

The rapidity and thoroughness of these changes have probably no parallel in all Christian history, and furnish a striking fulfillment of the prediction, "As soon as they hear of Me they shall obey Me; the strangers shall submit themselves unto Me" (Ps. 18 : 45; 2 Sam. 22 : 45).

A little more than a year after the discovery of Raratonga the whole population had renounced idolatry and were erecting a place of worship six hundred feet in length; and at a meeting held, the chiefs from Aitutaki were the principal speakers. The means which God used made the work more astonishing. Two humble native teachers were the instruments of this wonderful change before a single missionary had set foot upon the island. And yet it was at Raratonga that Mr. Williams, in 1827, met the greatest concourse he had seen since he left England; the people, walking in procession, dropped at his feet fourteen idols, the smallest of which was about five yards in length.

Mr. Williams drew up an elementary work, translated the Gospel of John and the Epistle to the Galatians, which were printed a few months later, and from that time the progress of the people distances all comparison. The manner in which the Raratongans spent their Sabbaths shames most other Christians: A preparatory prayer-meeting at sunrise, conducted by themselves; a service of worship led by the missionary at nine o'clock, prior to which they met in classes of ten or twelve families each, distributing among themselves the portions of the sermon which each individual should bring away, carefully noting the divisions of the discourse, and marking opposite to each the chapters or verses by which it was illustrated.

A code of Christian laws was adopted. The inhabitants had always been systematic thieves, and before the introduction of Christianity their punishments were little more than acts of vengeance. The friends of the aggrieved party would take from the offender by force any article of value, destroy his trees and crops, break down his house, and sometimes murder the thief himself. Christianity brought with it a proper code of laws, with judges and juries, in place of this method of private revenge. Theft, trespass, Sabbath-breaking, rebellion, marriage, adultery, and "land-eating" or the forcible and unjust possession of another's land, were all regulated or restrained by law, and deliberate murder was punished with death. Plurality of wives became unlawful; wedlock was honored with becoming ceremonies. The Raratongan women were completely transformed, even in outward appearance; they became more industrious, neat in person, modest in manners, faithful in their households, and helpful in all Christian work.

The chiefs themselves commonly led the way in the conversion of the people, and sometimes in the advocacy of the Gospel by public addresses. Knees bowed in prayer to God, and tongues were unloosed in supplication on islands which had never before known prayer to Jehovah. Sometimes the public destruction of idols was attended by vast crowds, and presided