



Light Comes to a Cannibal Chief

DONI AND THE BRIGHT, SHINING VISITOR

E.L. Martin brings us the amazing account of how an angel personally taught the gospel to a native chief in Western Papua and he taught his people.

“I listened to this fantastic story, which was later confirmed by the person concerned. As I tell this story, no doubt you will find it hard to believe, but Pastor Herbert White of the Publishing Department of the General Conference can verify its accuracy, for I later took him into the area, and he, too, heard the story.

The Bible speaks of things happening that we would find hard to believe: "Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvelously: for I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you." Habakkuk 1:5.”

Pastor Martin had a team of native missionaries, led by a man named Haru, who had been sent out by him to contact the isolated tribes in unexplored regions.

“One day as they rounded a bend in the river they saw several small canoes half a mile or more ahead. Some of these canoes disappeared into the overhanging undergrowth on the riverbank. Reaching the spot, they found a small opening into another tributary called the Wamuri (wah-MOO-ree) River. However, by the time they had found the opening, the canoes were nowhere in sight.

All except Haru were in favor of going on, for there was no village in sight. However, Haru said, "Did not Pastor Martin tell us we were not to bypass one village? We must find where the canoe people came from." So they traveled up the small river several miles till at last they came to a village.

I should explain that the Turama villages were not villages in the true sense of the word, for there was only one house, call a dubu, which could be one or two hundred yards in length. One I saw was almost four hundred yards long. Inside lived men and women, boys and girls, pigs and dogs, and on the sides of dubu, about shoulder high, were racks and racks of human skulls, grim

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reminders of cannibal feasts. On reaching the village, Haru's band was surprised to find that it appeared deserted. Soon, however, they found that the people were inside enjoying a feast of human flesh. As soon as it could be arranged, Haru gathered the people together in a little clearing where he produced a picture roll, and began telling the story of the One who had changed him from a heathen to an ambassador of Jesus Christ.

Haru said that he had been speaking only about five minutes through an interpreter, when an old man, whom he recognized immediately as a chief, came in and sat among the listeners. Almost immediately the chief jumped to his feet and said, "Take notice of this, my people. It's true, it's true." Haru continued his story only to be interrupted intermittently by the chief, saying, "It's true, it's true. Take notice of it, my people."

Haru was impatient and almost exasperated because of the frequent interruptions. When the meeting concluded Haru walked over to the chief and said, "Have you heard this story before?"

The chief answered, "No, never, but I know it's true."

"Then somebody must have told you this story."

"No, never." The chief was positive, but he emphasized. "It's true, it's true, I know it's true." Almost in desperation Haru said, "Listen, if you know it's true, then how do you know?"

"My name is Doni (Daw-nee). Some weeks ago I was asleep in this big dubu and was awakened to see a man clothed in garments so bright and shining that I could not look upon them. This man said, 'Doni, you are to leave your village and go back into the mountains and build yourself a house there. If you do so, I will come again.'"

Doni was so impressed that early the next morning he called his people together and told them what he had seen and heard. He gave orders for the people to go back into the mountains and build him a house. The villagers had never heard of anything so ridiculous, and thought he must have become mentally deranged, but they dared not disobey his commands, for when a village chief speaks, his people do not ask the reason why.

A few days later, when the house was completed, Doni was ready to take his wife and three children to the mountains. They objected strongly, but they, too, eventually obeyed. The very first night that Doni and his family were in their new home the visitor came again, clothed in the same white, bright garments, which Doni described as "brighter and much whiter than the noonday sun." The visitor said, "Doni, tomorrow you are to leave your house and return to your village. You are to destroy all your pigs and, if you do so, I will come again."

To carry out this command required more sacrifice; -shall I say more faith; because his pigs were his wealth. Men bought their wives and their land with pigs and could even settle differences with their enemies by exchanging pigs, but, as he said, "More than anything in the world I wanted to see that visitor again."

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Early the next morning Doni returned to his village and had all seventy of his pigs destroyed. His people, after this, thought that surely he was "long-long" (mad). For days they feasted on swine's flesh, but Doni refused to eat or touch any of it, and would not allow his wife and children to eat it.

Back in his mountain home that night the visitor came again dressed in the same way. This time he said, "Doni, tomorrow you are to go out to your garden and bring in sufficient food, for the next day you are not to go to your garden, you are not to go fishing, or hunting in the bush, but remain in your house. If you do that, I will come again."

That day at home was the most wonderful day he had ever spent, because he felt that he was in the presence of the visitor, even though he could not see him during the daylight. In the darkness after that wonderful day, the visitor said, "Doni, tomorrow you are to go out to your garden and bring in produce sufficient for several days, place it outside your door, but do not use it. If you do that, I will come again."

Doni said that by this time he was prepared to do anything, for more than anything in the world he wanted to see the visitor again. He could hardly wait for the next visit. Yet he wondered why he should be told to bring the garden produce and not use it but leave it outside his door.

That night, when the produce was outside the door in several bundles called billums (woven string bags), the visitor came again and said, "Doni, tomorrow morning you are to go outside your house. There you will find a measure by which you are to measure your garden produce. If you do that, I will come again."

Sure enough, outside his house the next morning there was a measure, perhaps a little different from the types we are used to. It was in the form of a pole about four inches thick and about fourteen feet long. Doni began with his kau kau (sweet potatoes) and put the first one at the first mark. Then he noticed that there was another mark, so he put one at that, and another and another, up to five, six, seven, eight, and nine. Then another mark appeared right near the end of the pole. It was separated quite a distance from the other nine marks. So he put a kau kau on that mark too, and then began from the beginning to do the same thing again. Not only did he measure out his kau kau like this but also his pineapples, paw paws, bananas, and in fact, all his produce.

There he left it all, not knowing the reason why.

That night the visitor came and said, "Doni, the food beside marks one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, and nine is yours. Do what you like with it, but the food alongside mark ten is mine. It is to be put in a billum, but otherwise is not to be touched. If you do that, I will come again."

In the dead of night as Doni was waiting for his visitor to come, all of a sudden the whole area seemed to be lit up. Within moments the same bright shining visitor stood in his doorway. Doni said he always had to cover his eyes with his hands because of the dazzling brightness. This time the visitor said, "Doni, tomorrow afternoon you and your family are to gather up all your food,

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and mine too, and return to your village. When you arrive, my ambassador will be there. Give him the food that is mine, and listen very carefully to every word that he says because you will know it's true, it's true."

It was then that Doni handed Haru the billum of food. Doni, in telling Haru the story, said, "That's why I kept on telling my people, 'It's true, it's true.' I know it's true."

I set sail almost immediately for the Turama area with Haru and his wife and family. Haru wanted to return to be with "his people." I hadn't planned for this trip but felt that since I had heard Haru's story, it must take priority.

We found our way up the Turama and then up the Wamuri. The Wamuri was slow going for we had to cut away overhanging trees and limbs every few yards. Sometimes whole trees had fallen right across the stream. My worry was whether we would be able to turn the boat around when we got there, because although the river was deep, we had only a few feet to spare. Haru assured me that there was a place near the village where we would be able to turn around. Haru's word was sufficient assurance for me.

I shall never forget my first night at this village. I forbade Kaura, Haru's wife, and his children to step off the boat, for after all we were among cannibals. While conducting my first meeting that night, I found it difficult to tolerate the stench of human flesh being cooked in the bamboo cooking tubes. Stench is the only word I can use, because the victims had been killed several days before, and this was the last.

That night Doni himself told me of the bright visitor. After two or three days with the Wamuri people, giving three or four meetings each day, I said to Haru, "How would you feel if I were to leave you to make this your base and to extend the work to other villages?"

Haru was jubilant. "I was hoping you would ask me to stay." I told him that my plan would be to sail for home the next morning and that I would be taking Kaura and the children with me, but that I would be back in six weeks. Then if he was sure that things were all right I would leave his wife and family with him.

Haru, great man that he was, said, "Master, I will do whatever you say, but I would like you to ask Kaura what she wants to do. I promise not to talk to her till after you have talked to her."

I went immediately to the boat to speak with Kaura. "I am leaving Haru here to begin work among these savage people. I am taking you and the children back with me, but in six weeks I will bring you back again." Kaura, one of God's great women said, "Master, if Haru stays, then I stay, too."

I sailed the next morning, leaving behind Haru and his wife and family. My work was pressing heavily upon me. I had seen my wife and family for less than two days in the past eleven or twelve weeks and knew that I could have only about three days at home before leaving on another patrol that would take me away for a month.

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Six weeks later I was back in the Wamuri village and witnessed a marvelous transformation. They had built a new village. The old dubu was no longer used. Houses seemed to have sprung up everywhere and a church was being built. As I sailed up to the village I found a line of about two hundred people standing side by side, dressed in new lap laps (loin cloths).

Haru said, "I want you to shake hands with my people." I shook hands, and shook hands, and shook hands. I asked Haru, "How come all these new lap laps?" He said that he had selected twenty young men and had sent them by canoe to the mouth of the Turama and up another river to where there was a plantation. There they worked as long as it took to earn ten or twelve lap laps each. They then returned quickly to precede my return. Haru had not only organized the building of a new village and the purchase of new lap laps for everyone, but he himself had visited people in all the nearby villages and as a result of his preaching they, too, were there to meet me.

As soon as I found a few minutes to spare, I spoke to Doni. "Your people should finish with their cannibalism," I said. "Master, we decided to end that the first night after you left. We have left that forever."

"Well," I said, "what about the village people. Isn't it time they finished with their pigs?" Doni replied, "There are no pigs left in this village. We killed them all. We won't even trade with them again." Doni asked me whether I would baptize him while I was there. I hesitated. I told him I would be back in another six weeks. If he wanted to be baptized then, I would be glad to.

I returned six weeks later-in fact, three days under the six weeks--but when I arrived Doni was dead. He had been buried a few days before I arrived. Don't spare me, Lord, for not baptizing Doni. I should have known better when You had sent an angel from heaven to speak to him face to face.