

The Esoteric Signification of
the Wackenzelle

Rev. C. E. Whitaker



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The Eskimo Mission of the Mackenzie

"At the funeral of the great Duke of Wellington it was considered to be a mark of solemn respect that the obsequies should be attended by one soldier from every regiment of the British Army; and it is a part of the Saviour's glory that one jewel be gathered to His crown from every tribe of the lost human race. It is an honour to seek to secure for our Lord one such jewel from even the remotest tribe."*

I.

With this thought like a fire in his heart, the Reverend William Carpenter Bompas, afterward successively Bishop of Athabasca, of Mackenzie River, and of Selkirk, on April 18th, 1870, started on an itineration among the Eskimos dwelling in or near the Mackenzie Delta. This marked the first attempt at Christian work among this people, and the aim of this paper is to trace the progress of the work thus begun, and to show that it is "*the Gospel of Christ* that is the power of God unto Salvation," even unto the ends of the earth.

Pioneer Work Among the Mackenzie River Eskimos.

Bishop Bompas, 1870.

It must however be understood that statements in this account regarding the Eskimos of this particular region may not be applicable to the Eskimos of other places. There is a great difference of circumstance between Mackenzie River, and Greenland or Labrador.

It would be difficult to find a more degraded people than were those whom Mr. Bompas now proposed to visit. They had invited him to come to them, but before reaching them he had a message from the chief to defer his coming, as the "Eskimos were starving and quarrelling, and one had just been stabbed and killed in a dispute about some tobacco."

A Degraded People.

* An Apostle of the North, p. 108

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ESKIMO DOG DRIVER

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But he kept on, trusting in God Whose servant he was. His visit, however, afforded him little pleasure. He found they were addicted to lying, stealing and stabbing. "They practised heathen dances, songs and conjuring, spells and charms. Their religion was very crude, being vague ideas of a spirit of evil, related to cold and death, amenable to exorcism at times, and a less definite idea of a good spirit, in relation with the sun." Religious Ideas.

"Smoking seems to be the sole object of their lives." He thought it "prudent not to carry his watch." Of their habitations, he says, writing to a friend, "Go to the nearest well-to-do farmer, and spend a night in his pig-sty (with the pigs of course) and this is exactly like life with the Eskimos. The difficulty you would have in crawling or wriggling into the sty through a hole only large enough for a pig, was exactly my case with their houses. As to the habits of your companions, the advantage would probably be on the side of the pigs, and the safety of the position decidedly so. As you will not believe in the truth of this little simile, how much less would you believe if I gave you full particulars?" With the exception of the kindness shown him by the old chief Shipaitook, on whose invitation he had come, nearly all his experiences were disagreeable, and often dangerous. Other observers have been less reticent regarding prevailing customs showing that a state of shocking immorality, infanticide, polygamy, promiscuous marital relations, disregard of life and property rights characterized them. "At the same time their ignorance and carelessness are so great that they seem quite incapable of apprehending the solemnities of religion"—but, he says, "They have received the little instruction I have been able to give them with thankfulness." But their thankfulness was shortlived, for on the way returning they conspired to murder him, and were with difficulty restrained by the diplomacy of the chief, who dreamed a dream to order, and related it to his people with such effect that they were thereafter solicitous for the Bishop's health and safety. Their Social Condition.

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A Superstitious and Treacherous Race.

The unevangelized Eskimo is a very superstitious man, and almost every act of his life is bounded by some more or less unreasonable regulation. He may not kill deer with a rifle which has killed a bear. The woman may not work at deer skins in the sealing season. A dead whale or seal when brought to shore must be given a drink. If one move into a house by the door he must move out by the skylight, etc., and the observance of such things constituted his religion. And they were very treacherous. From unknown times there were feuds between them and the Indians, but never open battle, generally a stealthy approach and a midnight attack. There still lives at Ft. McPherson an old woman who survived as a child a massacre in which many lives were destroyed. The two companies were camped near each other and all relations appeared friendly, but when all were supposed to be asleep, the Eskimos rose up and slew their unsuspecting neighbors.

A Change for the Better.

This was the last massacre as at this time the Indians had come under Christian instruction, and were restrained from retaliation. Mr. Bompas was never able to make another visit to the Eskimos in their own territory, neither were they visited by any other missionary for more than twenty years. But numbers of them came regularly to the trading post at McPherson to barter their furs, and observing the lives of the missionaries who were there at different times, of the Indians who now treated them peaceably, of the Company's agent who for many years exercised an influence all to the good, a gradual change came over the tribe. The grossest practices died out with the passing of the older generations, the manners of the post residents influencing the youth, for they are great imitators. Thus indirectly Christian example wrought much for their betterment. And though the visit of the first Herald of the Gospel was fraught with so much discomfort and discouragement, the Eskimos always remembered with kindness his patience among them and his manifest love for them. One of them long after said—"Why would we not listen to him? We were like dogs, we know now what our fathers missed."

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MR. W. H. FRY AND THE REV. EDWARD
SITACHILI OF FORT MACPHERSON

THE FIRST TWO ESKIMOS BAPTIZED, AUGUST,
1909. JOHN AODLEGIK AND SIMON ANAKTOOK

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Language Difficulties.

The greatest obstacle in the presentation of the message was lack of knowledge of the language. There was one called an interpreter who could manage fairly well in barter, but in things spiritual his heart and mind were so perverted as to be as incapable of conveying the truth, as a shallow tortuous river is of bearing a vessel deeply laden with the good things of the world. And incapacity was not the worst but wilful misrepresentation fostered suspicion and on more than one occasion nearly caused serious trouble.

Indirect Influence of Archdeacon MacDonald.

While, strictly speaking, he made no direct effort to reach the Eskimos, Archdeacon Robert MacDonald, must be reckoned as a large factor in the change manifested during these years. Going in and out, as he was, among the Indians for so many years, understanding the Indian tongue thoroughly, and instructing them so ably, his teaching was thus indirectly brought to bear, through the frequent intercourse of the two peoples on the Eskimos whose language he understood not at all.

Outward Signs of Improvement.

During the latter part of this period there was an immigration from Alaska, of some members of another tribe, differing somewhat in manners and language, and these further modified the behaviour of the people. But though outwardly some progress had been made, within they were little improved. They no longer flaunted their degrading immoralities before the public but privately gave themselves up to vile affections "having no hope, and without God—in the world."

Among the old customs now going out may be mentioned tattooing, ornaments, tonsure and coiffure. Tattooing is practised by both sexes, the girls beginning quite young with lines on the chin, these being added to periodically. A man who had killed another was privileged to wear tattoo lines from the ears to the mouth. Of ornaments, earrings of Yakwa shells or of jade, and beads were worn by the women, and long ago, beyond the memory of any now living, some of the women wore a large labret in the middle of the under lip. All males had their lips cut in youth and plugs inserted, one under each corner of the mouth. The size of these holes increased with

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age, and required large buttons to fill them. Some of them were as large as a silver dollar, and set with a blue stone.

The purpose of the tonsure was that the sun, their good spirit "might shine through the skull, and warm the brain and give life to the heart." The females parted the hair in the middle from the brow to the nape of the neck, drew it in two plaits over the ears, added all the combings of their previous years and wound it round closely with strings of seed beads. The older women had large rolls.



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II.

Bishop
Reeve, 1890.

The Ven. Archdeacon W. D. Reeve was made Bishop of MacKenzie River in 1890, in succession to Bishop Bompas, who had chosen the new Diocese of Selkirk as his sphere of labour. Both of these Dioceses reach through to the Arctic, and both contain Eskimos territory. The two Bishops therefore issued a joint appeal for a missionary for the long neglected Eskimos. Isaac O. Stringer, a Toronto University Graduate, then taking a Theological course at Wycliffe College responded to the call, was ordained in 1892, and at once went actively into work. With such help as he could get from the interpreter he devoted his whole attention and effort to bringing the Gospel to these degraded but interesting people. He held services for them when they visited the trading post, visited them during summer and winter at their Eastern village, and at Herschel Island, and travelled with them on the Spring migration. At about the same time a Roman Priest also began working among them, and there appeared a prospect of a division, as some were friendly to one side and some to the other. By giving presents and charms and by other material inducements, the Roman Priest endeavoured to gain favour, but the Eskimos are keen trappers and know the nature of baits, so were not deceived.

Bishop
Stringer,
1892.

Roman
Catholic
Efforts.

After some years of this halting between two opinions the Priest brought matters to a crisis. With violent language he assured the chief that he and his people would "be burned up like this paper which I throw in the fire" because they did not attend his services. The chief was displeased, came to see Mr. Stringer, and said he would forbid the Priest ever to come to the village again, and from that time onward, no Eskimo has ever attended a Roman service.

The differences in the personal character of the two missionaries had probably much to do with the decision. It does not appear that they made a choice of doctrines, or that they gave any adherence to any doctrine, but as a matter of men, they respected the man who was endeavouring to help them,

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MEMBERS OF THE ESKIMO TRIBE DISCOVERED BY MR. STEFANSSON

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and resented the attempt to usurp authority over them. But while they became listeners to the message, there was little indication of any desire to follow its precepts. They attended services interestedly, but were indifferent to the things taught them, not realizing that these things applied to them in any sense.

Rev. C. E.
Whittaker,
1895.

Mr. Stringer went on furlough in '95 and returned with a bride in '96, and the next year went to reside at Herschel Island. Mr. C. E. Whittaker, a layman, joined the Mission in 1895, was ordained and married in 1898 and worked with Mr. Stringer until the latter's return home in 1901. He then succeeded to his work, and residence at Herschel Island. Mr. W. D. Young was also on the Mission staff from 1896 to 1902.

Mr. W. D.
Young, 1896.

Opposition
from
American
Whalers.

During these years the missionaries endeavoured by preaching and teaching, at home and abroad, by ministering to the sick, by godly example supporting precept, by kindly helpfulness to the needy and sorrowing, by every possible means, in season and out, to make known to them the love of God in Christ. The interpreter died, another, who could give a little help, suicided, and so the language has always presented great difficulty. But worst of all was the presence and influence of the American whaling ships. From 1890 onward, from ten to twenty-five ships a year cruised in the Arctic, and ten to fifteen frequently passed the winter in the harbour at Herschel Island. The average crew of these ships was about forty men and as Eskimo concubines were usually maintained by Captains and officers, the crews had no restraints placed on their licentious desires. The more unscrupulous among them dispensed liquor freely in trade or to debauch the women, and so successful were they that for years there was scarcely a woman, or girl of age, who had not fallen a prey, and the present writer has seen a sober population, within an hour after the arrival of a ship, turned into a howling bedlam of drunken men, women and children. And in addition, the officers and men not only by example opposed the work of the Mission, but belittled and ridiculed the teaching given there. As there were scores or hundreds of these men to one missionary, and as

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they were generally better provided with material goods, it is not strange that the Eskimos listened to them.

But the steady consistent life of their teachers, in comparison with that of their seducers, was gradually realized by the Eskimos; the persistent proclamation of the Good-News, like the continual dropping of water, made an impression on their stony hearts; the work of the day school for children, and night school for men, begat an ambition for learning, and bit by bit the influence of the Mission grew. But the change was so slow as to be almost imperceptible, and as year by year passed away, and not one person was willing to cut loose from evil habits, or to take a stand for right, the question arose whether this barren field were worth the labour and expense bestowed upon it. The Headman of Herschel Island, and two young men related to him who had been very attentive at services and at night school, were the only ones who gave any promise of encouragement, from the spiritual side, and when, in 1906, Mr. Whittaker and family were obliged to leave Herschel Island, the Headman consented to keep the service books and hold services in his house on Sundays "for those who wished to believe." Thus the work was, in a sense, laid upon them, and the response has been gratifying.

For nine years Herschel Island was continuously occupied first by Rev. I. O. and Mrs. Stringer, and later by Mr. and Mrs. Whittaker. Two children were born to the latter, but passed to that land where there is neither heat nor cold, where all tears are wiped away, where they shall see their Saviour face to face. Their little bodies were carried 250 miles by sled to McPherson for burial. The isolation of the station may be judged from the fact that in five years Mrs. Whittaker saw only two white women, captains' wives from the whaling ships, and not a green tree during that time.

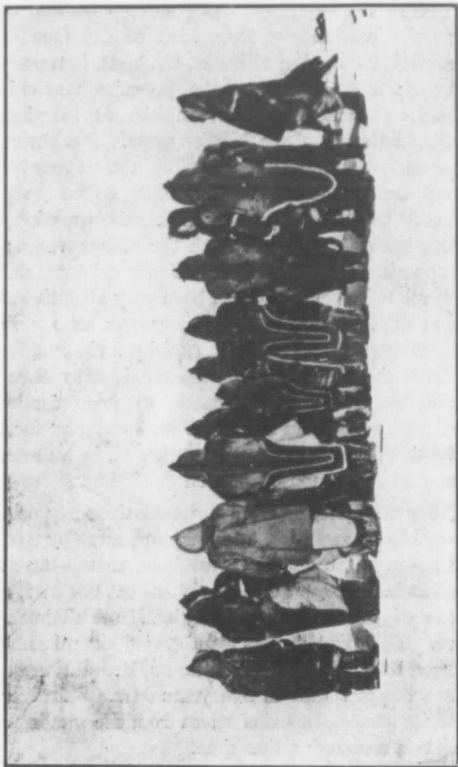
An epidemic of measles in 1902, aggravated by plentiful whiskey, carried off about thirty people at the Island, and nearly 50 more at different places along the coast, between the Alaskan boundary and Baillie Islands. Nearly all the victims were

Slow but
Certain
Progress.

Sorrow in
Solitude.

Spiritual
Blessing
from
Physical
Suffering.

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ESKIMO COSTUMES

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beyond middle age, many of them had been hostile or distant in attitude, and the younger generation looked upon this visitation as an indication that unfriendliness to the Mission was displeasing to the God they served. While therefore spiritual result was not apparent their personal attitude was much improved.

In the early years it was difficult to get the natives to attend to the dead, even of their own families, fear of spirits deterring them, but this also was modified in course of time, when they saw others performing these duties without hurt.

Care of the Dead.

As related, the Headman was made responsible for the services during the absence of the missionary, and as no resident missionary has been there since, the responsibility became permanent. A native from one of the Alaskan missions was there for a time and helped him ; others also rose to the occasion and for six years they have maintained, with occasional brief visits by a missionary, their services unbroken, in the midst of much temptation, in the face of opposing influences from more sources than whalers.

Development of Native Workers.

During this period constant study of the language produced a more definite statement of the message, a better understanding was established, and a clearer sense of individual responsibility to God dawned on the native mind.

When, therefore, Bishop Stringer, on his first Episcopal visitation to the Eskimos in 1909, went to the village of Kitigagyuit, the scene of his earliest labours, he was astonished at the change apparent in the people. Instead of aloofness, their welcome was of the heartiest, in place of indifference, there appeared a real desire, not only to hear and learn, but to obey the words taught them. Many were the questions brought for decision, some of them quite removed from ethics, but all showing an awakened mind and heart, and a new confidence in the Minister of the Word. In former visits, constant begging had made prolonged stays impossible, but at this time, so far from begging, they daily brought supplies of their best for the Mission party, and when a case of newly published service books was opened for sale, they dug up curios, stripped off

Bishop Stringer in 1909 Sees a Marvellous Change.

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jewelry, grudging not their furs, in their desire to obtain copies of the book. A service called at any time was immediately responded to by every one in the village and the attentive faces and eager eyes bespoke a deeper work of the spirit than had ever before been manifest among them.

First Fruits

One elderly man, fifteen years a cripple from rheumatism, but keen of mind, had made himself schoolmaster in ordinary. He now, first among the Eskimos of this region, desired baptism, and choosing the name of John he was received by the Bishop. Another young man named Simon was baptized the same day, and a few days later several others at Herschel Island and Escape Reef.

Many Baptisms.

The duty and privilege of baptism had never been pressed upon them, lest many should seek it without a work of grace begun. But now that some had received the rite, many others gave evidence of intention to "lead a new life, following the commandments of God," and in the year 1910 one hundred and thirteen were baptized. So far from being a fashion, every candidate seemed to realize the solemnity of the ceremony and of the promises they took upon them. Previously the women were the greater offenders in matters of purity. Nearly one hundred women have been baptized, and no case of offence among them is known to the Mission. Some of their unbaptized sisters still continue in their old courses.

Changed Lives.

The total number of baptized persons to July 20th, 1912, was two hundred and forty-eight, including 52 children, for whom parents, or other relatives, already baptized, stood sponsor. And the change wrought is "marvellous in our eyes." No case of theft has been heard of in years. The last murder was nine years ago, the murderer living now without fear of vengeance. Infanticide has ceased, polygamy is abandoned, lying extremely rare. Besides hands and face daily, they bathe every Saturday, and appear in clean clothes on Sunday. The treatment of the aged is much more kindly, and in all other matters of ethics they show great improvement. Though very little in the way of schooling has been done for them, the majority of them have learned to read and write, and they

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devour with avidity every word translated into the vernacular, and at once learn every new hymn. Some of the older people who cannot read can sing the Hymnal through, having learned it off by rote.

Two years ago they were told that the Gospel was sent to them by the kindness of others and that they ought to help send it to those still in darkness. The response was a contribution of \$305.00, a thanksgiving for the light that had come into their darkness. The second year with an increasing number baptized the amount arose to \$388.00. Perhaps the most striking feature of the thoroughness of their devotion is found in their readiness to go as teachers to distant tribes of their own people.

In most of these matters they have been much influenced by the example of the Indians who have had services, ceremonies, offerings and native teachers for two generations. During the present year eight persons were instructed, admitted to confirmation and to the Holy Communion, the first to be celebrated among the Eskimos in this district. Each of those confirmed is looked upon as licensed by the Bishop to teach. They are as unashamed of their religion as the Moslem who unrolls his prayer mat and performs his devotions regardless of observers. During the winter, which is the major part of the year, the Eskimos are much scattered, but live mostly in small groups of one to four families in a place, and pursue their trapping and hunting from a central camp, oftentimes a well-built house. In every such place there is some one competent to lead the service, and in some daily, and in all weekly service and prayer are held, and even though they do not see a missionary for months he is able to instruct them by letter, sending a copy to each camp where it is studied and practised.

The Eskimos resented the attempt of the Roman Priest to assume authority over them. The missionaries have tried in every particular to put the responsibility of decision on the individuals, contenting themselves with pointing out the right course, and where possible giving reasons for it. The outcome is, that a course indicated by the missionary is implicitly

**Missionary
Zeal.**

**Each Com-
municant a
Teacher.**

**A Ready
Will to
Obey.**

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followed as the command of high authority, and therein lies a heavy responsibility for the missionary. The Eskimos in their simplicity might follow an erratic leader into many by-paths. While their hearts are moved and their devotion is whole, there is still great need for instruction, and for prayer that they may be kept sane, and their devotion directed in proper channels.

They rejoice in new-found love and life, and their teachers rejoice in a people transformed by the Spirit of God, through the proclamation by lip and life, of His Holy Word.



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III.

For some years past there have been reports from stray whaling ships of a number of natives on the islands to the east of Beaufort Sea (that portion of the Arctic lying north of the Mackenzie River Diocese), but they were thought to be few and scattered, and very inaccessible. It had long been Bishop Stringer's ambition to reach them as soon as possible, but he had hitherto been unable to do so. During the winter of 1910 the explorer Stefansson, writing from north of Great Bear Lake, reported having found a large number of hitherto unknown Eskimos, in the region of the Coppermine River. Stefansson does not claim to be the discoverer of the tribe, but that he has seen some hundreds of people who have never seen a white man before, and, what had not before been noted, that a few of these people had blue eyes and light eyebrows and sandy beards, indicating a European admixture at some remote period. Some well-known white trappers in the Bear Lake region also saw some of these Eskimos, and established communication with them for the first time. On all previous occasions, whenever the Eskimos in this region had seen smoke of a camp-fire they became frightened and ran. When asked why they ran, they said "our fathers ran when they saw smoke, and we run." To this day they do not know that Mr. Stefansson is not an Eskimo like themselves, and it was he who brought them into touch with the white trappers.

When this discovery became known in Mackenzie River, the Roman bishop at once dispatched a priest to plant a Mission among the Eskimos north of Bear Lake. This was cutting into our preserve, no Eskimo having hitherto been secured by the Roman Church. But we had no man to promote to this field. Bishop Holmes during his visit the next year was greatly enthused with the idea of occupying this field at once, in view of the splendid results obtained among the Eskimos of the Mackenzie. Information was gathered from reliable sources. Mr. Fry made a winter trip about 300 miles eastward to visit natives along

A New
Tribe.

Steps Taken
to Secure
Reliable
Information.

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the coast. He also saw Captain Bernard of the schooner "Teddy Bear," who had passed a winter near the mouth of the Coppermine, and who showed Mr. Fry photographs of large groups of these people. He also met Mr. Stefansson, who spent "portions of four days with him, making sketch maps, showing location of tribes in summer and winter, as well as population, drawing and locating such ship harbours as I know of, etc." (Extract from Mr. Stefansson's letter to Mr. Whittaker).

Mr. Fry
Chosen for
this New
Work.

When these facts were laid before Bishop Stringer and Archdeacon Lucas last July there was no hesitation as to the need of moving at once. Mr. W. Henry Fry was ordained for the work. He had already been three years in the field and has a good knowledge of Eskimo character, and a faculty of inspiring their confidence. At the same time he could not undertake such a work at so great a distance single handed, and the new converts were approached as to whether any of them would volunteer to accompany him, it being well explained to them that if they went they would have to depend on their own efforts to keep themselves, and at the same time would be expected to show by word of mouth, and holy life, the gospel they were carrying. The response was that they could not volunteer, as the volunteers might be unsuitable, but, "We are Christians, tell us whom you would like to go with Mr. Fry, and we will go."

Volunteers
Called for
from Among
the Native
Christians.

Ten people, five couples, were chosen, and accepted, without demur. One man had an adopted son, old enough to please himself, who was not in the party, but his father asked the Bishop to "speak to the boy to go with me." This conversation ensued :

Bishop—"Tamma Keruk wants you to go—will you go?"

The Boy—"Do you want me to go?"

Bishop—"Yes."

Boy—"Very well, I will go,"—and the matter was closed.

It will be noted here that this young man was negotiating marriage, for the young folk have that right, and in view of his going away at the Bishop's request the girl has betrothed her-

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self, a most unusual proceeding, and will await his return, perhaps two years hence.

On July 18th, Mr. Fry, with some of these people, were despatched via Herschel Island, in the Mission schooner which had just then been dedicated by the Bishop, and named "Tiliyak," which is the Eskimo word for "Messenger."

The other members of the party, with a son of one of them, go by their own boats, there being five boats in all. A late letter from Mr. Fry, dated August 1st, from Herschel Island, advises that he was then ready to start eastward with the first fair wind. Thus is launched in trembling, yet in confidence, the forward movement of the farthest north, fearful because the dangers are known, and the difficulties almost insurmountable ; an open coast, an unchartered shore, a heavy boat dependent upon fair winds, an unknown and barbarous people, no houses, scarcity of building materials, and a long cold winter with the dangers of ice. Confident because of the assurance that God is with us, that now or never is the time. A Venture
of Faith.

These natives have not yet been "spoiled by civilization," and when one remembers the triumphs of Grace among the debauched natives of Herschel Island, what miracles may not be faithfully expected, where the depraving influences of whalers, traders and miners have not yet been felt ? If the agent of the grace of God be first on the ground, it is hoped a foundation may be laid, and a fortress built within their lives, to preserve these children of darkness from the worse darkness which has befallen so many aboriginal tribes. For the trader will come, and the whaler will come, and the reports of large deposits of copper are already exciting prospectors and mining men with a desire to exploit that country. But one man, and a band of half-taught native Christians, are not enough, and in those seas a sailing boat is not enough. Another man, two men, three men, would only touch the edge of the task. Herschel Island is the base of supplies, and it is a thousand miles from there. An Open
Door.

The season of navigation is often only two months. The present boat, when it returns, is needed to work the Fort Immediate
Needs.

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MacPherson and Herschel Island Mission. A new boat with power auxiliary is essential to the efficient carrying on of the new work, a boat capable of carrying eight or ten tons of cargo, burning gasolene, as neither wood nor water can be obtained for a steamer. Such a boat will probably cost about \$4,000.

The Board of Management of the M.S.C.C. has approved of the Forward Movement and made a special grant to Bishop Stringer to further it. But the boat will have to be obtained from other sources. Some funds, a beginning, are already in hand, and it is confidently expected that God will move the hearts of His people, and the whole need will be met.

In the meantime Mr. Fry and his band of helpers must be upheld with instant prayer, for loneliness is hard to bear, and the great enemy finds means there as elsewhere, to tempt and try. And Mr. Young at Kittigagyuit, and his native assistants likewise, look to the Church to "keep open the means of communication," to preserve continuous contact, that the power of God may flow through them, and build up the Church among those young believers, and "perform that good work which He has begun, until the day of Jesus Christ."

