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EVANGELICAL MISSIONARIES IN THE SOUTH SEAS

1797 - 1860

A Thesis submitted
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

by

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Preface

The work of missionaries has an important place in the history of the South Seas. Missions have played a significant role in directing much of the current thinking of the South Sea islanders, and the traditions of Christian teaching have become as fully a part of the ideological background as the traditions of their own culture. Although the degree to which Christianity has affected the traditional ways of life varies from group to group, and from island to island, the total effect of Christianity has been to minimise the sanctions of the past, even if at times it has failed to exalt the spiritual authority of Christ.

The historian is not necessarily concerned with the moral problem of the "rightness" of missionaries being sent to non-Christian countries. He is more concerned with the success or failure of the missionaries to do what they set out to do, and with their management of the problems arising from their contact with other peoples and other ways of life. He must, before all, record change. The change that had taken place before 1860, in eastern Polynesia, was in most cases only half a change. A new culture had been grafted on to the old, but in other instances it appeared that a reorientation had simply been given to the old ways. It is the purpose of this study to show something of the mentality of the missionaries who sought to change the social systems of the South Seas.



The Evangelical missionary emerges as a special type of actor in the account of the relations between Europeans and native peoples. If, in the early years, he seems to fall into more categories, by the 1860s, by virtue of more uniform training, he had become somewhat stereotyped.

In relation to the role of the Evangelical missionary two other points might be made. The first is the development of a new mentality in the national scene. We see in the heredity and environment of the mission families, the growth and culture of a similar spirit to that Evangelical zeal which took the missionaries to the field. This spirit, reinjected back into the national life, has served as a powerful stimulus to progress. Out of the mission field came men who knew their own minds. It is surprising the number of distinguished and influential people, by no means restricted to the religious world, who derive immediately from the mission families, and who have enriched the national life.

Secondly, it might be observed that the impact of the Evangelical missionaries often provided the quickest way to self-assertion by the native peoples. In the world of culture conflict, which is in a sense, the world of Evangelical religion, the islander was given a beam to support himself against the tide of new concepts. Wherever that beam was grasped, the islander's potentials for self-assertion were increased.

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The first difficulty which the historian faces in writing any account of missionary history is that so much of what passes for history is written specifically as religious propaganda. The purpose of such writing is not to present the whole picture, but only that part of the whole which, it



is hoped, may aid the cause of religion. Some historical facts are accurately recorded, but because of the restricted purpose of the author, the reader can be deceived into drawing false conclusions simply because all has not been said. The Tahitian missionary historian, John Davies, was well aware that some missionary narratives gave false impressions, and he was determined to abide by more historical rules in his own writing. In a letter to the Rev. William Orme, whose writings in defence of the South Sea missions were a little too roseate, he denounced the propagandist authors.

"The doctrine of 'pious fraud' is hateful, let its abettors be who they may - nothing but truth will stand its ground at a future day. There is a way of stating things so as not to be false in itself, yet calculated to convey false impressions, to such as are inacquainted with all the circumstances."⁽¹⁾

Notwithstanding that there are many reliable and authoritative histories written by men who have obviously believed that all historical events are subsidiary to the establishment of the Christian Church, the 'doctrine of pious fraud' has many subtle ways of insinuating itself, especially in biographical studies.

Another difficulty facing the historian is the unravelling of historical fact from the biased accounts of sectarian propaganda. This, of course, is not such a great problem when primary documentation for the period is both considerable and available.

There has also been a tendency amongst missionary societies to single out a few individuals whom they have decked up in great glory, not satisfied

(1) John Davies, 19 December 1829, L.M.S., South Seas Letters.

only in making them saints or martyrs, but in publishing many popular accounts of them, and in endeavouring to perpetuate their memory in ships and institutions. On the other hand, men of learned societies, anthropologists, historians and purely secular writers, have tended to eulogize certain missionaries whom they have believed to be apostles of a different light, of scientific methods and of learned curiosity. Hero-worship has a legitimate function in the inspiration of men, but the historian, who is not a biographer, must be careful to place the heroes in their right perspective, and to separate them from their mythology.

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The missionaries examined in this study are described as "Evangelical". Mission historians, such as Gustav Warneck, have previously used the term "Evangelical" to distinguish Protestant missionaries from Catholic ones. However, I have used the term in its more strictly historical sense.⁽¹⁾ The missionary movements with which this study is concerned stemmed directly from the great Evangelical or "Methodist" movement of the eighteenth century. The great missionary societies were the direct outcome of the preaching of the revivalists, Whitefield and Wesley. There were also certain definite doctrinal and methodistical characteristics associated with Evangelicalism, which were to be found in these missionary societies. First and foremost there was the preaching of the Atonement, the doctrine of the cross; there was an emphasis on the eternal peril of the soul; and there was an emphasis on the propagation of the Bible. Likewise the

(1) I have ignored a third and more restrictive use of the word, current at the beginning of the nineteenth century, synonymous with "Calvinist". Wesleyan missionary candidates were excluded by the L.M.S. because they were not "Evangelical".

missionaries were Evangelicals in that their sentiments were those which were promulgated from Exeter Hall, and which played such an important role in the shaping of British home and colonial policy during the nineteenth century.

The term "Puritan" has been purposely avoided as it was resented by the Evangelicals of the Church of England and by the various Methodist "connexions" who rightly defined the Puritan as being essentially a dissenter from the Church of England. However, in most respects, Evangelical doctrine is essentially Puritan doctrine. The Rev. S.C. Damon used the term "Puritan" to cover all the Protestant missions in the Pacific, but he admitted that he was stretching the term.

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As a result of reading the original letters and journals of the missionaries, I have tended to draw very little on the equally extensive published primary material. Many of the quotations have a vitality of their own which not only makes the historical enquiry real and satisfactory for us, but we are able to obtain clearer insight into the character of the writer which is so very much the object of this study. Consequently, I have let the missionaries speak for themselves whenever possible.

If, at times, the Tahitian mission seems to figure largely in the narrative, it must be borne in mind that this was the principal mission for the first thirty years, and that its history has a greater variety than that of the other fields. New Zealand and Hawaii, although both scenes of Evangelical missionary activity, have not been examined in any great detail, except for the purposes of comparison.

An account of the establishment of missions in the Pacific area has been subjoined as an appendix, as any attempt to arrange the material on a chronological basis in the text seemed to be unwise. Not only are there a great number of islands to consider, but most of the problems related to missionary attitudes were common to the whole period.

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It would be impossible to express adequately my acknowledgments to everyone who has helped, particularly Librarians and research officers. Miss Mary Walker of the A.B.C.F.M. and Miss Berenice Judd of the Hawaiian Mission Children's Society have been informative correspondents. Miss Irene Fletcher of the L.M.S. has given me the benefit of her knowledge of the Society's archives and shown many kindnesses.

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written by Mrs. Ida Oswald.

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Lastly, I must thank those historians who have been working on various aspects of South Seas history bearing on this subject, particularly the Rev. A.R. Tippett of Davui levu, Fiji, Mr. R.A. Derrick of Suva, and Principal L. Lockley of Cromwell College, Brisbane; and Dr. J.D. Freeman, Mr. R.P. Gilson, Mr. H.E. Maude, and Dr. C.W. Newbury of the Australian National University, all of whom have contributed by discussion and in indicating valuable sources. In this context I would also thank my supervisor, Professor J.W. Davidson who has given my draft his very careful attention, and whose criticism has been invaluable.

London 1959.

Source Material and the study of Mission History in the South Seas.

The history of Christian missions has received particular attention from the commencement of the nineteenth century till the present day. An extensive body of literature has grown up, much of which is devoted to missions in the South Seas. Besides those works specifically concerned with Christian missions, there are many general works which record the impressions of voyagers and travellers. Most of those who came in contact with the missionaries either wrote glowing reports of their work or denounced them. Some were more carefully critical. Ministers at home wrote books on the nature of missions, and published sermons in support of missions. The theory and practice of missions was a favourite subject in Evangelical circles.

The most important sources are undoubtedly the writings, especially the private papers, of the missionaries themselves. By far the most of such documents are in manuscript collections, and together they represent a formidable body of knowledge on island life and mission affairs. Missionaries kept journals, wrote letters, carried on research, wrote memoirs, and even pursued scientific studies. Some missionaries wrote so much that they had to compile their own indexes.

The principal MS sources which I have used fall into two main categories, documents relating to the L.M.S. missions and those relating to the Wesleyan missions. Of the L.M.S. material kept in the archives of the L.M.S. in London I have found the letters of the missionaries to the Directors to be the most representative source. The journals of the L.M.S. missionaries

form an important supplement to these, and contain much detailed information which is nowhere else recorded. I have listed the journals separately in the Bibliography, not only to indicate the variety of these documents, but also to reveal their limited authorship. This might be gauged by comparing the list of missionaries with the list of authors recorded in the Bibliography. Whereas the letters give a fairly complete picture of the personalities and experiences of all the missionaries, the journals reflect the lives of a limited number only. The journals of J.M. Orsmond, for instance, give a detailed picture of island and missionary life seen by a man with definite prejudices, who was not afraid to commit his views, which were often unwelcome to the Directors, to writing. On the other hand, many of the missionaries did not send their journals to the Directors, only making occasional extracts. Fortunately, some of these more private journals are still held by descendants or form part of the collection in the Mitchell Library, Sydney. Of the other official L.M.S. manuscripts, the Candidates' Papers have been invaluable. These fall into two main divisions; letters of recommendation, testimonials, medical and academic reports, and other personal papers (C.P.), and a more regular series of printed questions with answers written by the candidates (C.Q.) These official L.M.S. documents have been available on microfilm at the National Library, Canberra. (1) Besides this microfilmed material, I have used the large collections of L.M.S. material in the Mitchell Library. The principal collections are the Haweis Papers, many of which were reports sent home by

(1) Since coming to London in October 1958 I have been able to read other ms. documents in the L.M.S. archives. I have incorporated some of this material in the text.

early missionaries and retained in the family after the death of the Rev. Thomas Haweis, the "father" of the South Seas mission; a book of letters entitled South Sea Missions mostly relating to the missionaries Threlkeld, Barff and Buzacott, once in the possession of the Rev. Joseph King; the Hassall Papers and the Papers of Rowland Hassall, which are large letter-books containing many letters written from the missionaries to N.S.W.; the Papers of John Dunmore Lang and of Samuel Marsden. The journals of Pitman, and some additional journals of Orsmond are also important sources.

The Wesleyan source material is much more dispersed than the L.M.S. material. Due to the fact that the Australasian Conference took over the Wesleyan missions in the South Seas in 1855, a considerable body of material can be found in the archives of the Methodist Overseas Missions (M.O.M.) now housed in the Mitchell Library. Many of the official documents relating to the period before 1855 have been given by the Methodist Missionary Society in London to the Mitchell Library, whilst the same library has bought other official material which had been in private hands. The Mitchell Library also has photostat copies of most of the other material in London. There is other Wesleyan material in the Wesleyan archives in Fiji which I have been unable to see. This material is mostly post 1855, and much of it is duplicated in the reports sent to London. The Mitchell Library possibly possesses a greater number of Wesleyan private diaries than any other institution, and those of Thomas Williams, Lyth and Peter Turner are very comprehensive. I have also been fortunate in having access to a number of papers relating to the Waterhouse family.

Besides the considerable amount of primary material which is available, there must be other manuscripts still held in private hands unknown to research workers in the history and ethnology of the South Seas. It is probable that such material would not add very much knowledge to the quantity already available, but it would help in completing the biographical backgrounds of individual missionaries, the greatest of whom merit full studies.

Considering what has previously been written about the Rev. J.M. Orsmond of Tahiti, (1) especially as his own Society cast doubts on his statements, it is felt that some sort of defence or apology or even caution should be made for having frequently quoted his writings. Even his more devoted colleagues recognized that Orsmond's behaviour was often "eccentric and imprudent", at times he appears to have suffered from mental ill-health, and his emotions often got the better of his judgment, yet despite all this I feel that he was a much misunderstood man, and his actions, even when not in line with those of his brethren, were consistent with the ideals he professed on becoming a missionary. I must admit surprise at finding some of his most unexpected statements corroborated by some of the more prosaic of the missionaries.

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The historians of missions in the South Seas have been a distinguished company. Of the missionaries themselves who wrote, William Ellis stands out as one of the most interesting. Ellis had not only the advantage of having lived in several mission fields, but he had full access to the records of the L.M.S. Much of his material was supplied by his missionary friends, (1) e.g. Lovett, History of the L.M.S., I, 311.

and incorporated into his work with very little acknowledgment. Ellis was very much a derivative writer, and it is not surprising that John Dunmore Lang accused him of plagiarism.⁽¹⁾ Apart from his own works he supplied material for William Orme's Defence of Missions, and is said to have been the editor of Williams's Missionary Enterprises. Williams's original journal is extremely readable in itself, but Ellis was careful to exclude any material which he thought offensive to good taste, in the published version, and material was added which Lang claimed Ellis had appropriated without acknowledgment. Ellis's two works, Polynesian Researches, and the first volume of a History of the London Missionary Society, were themselves the principal sources for quite an extensive range of popular works on the South Sea missions.

A.W. Murray was another missionary historian. Most of his work was autobiographical in inspiration, and when he used material outside his experience he tended to rely on standardized sources rather than on original research. William Gill's Gems is also based largely on his own experience, but it is unique in that it sets out to give a history of the work of the native teachers. Its principal defect is that very few of the native missionaries are made to appear as real and vital persons, most of them remaining anonymous. W.W. Gill's work, all of it written long after the period of this study, belongs essentially to a later period. It is packed with scientific observation in the manner of Darwin or Müller, and although there are historical sections in his work, they are essentially of an anecdotal nature.

(1)Lang, Origin and Migrations(1877), 307-324.

The manuscript history of the Tahitian mission by John Davies should also be mentioned in this context. The Rev. W. Cowper of Sydney had suggested to his friends, Davies, Henry and Nott, that they should collaborate in writing a history of the mission. Davies finally undertook the task, and Nott read the draft. This work was never published, mainly because Ellis covered the same field in his own history.

Of the more professional or non-missionary historians, the principal names might be mentioned. Dr. John Campbell was perhaps a moralist rather than an historian. However, his Martyr of Erromanga and his Maritime Discovery and Christian Missions, to name two of his better known works, were a contribution to mission history. The Sheffield poet, Montgomery, should also be named as the editor of the Journals of the Rev. D. Tyerman and George Bennet. Ebenezer Prout, as the biographer of Williams, has given the current popular picture of that missionary. Mullens and Lang also commenced histories of the South Sea missions which are still in manuscript. Lang did not get beyond the first section although his other works contain missionary information and criticism.

Dr. Robert Steel was quite a scholarly historian of missions. Although he wrote several moral works - Doing Good and Lives Made Sublime by Faith and Works - which reveal his social limitations, his New Hebrides and Christian Missions is still a useful reference work, and his manuscript Life of A.W. Murray is the only attempt at a biography of that prominent missionary.

We should not neglect referring to the official historian of the L.M.S., the Rev. Richard Lovett. The section in his history devoted to the South

Seas mission is both comprehensive and fairly accurate. Although it makes no claims which cannot be substantiated, it naturally suffers from the limitations of all official histories. The Rev. Joseph King, an ex-missionary, was another later historian whose Ten Decades is a remarkably accurate and readable account of the early missions. His Christianity in Polynesia is a much lighter and more popular work in comparison with it.

Comparatively little historical work has been written on the early history of the L.M.S. in the South Seas, of recent years, apart from what has been included in general works on missions. The researches of the Rev. Principal Lockley of Cromwell College, Brisbane, have shown the extent of the contribution of the early missionaries to the cultural and educational development of N.S.W.

Of the Wesleyan missionaries, Calvert and Thomas Williams were the principal historians, and the work of the latter was mostly concerned with the Fijian people. Cargill, Hunt and Cross were careful biographers. George Stringer Rowe was undoubtedly the leading personality amongst the historians of the earlier period. His biographical studies, although of a very popular nature, contain his judgments of those whom he admired. Professor Henderson brought a more critical approach to the study of the Wesleyan mission in Fiji. Although mostly an impartial critic, Henderson occasionally allowed his prejudices against Evangelical theology to colour his work. Often his criticism is directed as much at Christian doctrine as at the Wesleyan missionaries. Henderson was familiar with most of the official primary material and the private manuscripts in the Mitchell Library, and consequently his work bears the stamp of authority.

The Rev. John Burton is one of the leading Wesleyan historians living today. Most of his work, however, is written in relation to the theory and development of missions, and his reliance on inaccurate secondary sources, in some instances, makes his otherwise valuable work sometimes unreliable. The Rev. A.R. Tippet of Davui levu, Fiji, is more essentially concerned with history as such, and his charge of the Methodist archives of the Fijian mission promises some works of interest in the future. Tippet's monograph, The Christian, which is a study of the Fijian Evangelical and the chiefly church in Fiji, 1835-1867, is a competent reconstruction of the early mission scene. Tippet seems inclined to the thesis that historians belong to two schools of thought, "theocratic" and "determinate or secular", and although his own work is very fairly presented, it is a little prejudiced by his conscious opposition to the "secular" historian.

A little might be said about the more general histories of South Sea missions. Dr. William Brown, although by no means the first of the modern historians of missions, applied considerable research and thought to the missions of the South Seas. His material was mostly taken from the published sources. His attitude was a considerably critical one, and must be admired in an Evangelical missionary secretary.

T.W.M. Marshall was an early historian of missions. His Christian Missions is largely a polemical work, his thesis being that Protestant missions were doomed to failure and to moral dissolution, whilst Catholic missions were destined to success. The work has the appearance of scholarly erudition, but it is cleverly contrived to throw discredit on Protestant

missions by careful selection and omission of the essential features of the missions concerned.

The standard histories of Warneck and Latourette have a general authority, but they cannot be expected to give very detailed accounts of each mission. Wright and Fry have written a popular account of the South Sea missions, but their anti-Puritan bias introduces a spirit of contumely into their narrative. By treating the missionaries as Puritans rather than as Evangelicals, they have given a colouring to the history which is misleading. A very useful little textbook containing the principal developments in South Sea missions is the Right Rev. Ian Shevill's Pacific Conquest.

Abbreviations and Glossary

A.B.C.F.M.	American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.
App.	Appointed
A.W.M.S.	Australian Wesleyan Missionary Society.
C.M.S.	Church Missionary Society.
C. P.	L.M.S., <u>Candidates' Papers.</u>
C. Q.	L.M.S., <u>Candidates' Questionnaires.</u>
D.N.Z.B.	<u>Dictionary of New Zealand Biography.</u>
d. o.	daughter of
J.S.O.	<u>Journal de la Societe des Oceanistes.</u>
J.T.W.	Henderson (ed.), <u>Journal of Thomas Williams.</u>
L.M.S.	London Missionary Society.
<u>lotu</u>	noun and verb, used principally in Tonga, Samoa and Fiji meaning religion, or to adopt religion, usually the Christian religion. <u>lotu Tonga</u> = Wesleyan Methodism; <u>lotu Tahiti</u> = L.M.S. teaching; <u>lotu Pope</u> = Roman Catholicism.
M.L.	Mitchell Library, Sydney.
M.M.S.	Methodist Missionary Society, London.
M.O.M.	Methodist Overseas Missions, Sydney.
N. L.	National Library, Canberra.
N.S.W.	New South Wales.
O.O.M.	<u>Old Orsmond Manuscript</u> (see Orsmond in Bibliography).
P.R.H.	<u>Papers of Rowland Hassall</u> (see Hassall in Bibliography).
S.M.H.	<u>Sydney Morning Herald.</u>
S.S.J.	<u>L.M.S., South Seas Journals.</u>
S.S.L.	<u>L.M.S., South Seas Letters.</u>
S.S.M.	<u>South Sea Missions.</u>
W.C.	<u>Waterhouse Correspondence.</u>
W.M.M.	<u>Wesleyan Methodist Magazine.</u>
W.M.M.S.	Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society.

For other contractions used in the footnotes the Bibliography should be consulted.

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