

LITURGICAL SPIRITUALITY UNDER THE SOUTHERN CROSS:

**A Study of the impact of the Anglo-Catholic tradition
on the Anglican Church in Melanesia**

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by

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Preface

When the Melanesian Mission was founded in 1849 by Bishop George Augustus Selwyn, it monopolized the missionary activities in the Melanesian chain of islands which extends from New Guinea to the Solomon Islands and northern New Hebrides (now Vanuatu). However, as the region became exposed to the outside world by the activities of foreign traders, colonial imperialism, and other mission agencies, the religious monopoly ended in the late 19th century.

The aim of this thesis is to study the strengths and limitations of the Anglo-Catholic tradition in Melanesia and to see how the tradition can be used to facilitate:

1. Changes that would promote inculturation to enable Melanesians identify Christianity with their own culture.
2. Changes that would help the Church of Melanesia to accommodate and participate in constructive dialogue with other members of the Anglican Communion on issues that affect the world-wide Anglican Church.

The concept of 'change' is frightening to Melanesians because it is often associated with inauthenticity rather than improvement. This thesis attempts to identify the reasons that trigger this unnecessary fear and misunderstanding.

Chapter one of this thesis looks at the working principles of the mission during the period 1849-1894. In founding the mission, Selwyn wanted to establish an indigenous Church whereby Melanesians would become evangelists among their own people. White missionaries would be there only as facilitators, advisors and supporters. He described the strategy as a "black net floated by white corks." Training of young Melanesians started at St. John's College with Maori and European students. Later, a Melanesian school was established at Kohimarama on the shore of Mission Bay in Auckland Harbour under Bishop John Coleridge Patteson the first bishop of Melanesia. Young men and women from Melanesia were brought there to be trained in basic Christian principles before they were returned to the islands to work among their own people.

However, winter conditions in Auckland were unfavourable to Melanesians so the school was relocated to Norfolk Island in 1867. After Patteson was killed at Nukapu in 1871, the mission was without a leader for almost six years. In 1877, John Richardson Selwyn, son of George Augustus Selwyn, founder of the mission was consecrated second bishop of the Diocese. John Selwyn maintained the approach of work as laid down by his father and Patteson. In a nutshell, George Selwyn was the architect, Patteson the builder and John Selwyn the maintenance supervisor of the Mission.

Chapter two provides an overview of changes in Mission Policy which began under the leadership of Cecil Wilson in 1894. These changes included the abandoning of the 'remote-control system' and engaging in building schools in the islands where missionaries would reside. Two other developments occurred during this period which included the 'westernization' of the mission and the establishment of the Anglo-Catholic tradition. Women missionaries were also recruited during this period as teachers and nurses in the schools, hospitals and clinics.

The founding of the Melanesian Brotherhood by Ini Kopuria in 1925 spear-headed primary evangelism by Melanesians, a fulfilment of one of Selwyn's plans — Melanesia to be evangelized by Melanesians. Melanesia became independent from the Anglican Church of the Province of New Zealand in 1975.

Chapter three presents background information about pre-Christian Religion in Melanesia. Before the arrival of Christianity in the mid-19th century, Melanesians had their own belief systems. However, Melanesia is a heterogeneous society and therefore one cannot generalize what Melanesian traditional religion was. Different areas worshipped different spirit-beings. They could be ancestral spirits, animal spirits or other forms of spirit-beings. But the similarity is in the concept of 'mana'. A spirit-being is a source of 'mana' that governs the livelihood of the community. Maintaining a good relationship with the 'source of mana' is therefore the 'core' of a Melanesian traditional religion. Other aspects that reflect Melanesian religions include human or animal sacrifices and the emphasis on rituals.

Chapter four provides background information about the Oxford Movement

which is believed to be the origin of the Anglo-Catholic tradition that is practised in the Church of Melanesia. This chapter focuses on why Anglo-Catholic practices attracted Melanesians. Melanesians were able to identify with the Anglo-Catholic practices with their own and that led to their accommodation of the Anglo-Catholic tradition.

The final chapter looks at the situation and issues in the Anglican Church in Melanesia today and tries to identify the reasons why the present situation is unsatisfactory. Melanesians want to maintain tradition and in so doing they have become very defensive of the missionary tradition and claim it to be their own. Cultural elements have not been integrated with the liturgy and the modes of worship and the need to do so is what this thesis is trying to explore. Apart from rituals and the modes of worship, this chapter addresses the need for women in Melanesia to be encouraged to participate fully in the liturgy and in all the activities of the Church, and for women themselves to recognise the importance of carrying out their Baptismal ministry in the Church.

Infant communion is another subject of discussion in this chapter. Melanesia still sees confirmation as the entry to communion and therefore children are still excluded from the sacrament. This chapter discusses the importance of recognising baptism and communion as a single event other than separating them.

In writing this thesis, I have suggested how to initiate responsible changes in the Church of Melanesia, so that the Church continues to be relevant in the contemporary time. Certainly, I have learnt a lot from my research and I believe that what I have gained in this work will be of use in my ministry in the Church in future and I pray that I will be of some use to the Church of Melanesia.

Acknowledgement:

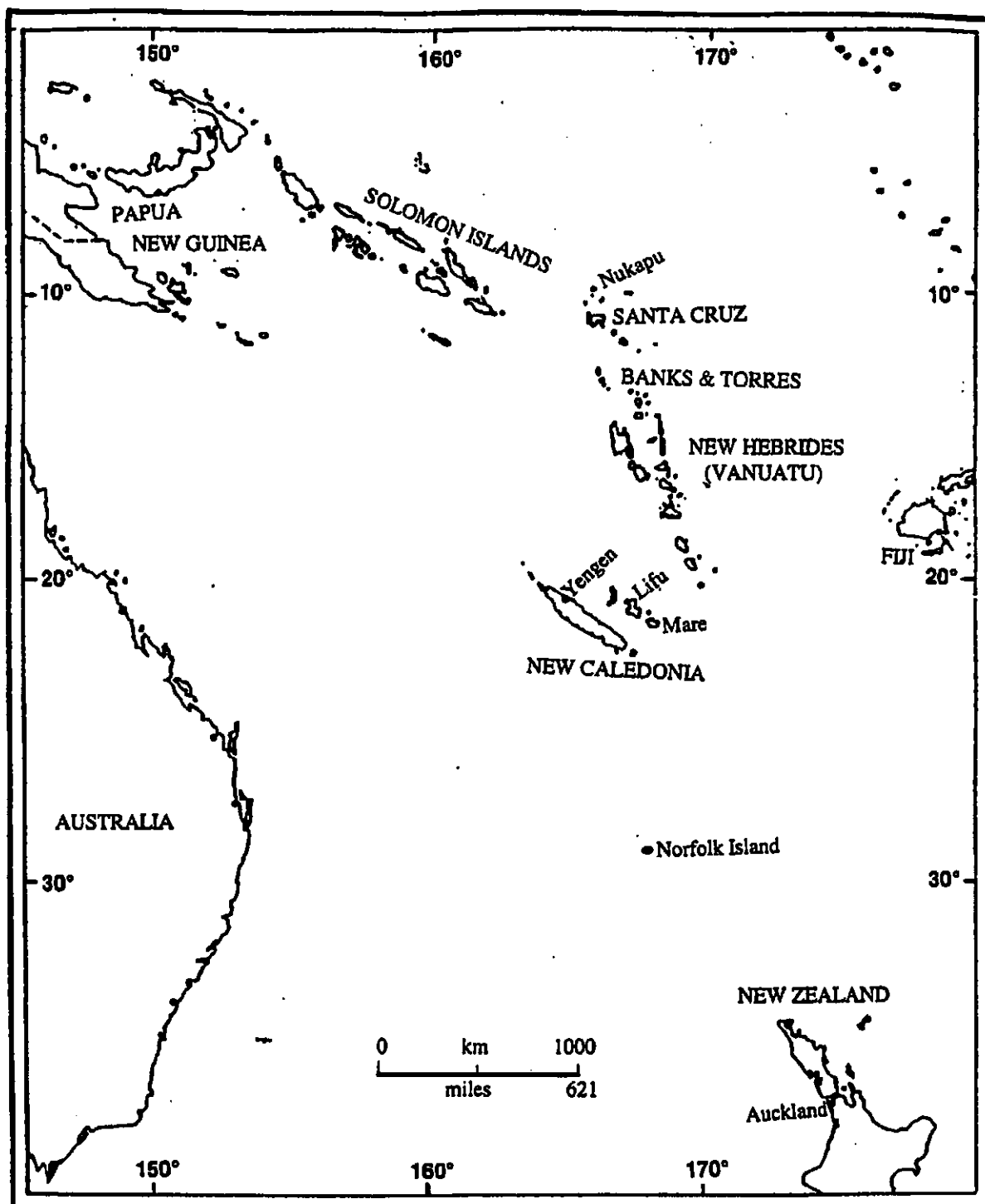
My patience and self-discipline were greatly tested during the time of research and in the writing of this thesis. There were times of frustration and uncertainty but I found support and encouragement from many people and I am grateful to each and everyone.

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The Islands of Melanesia in relation to Australia and New Zealand