

MISSIONS

John Williams

John Williams was born in Tottenham, England, on June 29, 1776. He was a cheerful, active, and affectionate boy with a limited education. He never got to go to college.

As a youth he scoffed at Christ until one Sunday night he heard a sermon on "The Worth of the Soul." It was a turning point in his life. He broke away from his evil companions and became a teacher of the Bible and a visitor of the sick.

His church had quarterly missionary reports and on one of these occasions John Williams was convicted to become a missionary. Pomare, the King of Tahiti, had just become a Christian and there was a desperate need for workers. Williams responded to that call.

At his ordination one of the speakers said: "Go my dear young brother, and if thy tongue cleave to the roof of thy mouth, let it be in teaching poor sinners the love of Jesus Christ; if thine arm drop from thy shoulder, let it be by knocking at men's hearts to gain admission for Him there."

Williams set sail for the South Seas on November 17, 1816,

and a year later they sighted Tahiti. As I have said, Williams was a simple man with little formal education. Like Robinson Crusoe he fashioned a dwelling from what materials were native to the area. He rubbed shoulders with the people and learned their language. Converts came to Christ, literally by the thousands.

On the Island of Raratonga, for example, within one year the natives had built a huge chapel and filled it with 4,000 savages who came to worship Jesus.

When Williams longed to reach out and evangelize on new horizons he saw the need of a ship and simply built one. It was fashioned of native woods and other material indigenous to that part of the world, and caulked with banana peeling and coconut hulls. It was 60 feet long and 18 feet wide and would carry a burden of 70-80 tons. It was very sea worthy and sailed thousands of miles to advance the cause of Christ. John called it "The Messenger of Peace."

He set sail on May 24, 1832, for Samos where savages abounded whose cruelty is difficult to imagine or describe. A chief might have from 20-100 wives and when he died they were all strangled and buried with him. A pig had more rights than a woman and men behaved more like animals than human beings.

Williams has been described "The prince of missionaries since the days of the Apostles to the gentiles."

It has been said that there was not a group or an island within 2,000 miles of Tahiti in any direction to which the glad tidings of salvation had not yet been conveyed.

In 1839, John Williams was killed and eaten by cannibals on the Island of Erromanga in the New Hebrides. He considered it a critical place to evangelize and perhaps the key to the evangelism of New Caledonia, New Britain, and New Guinea.

Williams was only one of five missionaries to be martyred on this island. He once wrote to his parents these poignant words:

Grieve not at my absence, for I am engaged in the best of service, for the best of masters, and upon the best terms, but rather rejoice in having a child upon whom the Lord has conferred this honor.

Williams looked forward to the day when not only the poor, but also the rich and the noble will consecrate their influence, their wealth, and even their sons and daughters to regenerate and bless the world.

“ . . . but whether such forward it or not, the work will go on, enlargement and deliverance will come, until the earth, instead of being a theatre on which men prepare themselves by crime for eternal condemnation, shall become one universal temple of the living God, in which the children of men shall learn the anthems and of the blessed above, and be made meet to unite with the spirits of the redeemed from every nation and people, and tongue, in celebrating the jubilee of a ransomed world.”

Adapted from *Epoch Makers of Modern Missions*
by McLean

350 Missionaries Supported By One Church

(Oswald Smith)

Read the following article to see how it all started.

“When I moved to The Peoples Church on Gerrard Street, many years ago now, I was told everything except one thing, and on the Sunday morning that I was to preach my first sermon, the treasurer approached me with a very grim expression on his countenance. ‘Dr. Smith,’ he said, ‘we have told you everything there is to tell you about this church except one thing.’ Then he paused. I waited for him to continue with what he was going to say. In a moment he went on. ‘The church,’ he said, ‘is in debt. We have some unpaid bills and we have nothing in the treasury,’ and then he looked at me as though he expected me to put my hand in my pocket, take out the money and give it to him, telling him to run away and pay the bills.

Instead, I turned and went into the pulpit and as I went I prayed. ‘Lord,’ I said, ‘I have been wanting to find out for a long time whether or not a certain passage in Thy Word is true.’ True, I meant, from a practical standpoint. I referred to that verse, ‘Seek ye first the kingdom of God (the extension of God’s kingdom worldwide) and all these things shall be added unto you.’ That morning I preached a missionary sermon.

Sunday evening came. It was my first Sunday. I should have brought an evangelistic message, but again I felt led to speak on missions, and I did so. Then I asked the people to come back every night that week. They came, and on Monday night I gave them missions again. On Tuesday they got another dose of missions. Wednesday night they had to listen to still another missionary address. On Thursday night it was missions again. By Friday they were coming in increasing numbers, perhaps more out of curiosity than for any other reason, and once again they got a dose of missions.

Then, I suppose they folded their arms, saying one to another, 'This new pastor of ours, we cannot understand him. He doesn't seem to have any sermons except on missions. But the second Sunday is coming. Perhaps then he will really start to preach.'

The second Sunday came. I can remember it as though it were yesterday. At the morning service I made an announcement. 'We are going to hold three services today,' I said, 'and take up three missionary offerings: one this morning, another this afternoon and the last one tonight.' Some of them seemed to look at me in amazement, but I had started my work, assisted by one missionary, with an attempt at a missionary convention, and I was determined to see it through. That morning I spoke on missions and took up a missionary offering. I did the same in the afternoon and again at night. Here I was, hardly saying a word about home needs and yet taking all the money I could get from them for missions. But now for the sequel.

They became so interested, so aroused, so awakened, that they came in ever-increasing numbers. Souls were saved and in a very short time every seat was taken. Before long they had caught the vision and they began to give, to give as they had never given before, and in a few weeks, without having to say hardly anything about the local obligations, every debt was paid, every bill met, and from that day to this we have not known the meaning of the word "debt" in connection with our work. We discovered that when we put first things first, God works.

The trouble with the average church is that the cart is put before the horse and then the pastor is told to get up on the seat and drive, and of course he finds the going hard. If only we would reverse the order and accept God's plan, we would get somewhere and the going would be easy. Seek first the extension of God's kingdom worldwide, and all things will be added. God's program never fails."

Taken from *Cry of the World*
by Oswald Smith, Toronto, Canada

