported that Kuanuan, the old Neraimene yeremwanu who had befriended Turner and Nisbet in 1842, conducted regular family worship and a Sabbath service among his tribesmen. On the death of a relative, it was reported, instead of blackening his face in the customary manner, he 'took his book' and prayed to God.

Murray and Hardie left two Rarotongan teachers, Mareko and Obadila, in the care of Kuanuan and the Neraimene yari en dete Viavai; Tumataiabu and Kau i stayed with Kapahai at Yuneseafa; and Upokumanu returned to Rarotonga to marry. Though they wrote a glowing report of the mission's prospects on Tanna, the brethren were uneasy about its being left in the hands of native teachers:

> These are conscious of their own deficiencies, they know the great risk to which themselves and their families are exposed in being located alone in strange lands, amid savage tribes, and exposed to unhealthy climate, with little medicine and less ability to use it: — and no wonder that they become discouraged when thus left year after year ...

The words were prophetic. Another L.M.S. deputation did not visit the island for more than two and a half years, by which time two of the teachers were dead from disease and another, severely ill, had removed to Anentityum. The association of disease and death with Christianity had taken such a hold on the Tannese mind, Murray wrote in July 1852, that they were ever ready to take alarm:

> They do not now as formerly directly charge the teachers with causing the disease and death, but they stumble at the fact the lotu does not preserve from these. Thus when

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54 Nisbet, Diary, 14 July 1848; Powell to L.M.S., 28 October 1848, L.M.S. South Seas Letters.
55 Murray and Hardie 1849.
the teachers are taken ill, and especially when they die, they are greatly discouraged.\textsuperscript{56}

Undaunted, Murray placed Upokumanu and his new wife at Port Resolution with Pita, who had come over from Aneityum in April 1850. Peleasaro, who had accompanied Pita from Aneityum, and Obadia were placed at Yunesefa, in \textit{yanekaht} territory.

An epidemic among the \textit{yanekaht} in late 1852 or early 1853 led to accusations of sorcery against Obadia and Peleasaro. After their pigs were killed the two teachers fled by night to Upokumanu's house, near the sandalwood station belonging to Captain Paddon on the east side of the bay. Missionary work at Yunesefa was suspended following the death of a local dignitary's child, which the Tannese interpreted as a sign that the spirits were displeased with the teachers' clearing of ground for building a chapel. Friendless among the Tannese—the pro-mission Kuanuan had by this time fled 'some miles inland'—the teachers were employed at Paddon's station. They were thus engaged when the \textit{Edward}, a New Brunswick barque en route from California to Sydney, put into Port Resolution for supplies in April 1853. During its three weeks stay some of its 100 passengers were daily guests at Upokumanu's house. Along with their trinkets and knick-knacks, they also gave the teachers smallpox. Obadia, Peleasaro and Upokumanu and his wife all died, resurrecting the old spectre of the mission's association with disease and death. As well, according to Murray, about fifteen Tannese around Port Resolution died. Some Tannese proposed to burn Upokumanu's house to propitiate the spirits but, fearful of Jehovah's wrath, they prevailed on Pita—who had moved inland with Kuanuan—to set it alight. When the smallpox continued (in fact, it continued until at least November), some blamed Pita's incendiary act, and others pointed the finger at Kuanuan. Finally, following the ambush and killing of five of Kuanuan's women, Pita fled to Aneityum in a boat borrowed from one of the Europeans at the bay.\textsuperscript{57}

By the 1850s all of the European missionaries who had contact with Tanna were convinced that the mission would not advance unless European missionaries were settled. After quitting the island in 1843, Nisbet had complained that some of the teachers were morally unfit and others lacked sufficient training and knowledge to be of any use. In the last perilous days on Tanna, he alleged, they had vied with each other 'in finding out what they could ask us to give them—Till at last it became outrageous'. Murray and Hardie reported that the Polynesians were

\textsuperscript{56}Murray and Sunderland 1852; Geddie, Diary, 24 April 1850.

\textsuperscript{57}Geddie, Diary, 26 May, 10 September, 27 October 1853; Inglis to Bates, 12 August 1853, \textit{Scottish Presbyterian} 1854:614; Murray 1863:154.
'conscious of their own deficiencies' and were too easily discouraged by savage tribes and the unhealthy climate. After seeing work on Tanna in August 1849 the Anglican Bishop Selwyn wrote that it lowered the whole character of mission work to confide the preliminary operations, which involved greater dangers and demanded more self-denial, to a native agency. 'Men of their class', he wrote, would not make much impression on 'heathen minds'. John Inglis, the Presbyterian missionary on Aneityum, believed that Melanesia's foreign climate and languages, and the presence of traders presenting 'so many temptations for trading and other secularizing pursuits', would always render Polynesian teachers 'comparatively inefficient' in the New Hebrides. By 1852 the L.M.S. brethren in Samoa had resolved to abandon their work in the New Hebrides if European missionaries could not be found to supervise the work of the teachers.

Most of the European commentators ignored the deplorable lack of support given to the teachers which often forced them to resort to 'trading and other secularizing pursuits'. Frequently it was a case of the Polynesians, faced with shortages of food and clothing and lacking any effective network of social support, surviving however they could. The infrequency of visits by L.M.S. deputations made them castaways, dependent on the charity of others. Compared with the deprivation and self-denial of teachers like Pita, who laboured for fourteen years away from his native Samoa, the self-proclaimed sacrifices of some of the European missionaries take on a ring of sacerdotal cant.

The problems associated with teachers existing in an alien environment were overcome in 1854 when Aneityumese, trained by John Geddie, became available for work on the surrounding islands. Many sent forth were traditional dignitaries on Aneityum, who could expect to command respect on the surrounding islands. Even the heathen provided them with food, Harbutt and Drummond noted in 1857. 'They feed them as Aneityum chiefs not as teachers of religion'. The Aneityumese teachers were never far from their own island, which was culturally and climatically similar to Tanna. The exchange networks binding the two islands meant that many of the teachers going to Tanna were known, if not personally at least by reputation, which the missionaries on Aneityum were able to use in their selection of teachers. When the Tannese requested three additional teachers in 1857, they asked for two by name and,

58 Nisbet to L.M.S., March 1843, L.M.S. South Seas Letters; Murray and Hardie 1849; Selwyn, Letters, 6 December 1849; Inglis to Bates, 14 June 1856, R.P.M. 1857:107.
59 Meeting at Samoa, 31 March 1852, cited by Chambers 1979:177.
60 Harbutt and Drummond 1857.
in the case of the third, specified the district from which he was to come.\textsuperscript{61}

The first Aneityumese teachers were placed at Anakuraka, some kilometres to the south of Port Resolution, in October 1854. As church members on Aneityum they had been required to affirm the following formula:

1. You affirm to be true this word, Jehovah is the true God, and there is no other, do you not?
2. You affirm to be true this word, These three are distinct, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, but they are one in heart, do you not?
3. You affirm to be true, that they are the words of Jehovah which his servants wrote in the holy book, do you not?
4. You affirm to be true your sinfulness before Jehovah, and your inability to save yourselves, do you not?
5. You affirm to be true this word, Jesus Christ came down into this world and died, a sacrifice for our sins, do you not?
6. You affirm to be true this word, the Holy Spirit only can give you a new heart, do you not?
7. You desire to give up all heathenism and wickedness, to trust in Christ, to keep the commandments of God, and to lead a holy life, do you not?

In addition, they were assumed to understand such concepts as the Unity and Trinity of God, the sinfulness and helplessness of man, justification by the atonement of Christ alone, sanctification by the Spirit of God, and the necessity of repentance, faith, and holiness.\textsuperscript{62} But given that Geddie and Inglis had not found suitable native equivalents for key Christian concepts like pardon, repentance, regeneration, judgement and salvation, it is doubtful that the Aneityumese view of Christianity corresponded with that of the missionaries. Indeed, later events were to demonstrate that the Aneityumese had selectively integrated Christian rituals and beliefs into their heathen framework. Inglis virtually acknowledged this when he commented that the teachers, with 'so little Scriptural knowledge and so little faith', could not be expected to 'convey much religious instruction'. Geddie agreed that they were 'wanting in knowledge, discrimination of character, prudence and energy, essential to the successful prosecution of Christian Missions in new and arduous fields of

\begin{footnote}
\textsuperscript{61}Inglis to Bates, 7 November 1855, \textit{R.P.M.} 1855:411; Inglis to Graham, 14 November 1857, \textit{R.P.M.} 1858:158.
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\begin{footnote}
\textsuperscript{62}Inglis to Bates, 3 October 1854, \textit{R.P.M.} 1855:245.
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labour'. In view of their pessimistic assessment of the teachers' worth, it is of little surprise that the missionaries kept them under close surveillance.

The people of Anakuraka quickly adopted some of the Christian rituals: such as observing the Sabbath as a day of rest, asking a blessing on their food and praying morning and evening. But contrary to the teachers' claim that they had 'renounced heathenism' the Tannese simply incorporated these rituals into their traditional belief structure. The chief under whose protection the teachers lived had been to Aneityum in 1852 and had gained the impression that Christianity had replaced disease and war with material well-being and happiness. And as Geddie wrote in July 1855:

The teachers informed our natives that many of the people persist in taking food intended for the sick to the house of worship, and they affirm that, when it is eaten, the sick recover. They have heard of the good effects of medicine on this island [Aneityum], which, being administered by missionaries, they identify with Christianity.

As Geddie himself recognized, the Tannese regarded the Christian religion 'as a sovereign remedy for temporal as well as spiritual maladies'.

The same view of Christianity led to the resettlement of teachers at Port Resolution in November 1855. In contrast to Anakuraka, where there was an abundance of food, a drought at the bay in 1854 had destroyed the coconut and bread-fruit crops. As well, severe volcanic activity had destroyed huts and gardens and claimed two lives, from which the Tannese concluded that Jehovah was punishing them, as Geddie put it, 'for their sins in rejecting his word and driving away his servants'. That conclusion was made all the more credible by the missionaries' claim that 'the volcanic eruption and the scarcity of food on Tanna ... at that particular juncture were no doubt of God's appointing'. Nowar, an important dignitary at Port Resolution, sent his son to Aneityum to 'learn the ... new religion', just as an apprentice

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63 Geddie to Bayne, 27 July 1855, Missionary Register 1856:231; Inglis to Graham, 29 July 1858, R.P.M. 1859:147, cf. Copeland to Kay, 25 July 1861, R.P.M. 1862:42; Geddie to Bayne, 26 August 1861, H.F.R. 1862:40; Inglis to Kay, 1 October 1874, R.P.M. 1875:72.
64 Geddie to Bayne, 27 July 1855, Missionary Register 1856:229.
65 Geddie, Diary, 13 December 1854, 1 October 1855.
66 Inglis to Bates, 7 November 1855, R.P.M. 1856:410.
might learn magical techniques. The boy spent some months under Geddie's supervision and took his knowledge of the Christian rituals back to Tanna where they were scrupulously observed.67

The people of Port Resolution stopped attending Christian services after an outbreak of influenza in December 1856 claimed at least ten lives. There was talk of killing the teachers for having caused the disease. Their house was burnt down but the teachers themselves were left alone; and, unlike their Polynesian predecessors, they did not feel obliged to quit the island. One difference may have been the smaller death toll. Also, the teachers were Aneityumese of customary rank who could always count on some support on Tanna, and they were materially well supported by frequent visits from the mission schooner John Knox.68

In addition, the fantastic tales of the effects of Christianity on Aneityum continued to pour in. For instance, when Namaka, a yeremuatu from Anakuraka, returned from Aneityum, he declared that taro was so plentiful since the advent of Christianity that the Aneityumese were forced to feed it to their pigs. Aneityumese returning from Tanna reported to Geddie and Inglis that Namaka's revelations had 'shaken the whole land'.69 For these various reasons, the Aneityumese teachers were able to weather the storm over the influenza and, when the John Williams visited the island in July 1858, the Tannese at Port Resolution and Anakuraka declared that they would accept European missionaries.70 Two months later John G. Paton and his wife were settled at the harbour and J.W. Matheson and his wife at Umaira rekar, near Anakuraka.

The settlement of the new missionaries took place just weeks after H.M.S. Iris's bombardment of Black Beach, dealt with in the preceding Chapter. Geddie, it will be recalled, had sailed back with the gunboat to assess the results of the naval assault; and Paton arrived at Port Resolution aboard one of the trading vessels which had assisted in the attack. The connections were not lost on the Tannese, who concluded that Paton had only to signify his wish, 'and the roar of British cannon would be heard at Port Resolution, as it was heard ... at Black Beach'.71 It was a


69Inglis to Graham, 16 October, 14 November 1857, R.P.M. 1858:155, 158.

70Gill and Stallworthy 1858.

71Inglis to Kay, 7 November 1859, R.P.M. 1861:24.
threat which Paton was to hold over the Tannese and, eventually, put into effect. In the short term, perhaps it did (as Inglis argued) enhance his safety and influence at the harbour but, ultimately, it was to ensure the failure of his mission.
Chapter 4

The making of a missionary — John G. Paton

When Paton sailed into Port Resolution, at the end of September 1858 aboard the Hirondelle, he brought with him a grand piano, a silver cutlery service and a bound set of the Penny Cyclopaedia. He also brought a view of the world as a vast battle-ground, with the followers of Jehovah and Satan locked in deadly combat. It was a metaphor so pervasive and encompassing that Paton was able to invest his every experience with a transcendent significance, to attach a sacred meaning to every action and event, to judge every individual as friend or foe. Like the Covenanters from Scotland's 'killing time' — from whom he claimed descent — Paton's battle against evil was simultaneously symbolic and actual. It was a battle which had its genesis in the earliest years of his psychosocial development, and it is to his childhood that we must go if we are to comprehend the depth and the strength with which the battle metaphor ordered his relations with the Tannese after 1858.

John Gibson Paton was born in a cottage on the farm of Braehead in the parish of Kirkmahoe, in the south of Scotland, on 24 May 1824. He was the eldest child of James Paton and Janet Jardine Rogerson and they named their first born after a great-grandfather, John Paton, who had been tried and acquitted at the High Court of Justiciary in Edinburgh in 1759, 'for the crimes of riot and tumult at Dumfries, with a view to obstruct the election of magistrates and councillors last Michaelmas Day, and to quash the authority of the magistrates then chosen'.

Something of the old man's singleness of purpose and self-righteous disregard of convention came out in his namesake, who was to stop at nothing — not even naval bombardment — to smash heathenism among the Tannese.

The name Gibson came from the owner of Braehead, one of the last Scottish lairds to maintain the traditional semi-feudal association with his five or six cottars who worked for half the week at their handlooms and the remainder at peasant agriculture —

1McDowall 1906:608-19.
cultivating the land in common, sharing the barley and oats, and paying the laird's rent in one annual lump sum. This form of primitive mass tenure had disappeared almost entirely in Scotland in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and it was just after Paton's birth that the capitalization of agriculture finally caught up with Braehead, with the building of farm labourers' quarters at the nearby hamlet of Quarrelwood in 1828. Rather than sell his labour for wages, James Paton removed his family to the village of Torthorwald.

An ancient village, seven or eight miles from Braehead and four miles from Dumfries on the road to Lockerbie, Torthorwald was remembered by Paton as a thriving, populous centre, with its cottars and crofters, large farmers and small farmers, weavers and shoemakers, cloggers and coopers, blacksmiths and tailors. The family lived in an ancient thatched cottage, 42 by 17 feet, probably almost identical with their former home for which they would have paid about £2 annual rent. For Paton it was a marvellously cosy cottage, with a large fireplace and chimney in each gable, solid stone walls and thick thatched roof. One end served all the purposes of dining-room, kitchen, parlour and children's sleeping quarters. The other end comprised the weaving workshop. In between was a small closet where the parents slept. The traditional familiarity of the cottage would have cushioned the effect of the move from Braehead, and probably it was not until much later that Paton resented the economic changes wrought by the 'Tory lairds and their big farms'.

The parish of Torthorwald had no library, friendly society or savings bank, though anyone with time and money to spare could choose between five whisky shops. There was no chapel to cater for the six 'poor Irish Catholic' families, or meeting house for the twenty-eight families of Dissenters — which included the Patons who belonged to the Reformed Presbyterian Church. When the Patons moved to Torthorwald the parish population was around 1300 — double what it had been forty years before. Nearly half that number lived in and around Collin, a village which had not existed in 1791. In contrast, the village of Torthorwald lagged in its population growth — from 135 in 1791 to 185 in 1831. Perhaps it was the stability and continuity of

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2Information on Braehead from Mr Walter Duncan, present-day laird at Quarrelwood; cf. New Statistical Account of Scotland IV:66 (the Kirkmahoe entry was written in 1833-4); Smout 1972:111-18. Much of the biographical information which follows is taken from Paton 1965.


4Statistical Account of Scotland II:7, 9; New Statistical Account IV:35-7; Census returns for 1801, 1811, 1821, 1831, Parliamentary Papers 1831, XVIII; 1841 Census, Parliamentary Papers 1843, XXII and XXIII.
Torthorwald village which had appealed to the old-fashioned James Paton.

Of the 273 families living in the parish in 1831, forty-eight were employed chiefly in agriculture and eighty-two in trade and handicraft — including a considerable number of cottage weavers like James Paton. Some produced for the local market, but most did piece-work for the larger manufacturers of Carlisle and other places. In 1791, when there had been only twelve weavers in the parish, handloom weaving was among the most respected and best paid trades in Scotland. But weavers, especially following the post-war depression after 1815, had fallen increasingly behind other artisans, until by the 1820s they were the lowest paid of all. At the same time as their income declined their numbers increased, so that by 1830 the number of weavers in Torthorwald was many times what it had been forty years before. Their incomes varied considerably, and when very low were 'attended with great want and misery'. It was in this depressed and impoverished craft that James Paton attempted to make his living in the 1830s and '40s.

James Paton was not, however, as badly off as some weavers. He produced the better-paying hosiery for the merchants of Hawick and Dumfries, and he lived in a region where he could at least grow his own potatoes. In addition, the family owned a cow. All the same, 'hard workers they had to be, else they would starve'. Work at the looms commenced at 6 a.m. and continued through till 10 p.m., with an hour off for dinner, and half an hour each for breakfast and supper. The workshop comprised five or six frames which meant that five or six people could be employed weaving. James Paton was probably assisted by his wife Janet and some of his eleven children. He may even have taken on an apprentice or rented out one of his looms — though this would have brought in only an additional 6d. per week. New clothing for even the first child was out of the question and failure of the potato crop almost spelt disaster. But in spite of his reduced material circumstances, James Paton still enjoyed a certain status, belonging to the older class of weavers whose hardship consisted less in the scantiness of their means than in the bitterness of their memories. Despite their descent into the common sewer of all unemployed labour, they retained, wrote Assistant Handloom Weavers' Commissioner Symons, 'no inconsiderable portion of that high mental and moral merit which so long and signaliy distinguished them among the artisans of the Empire',

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6 Paton 1965:5-27; Parliamentary Papers 1839, XLII: passim.
7 Parliamentary Papers 1834, X:146.
and in religious and biblical knowledge they were still at least equal to every other class of Scottish workmen.  

James Paton was a perfect example of Symons's older class of weavers. In his seventeenth year he had been through a 'crisis of religious experience', and from that time had 'openly and very decidedly followed the Lord Jesus'. Unable to achieve his goal of becoming a minister, he vowed unreservedly to consecrate all his sons to the ministry. That three of them did don clerical garb is testimony to the efficacy of his program of rigorous and constant religious indoctrination — including daily scriptural reading, morning and evening prayer, committing the entire *Shorter Catechism* to memory, and a full day of devotional exercises on the Sabbath. In the eyes of his children James Paton was a 'high Priest' offering up himself and his family to God, a 'patriarch' who commanded the 'apostolic affection' of the local Reformed Presbyterian minister, a divine emissary whose punishment spoke to their conscience 'as a message from God':

A white-souled Peasant of the olden time,
   God-frighted, Angel-guarded,
Here lived and made a poor man's life sublime —
Luminous with Christ-light from the spirit-clime,
   By flesh-veils scarce retarded ...
His eyes spoke Gospels; and his countenance
   With soul-light beamed benignly;
His happy face did God's dear love enhance,
   And trembling souls-rapt into holy trance —
Rose on Faith's wings divinely.

For John G. Paton, the heavenly father was to remain an extension of the earthly father — 'the Lord God of my father' — whom he so loved and feared. Reading his later correspondence from the mission field, one is struck by his anthropomorphic image of God, as a figure looking down on men, witnessing their actions and understanding their innermost thoughts.

In marked contrast, the mother appears to have exerted little direct influence on the boy's development. She was the father's 'Wee Jen', an 'altogether heroic little woman' with a 'holy respect' for her apostolic husband. Whereas her husband's consuming passion was his religion, she took her joy from flowers, garden plots and natty curtains. She rarely attended church, because of the distance and because of her 'many living "encumbrances"' — eleven children over twenty years — and she assumed a secondary, passive role in the household's religious routine.

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8Parliamentary Papers 1839, XLII:44, 63-4.
The reader of the Autobiography is left with the impression that Janet Paton existed simply to provide a warm and cosy background to nurture Paton's intimacy with his father and his father's God. Like her children, this loving, childlike woman was ruled by James Paton:

The Mother and the Children, one and all,  
However torn and sundered,  
He bore right in where seraph footsteps fall,  
And with the Everlasting Arms did them enthrall —  
While Angels peered and wondered.

Every Sunday the children would accompany their father the four miles to the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Dumfries. It was a 'holy, happy, entirely human day, for a Christian father, mother, and children to spend'. On their return from church, the father would parade across and across the flag-floor, telling over the substance of the day's sermons to the mother, enticing the children to help him recall some idea or other, praising them when they got to the length of taking notes, reading them over on their return. He would turn the talk, 'ever so naturally', to a Bible story, or Martyr reminiscence, or The Pilgrim's Progress. 'And then it was quite a contest, which of us would get reading aloud, while all the rest listened, and father added here and there a happy thought, or illustration, or anecdote'.

Paton adopted without question his father's view of religion as a fixed, external set of rules, providing authoritative judgement on the morality or immorality of every thought, word and deed. By a constant and rigorous program of religious indoctrination, marked by daily scriptural reading, morning and evening family prayer, and a full day of devotional exercises on the Sabbath, he was trained to fear the Lord. Every day the Bible was presented to him as a literal statement about the nature of reality. Every night he would work his way through the Shorter Catechism of the Westminster Assembly, answering questions from his father, 'till the whole had been explained, and its foundation in Scripture shown by proof-texts adduced'. This catechizing, Paton later wrote, laid the 'solid-rock foundation' of his religious life. His childhood diet of Bible stories and the Shorter Catechism was spiced with The Pilgrim's Progress and tales of the Scottish martyrs — where Christian was invariably the besieged soldier constantly on guard against Satan's attacks. The result was a view of the world as a vast battle-ground with the forces of light and darkness locked in deadly combat.

Paton's black and white worldview imbibed from his father was confirmed in his studies at the local parish school. The schoolmaster at Torthorwald, William Steward Smith — 'a learned man of more than local fame',\(^\text{10}\) — offered reading, writing,

\(^{10}\text{Paton 1965:19-20; cf. New Statistical Account IV:35.} \)
arithmetic, Latin, Greek and mathematics. But the basic school text was the Bible and students had to commit the Shorter Catechism to memory.11

At the age of eleven Paton stormed out of school after allegedly being brutally kicked and flogged by Smith. In his answers to a questionnaire from the Parliamentary Select Committee on Education in Scotland,12 Smith claimed that punishment in his school was confined to a rare strap on the hand — not that he would have been likely to admit brutality to such a body. Whatever the truth about the alleged assault, Paton fled to the sanctity of his house where he was followed by Smith entreating him to return to school. 'But all in vain, — nothing would induce me to resume my studies there', Paton wrote, and instead he retreated into the security of his infancy, choosing to labour at his father's stocking looms from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. It was during this time, under the watchful eye of a father who daily poured out his whole soul with tears for the conversion of the Heathen World to the service of Jesus, that the impressionable Paton resolved to become a missionary.13 With this end in mind he saved enough money from weaving to spend one term at the Dumfries Academy where he probably studied Latin and Greek under one Robert McMillan.14 After six weeks at the academy he secured a clerical position in Dumfries in connection with the Ordnance Survey of Scotland — employment more 'helpful to the prosecution of his education' than weaving. However, the bad language of his work-peers and superiors (who were 'mostly Roman Catholics') was more than he could endure and he would avoid them every lunchtime by retreating to a quiet spot on the banks of the Nith, while they played football. It was probably with some relief that he soon after lost his job by refusing to engage himself for seven years with the Sappers and Miners. Later, at the Lockerbie Lamb Fair, he would again withdraw from the company of rough and boisterous fellow workers and take refuge in a God-fearing household.15 In thus eschewing opportunities for exploring social relations uncharted by family or church, the young Paton displayed a disposition which was to figure prominently in his later life — a refusal or inability to accommodate to values and behaviour different from his own. The effect was to preserve intact his childhood conception of reality as a vast battle between the forces of good and evil.

11Stow 1845:8.
12Parliamentary Papers 1841; XIX:114.
There was another reason why Paton's childhood view of the world persisted into adulthood: within the Reformed Presbyterian Church, surrounded by a community of like-minded adults, he found an institutional structure and a conceptual framework which not only confirmed his Manichean worldview but transformed it into a mature ideology. In the 1880s, he wrote of the honour he felt to have been born into and brought up in the church which had resisted popery, prelacy and erastianism with the blood of so many of Scotland's noblest sons and daughters.\(^\text{16}\) As a Reformed Presbyterian, Paton was brought up to view God as the creator, preserver and governor of all things — 'a most pure spirit, invisible, almighty, omniscient, omnipresent, most wise, most holy, most free, most just, most gracious and merciful' — who had secretly ordained all the events of time, and unchangeably determined the final states of all His creatures. He was taught that men were naturally depraved and opposed to what is good, 'in the faculties of their souls, sin reigning even in the members of their bodies', with only a predestined elect being regenerated by the Holy Spirit. But, as nearly every Reformed Presbyterian tract emphasized, even the elect were in constant danger of being led astray by their own lusts, of being enticed by the wiles of Satan, the alluring blandishments of this world, and the workings of inward corruption. To give way was, invariably, to suffer God's wrath. Paton came to know that every person, whether of the elect or not, was bound to acknowledge and obey God's will when it became known to him. To rebel was to suffer divine retribution. Thus, the depression of the late 1830s was interpreted by Reformed Presbyterians as God's punishment for the national sins of the Erastian supremacy of the Crown over the church, the continuation of episcopacy in the Church of England, the corruption of party politics, widespread Sabbath profanation, and family mismanagement (as exemplified in filial disobedience).\(^\text{17}\) In all of these things — the system of moral absolutes, the crushing sense of sin and the conception of a wrathful God — Reformed Presbyterians were not notably different from the evangelical party in the Established Church, or the Relief Church of Turner and Nisbet.

What did distinguish Reformed Presbyterians from other Calvinists — particularly from Relief Presbyterians — was their attitude to civil authority. They tenaciously, at times frantically, clung to the ancient Presbyterian goal of a covenanting nation with ministry and magistracy united in yielding obedience to God. Until 1863 they refused to acknowledge the jurisdiction of the British Constitution; to vote for Parliament, to take an oath of office, even to use a postage stamp or buy a rail ticket,

\(^{16}\)Paton, Notebooks.

\(^{17}\)Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland 1842:259–94; Ferguson 1859; W. Symington 1831:27; Bates 1843.
were held to be inconsistent with church membership. This position was spelt out in the updated *Testimony* of 1839 and reiterated and expanded in a series of lectures by prominent Reformed Presbyterians to mark the bicentenary of the Second Reformation (1638–48). Civil society, declared a leading church light, 'should acknowledge Divine Revelation, bow at the footstool of Jesus' throne, and erect its constitution, enact its laws, and conduct its administration, in subserviency to the interests of the Kingdom of Christ'. It was the state's bounden duty to regulate for the external support and welfare of the church, for the education of the young in its principles, and for the active support of missionary activity. The men entrusted with civil administration must 'personally profess and exemplify Christianity', and protect and extend the church in their official, corporate capacity. Magistrates, as agents of God's will, were duty bound to repress activities which were 'scandalizing to religion' and 'hurtful to the peace and good order of society'—such evils as:

- the neglect of the public ordinances of religion; profane swearing in its various degrees and forms; performing by vocal or instrumental music, for public entertainment, passages of the Holy Scriptures, as is done in oratorios; or acting the most solemn scenes recorded in the Bible:
- Profanation of the holy Sabbath, by idleness; pleasure walking; visiting friends; convivial parties; reading newspapers; attending coffee-rooms or other reading-rooms; receiving and answering letters of civil business:
- Drunkenness, tippling; gambling; playing cards and dice; private or public lotteries; horse-racing; brawling and fighting; duelling, cruelty to fellow-creatures, or to the inferior animals; resentful and implacable spirit or conduct:
- Unchaste conversation; immodest apparel; promiscuous dancing; theatrical exhibitions:
- Idleness; all dishonesty between man and man:
- Lying, equivocation, deceit, back-biting, evil-speaking, envious and malicious conduct.

The social goal for Reformed Presbyterians was a Christian nation, where church and state were based on a covenant with Christ. In such a nation, God would fulfil his promise of Grace and the church and state, with ministry and magistracy united, would yield obedience to him.

The historical model for the ideal church-state—the 'Second Reformation' of 1638—had been a short-lived experiment,

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18 Hutchison 1893: *passim*.
19 Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland 1842:307, cf. 331-2; Thornburn 1773:55; A. Symington 1841b:14, 41.
and throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Covenanters had attempted to replace 'corrupt' secular institutions with their own all-embracing society. They would not admit to their fellowship anyone who accepted a government bond, paid cess duties, locality or militia monies to the civil authorities, or stipends to the Established clergy, voluntarily appeared before a court of law, supplied any commodities to the King's forces, or who in any way recognized the ministry of the 'indulged' Presbyterians. There had been a brief period of indecision following the accession of William and Mary, but then the Covenanters returned to their former separatist position by refusing even tacit recognition of government or constitution and by resolving to remain entirely divorced from the Established Church. 21 This degree of separatism had been made possible in practice only by the semi-communal system of land tenure which prevailed in Scotland until well into the eighteenth century. But the development of capitalist modes of material production, which was virtually complete by the nineteenth century, made such social detachment virtually impossible. An expanding and integrative system of secular social and economic relationships made it increasingly difficult for any dissenters to form themselves into strictly Christian communities living apart from the world and exercising complete civil and religious freedom. The profound religious and social implications of the changes were muted for Reformed Presbyterians by their retention and celebration of the old sectarian ideology: as late as 1858 — the year Paton sailed for the New Hebrides — the church synod unanimously reaffirmed that voting, or taking an oath of allegiance, were inconsistent with church membership. But, in practical terms, separatism was dead — with church members paying taxes without protest, using postage stamps, appearing in civil courts, sitting on juries, and even petitioning Parliament. 22

Frustrated in the attempt to realize their theocratic ideal at home, the Reformed Presbyterian imagination came to focus on the other side of the world. Among the 'heathen tribes' of the West Indies, South Africa or the Pacific, it was envisaged that missionaries would create godly communities constituted and administered according to scripture. 23 Andrew Symington, Professor of Theology to the denomination, drew attention to the possibility of establishing theocracies in isolated pagan communities:

21 Hutchison 1893: passim.

22 Reformed Presbyterian Synod, Minutes, 1858: Hutchison 1893:280.

23 Reformed Presbyterian Synod, Minutes, 23 April 1830; Bates 1831; Reformed Presbyterian Foreign Missions Committee, Report, 1839-40.
Suppose the population of a heathen island or kingdom to be converted to Christianity, and the inhabitants to become generally the subjects of its saving influence, and it is not an impossible or improbable case, what would be the results. They would erect themselves into a church to walk in the fellowship of divine ordinances according to the will of Christ. Besides this, would they not regulate their civil association and laws by the word of God, and in subserviency to the true religion? The idolatry embodied in it they would cast out. The theft, the murder, the impurity, the falsehood, the polygamy, and other evils formerly sanctioned or connived at, would now be interdicted in terms of the divine law, and officers fearing God would be appointed. They would do homage to God and to Christ, in enacting laws according to the will of God and in the spirit of the gospel... Would a Christian missionary be warranted to interpose and say, Have nothing to do with the tribe in your civil affairs, you have nothing to do with God and with Christ here, and have nothing to do with Christian character, or scriptural principles in the appointment of your rulers. No... The Church would acknowledge the commonwealth, and require of its members subjection to it in all lawful commands. In like manner the state would acknowledge the church, and provide that its rulers be her members, and that her constitution be acknowledged, and her members and fellowship be protected in their Christian liberty in the worship of God from all hindrance and contempt, if such things should at any time arise... Both departments would co-operate in promoting, each in its own sphere, the glory of God and of Christ. And to secure co-operation and prevent all collision, you can suppose an instrument drawn up acknowledging God and Christ, and defining the different departments of church and commonwealth, according to the word of God, upon the footing of which they pledge themselves to God and to one another.24

The attempt to establish a theocracy in some far corner of the globe — James Duncan was despatched to New Zealand in 184225 — quickened the zeal and activity of church members at home. But it could not resolve the contradiction between the stated aim of life and the reality of social existence for most Reformed Presbyterians. It could only direct attention away from it. However, for the small proportion of Reformed Presbyterians who, like Paton, actually went into all the world to preach the gospel to every creature, foreign mission work represented a personal attempt to resolve the contradiction in a way which was faithful to the Covenanting tradition.

24A. Symington 1841a:44-6.
25Reformed Presbyterian Foreign Missions Committee Report, 1842:3; cf. 'Quarterly circular' II.
To qualify as a missionary, Paton needed to further his education which, apart from the six weeks at the Dumfries Academy, had come to an abrupt end when he quit school at the age of eleven. In 1847, after twelve years chiefly at his father's looms, he applied for the position of district visitor and colporteur with the West Campbell Street Reformed Presbyterian Church in Glasgow. The position carried with it a year's teacher training at the Free Church Normal Seminary, considered to be as much a path to the ministry as to teaching.²⁶ It was a God-sent opportunity for Paton, already twenty-three years old with no other prospects for study. Candidates had to write an essay on any subject and he submitted two poems on the Scottish Covenanters. He was successful and, with blinding tears (he relates in his Autobiography), he finally left the intimate security of Torthorwald.

The training at the Normal Seminary underpinned the values and beliefs Paton had imbibed from family and church. Over-riding emphasis was placed on the need to overcome man's natural depravity through painstaking control. The aim of the founder and secretary, David Stow, was to regulate the whole of the child, to guide its intellectual, physical, religious and moral development. The unquestionable end of all education, he wrote, was the formation of moral habits according to scripture. According to Stow's system, schools were nurseries for the Church: it was the teacher's duty to suppress evil propensities and habits such as rudeness, deceit, indecency, disorder and lack of courtesy, and to cultivate the Christian virtues of obedience to parents and all in lawful authority, gentleness, docility and fidelity, by a 'repetition of doing'. 'Obedience — instant obedience', he wrote, 'ought to be the daily and hourly practical lesson in every department'. Before every lesson the children should be made to sit erect, with heels drawn in, toes angled outwards and hands folded on knees.²⁷ This anxious supervision of the child, so reminiscent of Paton's own childhood experience — 'the very discipline through which our father passed us was a kind of religion in itself' — reflected a lack of faith in the strength of character of the children themselves and perhaps even a contradictory attitude towards God's guidance of their lives. But so overbearing was the Calvinist perception of the power of sin and the weakness of human nature that no risk could be taken.

The same sort of discipline was instilled into the seminary students, who several times each week were given military exercises by the janitor, 'an old soldier'. The rest of their time was divided between instructions in the theory and art of the training system, observing the operation of the system in model

²⁶Scottish Guardian, 1 May 1846.
²⁷Stow 1845:12-23, 202, 239, 353. Stow believed that it was 'simply ridiculous' to 'speak of the teacher giving moral instruction without the Bible'. Fraser 1868:209.
schools attached to the seminary, and practising the various facets of the system under the supervision of masters. After three months each student was required to give a lesson in the presence of all his fellow students, the masters of the several departments, the seminary rector and the secretary (David Stow) who afterwards publicly dissected his performance. 28 These exacting demands were made all the more onerous for Paton by his sense of intellectual inferiority vis-à-vis the other seminary students. Though he 'ground away incessantly' at his studies, his health broke down and he was forced to give up the course and the West Campbell Street position.

After a short rest at Torthorwald Paton taught at the Free Church School in Girvan — until the summer of 1849, when he returned to Glasgow. He enrolled in Arts at the University, eventually completing four sessions though not taking out a degree, 29 and taught briefly at the Maryhill Free Church School. It had already lost three masters since it opened in November 1848 because of the rough antics of the pupils and Paton approached the job as one might a military operation: 'to conquer, not to be conquered, and to secure order and silence, whatever it might cost'. He thrashed with his cane one young man in the night class 'till at length he crouched down at his desk, exhausted and beaten, and I ordered him to turn to his book, which he did in sulky silence', and threatened day school recalcitrants with similar treatment. From that time, he wrote, perfect order was established, though the minister was obliged to wait on him after some parents had complained that their children were too terrified to attend classes. In a sense, Paton was simply applying Stow's maxim of 'Obedience — instant obedience', though the fervour of his application would seem to reflect a personal authoritarianism and even viciousness. The school committee dismissed him in March 1850. 30

Before the Maryhill appointment Paton had applied to be taken on as an agent of the Glasgow City Mission — or 'Society for promoting the religious interests of the poor of Glasgow and its vicinity' — and when it came to the mission superintendent's notice that he was to leave Maryhill, he summoned Paton to undertake the usual trials. Paton had to submit a written statement outlining what motivated his interest in the work, his experience, and his views on the fundamental doctrines of the Christian

28 Stow 1845:357-62.

29 The degree itself was considered less important than the class tickets, in which the professor certified the student's attendance and diligence. These tickets were the accepted evidence of advanced study. Cf. Saunders 1950:308.

faith. After that he had to visit houses of the poor in company with the superintendent, who assessed his ability 'to show men the way to salvation'. His final test was addressing a gathering of the poor in one of the mission halls in the presence of the superintendent and some of the mission directors. Paton wrote that he passed the trials and was taken on by the City Mission on 27 March 1850 at £40 p.a.\textsuperscript{31}

As a City Missionary, Paton was required to spend not less than four hours a day — except for Saturday which he was allowed for study — visiting the poor. Individual visits were to be kept to fifteen minutes and 'secular conversation' was to be avoided. In those fifteen minutes he was to tell Glaswegians 'of their original and actual sin in the sight of God', impress upon them 'their danger, and the certainty of death and judgement', declare to them 'the punishment that follows transgression, both in this world and the next', inculcate upon them 'the duty of reading the Scriptures daily, as a revelation of the mind and will of God to mankind, and as the standard by which they will be judged at the last day'.\textsuperscript{32} For six and a half years Paton conveyed such tidings to the 'ignorant and destitute' of Glasgow.

And destitute they were, in the 1850s, as Glasgow experienced severe social dislocation as the result of massive economic and demographic changes. In the forty years to 1851 the city's population more than tripled as immigrants streamed in from the Highlands, the rural Lowlands and, especially, Ireland. After the failure of the 1847-48 potato crop nearly 43,000 Irish had paid the 6d. steerage passage to Glasgow, where most of them settled. About 100,000 Glaswegians lived in one-room houses — with up to fifteen occupants in each. Another 100,000 lived in two-room dwellings, most with little ventilation because of the retention of the Window Tax to 1851. The majority of the municipality's inhabitants were crowded into two square miles which made Glasgow — with 5000 people to the acre — the most densely populated area in the United Kingdom. As Captain Millar of the Glasgow Police reported to the British Association for the Advancement of Science:

> In the very centre of the city there is an accumulated mass of squalid wretchedness, which is probably unequalled in any other town in the British dominions ... There is concentrated everything that is wretched, dissolute, loathsome and pestilential. These places are filled by a population of many thousands of miserable creatures. The houses are unfit even for styes, and every apartment is filled with a promiscuous crowd of men, women and

\textsuperscript{31}Couper 1919:81.

\textsuperscript{32}'Instructions to agents', included with Annual Reports.
children, all in the most revolting state of filth and squalor. In many of the houses there is scarcely any ventilation, and from the extremely defective sewerage, filth of every kind accumulates.  

The comments were made in 1840, but it was not until the late 1850s that any provision was made for improvements in housing, health, drainage, or removal of refuse. Human excrement was simply tipped from the tenements and allowed to accumulate in great heaps in the closes below. Most of it eventually found its way to the Clyde which also supplied the city's water until 1859. It offers no surprise that zymotic diseases like typhoid, scarlet fever and smallpox, followed by respiratory diseases, were the main causes of death. In 1845-48 there were 39.7 deaths per 1000 people, 32.7 for 1849-52, and 35.2 for 1853-56. It was estimated that 4346 people were carried off by an epidemic in 1847, nearly 4000 in an 1848-49 outbreak, and a further 4000 in 1853-54. The poor, particularly those weak from malnutrition, were the most affected: in the 1843 epidemic two-thirds of the victims were unemployed. Even without epidemics, the mortality rate in factory areas was much higher than the city's average. Working class children were the worst affected. In 1851 one in every twenty children (under fifteen years) died annually from fever alone, and in 1861 children under ten counted for 42 per cent of the city's total deaths.  

No part of Glasgow was worse than Calton where Paton laboured as the City Mission's first agent. A former suburban weaving village, where the weavers had abandoned all traces of agricultural work and had become full time servants of the loom, Calton had been sorely affected by the continuing decline in the return from weaving. The situation was exacerbated by the influx of Irish immigrants, who made up 22 per cent of the population by 1851, compared with the city average of 11 per cent. Typical of Calton living conditions was the situation at Deacon's Close, King Street, where the occupants of the eighty-eight houses shared not a single privy or ash-pit. Spirit shops proliferated: at least ten of the twenty-six traders in Green Street, thirteen of the thirty-four in King Street, two of the six in Milroad Street and eight of the thirty in Kirk Street, were spirit dealers. These figures represent only the four main streets in Paton's mission area, and take no account of illegal

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36 Strang 1852:18, 31-2; McLachland 1967:30.
dealers or of the many listed 'grocers' and 'victuallers' who may have sold liquor.\(^{37}\) For Paton, alcohol was the main cause, rather than the result, of Calton's 'poverty, suffering, misery and vice'. It was the poor's immorality and indifference to the gospel which accounted for their degraded condition: 'avowed infidels, Romanists, and drunkards' were congregated in Calton — 'living together, and associated for evil ... In many of its closes and courts sin and vice walked about openly — naked and not ashamed'.\(^{38}\)

Paton's association of sinfulness and material deprivation reflected the prevailing social philosophy that material success or failure issued directly from a person's character, that unemployment resulted from idleness and moral failings. The idea had a long history in parochial Scotland, and had been taken over in capitalist times by religious-based philanthropic bodies like the Glasgow City Mission which attempted to grapple with the 'growing moral and social degeneracy' by reviving the friendly oversight, the paternal care, the endearing intimacies, the moral and religious supervision, of the olden time. The lanes and wynds should be explored. Every inmate of these receptacles of misery and vice should be required to give an account of himself, to stand forth in the light, and lead an honest life before all man. Either this, or submit to the strong hand.\(^{39}\)

Some individual agents spent up to seventeen hours each day distributing medicine during cholera epidemics and the City Mission distributed leaflets on personal hygiene, but there was no questioning of the social structure which permitted the epidemics to recur among the city's poor every couple of years. The prevailing attitude was expressed by one City Mission supporter who wrote, 'To Christianise a man is to strike his name from the lists of pauperism as well as of crime; while, on the other hand, infidelity, atheism, and superstition [i.e. Roman Catholicism] are generally associated with these evils'.\(^{40}\)

All the miseries of life were ultimately the result of original sin. Paton's 'constant text book' for his Calton Communicants' Class — Paterson on the Shorter Catechism — explained that all mankind by their fall had lost communion with God and were under his wrath and curse. Sin was 'the source of every woe and the spring of every sorrow':

\(^{37}\)Glasgow Post Office Directory, 1850-1; cf. Strang 1851, where one public house is listed for every 164 persons.

\(^{38}\)Paton 1965:33-4, 43.

\(^{39}\)Glasgow Constitutional, August 1850.

Man is subject to all the miseries of this life, which concern the body. Such are these: public judgements and calamities of every kind; the troubles, afflictions, and diseases to which the human frame is exposed; the losses, crosses, and disappointments, and acts of injustice, to which men are continually liable; and all the poverty, and straits, and difficulties, and wants, which fall to the lot of many in the present state of existence...

Man is subject to all the miseries of this life, which concern the soul. Such are these: blindness of mind ... a reprobate mind ... strong delusions ... hardness of heart ... horror of conscience ... and vile affections.  

The conception of human misery and suffering as basically a moral and religious issue, with a wrathful and vindictive God punishing man for his naturally sinful state, determined Paton's response to Calton's poor. As well as his daily visitations and two Sabbath services, he organized a Bible class, singing class, Communicants' class, Total Abstinence Society, prayer meetings for the Calton police and open-air evangelistic services in summer. He met with 'considerable opposition' from 'publicans, papists and infidels', though it would appear from his Autobiography that the greater their opposition, the more fixed his determination to smash their obstructions. In the face of the 'fanatical passions of the Irish Papists' — whose church he had been brought up to view as 'the Mother of harlots and abominations of the earth', the corrupter of everything good, the 'synagogue of Satan' — Paton's response was to 'take them by the nose, and they will crouch like whelps beneath your feet'. For Paton, Calton offered real-life confirmation of the battle between the powers of light and the powers of darkness: he was the vigilant Christian in a hostile society.

This Manichean view of the world was further confirmed for Paton when he was elected an elder of the Great Hamilton Street Reformed Presbyterian Church in October 1853. As an elder, it was his duty to investigate rumours of improper conduct among church members, conferring with suspected sinners and recommending punishment to the session. According to the session minutes, the most frequently investigated failings were fornication, drunkenness, trading on the Sabbath, non-attendance at Sabbath services, irregular performance of family worship and abusive language. The lesson would not have been lost on Paton that

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41 Paterson 1856:65, 74.
42 Anon. 1817; Goold [1847]; Mason 1827; W. Symington 1829; Paton 1965:50.
43 Great Hamilton Street Reformed Presbyterian Church, Session Minutes, 1847-57.
sin would try to reign even in the bodies of the God-fearing; that, but for divine grace, man was 'utterly without moral ability to serve or enjoy God'; and that every person had to be on constant guard against his natural propensity for evil.\(^4^4\)

Soon after becoming a church elder, Paton began the five year course at the Reformed Presbyterian Divinity Hall to qualify as a minister.\(^4^5\) The study was a 'painful struggle', and being considerably older than the other nine students — twenty-nine compared with the average age of twenty-two\(^4^6\) — may have heightened his sense of disability. After the first session of fifty-six lectures his health again failed, and despairing that he would ever complete the course he offered himself as a foreign missionary, on the condition that he be sent out ordained.\(^4^7\)

For some time the church had been advertising, without success, for additional missionaries to join John Inglis in the New Hebrides. Paton, who had been attending classes in chemistry, midwifery and the practice of medicine at Glasgow's Andersonian College to equip himself for foreign mission work,\(^4^8\) was mentioned as a possible candidate at a meeting of the Foreign Missions Committee in October 1855. At an interview with the committee on 12 March 1856 he made it known that another denomination was pressing him to be its missionary to Jamaica. The implied threat worked only to the extent that the committee offered to send him out to the New Hebrides as a lay assistant. Paton made it 'very clear, that it was not his duty to go to the heathen, until he could be sent as an ordained Minister'. The committee unanimously decided to recommend that Paton 'prosecute his studies [to a conclusion' crossed out] and exercise his gifts in the home field ... and wait for the leadings of divine providence at some future time'. During the next six months the church tried various approaches to attract a qualified minister or licentiate, again without success. Once more Paton offered himself. Anxious to secure 'one or two additional labourers with the least possible delay', and by now convinced that it would not obtain a qualified person, the committee reluctantly agreed to accept the services of Paton and another second-year Divinity student, Joseph Copeland. On 28 October 1856, the two prospective

\(^{4^4}\)Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland 1842:272.

\(^{4^5}\)Scottish Presbyterian 1854:604; R.P.M. 1855:183-5; Glasgow Presbytery, Minutes, 5 June, 19 July 1855, 8 January 1856.

\(^{4^6}\)Reformed Presbyterian Divinity Hall, Matriculation Book; Paton 1965:51.

\(^{4^7}\)Foreign Missions Committee, Minutes, 12 March 1856; cf. R.P.M. 1855:306, 369; Glasgow Presbytery, Minutes, January, April 1856.

\(^{4^8}\)Cf. Andersonian College Rolls; Andersonian University 1858; McVail 1879; Duncan 1896:289, 498; Paton 1965:52.
missionaries officially met with the committee and agreed to be fully guided by it in preparing for their departure to the New Hebrides. 49

Both men resigned as City Missionaries and spent the next twelve months acquiring medical and trade skills, and completing their third year in Divinity. The final two years were waived and they were licensed on 1 December 1857 and ordained on 23 March 1858. 50 In the intervening months they preached to Reformed Presbyterian congregations throughout Scotland, and Paton found and courted a suitable bride, Mary Ann Robson, the eighteen year old daughter of 'a well-known and highly esteemed gentleman' from Coldstream, Berwickshire. On 16 April 1858 the three set sail from Greenock to join John Inglis in the New Hebrides. 51

Inglis had been labouring on the island of Aneityum, in the southern New Hebrides, for five years. He had been sent by the Reformed Presbyterian Church to New Zealand in 1844 but in 1852 he joined John Geddie on Aneityum. Throughout the 1850s there was scarcely an issue of the Reformed Presbyterian Magazine which did not carry a letter from Inglis, detailing the irresistible spread of Christ's kingdom in the South Seas. His portrayal of the Aneityumese as under the sway of the Devil, but at the same time childlike and passive, became the received view of all islanders. In the same year as Paton offered himself as a missionary, the Foreign Missions Committee confidently declared that the New Hebrideans were by nature at a lower level of ignorance and barbarism than the natives of New Zealand or of East Polynesia. Being a rude and ignorant people, their language was very limited in its range. Their mythology, like their domestic economy, was rude and childish, with their pantheon a variety of shapeless stones. If their wars were less destructive than those of the Malay races, it was only because of their want of skill in fabricating more deadly weapons. The vices and crimes of the savage state had full sway among them; polygamy was prevalent, the marriage bond was lightly regarded, the widow was strangled on her husband's death, infanticide was common, parents would sell their daughters into prostitution. To all of these crimes they added cannibalism, 'that foul enormity by which the human savage sinks below the common monsters of the forest'. 52 Without any apparent sense of contradiction, the committee also held the islanders to be tractable and docile. On Aneityum,

49 Foreign Missions Committee, Minutes, 12 March, 23 April, 20 May, 22-28 October 1856; R.P.M. 1856:192, 206; Paton 1965:53.

50 Foreign Missions Committee, Minutes, 3 October, 4 November 1857; Glasgow Presbytery, Minutes, 4 November, 1 December 1857, 23 March 1858.

51 Foreign Missions Committee, Minutes, 27 January 1858; R.P.M. 1858:183-6; Paton 1965:62, 79.

nearly all had renounced heathenism, war had given way to settled peace, there was increasing respect for the divine ordinance of marriage, polygamy was condemned, churches and schools were built with great zeal and perseverance, and the pandanus leaf was rapidly being exchanged for 'proper' clothing. Inglis and Geddie were able to convene meetings of 'all the most influential chiefs ... to consider what steps should be taken to establish a code of laws, framed on Christian principles, over the island'. They were able to gain the chiefs' 'cordial and unanimous' backing for their proposed enactments. They were able to ensure that the 'most God-fearing men' were elected as district chiefs. By such means, Inglis wrote, he and Geddie had succeeded 'in developing the germ of a scriptural magistracy' — the ancient Reformed Presbyterian ideal.\(^5^3\)

It was anticipated that on Tanna — 'where the desire for missionaries has become stronger every year' — the spectacular success story would be repeated. According to the Foreign Missions Committee, prospects for new missionaries could not have been rosier. 'There is no peculiar difficulty or danger in the enterprise' its 1856 Report declared:

Facilities for intercourse with the South Seas are multiplied from year to year. The climate of the New Hebrides is remarkably equable, and is now proved to be healthy. The utmost range of the thermometer scarcely amounts to 30 degrees over the whole year. Either in regard to climate, or to the character and condition of the peoples a more desirable field for missionary exertion cannot easily be named.\(^5^4\)

It was after listening to this romantic address to Synod that Paton for the second time offered his services to the Foreign Missions Committee. The prospect of working in such a healthy and rewarding sphere would have been alluring to Paton, after his recurrent ill-health in cholera-infested Glasgow, and faced with the possibility of perhaps never completing the five year Divinity course. Given his success in one of Glasgow's worst areas, in the face of the 'combined opposition' of publicans, infidels and Romanists, he would have entertained few doubts as to his ability to make headway among the 'tractable and docile' New Hebrideans.

Caught up in the excitement of their impending departure, Paton and Copeland never tired of telling enthusiastic

\(^{53}\)Inglis to Bates, 4 April 1854, R.P.M. 1854:769, 11 July 1854, R.P.M. 1855:133; Inglis to Kay, 9 September 1856, R.P.M. 1857:133.  
\(^{54}\)R.P.M. 1856:187.
congregations throughout Scotland of what awaited them in the South Seas. The New Hebridean, they asserted, was 'suspicious and revengeful, not to be depended upon, volatile, deceitful, given to lying, stealing, and cruelty'. His degraded state could be traced partly to his natural ignorance, partly to his religion and partly to the conduct of the European traders. He was ignorant because he had not been brought up to obey God:

After being born, he was not baptized: he might be dedicated to the service of some idol, but not into the name of the blessed Trinity. When his little lips had begun to give forth language, he was not taught to repeat the child's psalm, nor to bow down upon his knees and to say in his own tongue, 'Our Father which art in heaven'. When a little older he was not sent to school to learn to read, write, and work accounts, to fit him for the discharge of the duties of life. When the first day of the week came round, he was never summoned by the Sabbath bells to go up to the house of God. No minister ever preached a child's sermon for him, or repeated in his hearing that text of Scripture applicable to his years, 'Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth,' and 'I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me'. He was not called on to come to his parents and repeat his psalms and questions, to receive religious instruction, or be trained up in the fear and knowledge of God. He had not even the advantage of the Sabbath school as a substitute for parental and domestic instruction, and his young eyes never beamed with pleasure as he joined in singing, 'O that will be joyful, joyful, joyful,' or of 'The happy, happy land far far away'.

The almost childish level of description corresponded exactly to the missionaries' expectations. By conceiving of the islander negatively—as passive, childlike or unchristian—people like Paton were confirmed in their myth that the heathen were somewhere 'out there', simply waiting to be converted. Anéityum was the proof that, on some remote South Seas island, a theocratic Utopia could be erected:

The entire island was covered with schools, a complete system of national education had been established: the Bible is the principal school book; the schools ... were opened and closed with prayer; a teachers' Institution had been completed .... Of 4,000 inhabitants, all are now professing Christianity; idols have been abolished, and the whole island is Christian; war, which had known little interruption, has given place to settled peace; 60 per

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55R.P.M. 1858:242-3.
cent are attending church; and the whole population attending school; family worship is observed in every Christian family; the Sabbath is rigidly kept; life and property have become secure; slavery has been abolished; the weeping daughter is no longer bound and cast into the hold of the sandal-wood vessel; the shrieks of doomed widows, and the wail of helpless infancy have been hushed, and the cannibal no longer eats the flesh and drinks the blood of his fellows.\(^{56}\)
Chapter 5

Towards a scriptural magistracy

Paton and his young, by now pregnant, wife reached Aneityum on 28 August 1858 and a month later moved over to Port Resolution. The post should have gone to John William Matheson and his wife Mary, newly arrived from Nova Scotia; but as Nova Scotians already occupied two harbours in the group, they were appointed instead to Umairarekar, on Tanna's southern tip.¹ Two years later, in September 1860, another Nova Scotian couple, Samuel and Bessie Johnston, were appointed to Black Beach on the northwest coast. It was the high point of mission influence on the island and for a while it seemed, at least in the imagination of men like Paton, that John Williams' dream of making Tanna the hub of missionary enterprise in the western Pacific was about to be realized.

The Mathesons were an unlikely couple: he shy and withdrawn, she vivacious and 'always fond of society'. Matheson was noted for his piety and quiet determination, but little else. Unaccomplished as student or preacher, he seems to have turned to foreign mission work only after failing to obtain a call at home. His physical frailty — he was consumptive — was matched by what his biographer termed 'a modest retiring demeanour, and the appearance of a slight tendency to melancholy'. Whereas Matheson was apprehensive about losing his 'dear friends and loving kindred' as he undertook his lonely pilgrimage to the 'dark places of the earth', his wife, a niece of John Geddie, embraced the prospect of a life among the heathen with a masochistic passion. Under the influence of her 'pious' mother and 'excellent' grandmother, she had early come to fear and hate her own body with its 'evil passions'. The year before she left for the New Hebrides she had prayed to God to detach her heart from the things of this world, to make her feel her own weakness and depravity more and more. Later, with the naked appearance of the Tannese daily mocking her own 'evil lusts', she was to write of how sweet it was to be thus afflicted, how delightful to feel the full rod of the Lord

¹Patterson [1864]:354.
in this way. Isolated from European society at Umairarekar, but at the same time exposed in a tiny three-roomed cottage to heathen depredation, Mary Matheson soon began to experience the punishment she craved.

At Port Resolution the Patons occupied a similar three-roomed cottage, of wattle and plaster construction, situated on Turner and Nisbet's old site at the head of the harbour, just above high water level (Plate 5). It was a pretty spot but not high enough to benefit from the cool evening breezes which offer the only respite from the sultry wet season heat. Paton eventually realized the mistake and relocated his house on a small hill immediately behind the original site. The house might have been a replica of the Paton cottage in Torthorwald, with its thatched roof, white verandaless walls and small shuttered windows. A straight and narrow path of crushed coral cut through the front garden, partly ornamental and partly utilitarian with its few banana palms, surrounded by a low woven fence. Inside was furnished comfortably. A grand piano, china dinner and silver cutlery services, and a select library meant that the Patons could still sing, take tea and read as if they were at home. Inside this outpost of civilization they were able to maintain a physical and, more importantly, cultural distance, from their heathen hosts.

During the week much of Paton's time was spent in building, gardening and studying the Tannese language. Every Sunday at 7 a.m. he conducted worship at the mission station, and at 8 a.m. he would set out on an inland tour in search of congregations. He itinerated for six to eight hours in the first year after his settlement visiting seven to twelve villages. By the end of his second year on the island his district, according to his own estimate, covered about eighty square miles, and he conducted worship 'at nearly all the villages or districts of nine tribes', stretching well into the heart of Kaserumene territory to the north.

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2Patterson [1864]:295-316.
3Cf. Matheson to Bayne, 2 January 1861, H.F.R. 1861:30, that it was 'just about as easy to get letters from Nova Scotia as between stations on this island'.
4Patterson [1864]:442.
Paton began his mission to the Tannese with three assumptions. The first was that the Tannese were enemies not only to the European but also to each other, that they were among those that 'delight in war', and if left to themselves would never be otherwise. His second assumption was that the Tannese were 'waiting and thirsting for the law of Jehovah', which would 'soon cause bloodshed and cruelty to cease from one end of the island to the other'. Finally, Paton assumed that he was the divinely chosen instrument that would 'civilize, elevate, and save' the Tannese, that ere long he would make them as industrious, courteous, faithful and obliging as John Geddie's Aneityumese.7

The assumption that the Tannese delighted in war, with its implication of social and political anarchy, was confirmed for Paton soon after he landed when fighting broke out between the 'harbour tribes' and 'some of those living in the interior'.

7Paton and Copeland to Kay, 23 October, 28 August 1858, R.P.M. 1859:64, 63; Paton to Kay, 24 May 1860, R.P.M. 1860:408.
Paton and Inglis reported that one day 100 armed Yanekahi warriors, half of them carrying muskets, marched off to the battle-ground 'about two miles' from the head of the harbour. With the assistance of 'considerable numbers' of allies from other localities, the harbour people defeated their enemy, five of whom were reported killed. The harbour side suffered two casualties, including Wanvak — a follower of the Neraimene yan en ête Maki. On 11 October 1858 Inglis wrote that the war was at an end. However, during the following months there was still intermittent fighting, and in May 1859 Paton wrote that there had been many battles, both inland and at the harbour — including one fought around his house. No lives were lost in that battle, but another — 'at a very short distance' — claimed seven or eight. Over the next few weeks, Paton reported, the inland people killed seventeen harbour dwellers, usually in ambushes. It is unlikely that such numbers were killed; as Paton later wrote, when the Tannese reported someone 'dead' they may have meant that he was 'nearly dead'. But at the time he accepted the mortality figures as accurate and, in an attempt to effect a reconciliation between the two sides, decided to visit the inland tribe.

Until this visit inland, Paton believed that the harbour people were the innocent victims of aggression, which is not surprising given that he had no contact with their enemy. From the people living around the mission station he had learnt that the fighting was over their reinstatement of a chief to whom the inland people were opposed. However, from the inland people Paton heard that many of the present inhabitants of the harbour were exiles from other parts of the island. These exiles had 'unitedly destroyed and expelled many of the original inhabitants, who are their present enemies, and only seeking to be allowed to return to their own land'. Paton's informant was Kuanuan who had been a leading inhabitant of Port Resolution until just before Paton's settlement, and a staunch supporter of the mission for more than fifteen years. He was a yeremxanu and magician from Yuanawefa and, according to local traditions, it was on Kuanuan's land that Turner and Nisbet's and later Paton's houses were built. After conversing with Paton for an hour, Kuanuan and his followers agreed to give up the war. Paton then

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8 Inglis, Journal entries for 1, 11 October 1858, R.P.M. 1860: 19-20; Inglis to Geddie, quoted in Geddie to Bayne, 5 October 1858, Missionary Register 1859:49-50; Paton to Kay, 26 May, 22 June 1859, R.P.M. 1859:361, 396.
9 Paton to Kay, 13 February 1861, R.P.M. 1861:303.
10 Paton and Copeland to Kay, 23 October 1858, R.P.M. 1859:64; cf. Inglis to Geddie, quoted in Geddie to Bayne, 5 October 1858, Missionary Register 1858:49-50.
conducted worship followed by an exchange of gifts. Then they all shook hands and Paton was invited to visit them often, 'for after this they would harm no person belonging to the mission'. The exchange of goods would have signified to the Tannese that they had gained an ally in Paton. For his part, Paton considered himself above the dispute though, when he returned to the harbour, he tried to show the people there that their fighting was 'exceedingly unjust'.

When the L.M.S. missionaries Harbutt and Drummond had visited Port Resolution in June 1857, Kuanuan was still at the bay, though the two brethren referred to the land on which Paton was to settle as belonging to Miaki, and it was from Miaki — among others — that Paton had made his 'purchase'. As important Neraimene tribesmen, both Miaki and Kuanuan would have had some connection with the land and, as yani en dete and yeremuatu respectively, each would have had some claim to speaking on behalf of the group on the question of land ownership. As it turned out, the people with whom Paton had negotiated for the land refused to give him even half of what he believed he had paid for, and prohibited his use of any bread-fruit or coconut trees until he made an additional payment. Paton put the extra demands down to Tannese avarice and deceitfulness though, given that ownership of the land seems to have been disputed, the making of payments to different claimants was a way of ensuring the missionary's neutrality.

After his meeting with Kuanuan Paton assumed a direct intermediary role in an attempt to secure peace. Beyond his immediate object of ending the fighting he anticipated uniting both sides under his ministry in the worship of God. He helped arrange a feast at which the harbour people and Kuanuan's followers both expressed to Paton their readiness to live in peace. However, following the shooting of a harbour dweller, fighting recommenced on 1 January 1860 and lasted for three months during which time many warriors were reported killed and much property destroyed. Paton wrote that he did his utmost to stop the war, 'and at last succeeded, by giving a present to two chiefs, who secretly promised to fight no more, and to influence their respective districts'. The two sides resumed meeting and feasting together. At the end of April 1860 Paton was again able to visit and conduct worship with Kuanuan's people who presented him with three baskets of food. They requested him to visit them often and to obtain an Aneityumese teacher to reside with them. Kuanuan

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declared to Paton, 'Mese, I hated the war, and I love you because you broke it. We all love you now'. At a meeting of the disputing parties on 23 July 1860, which Paton was requested to attend, fourteen harbour chiefs declared that they had done with fighting; that no more were to be killed for sorcery as it was a system of lies; that they could not make rain, and wind, and food, as they professed, but that God made everything; that they had adopted the 'mouth of Missi and the Aneiteumese'; and that if thebanished tribes would return they would all become worshippers of God and henceforth live in peace. There were probably various motives operating in the display which the Tannese provided for Paton. The harbour people might have been earnest in wanting peace with those whom they appear to have dispossessed — so long as they could remain on the land. The denial of the efficacy of their customs and their affirmation of God's power, as well as being a typical display of Melanesian good manners, were perhaps also an attempt to win over Paton and force Kuanuan's people to accept that they would all worship God and live in peace — which in effect meant to acknowledge the right of their banishers to stay at Port Resolution — or, in the event of Kuanuan's refusal, to drive a wedge between him and Paton.

The reference by the harbour chiefs to the 'mouth of Missi' is significant, 'mouthpiece' being the bichelamar designation for yan i en d e t e. Possibly it was intended to do no more than flatter Paton and thus gain his support. However, there are indications that around this time Paton did fulfil a negotiating role comparable with that of a yan i en d e t e: on 24 July he wrote, 'of late, I am sent for to attend the most of their [i.e. the harbour people's] war councils and public meetings, and, through the Divine blessing, my advice is generally followed' — a claim he repeated in November.¹⁵ From the end of July 1860 there was almost daily feasting and gift exchange between the two sides. It would seem that Paton facilitated many of these encounters by acting as intermediary, receiving messages from one party and passing them on to the other. The harbour people — perhaps fearing ambushes — refused to attend inland feasts and exchanges unless accompanied by Paton. At one impressive feast hosted by Kuanuan's followers at the end of October, Paton went at the head of a large and noisy procession of harbour dwellers loaded with eighteen large pigs and other presents for the inland people:

The day was spent making and hearing speeches all of a peaceful, friendly character. I was invited to address the meeting, after which the chiefs unitedly declared that this day had put an end to all their fighting and bad conduct, and that now they would live in peace and learn to

worship Jehovah. Our leading chief said, 'We all, who follow missi, are his friends, and obey his word, and you see we are many; and we want all the inland people to return in peace, and worship Jehovah. Let us have one talk, and one conduct, and one heart. Before we began to fight we were many like the sand, but now we are few, yet hating and killing each other in the service of Karipanumum (Satan). Will we all live in peace now, and hear and obey the word of Jehovah, or what will we do?' A great inland chief answered for all, saying, 'Your word is good. We have done with war and bad conduct. Missi's friends are many. Let us all be his people and learn to worship Jehovah. You have fought with us and we have fought with you till our people are nearly all killed. We who are left are old men. Let us live in peace, and every one go to his own land without fighting. Missi, this day is the finish to our bad conduct'.

From the reported statements of the Tannese it would appear that Kuanuan's people were militarily inferior, possibly both numerically and in terms of the muskets they possessed. It was a political advantage emphasized by the harbour's leading chief when he declared: 'We all, who follow missi, are his friends, and obey his word, and you see we are many'. But it was an advantage which, by itself, counted for little in traditional Tannese terms: it was still important for the harbour people to gain the acquiescence of the people they had displaced — or, at least, general approval from most people living in the vicinity of the harbour. Without that they would be regarded, and (perhaps more importantly) would regard themselves, as interlopers with no legitimate right to the land.

The long term objectives of the two sides were, however, opposed. Whereas the harbour dwellers wanted Kuanuan's people 'to return in peace, and worship Jehovah', to 'have one talk, and one conduct, and one heart' — that is, accept that both parties had rights to occupy the land at Port Resolution — the inland people responded with 'Let us live in peace, and every one go to his own land without fighting', which suggests that they wanted the interlopers to return to their own territory. Paton was the medium by which both sides hoped to accomplish their respective goals. The talk of worshipping Jehovah was the idiom in which the discussions took place, an issue sufficiently removed from the land question for that issue to be broached dispassionately. It was also a shrewd move which ensured that Paton maintained his interest in the negotiations. At the same time, it reflected the Tannese view of Paton as a powerful person in close contact with the all important spiritual realm. The pertinent point is that

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16 Paton to Kay, 1 November 1860, R.P.M. 1861:163-4. Paton's account is repeated by Johnston, in Patterson [1864]:252-3.
Paton had influence among the Tannese because they had a use for him; both sides were attempting to win him over with their declarations of allegiance. This does not imply that Paton was merely a passive object in his relations with the Tannese or that his authority was illusory. On the contrary, he occupied a positive political role analogous to the yani en dete's. But like any native yani en dete he was effective precisely because he assumed the function which the community assigned him.

Whereas for the Tannese the talk of Jehovah competing with Satan was a metaphorical idiom by which to discuss the land issue, for Paton it was a literal expression of the reality of the world-wide battle between Satan and Jehovah. It could not have been otherwise. Had Paton shared the Tannese awareness of the idiom's practical usefulness the negotiations could not have centred on him. Paradoxically, then, Paton's political authority at this time rested on his ignorance of the reasons why he was able to exercise it. To his eyes, he was witnessing a repetition of the presumed transformation of Aneityum into a scriptural magistracy — and it is interesting in this context that he followed the Aneityum missionaries' methods even down to distributing red shirts among the chiefs he wanted to cultivate.\(^17\)

In addition to fulfilling the role of a yani en dete, Paton was perceived by the Tannese as a magician, which also had a direct effect on his political influence. The belief that Christian missionaries were magicians and sorcerers had a long history on Tanna, pre-dating even Turner and Nisbet, and from the time of his settlement at Port Resolution Paton was similarly perceived. A drought around the harbour in December 1858 and January 1859 brought a declaration from two Yanekahi chiefs that if rain did not fall within a few days their tribe would destroy the missionaries and the people with whom they lived.\(^18\) Miaki and Nouka, the two Neratemene yani en dete, and as such Paton's patrons, entreated Paton and Copeland to bring rain and warned them that, in the event of a Yanekahi attack, they could not protect them. But God interposed, the two missionaries wrote, and on the following Sabbath, when they were assembled for public worship, rain began to fall 'and the whole inhabitants believed it was directly sent in answer to our prayers'. But with the heavy rains came 'much sickness' for which the missionaries were also blamed. They were blamed too for gales which damaged fruit crops and when a hurricane on 6 February 1859 drove a sandalwood

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\(^18\)Paton's informants were Nouka and Miaki, whose names are rendered as Nouva and Nuake in Paton and Copeland to Kay, 26 May 1859, *R.P.M. 1859:*361; cf. Paton 1965:*87.
vessel ashore, where it was smashed to pieces,\textsuperscript{19} again 'mese did it'. In short, wrote Paton and Copeland, 'we get the credit of everything remarkable that takes place on Tanna'. The missionaries contributed to this attitude by broadcasting that Jehovah was responsible for all things: presumably they would have offered up public praise for his grace when the rain fell at the Sunday service. Given the Tannese belief that spirits intervened in the affairs of man and nature in response to a magician's intercession, Paton and Copeland's boast that 'God interposed on our behalf' implied a measure of personal responsibility. The fact that it began to rain during the missionaries' most public ritual would have confirmed the efficacy of their magical techniques. Similarly, given the missionaries' vociferous obsession with the supposed anti-mission machinations of sandalwood traders, it was entirely natural for the Tannese to suppose that Paton and Copeland had caused the hurricane which destroyed the sandalwood ship.

A week after the hurricane Mrs Paton gave birth to a son. For the next few weeks she suffered from delirium and diarrhoea and, despite her husband's remedies of shaving her head and applying cloths dipped in vinegar, she died — of 'pericarditis' — on 3 March.\textsuperscript{20} After severe suffering the child died three weeks later. Paton was stunned and overwhelmed with grief: Matheson wrote on 11 April that he had 'almost sunk under this severe trial', and Geddie later commented that subsequently 'he was often led to take too gloomy a view of passing events'.\textsuperscript{21} As well as the tragedy of his wife and son's deaths, Paton had to contend with a succession of malarial attacks. The incomprehensible suffering he experienced pushed his religious faith to its limits:

\begin{quote}
I try to feel resigned, but it is very difficult; for O! it seemed hard to be so left, and to lose one that was so singularly qualified for the work, and with whom I lived so very happily; yet God doeth all things well. After her death I was much set on the dear child, and hoped earnestly that he would be spared. His countenance was so expressive of his mother's, and he seemed such a lovely child; but God took him, and I believe he is too wise to err; yet I cannot help mourning their absence, for it is very trying to be here alone in such circumstances.\textsuperscript{22}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{19}Paton and Copeland to Kay, 26 May 1859, \textit{R.P.M.} 1859:361; Sh.G. & S.G.T.L., 16 May 1859.

\textsuperscript{20}Paton to his family, 27 April 1859, \textit{R.P.M.} 1860:37.

\textsuperscript{21}Matheson to Bayne, 11 April 1859, \textit{Missionary Register} 1859:180; Patterson 1882:476.

\textsuperscript{22}Paton to Walter Paton, 26 May 1859, \textit{R.P.M.} 1860:38.
Fearing that the Tannese would disinter her body for a cannibal feast, Paton kept a lonely vigil, gun in hand, over his wife's grave until her remains were completely decomposed. The fear was unfounded in terms of Tannese practices, and the episode was later related by Julius Brenchley and Herbert Meade to pour scorn on Paton, but it points to the terrifying mental anguish of a man deprived of his loved ones in a hostile environment. Eventually Paton derived some comfort from his conviction that 'God doeth all things well', and Inglis wrote that he soon began to bear up 'beyond expectations'.

What was a source of reassurance for Paton, that the deaths were inexplicably part of God's plan, was a source of fear and consternation for the Tannese. Paton's claim that Jehovah was responsible for the deaths was not without meaning for the Tannese who also attached spiritual significance to such events. For them, the deaths would have signified either that Paton and Jehovah were powerless against superior Tannese magicians and deities, or, if they accepted Paton's explanation that the deaths were God's will, that Jehovah was a capricious spirit who could act against the very magician who propitiated him.

For the Tannese, it was but the latest instance of the mission's long association with sickness and death. The deaths of Paton's wife and child, his own recurrent attacks of 'fever and ague', and the deaths of two leading Anityumese church members who were visiting Paton at Port Resolution, combined with a 'great amount of sickness' around the harbour to 'inflame' many Tannese. At 'meeting after meeting' excited speakers threatened Paton with death if he did not leave the island. When a teacher died on 9 August 1860 again 'great alarm ... prevailed among the natives, who were very insolent and ill to manage, again and again demanding me to tell them the cause of his death &c'. Paton turned the Tannese logic back onto his accusers by telling a 'large party' that he might just as well ascribe all the mission's troubles and deaths to them. Paton wrote that the crowd left him 'much afraid'. They returned a few days later explaining that a 'bushman' had got something belonging to them and Paton, which he had thrown into the volcano. Another group of Tannese said that the 'Aurumum, or evil spirit' of Tanna had caused the deaths and illness, 'for he knew that if they became worshippers of Jehovah, they would not continue to fear him, and present him with the first and best of their food, &c., as they and their fathers had always done'. Possibly the Tannese feared that Paton would direct Jehovah's wrath at them. They may also have feared that Paton would summon a British gunboat to punish their misdeeds:

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23 Inglis to Kay, 4 May 1859, R.P.M. 1859:359; cf. Meade 1870:321; Brenchley 1873:194.

24 Paton to Kay, 14 October 1859, R.P.M. 1860:68.
she was not in the least frightened by the Tannese as 'a man-of-war sometimes pays them a visit, and has already given them some very salutary lessons', it might be inferred that her husband had used such a threat against the Tannese.

The threat was given force at the end of August 1859 when a British gunboat, H.M.S. Cordelia, did anchor at Port Resolution and the commanding officer offered to do anything in his power to consolidate the missionary's position. At a meeting with the assembled harbour chiefs Captain Vernon gave 'many very judicious advices, all calculated to advance the interests of our work, and make my position more safe among them'. The Tannese 'made many fair promises' and were, according to Paton, much pleased with the captain, probably because he had not punished them. Vernon's visit left the Tannese with the impression that Paton had only to signify his wish 'and the roar of British cannon would be heard at Port Resolution, as it was heard last year at Black Beach'. For the next few months Paton heard of no more threats against himself or the mission.

However, sickness and death among the Tannese at the end of 1859 and beginning of 1860 precipitated further calls for Paton's expulsion. In April 1860 the people with whom Paton resided, mainly Neraimene tribesmen who previously had supported the missionary, declared that they hated the worship of Jehovah as it made them afraid to do as they had always done. However, if Paton were to give up talking with them about religious matters they would like him to stay and trade with them — 'for they liked the trader, but they hated the worship'. One chief, who it seems had spent some years in Sydney, declared on behalf of his followers:

Our fathers loved and worshipped the devil, and we are determined to do so, for we love all the conduct of our fathers. Mr Turner came here and tried to break his worship, but our fathers fought him, and he left — they fought Peter, a Samoan teacher, and he fled — they fought and killed some of the Samoan teachers, placed on the other side of the bay, and their companions fled — they killed Vasa, a Samoan teacher and his companions left — we killed the last foreigner that lived on Tana before you came. We fought the Anelteum teachers, and burned their house, and on each occasion Tana was good, they all did as they liked, and sickness left us. Now all the people are determined to kill you, for you are destroying our worship and customs, and we all hate Jehovah and his worship.

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25 Mrs Paton to her family, 20 December 1858, R.P.M. 1860:37.
26 Paton to Kay, 14 October 1859, R.P.M. 1860:70.
27 Inglis to Kay, 7 November 1858, R.P.M. 1861:24.
It would seem that the Tannese feared not to propitiate Jehovah and, at the same time, believed that his worship offended their customary deities, who displayed their displeasure by causing illness and death among the Tannese with whom Paton came into contact.

It was not Paton's physical presence but his missionary activity to which the Tannese objected — a phenomenon which was to re-emerge a year later in the wake of the measles epidemic. This was partly due to the Tannese fear of being told about Jehovah and offending other spirits. But the invitation to stay at Port Resolution and trade while giving up 'visiting the villages' — which were mainly the inland Neraimene villages — suggests also that the harbour people wanted to sever Paton's relationship with Kuanuan's people without at the same time denying themselves access to European goods. There were, then, a number of interrelated and sometimes inconsistent elements in the Tannese perception of Paton at this time. He was perceived as a sorcerer whose god was both powerful and connected with the appearance of disease; he was considered a threat to traditional customs and beliefs; he was used by both Kuanuan's people and the harbour dwellers as a means of out-maneuuvring the other group; he was seen as having a man-of-war to back him up if the need arose; and he was viewed as being useful for the acquisition of trade items. Paton, often in spite of his own efforts, occupied a complex and highly politicized position at Port Resolution.

Simultaneous with the Tannese construction of reality, Paton placed his own meaning on what was happening around him. Just as the Tannese had identified him in terms of roles located in their culture, so too he categorized the Tannese according to the precepts of his particular culture. Basic to his interpretation of events was the assumption that man was naturally depraved, and that this natural depravity could be transcended only by the intercession of the Holy Spirit. It will be recalled that Paton and Copeland, even before they left Scotland, had portrayed the New Hebridean as naturally suspicious and vengeful, undependable, volatile, deceitful, given to lying, stealing and cruelty. This degraded condition was held to be the result of native ignorance, superstition, and vengeful reaction to the vile conduct of European traders. In his letters from Tanna Paton repeated the classic missionary epithets: the Tannese were painted savages enveloped in all the superstitions of heathenism; their conduct was wicked and deceitful; they were naked; they were exceedingly ignorant, vicious, and bigoted; they were almost void of natural affection; the women were the down-trodden slaves of the men, children were uncaressed, and aged persons were neglected and starved; wives and daughters were often killed and cooked, and the Tannese desire for human flesh was so great that even the interred dead were exhumed and eaten; they were constantly at war among themselves, with every man doing what was right in his own eyes and every quarrel was settled by an appeal to arms. The
worst characters were those who had had contact with traders for, in addition to their own prejudices, they had imbibed the profane traders' hatred of the missionary and his work.29

Paton's day to day experiences on Tanna were inseparable from the creations of his symbolic imagination. In part, the world as a vast battle-ground, with the forces of good and evil locked in deadly combat, was a metaphor, a code, as it were, by which Paton communicated with other Reformed Presbyterians. But at the same time it was the pervasive actuality of life for Paton; brought up from infancy with a view of reality as an ongoing battle between God and Satan, the mythical and the literal were one and the same. Thus every expression of opposition became an attempt on his life carried out by heathen completely under Satan's sway and foiled only by God's grace. Even hearsay reports from unreliable sources were accepted as fact, without any attempt to verify their accuracy, because they conformed to his mythical explanation of events.30 Had these attempts on his life been as serious as he maintained they were, it is doubtful that he would have survived his first two years at Port Resolution. Evidence that he was more secure than his hair-raising accounts suggest may be seen in his material achievements: between the attempts on his life and recurrent malarial attacks, he was able to build a new mission house, sink a twelve foot well, erect a fifty by twenty-one foot church, and prepare and print an eight page primer in the Kwamera language.31

However, it would be wrong to interpret these achievements as unequivocal indices of missionary success, as members of the Reformed Presbyterian Foreign Missions Committee were wont to do,32 for the simple reason that they signified different things to Paton and to the Tannese. The making of the well meant for Paton the application of some simple practical knowledge with which he had grown up, and the appearance of water confirmed God's continued blessing on his work. To the Tannese, for whom digging for water in this manner was unprecedented, it confirmed Paton's magical powers. 'On seeing it', wrote Paton, they 'seemed to be without words to express their astonishment at good water existing so deep in the earth and [they] generally gave a wild scream'.33

32Foreign Missions Committee 1861 Report, R.P.M. 1861:182.
33Paton to Kay, 24 May 1860, R.P.M. 1860:405.
The erection of the church involved the same sort of cultural confusion. When the ground was being levelled a stone was unearthed, at the sight of which the Tannese 'seemed awe-struck'. One old chief explained to Paton that the stone either had been put there by the great spirit Karapanamun or it had been hidden there by a great chief in the past: it was the stone to which their fathers had offered human sacrifice, and the holes in it were filled with the blood of the persons killed for the stone to drink. The terrified Tannese implored Paton to remove this stone which ate men and drank their blood. Instead, to 'shew them the vanity of their notions', he made it the centre of the church. The stone, which previously had been a tangible link with Karapanamun, was henceforth to be 'sacred to Jehovah and his service'. This would have reinforced in the Tannese mind that Jehovah was not essentially different from their traditional deities and that he was competing against Karapanamun for their allegiance. Given the personalized, magical conception of religion for the Tannese, where spirits intervened in human affairs because of a magician's ritual, this view of Jehovah implied also that Paton was competing against customary Tannese magicians. By such actions as consecrating Karapanamun's stone to Jehovah, Paton unwittingly integrated both himself and the god he served into existing Tannese conceptual categories.

No copies of the eight page primer are known to have survived but, without doubt, Paton would have confronted the same sorts of translation problems which had beset Turner. In his translation of the Gospel of Mark into Kwamera, Paton, like his predecessor, used variations of the Greek and Hebrew words *Ihova, Jesu Kristo, Tiapol, and Satana*, to avoid reducing key Christian figures to Tannese dimensions. *Aggelos*, Greek for angel, was used variously as angel, unclean spirit (*agilo* *riraha*) and devils (*ageilo* *riraha*). But, as with Turner's texts, this solution begged the question in that the Tannese, to comprehend the concepts at all, had still to internalize them according to their existing knowledge. Paton also used Tannese terms for important religious figures. Following Turner, he used the word *irwanu* (*yeremwanu*) – the designation of the dignitary entitled to wear the *kayoo* – for Lord (*Irwanu*), Holy Spirit (*Irwan Ikinan*) and even Prince of Devils (*irwanu fei ageilo* *riraha*). Another local term, *nanin* or *nanim* (cf. *nanumun*), meaning the spirit or ghost of departed ancestors, was also used for the Holy Ghost (*nanin ikinan*). *Atua*, a Polynesian term used in many parts of the Pacific at this time to designate both a god and the Christian God, was also used by Paton. Thus the house of God was *nimwa* [= hut] *fei Atua*, the son of God *mati fei Atua*, and the kingdom of God *indita fei Atua*.

35Paton [1869]: passim.
Paton's use of *indita (en dete)* was an interesting choice because it already functioned for the Tannese as a significant metaphor. On the physical level referring to a canoe, on the symbolic plane it expressed the idea of a social body, and as used in the Tannese appellation *yani en dete*, 'master of the canoe', the dignitary primarily responsible for group safety in times of war, the metaphor was already rich in its overtones of security, loyalty, obedience, respect and permanence. It is likely that *indita* was able to capture, better than any other term, the essence of God's kingdom. Similarly, *yani en dete*, as a metaphor, would have caught something of the exclusive significance God held for the missionaries themselves. However, Paton did not use *yani en dete* to designate God: following Turner, he retained the term *yeremwanu*, particularly in his attempt to translate the concept of Lord God. In choosing this symbol, in inviting the Tannese to relate to God as they related to the *yeremwanu* — Paton, like missionaries before and after him, misread Tanna's political structure. After all, the *yeremwanu* was not only one of the most common of Tannese dignitaries but also one with a decidedly limited and ambiguous role. It is likely that, whatever the designation, God would have had to compete with other 'heroes' for Tannese allegiance, with His acceptance or rejection depending on the practical results of His propitiation. Certainly, Jehovah's identification with the *yeremwanu* helped ensure that the magico-religious framework of the Tannese was left basically unchallenged by Paton.

For his part, Paton was confident that ere long the gospel would 'triumph over idoltry on dark Tana', and that the love of Jesus Christ would 'root out all prejudices from the hearts of this degraded people.' The apparent extension of the mission's influence supported his optimism. In addition to the building operations and the production of the primer, religious services were being conducted further afield to increasing numbers of Tannese — since April 1860 Paton had had nine Aneityumese teachers and their wives working under his direction at many outposts around the harbour — and in September 1860 the mission at Port Resolution was further strengthened by the settlement of Samuel Johnston and his wife — another niece of John Geddie — from Nova Scotia.36

Like Paton the eldest of a large family, Samuel Fulton Johnston, born 1830, was raised by god-fearing parents in the pattern of family instruction based on the Bible and the *Shorter Catechism*. A serious bout of measles at the age of sixteen had heightened a disgust with his own body already engendered by Calvinist teachings, and Johnston became obsessively fastidious

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in exercising total control over his 'licentious desires' — though judging by the venom he poured on himself in his diary, he was never totally successful. He instituted a program of self-examina-
tion every fourth Sunday to dig out the 'secret abominations' of
his heart — the 'vile, corrupt human heart', that 'cage, containing
every unclean fowl ...'. Foreign mission work offered him an escape from the corrupting influences of civilized society with its worldliness, selfishness, and pride, with its emphasis on 'dress,
the gratification of the sensual, depraved, the pampered tastes,
appetites, and desires'. It also promised to feed his obsessions,
to heighten his personal sense of sin and weakness and, finally,
to bring him to cathartic peace through the exploration of the depths of human depravity. He was not disappointed. His first painful sight of native nakedness was enough to make him realize,
'in quite a new sense, the awful, the dismal darkness, the consummate degradation, the awful wretchedness of heathenism.
Such is Tanna!' The women, the 'poor, degraded women, ... are made subservient to sensual gratification — prostituted to the lowest and most debasing purposes ... made to drink the bowl of sensual pleasure to its very dregs ...'. Admittedly, Johnston was writing for a home audience which craved portraits of heathen depravity — especially carnal depravity — against which they could measure their own righteousness and purity. But his letters were not only written for the titillation and edification of others:
with his pen, Johnston flagellated himself, lifted his sense of human weakness and moral depravity to dizzy heights. As his wife noted, he was most in his element when he got a crowd of heathen with whom he could talk 'of their wickedness, evil habits, &c.'

Johnston's settlement at Port Resolution coincided with the high point of Paton's influence among the Tannese. With his position apparently secure at the harbour, Paton began to plan for an extension of his missionary operations. In September, with Johnston, he visited Black Beach to assess its suitability for Johnston's settlement, and in October he placed two Anitumese teachers there. The Tannese at Black Beach were anxious for a European missionary to counteract traders who, they claimed, had felt free to abuse and oppress them ever since the naval bombard-
ment two years before. Paton interpreted the desire for European missionaries as further proof that the triumph of Christianity on Tanna was imminent. His optimism was reflected in his building program which, besides the church and a new mission house, included a school building, store, printing office,
wright's shop, and five 'substantial' dwellings for his teachers at various points around the harbour. But his most ambitious project was a grand scheme to make the Kwamerra language Tanna's

37Patterson [1864]:127, 213, 244, 250, 261.
lingua franca. He acknowledged that it would be an additional burden on Johnston who, as well as attempting to impart religious knowledge to a 'benighted people', would also have to attempt to teach them a new language. But eventually, Paton argued, the common language would 'unite and elevate this divided and degraded people'.

Early in November 1860, however, there were expressions of anti-missionary feeling at both Port Resolution and Umairarekar. Joseph Copeland, who called at both stations in the mission schooner John Knox, reported the Tannese 'more saucy and turbulent' than they had been for a long time, with nothing good to say about the gospel, the missionaries, or the mission vessel. The immediate cause of this disenchantment was Paton's insistence that no more kava and tobacco could be brought from Aneityum to Tanna aboard the John Knox. Apparently a sizeable trade had developed, with the teachers on Tanna obtaining the goods from their families and friends on Aneityum to distribute among the Tannese with whom they resided.39 The implications of this traffic in terms of the integration of the teachers into customary Tannese social relationships, their conception of their role among the Tannese and the Tannese perception of the mission, were profound. However, perhaps embarrassed by the revelations, Paton did not even refer to the matter in his usually exhaustive correspondence.

The Tannese voiced their resentment with threats against Paton, who wrote at the beginning of November that in the preceding week his life had been threatened every day. As he was prone to do, he put the reaction down to 'foreign influence', claiming that one trader had called at the harbour in the last week of October and offered to come and live there and provide the Tannese with plenty of tobacco and gunpowder if only they would kill the missionary or at least drive him from the island. Consequently, Paton wrote, there had been Tannese attempts on his life every day since.40 Undoubtedly some traders were bitterly opposed to missionaries who, by opposing their trade in tobacco, grog and powder, and their use of native women, threatened both their livelihood and their recreation. But any opposition to Paton which the traders were able to foment among the Tannese, and the backlash which followed the cessation of the kava and tobacco trade via the John Knox, were storms in a teacup compared with the Tannese reaction to the great measles epidemic of 1860-61.

Chapter 6

The great measles epidemic

On 7 November 1860 Rev. J. Jones of Mare, in the Loyalties Group, wrote that measles had been transmitted to his island from New Caledonia, 'carrying off many, especially the healthy'. George Gordon wrote from Erromango on 18 November that the disease was 'running through the island', after being introduced earlier in the month by a trading vessel.1 About the same time it appeared on Tanna. At Black Beach some infected Lifuan crewmen were landed from a boat from New Caledonia and the disease, 'unprecedented in its ferocity', soon spread among the Aneityumese teachers and the Tannese. At Umairarekar 'four young Tanna men ill with measles' were set ashore and very quickly 'every soul, man, woman, and child', was prostrated. A month later, in mid-December, it broke out at Port Resolution after the trader *Hirondelle* landed infected islanders. The same vessel introduced the disease in the same manner to Aneityum, where fewer than six of the total population of 3500 escaped infection and more than a third of that number died within a year. A few months later the mission schooner *John Knox* carried measles to Aniwa, where it was estimated that a quarter of the island's population of about 300 was wiped out. Of the islands which comprised the southern New Hebrides only Futuna escaped the epidemic.²

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1 Jones to [ ], 7 November 1860, extract in *Sydney Mail*, 5 January 1861; Gordon to [ ], 18 November 1860, extract in *Sydney Mail*, 5 January 1861; Gordon to Bayne, 3 April 1861, *H.F.R.* 1861:250; Paton to Kay, 10 June 1861, *R.P.M.* 1862:39; Geddie to Bayne, 20 August 1861, *H.F.R.* 1862:36; Murray 1863:442.

It is not known exactly when measles first appeared at Port Resolution. Some time before 22 December Samuel Johnston noted in his journal that disease was 'prevailing among the natives to a most alarming extent', and spreading with 'fearful rapidity'. All whom he saw were 'scopulous', with only a few free from running sores. Many appeared to be 'masses of corruption'. Until the end of December, Johnston visited the villages around the harbour alone as Paton had cut his ankle with an adze. On 1 January, feeling too depressed to confront the mournful scene by himself, Johnston had the teachers carry Paton from village to village where the two missionaries distributed water, food and medicine. Paton noted in his journal on that day that the measles had 'nearly prostrated all our natives', and were causing 'great mortality'. On 4 January he noted that at 'our nearest inland village' (Yrasiau), many were dead and many others were in a very low condition. His journal entry for 9 January reads: 'A chief died on Monday, another today, and a third is dying, one has lost six brothers, and the mortality increases'. The next day Paton visited a village a little distance from the harbour, where he found 'many ... dying'. On 8 February he noted that 'almost every person' was confined with disease; with many 'dying and lying on the earth and in their houses unburied all around us', there being not enough people sufficiently well to bury the dead. In a letter dated 13 February he wrote of hundreds, including 'many of the most important chiefs', having died.

Matheson noted that inflammation of the throat and lungs prevailed among measles victims at Kwamera, and at all of the affected islands it was what the missionaries described as severe dysentery accompanying the measles which appears to have been the main cause of death. One need only read a medical description of dysentery and its complications to appreciate the islanders' utter misery and despair, exacerbated by the excruciating deaths of family and friends.

The epidemic was followed by a series of hurricanes and a tidal wave which obliterated trees and huts, fences and gardens.

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At Port Resolution, a hurricane on 3 January — which, with cruel irony, Paton and Johnston had set aside as a day of fasting and thanksgiving — destroyed all the tree crops on which the Tannese 'depended for three months food'. Another hurricane a week later destroyed the ground crops and 'laid the houses and fences of the natives in one common ruin'. A violent electrical storm on 7 February, which cut a 'great hole' in front of the mission house, killed a man, a woman and a pig. On 14 March another hurricane uprooted large banyan trees and destroyed Paton's church, school, store, wright's shop, cook-house and goats' house. The sea was reported to have gone 'nearly half a mile' inland at the head of the bay, sweeping several villages and gardens before it.\(^7\)

Islander reaction to the epidemics and natural disasters varied from island to island. Geddie's new church building at Anelgauhat was burnt down, but then the hurricane a week later was seen as divine judgement on the incendiast's act. Thereafter, the Aneityumese were 'silent under the repeated strokes' and resigned themselves 'to submit to God's will in all things'.\(^8\) The Aniwans were similarly subdued.\(^9\) However, on Erromango George Gordon and his wife were killed in revenge. Just days before the measles appeared, Gordon had warned the Erromangans that if they did not renounce heathenism God would visit them with a calamity. As he noted in his diary after the appearance of the measles, the chiefs 'could hardly now persuade their people that this is not the finger of Jehovah'. By January the Erromangans were 'for the most part like mad tigers, having been stirred up to believe that we are the cause of their alarming distress'. Gordon believed that resident traders were doing the stirring, though if the Erromangans believed (as Gordon maintained) that Jehovah had brought the measles, it was wholly consistent for them to blame Jehovah's self-proclaimed agent. By mid-February, however, the missionary was able to write of renewed confidence in the mission among many Erromangans: medicine was accepted and, if recovery followed, there was a 'profound impression' that Jehovah was shielding mission supporters. In early May, Gordon repeated to the inhabitants of Bunkhill his claim that measles were God's punishment for the Erromangans' idolatry and wickedness. Two weeks later, Bunkhill tribesmen slew the missionary and his wife.\(^10\)

\(^7\)Paton, Journal, 3 January, 7 February, 14 March, 1861; Paton to Kay, 1 April 1861, R.P.M. 1861:304; Patterson [1864]:268.


\(^9\)Murray 1863:411ff.

On Tanna, there was a general repudiation of Christianity in the wake of the epidemic and hurricanes. At Black Beach, where the disease appeared soon after the landing of the teachers, it was supposed that the new religion had something to do with it—a supposition, according to Geddie, confirmed by the cruel statements of traders. The chief of the district in which the teachers lived was forced to take them into his own hut for safety and keep them there until the excitement had abated. In July or August 1861 one of the teachers visited Aneityum and reported that, while the Tannese were no longer angry, they were still 'afraid of christianity', imagining that it 'either brings disease and death with it, or their own deities are enraged with them, and inflict judgements on them, when they receive christian teachers'.

At the other end of Tanna, in Matheson's district, one of the first to succumb to measles and dysentery was Kapuku, who had long been friendly towards Christianity and had been living at the mission house for some months. Kapuku's friends tried to persuade him that Matheson and the new religion had caused his sickness and that if he continued to live with the missionary eventually all the Tannese would die. Kapuku left the mission station—more from fear of being killed by his friends, Matheson supposed, than from acceptance of their argument. But it is possible that Matheson's supposition really was less a comment on what motivated Kapuku to leave, than a refusal to acknowledge that even his Tannese allies may have perceived him as a sorcerer. Such a perception had been unwittingly confirmed on various occasions by Matheson's claim that God was responsible for all things. For instance, in August 1860 he had explained to Namaka, whose youngest son was dying, that God alone had the power to inflict disease, to make or take life.

On that occasion Matheson had been innocently trying to console Namaka and prevent his taking revenge against the presumed sorcerers, but such statements would have assumed a bizarre significance with the outbreak of measles a few months later. As Matheson feared, he and his religion got the credit for the epidemic:

And never did Pope or Priest more violently hurl anathemas against poor heretics and the Word of God than did our poor natives against us and the new-religion ... When taken ill they declared that I had smitten them with the measles,

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in order to be revenged on them for having recently stolen from us with such a high hand. Their being all sick, and my health never having been so good on Tanna, confirmed their suspicion... taking our lives excepted, they resorted to every imaginable expedient to have us flee, or at least to say nothing to them about the new religion.\(^{14}\)

To 'persist in speaking to them of Jesus' was to invite threats of death.\(^ {15}\)

To avoid hearing about Christianity, the Tannese started avoiding Matheson. Previously, he had been able to employ Tannese 'for a trifle' and speak to them on spiritual matters while they were engaged in their work. But by March he could not get a solitary individual to perform the smallest task for any amount of remuneration, 'lest while thus engaged, we should speak to them about their souls and the necessity of seeking an interest in Christ'. Whenever Matheson appeared, the Tannese would run and hide or pelt him with stones. At one village, where he occasionally succeeded in collecting together a few individuals, he could not be heard owing to 'the fiendish yells of our enemies, and the incessant noise which they kept up by clapping, and beating with their clubs upon trees, old logs, etc.' Even those Tannese whom Matheson had counted as friends did 'everything that lay in their power', such as denying him food and threatening his life, 'to oppose the spread of the gospel'.\(^ {16}\)

Later, Matheson was to discover why the Tannese so vigorously guarded themselves from hearing about Christianity, when the yeremwanu, Kati, explained that they believed that measles were Jehovah's punishment for their rejection of the new religion. But so long as they continued in their 'heathen state' God knew nothing of them and they were free to live as they liked:

On the contrary, they believe that so soon as a person ventures about the mission premises, converses with the missionary on religious subjects, and attends public worship on the Sabbath day, so soon does God acquire a knowledge of that person; and any sin afterwards committed by that person, not only lays the offender open to God's displeasure, but every person of whom God has any knowledge ... They believe that God is indebted to the missionary for all his knowledge respecting the inhabitants of this island, and

\(^{14}\)Matheson to Bayne, 2 January 1861, \textit{H.F.R.} 1861:299–300 — my emphasis.

\(^{15}\)Matheson to [Bayne], 7 February 1861, \textit{H.F.R.} 1861:302.

\(^{16}\)Matheson to Bayne, 18 February 1861, \textit{H.F.R.} 1861:303–4, 1 April, 4 June 1861, \textit{H.F.R.} 1862:43–5, 47; Matheson to [Bayne], 14 January 1862, \textit{H.F.R.} 1862:249.
that the missionary cannot give God any information respecting any person, only while that person continued to receive instruction from the missionary, either on Sabbath or weekdays, hence a man may come and perform any amount of manual labour and receive payment for it, but if he refuses to listen to the word of God, and will not attend church on Sabbath, he imagines that he is still unknown to God, as I cannot report of him anything good or bad. 17

The stoning of Matheson, the people's fleeing at his approach, their yelling and beating of tree trunks, far from being symptoms of frenzied despair, were calculated attempts to control the awful power it was believed Matheson had at his disposal. In terms of the belief that Jehovah's intervention depended on the missionary's intercession, the way to control Jehovah was to control Matheson. And just as it was necessary for a nahak sorcerer to obtain some property of his intended victim, so too it seems to have been believed that Matheson had to enter into a religious conversation to place his spell over his victim. Hence the various techniques which were employed to cut off such conversation. In accordance with the Tannese belief that the intervention of spirits depended on the efficacy of the magician's ritual, it was important to stop Matheson from performing his rituals such as preaching and praying. Stoning the missionary, avoiding him, and making so much noise that he could not be heard, were barriers erected by the Tannese to protect themselves from God's wrath.

At Port Resolution the Tannese were at first 'very much humbled by the disease' and willing to worship with Johnston, promising to 'live better in time to come'. But within a few days they began to waver:

And say that the Nahah [Nahak] is killing them — that our worship is bringing these calamities upon them, and that if we would leave them the disease would leave, that Satan was destroying them all because he does not like the worship, and does not allow them to worship. They are now beginning to threaten us. They say some of us must die to satisfy Kempromon [Karapanamun]. 18

The statement that Satan was destroying them because he disliked the worship of God indicated to the missionaries that some Tannese were coming to share their Christian framework. But as the Tannese who had come into contact with the missionaries tended to confuse Satan with the traditional evil hero Karapanamun, they

were really inclining to their old superstitious notions (as Johnston put it) in trying to make sense of the measles. It is likely that some believed that nahak sorcerers were causing the disease to drive the gospel from the island; while others thought the missionaries had brought it because the Tannese would not worship Jehovah — an entirely logical deduction given not only the Tannese etiology of disease, but also the missionaries' claim that God was responsible for all events and their persistent warnings that He would surely punish the islanders for their sinfulness.

According to Paton, he and Johnston were attacked at the mission house on the evening of 1 January 1861 by two Yanekahi tribesmen. The men had asked for medicine for a sick boy but, from their agitated appearance, Paton suspected a plot and told them to return the next morning. One of the men was alleged to have attempted to club Johnston from behind but, becoming 'faint-hearted', he missed his blow. At this point Paton's two dogs sprang at the men, Johnston raised the alarm and Paton rushed out onto the veranda. One of the dogs was struck a blow from a club which, according to Paton, was meant to have killed himself. After the fracas, Paton surmised that the two men had travelled eight or ten miles expressly to kill the two missionaries. But as Paton was inside the house when the Tannese were supposed to have attempted to club Johnston, and as Johnston had his back to the two men — he was stooping to pick up a kitten from the veranda — it is difficult to accept Paton's account of the 'attempted murder'. It is more plausible that the Tannese had struck out with their clubs to repulse the dogs which apparently were ferociously anti-native. As they fled down the path, Paton 'reproved their sinful conduct, and entreated them to give up hating Jehovah, his worship and his servants'. If the men were at the mission house for medicine, one can imagine that the Tannese would have been left with the distinct impression not only that Paton had refused to provide medicine for a dying boy but that he had set his dogs on two men on an errand of mercy.

For one who conceives 'History' as decisions of state made in the world's capitals, or victories won on the battle-fields, incidents such as that related above may appear petty and trivial. But it was precisely this sort of incident — minor misunderstandings and personal clashes based on ignorance of the other's intention — which characterized the culture contact history of islands like Tanna. Particularly in a situation of uncertainty and suffering, such as during the measles epidemic, minor episodes were prone to be blown up far beyond what the intentions of the

20Paton, Notebooks.
actors warranted. Thus, the altercation with the two Tannese soon became for Paton and Johnston an 'attempt made upon our lives ... long meditated and undertaken with determination':

They considered that as when Mr. Turner was here, disease destroyed great numbers, so now the present epidemic had been brought upon them by us, and that at least some of us must die. The [Yanekahi] party came to the foot of the hill, and sent two of their number, - bold, blood-thirsty men to lie in wait and kill some of us, while the rest lay in readiness to assist if their assistance should be required.21

Such was the heathens' fiendish plot.

In all probability there were plots; after all, whether it was believed that the missionaries had caused the measles or that traditional sorcerers had done so in an attempt to drive them from the island, it would have been reasonable to get rid of the missionaries in order to end the disease. It is also possible that the Yanekahi decided to avenge Paton's refusal to provide medicine on 1 January. But it is unlikely that there was as concerted a plot as Paton believed either before or after 1 January. He received 'message after message' from the inhabitants of the harbour that a Yanekahi attack on the mission was imminent. However, as his informants were at the time fighting against the Yanekahi, it is likely that they were portraying their enemies as opponents of the mission - just as they had done in their earlier dispute with Kuanuan. Indeed, Paton commented that when they declared war on the Yanekahi, 'in a most mysterious manner all our people resolved to make common cause with us ... Up till this meeting our few friends were so overawed there is not one to speak in our favours'. The Yanekahi did not attack and, according to Paton, the harbour people concluded that the worship was making them strong and frightening their enemies. Larger numbers began coming to worship at the mission house every morning.22

Part of the reason why the harbour people made common cause with the missionaries, and attempted to alienate them from the Yanekahi, was the belief that mission medicine was effective against measles and dysentery. In mid-February Paton wrote that the mortality at Port Resolution, compared with the mortality 'at a distance', had been slight and that the people in the vicinity of the bay came 'in crowds' for medicine:

The inland people say they are all dying, and the worship is in some way the cause of it, therefore they want to

destroy the worship of God from Tanna; but the tribes around us say the worship is good, and the medicine is good, and that it is only dark-hearted Tannese who blame missionaries for the sickness.\textsuperscript{23}

It would seem that medicine had become a political weapon in a local conflict. Paton ignored this aspect and interpreted the desire for medicine as an indication that the harbour dwellers, at least, were becoming more favourable towards Christianity. The mission's cause, he wrote, had 'gained much ground during the sickness'. In a sense, Paton's optimism was not unfounded: from the Tannese viewpoint, to accept the efficacy of the missionary's medicine was also to accept the efficacy of his magic and rituals. If a person recovered after taking medicine, Paton's status as a magician was confirmed.

It is not possible to estimate how effective Paton's medicines really were. But that there was a high demand for them among the Tannese might be inferred from his calculation that in a few weeks he used nearly 2000 pills (unspecified), thirty pounds of Epsom salts; bottles of calomel, jalap, prepared chalk, laudanum, quinine, essence of senna, and tincture of rhubarb; and a quantity of the powder of rhubarb, sweet spirits of nitre, Dover's powder, and sulphur.\textsuperscript{24} Most of these drugs — jalap, senna, Epsom salts, calomel, rhubarb and sulphur — are purgatives, though rhubarb may also have an astringent effect after purgation.\textsuperscript{25} Dover's powder, administered in small doses, acts as an expectorant, while in large doses it leads to vomiting and diarrhoea. Taken in the early stages of fever, it acts as a diaphoretic. Sweet spirits of nitre has both a diaphoretic and diuretic effect. Prepared chalk is an antacid and effective in the treatment of diarrhoea. Laudanum was occasionally used for treating diarrhoea, though it is likely that Paton used it for its narcotic effect. Overall, the drugs administered suggest that Paton's treatment was based on the assumption that toxins had to be expelled from the body as quickly as possible — at the time, an almost universal assumption among the medical profession and one which would have been passed on to Paton in his earlier studies at the Andersonian College — though it is likely that the more rapid flow of intestinal contents did more harm than good.\textsuperscript{26} Laudanum and quinine, and possibly Dover's powder (ipecacuanha and opium), might have aided recovery by their analgesic and antipyretic effects, though it is doubtful that they would have sufficiently compensated for the dehydration effect of the purgatives. It is possible that the administration of any drug had a placebo effect.

\textsuperscript{23}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{24}Paton to Kay, 13 February 1861, \textit{R.P.M.} 1861:302.

\textsuperscript{25}Blacow 1972: \textit{passim}.

\textsuperscript{26}Christie 1969:146.
For his part, Paton had no doubts about the efficacy of his treatment. On 12 January he wrote that many lives had 'been saved by Gods blessing on our medicine', and at the beginning of March he knew of only one death among those who had taken medicine.\(^{27}\)

Given the large number who seem to have received medicine, and Paton's claim that only one patient had died by March, it might be concluded that the mortality rate at Port Resolution was much less than at Aneityum and than what Gordon reported for Erromango.\(^{28}\)

This does not prove, however, that Paton's treatment was either pharmacologically or psychosomatically effective as it is possible that some immunity had developed at Port Resolution during the intense European traffic of the preceding two decades. Nevertheless, there were many Tannese who believed that they had survived the measles and dysentery because of Paton's medicine. In the third week of January a *Neratmene* dignitary, Sirawia, and a number of his young men ceremonially presented Paton with six fowls, a pig and a pineapple, 'for coming among us and giving us medicine to take away our sickness'. They did not blame him for the disease, they proclaimed — it was only the 'dark-hearted men' who did that.\(^{29}\)

Another dignitary, who used to mock Paton when he went to his village to conduct worship, presented him with a bunch of bananas, declaring, 'had it not been for your ('Uni Britannia') medicine, I would have been dead, and also many of my people; but, when we were dead (almost dead), it made us alive, and now we all love you'. As the presentations corresponded with the payment customarily made to the magician who had caused the illness, it is possible that Paton was regarded as the sorcerer who had brought measles. It is significant in this respect that when a Tannese chief who had clubbed one of the teachers contracted measles it was widely believed to be 'a punishment from God for his abuse of Missi'.\(^{30}\)

Not all the deaths were traced back to Paton. On 16 February four men 'of the tribe at the head of the bay' (probably *Yaneikahti*) were killed to avenge the death, two days before, of Miaki's infant son. Following his child's death there was general

\(^{27}\) Paton, Journal, 12 January, 1 March 1861.

\(^{28}\) Gordon wrote that measles and dysentery killed two thirds of Erromango's population, including 'nearly all' the principal chiefs. However, of 100 young men and children who submitted to his treatment, only two (one of whom was 'otherwise diseased') had died by April 1861. Of the two dozen Erromangans 'who did not abandon the house of God', Gordon knew of only one who died. Gordon to Bayne, 3 April 1861, *H.F.R.* 1861:250-1; Gordon to Paton, 15 February 1861, extract included in Paton to Kay, 10 June 1861, *R.P.M.* 1862:39; Geddie to Bayne, 20 August 1861, *H.F.R.* 1862:39.

\(^{29}\) Paton to Kay, 13 February 1861, *R.P.M.* 1861:303.

\(^{30}\) Paton to Symington, 18 March 1861, *R.P.M.* 1861:375.
unrest at Port Resolution, perhaps from anxiety over who would be accused of sorcery. In the disturbances some of Paton's property was destroyed and Miaki sent Paton word that he was on no account to leave his house or he might be killed. Paton chose to regard the warning as a hypocritical bluff and wrote that Miaki was in fact doing all that he could to have him killed. When Miaki set some of his warriors to protect the mission house, Paton wrote of his being besieged by multitudes of armed savages watching an opportunity to take his life, adding (with unintended irony), 'yet they did not think of breaking our doors or windows to accomplish their purpose'. Paton's somewhat ridiculous interpretation of events served an important psychological function; confirming, by his very survival, that God was constantly protecting him from Satan's plots.

After three days Paton 'got hold of a chief' and told him that if anyone belonging to the mission were killed, 'God would punish them severely, & a man of war would also come from Sydney & punish them'. The chief, who had been to the Australian colonies and who had 'seen a man-of-war punishing some natives' (possibly at Black Beach in 1858), 'trembled, became covered with perspiration & left'. He returned soon after with a 'high chief' of the Kasemwene and declared that now the Tannese loved Paton. Miaki, his brother and another man also came to Paton, 'professing great friendship' and declaring that 'no person would attempt to kill us now'. Paton noted that they were afraid of a man-of-war punishing them and that 'perhaps God may make this the means of keeping them quiet for the present'. It was a threat which Paton was to employ again and again. On 14 March he warned Nouka and Yonan, two associates of Miaki, of their sin and danger, & told them if my life was taken a man-of-war would come & punish them, & what was worse God would punish them, especially Nouka, Miaki & Yonan, who had not only attempted my life, but hired the inland people to come & kill me. I had already written home to that effect so that if I was killed they would know that it was by these three men who hated the worship & me & every thing good. Said if you do force me to leave I will go to Aneiteum wait till a man-of-war does come, when I will come back & claim my own, & get redress.

According to Paton, Nouka trembled with fear and said that it was his 'young men' who had opposed the mission. Paton retorted that they only obeyed him and that a gunboat captain would hold him

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31Paton, Journal, 16 February 1861; Paton to Kay, 1 April 1861, R.P.M. 1861:305.
32Paton, Journal, 18 February 1861.
33Paton, Journal, 14 March 1861.
responsible for their conduct. Under the twin threat of further divine punishment and naval retribution, Paton was able to extract promises of support from Nepikinamame, Neraimene and Yanekahi leaders.\(^{34}\)

The image of a wrathful and vengeful God was not contrived by Paton simply to cow the Tannese. It was a conception with which he had grown up. When he told the Tannese that the hurricane of 14 March 'was because of their bad talk, of their killing and eating men, of their hating Jehovah and his worship, and wishing to kill us his servants', Paton was stating the orthodox Reformed Presbyterian conception of natural disasters. He might have been addressing a Scottish congregation when he warned them that 'if they did not fear, love, and worship' Jehovah, 'he would punish them both here and hereafter, for he knew all their conduct .... For his eye saw them at all times and in all places, and his ear heard all their bad and good talk'.\(^{35}\) And the Tannese might just as well have been a Reformed Presbyterian congregation, for their customary belief that spirits kept watch over them and determined the course of events was, in fact, very close to Paton's conception of God.

For the next two and a half months Paton could point to minor pilfering of his fowls, yams, taro and coconuts as the only signs of anti-mission behaviour. But, notwithstanding the severe shortage of food at the harbour — which in itself provided sufficient reason for the thefts — Paton interpreted each incident as a serious attempt on his life and part of a well orchestrated conspiracy. Again, his characteristic transformation of everyday events into signs fulfilled an important psychological function. By turning every minor Tannese misdemeanour into a religious symbol Paton was repeatedly confirmed in his faith. By categorizing every isolated Tannese action as part of a diabolical plot he proved to himself that

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\text{Satan has a fearful hold upon the superstitious minds of this people, and, at his will, leads them captive to commit the grossest deeds of wickedness with impunity ... Satan seems to have our natives completely under his power, and undoubtedly he will do his utmost to keep them, and contest every inch of ground gained for Jesus.}\(^{36}\)
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\(^{34}\)In his letter to Symington (\textit{R.P.M.} 1861:375) Paton referred to Nowar, Nouka, Miaki, Manuman and Yonan. In his Journal (19 March 1861) he listed Nouka, Miaki and Esubule.

\(^{35}\)Paton to Symington, 18 March 1861, \textit{R.P.M.} 1861:376.

But God exercised restraining power on the minds of the degraded savages and preserved his servant. In terms of this symbolic representation of himself vis-à-vis the Tannese, Paton was able every day and in every incident, to experience the meaningfulness and worth of his mission. God had placed him on Tanna to 'prosper his own glorious work' he wrote in March 1861 and, due to God's ever-loving grace, the storm over the measles had passed.

But the storm had not completely passed and there was a fresh wave of anti-mission sentiment when news of the Gordons' deaths on Erromango reached Port Resolution. A party of Erromangans on a trading vessel brought the news to Tanna and urged the Tannese to kill their missionaries, as they had done on Erromango and as they claimed the Aneityumese would soon do. The Tannese at Port Resolution, however, knowing that public opinion on Aneityum strongly supported the mission, and fearing naval retaliation should anything happen to Paton, rejected the Erromangan proposal. Tannese from other parts of the island were less cautious and next day the mission premises 'thronged with armed men ... from inland districts and ... Mr. Matheson's station ... rejoicing and praising the Erromangans for killing God's servants'. Paton reported the speech of the 'leader of a large party' of excited Tannese:

The men of Erromango killed Misi Williams long ago. We have killed some of the Samoan and Rarotongan teachers. We banished Misi Turner and Nisbet from our land. We killed an Aneityum teacher on Aniwa, and since Misi [Paton] came we killed one of his Aneityum men, and no man-of-war came to punish the Erromangans or us for killing the servants of Jehovah. Let us all talk about killing Misi Paton and the Aneityumese till we see if a man-of-war does punish the Erromangans and, if not, let us all unite in killing the missionaries, and banishing the worship of Jehovah from our land.37

An inland chief declared the Erromangans 'bold, good men ... to kill Misi and his wife, and to destroy the worship of Jehovah'. Paton warned the speaker that God would be angry with him for such 'bad talk' and that he would punish the Erromangans with 'eternal misery' for their wickedness. But the inland Tannese merely reasserted their 'love for the Erromangans'.

Nowar (Plate 6), who had been closely associated with the mission since the mid-1850s, but who was now anxious not to be counted as a mission supporter should the Tannese rise up against Paton, assumed a hostile posture. Jehovah had been unable to protect the Gordons, he explained to Paton. If a man-of-war

37Paton to Kay, 10 June 1861, R.P.M. 1862:37; cf. Geddie to Bayne, 26 August 1861, Misc. papers.
punished the Erromangans, the Tannese would be too afraid to harm their missionaries but if the Erromangans were not punished, 'by and by they will kill you, and the Aneityumese, and me, and all who worship at your house'. On 3 August Nowar boasted to Paton that Miaki would make a hurricane to sink any gunboat which attempted to land at Tanna and (with no regard for the contradiction) that if a gunboat did land the Tannese would unite to kill all on board. 'For the worship is lies, it makes us all sick, and kills us', he declared, threatening Paton with death if he did not leave the island by the first vessel to call. Almost immediately two British men-of-war appeared on the horizon and Nowar fled into the bush. He emerged from hiding when the ships had sailed and chided 'a great meeting' of Tannese that they had acted like children in listening to the captains. They would not punish the Erromangans, he asserted, just as they had not punished the Tannese: 'They will talk to them — that's all; they are afraid of us. Give up Missi and the worship, it is lies'. Nowar privately confided to Paton that his public talk was lies, but that if he spoke the truth he would be killed. But beneath Nowar's equivocation, his attempt to balance his attachment to Paton and his fear of being swept aside by anti-mission sentiment, Paton could perceive only the influence of Miaki.\(^{38}\)

In Paton's eyes, Miaki was 'our evil genius' who 'has been and is the cause of all our opposition', who personified the worst features of heathenism. As an agent of the Devil he could do no good — any moderation or reasonableness on his part signified duplicity and cunning. Behind every real or imagined expression of anti-mission sentiment was Miaki's guiding hand.\(^{39}\) The evidence suggests otherwise. It is true that Miaki tried to convince Paton to leave the island for, like many Tannese, he believed that the missionary and his religion were in some way responsible for the unprecedented epidemic of 1860-61. He also feared that Paton was helping to undermine traditional Tannese values and rituals of which he, as a yani en dete, was a moral guardian. On 13 June 1861 he confronted Paton at the mission house and declared:

Long ago we destroyed the worship of Jehovah again and again, and we were well; and now the worship is killing us all, and the inland people will destroy you and it, for we all love the conduct of the Tannese, but hate that of the worship. We will kill you and it, and then we will be good ... Such is our conduct, Misi. We and our fathers have loved such conduct, and if the worship condemns it,

\(^{38}\)Paton to Kay, 11 October 1861, R.P.M. 1862:115-16; Geddie to Bayne, 26 August 1861, Misc. papers; Seymour to Admiralty, 9 August 1861, Adm. 1/5760.

\(^{39}\)Paton, Journal, 8 January, 2, 11 March 1861.
I say it is forbidden for you to condemn it; if you oppose such good conduct, we will all kill you and destroy the worship ... Misi, you lie; we like many wives to attend us and do our work. Three of my wives are dead, and three are still living; and the worship killed them and my child, and by and by it will kill us all. We hate the worship ... Misi, we hate you and the worship, and love our own conduct. My heart is very good, and I hate your teaching. They will kill you.\footnote{Paton to Kay, 10 June 1861, \textit{R.P.M.} 1862:38.}
Miaki hated his teaching — i.e. the word of God — then, by definition, Miaki's heart was bad. But for Miaki goodness was defined by the 'conduct of our fathers', by traditional beliefs and practices. Not only did Paton condemn and blaspheme against such beliefs and practices, but he even threatened punishment from a man-of-war if the Tannese did not throw them aside and worship Jehovah and perform Christian rituals. In condemning the conduct of their fathers, Paton repudiated what it was to be Tannese. In its place he offered what appeared to lead to death, misery and despair. But Miaki also argued against those who wanted Paton killed, not only because he feared the personal consequences — Paton had warned him in mid-March that the navy would hold him personally responsible if he (Paton) suffered any harm or were forced to leave Tanna — but also because he realized that the death of one missionary would not reverse the disintegration of Tannese traditions.41 'They will kill you', Miaki had warned Paton — 'they' being the inland people who, in by-passing the authority of customary leaders like himself, reflected the very disintegration he wanted to arrest.

But Paton had no empathy with Miaki's dilemma and the declaration simply confirmed for him that Miaki was his arch-enemy. 'Satan seems to have got full possession of this poor man at present', he wrote, 'and is leading him to commit every act of wickedness ... It is impossible to think of a savage in whom more wickedness could be concentrated'. He told Miaki and his companions that it was their own 'sinful heathen conduct', and not the worship of Jehovah, which was making them sick and killing them. 'Give up your bad conduct', he told them, 'or God will punish you with eternal fire for your wickedness. Remember, I have told you all these things; you now know what is good and what is bad and when you love and do what is bad, Jehovah will punish you'. Again he warned Miaki that no matter who might kill him, it would be he whom God would punish.42 In his obsession with Miaki, Paton was reacting to a projection of his own symbolic imagination rather than to a separate and independent person outside himself; and opposition to the 'evil genius', the 'devil-king', became prescribed as a test of faith.

Paton's survival in the face of Miaki's presumed plotting confirmed God's supremacy over the latter's 'fiendish fury' and Paton's personal control of most of the inhabitants of the harbour. 'Public opinion', he wrote, 'still enables me to keep peace all over and around my side of the island, for which ... [Miaki] is

41 Paton himself quoted those who were clamouring for his death as saying: 'Miaki is lazy ... let us go and hold meetings at all our villages, and talk with each other till we all agree to kill Misi ...'. Paton to Kay, 10 June 1861, R.P.M. 1862:37; cf. Paton 1965:169-70.
42 Paton to Kay, 10 June 1861, 6 January 1862, R.P.M. 1862:38, 284.
very angry'. Given the evidence of his active mediation with mission opponents, Miaki had himself been instrumental in maintaining peace, though Paton's perception of the yaní en dété as a source of evil precluded the possibility of his admitting this. Paton received strong support from the Tannese amongst whom he lived in his opposition to Miaki, on the basis of which he made his claim about the backing of public opinion. When the men-of-war anchored at the harbour in August 1861 Miaki's enemies pressed Paton to have him and his followers publicly punished. Using the same tactic which had been employed against Kuanuan in 1859 and the Yanekahi in January 1861, they argued that then they would 'be strong to speak in your defence, and also to induce all the Tannese to worship Jehovah'. It is not clear if Paton also pressed for Miaki's punishment, but Commodore Seymour was satisfied with a promise of good behaviour.

The visit of the gunboats, and the non-appearance of a hurricane to destroy them, confirmed Jehovah's supremacy over the Tannese deities and strengthened Paton's power in the vicinity of the harbour. To a certain extent Paton was being manipulated by the Tannese with whom he lived. But, at the same time, he clearly was seen as a person with strong magical power. After his trees and ground crops successfully bore fruit in spite of a local famine so serious that many Tannese were forced to subsist on leaves and bark, a 'great number' of astonished Tannese massed at the mission house to view the spectacle, and a 'great chief, a sacred man' declared:

> Our conduct is bad, our professions are false. I say I make this famine. Others say they are making the breadfruit, the bananas, and the yams grow. Where is it? Who is making Missi's breadfruit and bananas grow? Oh, let us all entreat Missi and Abraham [an Aneityumese teacher] to pray to Jehovah, to make our fruits grow also, or else we will all soon die with hunger.45

All acknowledged the fruit to be 'the gift of God', and Paton claimed that he was able to persuade 'nearly all the inhabitants' of a nearby village to give up their custom of making the small shelter in the centre of their plantations which housed the protective spirits of their ancestors. He even persuaded 'one young chief and his wife' to destroy a spirit shelter. The

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43Paton to Kay, 10 June, 11 October 1861, R.P.M. 1862:38, 147; Geddie to Bayne, 26 August 1861, H.F.R. 1862:42; Seymour to Admiralty, 9 August 1861, Adm. 1/5760.
45Paton to Kay, 11 October 1861, R.P.M. 1862:115.
customary magicians, Paton wrote, were 'much offended' and claimed that the plantations would be lost. But the crops grew, and 'all concluded that Missi is right, and that it is not the sacred men and evil spirit that cause the yams to grow well, but Jehovah'. Subsequently, and significantly, Paton was presented with the first-fruit offerings.46

By October 1861 Paton had regained much of his earlier authority in the vicinity of the harbour. This was due in part to the backing of the Royal Navy, but it also reflected his reputation as a powerful magician. With the measles, dysentery and hurricanes behind them, the Tannese could look forward to benefiting from the apparent efficacy of Paton's rituals. But, contrary to Paton's expectations, the Tannese were not undergoing conversion. Because they, too, viewed the world in religious terms and invested natural occurrences with a spiritual significance, the Tannese were able to accept the efficacy of Paton's prayers, and Jehovah's power over nature, without overturning their traditional magico-religious construction of reality. 'Missi' was another sacred man and Jehovah another deity, like Karapanamun. In the same way, Paton attached a sacred significance to their actions and statements according to his own religious framework. What for the Tannese was Paton's integration into their traditional ideological and social relational systems — as exemplified by his acceptance of their first-fruit offerings — was for Paton a sign that the Tannese were casting aside their 'superstitious notions' and embracing the gospel. If the Tannese considered they had gained a magician, Paton thought he had acquired a congregation.

46Paton to Kay, 6 January 1862, R.P.M. 1862:284.
Chapter 7

'Friends' and 'enemies'

At the end of 1861 all the confusion, mutual misunderstanding and double meaning which had characterized Paton's three years among the Tannese suddenly came to a head. In a matter of weeks, he became caught up in a complex and confused political imbroglio. This revolved around a dispute over the customary ownership of the land on which he was settled and was complicated by the death of a principal claimant, the outbreak of disease among tribes to the north of the harbour, a severe war inland, and the occurrence of a destructive hurricane. What for the Tannese were separate — though not necessarily unrelated — issues giving rise to different combinations of allies and enemies, were for Paton expressions of the fundamental conflict between the friends and enemies of the mission; and Tannese attempts to resolve the issues through a variety of traditional means, including public disputation, gift exchange and warfare, signified to Paton a conspiracy directed against the mission in general and himself in particular.

Predictably, the conspiracy ringleader was Miaki, who continued to remain Paton's favourite bête noir. Whereas other missionaries were able to maintain amicable relations with Miaki, for Paton he was the obverse reflection of himself: where one was devoted to the glory of God, the other served only the Devil. Even when he was absent from Port Resolution, Paton was obsessed with his supposed machinations. When he went down to Umairarekar in December 1861, to assist Mrs Matheson in her confinement, Paton, on the basis that some (unknown) Tannese burnt an old, disused teacher's hut at Umairarekar and that Matheson's goats had been disturbed, concluded that Miaki had hired a party of Kwamera natives to kill him. When he returned to the harbour his 'friends' — Nowar, Ian, Sirawia and Manuman — told him that his 'enemies' — centred around Miaki and Nouka — had 'resolved to force me again to leave and go to the south side, or to go and live inland [i.e. with Ian], or they would kill me'.\(^1\) However, the 'friends' rose to a man (according to Paton) and declared: 'He is our Missi. He will stop here, and we will all worship

\(^1\)Paton to Kay, 6 January 1862, R.P.M. 1862:284-5; Paton 1965:187.
Jehovah, and obey his word'. Miaki and Nouka answered: 'As he lives on our land, he must leave it, and you can take him where you please' — which was not so much an ultimatum to Paton as an assertion that he was settled on their land. Ian replied:

It is our land on which he now lives; it is his own land which he bought from you, but which our fathers sold Missi Turner long ago. The land was not yours to sell; it was really ours. Your fathers stole it long ago from us by war ...²

Kuanuan, who had sold the land to the mission in 1842, seems to have died sometime in 1861, and Miaki, Nouka, Ian, Sirawia and Manuman, as Neraimone tribesmen, presumably would have had some claim to the land through genealogical connection. Using the old tactic of representing a local dispute as an issue centred on support for the mission in order to win Paton's support, the 'friends' declared that they would massacre Miaki and Nouka and their followers 'for their hatred of Missi'. Because the mis-representation corresponded to Paton's own construction of events, particularly in relation to his view of Miaki, the tactic was largely successful.

Early in January 1862, Paton, for the first time since the measles epidemic, visited Ian's inland villages. The Tannese probably interpreted this as an expression of support for Ian over the land question. All the villagers, Paton wrote, 'expressed a strong desire to have revenge on Nauka, and Miaki, and Karewick, for their deceit and wickedness, and all said that "for the good of Tanna these men must perish"'.³ The mere involvement of Miaki was sufficient to convince Paton that land ownership was not the issue at all; what was really occurring was a religious war. This had two profound effects. One was that Paton, backed up by his threats of naval intervention which he had clearly suggested would be directed against Miaki and his allies, effectively supported one side in a local land dispute and was seen by the Tannese to do so. The other effect was that Miaki's capacity to press his claim without at the same time appearing to oppose Paton was diminished.

The land question was further clouded, and Ian and Sirawia's bargaining position vis-à-vis Miaki strengthened, by a 'severe war inland' towards the end of 1861 which had sent 'hundreds' of mountain dwellers to seek refuge with Sirawia. Late in December Sirawia assembled the refugees at the village of Yuanawef a and presented them to Paton as his inland allies whom he had brought to the harbour to fight for the mission. 'Now you will not leave

³Paton to Kay, 6 January 1862, R.P.M. 1862:285.
us, for here they are', he declared. 'Look around you; they are many, like the sand, and will protect you'. One old chief rose from the group and addressed Paton: 'Missi, I say it is good for us all to live here. We are all your people, I say. There is to be no more stealing from you or persecuting of you, or we will kill and cook those who do so'. Here again was the tactic employed by the people who had settled on Kuanuan's land in 1858—the claim that they wanted to unite (on the disputed land!) under Paton's care. And again Paton made the mistake of accepting the encroachment by calling on Miaki and Nouka to 'unite' and 'live in peace' with Sirawia's inland allies; which was, in effect, to demand that they relinquish their claim to the land. If they did not, he warned, Jehovah 'would punish them both here and hereafter'. As he had threatened in the past, punishment here implied naval bombardment.

In the face of the threat of gunboat action and other punishments from Jehovah, the numerical strength of Sirawia's forces, and possibly even hoping to secure Paton's support, Miaki and Nouka publicly acknowledged that 'missi's word' was good and gave a large present of food to Ian and his men as a peace-offering. One of Sirawia's followers called on the two men to give back the land 'which they took from our fathers in war, and we will come and live in peace among them, and if not, we will fight for it'. The next day Ian 'and a host of followers' brought Miaki and Nouka a return present and Sirawia's men told Paton that if Miaki and Nouka did not accept the gift, 'we will have revenge for all their bad conduct'. However, the present was accepted and Ian became 'owner' of the mission land. Now Miaki and Nouka could have no claim to it, he told Abraham, Paton's senior teacher. 'All is ours, and you and Missi can take of our cocoanuts and bread-fruit what you require. You are our friends, living on our land, and we will protect you'. One implication of Ian's statement is that Paton's purchase of the mission land in 1858, regardless of whom he paid, was irrelevant from the Tannese point of view as it could be exchanged without reference to him. 'This is our quarrel, and not yours, Missi', Sirawia's men asserted, which suggests that the question of Paton's safety had not, as Paton assumed, motivated Ian and Sirawia to push their claim: from a statement by Ian's men that their chief had given Miaki and Nouka the gift 'to give up quietly & in peace, the land of our fathers, so that we might come and live on it ...', it would rather seem that Ian's supporters intended to settle on the land.

4Paton to Kay, 6 January 1862, R.P.M. 1862:285.
5Paton 1965:188.
7Paton, Journal, 8 January 1862. My emphasis.
Paton put the peaceful settlement of the land dispute down to his own skill and influence as a mediator. A more reasonable view of his role in the negotiations was that he was useful for Ian and Sirawia. If he perceived at all that he was being used against Miaki and Nouka he did not object. The important point for him was the triumph of Jehovah over Satan's forces. Notwithstanding the opposition of 'our enemies', he wrote in his Journal, 'our cause seems daily to be gaining ground'. Never had he felt such encouragement and happiness in his work. Outwardly, things were advancing. Sixty people attended his services and some prayed morning and evening with their families. If he gave any of his 'young men and children' a biscuit, 'they either ask a short blessing, or request me to do so, before they will taste it'.

Paton does not specify who the sixty people were who attended his religious services. If, as is likely, they were the followers of Ian, Sirawia, Manuman and Nowar, their attendance might point not to the Tannese acceptance of Christianity, but to Paton's involvement in the land issue. Similarly, there is nothing to suggest that the Tannese prayers to Jehovah were not simply an extension of their traditional ritual propitiation of deities like Karapanamun. In the same way, it is not necessary to assume a deepened Christian awareness to make sense of the Tannese requests that Paton bless the food he gave them.

Paton was also encouraged by being summoned often to pray with and give medicine to the sick and dying. As in the past, it probably signified that he was, in fact, perceived as the sorcerer who had caused the illness. The old association of mission and disease had been revived in December 1861 with the appearance of 'a great amount of sickness and death' around the harbour. The most seriously affected region seems to have been towards the volcano, among the Kasemene tribe whom Paton counted as among his worst enemies. The impression that the missionary had cast a spell upon them may well have been related to his ascent of the volcano — the most sacred site on the island, overlooking Kasemene territory — in September with a party of Belgians from La Coquette. According to Nowar, the Kasemene planned to kill Paton in December to avenge the deaths from disease of three of their people. Fearful of the repercussions of the missionary's death, Miaki and Nouka, 'professing great friendship', urged Paton to accompany them to the Kasemene to show that he was not causing the sickness among them. Convinced that it was a plot to have him killed, Paton refused the request.

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8Paton, Journal, 6 January 1862.
9Paton to Kay, 6 January 1862, R.P.M. 1862:286.
11Paton to Kay, 6 January 1862, R.P.M. 1862:286.
From the Kaserwene perspective, Paton's refusal to meet with them was an admission of guilt.

Miaki and Nouka's failure to effect a reconciliation between Paton and the Kaserwene, combined with their inability to conclude the land dispute in their favour, reflected on their credibility as yami en dête and undermined confidence in their authority. When, in December 1861, Nouka, as a yami en dête for the Neraimene, called on his tribesmen to fight against the tribe which had forced the 'mountain people' to seek shelter with Sirawia, 'he left for it with only one attendant, and becoming faint-hearted, he turned and came home next day'. The following week when Miaki summoned his people only his brother and 'six or seven boys' responded, 'but as the enemy had heard of his desire, the night before they had surprised and shot two of his leading friends' forcing him to abandon his attack. When he returned to Port Resolution, Miaki was 'laughed at by all our people, having universally refused to join him', which Paton, characteristically, interpreted as an expression of support for the mission.

Paton's division of the Tannese around him into friends and enemies was confirmed by reports reaching him from the Tannese. Paton's Journal entries for January 1862 show that reports which alleged that Miaki, Nouka and Karivick were inciting people around the harbour to murder him and drive Christianity from the island came from Katasian, Kowkari, Sirawia, Manuitonga, Rinkaimour, Kopisouak, Manuman and Nowar.12 Katasian and Kowkari lived at the mission station, had adopted European clothing, and were considered by Paton to be on the verge of conversion — Katasian was referred to around the harbour 'as missi's boy' — and it is likely that Miaki and his supporters had reproached both young men for abandoning traditional beliefs and customs. The other informants were, at the time, backing Ian's claim to the disputed land and it was in their interest for Paton to threaten Miaki, Nouka and Karivick with gunboat action if they persisted in their land claim. On 8 January, following deterioration of Ian's health, Paton reported that a dozen of Ian's 'underchiefs' declared that Nouka, Miaki, Kamimi — a 'brother' of Manuman — and Karivick were killing their chief by sorcery, 'because he loved Missi and Sirania'. Their past 'bad treatment' of Paton was cited as proof that they 'did or caused all the evil to be done':

Missi these men fought & killed our fathers, they fought Missi Turner, killed one of your teachers, broke down your fences, killed your dog, stole all they could from you, tried to kill you, & tried to get others to kill you, they cut your bananas for which we will have revenge, they told you if we would give up fighting, that they would

12Paton, Journal, 1, 4, 6, 7 January 1862.
all worship Jehovah & fight no more, you came & interceded with us, & our fathers, & we loved you & obeyed you & your work, but they deceived you & us all ... They did not come to worship as they often promised ... And they send Kariwick here to advise us all to hate & kill you Missi for making him [Ian] sick. Ian loves you. Sirania loves you. We all love you & you love us all we know they are telling lies.\textsuperscript{13}

The characteristic intermingling of a number of local disputes with the question of support for the mission, regardless of the motives of those who perpetuated the confusion, simply confirmed Paton's prejudices. Whether Ian's men cynically manipulated Paton — whose hostility to Miaki would have been apparent to everyone — or whether they sincerely believed that their fight was his fight, Paton did not consider that he was allying himself with a party to a local dispute. Every conflict was merely an aspect of the fundamental religious battle. On 30 January he wrote home that Nouka, Miaki and Kariwick 'united against our people, and gave the challenge to war by killing a fat pig of Sirania's, cutting down my fences and bananas, killing three of my goats, and attempting to kill a chief's son [Katasian] who had come to stay at my house'.\textsuperscript{14}

The cutting down of the bananas on the disputed land was referred to on a number of occasions during the course of the land dispute, and it provides a precise example of how even seemingly minor episodes assumed radically different meanings for Paton and the Tannese. For Paton, it expressed the opposition of Miaki and his followers to himself and the mission. From the Tannese perspective, it was a symbolic challenge by Miaki to the other land claimants — an assertion of his right to the land. It was an action, declared Ian's followers, 'for which we will have revenge'.

In the first week of January, Paton had been treating Ian for his sickness, administering medicine and applying blisters to his chest. Given the Tannese belief that the person who caused an illness was the person best able to cure it, Kariwick's claim that Paton was making Ian sick was credible. Indeed, Paton later wrote that Ian had planned to kill him from his sick-bed. The impression that Paton was using sorcery against Ian would have gained further credence by his protestation to Ian's men on 8 January that God alone had power over life and death — in effect, an admission of personal responsibility. Paton was not the only person suspected of sorcery: some of Ian's underchiefs suspected Miaki and his followers. Following Ian's death on

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{13}Paton, Journal, 8 January 1862.
\textsuperscript{14}Paton to Kay, 30 January 1862, \textit{R.P.M.} 1862:243. My emphasis.
\end{footnotes}
8 January ‘even a part of his own [i.e. Ian's] people fled from their villages’ in the terror and excitement of the hunt for the guilty sorcerer(s).  

During the week following Ian's death a steady stream of rumours that a bloody war at the harbour was imminent reached Paton. On 11 January Manuman sent one of his men to warn Paton that in a day or two Nouka, Miaki and Kariwick would be attacked, 'as Ians people & all their inland tribes were assembled & determined to drive them out of the harbour for their wicked inconsistent conduct'. Sirawia repeated the warning and added that if Nowar sided with Miaki he and his people would also be killed. Miaki also warned Paton of an imminent war, though he maintained that Ian's people were coming to shoot the missionary and steal his property – presumably for killing their chief. Though Ian had himself plotted to kill him, Paton dismissed Miaki's statement as a complete fabrication. The next day, two of Miaki's men entreated Paton 'most urgently' to sail with them at once from Tanna or the inland people would shoot him and burn his house. It is not clear whether they were referring to Ian's people or to the Yanekahi and Kasermene who, the previous month, had blamed Paton for the outbreak of disease in their territory. In either case, Paton 'absolutely refused' to believe them.  

Cutting across the recriminations over Ian's sickness and death, and the threat of a Kasermene-Yanekahi attack on the mission, was the continuation of the land dispute as a burning issue. It is not clear what the terms of the settlement between Ian and Miaki were, but almost immediately after their exchange various parties were again asserting their right to the land. Ian's people broadcast that they planned to live on the land; Miaki's Yanekahi ally Naia cut bananas growing there; and Sirawia seems to have actually settled on it at Paton's behest. With as many as four parties disputing proprietary or usufructuary rights to the land, Paton continued to reduce it to an uncomplicated battle between the mission's friends and enemies.  

The inability of Paton's mythical framework to embrace the complex interplay of political factors at the harbour in January 1862 may be seen in his interpretation of Nowar's behaviour. On 7 January Paton noted that Nowar was 'much excited & afraid as Miaki had threatened to shoot him on account of his friendship for me & Sironia & Ian'. After Ian's death, he was 'a firm & boisterous friend of Miaki's ... but again when he meets Manuman or Sirania he is just as great a friend & adherent of Ians'.

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16Paton, Journal, 10–11 January 1862.
17Paton, Journal, 8 January 1862; Paton to Kay, 30 January 1862, R.P.M. 1862:246.
Paton claimed to have heard Nowar advise Miaki, Nouka and Numaha on 10 January to nahak and kill 'all their enemies', and two days later Abraham alleged that Nowar urged Ian's people to 'fight Miaki'. All of which suggests that there were distinct issues, bringing into operation different webs of alliances, cutting across each other at Port Resolution in January 1862. However, for Paton, Nowar's contradictory behaviour simply signified 'heathen treachery'.

The event which finally precipitated fighting between Ian's people and Miaki and his allies was a hurricane on 16 and 17 January. Since 13 January Miaki's people had been sounding their conches to bring on a storm — according to Paton, to destroy the mission house and drive him from the island. The hurricane levelled huts and plantations and Miaki warned Paton that he feared the inland people would kill him and his people for destroying their crops. He advised the missionary to be ready to take to sea in canoes with his people should they be attacked. The confrontation came on 18 January, when the 'inland people came in a host enclosing the whole bay & fired some 5 or 6 muskets .... In a moment the whole bush from sea to sea was one yell & howl as if thousands of people were around'. Both Miaki and Nowar warned Paton that the invaders would shoot him, burn his house and steal all his property. They urged him to leave his valuables at Nowar's village of Samoa and join them in flight either overland or by sea. Paton, on the basis of Miaki's 'sullen look', rejected their advice as a ploy to get his property to distribute 'among their new friends' — though two days later he did remove some of his property to Samoa after Nowar had indicated that he would protect it from Miaki, Nouka and Kariwick. In the fighting, Miaki, Nouka, Kariwick and Nowar initially were opposed by Manuman, Manuitonga and Rinkaimour. Within four days Sirawia and Manuitonga were supporting Miaki against Manuman. Miaki also had Yanekahi and Kasemone backing which might indicate acceptance of Miaki and Nouka's accusation that Manuman had caused the hurricane to destroy their food, whereas his people had 'plenty of pigs, yams, and kava'. There may also have been opposition to Manuman's family because Manuman's 'brother' Kamimi was alleged to have killed Ian by sorcery. Nowar, who had been a 'close friend' of Manuman, after 18 January both denounced and supported Miaki.

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18 Paton, Journal, 7-8, 10-12 January 1862.
20 Paton, Journal, 18 January 1862. In his letter to Kay, 30 January 1862, and Paton 1965, the 'if' is deleted.
21 Paton, Journal, 18 January 1862; Paton to Kay, 30 January 1862, R.P.M. 1862:244.
22 Paton to Kay, 30 January 1862, R.P.M. 1862:245.
The fighting, which appears to have been in response to several issues, was seen by Paton as another showdown between his friends and enemies. Siravia and Manuitonga's support for Miaki signified heathen treachery, and Manuman was represented as upholding the mission's cause. Paton wrote on 23 January that Manuman had been chased 'from village to village, with his remaining people, half over Tanna, and every day some are murdered, and villages are burned'. Miaki, Karlwick and their followers were reported to have burnt a line of thirteen or fourteen villages, 'all belonging to Manuman's tribe', reaching from Port Resolution to sixteen miles inland (sic), and murdered and cooked women and children as they fell into their hands.24

In the midst of his fighting against Manuman, Miaki was still attempting to isolate Paton from his Yanekahi and Kaserumene opponents. According to a myth now current at Port Resolution, the Yanekahi and Kaserumene wanted to kill Paton to avenge the death of Gaskin in 1851. While the myth clearly expresses recent anti-European sentiment amongst the Tannese, it is also possible that there were Yanekahi and Kaserumene people who wanted to avenge Gaskin's death, and an opportunity presented itself when it appeared that Paton was using sorcery against their tribes. The question of avenging Gaskin's death aside, the belief that Paton was killing them by sorcery was sufficient reason for the Yanekahi and Kaserumene to rid the island of the missionary. In either case, the written evidence and the current myth both suggest that Miaki used all the means at his disposal to protect Paton. His attempt to arrange a meeting between the missionary and the Kaserumene in December was followed by a proposal that Paton should distribute property among the mission's enemies, as Turner had done in 1843, to save his life.25 On 18 January Miaki and Nouka gave 'a large present of food' to the Yanekahi and Kaserumene people which, Miaki assured Paton, was to keep them from doing the missionary further harm. On receipt of the gift they retired from Port Resolution to their own territory. When they returned two days later, Miaki and Nouka forbade them to steal Paton's property or to burn the mission house.26

Each of Miaki's attempts at mediation signified something sinister to Paton. He had refused to accompany Miaki and Nouka to the Kaserumene in December for fear that it was an ambush.27 He 'firmly refused' to distribute property among the Yanekahi and Kaserumene: Miaki and Nouka 'deceived me in everything', he wrote.

25Paton to Kay, 6 January 1862, R.P.M. 1862:286; Paton, Journal: 10 January 1862.
27Paton to Kay, 6 January 1862, R.P.M. 1862:286.
'If they got my goods among them they would steal all. Their desire, talk & conduct was bad & had been bad'. Similarly, the presentation of food on 18 January signified that Miaki and Nouka were enlisting **Yanekahi** and **Kaserumene** support,

to 'kill and cook Missi and his two Aneiteumese at every village on Tanna, to steal all their property, and to burn all their houses'. Our bodies were to be cut into small pieces, so that they might be sent to be cooked at all the public villages.\(^{28}\)

Miaki's direction to the **Yanekahi** and **Kaserumene** who had assembled at the harbour on 20 January, to respect mission property, was a ploy to bring him back from Nowar's village to the mission premises where 'they would ... kill me and my Aneiteumese'. As in the past, Paton's fears were confirmed by alarming reports from his 'friends', that is the supporters of Manuman, who were opposed to Miaki. During his last days at Port Resolution Paton refused even to confer with Miaki and, on Nowar's advice, made plans to escape to Matheson's district.

Paton's hair-raising account of his abortive attempt to sail from Port Resolution in a canoe, his journey overland to Matheson's station just steps ahead of Miaki's forces, the supposed machinations of Miaki even at Umairarekar, and his escape to Aneityum on the **Blue Bell**, has been recorded in his **Autobiography**. While it reads like a Ballantynian adventure story, after the manner of **Headhunters of the Coral Sea**, it would be a mistake to dismiss it as the romantic fantasy of an aging man.\(^{29}\) The story *is* fantastic, but it is also true, in the sense of being a symbolic expression of how Paton perceived himself *vis-à-vis* the Tannese. The concept of warfare between the powers of light and the powers of darkness was not just an allegorical device for Paton, but the literal expression of reality: 'What a dreadful hold Satan has upon the hearts of these poor deluded people,' he wrote in his Journal, '0 for the all powerful influence of Divine grace to break his bonds & let the prisoners go free under the light & influence of the Gospel of Jesus'. In particular, what a dreadful hold Satan had upon the hearts of Miaki, Nouka and Kariwick: 'It is impossible to conceive of more deceitful, or desperately wicked people than these men are ... They hate the worship & seem only to delight in robbery, bloodshed, & murder, & cannibalism'. Their fight against Manuman was 'a religious war, tho' carried on by savages ...'.\(^{30}\)

\(^{28}\)Paton to Kay, 30 January 1862, *R.P.M. 1862*:243; Paton, Journal, 10 January 1862.

\(^{29}\)Paton wrote the **Autobiography** when about 60 years old. The extant manuscripts confirm that his brother James' editing of the Tanna section was very slight.

\(^{30}\)Paton, Journal, 13, 14, 18 January 1862.
Paton's flight to Umairarekar was followed by a reaction against the mission there. Matheson had written on 14 January that 'our prospects are ... becoming more than ever cheering'; two weeks later he wrote that he had 'experienced more real heart satisfaction in the work, than ever before among this people'. More 'real soul-saving knowledge' was being communicated daily. But Matheson also wrote that ever since he had settled at Umairarekar, the people 'invariably' had told him that they would act towards him just as the people of Port Resolution acted towards Paton: 'if they drive Mr. Paton away, we will drive you away'. As at the harbour, there were influential men at Umairarekar who perceived that the mission posed a threat to traditional Tannese beliefs and customs and who welcomed the opportunity to rid Tanna of the missionary menace. For instance, after participating in burning the church building on 2 February, Kati, under whose protection Matheson had settled at Umairarekar, complained to the missionary:

Before you came here, people used to hear my word far and near, they used to believe that I could do anything and make anything, they also used to say great is the word of Kati, but now you tell them God makes everything, and the people are beginning to hear your word; and all who receive the word of God don't hear my word, or believe that I am god of the sea, of sickness, of food &c. 

Proof that Matheson was beginning to exert some of the influence Kati credited him with was Kapuku's action at this time of handing over to the missionary all his family's sacred stones as a sign of his acceptance of Christianity.

Matheson's reply to Kati was that God's word was never going to leave Tanna, and when a trading vessel called to evacuate the mission party Matheson 'resolved to remain and die on Tanna', and locked himself in his study rather than accompany Paton to Aneityum. In his otherwise very detailed letter to the Foreign Missions Committee of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Paton made no mention of Matheson's refusal to leave his post. The omission may have been to save Matheson any embarrassment, though it seems more likely that Paton was anxious not to give an impression that he had fled Tanna prematurely. Matheson reluctantly agreed to quit the island only after Paton threatened to 'write a note with the vessel stating why I am forced to remain,

33Matheson to Bayne, 20 February 1862, H.F.R. 1862:224; Paton to Kay, 30 January 1862, R.P.M. 1862:250.
and if we are murdered as it is almost certain we will be, God will charge you as our murderer'. 34 En route to Aneityum, the vessel called at Port Resolution where Miaki urged Paton to inspect his house which, he claimed, was just as the missionary had left it. Suspecting an ambush, Paton sent his Aneityumese assistant Abraham who brought back the report that food and printing type were strewn about the premises and that the piano was smashed. 35 That damage had, in fact, been committed a fortnight before by Yanekaht and Kaserrumene tribesmen, and Miaki and Nouka had taken steps to ensure that it was not repeated. 36 Nouka had even nailed up the mission house door. 37 Miaki told Paton that although he and his people 'hated the worship' for its effect on 'their talk and customs', they would not destroy his house, just as 'their fathers did not destroy Mr. Turner's house ...'. 38

After his flight from Tanna, Paton drew up a 'petition' from ten 'chiefs of Tanna who worship towards Jehovah' to be sent to Sir John Young, Governor of New South Wales. From start to finish the document is Paton's creation, and his proposal to present it to the Governor was against the wishes of his fellow missionaries John Geddie and Joseph Copeland. 39 The document is significant for the way it epitomizes Paton's reduction of a complex variety of political issues to a straightforward 'religious war', his obsessions with Miaki, his determination to employ the punitive power of the Royal Navy against the recalcitrant Tannese, and his paternalist attitude towards the Tannese:

The prayer of the Tannese who love the Word of Jehovah to the Great Chief of Sydney.

To the Chief of Sydney the servant of Queen Victoria of Britannia, saying, We great men of Tanna dwell in a dark land. Our people are very dark-hearted, they know nothing good.

Missi Paton the man, Missi Matheson the man, and Missi Matheson the woman, have dwelt here four yams (years) to teach us the worship of Jehovah; their conduct has been straight and very good, therefore we love these three

37 Geddie to Bayne, 22 July 1867, Misc. papers; Paton, Notebooks; Paton 1965:197.
38 Paton to Kay, 30 January 1862, R.P.M. 1862:252. Miaki later removed Paton's boat into the bush 'lest someone should take it away'; Copeland to Kay, 23 May 1862, R.P.M. 1862:432.
missionaries, and the worship of Jehovah which they three have taught us Tannese.

Alas! a part, as it were, only three (sic) of our chiefs, whose names are Nauka, Miaki, Karewick, Ringian, Enukarupi, Attica and Namaka, they and their people hate the worship, and all good conduct like that which the word of Jehovah teaches us, and the people of all lands. These men all belong to four villages only; they have stolen all Missi's property; they have broken into his house; they have cut down his bananas; they have scolded and persecuted him, and they desire to kill Missi and to eat him, so that they may destroy the worship of God from the land of Tanna.

We hate exceedingly their bad conduct, and pray you the Great Chief of Sydney to punish these dark Tannese who have persecuted Missi, who have deceived Missi, who have altogether deceived the Great Chief (Commodore Seymour), and the Chief (Captain Hume) of the men-of-war, and who deceived the chief and other missionaries in the John Williams, who murdered one of Mr Paton's Aeiteum teachers, who fought Messrs Turner and Nisbet, who killed Vasa and his Samoan people, who killed the foreigners, who have now fought and driven away our three missionaries; their conduct had been exceedingly bad, they destroy the kingdom of Tanna, kill the people and eat them all, and are guilty of bad conduct every day; our hearts hate their bad conduct, we are pained with it.

Therefore, we earnestly pray you the chief of Sydney to send quickly a man-of-war to punish them, and to revenge all their bad conduct towards Missi. Then truly we will rejoice, then it will be good and safe for they three missionaries to dwell here, and to teach us men of the devil; our hearts are very dark, we know nothing, we are just like pigs, therefore it is good for Missi to teach us the word and the worship of Jehovah the Great King. Long ago he was unknown to us here, Missi brought his knowledge to us here.

Our love to you the Great Chief of Sydney, the servant of Queen Victoria, and we earnestly pray you to protect us, and to protect our missionaries, and the worship of God in our land, the land of Tanna. We weep for our missionaries; they three gave us medicine for our sickness, clothing for our bodies, taught us what is good conduct, taught us the way to heaven; and of all these things long ago we had no knowledge whatever, therefore we weep and our hearts cling to these three, our missionaries. If they three are not here, who will teach us the way to heaven, who will prevent our bad conduct, who will protect us from the bad conduct of foreigners, and who will love us and teach us all good things?

Oh compassionate us, Chief of Sydney! Hold fast these three, our missionaries, and give us them back, and we will love you and your people. You and your people know the word of Jehovah, you are all going on the path to
heaven, you all love the word of Jehovah. Oh! look in mercy on us dark-hearted men going to the bad land, to the great eternal fire, just like our fathers who are dead.

May Jehovah make your heart and the hearts of your people sweet towards us, to compassionate us, and to look in mercy on our dark land, and we will pray Jehovah to make you good and give you a rich reward.

The names of us the chiefs of Tanna who worship towards Jehovah:

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It is most unlikely that the statement signified the same things to the ten petitioners as it did to Paton. Possibly they did not understand what they were signing. After all, the very notion of a petition is rooted in a Western tradition of jurisprudence beyond the range of their experience. The ten men may have put their 'X' on whatever Paton offered them just to please him, or with the hope of some material reward, or so as not to be counted among the mission's 'enemies' should a gunboat pay a retaliatory visit. It is also possible that the petition represented existing alliance networks among the Tannese which may or may not have been related to the question of support for the mission. Perhaps some of the signatories did, like Paton, view the recent fighting as a religious war. Each explanation is credible to some extent.

Just four days before the document was drafted (assuming it was written at Port Resolution), Manuman and Nauru's people were 'still hunted and shot down daily' by the men listed as the mission's opponents. Perhaps Manuman and Nauru saw the call for naval action against Miaki and others as a means of reversing their losses. Nowar and his son-in-law Faimungo (Firmingo) may have been insuring themselves from possible gunboat retribution. Both had sided with Miaki against Manuman. Taura, from Matheson's district, had pledged to protect Paton after he fled to Umairarekar until a vessel arrived, for which he had been given various goods (which Paton had 'brought for the purpose'). Perhaps he anticipated additional rewards for a show of support for the mission. Certainly Paton had little faith in his goodwill. Kapuku (Kapuka), also from Matheson's district, perhaps saw his mark on the petition as a gesture of support for the mission cause: earlier he had given up all his family's sacred stones as a sign that he accepted Christianity, after which he was 'time and time again' threatened with death if he ventured near the mission premises.40

Perhaps one of those who made the threats was Namaka (listed as one of the mission's enemies), who had been a staunch opponent of Matheson during the measles epidemic — though Inglis later included Namaka among the chiefs 'who had befriended Mr Paton'.

Of the other signatories, Ruawa seems to have moved to Port Resolution only in the late 1850s, after being forced to leave northwest Tanna, apparently settling on the land claimed by Ian and Miaki. Possibly he believed it to be to his advantage to have the navy drive Miaki from Port Resolution — a suggestion Paton may well have made. The names Nebusak and Kaua do not appear anywhere else in the historical documents for the period and are not recalled today at Port Resolution or Kwamera.

Geddie dismissed the petition as fraudulent. In his annual report for 1862 he repudiated Paton's assumption that the war which precipitated the mission's breakup had been directed against the mission. It was 'entirely a native quarrel', he wrote, with mission supporters and their 'heathen countrymen' united on opposite sides. Paton, rather than any spurious religious war, was responsible for the mission's collapse. Geddie suggested that Paton should not be allowed to return to Tanna as he had completely alienated an influential party of Tannese who were not otherwise opposed to the mission. Two other missionaries should re-occupy Port Resolution, he argued, while Paton's experience would be useful elsewhere.

For his part, Paton 'resolved to remain on Aneityum translating and watching any opportunity to return as soon as possible to Tanna'. However, he was overruled by Geddie and Copeland who despatched him to the Australian colonies to raise funds for a new missionary vessel. Matheson persevered with his translations, waiting Paton's return so that they might together re-occupy Tanna. But Paton delayed his return, time and again, to tell the world of the gruesome scenes of depravity he had endured on Tanna and of his miraculous escapes from Satan's grasp. To enraptured audiences throughout Australia and Britain he never tired of repeating his trials among a people who, he claimed, daily sacrificed human victims, daily feasted upon human flesh,

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41Matheson to [Bayne], 1 April, 1 August 1861, H.F.R. 1862:43, 51; Inglis to Kay, 9 November 1865, R.P.M. 1866:305.

42In 1975 Ruawa's descendant claimed (to me) that his great-grandfather was Kuanuan's son, who therefore had traditional right to the land. The genealogy was disputed by other people at Port Resolution.


44Ibid.

enslaved their women, strangled their wives and killed their children. 46

Chapter 8

The Curagoa Affair

By the time Paton returned to the islands Matheson had been dead nearly three years. ¹ When he left the New Hebrides in 1862 on his fund raising tour, Paton was to have spoken only in New South Wales; but he extended his itinerary to Victoria, then the remaining Australian colonies, and finally Britain. In Scotland he remarried and was elected Moderator of the Reformed Presbyterian Church. He returned to Australia in 1864 but again put off returning to the New Hebrides for another season. During all this time he had anticipated that it would be he who reoccupied Port Resolution for Christ. However, when he returned in June 1865 the harbour was closed to him, but the fortuitous appearance of a British gunboat offered him a God-sent opportunity to re-open Tanna to the gospel by force.

When Joseph Copeland visited Port Resolution in April 1862, the war which had occasioned Paton's leaving Tanna had ended. Copeland found the mission house standing but with the windows broken, doors removed and 'not the worth of sixpence' of furnishings remaining — for which the harbour dwellers blamed the inland people. ² Miaki told Copeland that it would be safe for teachers to return to the harbour but advised a four month delay — until the planting season would further improve political stability. When he returned towards the end of 1862 Copeland was again urged to delay the resettlement of teachers, as the people around the harbour were about to make war. Fighting and the threat of fighting — it would seem chiefly between the Neraimene and Yanekahi — kept the harbour region closed to the mission's recommencement throughout 1863 and 1864. During that time Miaki, who requested Copeland in April 1863 to remove him to Aniwa for fear of his life, was shot dead and numbers of his followers

¹ Copeland to Kay, 31 December 1862, R.P.M. 1863:149-50.
were forced to flee to other parts of the island.\(^3\) Asked late in 1864 if they desired the return of teachers, the Tannese replied, 'We have not time to sit down and hear the Word of God; we are just about to be driven into the sea by our enemies yonder'. The unrest continued into 1865 — with Nowar being accused of using sorcery against Nouka — and when Paton called at Port Resolution in July of that year he was forced to accept that the station was closed to his resettlement.\(^4\)

Paton sailed from Port Resolution with 'crushed feelings'.\(^5\) During his three and a half years in Britain and Australia he had implicitly assumed that the Tannese would hail his return. The decision of his fellow missionaries, meeting on Aneityum at their annual synod, that Tanna was not ready for the mission's recommencement, would have heightened his sensitivity to the charge that he had jeopardized the mission by prematurely abandoning his post in 1862.\(^6\) The synod resolved, on 1 August 1865, that Paton should undertake missionary duties on some other island. Paton seems to have rejected the proposal — three days later, it was rescinded in favour of his returning to the colonies to raise more funds.\(^7\) During the same session the missionaries, learning from Captain Luce of H.M.S. \\emph{Esk} of the imminent arrival at Aneityum of Commodore Sir William Wiseman, prepared a statement on the loss of life and property suffered by the mission on Tanna, Erromango and Efate, for the Commodore's immediate attention.\(^8\)

The main force behind the synod decision to appeal to Wiseman was Paton — with the strong backing of John Inglis, synod chairman. The other signatories of the memorial were James Gordon, William McCullagh and Donald Morrison, all of whom had arrived in the New Hebrides only during the preceding year, and Captain W.A. Fraser, master of the mission brig \\textit{Dayspring}. The most senior missionary, John Geddie, was on furlough in Canada,


\(^6\)Cf. Paton, Notebooks; Paton 1965:223.

\(^7\)New Hebrides Presbyterian Mission Synod, Minutes, 1 and 4 August 1865.

\(^8\)New Hebrides Mission Synod to Wiseman, 1 August 1865, enclosure No.1, Wiseman to Admiralty, 1 October 1865, Adm. 1/5925.
and Joseph Copeland was touring the Australian colonies. The events complained of by the synod had occurred before Gordon, McCullagh, Morrison and Fraser had arrived in the field and most of them during Inglis's furlough in Britain. Gordon later claimed that he at first rejected Paton's proposals for naval intervention, but eventually yielded, 'as my standing out would have barred action on Tanna; at least such was said'. Gordon—who had already been contemplating naval intervention at Erromango—probably feared that not backing Paton on Tanna would have barred any action at Erromango, which he considered much more warranted. Neither McCullagh nor Morrison was enthusiastic about naval action against the Tannese, but both accepted that it was perhaps necessary in order to recommence the mission at Port Resolution. McCullagh, certainly, was less concerned with Paton's specific charges than with Tannese indifference to 'any religious interference', which held out no prospect for Paton's resettlement. It is likely that they deferred in this matter to the more experienced missionaries and, having accepted the concept of punitive naval action, felt obliged to justify their support. Captain Fraser, not being a missionary, acted irregularly in signing the memorial. However, he later expressed his satisfaction at the results of the action at Tanna and was probably pleased to have been able to support his 'patron' Paton.

The synod's memorial to Wiseman alleged: that in 1854 a Rarotongan family in the service of the mission was murdered on Efate; that on 20 May 1861 George Gordon and his wife—brother and sister-in-law of James—were murdered by two Erromangans from the tribe at 'Bunkil' (Bunkhill), a few miles south of Dillon's Bay, at the instigation of Rangi, supposedly a Singaporean and therefore a British subject, and Akasau (alias Long Bob), a native of Dillon's Bay; that subsequently Akasau incited the Erromangans to kill the mission teachers; that, on Tanna, Paton and Johnston were attacked by Yanekahí and Kasemwene tribesmen.

10 Patterson to *London Guardian*, reprinted in *H.F.R.* 1866:244.
13 Fraser to Wiseman, 21 May 1866, enclosed in Wiseman to Admiralty, 23 June 1866, Adm. 1/5969.
14 Rangi was often described as a native of Singapore, though Shineberg believes that he was probably Polynesian. She notes that the missionaries possibly had heard that he was a 'Malay', a term often loosely used in those days to distinguish Polynesians from Melanesians. Shineberg 1967:266 fn. 24.
on 1 January 1861; that in 1861 an Aneityumese teacher was fatally wounded at the village of Yuanawefa; and that in February 1862 the Tanna mission was broken up and Paton, the Mathesons and their teachers were forced to flee, 'while most of their property was stolen or destroyed'.

The missionaries complained that nothing effective had been done to bring 'these murderers and miscreants to justice'. In 1861 Commodore Seymour had visited Erromango after the murder of the Gordons, but had decided against action. In 1862 a petition on the subject had been presented to Governor Young but no action followed because of the loss of the relevant documents when the Orpheus was wrecked off New Zealand. Since that time no man-of-war had visited the area. Consequently:

The natives of Erromanga and Tanna count up the number of white men they have killed, without their being punished for so doing, and boastingly say, that it is all lies, about Men-of-War coming to punish them; so that unless some firm but discriminating steps be taken to convince them, that British power will be employed for the protection of British subjects, no white man's life will be safe.

The synod trusted that Wiseman would reverse this state of affairs and assured him of their full cooperation. The commodore agreed to do all in his power 'to render life and property secure' and took on Inglis, Paton, Gordon and Morrison to act as interpreters, and Captain Fraser in the mission vessel Dayspring to act as pilot.

At Port Resolution Wiseman received a further statement from Paton and Inglis on the mission's losses at Tanna. It stressed that land had been legally purchased at Port Resolution, Umairarekar and other places between the two stations for Paton, Matheson and upwards of twenty teachers. In all of these transactions, it was claimed, 'the chiefs promised them protection' — promises they repeated to Captain Vernon in late 1859 and again to Commodore Seymour in 1861. In spite of these promises, 'one assault after another was made upon the teachers and the missionaries' culminating in the break-up of the mission in 1862. Furthermore, just before Wiseman's arrival the three teachers at Black Beach had been forced to flee to Erromango 'through the threatenings of some inland tribes, instigated by a party of natives from Port Resolution'. Thus, concluded Paton and Inglis, action must be directed against Port Resolution which was the 'centre of political influence' for the whole island, and the base of opposition to the mission.

\[15\]Inglis and Paton to Wiseman, 11 August 1865, enclosure No.2, Wiseman to Admiralty, 1 October 1865, Adm. 1/5925.
Though he had been warned by his predecessor, Seymour, not to accept missionary claims uncritically, Wiseman took the mission statements to heart. In doing this he was following a firm tradition of mutual support which had developed between naval officers and missionaries in the New Hebrides. Both were concerned to impose civilized standards on a presumed benighted race, and Wiseman would have appreciated that effective missionary control was conducive to stability in the region. Furthermore, the missionaries' argument that Seymour's pacific policy had merely emboldened the Tannese and Erromangans to commit more misdeeds was superficially persuasive. Indeed, Seymour had implied in his notes for his successor that a display of force might be warranted at Port Resolution and Erromango, 'where the natives are not to be trusted'.

But the decision about what to do at Tanna and Erromango was Wiseman's alone. There were precedents for armed intervention to protect British life and property — such as the assault on northwest Tanna in 1858 — but the British Government had consistently backed away from giving firm directions on the matter. As to the use of force, the Duke of Newcastle had written in 1860 that on the one hand flagrant acts of violence committed by the natives should not go unpunished, while on the other hand it was very difficult to give general abstract instructions. To justify force it would be necessary for the investigating officer to establish that the fault was on the part of the natives and that they had not been provoked by the complainants. On the basis of Paton's testimony, Wiseman ascertained that the Tannese were guilty of unprovoked acts of violence against the mission. Operating very decidedly within a British legal framework, he satisfied himself that Paton's land had been 'fairly purchased', that the property alleged to have been destroyed or stolen was 'all bona fide the property of British subjects', and that the Tannese had broken their promise of protection and annoyed British subjects to an extent which rendered their presence at Port Resolution highly dangerous.

Paton went ashore on 10 August and brought back to the Curapoa a group of friendly Tannese, who were 'kindly received' by Wiseman and shown over his ship. The commodore demanded that they deliver up the 'guilty chiefs' by noon next day or, in accordance with the principle of collective responsibility, he

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16 Seymour to Admiralty, 'The Australian Station', 15 May 1863, Adm. 1/5829.
17 C.O. to Admiralty, 12 May 1860, C.O. 201/514.
18 Namely Nautka [Nouka], Usua, Yawrien [Yorian], Kariwik [Kariwick], Rangian [Ringian in 1862 Petition], Yaukarupi [Enukarupi in 1862 Petition], Yaufangi [Yaufanga] and Kariaw. Inglis and Paton to Wiseman, 11 August 1865, enclosure No.2, Wiseman to Admiralty, 1 October 1865, Adm. 1/5925.
would punish them for protecting the murderers. He also demanded £1000 compensation for the British property stolen and destroyed. Twice that afternoon Paton returned to the shore and urged the Tannese to comply with Wiseman's summons and both times they laughed at him. The Tannese declared that they were prepared to fight the Big Ship. Next day, Paton went ashore three times, and the deadline was extended to 7 o'clock next morning. Still he found the 'guilty parties ... all rejoicing in prospect of fighting', and his tearful entreaties only brought on more laughter. On the morning of 12 August Paton again went ashore and told the assembled Tannese that all who went with Nowar and the 'Christian party' to a vantage point overlooking the bay would not be harmed and would be able to witness all that took place while Wiseman 'punished the heathen'.

In a celebrated account of the bombardment, J.L. Brenchley, naturalist on board the Curacao, noted the course of events as the ship's big guns began to carry very unpleasant messages to the culprits. The cutter further enlightened them by discharging rockets among a great crowd that had massed at the harbour (Plate 7). The overture continued for some hours, when the more serious business of the day began by the landing of 170 men — comprising almost the entire fighting crew of the ship — who were to penetrate into the island and commit such devastation as was in their power. Cooks, stewards and stokers were left to man the ship's guns. No doubt Wiseman had in mind that the Tannese had killed two marines in the naval assault on Black Beach in 1858. Among the Curaçoa's crew, certainly, there was a strong undercurrent of opinion that they were likely to get a dusting.

The Tannese tried in vain to match the Curacao's fire-power with their muskets but were quickly scattered into the bush by the rockets. However, the dense tropical bush presented an almost 'unsurmountable barrier' to the landing party. Paton had failed to procure a native guide so the men had to manage as best they could, marching Indian-file along the narrow paths. One party, under Commander Dent, 'after a prodigious expenditure of creeping, crushing and other fatiguing exertion in forcing a way through the intricate tangle of bush', eventually reached a cleared spot which was to be the rendezvous point with Lt. Meade's company. So intent were they on grappling with the undergrowth that they did not notice that the Tannese were following close on their heels until, on reaching the open space, the Tannese let fire on the exposed men (Plate 8). A dash was made at the Tannese who

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19Paton to S.M.H., 18 November 1865.
20Brenchley 1873:201.
21Meade 1870:237.
Plate 7  H.M.S. Curaçoa shelling native villages on the island of Tanna. (From The Australian News, 25 October 1865, p.13.)
vanished into the bush. During their flight they came across and mortally wounded one of the ship's men cutting down sugar cane.

The object of the landing was not to kill Tannese, but to destroy as much as possible of the villages and gardens and then burn the bush. Only four Tannese were killed, and three of these later by an unexploded bomb. Meade's party destroyed gardens belonging to Nouka and Yaufanga, alleged ringleaders of the opposition to Paton in 1861-62, without much effort — 'it being a beautiful arrangement of Nature that the trees which are the principal sustenance of these savage nations ... are of so soft a wood that a banana, or mummy apple-tree, six inches thick can be hewn down with one blow of a sword'. While Meade was thus engaged, Dent destroyed the offenders' villages and a party under Mr Scudamore, the ship's master, went along the coast destroying their canoes — twenty-one in all. The attempt to set fire to
the bush was unsuccessful owing to drenching rain the previous night. 23

Wiseman wrote that to have left without punishing the Tannese would have sacrificed property and life in the future. From his perspective he had arbitrated in an impartial way; he had made a point of explaining to the Tannese whom he had interviewed that he would similarly investigate and act upon their complaints against British subjects. 24 However, from the point of view of the Tannese, for whom the significance of the events of January 1862 was altogether different from Paton's interpretation, Wiseman's actions would have appeared far from impartial. Some would have construed the course of events as combined naval-missionary intervention against Nowar's current enemies. At the time Nowar and Nouka's people were opposed to each other — Nowar having been accused of sorcery which was making Nouka ill — and negotiations had taken place only between Paton and Wiseman and Nowar and his supporters, after which the villages, gardens and canoes of Nouka and his brother-in-law Yaufanga were destroyed. 25 Presumably Nouka would have regarded Paton's actions as treacherous because, at the time of the alleged offences, he had intervened on the missionary's behalf and, after he had fled south, had nailed up the mission house door to prevent further pilfering. Immediately after the assault on Nouka and Yaufanga's villages, Morrison wrote that Nowar's people stood securely on the beach all day, 'viewing what was going on with mingled feelings of pleasure, gratitude and terror'. 26

In the 1862 petition to Sir John Young, Nouka, Miaki, Kariwick, Ringian, Yaukarupi (Enukarupi), Attica and Namaka were listed as the mission's chief opponents. In the synod's memorial of 1 August 1865 the charge was repeated against the first five individuals — Attica and Namaka being from Matheson's district. Also included in the memorial as an enemy of the mission was Usua, whose father (Rauawa) had signed the 1862 petition as one of 'the chiefs of Tanna who worship towards Jehovah'. In Paton and Inglis's memorandum to Wiseman, Yorian, Yaufanga and Kariaw were included with Usua as 'the great enemies of the Mission ... who have caused all our losses' — yet none of these four men was referred to in either Paton's 1862 petition or the synod's memorial to Wiseman. Usua, Yaufanga and Kariaw were not mentioned

24Wiseman to Admiralty, 1 October 1865, Adm. 1/5925; Inglis to Kay, 11 December 1865, R.P.M. 1866:177.
25Inglis to Kay, 11 December 1865, R.P.M. 1866:178-9; cf. Paton to S.M.H., 18 November 1865.
in any literary source before the memorandum and Paton's only previous reference to Yorian, in 1861, was in favourable terms.\textsuperscript{27} Miaki, the supposed ringleader of the anti-mission campaign in 1861-62, was by this time long since dead.\textsuperscript{28} Given that Paton and Inglis's contact with the Tannese was limited to 'Nauwar, Boni and other natives of the friendly tribe',\textsuperscript{29} it is likely that the inclusion of Usua, Yorian, Yaufanga and Kariaw in the memorandum reflected the political context of 1865. All four were associated with Nouka and perhaps had supported accusations of sorcery against Nowar; or possibly Nowar was using the opportunity presented by the gunboat to settle some other scores. In short, the bombardment of 1865 — like the petition of 1862 — should be seen as having been used by some Tannese for their own political purposes which had little or nothing to do with the question of support for the mission.

Before the \textit{Curapo\-a} sailed, Paton went ashore and returned with a document from the chiefs to Wiseman, in which they promised to mend their ways for the future:

Formerly we had been guilty of so many murders that we feared men-of-war would come and punish us; we all thought and said they durst not try, and so we delighted in our bad conduct. Then we had no idea of the multitude of fighting men in a man-of-war, and of her awful power to destroy us and our lands; but now we have seen it, and our hearts have failed us. We are all weak and crying for fear. The great inland chief, Quantengan, who came to help us fight the man-of-war, was cut down by one of his chiefs (officers), and many more are hurt, and we know not how many are shot and dead. Our canoes, our houses, and our lands are laid waste by his fighting men. We never saw anything like this and plead with the chief of the man-of-war not to punish us any more, but to go and leave us, and truly we will obey his word. Tell him to inform your good Queen Victoria that we will kill no more of her people but in future be good, and learn to obey the word of Jehovah.\textsuperscript{30}

\textsuperscript{27}Paton, Journal, 1 March 1861; cf. Paton 1965:177.
\textsuperscript{29}Inglis to Kay, 9 November 1865, \textit{R.P.M}. 1866:305.
\textsuperscript{30}Paton to Wiseman, 'Memorandum ... respecting the effects of punishment of the natives of Port Resolution, Tanna', 14 August 1865, enclosure No.3, Wiseman to Admiralty, 1 October 1865, Adm. 1/5925. The document is reproduced in Brenchley 1873:204 and Meade 1870:247–8.
While ashore, Paton conducted prayer with the 'leading Heathen Chiefs', and noted that they were 'exceedingly afraid' — an impression confirmed shortly afterwards by a visiting trader — and all ready to obey the commodore's 'good word' if the man-of-war 'would leave off punishing them and sail from their Island'. They promised to erect a new fence around the mission garden and to repair the mission premises. Perhaps fearful of Nouka's wrath once the warship had sailed from the island, Nowar urged Paton to resettle on the island. Paton was hopeful that the lessons dealt out to the Tannese would make them in the future 'respect the lives and property of British subjects'.

After he left Tanna Wiseman made his way, in company with the Dayspring, to Dillon's Bay where he received a further memorandum on the mission's losses at Erromango. The document made out a rather inconclusive case against two chiefs, concentrating on their 'avowed' object of destroying the mission, rather than listing actual misdeeds, and Wiseman let the Erromangans off with a warning. He was more interested in the statements and depositions he obtained from Captain Henry and other men employed at the sandalwood depot, regarding the killing of an Englishman named Fletcher and fourteen Efatese on the other side of the island. Because of the distance of the offending tribe from Dillon's Bay, Wiseman decided against landing a party to destroy property. Instead he sailed for Efate to investigate the missionaries' charge that a Rarotongan family in the service of the mission had been murdered there in 1854. Given the passage of time and finding there that 'everything appeared to be progressing satisfactorily', Wiseman decided against any punitive action. After an uneventful cruise through the Banks and Santa Cruz groups in company with Bishop Patteson, he returned, en route to New Caledonia, to Dillon's Bay on 25 September where he received another list of grievances from Gordon. The missionary claimed that the two offending chiefs had contumaciously ignored Wiseman's threats of just a month before by threatening to take possession of mission lands. He suggested that if the commodore wiped out their settlements he could settle Dillon's Bay with 'a number of people favourable to Christianity' who could defend the mission. Wiseman wisely rejected this preposterous suggestion, arguing that he could not punish the Erromangans for 'anticipated acts.

31Brenchley 1873:300.
33Paton to Wiseman, 'Memorandum ...', 14 August 1865.
34Inglis and Gordon to Wiseman, 14 August 1865, enclosure No.3, Wiseman to Admiralty, 16 October 1865, F.O. 58/106.
35Cf. Enclosure No.4, Wiseman to Admiralty, 16 October 1865, F.O. 58/106.
36Wiseman to Admiralty, October 1865, Adm. 1/5925.
of misconduct'. However, in response to Gordon's argument that once islanders were won over to Christianity they became *de facto* British subjects and, as such, could expect British protection, Wiseman decided to make a token demonstration against the recalcitrant Erromangans. He threw some shell into the village of Sifu (Sufu) — chosen because shots had been fired from there, earlier in the day, at a sounding party from the ship — but he did not land any troops. The lightness of the punishment alarmed Gordon who bitterly questioned the value of the commodore's visit. His last appearance had simply emboldened the wicked, he wrote, 'My heart is distressed'. Brenchley noted Gordon's fear that the Erromangans would imagine that the navy had done all it could, 'which they would probably find was not much'.

Wiseman planned to return to Erromango at a later date with properly equipped landing forces to search out and destroy the villages and gardens of Fletcher's killers. But he never received the official approval he requested. The Foreign Office made it clear that it disapproved of action on the Tanna scale which, it feared, might render European life and property even less secure. Where a European's life was threatened, suggested Lord Clarendon, he would do well to leave the island. In the light of the subsequent developments at Port Resolution, Clarendon's caution was justified. Within a year, Nowar had been humiliated, the teachers had been threatened, and the Tannese had declared that they would take Paton's life if he attempted to resettle on the island.

The *Curaçoa*’s actions at Tanna were seized upon by the Sydney press, with contemporary writers making the episode something of a *cause célèbre* to support their various contentions about missionaries, naval officers, traders, islanders, and even the reliability of Sydney newspaper editors. On his return from the New Hebrides in November Paton found himself 'probably the best-abused man in all Australia and the very name of the New Hebrides Mission stinking in the nostrils of the People'. Correspondents to Sydney's *Empire* were particularly vociferous. 'Cornelius Cannon' supposed that, once having told a savage that if he was not honest and upright he would go to the devil, one gained the right to shoot the rascal if he offended against good morals:

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37 Gordon to Wiseman, 25, 26 September 1865, enclosure No.5, Wiseman to Admiralty, 16 October 1865, F.O. 58/106.
38 Wiseman to Admiralty, 16 October 1865, F.O. 58/106.
40 F.O. to Admiralty, 26 December 1865, F.O. 58/106.
41 Geddie to Bayne, 16 August 1866, Misc. papers.
42 Paton 1965:298.
It doesn't do to be gentle with these niggers. You must insist upon their leaving their evil ways, and if they hesitate, you must send a bullet through them ... Of course, after you have slaughtered half a dozen or so of the barbarians, the remainder would see, at a glance, the advantage of embracing Christianity.

Other, less ironic, writers complained that the true course of Christian missions was impeded by those such as Paton, who built their faith upon the holy text of pike and gun.43

Paton strongly defended his actions in a letter to the Sydney Morning Herald on 18 November, in which he employed the same Manichean interpretative framework which had characterized his years on Tanna. He divided the Tannese into two opposing camps of Christian and Heathen, and outlined the latter's 'persecution of the missionaries, teachers, and native Christians':

The native Christians tried to protect us, for which many of them lost their lives, and their villages were burned and their property plundered for many miles round the station. Having thus driven them away, the heathen returned and attempted to shoot and again to tomahawk me. They broke into my store, taking all it contained, and drove me from the mission station; and after much suffering ... I got to Mr Mathieson's station, from which, after much continued suffering from want and persecution, we escaped by ship, having lost about £1000 worth of property.

Paton went on to suggest that the deaths of Johnston, Mr and Mrs Matheson and their child resulted from the persecution they suffered at the hands of the heathen. The Tannese were not, he stressed, the 'ignorant savages' as represented by the Empire, but were 'enlightened as to right and wrong' as the result of his own unstinting instruction. They were not punished to force them to receive the gospel. They were punished for 'crimes committed', and to keep them from such in the future. Civil government, stressed Paton, was God's ordinance 'for the punishment of evildoers, and for the promise of them that do well', and it was the missionary's duty to avail himself of its protection when possible.

On the basis of Paton's letter, the Sydney Morning Herald on the same day commended Wiseman and the missionaries for their course of action, and added that 'the results of the commodore's visit have shewn that the natives appreciate a resolute display of force'. That law of human nature, it asserted, had not been

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43Empire, 24, 26 October 1865; cf. Empire, 23, 25, 26, 30 October, 20, 22, 25 November 1865.
sufficiently taken into account by good men who had sought to benefit the native tribes. Force was 'the instrument of Providence for human happiness', it editorialized, and 'the subjection of the weak to the strong' was no hardship. 'It is the only process by which the weak can participate in that strength, and become entitled to share in its blessings'. In a thinly veiled jibe at the Empire, the Herald concluded that the adverse criticisms of the Curaçao's proceedings were mis-statements, 'probably with a dash of malicious invention'.44

The Empire hit back, accusing Paton of the mis-statements and malicious invention. His letter of explanation to the Herald was 'a mass of inconsequential and in many respects contradictory twaddle'. In the name of humanity the Empire writer protested against the 'wholesale destruction of life merely for the gratification of a few sacerdotal hypocrites who force themselves upon the islanders ...'45 In the following months and years other voices were raised against Paton, who was portrayed as an insincere and ineffectual missionary, 'bent on dangerous enterprises' who had misled his fellow missionaries into a cowardly policy of retaliation.46

The suggestion that Paton was getting his own back on the Tannese for his inglorious departure from the island three and a half years before — which became the accepted view among later historians47 — was largely correct. Brenchley, too, was correct when he wrote, 'Relying on the presumed results of the intended discipline, Mr. Paton was about to return to Tanna'.48 But it does not follow from this that Paton was a mere 'sacerdotal hypocrite'. There is no evidence to indicate that his claim that civil government was God's ordinance, 'for the punishment of evildoers, and for the promise of them that do well', was merely an ex post facto rationalization to cover an ignoble course of action; or that he did not sincerely perceive events on Tanna in terms of a drawn-out struggle between Jehovah and Satan. Paton's fundamental aim as a missionary was the establishment of a godly community in which he controlled both the religious and the secular aspects of the islanders' lives, and to this end he was not only prepared to accept, but he expected, the support of secular institutions such as the Royal Navy. As Andrew Symington had declared years before, in 'isolated pagan communities' it was the duty of both secular and religious authorities to 'co-operate

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44 Paton to S.M.H., 18 November 1865; S.M.H., 18 November 1865.
45 Empire, 20 November 1865.
48 Brenchley 1873:194.
in promoting, each in its own sphere, the glory of God and of Christ'.

This view of the role of civil government was repeated by Inglis in a long letter of explanation to the convener of the Foreign Missions Committee of the Reformed Presbyterian Church: 'The magistrate is as much the servant of God as the missionary, and has a work of his own to do: he is invested with the sword to be a terror to evil-doers'. Like Cromwell in his storming of Drogheda, the commodore was the soldier of God the Just: 'Armed soldier, terrible as death, relentless as doom; doing God's judgements on the enemies of God!' When great crimes and great outrages were committed by a people like the Tannese and Erromangans, Inglis wrote, he for one would 'appeal for punishment, signal punishment, punishment that would be felt and feared for many a year to come'. With people in their primitive state of society severity was at times a mercy. It was only terror, he asserted, which would keep them from evil-doing.

At the same time, Inglis contended that the question of missionaries relying on gunboats for protection of life and property was strictly a civil matter which somewhat contradicted his theological argument. However, it should be viewed within the context of the general contradiction between doctrine and the reality of social existence which confronted Reformed Presbyterians everywhere; and it indicates that not even in the far-flung corners of the globe could that contradiction be ignored. On the basis of Inglis's letter, the Foreign Missions Committee exonerated its missionaries from any blame, and unanimously resolved that where life or property were endangered, it was the missionary's duty to invoke the protection to which, as a British subject, he was entitled. The committee's stand highlights the almost complete integration of Reformed Presbyterians into the secular body politic by this time, and the extent to which they had overturned their earlier repudiation of the British Constitution.

John Geddie, who returned to the New Hebrides from furlough in September 1866, complained that 'the way in which the Reformed

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49 A. Symington 1841:46.

50 Inglis to Kay, 11 December 1865, R.P.M. 1866:181-2.

51 Kay to Editor of Reformed Presbyterian Magazine, 12 November 1866, R.P.M. 1866:453; cf. Report on Foreign Missions, R.P.M. 1866:271-2. Before the receipt of Inglis's letter there were some committee members strongly opposed to Paton and Inglis's involvement with the Curacao—cf. Geddie to Bayne, 23 June 1866, Misc. papers.
Presbyterian Church has disposed of the affair is discreditable and unworthy of any body of Christian men ...'\textsuperscript{52} To his mind, the bombardment — based as it was on Paton's deliberate misrepresentations\textsuperscript{53} — was one of the most humiliating episodes in modern mission history. So antagonistic did he feel towards Paton that he withdrew his connection with the Victorian Presbyterian Church when he discovered that it planned also to take on Paton.\textsuperscript{54} However, extreme as Paton's use of naval firepower at Tanna was, he was drawn to that 'cruel outrage' by the same religious beliefs and missionary aspirations that had motivated Geddie. In his theocratic aim and his readiness to use the Royal Navy to help establish a scriptural magistracy on Tanna, Paton had followed the precedent of Geddie and Inglis who had striven to institute over Aneityum 'a code of laws, framed on Christian principles', a system of government based on 'the principles of magistracy as laid down in Scripture'. Both had aspired to exercise total personal control over the Aneityumese. Both had actively worked for the declaration of a British protectorate over Aneityum. Both had welcomed the efforts of visiting naval officers to do everything in their power to 'strengthen the hands of the missionaries, and elevate their positions in the eyes of the natives'.\textsuperscript{55} Paton's reasons for wanting to establish a theocracy on Tanna were no less principled than Geddie's. In terms of his belief that it was the divinely ordained duty of secular as well as ecclesiastical institutions to establish godly communities on earth, Paton, like Geddie, was compelled to attempt to exercise strict control over the islanders. Moreover, his constant threats of gunboat action were consistent with the ancient Reformed Presbyterian attitude towards civil authority, and the actual use of a man-of-war — which even Geddie had admitted could have 'salutary effects'\textsuperscript{56} — was but a logical extension of that attitude.

However, as much as their ultimate goals coincided, Geddie's methods were fundamentally different from Paton's. He probably was serious when he declared before a special meeting of the Sydney Presbytery that, 'rather than have had anything to do with the Curacoa's visit, he would have had his hand burned off in the fire'.\textsuperscript{57} The difference between the two men is perhaps best

\textsuperscript{52}Geddie to Patterson, 29 August 1868, Misc. papers.

\textsuperscript{53}Geddie to Patterson, 14 September, 13 December 1866, and McGregor, 22 July 1867, Misc. papers.

\textsuperscript{54}Geddie to Bayne, 17 August, 13 December 1866, Misc. papers.


\textsuperscript{56}Geddie to Bayne, 21 August 1858, \textit{Missionary Register} 1859:2.

\textsuperscript{57}Quoted by Paton (who was present at the meeting) 1965:302.
summed up in an address, on the role of the missionary, Geddie delivered to the New Hebrides Mission Synod in September 1866:

There is among missionaries as well as among friends of the Redeemer's cause at home, an unhealthy appetite for immediate and startling results, and when these are not realized depression follows. A little reflection will help to correct this error. The extension of the gospel is opposed by obstacles numerous and immense, which omnipotence alone can remove. It has to encounter national antipathies and prejudices; it meets with difficulties arising from difference of climate, of colour, of language and of habits. It has to contend with systems of superstition rendered venerable by their antiquity. And above all it meets with the natural enmity of the human heart, rendered still more inveterate by the debasing influences of heathenism. It is unreasonable to expect that the heathen will always cast their idols to the moles and the bats at the sound of the gospel even when we can speak intelligibly to them.58

The missionary who presided over such a flock, Geddie observed with pointed reference to Paton, needed much tenderness, much patience and much care.

The bombardment of Port Resolution in 1865 was the most momentous episode in Paton's life. It gained him bitter enemies among former friends, and it made him an object of scorn and ridicule in Britain, Canada and the Australian colonies. It ended his missionary association with Tanna: the principal dignitary at Port Resolution warned that if he set foot on the island again he would be killed59 and, confronted by the 'decided opposition' of all his colleagues apart from Inglis, he was despatched to the little island of Aniwa.60 With its tiny population already largely christianized by native teachers, Aniwa offered little challenge to a man who thrived on conflict and opposition. For a while Paton toyed with the idea of re-occupying Tanna despite the synod decision — he even contemplated taking advantage of the presence of H.M.S. *Brisk* in August 1866 to make his triumphant return!61 Once more he was Christian on his lonely pilgrimage through hostile territory. The newspaper opposition was part of a Unitarian conspiracy; Geddie's head had been 'turned' by the tide of abuse; and the 'sentimental Christians'

58 New Hebrides Mission Synod, Minutes, September 1866.
59 Geddie to Bayne, 16 August 1866, Misc. papers.
60 Paton, Notebooks.
at home simply did not appreciate the need for a show of force among the 'natives'. 'God's people are still belied', he later wrote, 'and the multitude are still as ready as ever, to cry "Crucify! Crucify!"'.

Chapter 9

Variations on a theme 1865-1874

For the Tannese as much as for Paton the Curagao affair had a profound effect. Perhaps Tom Harrisson overstated the case with his claim that it marked a turning point in New Hebridean history towards 'official backing for whites, and recognized compulsion of natives', but there are many Tannese today who would support his view. Along with the death of Gaskin in 1851 and the missionary Bell's refusal in 1941 to allow John Frum followers into church, because they 'smelt worse than pigs', the navy's action in 1865 has come to symbolize the characteristic arrogance and ignorance of the European. At the time, the belief that the navy would not hesitate to use force to protect British interests encouraged a new wave of traders and, for the first time, planters to settle on Tanna. More regular visits by men-of-war muted what native opposition there was to the mission. This encouraged the new missionaries to suppose that they were making headway against heathenism - that Tanna might yet become the hub for the conversion of the western Pacific.

In the decade after 1865 there were nine visits to Tanna by British gunboats. Captain Hope set the pattern of contact when he called at Port Resolution in August 1866 to 'show the natives that British subjects are being looked after'. His discovery

1 Harrisson 1937:137.
3 Neilson to Kay, 23 June 1869, R.P.M. 1869:413; Foreign Missions Committee 1871 Report, R.P.M. 1871:283.
4 August 1866, H.M.S. Brisk, Captain Hope; July 1867, H.M.S. Falcon, Captain Blake; August 1868, H.M.S. Challenger, Commodore Lambert; March 1869, H.M.S. Rosario, Captain Palmer; January 1872, H.M.S. Rosario, Captain Markham; September 1872, H.M.S. Basilisk, Captain Moresby; c. October 1873, H.M.S. Suckling, Lt. Renard; c. December 1873, H.M.S. Blanche, Captain Simpson; April 1875, H.M.S. Pearl, Commodore Goodenough.
that Tannese had 'entirely changed their tone towards foreigners'\textsuperscript{5} is hardly surprising, given the popular view at the harbour that it was now dangerous to touch white men, 'as vengeance would certainly be exacted by a man-of-war'.\textsuperscript{6} Two years after Hope, Commodore Lambert confirmed that Europeans 'had no cause of complaint of any sort against the natives' — a state of affairs which the very presence of men such as himself had helped bring about. Most of the missionaries were delighted with the increased naval presence. As John Inglis commented after the visit of Captain Moresby in 1872: 'It is a matter of great encouragement to us in this Mission, to find so many of the captains of H.M. ships of war in these Seas ... hearty in their approval and support of missionary efforts ...'\textsuperscript{7}

Traders, too, were encouraged by the presence of gunboats. Within days of the Curapoa's action at Port Resolution, the crew of the trading brig Curlew felt emboldened enough to take on water at Black Beach without making the customary payment to the chiefs. But the people on that side of the island had not yet heard of the bombardment and one young seaman, William Peacock, paid for the cheat with his life.\textsuperscript{8} At Port Resolution there continued to be the odd clash — over payment for services, or the recruitment of unwilling labourers\textsuperscript{9} — but given the volume of traffic, Tannese—trader relations were remarkably ordered.

The Tannese endeavour to avoid confrontation with Europeans encouraged a number of traders to take up residence on the island. Early in 1866, two Englishmen settled near Nowar's village on the east side of the harbour to collect sulphur and make coconut oil. They reported to Captain Hope in August 1866 that in six months they had not been in any way troubled by the natives.\textsuperscript{10} By July 1868 there were stations on both the east and west sides of the bay and the number of resident traders had grown to four.\textsuperscript{11}

\textsuperscript{5}Inglis to Kay, 24 August 1866, \textit{R.P.M.} 1867:12; Hope to Wiseman, 5 September 1866, Adm. 1/5969.

\textsuperscript{6}Neilson to Kay, 23 June 1869, \textit{R.P.M.} 1869:413.

\textsuperscript{7}Lambert to Adm., 9 September 1868, Adm. 1/6054; Inglis to Kay, 24 October 1872, \textit{R.P.M.} 1873:97.

\textsuperscript{8}Underwood to Brisk, 17 August 1866, enclosed in Hope to Wiseman, 5 September 1866, Adm. 1/5969.


\textsuperscript{10}Hope to Wiseman, 5 September 1866, Adm. 1/5969; Inglis to Kay, 2 June 1866, \textit{R.P.M.} 1866:418.

\textsuperscript{11}Neilson to Kay, 26 August 1868, \textit{R.P.M.} 1869:67; Inglis, \textit{Extracts from Journal of a Voyage in the 'Dayspring',} 1, 24 July 1868, \textit{R.P.M.} 1869:66, 128; Neilson to Kay, 8 October 1868, \textit{R.P.M.} 1869:143.
Another station was established in September 1868 at the head of the bay and muskets were the currency for trade in sulphur and pigs. It was set up by Charles (Charlie) Hyde, an American who had begun trading in coconut oil at the north end of Tanna in 1866. Before that he had been on Erromango and Santo for a number of years. He was often employed as an interpreter by labour recruiters, and he had been burnt out at north Tanna by the 'enraged' kinsmen of a boy he had sold to a passing blackbirder. Early in 1869 Hyde was reported to be working for 'some of the white men' on Tanna. By that time there were two trading stations on the west side of Port Resolution, with two Europeans in each, as well as an unknown number on the east. Another station, which specialized in purchasing sulphur collected from the volcano, was opened on the west bank during 1870 by an agent of Captain Ashmore of the schooner Sea Witch.12 About the same time, traders established stations at Kwamera and Black Beach, and began a more sustained trading contact with relatively untouched parts of the island, such as Waisisi to the north of Port Resolution.13

Life for most traders was spartan and often lonely and, even when the natives were quiet, not without risk. In December 1872, a young Melbourne man in charge of one of the trading stations at the harbour died from tetanus after accidentally shooting himself in the leg while drunk. According to Thomas Neilson, missionary at the harbour, he belonged to a family of high social position in England which had taken a distinguished place in the political and literary world of the United States. Left an orphan at an early age, he had inherited a small fortune when he came of age—all of which he had squandered by the time he was twenty-four, when he joined a Melbourne syndicate to colonize Tanna.14 There were other traders of whom the missionaries spoke favourably,15 but generally they were lumped together with the likes of Charlie Hyde and Ross Lewin, as godless rogues.


The notorious Ross Lewin — one of his lesser crimes was the abduction and rape of a Tannese girl aboard a recruitment vessel — had set himself up as a planter on Tanna's west coast sometime in the 1860s, possibly as early as 1863. Within months of the Curagao's bombardment of Port Resolution in 1865 another old-time trader, a certain Fitzpatrick, began cultivating cotton and coffee at Black Beach. By early 1871 'a good many' Europeans, including the syndicate of young Melbourne men who planned to colonize the island, were similarly employed on the west coast. Though they dreamed of setting themselves up in grand colonial style, in reality they shared the cramped and mean conditions of the east coast traders. In the middle of the year most of the settlers left after two members of the Melbourne syndicate were killed when they lost their way while travelling to a neighbouring plantation. Only Ross Lewin and a Mr Morrison, manager for the well known inter-island trader Captain Macleod, stayed on, relying for protection on their large bodies of imported labourers. Morrison soon after met his death and Lewin was shot — though it would seem not killed — early in 1874.

While men like Lewin and Morrison were importing labourers from other islands to tend their cotton and coffee, planters in Queensland, Fiji and New Caledonia were recruiting Tannese and other New Hebrideans to work on their plantations. The practice had begun in the early 1860s with the Tannese quickly gaining a reputation as good workers — wonderfully strong, but at the same time docile and affectionate. In 1863 Lewin was engaged by Robert Towns, Sydney merchant and member of the N.S.W. Legislative Council to Lyin (sic), 29 May 1863, Towns to Grueber, 29 July 1863, Parliamentary Papers 1867-68 XLVII:2-3; Governor Blackall to Earl of Granville, 9 July 1869, Parliamentary Papers 1871 XLVIII:2; Extract from S.M.H. 9 February 1869, Parliamentary Papers 1868-69 XLIII:50; Extracts from S.M.H. 23-28 June 1869, Parliamentary Papers 1871 XLVIII:16; Palmer to Lambert, 5 April 1869, Parliamentary Papers 1871 XLVIII:86-7; Anon. 1870:194.

17Westwood 1905:15.
18Neilson to Kay, 19 August 1871, R.P.M. 1872:57-8; Goodenough 1876:280; Steel, 'New Hebrides Mission', R.P.M. 1874:408; Paton to Kay, 1 July 1874, R.P.M. 1875:19; Moresby 1876:114-16; Westwood 1905:12-18.
20Watt to Kay, 26 December 1871, R.P.M. 1872:214; Goodenough 1876:279; Westwood 1905:19.
Council, to recruit islanders for his cotton plantation at Towns vale, about forty miles from Brisbane on the Logan River. He brought in sixty islanders, chiefly from Tanna, Efate, Malekula and Erromango. The venture was a financial success, and by 4 March 1868, when the Queensland Act to regulate and control the introduction and treatment of Polynesian labourers came into operation, there were 244 Tannese registered as indentured labourers in that colony. By the end of the year their number had grown to about 330, and over the next seven years another 779 were registered as entering Queensland. During the same period about 425 were repatriated to Tanna — sometimes to the wrong stretch of coast which could mean death on the spot.

Fiji also attracted Tannese labourers. There were possibly forty working on cotton plantations there by October 1865, and between November of that year and November 1868, 562 Tannese workers were imported. In the latter year, a number of Tannese were reported killed and eaten by Fijians resentful of land alienation, after which the Tannese were (understandably) reluctant to recruit to Fiji. Figures for New Caledonia are more difficult to come by, though early in 1869 Captain Palmer of H.M.S. Rosario noted that forty-nine natives of Tanna and Efate were labouring on a sugar plantation of M. Joubert, about fifteen miles from Noumea. The numbers recruited from Tanna and surrounding islands went on rising into the 1880s and did not fall significantly until the 1890s. One result of the burgeoning traffic was the increased naval surveillance of the region after 1866, as missionaries agitated for the control of the new slave trade.

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23 Neilson to Kay, 28 October 1874, R.P.M. 1875:148; figures compiled from Parliamentary Papers 1868-69 XLIII, 1871, XLVIII, 1873 L, 1877 LXI.
25 Queensland Attorney General to the Governor, 13 April 1869, Parliamentary Papers 1868-69 XLIII:16.
One of the staunchest opponents of blackbirding was the missionary Thomas Neilson who succeeded Paton on Tanna in 1868. He had come out from Scotland in 1866 aboard the same vessel as John Geddie who was returning from furlough in Canada. During the voyage he courted Lucy Geddie whom he married when the ship reached Melbourne.²⁸ They reached the New Hebrides in September 1866 by which time Geddie, the ageing patriarch of the mission, had decided that his daughter and new son-in-law should be the ones to re-occupy Port Resolution. Though appointed by the mission synod to Havannah Harbour, Efate, Neilson stayed on with Geddie at Aneityum, studying the Kwamera language and waiting a 'call' from Tanna.²⁹ The call was slow in coming and unenthusiastic when it did eventually come. Though two Aneityumese teachers had been placed at the harbour in November 1865 — joined by a third in 1867 — their efforts were confined to Nowar's family. An outbreak of dysentery in the first half of 1867 brought forth threats against them, and even Nowar desisted from his customary appeals for a European missionary.³⁰ Finally, when Nouka — now the principal yani en date at the harbour and bitterly anti-mission since the bombardment of his village in 1865³¹ — gave his consent for Geddie's son-in-law to be settled, his people demurred, and with a mixture of wit and resentment remonstrated loudly:

One said, 'Suppose missionary come here, white man go away, where man Tanna get tobacco?' Another, 'Suppose missionary come here, he want man Tanna put on clothes; no good man Tanna he wear clothes; very good white man he wear clothes, all the same as you. Look at that man (pointing to an Aneityumese, who was not very neatly dressed), he no look well: look at that man (pointing to a strapping Tanna man in puris naturalibus), he look well, he no want clothes.' A third, 'Look here, Tanna man he lazy, he plenty lazy, he no like work, he like walk about. Suppose missionary come here, he say, Very good man he work; no very good woman do all the work; man Tanna he lazy, he plenty lazy.' A fourth, 'Suppose missionary come here, he say, Very good man Tanna keep only one woman; man

²⁹ New Hebrides Mission Synod Minutes, 18 September 1866; Inglis to Kay, 24 September 1867, Neilson to Kay, 17 September 1867, R.P.M. 1868:56; cf. 17 January 1867, R.P.M. 1867:63, 257.
Tanna he no like that, he like to have two, three, four woman.' A fifth, 'Suppose missionary come here, man Tanna go work for him, he give him calico (making believe to tear off a bit of calico, and to hand it with a contemptuous gesture); man Tanna he no want calico, he want tobacco, and powder, and musket. What for missionary no keep tobacco?'

A sixth, 'What for Mr Paton bring man-of-war here, fight man Port Resolution. Mr Paton come here make plenty good talk, then he go away make plenty bad talk, bring man-of-war here, fight man Port Resolution; man Port Resolution no fight Mr Paton, man belong a bush he come fight Mr Paton. Suppose missionary come here, man bush he come make fight, he come burn house belong a missionary, missionary he go away bring man-of-war he no fight bush, he fight man belong a Port Resolution—you go away, man Tanna he no want missionary.'

By May 1868 the teachers had been forced to leave the harbour, and Neilson had come to accept that it was his lot to settle further north.

En route to his Efate post in October 1868, Neilson heard from the two teachers at Umairarekar that, with Nowar in the ascendancy over Nouka, Port Resolution might at last be re-opened. It would seem that many of Nouka's supporters had been driven inland and then to Kwamera, though the missionaries—as usual casting the islander in a passive role—put the change down to the death of a trader who had been living at the harbour for two years doing all in his power 'to excite the natives against us'.

Turning his back on Havannah Harbour, Neilson headed for Port Resolution where he took on a large party of the principal men—including Nowar and Nouka—to visit Aneityum. At Inglis's station they were lavishly feted and assured by a leading

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34 Inglis, Extracts from Journal of a Voyage in the 'Dayspring', 30 June 1868, R.P.M. 1869:65.
Aneityumese chief that they 'never had so much food here as we have now, when we are all Christians. It will be the same with you, if you give up your heathenism ...'.\(^{37}\) In agreeing to accept Neilson, Nouka and his supporters might also have been impressed by two British gunboats then at Aneityum, one of which was about to depart for Tanna. For Nowar, who seems to have used the teachers at his village as intermediaries to secure peace with neighbouring tribesmen,\(^{38}\) a resident European missionary presented a further opportunity to extend his authority through peaceful means.\(^{39}\) Neilson lost no time in erecting a small, temporary cottage at Nowar's village of Samoa, to be replaced with a grander affair at the head of the bay, on Nouka's land, when the people there were all 'soft in their hearts'.\(^{40}\)

Like Paton, a Reformed Presbyterian, Neilson wrote of his proper place as a Cameronian being at the 'fore-front of the battle ... against the high places of heathenism'.\(^{41}\) But unlike his predecessor, Neilson did not let Manichean rhetoric rule his relations with the heathen. His approach was to accept the Tannese — 'an active and energetic race beyond the average in these seas'\(^{42}\) — as they were and to feel, rather than force, his way. 'Tanna is Tanna still', he wrote just after his settlement, 'and one would need a hopeful spirit to see much prospect of any speedy change for the better'. He would not force them to wear clothes, to give up tobacco, to work, or to have only one wife, until they themselves wanted to do so.\(^{43}\) Even with the traders resident in the bay he adopted a conciliatory and accommodating approach. While he protested against their practice of selling firearms and ammunition to the Tannese, he accepted that if they did not, others would.\(^{44}\) But on the issue of 'blackbirding' he was dogmatic and inflexible, exposing at every opportunity the fraud and depredations of the traffic in bodies.\(^{45}\)


\(^{40}\) Neilson to Kay, 26 August 1868, \textit{R.P.M.} 1869:67.

\(^{41}\) Neilson to Binnie, 8 December 1871, \textit{R.P.M.} 1872:170.

\(^{42}\) Neilson to Kay, 17 September 1867, \textit{R.P.M.} 1868:64.


With his more even and accommodating temperament, Neilson fared better than his predecessors in his relations with the Tannese. Eventually he was to leave Port Resolution without a single convert to his credit, but the mere fact that he lasted for fifteen years is testimony enough to his strength as a missionary. At the same time, he was able to last that period because the Tannese had a use for him, not least of all as a healer and a peacemaker.

Almost as soon as he had settled there, the harbour was troubled by three and a half months of inter-tribal fighting seemingly as serious as that which had led to Paton's flight seven years before. According to Neilson, ten people were killed, twenty-six severely wounded, seven villages razed by fire and a great many gardens destroyed. During the war Neilson was allowed to move freely among the combatants, 'attending to the wounded, and using any little influence I had on the side of peace and mercy'. In part the 'any little influence' was due to the general fear that to oppose the missionary would be to invite gunboat retaliation. But, as well, Neilson was perfectly placed for the role of intermediary: he lived with Nowar, who was not himself involved in the fighting, and by avoiding his predecessor's habit of interpreting every dispute as centred on himself, with the parties necessarily either pro or anti the mission, he was acceptable to all. The fighting was brought to a close early in 1869 when the beaten party was banished for four years 'to the interior of the island'. In sharing out the spoils of war, each of the victorious chiefs put a trading station under his own protection — i.e. control — but, significantly, Neilson was put 'under the protection of all'.

Neilson estimated that during the war one third of his time was taken up with attending to the wounded. Even in times of peace, much of his day was spent in caring for gunshot wounds — one ointment he devised was 'perfectly successful' in keeping down maggots, broken limbs, and even chronic headache. Among those who sought medical help were Nepikinamane, Neraimene, Yanekahi and Kaserumene tribesmen. But given the Tannese belief that the person best able to cure sickness was the one who had caused it, a reputation as a powerful healer was a double-edged

46 Miller 1975:352.
48 According to Neilson, comprising 800-1000 people, occupying an area of 5 miles by 10.
50 Cf. Lindstrom n.d.
sword. In the second half of 1871 an outbreak of what Neilson thought was diphtheria carried off 'about a tenth of the population' around the bay including such prominent men as Nouka and Mahana, and raised the old spectre of the mission bringing disease. Because some who had been taking Neilson's medicines for other complaints died — such as Nouka who had been taking medicine for a chronic headache — it was feared around the harbour that the medicine had caused the sickness. Among those farther inland, it was felt that Neilson and the harbour dwellers with whom he lived were practising sorcery against them. In October, with the 'inland natives ... threatening to come down and force those around us to take to their canoes, and migrate to some other part of Tanna or to Aniwa', Neilson went to an inland village and tried to reason with the people by showing them 'the folly of their ideas about witchcraft, and how the issues of life and death are in the hands of God alone'. Coming from God's own representative, the folly would seem to have been Neilson's. Possibly the villagers interpreted it as a threat of further mischief for they readily agreed to a 'general reconciliation'. When he returned to the harbour, Neilson made arrangements for a feast to confirm the peace. The feast was also used to celebrate Nowar's marriage — the first on Tanna according to Christian rites — and the completion of the new mission house — on Nowar's land, like the old one — which would have confirmed for the inland guests that Neilson had indeed allied himself with Nowar and his followers.

It is likely that Neilson was regarded as a sorcerer even by the people among whom he lived. On one occasion the inhabitants of a 'nearby village' allowed a young widow, who had spurned the advances of their yeremwanu, to be killed. After being condemned by Neilson 'as strongly as I had done in my life to any body', the villagers were 'afraid lest some judgement should fall upon them' — from which it might be assumed that Neilson had threatened them with divine retribution. The next day the man who had killed the woman was suddenly taken dangerously ill which 'was regarded by all as a judgement upon him for his crime, and [it] had a very salutary effect upon the people'.

51 Neilson to Kay, 19 August 1871, R.P.M. 1872:56–9; 'The work of the "Dayspring"', R.P.M. 1872:176.
52 Which in this instance, for what it is worth, Neilson computed at about two miles from the mission station. Neilson to Kay, 11 December 1871, R.P.M. 1872:208.
53 Neilson to Kay, 19 August, 11 December 1871, R.P.M. 1872:58, 208.
54 Neilson to Kay, 23 December 1872, R.P.M. 1873:330.
The situation was much the same at Matheson's old station near Kwamera, where another Reformed Presbyterian, William Watt, and his wife, had settled in 1869. Soon after Matheson had quit his station in January 1862, 'several epidemics' had carried off the people 'in twos and threes daily', which the Tannese interpreted as punishment from God for their 'very bad conduct'. When Watt settled among them the people stood in dread of doing something 'to spoil the worship', lest they be visited with another disease. Like Neilson, Watt was able to effect some seemingly miraculous cures with simple medicines, even on some who had been prepared for burial; and he always endeavoured to point his patients 'to the great Physician who alone is able to raise up, in whom they ought to trust, and who is able as he is willing to save both soul and body'.

Such statements both fascinated and frightened the Tannese. From the time of Neilson and Watt's settlement they had feared that the missionary would bring sickness and death among them, and with each new outbreak of disease — fever and ague, pleurisy, consumption, dysentery, diphtheria — there was a fall-off at religious services. As in the past, the Tannese appear to have been torn between appeasing the missionary and his powerful god, and repudiating him to make amends with their traditional gods. Overshadowing the dilemma was the fear of naval retaliation if either missionary were hurt, or even threatened.

Watt openly acknowledged that any progress he enjoyed at Kwamera was related to the local belief that his word carried considerable weight with the British authorities. For Neilson's part, from the start he had pressed for a strong naval presence to curtail the activities of the blackbirders. In addition his close association with the commanders of gunboats who came to investigate his complaints would have been public knowledge around the harbour. His interventionist stance took on a new dimension in 1877 when he assisted a naval investigation into

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the death of a British trader who had been killed in a dispute involving his Tannese wife. With Neilson's assistance seventeen Tannese were taken on board H.M.S. Beagle and held as hostages for the alleged murderer, Yuhmanyah. Ten were released after six days with the message that, if the culprit were not delivered up, the remaining prisoners would be carried off to Sydney. In the ensuing search for Yuhmanyah eight Tannese were killed—four in defending him and four in attempting to take him. At this point it was decided to put on trial instead one of Yuhmanyah's relatives as an accomplice. He was quickly found guilty and hanged at the yardarm. Neilson agreed with Lieutenant Caffin that the affair had exercised a wholesome influence on the native mind.60

By the mid-1870s, Tannese-missionary relations had fallen into the old mould. Like his predecessors, Neilson had become more and more enmeshed in the intricate web of intrigue and rivalry which constituted Tannese political life. Increasingly he became identified with, and manipulated by, Nowar and his followers, many of whom were refugees from other parts of the island. And, like his predecessors, he fell into the trap of identifying that group as 'a quasi-Christian and peace party among the Tannese...'.61 In the end, no-one else attended his services.62 Visitors could write of a 'network of Christian work over a considerable district in the south end of Tanna',63 but Neilson knew that, even with those who attended most regularly on his instruction, 'the old superstitions have still a strong hold'. As for the great mass of the Tannese population, they still followed their 'degrading practices with as much vigour as if they had never heard of anything better'. Neilson went on to list the practices that he considered most opposed to Christianity:

1. The belief in the power of sacred men to cause the fruits of the earth to come to maturity. 2. The worship of, and presenting offerings to, evil spirits. 3. The practice of and belief in witchcraft, for the purpose of causing disease and death. 4. Tribal wars and blood feuds resulting from the practice of witchcraft. 5. The practice of tribal revenge, extending over many years and even generations, and exercised even upon the persons of remote

61 Neilson to Kay, 11 December 1871, R.P.M. 1872:208.
62 Neilson to Kay, 28 October 1874, R.P.M. 1875:148. Finally, in December 1874, the refugees were expelled to Aniwa, after being accused of killing people by sorcery. They were then blamed for a hurricane which followed their departure. Paton, Annual Report of the Mission Station on Aniwa, R.P.M. 1876:18-21; Watt to Kay, 6 December 1875, R.P.M. 1876:96; Neilson to Steel, 4 March 1875, R.P.M. 1875:278-9.
allies. 6. The practice of circumcision. 7. The obscenity of much of their ordinary conversation. 8. The fact that murder, adultery, theft, and lying are usually regarded, not as things to be ashamed of, but quite the reverse.⁶⁴

The list may be read today as testimony to the underlying strength and resilience of Tannese 'kastom', but to Neilson it was evidence of a heathen perversity so impenetrable that there was little reason to persevere with his mission.

Neilson ended his list of Tanna's most 'degrading practices' with a little lament: 'The standard of virtue is then, as it were, reversed'.⁶⁵ It was a conclusion to which he had been drawn, as a man perhaps reluctantly, as a missionary inexorably. In trying to change the Tannese from heathen into christian, Neilson was, faute de mieux, Prospero. Where he differed from missionaries like Paton was in his craving for an island of Ariels. But Caliban had never been far from his side: for a century, and more, he had been in the wings, waiting on a succession of Prosperos — though he always made his most dramatic and engaging entrance when Prospero was a missionary. Perhaps the casual visitor could afford to treat the Tannese as children, to divide them into 'naturally vicious savages' and 'naturally gentlemanly savages'.⁶⁶ But to the missionaries who chose to live in their midst, the Tannese were still 'low, degraded, cunning, treacherous, and cruel'.⁶⁷ 'One cannot think without a shudder', wrote William Watt, 'of the sensuality and lust which are manifested in their daily conduct'.⁶⁸ 'The longer we live among them', wrote his wife Agnes, 'the more do we see the depths in sin to which they have sunk. Their every word and action are such as to indicate a heart stained with sin of the deepest dye, while they believe themselves to be very good'.⁶⁹ It was this belief in their own goodness that the missionaries baulked at most of all. Their words and actions, no matter how base, could be forgiven — but their refusal to consider themselves bad, to hate and deny themselves, was unpardonable. Blasphemous and insolent, it struck at the very heart of the missionary's vocation, threatening the missionary's attempts to

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⁶⁴Neilson to [Kay?], 15 October 1877, F.C.S.M.R. 1878:130.
⁶⁵Neilson to [Kay?], 15 October 1877, F.C.S.M.R. 1878:130.
⁶⁶Campbell 1873:162.
⁶⁷'The work of the "Dayspring"', R.P.M. 1872:168.
⁶⁸Watt, Opening Address at the meeting of the New Hebrides Mission Synod, 15 July 1873, R.P.M. 1874:3.
⁶⁹Letter from Mrs Watt, 28 August 1872, R.P.M. 1873:96.
bring the heathen to God as he himself had come: through repression and self-negation.

Through the pages of church journals in Britain, America and Australia, Tanna entered its second century of contact with Europe with a reputation as dark and distorted as it had ever been in the preceding hundred years. In the minds of many, Tanna was to remain a potent symbol of heathenism, the very antithesis of Christendom:

Where all that's human has been soiled,
Withered and blasted, dammed and spoiled,
And where the Serpent's folds are coiled
So firmly round the Soul.70

A place where vice reigned supreme, where the people cowered beneath the slavish yoke of the Spirit of Evil, where Monster Parents feasted upon the virgin flesh of their own offspring. An island of Calibans for a world of Prosperos.

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70 James Paton 1875:79.
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