

## ON HOPE <sup>1</sup>

**A sermon preached by Associate Professor Michael Horsburgh AM in St James' Church, King Street, Sydney, at Choral Evensong on the 17<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost, 24 September 2023**

This afternoon, the Rector gave a tour of the church, focusing on its inherent symbolism. I thought that I should continue the theme by drawing some links between the memorials on our church's walls. Let's start with the memorial to Bishop John Coleridge Patteson.<sup>2</sup> It is on the south wall just east of the chapel. Born in 1827, Patteson was martyred in the Solomon Islands on 21 September 1871, so today is close to the 152<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of his death, which we remembered last Wednesday. Ordained priest in 1854, he was recruited by George Augustus Selwyn (1809-1878), the first bishop of New Zealand, which then included Melanesia.<sup>3</sup> Selwyn consecrated Patterson as the first bishop of Melanesia on 24 February 1861. His death is believed to be an act of retribution for the activities of "blackbirders" who recruited Melanesians into *de facto* slavery in Australian sugar cane fields.

Patteson's patron, Selwyn, developed a specifically "high church" style of mission, which, in an urban version, proved influential in the history of St James', marking it off from the evangelical stance of the Sydney diocese. Patteson, in his visits to Sydney, was a vehicle of Selwyn's mission concept, which was also taken up by the now Anglican Board of Mission.

Patteson was ordained both deacon and priest by Bishop Henry Phillpotts of Exeter (1778-1869).<sup>4</sup> Phillpotts was a traditional high churchman with little sympathy for either the evangelicals or the Tractarians. He was a disciplinarian with little tolerance of theological diversity. Enter the Reverend George Cornelius Gorham (1787-1857).<sup>5</sup> In 1847, he was presented to Bishop Phillpotts to be installed into the parish of Bramford Speke in Devon. Phillpotts discovered Gorham's unorthodox views of baptism, which had nearly prevented his ordination as deacon in 1811. Gorham argued that children do not become members of Christ or children of God at baptism. Baptism was, Gorham thought, conditional on a later adoption of the promises made on the child's behalf, making him almost a Baptist.

Gorham lost an appeal to the ecclesiastical Court of Arches when Phillpotts refused to institute him to the parish. However, Gorham won an appeal to the Privy Council, a secular court, establishing the principle that Christian doctrine could be determined by the state. This highly controversial decision led to some members of the Oxford movement becoming Roman Catholics and was noticed at St James, where, early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, such secular judgements resulted in the removal of eucharistic vestments, particularly the chasuble, from use here.

On the western side of the north door is a memorial to Lieutenant George Phillpotts RN (1814-1845), the second son of Bishop Henry Phillpotts.<sup>6</sup> George served on HMS Hazard in the first

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<sup>1</sup> Readings: Psalm 145:14-21; Exodus 16:14-31; Romans 15:7-13

<sup>2</sup> [John Patteson \(bishop\) - Wikipedia](#) and [Biography - John Coleridge Patteson - Australian Dictionary of Biography \(anu.edu.au\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> [George Selwyn \(bishop of Lichfield\) - Wikipedia](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Henry Phillpotts - Wikipedia](#)

<sup>5</sup> [George Cornelius Gorham - Wikipedia](#)

<sup>6</sup> [George Phillpotts - Wikipedia](#)

New Zealand War. He was highly critical of the activities of missionaries, led by Bishop Selwyn, who, he thought favoured the Māori side. Aged 31, he was killed on 1 July 1845, during an assault on the *pa*, or fortified Māori encampment, at Ōhaeawai, on New Zealand's north island.

The act of making a frontal assault on a fortified location was known in military circles as a “forlorn hope”, the likelihood of death being so high. Also fatally wounded in that assault was 25-year-old Lieutenant Edward Beatty of the 99<sup>th</sup> Regiment, whose memorial is on the stairs leading to the gallery. It uses the term, “forlorn hope” in its inscription.

Another soldier, 23-year-old Ensign Henry Blackburn, also of the 99<sup>th</sup> Regiment, survived that battle only to die early the next month. His memorial is by the pulpit.

If you have been following me this far, you may be feeling that it has been a roundabout way to arrive at the subject of hope, the concluding sentence of our reading from Romans. And you'd be right. Roundabout it may have been but not, I hope (there's that word), an irrelevant one. Only the military have spoken openly about hope and then because their hope is forlorn. It was not, for them, a joyous phrase, but one arising from a sober evaluation of their chances in battle.

Paul's letter to the Romans frequently refers to hope. If we consider Paul's own life; his planned journey to Rome was not taken freely as he had intended, but as a prisoner facing, and ultimately experiencing, death. His readers also ran the same risks. Their hope might also have attracted the qualification “forlorn”. In chapter 8 of Romans, Paul writes:

[I]n hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.<sup>7</sup>

Why does Paul say this? Because he is not offering a false or cheap hope. He is not asking us to see hope in the presence of despair or aggression.

Hope for what? Hope that love wins. Hope that goodness is stronger than evil. Hope that we will be conformed to the image of Christ. Hope that we will come to full humanity in Christ, that we will bear the image of God in our lives. Hope that humanity and all creation will come to the fulfillment of our calling.<sup>8</sup>

In the light of this, we should perhaps return to Bishop Patteson. On the centenary of his consecration, Canon Fox, preaching in Honiara, where the Church of Melanesia has its headquarters, said that Patteson treated Melanesians with neither contempt nor condescension. He did not live apart from them nor try to make them British. He supported their cultural practices.<sup>9</sup> In this, he held to the hope as expressed by Paul.

The times have changed, and we will not express our hope in the same ways as Bishops Patterson, Selwyn, and Phillpotts. We face different hopes; those of our indigenous people, of diverse sexualities in our society, of increasing poverty and social divisions.

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In memory of Lieut. George Phillpotts R.N. who fell at the assault on the pa at Ohaeawae New Zealand 1st July 1845, aged 31. Erected by his brother officers of H.M. Ships Hazard and North Star.

<sup>7</sup> Romans 8:24-25

<sup>8</sup> Sylvia C Keesmaat and Brian J Walsh, *Romans Disarmed: Resisting Empire, Demanding Justice*, Baker Publishing Group, p. 376

<sup>9</sup> [John Coleridge Patteson, by C. E. Fox \(1961\) \(anglicanhistory.org\)](http://anglicanhistory.org)

In the end, hope is not passive waiting, it is active confidence. Writing during the COVID-19 pandemic, Rowan Williams said:

We trust those who are inspired by a vision of something bigger than themselves *but who also recognize the ever-present possibility of failing and messing things up* – and yet they aren't paralysed by that recognition but are still ready to take risks and pay loving attention to the reality around them.<sup>10</sup>

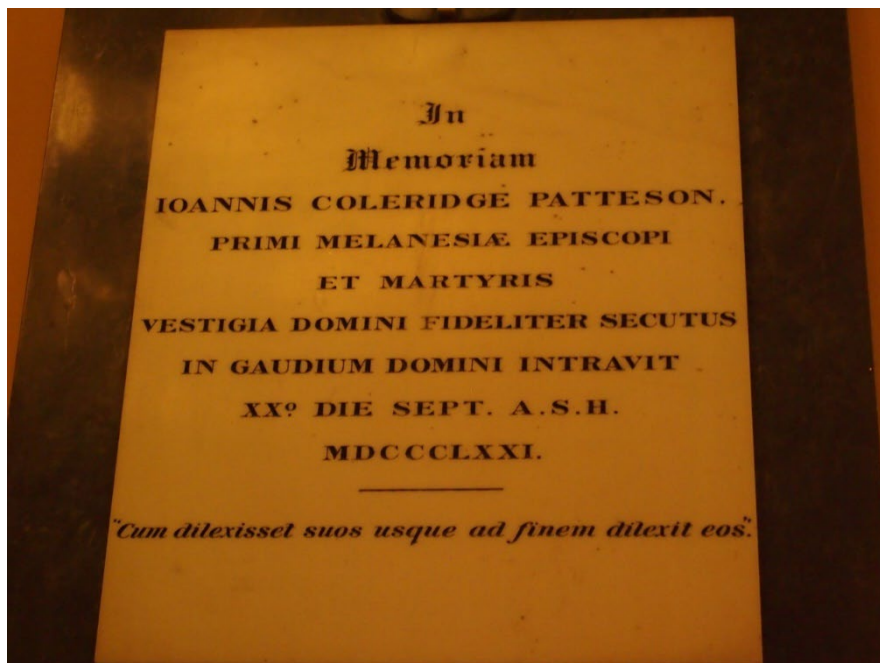
We need to be those people.

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<sup>10</sup> Rowan Williams, *Candles in the Dark: Faith, Hope and Love in a Time of Pandemic*, SPCK, p. 15



John Coleridge Patteson (1827–1871), Bishop of Melanesia  
British (English) School  
Lambeth Palace



The Latin text of the Patteson memorial is:

In memoriam Iohannis Coleridge Patteson, Primi Melanesiae Episcopi et Martyris. *Vestigia Domini fideliter secutus in gaudium Domini intravit. XXº Die Sep. A.S.H. MDCCCLXXI. Cum dilexisset usque ad finem dilexit eos.*

An English translation of the text is:

In memory of John Coleridge Patteson, first Bishop of Melanesia and Martyr. 'He who has faithfully followed in the footsteps of the Lord has entered into the joy of the Lord' [I have been unable to identify the origin of this text. It is not biblical.] 20 September 1871 'Whom he loved he loved to the end' [an adaptation of John 13:1]

The letters 'A.S.H.' in the Latin text for the date of Patteson's death may contain a mistake, possibly on the part of the stonemason who carved the memorial. The probable correct text is 'A.S.N.'—'Anno Sancti Nativitatis'—'year of the sacred nativity', an alternative to the more common 'A.D.'—'Anno Domini'—'year of the Lord'.



Henry Phillpotts



George Cornelius Gorham

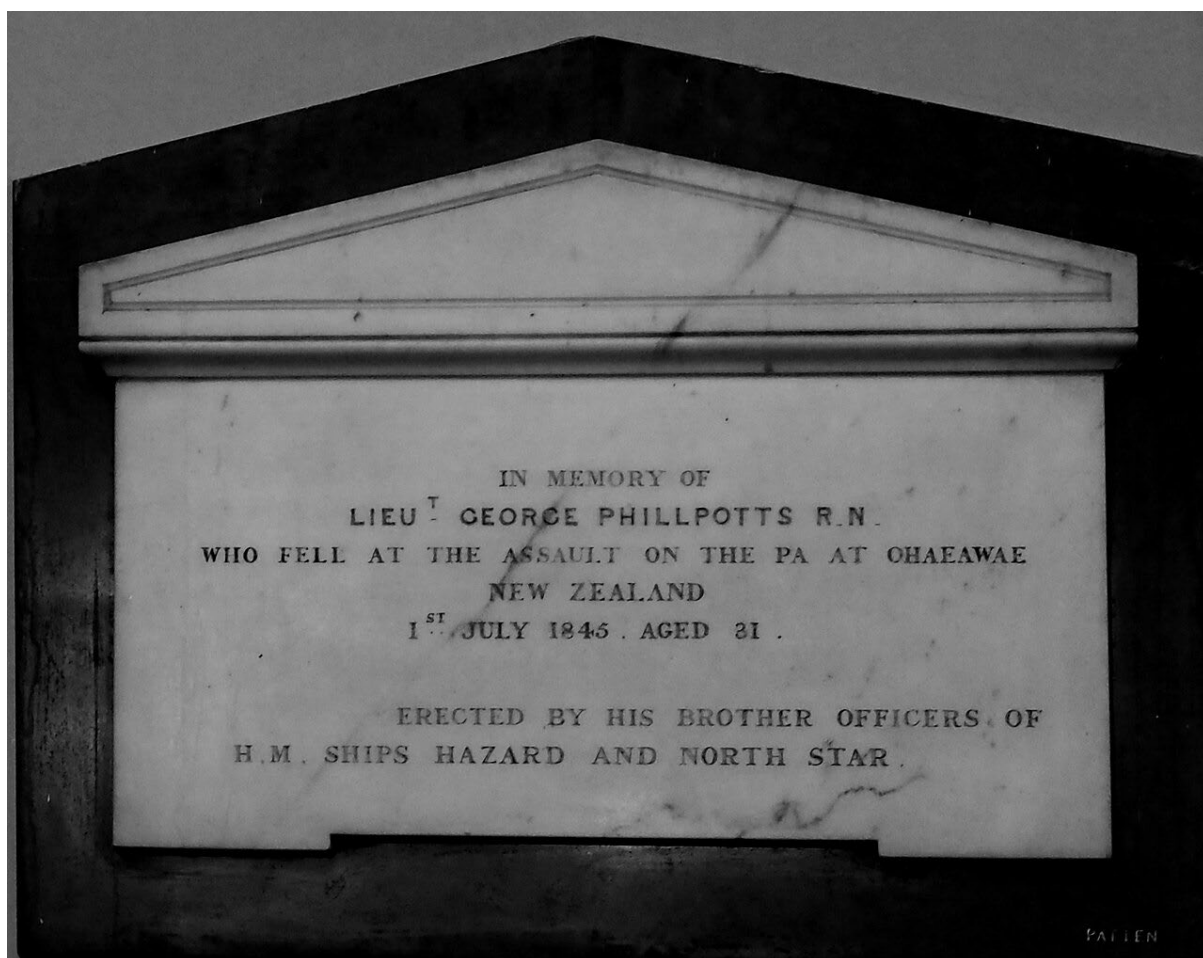


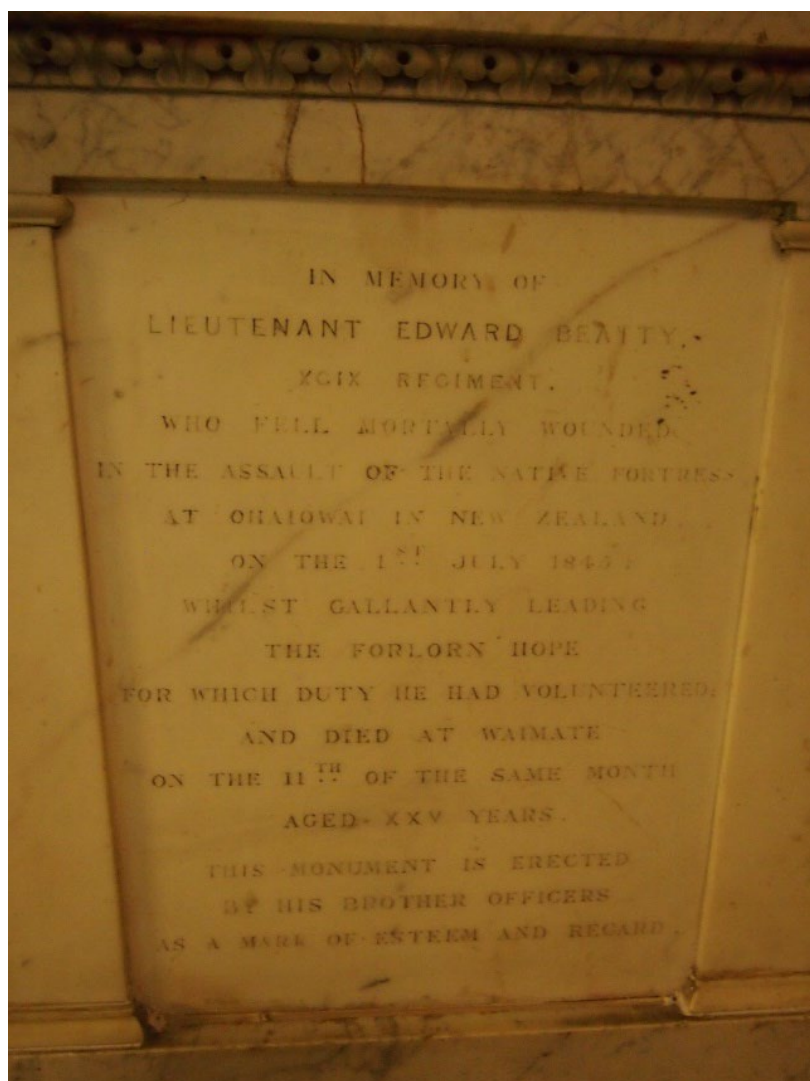
Augustus George Selwyn



George Phillpotts at Ōhaeawai, 1 July 1845.  
Artist: Arthur David McCormick, 1908







IN MEMORY OF  
LIEUTENANT EDWARD BEATTY,  
20TH REGIMENT,  
WHO FELL MORTALLY WOUNDED  
IN THE ASSAULT OF THE NATIVE FORTRESS  
AT ORAIOWAI IN NEW ZEALAND  
ON THE 1<sup>ST</sup> JULY 1845  
WHILST GALLANTLY LEADING  
THE FORLORN HOPE  
FOR WHICH DUTY HE HAD VOLUNTEERED,  
AND DIED AT WAIMATE  
ON THE 11<sup>TH</sup> OF THE SAME MONTH  
AGED XXV YEARS.  
THIS MONUMENT IS ERECTED  
BY HIS BROTHER OFFICERS  
AS A MARK OF ESTEEM AND REGARD.



