

OUR LINKS WITH MELANESIA

The Australian Church helps Melanesia financially by paying all running costs of the "Southern Cross," a yearly commitment of \$20,500. But the diocese of Melanesia needs our help in more ways than that. It needs our prayers. It needs our understanding of what social change does to its people. And it needs missionaries. Urgently. If you're a priest, doctor, nurse, teacher or tradesman, the "Black Islands" may be where God wants you to be. Why not ask Him?



FOR FURTHER READING

"The Story of the Solomons," by C. E. Fox.
 "Lord of the Southern Isles," by C. E. Fox.
 "Solomon Islands Christianity," by A. R. Tippet.

PRAYER FOR MELANESIA

Almighty and most merciful Father, grant the power of your Spirit to all who serve you in Melanesia. Accept the desire of the clergy and people for renewal. Nourish with your grace their new hopes, plans and programmes, so that the people of Melanesia will be brought to repentance and new life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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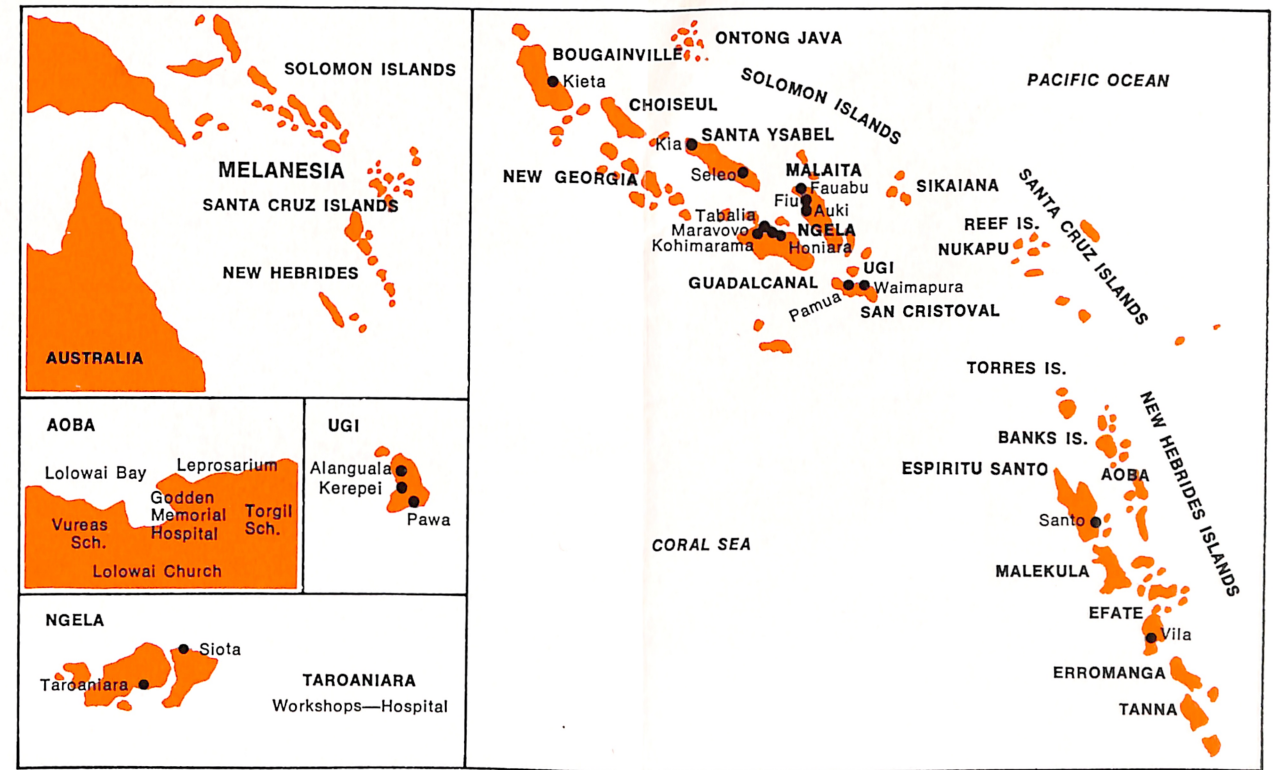
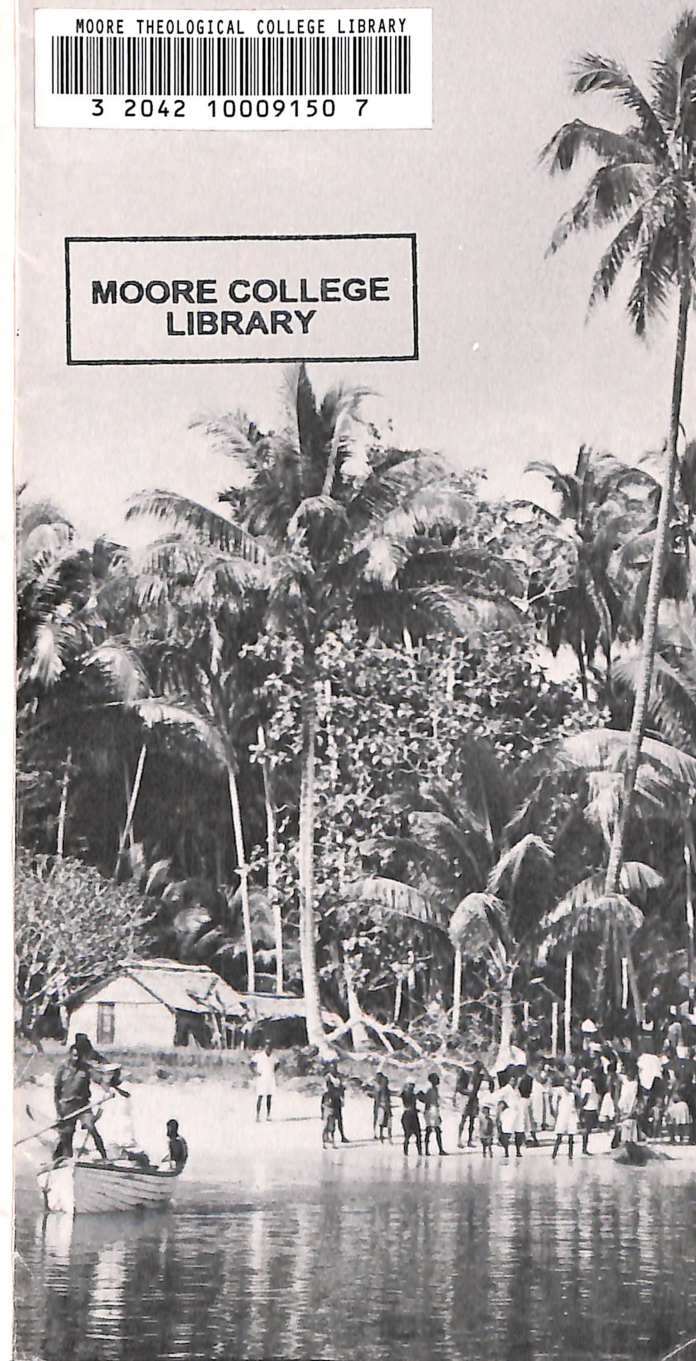
THE ANGLICAN CHURCH IN MELANESIA

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THE "BLACK ISLANDS"—AUSTRALIA'S NEAREST NEIGHBOURS

Forming a crescent around Australia's north-east coast, the islands of Melanesia (the "Black Islands") are our nearest neighbours. The main islands are New Guinea, the Solomons, New Hebrides and Santa Cruz Islands, New Caledonia and the Loyalty Islands. They are mountainous, rising from low coastal belts to lofty interiors. The rainfall is torrential, the climate hot, humid and frequently malarial.

The Melanesian people vary greatly in physique, but basically they are Negroid, with broad noses, thick lips and frizzy hair. Skin colours range from chocolate brown to the deepest blue-black. Some Melanesians, in fact, are the darkest people on earth.

The first Europeans came to Melanesia about 400 years ago. They found the Melanesians to be among the world's most savage and unapproachable people. In pre-European days, there was little contact between them. Dense forests and rugged terrain discouraged travel, and a multiplicity of languages hindered communication. Even today, lack of contact between inland "bush people" and coastal "salt water people" slows the creation of a national consciousness. Most Melanesians regard themselves as belonging to a particular island rather than to an emerging Pacific nation.

The Second World War shattered Melanesia's isolation and made names like Guadalcanal and Savo familiar throughout the world. Today the process continues through education, urbanisation and trade. Many Melanesians are travelling and studying overseas. Among educated islanders, a sense of national identity is growing.

THE ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF MELANESIA

The Christian Gospel came to Melanesia as late as the 1830's. Samoan missionaries were the first to reach the New Hebrides, followed by Australian Presbyterians. After severe hardship and many martyrdoms, the work was established. The Anglican Church pioneered the Solomon Islands. The first Bishop of Melanesia, John Coleridge Patteson, was murdered on the island of Nukapu in the Santa Cruz Islands in 1871.

Today, the diocese of Melanesia consists of the Solomon Islands, the New Hebrides and the Santa Cruz Islands. The Solomons are a British Protectorate, while the New Hebrides are jointly governed by Britain and France. Although part of the Province of New Zealand, the diocese has always had close links with Australia. The present bishop, the Rt. Revd. John Chisholm, is an Australian.

CULTURES IN COLLISION

Most Melanesians today are confused. Their old culture has crumbled before a stronger one. They have learnt of a wider world beyond their island's fringing reef. They see it in microcosm in the bustling towns to which many have drifted. They watch the Europeans' way of life. They copy it in the superficialities of clothes, cigarettes and beer. They realise that much of the new way is good and desirable—but much is bad and degrading. They realise, too, that the old way held many true insights. How to choose . . . ?

Their dilemma has been movingly expressed in a play by a Melanesian, Francis Bugotu, who is assistant deputy director of education in the British Solomon Islands Protectorate. His play "This Man" (recently filmed by ABM) is a vivid glimpse into the thoughts of a man torn apart by culture clash. Mostly our conversations with Melanesians (or people of any developing country) tend to be monologues—we talk and they listen. "This Man" reverses the process. It is a rare opportunity to learn what they think of us and our culture. It is a significant step towards understanding, and hence real communication, between us. Today, when inter-racial communication is vital, "This Man" is important. That is why ABM filmed it. Why not arrange for a screening in your parish?

THE CALL OF THE TOWN

As in most other countries, people in Melanesia are drifting into the towns. Honiara, the capital of the Solomons, came into existence after World War II. Today it has a population of 12,000.

Urbanisation brings obvious problems—unemployment, overcrowding, delinquency, crime and disease. Less obvious, but probably more painful, are the mental conflicts caused by immersion in an alien culture—the conflicts so clearly and movingly stated in "This Man."

Tribal links are basic to Melanesian culture. In the village, they provide a tight ethical code that governs one's relationships with family and friends. Beyond the village the links break. The Melanesian in town has lost the sanctions that gave his life security. He is not sure how to treat people to whom he owes no tribal loyalty. If he gets a job, he may have to support a horde of relations as well as his family. Add to that the pressures of a competitive society, a money economy, shattered moral standards and a strange culture, and it is easy to see why an urbanised Melanesian can be very mixed-up indeed.

He finds it particularly hard to grasp Western economic philosophy. In Melanesian society, material possessions are shared by all. The concept of consumers seeking the best deal and sellers the highest profit has no place in his thinking, and appears—when he grasps it at all—as shameful and greedy.

All these comments apply to the average Melane-

sian, with no education or at best a senior primary one. But a Melanesian elite is emerging—high school and university graduates, of whom many have travelled widely—and they are something else again. Their influence will shape the future of Melanesian society. It is significant that many are devout Christians.

But not all Melanesians drift to town or travel the world. The majority still live in leaf-and-stick villages. Times are also changing there. The young people leave, or come home from school with awakened minds no longer satisfied with gardening and fishing. The older people watch and wonder and try to understand. The generation gap in Melanesia is more like a ten-thousand generations gap. There is heartache in the villages, too.

THE ANGLICAN CHURCH—BRIDGING GULFS AND CLOSING GAPS

Melanesia is the only part of the Pacific where the Anglican Church is the largest church. About two-thirds of the diocese's people are Christians, and of these, half are Anglicans. This puts the Anglican Church in a key position to bridge gulfs and close gaps. One of the most indigenous of Pacific churches, it has 115 clergy, of whom over 100 are indigenes, including two bishops and all village clergy.



Inside the Cathedral at Honiara.

Its work today, in a very real sense, has been renewed by Bishop Patteson's martyrdom. On September 20, 1871, Bishop Patteson landed on Nukapu Island in the Santa Cruz group. "Blackbirders" had recently been there, seizing men as slaves for Queensland plantations. To the Nukapu people, Patteson's white skin was enough. They killed him immediately. He was the first of several missionaries who paid with their lives for the sins of fellow-Europeans. The evil "blackbirding" trade was not stamped out until 1904. Its legacy of bitterness lasted much longer.

To mark the centenary of Patteson's death, Bishop Chisholm called the diocese to a Holy Year of personal renewal and corporate action.

IN HONIARA

From the new Cathedral of St. Barnabas, a strong ministry radiates into the town, offering Christ to lonely and confused hearts. Newly urbanised Angli-

cans are helped to find a replacement for broken tribal ties in the warm, caring Cathedral congregation. Moves are also being made to make the Cathedral a centre of Melanesian culture, past and present.

Evangelism in Honiara has been quickened by the Society of St. Francis and the Community of the Sisters of the Church, whose members are now working with Cathedral staff and congregation.

EDUCATION

In January, 1970, the diocese opened its first co-educational secondary school, Selwyn College, with an initial enrolment of over 200. This is the most recent achievement in a notable record. Anglican schools, primary and secondary, are among Melanesia's best. Many of today's leaders in government, church and society passed through them.

THEOLOGICAL TRAINING

A new theological training establishment, the Patteson Theological Centre, has been established at Kohimarama on Guadalcanal. It trains priests, lay evangelists (men and women), catechists, lay readers and Melanesian Brothers.

VILLAGE RENEWAL

Because of a widely felt need for spiritual renewal at village level, a network of island village training centres is being established. These are training key leaders, clergy and lay, to act as agents of renewal in their villages.

MEDICAL WORK

Warm, wet Melanesia offers ideal conditions for malaria, leprosy and a host of other ills, common and exotic. Medical work is consequently a major diocesan activity. The diocese maintains four well-equipped hospitals, and—with help from the New Zealand Leper Trust Board—two leper colonies.

THE MELANESIAN BROTHERS

A remarkable expression of indigenous Melanesian Christianity, the Melanesian Brotherhood was founded in 1925 by Ini Koporia, a Solomon Islander. The Brothers are dedicated to taking the Gospel where it has never gone before. They take yearly vows of poverty, chastity and obedience.

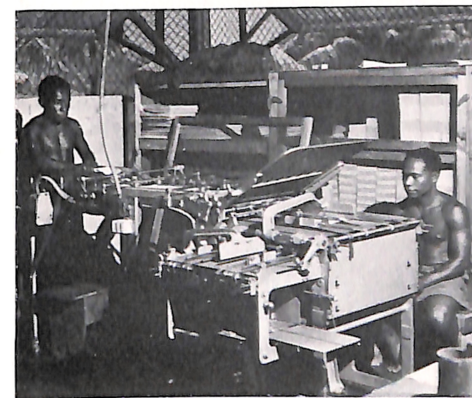
For many years the Brothers have spearheaded evangelism in heathen Melanesian villages. More recently they have gone to the New Guinea Highlands and Fiji, where they are working among the Indians around Ba.

TRANSPORT

For travel and communication in these scattered, reefy islands, the diocese depends on its fleet of small ships. The largest and most important is the "Southern Cross." The ships are maintained in the diocese's own shipyards at Taroaniara, on Ngela Island. Here, too, Melanesians are trained for well-paid jobs as diesel and electrical engineers and carpenters. The Melanesian Press, which produces Christian literature, has recently moved from Taroaniara to Honiara.



Boys at Maravovo School, Guadalcanal, prepare a meal.



The Melanesian Press produces literature for worship, education and evangelism.



The Melanesian Brothers gather at Tabalia for their annual conference.



"Southern Cross" alongside the wharf at Honiara.