

The Australian Church Quarterly

Edited by

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Editorial note: *Father Maynard made some references to the Memorial Windows at St Peter's Eastern Hill in 'The Australian Church Quarterly', of which he was the managing editor. These comments from Maynard's editorials are reproduced here.*

St. Peter's and the New Guinea Mission

The people of St. Peter's decided, after careful consideration, to erect a stained glass window to commemorate the centenary of their church, and decided that it should tell, in twelve panels, the glorious story of the New Guinea Mission, with which the Church has been intimately connected since the Mission's inception fifty years or so ago, down to the recent martyrdoms of eight Missionaries and two native Christians. Plate I in this number is a coloured reproduction of the panel which represents the Bishop of New Guinea, on the day of its consecration, going in procession to the new Cathedral in Dogura. It gives some idea of the strength and beauty of this really magnificent work of art by Mr. Napier Waller. Those in the "Evangelical" tradition in the Church have done great and glorious work in the Mission Field, but it would perhaps be hard to find any better piece of Mission work in the Anglican Communion than that done in New Guinea on sane and solid Catholic lines. And all the world knows to-day how much the sterling devotion of the native Christians of Papua meant to the cause fought out recently on the shores of that island. It was in thankfulness for this, that the people of St. Peter's decided to collect three hundred pounds more than was needed to erect the window, and to present this to the Bishop of New Guinea.

We cannot conclude this reference to the centenary without expressing our deep sense of gratitude to the Archbishop of Melbourne for his unfailing helpfulness at every point, and in every way, throughout the commemoration; and for coming to dedicate the window at the great High Mass on October 27th. The carefully considered sermon which he preached on that occasion is printed in this number. It was listened to with great appreciation by a large congregation, many of whom had walked miles to be present, since the event coincided with the transport strike, and there were no trams or trains that day.

[The Archbishop's sermon has been transcribed, and is available on the St Peter's website through links on the pages devoted to the New Guinea Window. (Ed.)]

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The New Guinea Window

The first Plate in this number of the A.C.Q. shows the window erected in the north transept of St. Peter's, Eastern Hill, Melbourne, to commemorate the centenary of that church. It is the first photograph of the window to be published, although a coloured reproduction of the top central panel was issued at the time of the commemoration, June, 1946. Since that date the corresponding window in the south transept has been filled as a War Memorial. Both windows are remarkable for originality of design and treatment; and a booklet is shortly to appear with photographs of both windows and full explanations of their significance. The cost of the booklet will be 2/6, and orders may be placed with the Secretary of "The Book Room," St. Peter's, Melbourne, C.2. [*No copy of this booklet has been found in the parish archives. If any reader knows of a copy, please contact St Peter's so that it can be copied and made available through the St Peter's website. (Ed.)*] Both windows are by the same distinguished Australian artist, Mr. Napier Waller, who is now engaged on work for the Canberra War Memorial.

A few words may be said here about the window illustrated in Plate I. An overseas artist, who knows the treasures of Europe well, after looking at it silently for some minutes, remarked: "This window does not only tell a story in glass, it makes history in glass."

Alas for the impossibility of depicting in black and white the many colours so skilfully ordered as to make of the whole a unity whose overall impression is one of restraint! But there is undiminished the brilliance of the hybisscus (*sic.*), the gorgeousness of the banners, the deep tranquil blue of the sea, the tropical green of the vegetation in front of the Cathedral, which in the picture looks black. Sombre also seems the priest's chasuble in the centre, which, in reality, is a rich purple. Nor can the fierceness of flames devouring the native habitation be more than merely suggested. Lost, too, is the ethereal loveliness of the scene in the top right-hand panel. These, and other glories, can be no more than barely suggested; but the story can be read.

The story is that of the marvellous New Guinea Mission, which, though only some fifty years old, has transformed that part of Papua where its influence has been felt, and whose glorious work culminated in the sacrificial offering of the lives of ten martyrs, who died at the hands of the Japanese invaders because they would not leave their post when dire danger threatened. These ever glorious figures are represented in the three bottom panels. On the left-hand two nurses are seen in flight with the two natives who perished with them. In the centre the three priests who suffered are shown, one in a boat, commemorative of Henry Matthews, who perished at sea. The artist has avoided showing the enemy, nor is any of the grimness of the actual tragedy depicted. He has been content to represent it by a sword of destruction, a palm leaf of victory, and the red glow of blood. There is a sense of wonderful serenity on this panel, which is one of the most remarkable. The right-hand bottom panel shows the other two women, and the layman, who stood by the women to the last and perished on the shore. This panel speaks of humble resignation.

Above these bottom panels the story runs. Reading downwards on the left, we see first and early missionary telling natives of the glory of God as revealed in the beauty of nature; and there is depicted with great skill the symbol of the Holy Ghost descending in a flame which takes the fashion of a dove as it approaches the teacher and her hearers. The drawing and colouring are superb. The next panel shows a further development. The school is at work; and, under that, the hospital is shown. The details in both are fascinating.

The top centre panel is almost an exact reproduction of a photograph taken on the day of the consecration of the Cathedral of St. Peter and St. Paul, at Dogura. The Bishop of New Guinea is seen in procession against a stylized representation of the Cathedral. The Book, the Sword, the Keys are all there, and many colourful banners. It is a glorious piece of composition. Under it there is seen the then Archbishop of Brisbane, Dr. Wand, seated, as the petition for consecration is read to him by the builder, Mr. Robert Jones. The Archbishop is surrounded by various attendants, and the two other Bishops present appear behind him, namely, the aged Bishop Newton, and the present Bishop, Dr. Philip Strong. Then, further down, in the next panel, we see the Church at her most sacred work. There is the Cathedral Altar, and a priest giving Communion as black and white kneel together.

Passing immediately to the right we see a native house in flames. Most skilfully has the artist made us realise the terror of the bombings, and the grief of the mother over her dead child. Above, the reconstruction work is already commencing at Mamba, where the grand old veteran missionary Father Gill is planning with his boys the re-building of his desolated mission station. Courage has not failed. Hope has not been quenched. In the power of Christ good shall yet triumph over evil, and life over death. So at the top we have a priest—representing every priest of the whole Mission—offering the Sacrifice of Praise. And as he elevates the sacred Host, there is seen beyond a vision of the Eternal City, beyond time, beyond the reach of the enemy, the City whose citizens are here being prepared through much tribulation for their glorious destiny.

The legend below the three lights runs thus:—

To commemorate the missionaries martyred in New Guinea, 1942.

The Good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. St. John x.: 11.

They knowing full well the risk elected to stay with their flock.

The people of St. Peter's felt that they could not better thank God for their hundred years of blessing than by putting up this window to remind all who come after of past links with the New Guinea Mission and future responsibilities. To the £700 needed for the window another £300 was subscribed as a gift to the Bishop of New Guinea toward restoration or extension.

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