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The Work of Mission:
race, labour and Christian humanitarianism in the
south-west Pacific, 1870-1930

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Except where otherwise acknowledged,
this thesis is based on my own original research

Abstract

This thesis centres on the varying representations in missionary and other contemporary writings of Pacific Islanders by Anglophone Protestant missionaries, particularly Methodists, between the 1870s and the 1920s. I examine the attitudes of missionaries, focussing on their roles in training, education and employment, and recognising that all such attitudes were vitally influenced by prevalent assumptions and debates about racial hierarchies and differential racial abilities. Alongside racially-based social evolutionism developed by metropolitan anthropologists, often with the aid of observations from missionary-ethnographers, missionaries also held a profound belief, grounded in Christian theology, in human similitude. Many Protestant writers believed 'their' Islanders to be low on the evolutionary ladder and feared that observed or assumed depopulation was the result of contact with 'more advanced' cultures, but this view was tempered by the assumption that Christianity could reverse the dismal trend through education, both spiritual and practical.

The thesis examines missionary attitudes to Islanders through the prism of work: the role of work in creating new Christians and in bring modernity to the islands; its benefits and hazards, especially those of indenture; and Islanders' suitability for particular employment, in particular on the sugar plantations in Queensland and Fiji. In both cases the prevailing secular attitudes towards 'race' and the demands of a Christian ethic were held in tension. In Queensland, the protective arguments of Christian humanitarians against Melanesian indenture became entangled with those of union activists for a White Australia policy and controversies over the climatic suitability of tropical Queensland for white labour, debates in which religious figures were involved on both sides. In Fiji, Methodist objections to the importation of Melanesian indentured labour were complicated by varying attitudes towards chiefly labour exactions from commoners. The initial acceptance on legalistic grounds of Indian *girmitya* labour was superceded in the 1910s when humanitarian objections to

indenture were extended to Indians.

Many missionaries believed that manual work was instrumental in the formation of a desired Christian 'character'. In this context, I examine two areas of practical concern: the establishment of 'industrial missions' and the employment of Islanders as teachers, catechists and ordained leaders. 'Industrial missions', based on evolutionist assumptions about the virtues of manual training in forming Christian 'character', developed in the Pacific Islands with varying conformity to overseas models and were received unenthusiastically by most Islanders. Islanders favoured academic education thus, ironically, conforming to mission aims to develop an indigenous leadership for the growing Christian communities. Europeans represented the resulting Islander Christian leaders variously as heroic fellow-evangelists or less competent junior partners; less flattering representations could lead to conflict with Islander leaders who had internalised a Christian hierarchy at variance with more racially-based ones.

The public debates in the 1920s over Australia's role in New Guinea suggest a degree of resolution to the tensions investigated throughout the thesis, as religious figures rejected racialised claims of difference and countered them by employing the discourse of international relations.

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Preface

This thesis has been long in the making. It reflects an interest in the south-west Pacific and the place of Christianity in Island societies which developed during the eight years that I lived in Suva during the late 1970s and early 1980s. The visibly Christian character of indigenous life was startling for anyone from secular Europe, even a practising Christian. In many places indigenous custom and Christianity have become intertwined, mutually dependent, spoken of as one.

I quickly learned that pioneer missionaries such as the Methodist John Hunt and the Anglican Bishop Patteson were highly revered. The Christian societies which have developed in the places where they ministered, however, are by no means faithful copies of the ideas of their founders. Islanders have appropriated and adapted what was brought to them, and created new ways of being Christians. Observing this, I asked myself two questions: What was the cultural clothing in which the Gospel was brought to the Pacific Islands? And how had Islanders adapted it? An answer to the second question is the task of a theologian or an anthropologist more skilled than I. This thesis has developed from a broad consideration of the first question.

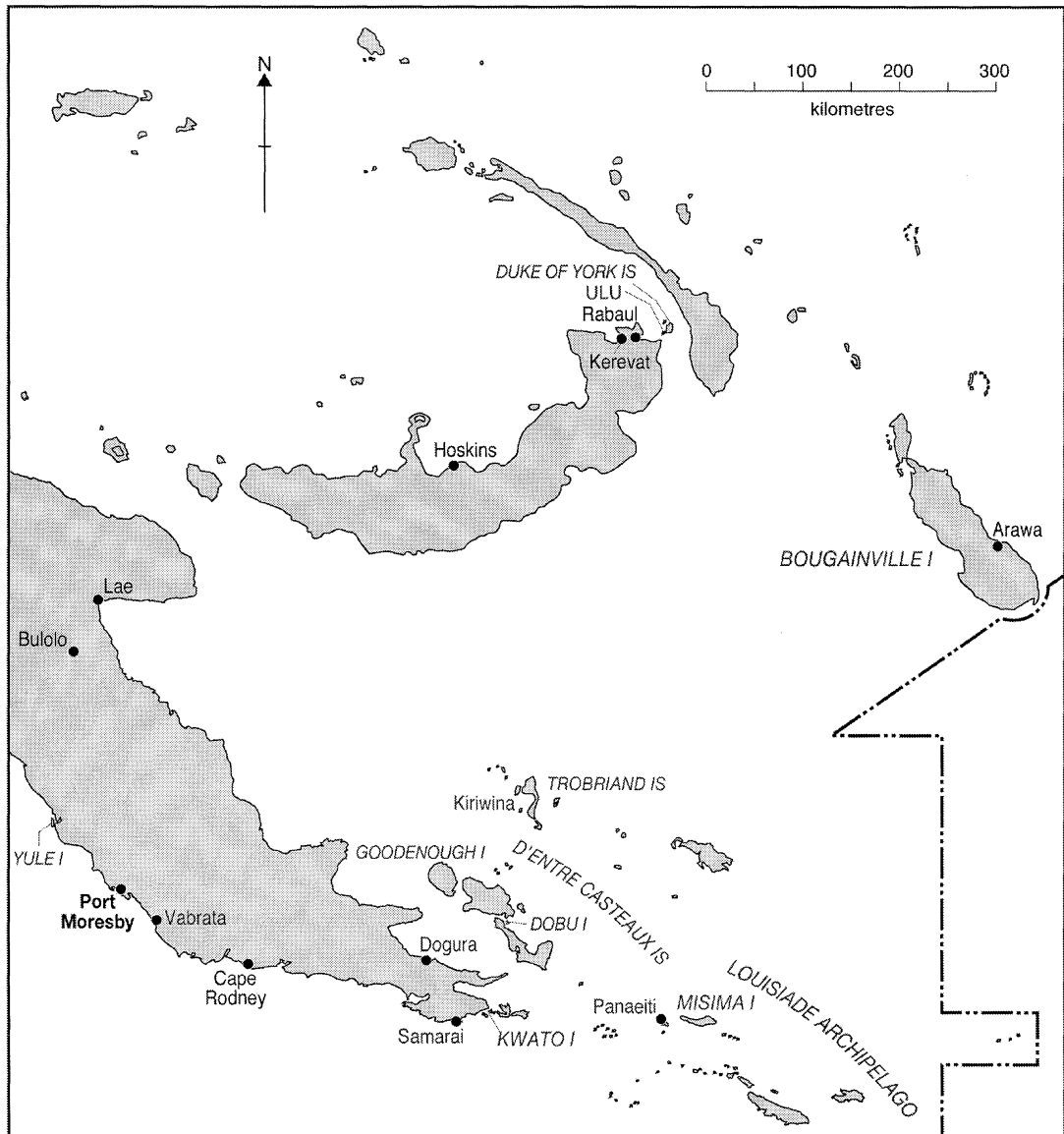
In completing this work I have received support, encouragement and advice from many people. I have been privileged to be a member of the vibrant intellectual community that is the Pacific and Asian History division of the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies at the Australian National University and have gained much from the seminars and workshops held under their auspices. I am grateful to the Australian National University for awarding me a scholarship for this research. I thank the division for funds that enabled me to attend conferences and do field research in Fiji and the Solomon Islands. Dorothy McIntosh, Marion Weeks, Jude Shanahan, Oanh Collins and Caroline O'Sullivan in the office have been unfailingly helpful, as have the IT staff on those many occasions when the mysteries of computers have defeated me. My thanks too to Kay Dancy of the Cartography Dept. of RSPAS who produced the maps.

I wish to thank the Uniting Church in Australia, especially Rev. Graham Brooks, for permission to consult the Methodist Mission archives in the Mitchell Library, the Australian Student Christian Movement for access to their archives, and St. Mark's Library, Canberra, now part of Charles Sturt University, for permission to use the Tippett Collection. I also thank the librarians and staff of the Mitchell Library, Sydney and the Australian National University library for their assistance, and especially the Petherick Room staff of the National Library of Australia who have helped track down little-known literature.

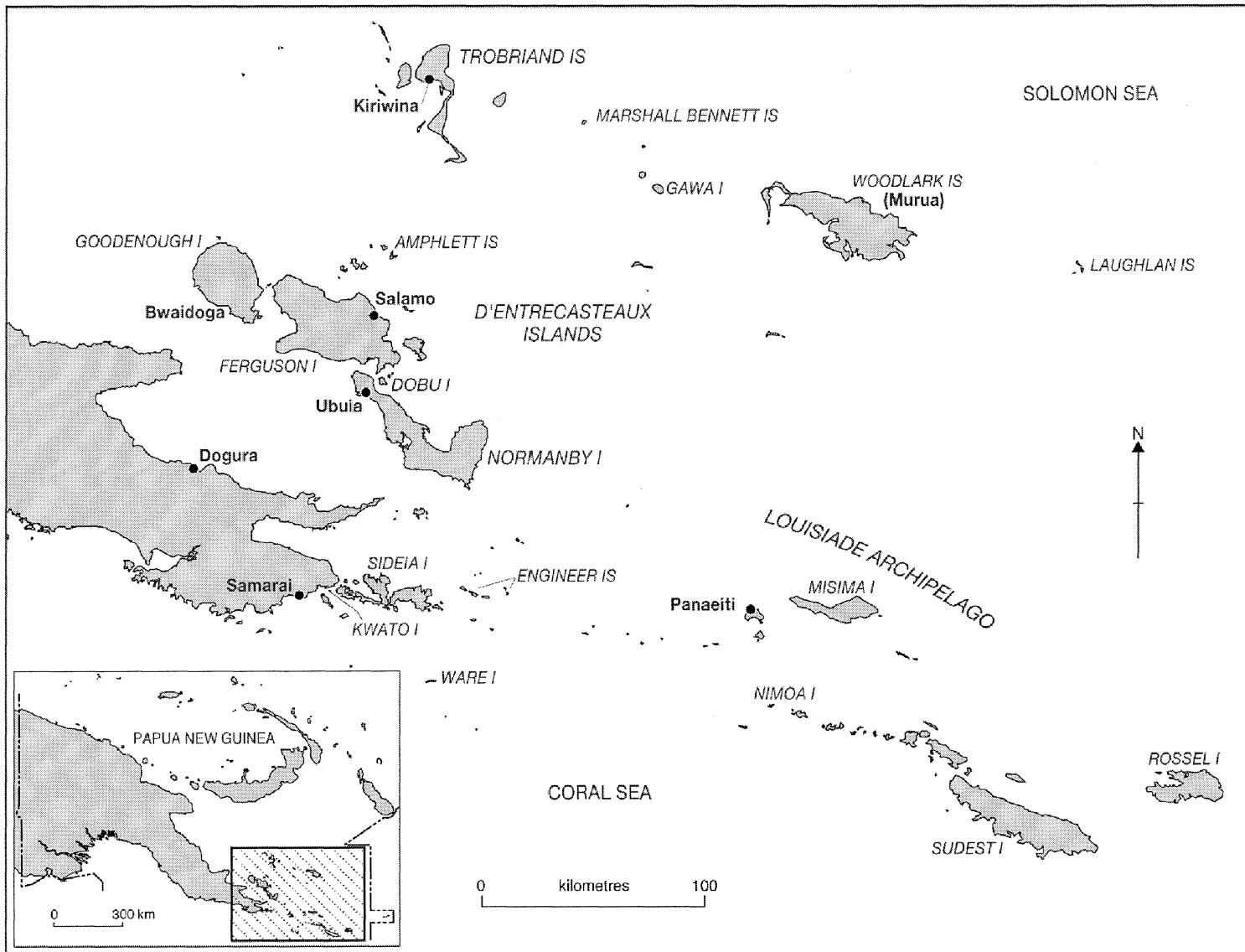
My fellow students have been a constant source of encouragement, friendship and cups of coffee. I acknowledge particularly the wisdom of members of two thesis-writing groups: Paul D'Arcy, Ross Mackay, Ben Liua'ana, Kampati Uriam, Monica Wehner, Adrian Muckle, Michael Morgan, Michael Cookson and Sally White. Among the staff members who have given me of their time and expertise, I am particularly grateful to Dr. Niel Gunson, Dr. Chris Ballard and Dr. Hank Nelson. Others I wish to thank include Rev. Dr. John Garrett and Dr. Andrew Thornley who long ago whetted my interest in Pacific mission history, Rev. Andy Carlisle for his theological guidance, Dr. Vicki Lukere for her encouragement and friendship, Rowen Weir for her hospitality on my trips to Sydney and Katie Weir who proof-read the final text.

To my supervisors and advisors, Professor Donald Denoon, Professor Brij Lal and especially Dr. Bronwen Douglas, my debt is profound. They have challenged me, forced me to question my conclusions and refine my writing. It is a wonderful thing to be taught by people of their wisdom and knowledge – and patience as this thesis dragged on – and I am profoundly grateful to them.

Finally, I thank my family, my husband Tony and my children Helen, Katie and David, for their patience and support both through the times when I was excited by my discoveries and when I thought I would never finish. I dedicate this work to them.

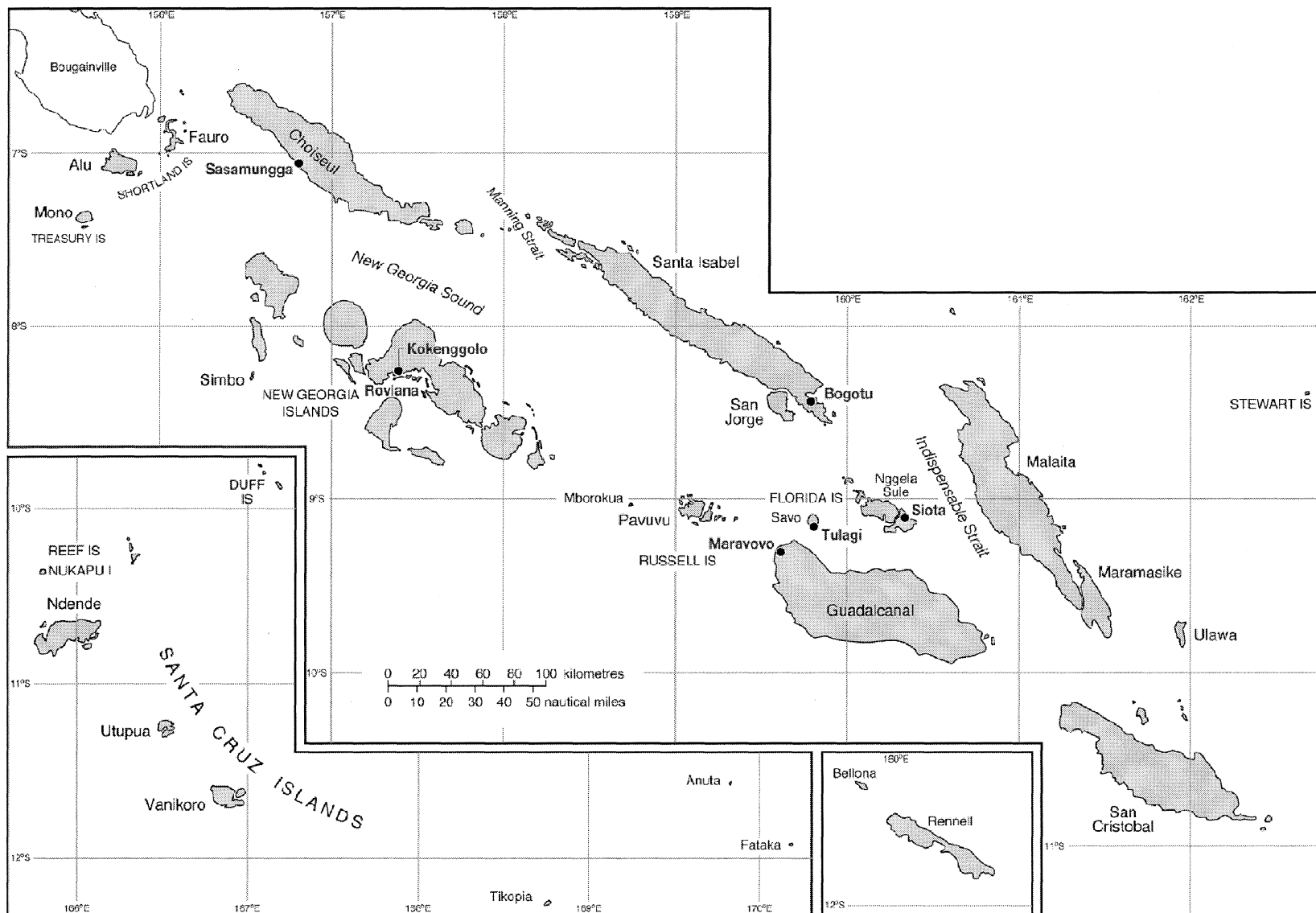


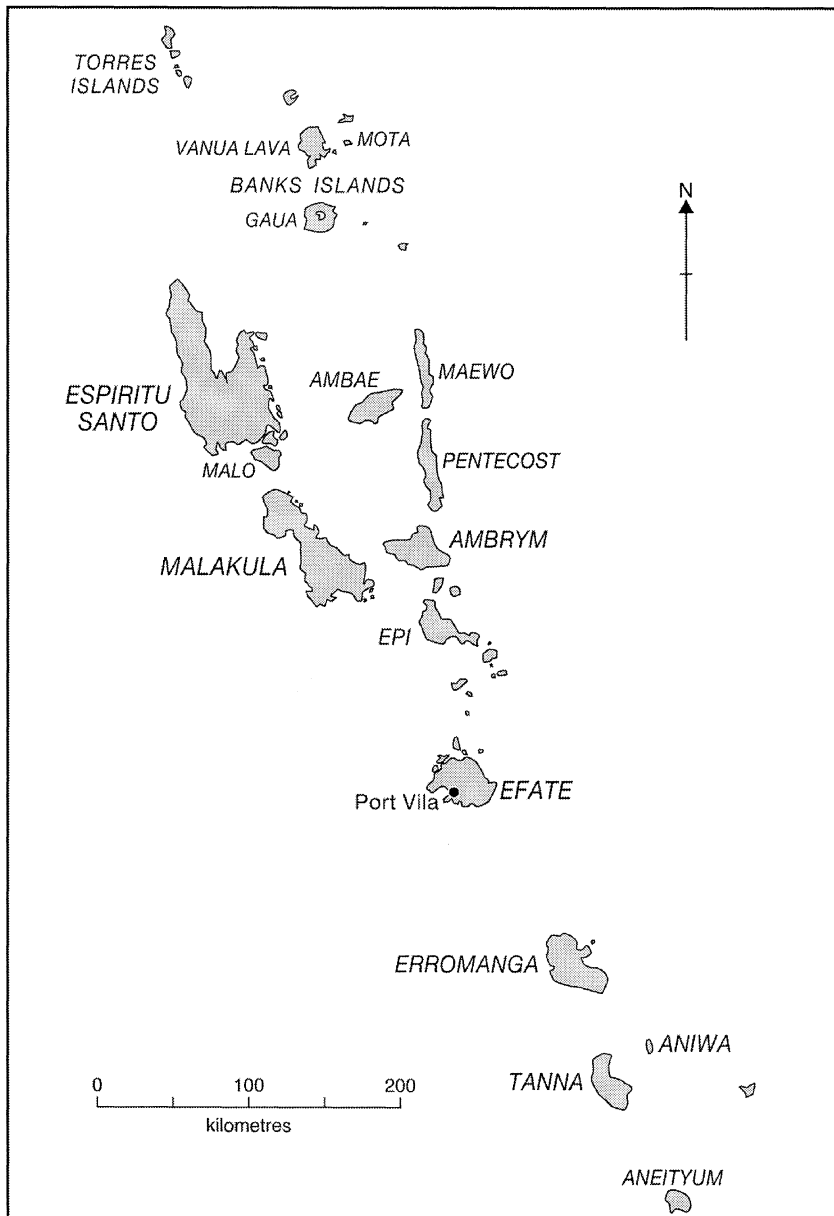
Map 1. New Britain and Papua



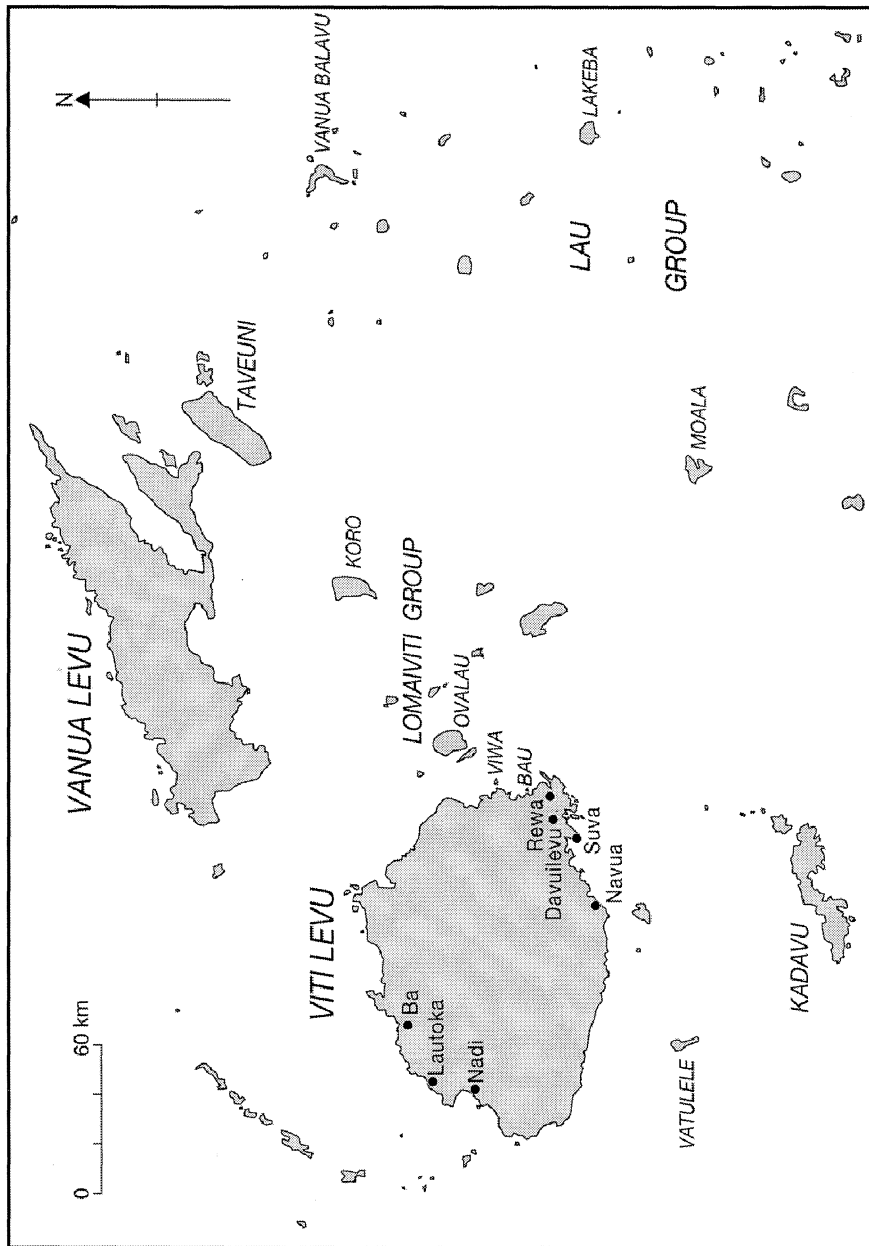
Map 2. The Papuan Islands and Milne Bay area in greater detail

Map 3. The Solomon Islands





Map 4. The New Hebrides, now Vanuatu



Map 5. Fiji

Chapter One

Introduction

From the 1870s until the 1920s Australians viewed the Pacific in a variety of ways: as a source of wealth, as a source of cheap labour for the Queensland sugar fields, and an area where Australia too could be an imperial – or at least a sub-imperial – power. Australian economic interests in the Pacific were considerable: the Colonial Sugar Refining Company had sugar plantations in Fiji; Burns, Philp controlled shipping and trading interests in New Guinea, New Hebrides (now Vanuatu) and through the Pacific to Samoa; numerous smaller firms were active especially from Fiji westwards. The effective transfer of colonial power over Papua from Britain to Australia in 1906 and the 1921 League of Nations Mandate over New Guinea gave Australia an opportunity to exploit the resources of Papua and New Guinea either through mining, plantations or settlement, and also a responsibility to protect the Islanders in accordance with the international mandate - with all the contradictions inherent in that dual purpose. The Pacific was also a site of romantic desire for painters, utopian thinkers, and particularly novelists. Fiction set in the Pacific was popular and widely read, by both adolescents and adults; it ranged from the serious authors Robert Louis Stevenson, Herman Melville, Louis Becke and Jack London to sensationalist but very successful writers like Beatrice Grimshaw and Guy Boothby.¹

¹ E.g., Guy Boothby, *In Strange Company* (London: Ward Locke and Co, 1894); *The Marriage of Esther* (London: Ward Locke and Co, 1895); Beatrice Grimshaw, *Conn of the Coral Seas* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1922); *In the Strange South Seas* (London: Hutchinson, 1907); *The Sorcerer's Stone* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1914). For further discussion of these writers see Eugenie and Hugh Laracy, 'Beatrice Grimshaw: Pride and Prejudice in Papua' *Journal of Pacific History* 12, no. 3, pp. 154-75 (1977); Paul Depasquale, *Guy Boothby: His Life and Work* (Seacombe Gardens, South Australia: Pioneer Books, 1982); Robert Dixon, *Writing the Colonial Adventure: Race,*

The Pacific also had importance to the Christian communities in Australia; it was where Australian Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian and other missionaries served in large numbers and where they had been remarkably successful in achieving conversions. Australian efforts had incorporated thousands of Islanders into the Christian world and were continuing to do so. The importance of this religious dimension to Australian perceptions of the Pacific should not be underestimated. When Hank Nelson asked veterans of the Second World War what they had known about Papua New Guinea before going to war,² he found that their most frequent source of information was Sunday School material. This tallies with my anecdotal experience of talking with older Australians: their memories of the Pacific, depending on denomination, centred around ‘buying black babies’, saving pennies for the *John Williams* or promoting the sale of cookbooks.³ Many remember the ‘lives of missionaries’, written in heroic mode and aimed at a juvenile audience, given as prizes or presents.

This thesis centres on the varying representations of Pacific Islanders by Anglophone missionaries, predominantly Protestant ones, between the 1870s and the 1920s. I concentrate on representations available to Australians, and the interaction between Australian domestic concerns and involvement with the Pacific Islands and Pacific people. As I examined the debates within Australia which involved the Pacific in the

Gender and Nation in Anglo-Australian Popular Fiction 1875-1914 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

² Questionnaire distributed to veterans of the 2/22nd Battalion. The other frequent source of information about the Pacific was stamp-collecting. Hank Nelson, personal communication.

³ Catholic child-sponsorship programs were popular; the various *John Williams* ships belonging to the London Missionary Society were supported by Sunday School children in Britain and Australia; Presbyterian missions were supported in part by the sale of cookery books, such as that compiled by the Presbyterian Women's Missionary Union, *Cookery Book of Good and Tried Recipes, Compiled for the Women's Missionary Association Sale and Exhibition, Sydney 1895*, 10th ed. (Sydney: Angus and Co, 1907), all profits from which went to the ‘support of missionary efforts at home and abroad’.

late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in particular those within church, trades union and commercial circles concerning Pacific Islanders employed in Queensland and its importance in the Federation debates, two motifs recurred. One was the notion of labour and employment, whether Islanders should be employed by Europeans, which Islanders and under what conditions. The other was a realisation of the degree to which missionaries played a distinctive and prominent part in these debates. They had inherited from their abolitionist forebears strong views about forced labour, which they then transferred to the practice of indenture – of Solomon Islanders and New Hebrideans in Queensland, of Melanesians and Indians in Fiji, and internally within Papua and New Guinea. On the issues of recruitment and indenture commercial and missionary interests were usually opposed, but occasionally they overlapped and missionaries were by no means united amongst themselves. The indenture of some groups was seen as legitimate, while similar treatment of other groups, such as Fijians and most obviously Europeans, was not. For this reason, this thesis examines missionary attitudes to Islanders through the prism of work: the role of work in creating new Christians and in bringing modernity to the Islands; its benefits and hazards – especially indenture; Islanders' suitability for particular types of employment.

While missionaries had generally negative attitudes towards the indenture of Islanders, it was not work *per se* that they opposed. Indeed, 'honest labour' was widely perceived as the key to transforming societies struggling with the impact of the west. Work was a part of the transformative project missionaries undertook with their converts, an integral component of the creation of the 'new person in Christ' they desired. By providing an 'interest in life', work was seen as a counter to presumed depression and depopulation. Missionaries educated islanders for employment within their own institutions as catechists, teachers, craftsmen, sailors and later as ordained leaders. The representation of these Islander Christian leaders reflected the ambivalence of Europeans about their role: it veered between genuine admiration and respect, and paternalist criticism. All these ideas are complex and have rarely been carefully examined. This thesis aims to investigate further the

complexity and ambiguity of missionary assumptions and ambitions concerning their own Islander converts and colleagues, and their perceived responsibilities towards Islanders in general.

Missionaries and Colonialism

The story of the introduction and development of Christianity has always been regarded as an integral part of Pacific history, with general surveys⁴ and national/denominational histories⁵ a mainstay of historical writing. Recent studies however have moved towards examining the level of missionary involvement and implication in the wider colonial project. It is inevitable that the missionary and colonial projects should often be elided. Missionaries and other Europeans entered the islands at around the same time and, to a greater degree than most other Europeans,⁶

⁴ E.g., John Garrett, *To Live among the Stars: Christian Origins in Oceania* (Geneva/Suva: World Council of Churches/University of the South Pacific, 1982); *Footsteps in the Sea: Christianity in Oceania to World War II* (Geneva/Suva: World Council of Churches/University of the South Pacific, 1992); *Where Nets Were Cast: Christianity in Oceania since World War II* (Suva/Geneva: Institute of Pacific Studies/World Council of Churches, 1997); Niel Gunson, *Messengers of Grace: Evangelical Missionaries in the South Seas 1797-1860* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1978).

⁵ E.g., A. Harold Wood, *Overseas Missions of the Australian Methodist Church - Fiji* (Melbourne: Aldersgate Press, 1978); *Overseas Missions of the Australian Methodist Church - Fiji-Indian and Rotuma* (Melbourne: Aldersgate Press, 1978); Andrew Thornley, *Fijian Methodism 1874-1945: The Emergence of a National Church* (PhD thesis, Australian National University, 1979); David Hilliard, *God's Gentlemen: A History of the Melanesian Mission, 1849-1942* (St Lucia, Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1978); Hugh Laracy, *Marists and Melanesians: A History of Catholic Missions in the Solomon Islands* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1976); David Wetherell, *Reluctant Mission: The Anglican Church in Papua New Guinea 1891-1942* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1977); Diane Langmore, *Missionary Lives: Papua 1874-1914* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989); Ross Mackay, *Catholic and Methodist Missionaries in the Milne Bay Province of Papua New Guinea, 1930-1980* (PhD thesis, Australian National University, 1999).

⁶ Throughout this thesis, for the sake of clarity, I use the term 'European' to describe all white settlers, colonial officials, missionaries, traders etc. who travelled and settled in the Pacific Islands. I realise, of course, that not all personally hailed from Europe – they included Australians, Americans and

missionaries aimed to change the island world and its inhabitants. Missionaries frequently (though by no means always) found their lives made easier and safer by association with colonial powers, particularly those of the same nationality as themselves. But missionaries did not agree on how intimate they should be with colonial agents, even when such agents were nearby – which was frequently not the case. Missionaries tended to live in rural areas, in close contact with their ‘flock’, and there were considerable perceived class differences between government officials and (especially non-conformist) missionaries which militated against contacts based on any degree of equality. Even when the missionaries were from a higher social class, as in the Anglican Melanesian Mission,⁷ the relationship was not necessarily close. David Hilliard, investigating the relationship between the Anglicans and the Solomon Islands Protectorate, concluded that the missionaries wanted protection for the mission, but saw themselves as intermediaries between Islanders and the government, and, contrary to the wishes of the government, emphasised conversion over any ‘civilising’ project. While they in practice had an ‘uneasy partnership’ with the Protectorate government, the Anglicans did not see themselves as ‘agents of colonialism’.⁸

Missionaries saw themselves primarily as bringers of religious change; in the main it was only incidentally that they saw themselves as civilising agents. Whether it was desirable to first ‘Christianise’ or ‘civilise’ had been debated by Moravian missionaries in the eighteenth century, and the controversy continued. Referring to missionaries in Papua, Langmore commented that ‘in their choice of what ... to retain, and what to introduce, [they] most clearly revealed beliefs and underlying

New Zealanders – but I use the term in preference to ‘white’ or ‘of European descent’. This replicates current popular usage in the Islands.

⁷ The Melanesian Mission was founded in the 1850s by **George Augustus Selwyn** (1809-1878), Anglican Bishop of New Zealand, who brought young boys to school in Auckland (later, Norfolk Island) to teach them basic Christianity, then sent them back to evangelise, visiting them each year on the *Southern Cross*. The Diocese of Melanesia was founded in 1861.

⁸ David Hilliard, ‘Colonialism and Christianity: The Melanesian Mission in the Solomon Islands’ *Journal of Pacific History* 9 (1974), pp. 91,116.

values that were a product of their own origins'.⁹ This is one of the themes of this thesis. In general evangelical Protestant missionaries placed more emphasis on 'civilising' than more sacramentally-minded Anglicans. Missionaries did not see themselves primarily as opponents of commerce or proponents of a particular colonial power, though they were frequently portrayed primarily as such both by contemporaries and by modern commentators. From the perspective of these writers the missionary was deeply implicated in colonialism. Margaret Jolly's article "'To Save the Girls for Brighter and Better Lives'" is an interesting example of the modern manifestation of this genre. Her aim was to historicise the observation made by development studies researchers that 'the effect of capitalist expansion has been the 'domestication' of women',¹⁰ and to do this she examined the attempt of the Presbyterian missions, particularly the missionaries' wives, in Vanuatu to introduce their converts not just to Christianity, but to a new notion of womanhood. Using the private letters and journals of the missionaries, she looked at the attempt to reform domestic space, to change the norms of good motherhood, to introduce limited cash cropping of arrowroot, and literacy – all with the aim of re-forming ni-Vanuatu women in the mould of western nineteenth-century Protestant wives and mothers. Jolly did not share the assumption of the missionaries themselves, or of many of their historians, that this was desirable; rather she saw it as part of the colonising project, problematic and ambivalent. The focus has moved from spiritual change to the changes exhorted in clothing, housing, work patterns and relationships between the genders.

A similar comment can be made about Jean and John Comaroff's exciting work concerned not with the Pacific but with southern Africa, a study of the encounter between the Tswana and London Missionary Society (LMS) and Methodist missionaries.¹¹ They looked carefully and sensitively at the changes in consciousness

⁹ Langmore, *Missionary Lives*, pp. 121.

¹⁰ Margaret Jolly, "'To Save the Girls for Brighter and Better Lives": Presbyterian Missions and Women in the South of Vanuatu 1848-1870' *Journal of Pacific History* 26, no. 1 (1991) p. 27.

¹¹ Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism, and*

attempted by the missionaries, recognising the complexity of the task and the variety of possible responses. They examined dissonances between the 'civilising mission', complete with changes relating to family structure, clothing, work and labour which are all paralleled in the Pacific, and the increasingly racist South African colonial state – and noted that they were considerable. Yet their explanation for these dissonances did not fully acknowledge the most obvious difference between missionaries and the colonial authorities, the *religious* motivation of the former. The Comaroffs quite deliberately rejected any notion of the 'reification of religious "belief"'¹² which, they suggested, removed belief systems from cultural embeddedness and, apparently, from serious consideration. They came under criticism for this neglect in the first volume of their projected 3-volume work,¹³ but the change of attitude in the second volume was limited.¹⁴ Their analysis also marginalised those Tswana, and they were many, who found an accommodation with what the missionaries brought to them.

Missionaries shared some but not all the assumptions of colonial rulers. They shared some general notions of progress, of civilisation and of racial hierarchies current in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, leading some scholars to assume that these notions were shared completely, that missionaries were fundamentally colonial agents in fancy dress, that their enterprises were best described in phrases like 'evangelical colonialism'.¹⁵ But this is to conflate concepts which I believe need to

Consciousness in South Africa (vol. 1) (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991); John L. Comaroff and Jean Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: The Dialectics of Modernity on a South African Frontier* (vol. 2) (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

¹² Comaroff, *Revelation and Revolution*, vol. 1, p. 251.

¹³ J.D.Y. Peel, 'Review of J. & J. Comaroff, *of Revelation and Revolution*, Volume 1' *Journal of African History* 33, no. 2., pp. 328-9 (1992).

¹⁴ For further discussion, see Christine Weir, 'Contesting the 'Civilising Mission' *Canberra Anthropology* 22, no. 1, pp. 121-6 (1999).

¹⁵ Nicholas Thomas, 'Colonial Conversions: Difference, Hierarchy and History in Early 20th Century Evangelical Propaganda' *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 34, pp. 366-89 (1992) and Richard Eves, 'Colonialism, Corporeality and Character: Methodist Missions and the Refashioning

be disentangled.

In a recent study of the role of missions, in particular the LMS, Susan Thorne aimed to demonstrate the importance of the empire to British social history by showing the degree of involvement of the missionary movement in the formation of an ideal of Empire. She also demonstrated the role of mission involvement on class formation. She also made the claim – quite explicitly – that their location on the frontier made missionaries ‘the advance column of imperialism's cultural assault on indigenous subjectivities, and missionaries were often the first to claim that they were “colonizers of consciousness” itself’.¹⁶ Missions were a prime source of information on overseas, inevitably shaping public notions of Empire, as Thorne rightly noted. But the involvement with colonialism was complex and to suggest that ‘the missionary movement disseminated an ethical language in which authoritarian colonial practices could be defended or simply ignored by the missionary emphasis on service’ is to fail to take missionary notions of obligation, service and compassion seriously.¹⁷ Jane Samson, in her study of naval ‘benevolence’ in the southwest Pacific in the nineteenth century demonstrated naval links with missionary campaigns, but similarly failed adequately to unpack or acknowledge the motivations of missionaries or naval officers. She equated their actions with ‘protection’, ‘paternalism’, and ‘the humanitarian crusade of “Christianization and Civilization”’.¹⁸ But this is to run related ideas together somewhat indiscriminately under the rubric of ‘protective intervention on behalf of islanders’ (which were then criticised on the grounds that they diminish islanders’ ‘agency’).¹⁹ Thorne claimed, with little evidence, that those

of Bodies in the Pacific' *History and Anthropology* 10, no. 1, pp. 85-138 (1996) both use the phrase ‘colonial evangelism’, borrowed from T.O. Beidelman, ‘Social Theory and the Study of Christian Missions in Africa’ *Africa* 44, no. 3, pp. 235-49 (1974).

¹⁶ Susan Thorne, *Congregational Missions and the Making of an Imperial Culture in Nineteenth Century England* (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), p. 9.

¹⁷ Thorne, *Congregational Missions and the Making of an Imperial Culture*, p. 11.

¹⁸ Jane Samson, *Imperial Benevolence: Making British Authority in the Pacific Islands* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1998), pp. 10-11.

¹⁹ Samson, *Imperial Benevolence*, p. 115.

who championed humanitarianism did so 'not as an alternative to imperial control but as the best means of securing it', that '[m]issionary praxis advertised itself as "moral conquest", a way of obtaining consent to European rule through humanitarian intervention'.²⁰ But the campaign against indenture waged by many missionaries in the Pacific was, in spite of flashes of self-interest, based on humanitarian motives which were in turn founded on Biblical injunctions and their development by an earlier generation of activists against the Atlantic slave trade. As I show, such humanitarian ideas contained their own ambiguities and tensions, but they were powerful and honestly held. The components of this 'benevolent' impulse have been little studied in relation to the Pacific and the whole notion of Christian humanitarian motivation needs further unpacking, which I attempt in this thesis.

I find problems with the approach of the Comaroffs, Thorne, Samson and others, in spite of the stimulating nature of their writing, since notions of the sacred seem to disappear completely. These writers display confusion between the primary religious aims of missionaries and secondary ones concerning domestication, commerce or political involvement. Stuart Piggin warned explicitly about this confusion when he re-examined the thesis originating with French historian Halévy, and adapted by Bernard Semmel, that Wesley and Methodism in general used enthusiasm for foreign missions as a social safety valve to pre-empt evangelical enthusiasm leading to radicalism. 'Mission for its own sake,' he wrote, 'was the primary consideration of most evangelicals and serious distortion can result if any of their ulterior motives are mistaken for their primary motives'.²¹ I can only concur. But the situation can be further complicated by missionaries' presuppositions concerning aims which appeared to their critics as secular. For example, mission enthusiasm for 'industrial missions', the development of craft training and commercial expertise, was seen by many, including some missionaries, as too secular and materialistic. But for its

²⁰ Thorne, *Congregational Missions and the Making of an Imperial Culture*, p. 9.

²¹ Stuart Piggin, 'Halevy Revisited: The Origins of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society: An Examination of Semmel's Thesis' *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 9, no. 1 (1980) p. 33.

proponents like John Goldie,²² Methodist missionary in the Solomon Islands, this work had the spiritual importance of aiding the growth of 'Christian character' in converts. The modern assumption of separation of the material and spiritual realms, alien also to Islander thinking, can be misleading.

Three other problems with the elision of missionary and colonialist agendas warrant brief mention. It is a fallacy to assume a unified attitude amongst missionaries. Even the same mission organisation could have very different personalities living in close proximity. In the 1900s Charles Abel and John Holmes²³ were both LMS missionaries in the Gulf of Papua region; Abel was a proponent of the industrial mission and an 'uncompromising cultural policy' of change, while Holmes was respectful of indigenous cultures and a correspondent of the anthropologist Alfred Haddon.²⁴ Second, there can be problems of historical specificity when a writer uses material from a particular missionary context and then generalises from it to make wider comments about mission activity. So Nicholas Thomas' emphasis on the New Georgia civilising project overlooked the specificity that John Goldie's preoccupation with commercial copra plantations was unique and much criticised within the Methodist mission.²⁵ Third, and perhaps more importantly, such analyses tend to

²² **John Francis Goldie:** Pioneer Methodist missionary in Solomon Islands 1902-1951.

²³ **Charles William Abel:** Born 1862 in England. London Missionary Society missionary in Papua 1890-1918, during which time he set up an 'industrial mission' complex at Kwato. In 1918 his frequent disagreements led to a rift with the LMS and Abel set up Kwato as an independent enterprise which he ran until his death in 1930.

John Henry Holmes: Born 1861 in England. LMS missionary in Papua at various stations from 1893-1919, writings included contributions to anthropological journals, the autobiographical *In Primitive New Guinea* (1924) and the novel *Way back in Papua* (1926). Died 1934.

²⁴ David Wetherell, 'The Fortunes of Charles W. Abel of Kwato 1891-1930' *Journal of Pacific History* 17, no. 4, pp. 195-217 (1982); David Wetherell, 'Monument to a Missionary: C. W. Abel and the Keveri of Papua' *Journal of Pacific History* 8, pp. 30-48 (1973); R. E. Reid, 'John Henry Holmes in Papua: Changing Missionary Perspectives on Indigenous Cultures 1890-1914' *Journal of Pacific History* 13, no. 3, pp. 173-87 (1978).

²⁵ See for example the correspondence between Goldie and the Australian Methodist Mission's General Secretary Benjamin Danks between 1909 and 1911, files MOM 116, MOM 168, Methodist

overestimate the degree of missionary impact, and downplay the level of islander agency.²⁶ Here is Thomas describing Goldie's mission: 'It created an entire social geography of circuits ... it sought to impose a new temporal regime ... It produced not just a population of Christians, but a people that engaged in periodic plantation work.'²⁷ There is a level of determinism here, in spite of warnings a few pages later, which is striking. More nuanced is the approach of Amanda Porterfield, who examines the 'missionary philanthropy' of a group of American female missionaries, graduates of Mount Holyoke Seminary. She recognised that they 'acted out of concern and compassion for others' in introducing female literacy in Maharashtra, but that their efforts unintentionally contributed to the Hindu reform movement.²⁸ Exciting and enlightening though investigations of mission Christianity within a colonising framework may be, these dangers must be guarded against.

An alternative approach: shared and differing perceptions

Ann Stoler, Frederick Cooper, Nicholas Thomas and others anthropologists²⁹ have

Missionary Society of Australasia (MMSA) papers, Mitchell Library, Sydney; Kim Byron Jackson, Tie Hokara, Tie Vaka; *Black Man, White Man: A Study of the New Georgia Group to 1925* (PhD thesis, Australian National University, 1978), esp. chaps. 4 and 7.

²⁶ On the dangers of assuming that missionary intentions were realised, see Bronwen Douglas, 'Provocative Readings in Intransigent Archives: Finding Aneityumese Women' *Oceania* 70, pp. 111-29 (1999) Bronwen Douglas, "Recuperating Indigenous Women: Female Sexuality and Missionary Textuality in Melanesia" (paper presented at the Association for Social Anthropology in Oceania annual meeting, Auckland, New Zealand, 23 February 2002).

²⁷ Thomas, 'Colonial Conversions', p. 384.

²⁸ Amanda Porterfield, 'Mount Holyoake Missionaries and Non-Western Women: The Motivations and Consequences of Nineteenth-Century American Missionary Philanthropy', in *Philanthropy in the World's Traditions*, ed. Warren F. Ilichman, Stanley N. Katz, and Edward L. Queen II, pp. 215-35 (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998).

²⁹ Ann Laura Stoler, 'Rethinking Colonial Categories: European Communities and the Boundaries of Rule' *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 13, no. 1, pp. 134-61 (1989); Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper, 'Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda', in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, ed. Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, pp. 1-56 (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 1997); Nicholas Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture: Anthropology, Travel and Government* (Cambridge: Polity Press,

noted that a fruitful way to analyse the nature of the relationships between colonisers and colonised is to look at the fissures and disjunctures in the writings of the dominant group. Such fissures frequently involve missionary writing for a very particular reason: missionaries shared some but not all the assumptions of colonial rulers. In this thesis I aim to use, but also to shift, Stoler's insight, to look at both the fissures and continuities between missionary and secular colonial assumptions about the nature of desired change in Islanders. What I have found in mission writings is the concurrent holding, in tension, of two ideas. The first is a representation of Islanders heavily influenced by general European racial assumptions, relying on developmentalist or social evolutionist notions in some form. These all start from seeing western European Christian society as the epitome of human achievement. The comparative backwardness of non-Europeans could be explained by environmental disadvantage or remoteness, both of which led to slower historical development, or by varying degrees of biological determinism. The complexity of these ideas is currently attracting growing academic interest.³⁰ The second idea held by missionaries was the Biblically-based belief in human unity, in essential human similitude. Their Christian commitment led missionaries into assumptions about human worth, the nature of civilisation and notions of hierarchy which were subtly, and occasionally dramatically, at odds with those of more secular, administrative and commercial interests. This was not merely a theoretical idea; it impelled action. This ethic was epitomised by Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount which emphasises the God's concern for the poor and the Christian's duty to reflect that concern in

1994).

³⁰ See, for example, Bronwen Douglas, 'Science and the Art of Representing "Savages": Reading "Race" in Text and Image in South Seas Voyage Literature' *History and Anthropology* 11, no. 2-3, pp. 157-201 (1999); Richard Eves, 'Going Troppo: Images of White Savagery, Degeneration and Race in Turn-of-the-Century Colonial Fictions of the Pacific' *History and Anthropology* 11, no. 2-3, pp. 351-85 (1999); George Stocking, *Race, Culture and Evolution: Essays in the History of Anthropology* (New York: The Free Press, 1968); Stoler, 'Rethinking Colonial Categories'; the essays in Bronwen Douglas and Chris Ballard, eds., *Foreign Bodies: Oceania and Racial Science 1750-1940* (in preparation).

compassionate action.³¹ It demanded that all people (or all those recognised as falling within a common set with the speaker) should be treated as having claims on our consideration and care. In the nineteenth century this attitude was commonly called ‘benevolence’, ‘philanthropy’ or ‘sympathy’. In more modern parlance it might be termed ‘altruism’, which has also been linked to beliefs in human similitude.³² My thesis is fundamentally about the interaction of these two ideas of racial difference and human unity and their manifestations in practice.

In practice the relationship between these two ideas was fluid and changing, even for an individual missionary. George Brown, Methodist missionary to New Britain,³³ campaigned for British annexation of Papua in the early 1880s as protection against the labour trade and to bring lawlessness under control. But there were ambivalences evident in his attitudes, as Helen Gardner has shown. Brown wrote the articles advocating annexation using the *noms de plume* ‘Carpe Diem’ or ‘Justitia’, which ‘allowed him access to the often bellicose tropes of colonisation without the need to reconcile them to the language of the Christian mission’.³⁴ In his public writings under his own name he emphasised his belief in human similitude; articles which demanded annexation used evolutionist language to a much greater degree. Since Papuans were so little civilised as to have no ‘settled government or principle of cohesion...not even a hereditary chieftainship’, colonisation was both necessary and

³¹ Matthew’s Gospel, Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

³² Samuel P. Oliner and Pearl M. Oliner, *The Altruistic Personality: Rescuers of Jews in Nazi Europe* (New York: The Free Press, 1988).

³³ **George Brown:** Born 1835 in England, ran away to sea and became a Methodist minister in New Zealand. Methodist missionary in Samoa 1860-74, led first Methodist party to establish new mission in New Britain 1875 and remained as Chairman of the New Britain district until 1880. General Secretary of the Australasian Methodist Missionary Society 1887-1907. Writings included anthropological papers, his *Autobiography* (1908) and the anthropological study *Melanesians and Polynesians: their life-histories described and compared* (1910). Died 1917.

³⁴ Helen Gardner, *Cultures, Christians and Colonial Subjects: George Brown's Representations of Islanders from Samoa and the Bismarck Archipelago* (PhD, La Trobe University, 1999), pp. 116, 121-12.

practical.³⁵ Brown's work and writings demonstrate a concern with the injustice of indenture and a concern for the spiritual well-being of his converts, as well as profound involvement with the anthropological debates of the age which were in essence racially based. The same complexity of attitude can be seen in work and writings of other missionaries I discuss in this thesis: Lorimer Fison, John and Frank Paton, John Burton, John Goldie and William Bromilow.³⁶

I have to place myself. From personal conviction inclined to be a sympathetic observer of the missionaries and their endeavour, I nonetheless recognise that the anthropologists and historians concerned with colonialism are right to problematise

³⁵ Brown writing as 'Justitia', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 April 1881.

³⁶ **Lorimer Fison:** Born 1832 in England, Methodist missionary in Fiji 1863-71 and 1875-84, based in Levuka and at the Navuloa Training Institute; also prolific newspaper correspondent and informant of anthropologist Lewis Henry Morgan. After his return to Australia he worked with anthropologist A.W. Howett on the kinship system of the Kamilaroi and Kurnai Aboriginal groups. Died 1907.

John Gibson Paton: Born 1824 in Scotland. Presbyterian missionary in the New Hebrides (Tanna) 1858-62, but had to withdraw because of indigenous fighting. He returned to New Hebrides (Aniwa) in 1866-1873, then concentrated on fund-raising and campaigning, in Britain and Australia, against labour recruitment in the south-west Pacific until his death in 1907.

Francis Hume Lyall Paton: Born 1870 on Aniwa, New Hebrides, third son of John G. Paton. Presbyterian missionary on Tanna 1896-1902, after which he returned to Australia and served in various administrative positions in the Presbyterian church. Writer on mission policy, including *The Kingdom in the Pacific* (1913). Died 1938.

John Wear Burton: Born 1875 in England, grew up in New Zealand. Methodist missionary to the Indian community in Nausori, Fiji 1902-11. Prolific writer on mission theory, including *The Fiji of Today* (1910), *The Call of the Pacific* (1912) and *Modern Missions in the South Pacific* (1949), and frequent contributor to the Australian religious and secular press. General Secretary of the Australasian Methodist Missionary Society 1925-44. Died 1970.

William E. Bromilow: Born 1857 in Australia, Methodist missionary in Fiji 1879-89, established Methodist mission to Papua based at Dubu in the D'Entrecasteaux islands in 1891 and served there until 1907, then again 1920-25. Died 1929.

While Bromilow and John Paton published autobiographies, none of the listed missionaries has been the subject of a comprehensive biography. Their writings remain dispersed, some published as books, many as newspaper and journal articles. Fison, Burton and Frank Paton in particular would deserve more coherent study.

the encounter between missionaries and Islanders, and that their insights are valuable. The route I have chosen is to investigate more closely the world view of the missionaries, to understand their conceptions of their own place in the world and the place of those they tried to change. This is in some ways a return to the approach pioneered by Niel Gunson when he examined the intellectual and social origin of the earliest Protestant missionaries to Oceania and follows and broadens Helen Gardner's approach in her writing on George Brown, placing him within the European debate on race and evolution. I have tried to maximise my own advantages of a background both in the formal study of British history and an understanding of the social history of a British city, in my case Birmingham, complete with its imperial past. When I read Davidoff and Hall's marvellous study of the Midlands evangelical bourgeoisie, the sending people, it resonated with the architecture, the landscape, not to mention the factory smell of chocolate, of my own adolescence.³⁷ So, perhaps, I can bring that background to add to our understanding of how missionaries from Britain came to believe it their duty to sail to the far Pacific, to attempt to change the lives of islanders they knew little of.

But the debates I am most concerned with take place in Australia – and share similarities and differences with British debates. This is a persistent sub-theme to this thesis. The debates surrounding climatic suitability of the tropics had a different resonance in Australia, when they impacted on the nature of home society, from that in Britain, where they related to the nature of the Empire. Missionary supporters in Australia, especially Methodists and Anglicans, had close, almost familial, links with 'their' missionaries serving in the Pacific, a familiarity which was extended to Islander evangelists. In general this identification was less pronounced in missions which were based in London. An Australian sense of responsibility for the Pacific was expanded in the aftermath of World War 1 when Australia was granted the League of Nations Mandate over New Guinea; political decisions now had to be

³⁷ Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (London: Hutchinson, 1987).

made, with mission voices pleading for conformity with the Mandate provision against other more exploitative ambitions.

Resources

In any writing on Pacific Christianity, the doings of missionaries, particularly those from Europe, Australia and New Zealand, inevitably loom large. In earlier work they tended to be the exclusive focus of attention. This has shifted but, as John Barker noted, by far the largest body of work comes still from 'the pens of missionaries and their supporters and critics'.³⁸ This largely reflects the fact that the main sources, certainly the main written historical sources, are mission texts. These include the memoirs and letters of individual missionaries and the unpublished administrative records of the main Christian denominations active in the Pacific. Missionaries left behind a prodigious amount of written material. Richard Lyth, Methodist missionary in Fiji from 1839-54, wrote in his journal almost every day, often for several pages, had a wide correspondence and made extensive notes on Fijian custom and history. George Brown was similarly prolific.³⁹ Most others kept some sort of journal, and many wrote memoirs. Some of this material was published virtually contemporaneously,⁴⁰ some after revision during retirement.⁴¹

The main focus of my interest, however, is in questions which were debated in public and thus my main resources are published ones, including missionary memoirs and histories, but focussing also on published Sunday school or devotional texts,

³⁸ John Barker, 'Introduction: Ethnographic Perspectives on Christianity in Oceanic Societies', in *Christianity in Oceania: Ethnographic Perspectives*, ed. John Barker, pp. 1-24 (Lanham/New York/ London: University Press of America, 1990).

³⁹ The personal papers of both Richard Lyth and George Brown are now in the Mitchell Library, Sydney: Lyth papers – ML B533-B553, Brown papers – ML A1686 (24 parts).

⁴⁰ For example James Calvert, *Fiji and the Fijians: Mission History* (London: Alexander Heylin, 1858).

⁴¹ For example George Brown, *George Brown, D.D, Pioneer-Missionary and Explorer: An Autobiography* (London: Charles H Kelly, 1908); William Bromilow, *Twenty Years among Primitive Papuans* (London: The Epworth Press, 1929).

photographs and films. I also consider the public writings of missionary figures, such as the scholarly anthropological papers of Codrington and Holmes, Fison's journalism in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, John Paton's public debates in Queensland and John Burton's forays into debates concerning the League of Nations in the 1920s.⁴² I have used extensively the (usually monthly) missionary periodicals produced to promote mission activity to supporters in the metropole. The first denominations to produce material for the 'person in the pew' were the large non-conformist groups. The LMS was the leader in the field of truly popular periodicals, with the *Chronicle*, published in London from 1867 and the children's journal *News From Afar* beginning in 1896. For the LMS the Pacific was a small field, but they had mission stations in Samoa, the Gilbert and Ellice Islands and Papua. Although originating in London, the *Chronicle* was imported in bulk into Australia, where it was read by members of the Congregational Churches who also contributed financially to LMS work. The *Missionary Review*,⁴³ published in Sydney by the Methodist Church of Australasia from 1891 – and following on from earlier British Methodist publications – was concerned almost exclusively with the mission fields of that church, concentrated in the Pacific: Fiji, Samoa (along with the LMS), New Britain, New Ireland and present-day Milne Bay province of PNG. Similar in many ways was the *ABM Review*, published from 1910 by the Anglican Australian Board of Mission (ABM). The ABM also published the *Herald* for children, again from 1910.

⁴² E.g., R.H. Codrington, 'Religious Beliefs and Practices in Melanesia' *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 10, pp. 261-316 (1881); J.H. Holmes, 'Notes on the Religious Ideas of the Elema Tribe of the Papuan Gulf' *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 32, pp. 426-432 (1902); John G. Paton, *The Kanaka Labour Traffic: Queensland's Defence, Dr John G Paton's Reply* (Southend, Essex: 1894); John G. Paton, *Slavery under the British Flag: Correspondence and Protest against the Kanaka Labour Trade* (Woodford, Essex: South Woodford Printing Coy, 1892); John W. Burton, *The Australian Mandate in Relation to Our Duty to Native Races* (Melbourne: Australian Student Christian Movement, 1921).

⁴³ Until 1908 the journal was called the *Australasian Methodist Missionary Review*; between 1908 and 1917 the *Australasian Methodist* prefix was printed in successively smaller typeface until it was completely dropped in 1917. For simplicity's sake I refer to the journal as the *Missionary Review* throughout this thesis.

The ABM was responsible for Anglican mission efforts in New Guinea and the Torres Straits and amongst Australian Aborigines, and shared support of the Melanesian Mission in the Solomons with Britain and New Zealand. In general, missionary literature was particularly influential in forming Australian perceptions of the Pacific area; these journals carried news of missionary activity designed for popular consumption, aimed at the average congregation member. The aim of this material, which often included children's pages or a separate periodical for children, was two-fold: to inform and to raise money, the two being obviously closely connected. They promoted the idea that mission support was an essential and normal part of the expression of Christian faith for all Christians.

It is precisely because these journals were the public face of the missionary societies that their modes of representation are so interesting, and I am not the first to examine them. Michael Young examined the 'tropology' of the Methodist Dobu mission, using William Bromilow's memoirs and the *Missionary Review*, noting that 'whenever a Wesleyan picked up a pen the metaphors flew thick and fast', to produce 'a morass of verbosity amid muddled metaphors and tangled tropes'.⁴⁴ He took it upon himself to do some untangling. Most of the tropes he elucidated are Biblical (to a greater degree than he perhaps acknowledged) and thus unsurprising, yet the sheer encompassing persistence of them is striking; they demonstrate the familial image by which the mission wished to represent itself. Nicholas Thomas, Richard Eves and Virginia-Lee Webb have done similar work, both with missionary texts and with photographs, either published in the mission journals or as postcards.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Michael Young, 'A Tropology of the Dobu Mission (in Memory of Reo Fortune)' *Canberra Anthropology* 3 (1980), pp. 87-88.

⁴⁵ E.g., Richard Eves, "Black and White, a Significant Contrast: Missionary Photography in the Pacific" (paper presented at the 12th Pacific History Association Conference, Honiara, Solomon Islands, 1998); Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture*, esp. pp. 125-141 ; Virginia-Lee Webb, 'Missionary Photographers in the Pacific Islands: Divine Light' *History of Photography* 21, no. 1, pp. 12-22 (1997); Thomas, 'Colonial Conversions'.

My aim is to analyse similar texts, including some visual ones, in investigating notions surrounding the theme of work. Some comment is necessary on the nature of such mission material. Its full understanding requires some knowledge of the basic assumptions of writers, with their acceptance of the role of the Divine and their prose steeped in Biblical allusion. I have attempted to follow the example of Bronwen Douglas, who suggested that in spite of the inherent difficulties, including finding such texts ‘offensively racist and sexist’, one can read ‘intransigent archives’, originally written with propagandist objectives, for other purposes. She used close textual analysis, ‘reading across the grain’ to find traces of indigenous voices, examining the letters and journals of John and Charlotte Geddie, Presbyterian missionaries in the New Hebrides and articles in *Missionary Review* for the ‘encode[d] enigmatic traces of hedged women’s agency and circumstantial strategies’.⁴⁶ I am rather looking for traces of the missionaries’ barely-spoken presuppositions. My early chapters centre on European representation of Islanders, though in the chapters on industrial missions and on islander teachers I find considerable evidence of the interaction between missionary intention and Islanders’ selective appropriation and alteration of those aims – ‘oblique traces of indigenous action’.

Many of the debates I consider were conducted outside as well as inside missionary publications. They featured in the pages of Australian newspapers, especially the *Sydney Morning Herald*, and in small pamphlets which seem to have been the turn-of-the-century equivalent of talk-back radio; the National Library has a marvellous collection of them. I have supplemented these materials with mission reports of more

⁴⁶ Douglas ‘Provocative Readings in Intransigent Archives’, p. 119. Her argument in ‘Recuperating Indigenous Women’ expanded the analysis to demonstrate how Presbyterian missionary John Geddie structured his accounts of Aneityumese widow strangling to conform to his metanarrative of conversion and to unpack the trope ‘degraded’ as related to women. Also Bronwen Douglas, ‘Encounters with the Enemy? Academic Readings of Missionary Narratives on Melanesians’ *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 43, no. 1, pp. 37-64 (2001).

limited circulation and complemented by private and official mission correspondence – with representations which are frequently far from identical to those in the public domain.

Structure of the Thesis

I chose a starting date of the 1870s as this marks the beginning of the main debate about the legitimacy of the labour trade from Melanesia to Fiji and Queensland and the first use of Fijian missionaries in New Britain. My finishing date is around 1930, which allows me to include the very active debates about education and industrial missions during the 1910s and 20s. This period also marks the high point of Christian influence in general, and the impact of missions to the Pacific in particular, on Australian public life and debate. While ideally it would be best to cover the entire Pacific, sheer practicality has forced me to concentrate on the area from Fiji westwards to Papua, New Britain and Queensland. This corresponds with my experience and general interest and enables me to cover all the debates of importance.

In theoretical debates, which interested many Christians, Christian thinkers and professionals (clergy and missionaries) absorbed the scientific/anthropological ideas of the day. Chapter two investigates the attempts of British and Australian Christian humanitarian writers to engage a secular as well as a religiously-committed audience through employing their Oceanic experience, in dialogue with the biological and anthropological sciences. Protestant Pacific missionary correspondents published ethnography which was locally specific and based on long residence; as such it was valued in metropolitan scientific circles. But metropolitan theorists were interested in ‘proving’ various social evolutionary theories which were frequently at odds with the missionary insistence, underpinned by the assumption that all humans were valuable in God's sight, on the uniqueness and potential for ‘progress’ of their subjects. I also look at the notion of Christian humanitarianism, which I have suggested needs nuanced examination. Missionaries claimed that the Christian ethic had universal applicability, and it was precisely because they saw Indians or Fijians or ni-Vanuatu as sharing in common humanity that they felt impelled to act. The strong intellectual

and theological links with the abolitionist movement against the Atlantic slave trade, especially in relation to recruitment and indenture in the southwest Pacific, are also investigated.

Important concomitants of theories about race in the Pacific can be seen in the debate about depopulation, the subject of my third chapter. That disease caused depopulation seems obvious, but contemporary rhetoric was highly moralised, often assuming racial inferiority. 'Hard' Darwinists believed that the extinction of 'less adapted' races was inevitable, but most writers did not accept such harshness and attempted to improve the adaptation of Islanders to new conditions. Missionaries particularly, while accepting evolutionist rhetoric about the need for 'struggle', also believed that change through Christian conversion and practical and spiritual education could reverse the dismal trend.

The next two chapters look at the debates concerning the recruitment and indenture of Islanders to work on European-owned enterprises, especially sugar plantations. I concentrate on two areas, Queensland and Fiji, where quite different assumptions about the most suitable labourers operated. In Queensland, the colonial government encouraged the use of Melanesian labour from the Solomon Islands and the New Hebrides. Following the example of the slave trade abolitionists, many missionaries, led by the Presbyterian John Paton, protested against Melanesian indenture on humanitarian grounds. But their protective arguments became entangled with those of union activists for a White Australia policy and controversies over the climatic suitability of tropical Queensland for white labour, in which religious figures were involved on both sides. At issue was the nature of the Queensland colony/state and the alliances formed by figures like Paton were complex. In Fiji, the most prominent missionary to argue against Melanesian recruitment, the Methodist Lorimer Fison, used legalistic arguments rather than Paton's more emotional ones. Methodists also found themselves involved in controversy over obligations on commoners imposed by the Fijian chiefly system. For a time Indian indenture was accepted by Fison as legally valid, indicating differing racial assumptions about the two groups, until John

Burton, another Methodist, extended humanitarian arguments to Indian *girmityas* and opposed their continued indenture. In each of these case studies the prevailing secular attitudes towards 'race' and the demands of a Christian ethic were held in varying degrees of tension, and my concern is to unravel and investigate this tension.

Most Pacific missionaries focussed on the potential of islanders not only to be converted to Christianity and to convert others, but also to be taught a western curriculum, to be employed within a cash economy and to become 'civilised'. My sixth chapter discusses the creation of a 'Christian citizen', the formation of a Christian character and the role of work in this formation. I look at nineteenth-century evangelical beliefs about work and duty, Bourdieu's notions of the 'habitus' as related to Christian domestication, and its counter, the evangelical concept of self-examination.

Chapters seven and eight examine two areas of practical mission concern: the establishment of 'industrial missions' and the employment of Islanders as teachers, catechists and then as ordained leaders. In the early twentieth century 'industrial missions' became popular in Africa and in the southern states of the US, as 'suitable' education for non-Europeans. This 'suitability' was premised on assumptions about the virtues of manual labour in developing Christian 'character'. It was also believed that non-Europeans were not intellectually capable of academic education and that there would be few employment opportunities open to them requiring such education. I investigate the development of 'industrial schemes' in the Pacific, as well as their rejection by some missionaries. But here indigenous agency, not especially apparent in the indenture debates, influenced the outcome of mission endeavour. It became rapidly apparent that many young Islanders, unconvinced about the virtues of 'character-formation', sought academic education in English leading to government and commercial employment (where it was available, as in Fiji) ahead of industrial and agricultural training, especially that conducted on a shoestring budget, as it usually was. Where commercial or government openings were unavailable, education leading to employment within the mission as teachers, catechists and ministers had

greater appeal than the 'industrial' option. This conformed with European aims to develop an indigenous leadership for established Christian communities and especially to use 'islander missionaries' to evangelise further westwards. European motives were complex: they included an acknowledgement that Islander missionaries were fellow evangelists, co-inheritors of the Kingdom of God alongside a recognition that they were cheaper to employ and to degree expendable. Islanders' heroism was praised yet their assumed junior status was evident in photographs and written accounts. This could lead to conflict, as Islanders internalised a Christian hierarchy in which they saw themselves, as missionaries, close to the top.

My final chapter suggests a degree of resolution to the tension investigated throughout the thesis. During the 1920s, the stridency of racial ideas emanating from America and the reluctance of some politicians in Australia to accept fully the responsibilities incurred by Australia under the League of Nations Mandate for New Guinea from 1919 forced Christian writers to confront racialist determinism – and most rejected it. This was evident in the adoption of more collegial attitudes towards indigenous ministers and mission workers. It can also be seen in the public debates over Australia's role in New Guinea, when religious figures rejected racialised claims of difference and countered them by employing the discourse of international relations and the associated new science of economics.

Chapter Two

Racial difference, evolution and Christian humanitarianism

This chapter investigates the theoretical debates in which Christian professionals such as clergy and missionaries, often active participants, absorbed the scientific/ anthropological ideas of the day. British and Australian Christian writers engaged both secular and religiously-committed audiences. Protestant Pacific missionary correspondents published ethnography which was locally specific and based on long residence, for this it was valued in metropolitan scientific circles. But metropolitan theorists' enthusiasm for social evolutionary theories frequently grated against missionary beliefs that all humans were valuable in God's sight and that their converts were unique and had the potential for 'progress'. The practical concerns of Pacific missionaries, discussed in later chapters, focussed on the potential of islanders not only to be converted to Christianity and to convert others, but also to be taught a western curriculum, to be employed within a cash economy, and to become 'civilised'. Missionaries were also concerned about what conditions and treatment were proper for island and imported labour - with particular concern about the institution of indenture, both in Queensland and in the islands, and the responsibilities incurred by Australia under the League of Nations Mandate for New Guinea from 1919. In each of these case studies the prevailing secular attitudes towards 'race' and the demands of a Christian ethic were held in varying degrees of tension, and my concern is to unravel and investigate this tension.

Missionaries in the Pacific held various beliefs about the origins, abilities and relative

positions of people considered to belong to different 'races'. The belief in the existence of separate, physically discrete 'races' was held by most writers, secular and religious, over most of the period under discussion, but my use here of the term does not imply my acceptance of an ontological reality of race. However, the use of the term 'race' was widespread, its meaning ranging from a generally benign descriptor of physical human appearance to a highly value-laden and proscriptive demarcator of unbridgeable human difference. Missionaries tended to use the term in something approaching the former sense; this chapter investigates some of the nuances in their understanding of human difference. Such beliefs were rooted in their Christianity, yet also reflected more secular understandings which originated in contemporary scientific or legal circles. The juxtaposition or interlinking of these varying discourses, and the conflicts between them, coloured missionary responses to the various professional debates current from the 1860s (and earlier) to the 1920s.

'Go ... and teach all nations': Biblical imperatives and human difference

Missionaries began with certain tenets derived from Scripture. First was the obligation, often referred to as the Great Commission, laid upon Christians to convert the whole world to Christianity:

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.¹

This assumes a belief that all human groups were equal in the sight of God, and eligible for inclusion in the Christian world, a belief made explicit in St. Paul's words:

For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.²

¹ Matthew's Gospel, 28:18-20. All Biblical quotations in this thesis are taken from the King James Authorised Version of 1611, the version used universally by nineteenth and early twentieth century English-speaking Protestants, including the missionaries to the Pacific.

² Paul's Letter to the Galatians 3: 27-28. A similar verse is in Paul's Letter to the Colossians 3:11.

This passage extols the resolution in favour of inclusion to the dispute amongst early Christians as to whether Jesus' message was exclusively to the Jewish world, or whether it was also to Gentiles.³ By the nineteenth century the world known to Christians was larger but the principle remained: missionaries acknowledged, in theory at least, that all could, indeed should, be saved and that members of all human groups could become Christians. There was an essential brotherhood – the masculine mode of discourse was almost universal, in spite of Paul's words – between all Christians. Without these presuppositions, missionary activity which aimed to convert others to the Christian faith would have been pointless. It was essential that missionaries believed that all people were capable of responding to the Christian Gospel if the obligation on them as individuals to convert 'the heathen' were to be fulfilled.

But also underlying nineteenth century Christian thought about 'the heathen' were common contemporary assumptions not only about the unity of humankind, but also that there existed a hierarchy within it. The Great Chain of Being, which in Stocking's words 'linked all forms of creation in a finely graduated hierarchical series', was a concept dating from classical antiquity. This essentially static linkage of all plant and animal forms, advancing through 'savage' humans to Western civilised man, used complexity of form as the primary taxonomic principle and was generally seen as representing the state of the world at creation, with little idea of change or 'progress'.⁴ Greater knowledge of the non-European world made the technological superiority of Western⁵ societies over those in the Pacific more obvious and led to increased interest in the nature of non-European people from Scottish and French

³ The Biblical account of the debate and the decision that circumcision was not a requirement for Christians, thus opening the new religion to non-Jews, can be found in the Acts of the Apostles 15.

⁴ George W. Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology* (New York: Free Press, 1987), pp. 11-12. For later scientific elaborations of this idea, see also Peter J. Bowler, *Evolution: The History of an Idea* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 1984), pp. 55-59.

⁵ The phrase 'Western society' is, I recognise, both anachronistic and inaccurate as I include within it, in different contexts, white Europeans, Americans and Australasians, but it seems the most convenient label for these self-confident and technologically-sophisticated societies.

Enlightenment scholars. By the middle of the eighteenth century – the exact provenance and chronology of these ideas is in dispute⁶ – as a more developmental view of human progress was common. Having adopted a more fluid version of the Great Chain of Being,⁷ the task Enlightenment scholars set themselves was to explain the ‘laws which lay behind social development’, and many came to the materialist conclusion that development was primarily contingent on ‘modes of subsistence’.⁸ The assumption that contemporary Western European society epitomised the pinnacle of human achievement encouraged the elaboration of ‘stage’ theories, which ranked human societies on the rationalist criteria of the sophistication of technology, the complexity of law, and the shift from ‘error’ or ‘superstition’ to science.

These theories may appear to challenge Christian notions of human equality but any such challenge was tempered by the assumption that temporal progression was possible between the stages. Enlightenment stage theories, as Stocking points out, were inherently sociologically- rather than biologically-based, for while ‘allowing something for the effects of prolonged environmental influences’, the savage man was separated from the civilised man not by a ‘difference in inherent mental makeup so much as the progress of refinement and of civilization itself.’⁹ The equality implicit in the Christian gospel and the hierarchies of Enlightenment discourse could be, and often were, held together in a constructive tension. As Bronwen Douglas showed in her study of British and French Pacific explorers’ texts, the eighteenth-century German natural philosopher Reinhold Forster, who sailed on Cook's second voyage, linked Christian and Enlightenment humanism in a ‘flexible taxonomy’ of human

⁶ For the debates concerning authorship of the ‘Four Stages’ theory see Ronald L. Meek, ‘Smith, Turgot, and the “Four Stages” Theory’ *History of Political Economy* 3, pp. 9-27 (1971); Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology*, pp. 14-15.

⁷ On the tensions within Enlightenment thought between static and more progressivist representations of the Great Chain of Being, see William F. Bynum, ‘The Great Chain of Being after Forty Years: An Appraisal’ *History of Science* 13 (1975) pp. 6-8.

⁸ Meek, ‘Smith, Turgot and the “Four Stages”’, p. 10. Original emphasis.

⁹ Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology*, p. 18.

difference.¹⁰ In the same vein as the continental savants Buffon and Blumenbach, Forster saw ‘varieties’ of humankind and made generous observations of indigenous custom which were contextualised and contained traces of response to indigenous action. Human varieties were discussed but Forster’s hierarchies were fluid rather than fixed and left a space for the potential for human change.¹¹ His flexible classification was heavily influenced by Christian belief: Douglas noted that he maintained on Biblical grounds that all mankind were one species, and his criteria for European ‘superiority’ lay in ‘a more exalted civilization and education’ – the ‘blessings of Providence’ – in contrast to the preoccupation with biological race of later nineteenth-century voyagers like the Frenchman Dumont d’Urville.¹² While increasingly under challenge from the 1790s, especially in France, a unitary, monogenist¹³ view of the human race remained a dominant trend in European thinking, especially in Britain, for the rest of the century and beyond.

The tension between Christian and Enlightenment humanism, implicit in Forster’s writings, became more explicit in the writings and actions of Wilberforce and other Evangelical reformers in early nineteenth-century Britain. William F. Bynum noted that the deism and stasis of the Great Chain of Being came under particular challenge from Wesleyan Methodists and other Evangelicals, with their ‘consciousness of man’s unique theological identity’. The Evangelicals wrote and acted on the basis of ‘a brotherhood of all men founded on the blood relationship devolving from a common ancestry’ using Biblical, particularly Pauline, assumptions; these motivated anti-slavery campaigns, missionary endeavour, and work with prisoners.¹⁴ But

¹⁰ Bronwen Douglas, ‘Science and the Art of Representing “Savages”: Reading “Race” in Text and Image in South Seas Voyage Literature’ *History and Anthropology* 11, no. 2-3 (1999), p. 173.

¹¹ Douglas, ‘Art of Representing “Savages”’, pp. 164-167; 170-175.

¹² Douglas, ‘Art of Representing “Savages”’, pp. 171, 174.

¹³ The term ‘monogenist’, the belief that all humans derived from one common stock, assumed by Christians to conform in essence to the description in Genesis 1, is anachronistic prior to 1864 (OED) but I use it because of its utility.

¹⁴ Bynum, ‘Great Chain of Being’, pp. 10-12. See also further discussion on the abolitionist campaigns below.

strongly monogenist assumptions based on Christian brotherhood did not preclude interest in human difference, rather they encouraged it. And any discussion of difference inevitably raised explanatory issues – how did such difference arise? Broadly developmental and historical assumptions lay behind James Cowles Prichard's hugely influential ethnological studies, which culminated in his *Researches into the Physical History of Man*, first published in 1813, and revised and supplemented periodically to 1847. Prichard aimed to 'trace the history of the tribes and races of men from the most remote periods which are within reach of investigation to discover their mutual relations, and to arrive at conclusions either certain or probable as to their affinity or diversity of origin.'¹⁵ Underlying his search were his Christian beliefs, first Quaker then Anglican, evident in the assumption of a common origin for humankind, an ancient dispersal from the Biblical Fall and Flood and a primitive religion which had been divinely revealed to all mankind.¹⁶ Bynum saw Prichard as part of the Evangelical tradition, moving away from the assumptions of the Great Chain of Being, as he pursued, in spite of increasingly racialist language in later editions of his book, the 'theory of the brotherhood of man under the fatherhood of God'.¹⁷ His historical approach allowed for both essential unity and contemporary differences.

Prichard changed his emphasis over time, giving a greater role to climatic and geographic adaptation to account for human difference and making greater use of ethnological data. This did not essentially challenge his monogenist position, for to acknowledge the differing histories of human groups, their varying levels of remoteness or the degree of environmental challenge, leading to differential

¹⁵ Prichard, *Researches into the Physical History of Man*, 1847, p. 231, cited in Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology*, p. 52.

¹⁶ George W. Stocking, 'From Chronology to Ethnology: James Cowles Prichard and British Anthropology, 1800-1850', in *Researches into the Physical History of Man by James Cowles Prichard*, ed. George W. Stocking (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1973), p. xlvi.

¹⁷ Bynum, 'Great Chain of Being', p. 13.

outcomes, it was not necessarily to question their underlying common humanity. In a scheme not unlike that of the Enlightenment writers, Prichard envisaged human development moving through different 'modes of subsistence', from hunter, to shepherd, and then 'inventing' agriculture.¹⁸ He stood firm on the 'central question of the common humanity of dark-skinned savages' and maintained a predominant concern with cultural and linguistic, rather than physical, approaches to human difference.¹⁹ Prichard was not rigid in adherence to the account of Genesis. He was prepared to lengthen the Biblical timeframe and was little concerned about when kangaroos were created in New Holland, but belief in the common origin, and thus the essential unity, of humankind, as the special creation of God, could not be compromised. Prichard began his book by postulating a hypothetical Englishman transported to Africa:

He would indeed immediately recognise the beings whom he saw as men, for the expression of rational intellect; the likeness of the Creator which was imprinted on the first of the human kind, is every where instantly striking and conspicuous.²⁰

It was his insistence on this point which separated him from the gradualism of the Great Chain of Being and from some Enlightenment thinkers, primarily Voltaire and Kames, who were veering towards polygenism.²¹

British Evangelical missionaries in the early nineteenth century mostly held to a historically-determined cultural explanation of human difference, a fundamentally Prichardian notion, but they also – concurrently – believed in an ahistorical source of difference: that caused by the absence or presence of the Christian gospel within a society. By this reasoning, Christianity could achieve something quite different from accelerating and augmenting natural developmental processes; it could free people from the inherent evils of a pagan system. 'Progress' in this Christian sense was not

¹⁸ Prichard, *Researches* (1813), pp. 556-7.

¹⁹ Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology*, chap. 2.

²⁰ Prichard, *Researches* (1813), p. 1.

²¹ Stocking, 'Chronology to Ethnology', pp. xlv-xlv. However, while polygenism was adopted by these prominent Enlightenment figures, the monogenism inherent in the 'Great Chain of Being' remained the dominant view of Enlightenment and nineteenth-century thinkers.

just the development of more complex legal and economic systems, or even literacy and education, though it might include these things. Rather it meant freedom from a life which was seen as inherently violent and 'depraved' – a term covering condemned sexual practices, war and its accompanying death-dealing practices. The possession of a religious sensibility was regarded as a positive by most missionaries, for it was seen as a point of contact for the introduction of new religious ideas, but much connected with 'pagan' religion was rejected as 'degraded' or 'degenerate'.

These related, but not identical, ideas were not confined to missionaries but were common amongst other writers with Christian convictions: Forster's accounts of Pacific islanders included notions of environmentally-caused 'degeneration' alongside more positive descriptions.²² Such descriptions included elements of various theological ideas. The first was the belief in original sin resulting from Adam's and Eve's first disobedience of God's commands and their expulsion from Eden,²³ after which all human activity that was not directly guided by God inherently tended towards evil. Islanders, physically and morally distanced from the monotheism of Judaism and Christianity, 'degenerated' further over time from the religious 'progress' assumed to be part of these monotheistic faiths. The evidence presented to substantiate such regression varied in different times and places. Some connotations of 'degradation' were specifically gendered, as Douglas has shown. Presbyterian missionaries on Aneityum in the mid nineteenth-century used the trope to signify 'brute' with respect to male treatment of women and their involvement in heavy agricultural work, alien to western middle-class norms.²⁴

Other elaborations to the theory of degeneracy were developed by Richard Whately, Archbishop of Dublin, who claimed that Biblical patriarchal society of the immediate

²² Douglas, 'Art of Representing "Savages"', p. 170.

²³ Genesis 3. This sequence of events was commonly referred to as 'the Fall'.

²⁴ Bronwen Douglas, "Recuperating Indigenous Women: Female Sexuality and Missionary Textuality in Melanesia" (paper presented at the Association for Social Anthropology in Oceania annual meeting, Auckland, New Zealand, 23 February 2002).

post-Fall era was 'placed by the Creator' with certain advantages, such as division of labour (exemplified in the story of Cain and Abel), a knowledge of the use of fire, and other attributes by 'immediate divine instruction', rather than being left to provide for themselves.²⁵ From here humanity could then progress by itself. However, he also observed that many nineteenth-century 'savages' were at a state inferior to that described in early Biblical accounts. This he explained by postulating that 'all savages must have originally degenerated from a more civilized state of existence', the degeneracy being caused by war, isolation and indolence which prevented knowledge being transmitted between generations. So 'each successive generation, [was] more and more ... disposed to be satisfied with a life approaching to that of the brutes'.²⁶ From this fate only contact with and instruction from a superior civilisation could rescue them, an argument with much appeal to missionaries. Stocking suggested that the debate between degenerationists and progressivists in England persisted into the 1860s, with the ultimate triumph of Tylor's progressivist ideas not settled until the end of the century,²⁷ though missionary discourse also shows some confusion, both ideas being present in different contexts. Certainly the early missionaries to the Pacific reveal degenerationist ideas: the concept of the inherent fallen nature of those untouched by the Gospel predominates, but there are echoes of further sinking, as well as confidence in future progress.

Those who had degenerated could become 'depraved', a natural condition amongst those who did not know God. Specific practices like widow strangling or cannibalism were merely manifestations of this depravity. The usual form of depravity, in the Evangelical imagination, was manifested in uncontrolled desire. Christopher Herbert noted the frequency in Wesley's sermons of discussions of the lawlessness and

²⁵ Richard Whately, *Introductory Lectures on Political Economy* (London: B. Fellowes, 1832), p. 127. The story of Cain and Abel is from Genesis 4.

²⁶ Whately, *Political Economy*, p 119. For further discussion of degeneration theory, and its place in the debates of the 1860s, see George Stocking, *Race, Culture and Evolution: Essays in the History of Anthropology* (New York: The Free Press, 1968), pp. 74-77.

²⁷ Stocking, *Race, Evolution and Culture*, chap. 4.

unbridled passions unleashed by the Fall, often expressed through the metaphor of the Beast (using tropes from the Book of Revelation). A more secular version of the same ideas saw 'animal instinct' replace the Fall as the root of ungoverned anarchic desire, and saw listlessness, disorientation, feebleness – anomie – amongst its expressions. But in either case, the world outside the Christian/civilised bounds was represented as chaotic, disorganised, licentious, lacking in social or symbolic form. Herbert also linked this with Foucauldian ideas of the 'lawless infinity of desire' – and the moral anxieties engendered by the French Revolution.²⁸

The state of the pre-Christian Pacific: the thralldom of heathenism

'An Appeal to the Sympathy of the Christian Public, on behalf of the Cannibal Feejeeans' (1838), launched in the *Monthly Notices*, the British journal of the Methodist Missionary Society, gives a typical evangelical representation of non-Christian islanders. Written by James Watkin, a missionary resident in Tonga, using evidence about Fiji culled from Tongan Christians who had visited Fiji, and Fijians resident in Tonga, the representation of Fijians centred on their propensity for violence: the eating of human flesh, widow-strangling, the burying alive of the sick and aged, and constant warfare.²⁹ Fijians were 'deeply depraved', and 'enslaved by vices', the 'evils of paganism'. Watkin's appeal for more missionaries for Fiji was urgent, for:

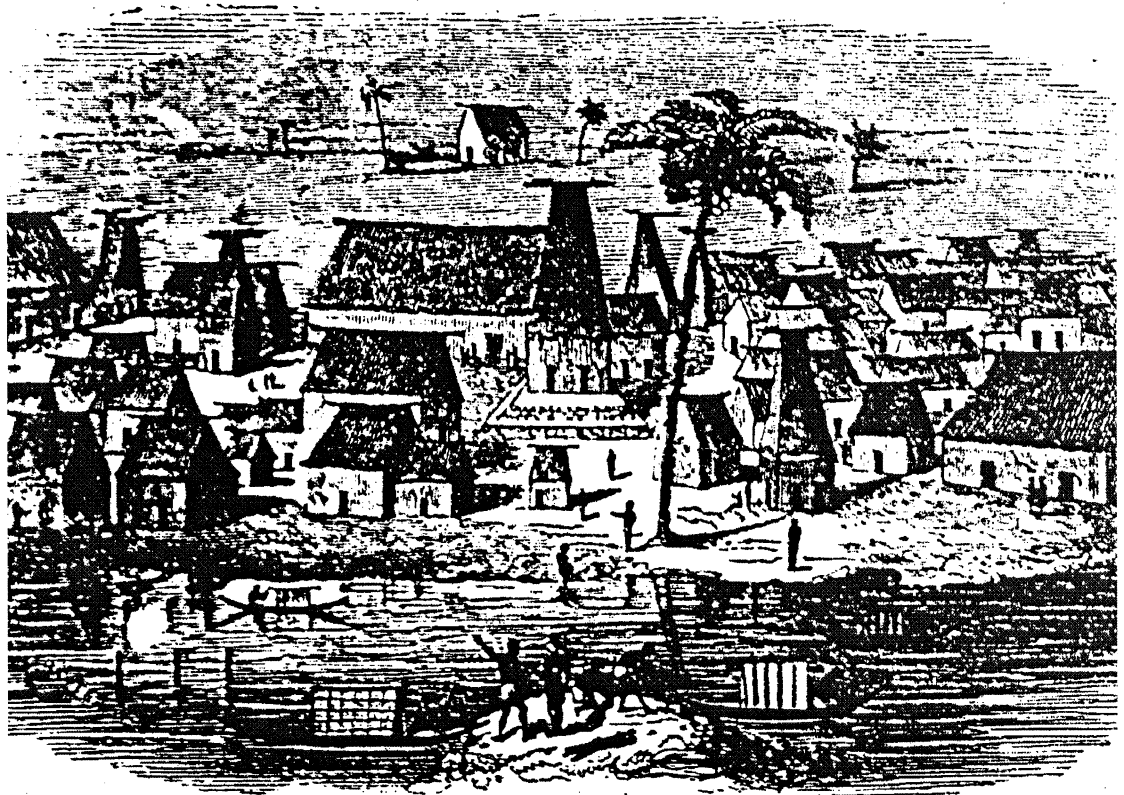
it is an awful consideration that before help can be afforded, many a Fegee widow will have been strangled; many a Fegee warrior will have gone into eternity; many a cannibal feast will have taken place; and hundreds of immortal spirits will have terminated their probation. Without hope and without God in the world, they are living and dying.³⁰

The emphasis on the violence of pre-Christian Fiji continued through the published literature of the mission into the 1850s (Figure 1). This is understandable given the close proximity of the early missionaries to major wars, such as that between Bau and

²⁸ Christopher Herbert, *Culture and Anomie: Ethnographic Imagination in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. 29-31.

²⁹ *Wesleyan Methodist Monthly Notices*, (hereafter *Notices - London*), March 1838, pp. 24-27.

³⁰ *Notices - London*, March 1838, p. 26.



MBAU, OR BAU, THE CAPITAL OF FEEJEE.

MISSIONS IN THE FEEJEE ISLANDS.

Figure 1: This lithograph exemplifies the representation of 'heathen' Fiji, with scenes of ritual slaughter (foreground), the traditional temple and its accoutrements all prominent.

Wesleyan Methodist Monthly Notices (London), June 1850, front cover.

Rewa, with its high death rate, both directly from war, and from associated rituals, such as the strangling of warriors' widows, and propitiatory deaths. In 1858 Thomas Williams, who had lived in the group for fourteen years, published the first volume of *Fiji and the Fijians*, subtitled *The Islands and their Inhabitants*. Williams' book can be seen as multi-faceted; it has been described as marking a shift towards participant observation and a new idea of culture, and differs in several important ways from much other missionary literature.³¹ However, he did not mince words about the violence and deception he saw around him. He described Fijian life as dominated by 'lawless cruelty, treachery and utter disregard of the value of human life', and 'all the evils of the most licentious sensuality'.³² But the violence of pre-Christian society could be removed at conversion. The mass Fijian conversions to Christianity from the 1850s were represented as progress from the 'awful maelstrom of depravity and pagan cruelty' to 'Christian liberty and peace'.³³ This movement has been described as the 'classic teleological Christian narrative of a Manichean battle', in which truth must ultimately triumph.³⁴ That this 'peace' was forcibly imposed on the hill people of Viti Levu (*kai colo*) from 1873 to 1876, and had been accompanied by devastating epidemic disease, did not alter the assumptions. Christian intervention could change the spiritual and also the physical status of people; it could make them free.

In advocating extension to New Britain, the Methodist Mission used a representation of the indigenous Tolai people which paralleled that used earlier of Fijians. Indeed the parallel was quite explicit. Rev. Benjamin Chapman, Secretary of the Australasian Missionary committee, promoted the idea to his London superiors in these terms: 'the necessities of the large populations of New Britain and New Ireland ... have been pressed upon us. The people are very bad - cruel, abominable and most likely

³¹ See Herbert, *Culture and Anomie*, pp. 172-184; Christine Weir, 'Fiji and the Fijians: Two Modes of Missionary Discourse' *Journal of Religious History* 22, no. 2, pp. 152-67 (1998).

³² Thomas Williams, *Fiji and the Fijians: The Islands and Their Inhabitants*, (London: Alexander Heylin, 1858), pp. 133-4.

³³ *Missionary Review*, January 1895, p. 8.

³⁴ Douglas, 'Recuperating Indigenous Women'.

cannibal; but we remember Fiji.³⁵ In similar terms, a general report in the mission journal described the New Britain situation thus:

We believe that these islands are occupied by people of the Papuan and Malay races. As to their moral condition, we are sure they are not innocent and pure, but testimony accuses them of cannibalism and cruelty. We conjecture that they will be found in a state very similar to that of the inhabitants of Fiji forty years ago.³⁶

Missionary descriptions of New Britain emphasised the pervasive fear of neighbours and the subsequent isolation, suspicion, and frequent fighting. George Brown, the pioneer Methodist missionary to New Britain, noted that it was normal for the inland and coastal groups to be at war, 'and no man stirred from his house without his spear, or a bundle of them, in his hand, ready for action'. Brown saw it as his task to bring groups together and used the mission launch to transport chiefs to 'places where they would never have dared to go in their own canoes'.³⁷ According to Brown's colleague Benjamin Danks,³⁸ the 'seething mass of superstition and cruelty' proved that Matupit in particular was 'Satan's seat in New Britain'.³⁹ Fifty years later, material produced for the anniversary of the mission had the same emphasis, depicting pre-Christian New Britain as a land where 'village was constantly at war with village ... death and fear lurked in the dark forest paths where none could walk with safety'.⁴⁰ J.H. Margetts, long-serving missionary in Raluana, quoted a convert from Nakanai:

Before the Gospel came to our land ... a great darkness was over the place. We were not friendly to our neighbours. We lived in fear of one another. We fought one another

³⁵ As reprinted in *Notices – London*, April 1875, pp. 94-5.

³⁶ *The Wesleyan Missionary Notices relating to the Missions under the direction of the Australasian Wesleyan Methodist Conference* (hereafter *Notices - Aust Ed*), April 1875, pp. 81-84. Also reprinted in *Notices - London*, Aug 1875, pp. 196-198.

³⁷ George Brown, *George Brown, D.D., Pioneer-Missionary and Explorer: An Autobiography* (London: Charles H Kelly, 1908), pp. 125, 147.

³⁸ **Benjamin Danks:** Born 1853 in England, grew up in Australia. Methodist missionary in New Britain 1878-86, General Secretary of the Australasian Methodist Missionary Society 1907-1913. and editor of the *Missionary Review* from 1908. Died 1921.

³⁹ *Missionary Review*, April 1908, p. 11.

⁴⁰ *Missionary Review*, September 1925, p. 8.

... We have proved the Gospel to be a very good thing for us, for fighting is ceasing amongst us. Our faces are losing their look of dread.⁴¹

It was important for missionaries to counter any suggestions that their efforts were not required; an emphasis on the depravities of island life encouraged supporters to contribute money for improvements. An unnamed reviewer of William Wyatt Gill's book *From Darkness to Light in Polynesia* (1894) approved Gill's emphasise on the dark side of 'savage life':

A perusal of these stories and records of fierce wars, murders, revenge, cruelties and dreadful propitiatory sacrifices, will give a correct idea of heathen life and will supply an effectual answer to some who talk so foolishly about the child-like happiness of primitive races, and the absurdity of sending missionaries to them.⁴²

There is an obvious element of self-serving in this. The rhetoric of depravity was normative in missionary literature, and the fundraising dimension is ever-present. Helen Gardner has commented that George Brown's descriptions of New Britain islanders 'as degraded, cruel and ignorant as any people on the islands of the Pacific' were 'shaped for fundraising', not an accurate prediction of the state of the people he expected to meet.⁴³ But the belief that Pacific islanders were held captive by depravity as an effect of the Fall was much more than a fundraising ruse.

In the Solomons, the dominant motif was either headhunting or widow-strangling. R.C. Nicholson, pioneer missionary to Vella Lavella, described in detail the various methods used to kill widows, 'to show how strongly gripped the people are with dark and cruel superstition.'⁴⁴ For William Bromilow, arriving in the D'Entrecasteaux

⁴¹ *Missionary Review*, February 1929, p. 8. Note here the trope of physiognomic transformation, which was very common in missionary writings, and probably originates with the Biblical story of the Transfiguration (Luke 9:28-36, esp. v. 29; Matthew 17:1-9). It is interesting to see it in the words of a convert.

⁴² *Missionary Review*, March 1895, p. 5.

⁴³ Helen Gardner, *Cultures, Christians and Colonial Subjects: George Brown's Representations of Islanders from Samoa and the Bismarck Archipelago* (PhD thesis, La Trobe University, 1999), p. 72.

⁴⁴ *Missionary Review*, April 1908, p. 14

islands in 1891, Papuans prior to conversion were 'captivated by sorcery' and 'strangely developed forms of cruelty', especially mourning practices which included the live burial of the infants of dead mothers, and the total seclusion of surviving spouses.⁴⁵ There was an 'essential vileness' surrounding Papuans.⁴⁶ The victims of sorcery might be 'terrorised children of the night', but the perpetrators and guardians of the system were represented as the embodiment of evil, held in that state by the 'captivity of heathenism'. Bromilow's colleague Ambrose Fletcher made the theology explicit: 'Satan has a grip on the Islands of this land'.⁴⁷ The claim of the Christian God to bring freedom to the captives is one with a long history, from the Old Testament psalms, through the gospels, to Paul's letters. It was therefore an idiom that came readily to missionaries in attempting to describe the state of Pacific islanders, and the potentiality for change, to an audience also steeped in Biblical knowledge. What is more, in several examples the power to bring liberty is linked closely with the power to bring sight, or light:

The Lord looseth the prisoners, the Lord openeth the eyes of the blind, the Lord raiseth them that are bowed down.⁴⁸

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.⁴⁹

Many scholars have commented on the popularity of the missionary trope of turning darkness into light.⁵⁰ What has been less remarked upon is the use of this captivity

⁴⁵ William Bromilow, *Twenty Years among Primitive Papuans* (London: The Epworth Press, 1929), pp. 96-97.

⁴⁶ Bromilow, *Among Primitive Papuans*, p. 98.

⁴⁷ *Missionary Review*, August 1895, p.2.

⁴⁸ Psalm 146:7-8

⁴⁹ Luke 4:18, which incorporates a citation of Isaiah 61:1-2.

⁵⁰ For discussions of the use of this trope see, amongst others, Bronwen Douglas, 'Encounters with the Enemy? Academic Readings of Missionary Narratives on Melanesians' *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 43, no. 1, pp. 37-64 (2001); Margaret Jolly, "'To Save the Girls for Brighter and Better Lives": Presbyterian Missions and Women in the South of Vanuatu 1848-1870' *Journal of Pacific History* 26, no. 1, pp. 27-48 (1991); Virginia-Lee Webb, 'Missionary Photographers in the

metaphor. Yet the examples above show the persistence of representing pre-Christian islanders as prisoners of fear, of the dread induced by an evil system. Watkin, in his 1838 appeal for Fiji, used this image several times, seeing one of the effects of 'captivity' being to dull and distort Fijians' emotional responses towards their families, leading them to treat their own relatives with cruelty. Then he made a particularly interesting linkage:

The manacled slave once directed an imploring look towards Christian and Missionary Britain; and his tears were seen and his groanings were heard, and responded to, and the slave was made a man, for he was made free. And now we appeal to you, Brethren ... on behalf of the Feegeans, enslaved by vices too horrid for minute description. O send them missionaries to preach 'deliverance to the captives, and the opening of the prison doors to them that are bound'.⁵¹

Here he juxtaposed the Evangelical campaign against the physical slavery of the trade to the Americas with the metaphorical captivity of Fijians 'enslaved by vices'. Methodists and other Evangelicals, as we shall see, were proud of their abolitionist heritage and invoked it again in their protests over recruiting and indenture in the Pacific.⁵² But neither Watkins nor abolitionist campaigners suggested that inherent racial factors caused the people's captivity, though isolation from God and other human beings might have been regarded as causing their culture to degenerate. Nor did they consider that the liberation in the Christian gospel was any less pertinent for islanders than for Britons. While the rhetoric, especially in its excess, was shaped with an eye on financial supporters in the metropole, this does not necessarily challenge the sincerity of the basic belief or the confronting nature of their experience of practices like cannibalism and widow-strangling (albeit conflated by fantasy and fear). We may note too that if the reason for the 'horrid practices' of islanders was a

Pacific Islands: Divine Light' *History of Photography* 21, no. 1, pp. 12-22 (1997); Geoffrey White, *Identity through History: Living Stories in a Solomon Islands Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Michael Young, 'A Tropology of the Dobu Mission (in Memory of Reo Fortune)' *Canberra Anthropology* 3, pp. 86-104 (1980).

⁵¹ *Notices – London*, March 1838, p. 25.

⁵² For further discussion of Christian protests against the Pacific labour trade see chapters 4 and 5 below.

thralldom imposed by an outside religious force (often identified as Satan), then the existence of their inherent common humanity was not denied, only their freedom to express it.

It may be useful here to consider the relative place of obligation and self-interest as motivations for missionary activity, whether undertaken by the missionaries themselves or by their financial and moral supporters. There was a continuing tension between the call to altruism – that without the Christian message islanders would live short lives of fear and be damned in the hereafter – and the more self interested motivation that the Christian benefactor would be rewarded in Heaven. Related to the latter was the assumption that generosity to mission causes constituted proof of the Christian credentials of donors, both to themselves and to others. While this more self-serving motivation cannot be ignored, in general the appeals for mission support were couched in terms of obligation and compassion, that the corollary to accepting the love of Christ was to spread it. The mixture can be seen in Watkin's appeal:

Then send them the Gospel! You are put in trust to send it to all mankind ... O that pity for Fegee may lead all who read this paper to do all they can for the augmentation of the Missionary Fund ... Give of what God has given to you, and he will reward you the afterlife.⁵³

Darwinism and other evolutionary ideas

While earlier historical and culturally-based explanations for purported differential human development retained currency, by the 1870s Darwinist and other evolutionary ideas were incorporated into educated public discourse, including those of the Christian churches. Inevitably, they affected questions pertinent to the origins of humankind and the position of different human groups in relation to each other and to God. This was what concerned Christians in general and Evangelicals in particular. The initial debates about Darwin's writings within Evangelical and broader Christian circles concerned the relationship between human beings and the rest of the natural world, focussing on origins and the place of a guiding deity in ensuring 'progress'

⁵³ *Notices – London*, March 1838, p. 26.

within the natural world. As a natural extension of that concern, the debate also considered the relationship between human groups, especially between technologically-advanced Europeans and people in materially less sophisticated societies. These two concerns, the ‘theories of cultural and organic evolution’, are as Stocking pointed out, closely interrelated,⁵⁴ never more so than for missionaries resident in non-Western societies, facing daily the realities of cultural difference and concerned about its origin and nature.

Robert Young emphasised the degree to which Darwin, steeped in a religious world view, was not aiming to oppose science and religion, but ‘to reconcile nature, God and man’ through the discovery of the laws of nature through which God worked.⁵⁵ Darwin, moving somewhat away from his Unitarian family background, ‘drew his universe’ from the orthodox theologian naturalists of the time: Sedgwick, Whewell, the authors of the *Bridgewater Treatises*, and pre-eminently from Paley and Malthus, all of whose works he had studied at Cambridge or on his return from the *Beagle* voyage.⁵⁶ In other words, his main influences were Anglican clergymen. The relationship between scientists and religious figures was complex – not least because so many individuals were both.

Even the debate between T.H. Huxley, Darwin’s chief defender, and Samuel Wilberforce, Bishop of Oxford, does not confirm the stereotype of total rejection by religious figures of new scientific ideas.⁵⁷ Wilberforce’s arguments against Huxley in

⁵⁴ Stocking, *Race, Culture and Evolution*, p. 122.

⁵⁵ Robert M. Young, *Darwin's Metaphor: Nature's Place in Victorian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 10.

⁵⁶ James R. Moore, *The Post-Darwinian Controversies: A Study of the Protestant Struggle to Come to Terms with Darwin in Great Britain and America 1870-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 308-9.

⁵⁷ Moore, *Post-Darwinian Controversies*, pp. 60-62, notes the uses to which this debate has been put in the historiography to demonstrate the militaristic nature of the supposed clash between science and religion. Personal animosity was clearly present, as evidenced in Wilberforce’s famous insulting question whether Huxley was descended from apes on his grandfather’s or his grandmother’s side.

the Oxford meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science in June 1860 were not an outright rejection of evolutionary ideas. He had no quarrel with Darwin's 'disseminating and improving power' of natural selection within each species, nor with a geological age for the earth of three hundred million years.⁵⁸

Wilberforce claimed to consider Darwin's work on scientific, not religious grounds, since it was a scientific book:

We have no sympathy with those who object to any facts in nature ... because they believe them to contradict what it appears to them is taught by Revelation ... [T]he words graven on the everlasting rocks are the words of God, and they are graven by His hand.⁵⁹

But Wilberforce had great problems with the failure to see man as a special creation, with supremacy over the earth, speech, free will, reason and salvation through Christ. Darwin's theory downplayed the role of God and 'contradicts the revealed relation of creation to its Creator', denying the 'stupendous fact that all creation is the transcript in matter of ideas eternally existing in the mind of the Most High.' Wilberforce, in other words, objected to the lack of teleology, preferring to maintain a belief both in the overall purpose of a creator God and a special place for humankind within that creation.⁶⁰

Frederick Temple, Bishop of Exeter, took a similar tack, but accommodated divine purpose more closely with Darwinian theory. In his Bampton Lectures of 1884 he

But disagreement about scientific theory is another matter. Wilberforce's main speech at Oxford has not survived verbatim but we have the authority of Hooker that it contained 'not a syllable' except what was in the review of *Origin of Species* in the *Quarterly Review* of July 1860. This was anonymous, but that Wilberforce was the author was acknowledged by all protagonists (Adrian Desmond and James Moore, *Darwin* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1991), p. 495; Leonard Huxley, *Life and Letters of Thomas Henry Huxley* (London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1900), vol. 1, p. 186; Gertrude Himmelfarb, *Darwin and the Darwinian Revolution* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1959), p. 225). I have used the review with these assumptions in mind.

⁵⁸ Samuel Wilberforce, 'Review of 'on the Origins of Species, by Means of Natural Selection'. By Charles Darwin' *Quarterly Review* 108 (1860), pp. 241-2, 239.

⁵⁹ Wilberforce, 'Review', p. 257.

⁶⁰ Wilberforce, 'Review', pp. 258-9, 263.

concluded that Darwin's concept of natural selection did not conflict with the idea of divine design, widely held but mostly associated with William Paley. Boyd Hilton notes that Paley's essentially optimistic theology, with a belief in the harmony of nature and the perfectibility of human nature under God's guidance, was reviving by the 1860s, after the ascendancy of the grimmer Atonement theology of the early part of the century. Paley's theology centred on the Incarnation, emphasised God's purposes for the world, and, Hilton suggested, encouraged the idea of continuity, both in the physical world, as in geology, and in the development of societies.⁶¹ Darwin's ideas, which proposed adaptation of each organism to its environment rather than any overall scheme of 'progress', confronted a religious world particularly unreceptive to accepting the harshness of natural selection and Temple was at pains to soften and accommodate Darwin's ideas. Darwin's theory necessitated mass destruction of the unfit, a major stumbling block for many, challenging as it did the belief in a powerful and beneficent creator. Temple put God's role a little further back in the creative process; instead of God's creating organisms directly, 'He made them make themselves.' 'What is touched by [Darwin's] doctrine is not the evidence of design, but the mode in which the design was executed,' he said in his fourth lecture.⁶² In a positively Panglossian interpretation of Darwin's theory of struggle, Temple evaded the problem of mass destruction of less fit organisms by pointing to the advantages of selection to the 'fit' organisms:

The very phrase which we commonly use to sum up Darwin's teaching, the survival of the fittest, implies a perpetual diminution of pain and increase of enjoyment for all creatures that can feel. If they are fitter for their surroundings, most certainly they will find life easier to live.⁶³

⁶¹ Boyd Hilton, *The Age of Atonement: The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought 1795-1865* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), pp. 272-280; 301. Moore also notes that amongst the few Christians who accepted the full theory of natural selection were hard-line Calvinists who had a pessimistic view of this world and were attuned to the notion of harsh struggle (Moore, *Post-Darwinian Controversies*, pp. 335-340).

⁶² Federick Temple, *The Relations between Religion and Science* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1885), pp. 115, 114. Temple was Archbishop of Canterbury from 1897 to 1902.

⁶³ Temple, *Relations between Religion and Science*, pp. 117-8.

The fate of the less fit was left unexamined.

These issues were more pressing when considering the corollary to the debate about human beings' place within the natural world, that is, discussion concerning the relative placing of different groups within humankind. For missionaries in a situation of encounter between technologically advanced Europeans and less materially sophisticated non-Europeans, it was the more pressing issue, albeit a sensitive one, as Darwin himself realised in deferring its discussion until the *Descent of Man* (1871). Yet there was an intimate link between the two debates: those who saw progress as an integral part of evolution tended also to view human difference in developmental terms. We can see an equivalent teleology at work: if, as most Europeans assumed, Western, Christian, technology-using man formed the apex of a graded hierarchy, then some type of progression towards this ideal was usually assumed. In general, though not always in all particulars, missionaries in the Pacific Islands shared these assumptions. As they interacted with different groups of people, attempting to change religious allegiance, introduce education and change ways of living, their beliefs concerning the limitations and potentialities of islanders influenced everything they did. But so, crucially, did their experience of interactions with particular indigenous people inflect their beliefs. For missionaries it was crucial that any evolutionary theory allow for the potentiality of individual change and include a mechanism for inducing that change through education and the development of 'improved' modes of life. To give a theoretical basis for their own training and educational work, a more directed form of evolution had greater appeal.

In any case, there were alternative schemata available. Darwin's was only one of several evolutionary theories, the main competition coming from the earlier but neglected work of Jean-Baptiste-Pierre-Antoine de Monet, chevalier de Lamarck, who expounded his basic ideas in *Philosophie zoologique* (1809). He believed that the needs of a creature directed the way in which certain organs developed; some would be exercised and therefore develop along environmentally-useful paths, others would wither away from underuse. He used the case study of giraffes to demonstrate

his idea: they had long necks because at some point they had needed to feed from higher trees, so had stretched their necks, causing development in this area. This ‘use-adaptation’ was inherited by the offspring, who in turn developed it further.⁶⁴ While Lamarck’s work was neglected after his death, it was revived during the mid-century renewal of interest in evolutionary ideas. The emphasis on adaptation and the potentiality for directional change, initiated by the subject, attracted particular attention. It implied that an organism was not powerless before its environment, but could initiate purposeful adaptation. It also suggested that all members of a species could change, adapt and survive, thereby dispensing with the apparently meaningless annihilation of natural selection. The extent to which many people – religious believers and others – required an underlying purpose and the potentiality for change in any theory of evolution is hard to underestimate.

These more optimistic and purposeful ideas about evolution also had great appeal to a more general audience. In her study of the influence of evolutionary theories on nineteenth-century English fiction, Gillian Beer looked broadly at impacts which, as she commented, ‘become even more influential when they become embedded in the culture than when they are the subjects of controversy’.⁶⁵ While she was concerned with the impacts on fiction, especially on narrative processes, many of her insights are applicable to other areas of the late nineteenth-century world. She noted that there were always elements within Darwin’s theory, as opposed to other evolutionary ideas, which militated against popular acceptance. The most important of these was that while Darwinism presented a changing and dynamic environment, the individual was represented as helpless and acted upon. In Darwin’s theory, individual effort made no

⁶⁴ The details of Lamarck’s theory are explained in Bowler, *Evolution*, pp. 77-83. They are now regarded as scientifically untenable in purely biological terms, especially after their disastrous application to Soviet agriculture by Lysenko in the 1930s (Bowler, *Evolution*, pp. 252-3). There has however been recent revived interest in some aspects of the theory; see Mark Parascandola, ‘The Other Evolutionist’ *Lingua Franca* 9, no. 9 (2000).

⁶⁵ Gillian Beer, *Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Elliot and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (London: Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1983), p. 4.

difference. Lamarck, however, proposed a ‘world of intelligent desire rationally satisfied’, drawing on ‘mythic concepts of metamorphosis and transformation’ which ‘accord[ed] with human wishes and human language’ and as such it ‘gave primacy to mind – to intention, habit, memory, a reasoned inheritance from generation to generation’. Therefore, she argued, Lamarckian theories had greater psychic acceptability than Darwinian ideas which ‘expunge from language the suggestion that will is a force for change’ – an elimination which Darwin himself never achieved completely. Beer continued:

Curiously and revealingly, Lamarck's account of evolutionary process is *still* the popular one. An intentionalist language keeps creeping into accounts of evolution ... intention or will remained the *instrument* of change ... It suggests an intelligible and co-operative world ... Lamarck's reading is more optimistic: it gives primacy to intelligent adaptation and intelligent succession.⁶⁶

Beer also saw Lamarckian ideas as removing any place for an interventionist deity, but Temple’s lectures show that it was entirely possible to accommodate evolution of this more positive variety within a Christian framework. While Temple appeared to accept most Darwinian precepts and did not mention Lamarck in his lectures, in his sixth lecture he insisted on a definite progressivism. He postulated an equivalence between divinely controlled progress and scientific evolution:

[God] had to teach that the creation was not merely orderly but progressive; going from the formless to the formed; from the orderless to the ordered...from the lower animal to the higher; from the beast to the man; ending with the rest of the Sabbath, the type of the highest, the spiritual, life. Nothing, certainly, could more exactly match the doctrine of Evolution than this.⁶⁷

Here he reflected the view most common amongst Christian thinkers whose reservations about Darwinian evolutionism centred on the absence of teleology. Their arguments looked to mitigate the random and wasteful nature of natural selection, which offended against the notion of a beneficent, all-powerful God. Provision for special divine intervention at the point of human creation maintained the belief that

⁶⁶ Beer, *Darwin's Plots*, pp. 24-5, emphasis in original.

⁶⁷ Temple, *Relations between Religion and Science*, pp. 182-3.

humans were made in the image of God, set apart from the apes. Various proposals were put forward for the mechanism and timing for such intervention but the intellectual accommodation of evolution with special creation of humans was widely adopted. As Moore pointed out, many Christian thinkers in fact came to believe that 'creation is a universal process and evolution its method,' and that the only acceptable evolutionary theory was one which was 'worthy of the universal and omnipotent Creator', one which had purpose for the world.⁶⁸ Niel Gunson showed how great was the acceptance of directed evolution amongst Pacific Evangelical missionaries;⁶⁹ this was the background from which they became involved in scientific inquiries into human difference, and in proposing models to explain the development of human institutions.

Missionaries and Anthropologists

The anthropological theorists Henry Maine, John Lubbock and John McLennan, Lewis Henry Morgan and E.B. Tylor, writing in the metropolises and thus reliant for their data on others' firsthand accounts of exotic people, attempted in various organised ways to develop ideas previously implicit – namely the assumption that human progress from the primitive to the modern went through universal stages. Thus, in an assertion of the psychic unity of mankind, the claim was made that to see how modern society had been, one must look to how 'primitive' societies are now. This presupposition, sometimes called 'classical evolutionism' or 'social evolutionism', that the non-European world provided theorists with a living museum of the history of present-day Western society, was well entrenched by the middle of the nineteenth century. Or as Stocking neatly put it:

Contemporaneity in space was therefore converted into succession in time by arranging the cultural forms coexisting in the Victorian present along an axis of assumed structural or ideational archaism - from the simple to the complex, or from that which

⁶⁸ Moore, *Post-Darwinian Controversies*, pp. 231-5, 237.

⁶⁹ Niel Gunson, 'British Missionaries and Their Contribution to Science in the Pacific Islands', in *Darwin's Laboratory: Evolutionary Theory and Natural History in the Pacific*, ed. Roy MacLeod and Philip F. Rehbock, pp. 286-316 (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994).

human reason showed was manifestly primitive to that which habitual association established as obviously civilized.⁷⁰

Rather more cynically, Adam Kuper called classical evolutionism a ‘fantasy constructed by speculative lawyers’ and suggested the longevity of the theory came from its resonance with imperialism and nationalism. He commented that it was ‘good to think with’.⁷¹ Certainly the equation of the European past with the ‘primitive’ present, and the consequent establishment of developmental rules, appealed to the legal minds of Maine and McLennan. But it was also a profoundly progressivist notion; it included the implicit assumption that Europeans had climbed furthest up a ladder which Evangelical authors saw as universally applicable. This universality was not however always shared by secular writers, some of whom excluded certain groups from inclusion in the category ‘human’.

The shift from Prichard’s ethnographic emphasis to a social evolutionist understanding of human difference was influenced, but not determined, by Darwinism. As we have seen, Darwin’s thought began with certain Christian presuppositions. Maine’s *Ancient Law* (1861), on the development of legal structures, started with the Old Testament and Roman history to surmise that law originated with status-based patriarchal authority and moved towards a contractual state only in recent times.⁷² This was not a universal approach amongst evolutionary theorists: McLennan, in his work on the development of marriage, attempted to explain the institution of marriage ‘in naturalistic developmental terms’, rather than using Biblical evidence.⁷³ But all saw Western Christian (male) society as the zenith of human progress and increasingly viewed the development of religion as fundamentally linked to the development of other elements of society. In creating theoretical models, they drew heavily for ethnographic evidence on the writings of

⁷⁰ Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology*, p. 173.

⁷¹ Adam Kuper, *The Invention of Primitive Society: Transformations of an Illusion* (London/New York: Routledge, 1988), pp. 8-9.

⁷² Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology*, pp. 121-127; Kuper, *Invention of Primitive Society*, pp 17-34.

⁷³ Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology*, p. 167.

missionaries, especially those stationed in the Pacific. The role of Pacific missionary informants, including Lorimer Fison, R.H. Codrington⁷⁴ and George Brown amongst others, in the development of social evolutionary theories during the latter half of the nineteenth century is well documented.⁷⁵ Their ethnography was valued, they contributed to learned anthropological journals, and their expertise was acknowledged as such by Tylor, Frazer, Maine and Morgan. Indeed, Darwin himself used material from Bishop Patteson⁷⁶ in the second edition of *The Descent of Man*.⁷⁷

Missionary collaboration with metropolitan theorists was welcomed, at least in part because of the increased interest, emanating from Friedrich Max Müller's studies of language and religion, in religious belief and practice as well as marriage patterns or forms of legal authority, as an indicator of evolutionary status. Tylor, continuing such investigations, corresponded with Pacific missionaries and assisted in publishing their descriptions of Pacific religions in such journals as the *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (later *Man*). This was in spite of the tendency of

⁷⁴ **Robert Henry Codrington:** Born 1830 in England, ordained and worked in New Zealand. Joined the Melanesian Mission based at Norfolk Island in 1867, remained until 1887 as head of St Barnabas College and effective head of the Mission from 1871 (though he refused the bishopric of Melanesia). Writings included anthropological papers and *The Melanesians: studies in their anthropology and folk-lore* (1891). Died 1922.

⁷⁵ John Barker, "'Way Back in Papua': Representing Society and Change in the Publications of the London Missionary Society in New Guinea 1871-1932' *Pacific Studies* 19, no. 3, pp. 107-42 (1996); Douglas, 'Science and the Art of Representing "Savages"', Bronwen Douglas, 'From Invisible Christians to Gothic Theater: The Romance of the Millennial in Melanesian Anthropology' *Current Anthropology* 42, no. 5, pp. 615-50 (2001); Gardner, *Cultures, Christians and Colonial Subjects*; George W. Stocking, *After Tylor: British Social Anthropology 1888-1951* (London: Athlone Press, 1996).

⁷⁶ **John Coleridge Patteson:** Born 1827 in England, became Anglican Bishop of Melanesia 1861, heading the Melanesian Mission which was based on Norfolk Island and evangelised in the Solomon Islands and northern New Hebrides on the ship *Southern Cross*. Campaigned against the south-west Pacific labour trade. Killed on Nukapu Is (Santa Cruz group) in September 1871.

⁷⁷ Sara Sohmer, 'The Melanesian Mission and Victorian Anthropology', in *Darwin's Laboratory: Evolutionary Theory and Natural History in the Pacific*, ed. Roy MacLeod and Philip F. Rehbock (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994), p. 323.

missionaries, including both Brown and Codrington, to dispute with theorists to assert the uniqueness and value of the communities they knew. Missionary arguments and ethnography were always underpinned by the assumption that all human beings were capable of progress towards a 'higher state' since all were valuable in God's sight. Those working in Melanesia also had a particular desire to prevent 'their' people from being placed near the bottom ranks of any theoretical model. Helen Gardner documented Brown's unease with the assumed Polynesian/Melanesian divide, and his disagreement with Frazer over totemism, demonstrating the 'tension between [Brown's] desire to subvert the social evolutionist paradigm while simultaneously enmeshed in its logic'. This subversive impulse came from his 'Christian insistence on human similitude',⁷⁸ but also from a deep and close familiarity with the people amongst whom he had long lived in New Britain. Broad generalisations satisfied few of the missionary ethnographers who had personal knowledge of counter-examples. Codrington, in his academic writings, disputed Tylor's contention that the belief in souls originated in speculation about the meaning of dreams, for his personal experience amongst the Banks Island people (of what is now north Vanuatu) was that no such link was made.⁷⁹ He complicated any easy relationship between forbidden foods and totems, suggesting that many taboos were of a recent origin and somewhat ad hoc nature.⁸⁰ Direct and prolonged contact with Islanders led to writing which emphasised local specificity, potentially subverting universally-applied developmental models. However, the empirically-based ethnographic work of missionaries remained acceptable in metropolitan scientific circles at least until the 1910s.

From 'degraded' to 'undeveloped'

The contact between missionaries in the field and metropolitan theorists provided

⁷⁸ Gardner, *Culture, Christians, and Colonial Subjects*, pp. 173, 179.

⁷⁹ R.H. Codrington, 'Religious Beliefs and Practices in Melanesia' *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 10 (1881), p. 313.

⁸⁰ R.H. Codrington, 'On Social Regulations in Melanesia' *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 18 (1889), p. 310.

evidence for the building of theoretical models. John Barker suggested that it also changed the missionaries, with their scientific work ‘mark[ing] a notable instance of the “capture” of missionary ethnography by professionalising anthropology, based on the discourse of the natural sciences’. Yet he also noted that this was complemented by a ‘gradually liberalizing mood in the missionary movement as a whole’, and a complex interaction between different perspectives.⁸¹ This would seem to be true of the Methodist writing on pre-Christian religion. The ‘captivity’ metaphor, often with attribution of ‘horrid practices’ to satanic control, can be found in the literature until the 1910s, especially when new people were encountered. But it was not the universal discourse, and never had been. The collaboration with metropolitan theorists strengthened a tendency which had been apparent in considerably earlier work by some missionaries, such as Thomas Williams’ writings on Fiji, to see traditional religion in systematic terms, rather than just as a collection of nasty practices. To see traditional religion as powerful suggests a certain coherence, even if negative or satanic. But in his representation of a Fijian system, Williams began to valorise it in positive terms,⁸² thus anticipating the social evolutionary view that all people had some form of religion which represented a definable stage in human religious and social development. By around 1890 it was widely held both by theorists and by many of their missionary collaborators that early religions should be ‘respected for their place in preparing humankind for higher religions’.⁸³ This view was strong amongst Anglicans, but J.H. Holmes from the LMS, who worked with members of the 1898 Torres Straits expedition and other anthropologists, expressed similar attitudes. In his own writings he moved, partly under the influence of Alfred Haddon, leader of the 1898 expedition, from a position of revulsion at the religious practices of the Elema of the Papuan Gulf to a sensitivity to the importance of their traditional beliefs, in particular in the lives of older people.⁸⁴

⁸¹ Barker, “Way Back in Papua”, p. 111.

⁸² Herbert, *Culture and Anomie*, pp. 172-184; Weir, ‘Fiji and the Fijians’.

⁸³ Gunson, ‘British Missionaries and Science’, p. 303.

⁸⁴ R. E. Reid, ‘John Henry Holmes in Papua: Changing Missionary Perspectives on Indigenous Cultures 1890-1914’ *Journal of Pacific History* 13, no. 3, pp. 173-87 (1978); Diane Langmore,

The early years of the twentieth century, then, saw a persistence of the notion of ‘depravity’ alongside more relativistic attitudes towards traditional religion. Violence, war and deception in Fiji and New Georgia, sorcery in Papua, fear and war in New Britain: these were still often seen as the effects of heathenism, with conversion freeing islanders to progress in the Christian life. But while Fijians or Papuans might cease on conversion to be ‘depraved’, this did not necessarily make them any less ‘primitive’, showing how degeneration and progress narratives were not necessarily at odds, but could be sequential. Nor, in the eyes of some missionaries, was the ‘depravity’ immediately removed. John Burton, Methodist missionary to the Indians in Fiji, used the unpleasant, racist imagery of a corruption in the blood of Fijians:

There is an ichorous strain in his very blood, which has been transmitted to him by generations of bad living...Sometimes...the results are seen in mental deficiency; while all too often the strain shows itself in moral delinquency. That terrible past is always casting a shadow on the present. Even Christianity...cannot at once erase the effects of those dark hours of the race. She may apply healing to the sores, but it takes a long course of treatment before the blood is cleansed.⁸⁵

Bromilow also believed the ‘coarsened, polluted’ souls of pre-Christian Fijians left a legacy which lasted for several generations,⁸⁶ while anxiety about the reality of conversion was ever-present (and will be examined further). We might note, too, the apparently Lamarckian notion of both authors that the depravity or ‘corruption’ was transmitted in some biological way. Thus biological ideas are linked with the old Biblical idea that ‘the sins of the fathers’ were visited upon the sons,⁸⁷ even apparently after Christian conversion. Belief in the thrall of the heathen state, which had held the islanders for generations, was strong – there was always the danger of being ‘pulled back’. But in general the first generation of converts was praised for

European Missionaries in Papua 1874-1914: A Group Portrait (PhD thesis, Australian National University, 1981), pp. 111-13.

⁸⁵ John W. Burton, *The Fiji of Today* (London: Charles H. Kelly, 1910), p. 225.

⁸⁶ Bromilow, *Among Primitive Papuans*, p. 35.

⁸⁷ Deut 5:9, Exodus 20:5, Numbers 14:18. The phrase is ‘iniquity of the fathers’ in the King James Version of the Bible.

the degree and the speed of change – the ‘darkness to light’ motif, as discussed by many scholars, was ubiquitous. Matthew Gilmour⁸⁸ in Kiriwina, wondered at the ‘wonderful transformations of Christianity’ wrought on ‘the dirty, hopeless heathens of a few years ago’, which enabled them pray for themselves and others with ‘ripened grace’.⁸⁹ Islanders were now, as an unnamed columnist represented Fijians in 1895, ‘humanised and civilized’ by the Gospel.⁹⁰ The implication that their humanity was now restored, whereas it had been distorted or suppressed before, was common. It suggests that their capacity for religion had also been enhanced, though missionaries in general believed that all people had at least such an embryonic capacity, without which conversion would have been impossible. This was capacity was variously described: Rev. Richard Watson in 1824 described Jamaican slaves as ‘capable of loving God’, while in 1837 Müller claimed that the ‘faculty of faith’ was a attribute (alongside speech) to be found in all people.⁹¹

As earlier exuberance over rapid conversions ended, missionaries faced the realisation that the routine work of educating and guiding converts was less glamorous, and more frustrating, than pioneer work. Some of the perceived faults in converts, seen originally as the manifestations of heathenism, persisted. Could such faults then also be the result of ‘inferiority’ or ‘backwardness’? The juxtaposition of Pacific Islander degradation or ‘savagery’ against the assumed racial, or at least cultural, superiority of Europeans was often tacit in missionary discourse, and sometimes, especially around the end of the nineteenth century, overt. Catherine Hall, in her study of English Baptist missionaries in Jamaica in the 1840s, looked at the image of the ‘family’ of believers, where the belief in the universality of Christian

⁸⁸ **Matthew Kerr Gilmour**: Born 1872, Methodist missionary in Papua 1901-33, based at Kiriwini, Dobu and Salamo; District Chairman 1909-19, 1923-33. Died 1962.

⁸⁹ *Missionary Review*, March 1903, p. 6.

⁹⁰ *Missionary Review*, January 1895, p. 8.

⁹¹ Helen Gardner, ‘The Faculty of Faith’: Social Anthropologists, Evangelical Missionaries and the Claim for Human Unity in the Nineteenth Century’, in *Foreign Bodies: Oceania and Racial Science 1750-1940*, ed. Bronwen Douglas and Chris Ballard (in preparation).

brotherhood was held in tension with the assumption that West Indian converts were 'younger brothers'. Whether they were capable of ever approaching the first-born in terms of authority, knowledge or status was unclear, but many doubted it.⁹²

Similar observations were made in the Pacific. Essentialising comments were common as in James Hadfield's description of 'The Capable Islander'. This is by no means unsympathetic, but links all islanders under one distancing stereotype:

Unsophisticated is the word which best describes the South Sea Islander. I believe that in no part of the world can you find a human type more natural, simple and artless. We sometimes describe a man as "nature's gentleman". In the South Seas we find him on his native hearth. He is by nature polite, considerate, generous, sympathetic, hospitable and withal highly intelligent.⁹³

The fundamental optimism of Bromilow's comment about the people of Kiriwina in 1895 after only four years of missionary residence – that 'the contrast between former times and now is already great. The people are lazy, thievish and suspicious, but their manner is improving fast'⁹⁴ – was at least sometimes replaced by the gloomy evolutionism of Burton's 1926 equation of long-Christian Fijians as 'adolescents' who are 'proverbially difficult to manage', and 'make unreasonable demands on patience and resource'.⁹⁵ In times of frustration, missionaries tended to endorse what had long been a widespread popular sentiment, that 'backwardness' and 'inferiority' were inherently *physical* and immutable, or at least changeable only in the very long term, rather than attributes of the presence or absence of heathenism. So William Bennett⁹⁶ found teaching Fijians 'a slow and tedious process' and complained of a 'half-knowledge ... ready to beget a loud-mouthed boasting'. Yet this was held in a

⁹² Catherine Hall, 'Missionary Stories: Gender and Ethnicity in England in the 1830s and 1840s', in *Cultural Studies*, ed. L. Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula Teichler, pp. 240-76 (New York: Routledge, 1992)

⁹³ *Chronicle*, November 1926, p. 260. James Hadfield served in the Loyalty Islands from 1878.

⁹⁴ *Missionary Review*, September 1895, p. 4.

⁹⁵ *Missionary Review*, January 1926, p. 3.

⁹⁶ **William Ernest Bennett**: Methodist missionary in Fiji 1901-1913, mostly teaching at Navuloa and Davuilevu Theological Institutes. He wrote what became the standard theological works in Fijian.

tension with his confidence that 'a native Church indigenous to the soil, withal so strong and stable in Christian character that it can stand of itself' was being developed.⁹⁷ John Wheen, reporting on his trip as Methodist General Secretary to the islands in 1916, talked of people of Roviana as the 'untaught children of nature',⁹⁸ and John Goldie described them as having been 'Stone Age savages'.⁹⁹ But Goldie also described his weekly class, listing each man by name: one was 'a living epistle, a monument of God's power to save'; another was Goldie's constant and valued assistant.¹⁰⁰

Like Codrington, Goldie and Bennett knew and respected individual Islanders. Evolutionist language, normalised in popular discourse, slipped into their writing and yet it was tempered by knowledge and experience of individual Islanders which moderated any racial generalisations and strengthened their underlying Christian humanitarianism. Just as missionary anthropologists tended to subvert the developmentalist paradigm by insisting on the discrete nature of their subjects and resisted their placement within a theoretical framework, many of the writers in the Methodist centenary volume edited by James Colwell (1914) emphasised the skills, the positive attributes and the great progress of the societies in which they worked. The congratulatory nature of the volume accentuated this tendency; these are 'darkness to light' stories in the great tradition of Christian progress which in general eschew evolutionary language. Any acceptance of social evolutionism remained interwoven with descriptions which treated societies as unique, and progressing on a Christian trajectory which was related but not identical to an evolutionary trajectory.

⁹⁷ William Bennett, 'Fiji', in *A Century in the Pacific*, ed. James Colwell (Sydney: William H Beale, 1914), pp. 475-6.

⁹⁸ *Missionary Review*, December 1916, p. 5.

⁹⁹ *Missionary Review*, July 1927, p. 4.

¹⁰⁰ John F. Goldie, 'The Solomon Islands', in *A Century in the Pacific*, ed. James Colwell (Sydney: William H Beale, 1914), pp. 574-576.

Christian Humanitarianism

Nineteenth- and early twentieth-century ideas about human difference have attracted considerable academic interest, leading to an increasingly nuanced and complex understanding of ‘racial’ beliefs and representations. However there appears to be less examination in the scholarly literature of the basis of Christian humanitarianism. I have used this term to describe the practical consequences of the Christian belief in human similitude – attempts to mitigate perceived human suffering or injustice. I use it to link the source of the ideas – Christianity – with both a belief in human similitude and an emphasis on practical action. These are the qualities contemporaries described as the ‘feelings of Christian sympathy, the treasures of Christian benevolence’.¹⁰¹ The modern notion of ‘altruism’ encompasses the same virtues; in their study of Gentile rescuers of Jewish people during World War 2, the Oliners found that what distinguished such activists from bystanders was a profound belief in ‘egalitarianism and the basic similarity of all people’, often based in religious tenets, combined with a conviction that such belief compelled action¹⁰²

The primary assumption of the Evangelical humanitarian activists was the Christian insistence on human similitude, grounded in the Biblical injunctions already considered. The Christian humanitarian ethic, epitomised in Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, demanded that all people should be treated as having claims on our consideration and care, and this, together with the texts used to establish human similitude, made all human beings potential subjects of Christian compassion. Any expression of brotherhood was coupled with recognition that superior Western technology made European exploitation of the rest of the world possible. It was then the responsibility of Europeans to use that power humanely, and it would be held to their account if they did not. This sense of accountability and duty, so typical of the

¹⁰¹ Ralph Wardlaw, *The Jubilee: A Sermon Preached in West George Street Chapel, Glasgow, on Friday August 1st 1834, the Memorable Day of Negro Emancipation in the British Colonies* (Glasgow: Fullerton and Co., 1834), p. 34.

¹⁰² Samuel P. Oliner and Pearl M. Oliner, *The Altruistic Personality: Rescuers of Jews in Nazi Europe* (New York: The Free Press, 1988), pp. 143, 154-157, 222.

Evangelical conscience,¹⁰³ can be seen in the rhetoric of the campaigns against the Atlantic slave trade and repeated in the campaign against the Pacific labour trade. But belief was not in itself sufficient: the second assumption was that these beliefs impelled action. The practical manifestations of such beliefs most widely discussed by contemporaries and by modern scholars included prohibition of traditional practices which threatened life and campaigns against slavery and later indenture. Amongst modern historical anthropologists, interference with such practices as *loloku* (Fijian widow-strangling), *sati* (Hindu widow-burning) or hookswinging tend to be represented critically, often as the imposition of hegemonic colonial ideas on subaltern groups. Nicholas Dirks, in his discussion of British attempts to outlaw hookswinging, noted that ‘the alleged concern about the victimization’ of the hookswingers ‘worked to obscure far more salient concerns’ about the nature and representation of control and colonial attempts, in alliance with Brahmanic authorities, to define a ‘real’ Hinduism eligible for government recognition. Like *sati*, hookswinging was one of the practices around which ‘grand civilizational debates’ were centred, demonstrating the need for colonial control and discipline.¹⁰⁴ Closer to the topics of this study, Jane Samson, in her study of naval ‘benevolence’ in the southwest Pacific in the nineteenth century, concluded that humanitarian concern was frequently flawed, using fraudulent evidence and denying agency and opportunity to islanders.¹⁰⁵ Yet, notwithstanding the rhetorical importance of such debates, the actions criticised by campaigners involved human suffering and death, which cannot easily be dismissed. Lata Mani recognised this in her discussion of *sati*, where she

¹⁰³ For further discussion see chapter 6 below.

¹⁰⁴ Nicholas Dirks, ‘The Policing of Tradition: Colonialism and Anthropology in Southern India’ *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 39, no. 1 (1997) pp. 183, 211. There is much in his argument that anthropological investigation of practices such as hookswinging was part and parcel with the ‘apparatuses of colonial state power’ (p. 186) and with the role of the colonial police (p. 205). But, being in the same philosophical tradition as the missionaries who campaigned to stop such practices, I find troubling his very deliberate avoidance of any discussion of morality, especially when discussing clitoridectomy (p. 210).

¹⁰⁵ Jane Samson, *Imperial Benevolence: Making British Authority in the Pacific Islands* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1998) pp. 10-11.

aimed to 'restore to the centre' the 'active suffering of widows, and women's resistance to, and coercion in, widow burning'.¹⁰⁶

But such social and political action to right perceived wrongs was not the only possible response to the Christian humanitarian ethic. Other action could include the very act of Christian conversion, for the saving of souls remained a priority. It could be strong assertion within academic circles of belief in monogenesis, or developing educational or health initiatives to counter depopulation, taking political action concerning the League of Nations mandate or pressing for localisation within the island churches. It is this social and political imperative I investigate further, initially by examining the arguments used by Christian activists in the campaigns to end the Atlantic slave trade and slave holding within the British Empire. This campaign is particularly relevant to the present study as there is a vast literature pertaining to abolitionism, including a few useful studies of motivation. More directly, the arguments and rhetoric used by the campaigners against Pacific indenture were in conscious imitation of the abolitionists, appealing to the same traditions.

The links between the Christian Evangelicals, the missionary imperative and anti-slavery campaigns have been investigated by many historians.¹⁰⁷ Anti-slavery

¹⁰⁶ Lata Mani, 'Cultural Theory, Colonial Texts: Reading Eyewitness Accounts of Widow Burning', in *Cultural Studies*, ed. L. Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula Treicher (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 403.

¹⁰⁷ On the Christian Evangelical impetus behind campaigns to end the Atlantic slave trade see, D.W. Bebbington, *The Nonconformist Conscience: Chapel and Politics, 1870-1914* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1982); C. Duncan Rice, 'The Missionary Context of the British Anti-Slavery Movement', in *Slavery and British Society 1776-1846*, ed. James Walvin, pp 150-63 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982); Hugh Thomas, *The Slave Trade: The History of the Atlantic Slave Trade 1440-1870* (London: Macmillan Papermac, 1998); David Turley, *The Culture of English Antislavery 1780-1860* (London/New York: Routledge, 1991); James Walvin, 'Introduction', in *Slavery and British Society 1776-1846*, ed. James Walvin, pp. 1-21). For more sceptical views, see Michael Craton, 'Slave Culture, Resistance and the Achievement of Emancipation in the British West Indies 1783-1838', in *Slavery and British Society 1776-1846*, ed. James Walvin, pp. 100-22 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982) who investigates

sentiment became part of the identity of influential sections of the middle-class in Britain, 'part of a religious, philanthropic and reform complex which embraced missionary activity, temperance, peace, free trade and limited political reform'. A growing number of Protestants shared anti-slavery beliefs which 'constituted a prominent aspect of their more complex engagement in moral and social improvement'.¹⁰⁸

I consider two pieces of Christian abolitionist literature: John Wesley's *Thoughts Upon Slavery* (1774), and Thomas Clarkson, *An Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species, particularly the African* (1786), focussing on attitudes towards human difference and the resulting development of action to alleviate perceived wrongs. Both strongly maintain human similitude. Wesley's 1774 tract, an uncompromising condemnation of the practice of slavery which became one of the charters of humanitarian activists, is startling in its forthrightness. Countering any idea that Africans were without the same emotions and rights as Europeans, Wesley asserted that they shared the same moral rights because they were all created by God, 'the work of [God's] own hands, the purchase of [his] Son's blood'. This essential equality, the Christian notion of personhood and individual value and responsibility before God, rendered unacceptable the sale of African bodies and persons, as opposed to their labour. Wesley went further to postulate an equivalence of civilisation between European and African, as represented by the inhabitants of Guinea: 'Where shall we find at this day, among the fair-faced natives of *Europe*, a nation more generally practising the Justice, Mercy and Truth which are found among these poor black *Africans*.'¹⁰⁹ European standards of law had to be applied to Africans. 'Where is the Justice', he asked, 'in depriving those who never injured us...tearing them from their native country and depriving them of liberty itself?' Slavery was against God's moral order; slave holding could not be 'consistent with any degree of even natural

the slaves' use of Christian rhetoric and opportunities, and Hall, 'Missionary Stories, who questions the sincerity of that rhetoric.

¹⁰⁸ Turley, *Culture of English Anti-Slavery*, pp. 9, 6, 1.

¹⁰⁹ John Wesley, *Thoughts Upon Slavery* (London: R. Hawes, 1774) pp. 52, 25, 16. Original emphasis.

justice'.¹¹⁰

Clarkson's essay, written as a 'Latin dissertation' – it won first prize at Cambridge University in 1785 – is didactic rather than polemic, a work of logic rather than passion.¹¹¹ Clarkson acknowledged human differences, but assumed they were environmentally caused: 'all mankind, however various their appearance, are derived from the same stock', the proof of which was that they could propagate together. Variety was probably 'benevolent design' to enable groups 'to endure the respective climates of their habitation'; he suggested that the original colour of human beings was probably 'a dark olive, a beautiful colour'.¹¹² Difference in capacity was similarly environmental, since Africans did not have the opportunity to learn many of the industrial skills of the West, but there was no evidence they lacked inherent potential. Isolation, lack of contact with other groups and the stress of the struggle for survival caused apparent backwardness.¹¹³ Such belief in human similitude pervaded Abolitionist rhetoric and was exemplified in the mottos of the Anti-Slavery Society – "Am I not a Man and a Brother" – and the Aborigines' Protection Society – "Ab Une Saguine".¹¹⁴ Clarkson also recognised that Biblical justifications for slavery, particularly in the Old Testament, needed to be confronted.¹¹⁵ His first target was the

¹¹⁰ Wesley, *Thoughts upon Slavery*, pp. 30, 31.

¹¹¹ Thomas Clarkson, *An Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species, Particularly the African (Translated from a Latin Dissertation Honoured with the First Prize in the University of Cambridge 1785)* (London: J. Phillips, 1786), title page.

¹¹² Clarkson, *Essay on Slavery and Commerce*, pp. 187, 184, 190.

¹¹³ Clarkson, *Essay on Slavery and Commerce*, pp. 168-177.

¹¹⁴ 'Ab une sanguine' ('of one blood') is a quotation from Acts 17: 26 'And [God] hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth', Paul's words to the worshippers of 'the Unknown God' at Athens.

¹¹⁵ A huge debate concerning the Biblical justifications for slavery raged throughout the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, particularly in America. See David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1966) and particularly David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution 1870-1823* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1975) where he notes that rejection of the Biblical justifications for slavery (eg Leviticus 25: 45-46 'Moreover of the children of the strangers that do sojourn among you, of them

widely assumed ‘curse of Cain’ which it was claimed gave divine sanction for the slavery of black people. Since no distinguishing marks could be found for modern descendants of Ham/Cain (and the curse went no further than Canaan), he claimed that the curse had been extinguished.¹¹⁶ Clarkson also suggested that Paul’s letter to Philemon did not imply acceptance of slavery, since Philemon almost certainly freed Onesimus.¹¹⁷

Both Wesley and Clarkson then moved to ethical arguments against slavery. If Africans had human capacities for pain then to mistreat them was against the ethics of the Sermon on the Mount. Wesley detailed the appalling conditions on both the voyage and the plantations: ‘Banished from their country, from their friends and relations for ever, from every comfort of life, they are reduced to a state scarce in any way preferable to that of beasts of burden’.¹¹⁸ Commerce must encompass the Christian virtues of justice and compassion:

[i]t were better that all those Islands should remain uncultivated, yea, it were more desirable that they were all together sunk in the depth of the ocean, than that they should be cultivated at so high a price, as the violation of Justice, Mercy and Truth.¹¹⁹

Clarkson’s argument was more legalistic: all slavery was based on the purchase of human beings, which ‘is not lawful in the sight of God’. Since ‘human liberty can

shall ye buy, and of their families that are with you, which they begat in your land: and they shall be your possession. And ye shall take them as an inheritance for your children after you, to inherit them for a possession; they shall be your bondmen for ever’) generally saw historical slavery in social evolutionist terms and hence superceded, or in a more traditionally Christian view believed slavery to have been an extraordinary privilege temporarily granted to the Jews. ‘Progress’ demanded its abolition (pp. 112, 114).

¹¹⁶ Clarkson, *Essay on Slavery and Commerce*, pp. 179-183, 247. Genesis 9: 22-27 tells how Noah cursed his grandson Canaan because Ham, Canaan’s father, had seen the drunken Noah naked. Noah’s curse – “Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren” – was later called the curse of Ham or of Cain.

¹¹⁷ He cited Paul’s Letter to Philemon, in which Paul requests Philemon to take back his run-away slave Onesimus, who has now become a Christian.

¹¹⁸ Wesley, *Thoughts upon Slavery*, pp. 18-24.

¹¹⁹ Wesley, *Thoughts upon Slavery*, p. 36.

neither be bought nor sold', every lash was 'unjust...a lash against nature and religion'.¹²⁰ Not only did the slaves suffer; slavery was degrading and damaging to the enslaving society. No 'nation's glory depend[ed] on wealth, but rather on "virtue"', and God must side with the oppressed.¹²¹

Moreover, slavery was against the 'spirit of liberty'. One of the driving beliefs of the abolitionists was the need for all – Africans and Europeans – to bear individual responsibility for their actions before God. The coercion behind slavery made this impossible, which was perceived as one of its greatest evils. This notion of 'freedom' or 'liberty' incorporates both Enlightenment and Christian elements; it involves individual acceptance of the gift of Christian salvation as well as ideas of a free contract. As Clarkson put it, mankind has 'an existence in a future state' and every person has to account for his actions. But when he is sold 'he must instantly cease to be accountable for his actions and his authority as a parent and his duty as a son (as examples of the most commonly found sites of accountability) must instantly be no more ... his actions are not at his own disposal'.¹²²

Rev. Ralph Wardlaw, a Congregational leader in Glasgow, preached a widely-published sermon in 1834 on the 'memorable Day of Negro Emancipation' in which he noted that slaves now had not only physical freedom but also emancipation of the mind. This was primarily 'freedom from Sin, from Satan, from Death, from Hell'.¹²³ But it had more practical outcomes for the ex-slave, for 'liberty raises him from degradation, and elevates him to the conscious dignity of his rational nature ... It gives truth free access to him, and him free access to truth. It gives others liberty to teach him, and him liberty to learn.'¹²⁴ Liberation of captives was a 'metaphor or social

¹²⁰ Clarkson, *Essay on Slavery and Commerce*, p. 242.

¹²¹ Wesley, *Thoughts Upon Slavery*, p. 38.

¹²² Clarkson, *Essay on Slavery and Commerce*, pp. 244, 248. I continue the masculine emphasis of Clarkson's writing for the sake of clarity.

¹²³ Wardlaw, *The Jubilee*, p 17.

¹²⁴ Wardlaw, *The Jubilee*, p 23.

progress', in Davis' words, it 'unleashe[d] the forces of universal progress'. There was no ideological discrepancy between the British parliament emancipating the slaves and passing the Poor Law in the same year, 1834 – both had as their *leit motif* a belief in progress through personal responsibility.¹²⁵ Wardlaw, and many others, saw the responsibility and accountability which accompanied liberty as extending beyond the spiritual to the economic realm; it was seen as desirable that ex-slaves be exposed to 'market forces' – as long as there was no coercion. Hence the emphasis on the issue of fraud in recruitment, since it undermined the ability to be responsible for one's own actions.

The insistence that the employment of 'free agents' should be subject only to the market, but that there must be guarantees that such agents were truly free and not coerced, reappears in numerous nineteenth century contexts. According to classical liberal theory, government regulation of work conditions was only acceptable to protect those who for some reason were unable to enter freely into contacts they were offered.¹²⁶ It was this provision which was invoked to regulate the hours worked by children, on the grounds that they were not 'free agents'. Introducing a bill in March 1832 to limit children's hours of work in textile factories, Michael Sadler agreed that in the case of adults any 'attempt to regulate by law the market of labour ... as applied by free agents' would be 'an improper interference between the employer and the employed', but that 'children are not to be regarded as free labourers', since they were 'helpless' and 'dependent for their daily bread upon the will of others'. Thus

¹²⁵ Davis, *Slavery and Human Progress*, pp. 121-3.

¹²⁶ The irony that the Royal Navy still manned its own ships in part through the coercive mechanism of the press gang at the height of its anti-slavery patrols went largely unremarked. The Maritime Society however ran a campaign against impressment in the 1810s and 1820s and the practice was effectively abandoned during the second half of the nineteenth century. See *A Letter to Wm Wilberforce, Esq. MP. on the Subject of Impressment; Calling on Him and the Philanthropists of This Country to Prove Those Feelings of Sensibility They Expressed in the Cause of Humanity on Negro Slavery by Acting with the Same Ardour and Zeal in the Cause of British Seamen.* (London: R.S Kirby, Paternoster Row for the benefit of the Maritime Society, 1816), which draws a direct parallel between slave raiding and the actions of the press gang.

they could be protected without infringing economic principles. Nor could it be assumed that parents could 'act as free agents' for their children, for some did not have their children's best interests at heart.¹²⁷ Indeed, Sadler represented child labour without the worker's full consent as 'infantile slavery' and 'captivity', extending the analogy of children with African slaves. Extending the descriptor of 'not free agents' from British children to non-European adults could be seen as infantilising, but cases adjudicated in courts in the 1870s to the 1890s focussed on the specific level of comprehension and the adequacy of translation, rather than assumptions of general incompetence on the part of Melanesians. The issue was whether fraud had been perpetrated.

The basic Christian humanitarian arguments against forced labour remained remarkably consistent from Wesley's time to the end of Indian indenture in Fiji in 1920, focussing on accusations of fraud and deceit, and force and cruelty. But they interacted with ideas about the capability of European and non-European people to do hard manual work in particular climatic conditions, and about the speed with which it was assumed the newly emancipated (or converted) could progress. As a result, the character of individual campaigns differed as local conditions, the personalities of the protagonists and the encompassing ideological world differed. Subsequent chapters consider the campaigns in Queensland to end the indenture first of Melanesian Islanders and then of Indians, but the next chapter examines the Christian humanitarian response to a particularly local Pacific problem – the fear that Islanders were dying out.

¹²⁷ Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, 3rd series, vol. 11, pp. 342-7 (1832). Sadler's Bill failed to pass, but a similar Bill passed in 1833, sponsored by Shaftsbury, limiting the hours of employment of children in textile factories and instituting schooling for those under 9 years.

Chapter Three

‘A Light Grip on Life’: discourses of depopulation in the Pacific Islands

The previous chapter demonstrated that in practice the relationship between Christian humanitarian ideals and racially determined conceptions of human difference was fluid and changing. Evangelical missionaries in the South West Pacific were influenced by both ideas, often working with metropolitan theorists interested in ‘proving’ social evolutionary theories, but at the same time holding to a religion-based insistence that all human beings were valuable in God’s sight. This latter belief focussed on the uniqueness and potential for ‘progress’ of Islanders. Pacific missionaries’ primary concerns centred on Christian conversion, the adoption of the *lotu*,¹ but they also had practical concerns for the welfare of their flocks. These, as discussed in later chapters, aimed to avoid the exposure of Islanders, as fellow human beings, to the exploitation of slavery and to change ways of living as well as religious beliefs. Islanders, missionaries believed, had the potential not only to be converted to Christianity and to convert others but also to be taught a western curriculum, to be employed within a cash economy and to become ‘civilised’.

Underlying these concerns, however, was a more immediate one: that the apparently declining populations of the Pacific islands meant there would no longer be Islanders to protect, convert or teach. Underlying much mission as well as colonial discourse was the fear, if not assumption, that Pacific peoples were dying out. Empirically, this

¹ *Lotu*, (a word of Tongan origin): to be one of the praying people and to publicly acknowledge the supremacy of the Christian God. It is used as noun – the Christian religion, service or society, adjective – Christian, and verb – to become a Christian.

seemed a reasonable concern, though the population of most Pacific islands in the nineteenth century and thus their decrease can only be estimated. As Hubert Murray, Administrator of Papua, put it in 1910, population enumeration was 'a vexed question about which we have no very reliable data'.² The dispute between David Stannard and his critics over population decline in Hawai'i focuses on the size of the pre-contact population and on the dating rather than the reality of population decline.³ More reliable indications are only available for population decline in more settled colonial situations and even then statistical accuracy is unlikely.

The difficulties inherent in using colonial census figures are made clear in Dorothy Shineberg's analysis of enumerations of New Caledonia's Kanak population from 1880 to the 1930s. She concluded that the census of 1887, supposedly accurate, considerably overestimated the Kanak population, leading observers then to assume a huge decline when later considering more accurate counts in the early twentieth century.⁴ Such evident difficulties in enumeration have not stopped much detailed – and contentious – writing on the subject. The literature on population decrease in the Pacific is voluminous and is most effectively summarised by Vicki Lukere and by Donald Denoon.⁵ Aside from the detailed controversies, it is clear that many (but not all) Pacific communities suffered dramatic demographic decline during the nineteenth century. Presbyterian missionaries in the New Hebrides estimated that one third of the

² Territory of Papua, Annual Report 1911-12, p. 8.

³ David E. Stannard, *Before the Horror: The Population of Hawaii on the Eve of Western Contact* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989); Andrew F. Bushnell, "'The Horror' Reconsidered: An Evaluation of the Historical Evidence for Population Decline in Hawai'i, 1778-1803' *Pacific Studies* 16, no. 3, pp. 115-161 (1993). Bushnell estimated Hawaii's pre-contact population at 300,000 as against Stannard's 800,000 and the main decline from the 1820s onwards, rather than 1778-1803. He nonetheless called the 'demographic collapse ... the most important "fact" in Hawaiian history'.

⁴ Dorothy Shineberg, 'Un Nouveau Regard sur la Démographie Historique de la Nouvelle-Calédonie' *Journal de la Société des Océanistes* 39, no. 76, pp. 33-43 (1983).

⁵ Victoria Lukere, *Mothers of the Taukei: Fijian Women and 'The Decrease of the Race'* (PhD thesis, Australian National University, 1997) pp. 5-8; Donald Denoon, ed., *The Cambridge History of the Pacific Islanders* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 243-249.

population of Aneityum of 3500 and one quarter of Aniwa's 300 people died in the measles epidemic in 1860.⁶ On the other hand, William Bromilow, the Methodist missionary in the D'Entrecasteaux islands from 1891-1907 and 1920-25, did not mention depopulation in either his autobiography or his chapter on Papua in the Methodist centenary volume.⁷ His concern with 'child rescue' was couched as an example of the evils of heathenism, especially the belief in witchcraft, as a 'gross unfeeling custom'.⁸ My concern is not with controversies over statistics but with the response of various European groups to this apparently catastrophic decline, the meanings and interpretations loaded onto the (often) grim statistics.

Depopulation: disease or moral weakness?

Contemporary reactions to depopulation seem strange to the modern reader: moralised, racialised responses to what is now seen as the straightforward if tragic effect of introduced disease, made worse, as Donald Denoon pointed out, by carelessness over quarantine.⁹ In the debates concerning depopulation, the Fiji

⁶ Ron Adams, *In the Land of Strangers: A Century of European Contact with Tanna, 1774- 1874*, (Canberra/New York: Development Studies Centre, Australian National University, 1984), p. 116.

⁷ William Bromilow, 'New Guinea', in *A Century in the Pacific*, ed. James Colwell, pp. 535-558 (Sydney: William H. Beale, 1914); William Bromilow, *Twenty Years among Primitive Papuans* (London: The Epworth Press, 1929).

⁸ Bromilow, *Among Primitive Papuans*, pp. 132, 139-140. Michael Young saw the Mission as 'skim[ming] off the truly unwanted babies of Dobuan society and rear[ing] them in nurseries', making them 'the Mission's very own'. Young claimed that there was population decline, indeed a halving of the Dobuan population in the forty years after 1905, represented by Reo Fortune as 'race suicide' in response to missionary and government interference (Michael Young, 'A Tropology of the Dobu Mission (in Memory of Reo Fortune)' *Canberra Anthropology* 3, pp. 86-104 (1980)).

⁹ Denoon, *History of the Pacific Islanders*, p. 247. Ratu Cakobau and his two sons contracted measles in Australia but the ship returning them to Fiji, HMS *Dido*, had contact with the shore and passengers were allowed to land in Levuka in spite of measles being rife amongst the Fijians on board. The welcoming ceremonies for the returning chiefs and a chiefly meeting in Navosa encouraged further spread, and a hurricane caused food shortages which exacerbated the effects of sickness. Effective quarantine measures were enforced only several weeks after *Dido's* arrival - Thurston's despairing comment reflected their inadequacy: 'People talk of isolation. They might as

measles epidemic of 1875 was pivotal. Described by R.A. Derrick as 'Fiji's Darkest Hour', the mortality from measles ranged from Commodore Goodenough's estimate of between 25,000 and 30,000 to Gordon's later figure of 'not less than 40,000'.¹⁰ The Fijian population continued to fall to 105,800 in 1891, and 84,500 in 1921, worrying colonial authorities to such a degree that they set up a commission to investigate it.¹¹ Detailed work by Norma McArthur and Vicki Lukere has gone far to explain the impact not just of one terrible epidemic, but also of successive bouts of infection. This more convincing and complex description noted that the 1875 Fiji measles epidemic was neither the first nor the last outbreak of introduced disease. It came on top of repeated outbreaks of dysentery and influenza from the late 1830s, attested to by early Methodist missionaries. To note two out of many examples: Rev. David Cargill reported a dysentery outbreak in Lakeba in 1837 and he and Rev. Thomas Jaggar reported an outbreak of widespread sickness, probably influenza, in Rewa in September 1839. In this case Cargill noted: 'The king and queen are both ill. Very few of the people are exempted from this affliction.' The death rate during such episodes varied, but it is clear that it was significant.¹²

well talk of setting a barricade against the east wind' (R.A. Derrick, '1875: Fiji's Darkest Hour - an Account of the Measles Epidemic of 1875' *Transactions and Proceedings of the Fiji Society* 6, no. 1, pp. 3-16 (1955)). The arrival of the 1919 influenza pandemic in Samoa was the result of similar carelessness, in this case by the New Zealand authorities who allowed the infected steamship *Talune* to disembark its passengers (Denoon, *History of the Pacific Islanders*, p. 247). Helen Clark, PM of New Zealand, offered an official apology during her visit to Samoa, 3 June 2002, expressing 'sorrow and regret' for this 'preventable' epidemic.

¹⁰ Derrick, 'Fiji's Darkest Hour', p. 15. Norma MacArthur estimated a death rate of 20% and a post-epidemic (1880) population of around 115,000 (*Island Populations of the Pacific* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1967), pp. 10-11).

¹¹ Denoon, *History of the Pacific Islanders*, p. 247; McArthur, *Island Populations*, pp. 30-32.

¹² Albert Schütz, *The Diaries and Correspondence of David Cargill 1832-1843* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1977), pp. 97, 149; see also E. Keesing-Styles and W. Keesing-Styles, *Unto the Perfect Day: The Journal of Thomas James Jagger, Feejee 1838-1845* (Auckland: Solent Publishing, 1988), pp. 29-31. There are also references to this outbreak in R.B Lyth's Journal, 2 Sept. 1839, ML B3533, Mitchell Library, Sydney. Lyth, who was also a doctor, was frequently approached for help on such occasions but was by no means always able to save life. For a

The aftermath of the 1875 measles epidemic was even more devastating as a result of the particular susceptibility of young children, resulting in a depleted generation reaching reproductive age some 20 or so years later. Nor did it end there. The case studies which Lukere collected from infant death inquiries in the 1890s paint a harrowing picture; nearly half of all babies born died within their first year from dysentery, influenza, whooping cough and other ills.¹³ The cumulative effects of continued ravages of diarrhoeal, respiratory and other diseases depleted successive cohorts of young adults of reproductive age, with a continuing depressing effect on the birth-rate. But this was a process inadequately understood by missionaries and colonial authorities. The *Fiji Report of the Commission Appointed to Inquire into the Decrease of the Native Population* (1896; hereafter *Decrease Report*) demonstrates this. Set up by a concerned colonial government to discover why the Fijian population continued to decline, it was brilliantly analysed by Vicki Lukere. She noted that the report advanced a range of hypotheses both medical and cultural, implicating both the practice and abandonment of polygamy, the introduction of colonialism and Christianity, 'premature civilisation' and 'apathy'. But the majority of explanations blamed Fijian women for being bad mothers. They were accused of neglect, of procuring abortions and practising infanticide, though little evidence was produced for any of these assertions.¹⁴

discussion of the limitations of missionary medicine in the mid nineteenth century, see Dorothy Shineberg, "He Can but Die...": Missionary Medicine in Pre-Christian Tonga', in *The Changing Pacific: Essays in Honour of H.E. Maude*, ed. Niel Gunson, pp. 285-296 (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1978); Christine Weir, 'Fijian and Missionary Views of Health and Sickness, Life and Death in the Early Contact Period', in *Engendering Health in the Pacific: Colonial and Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. Margaret Jolly and Victoria Lukere (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, in preparation).

¹³ Lukere, *Mothers of the Taukei*, pp. 100-102.

¹⁴ Lukere, *Mothers of the Taukei*, pp. 42-51. The modern geographer Peter Pirie suggested that low fertility was the pre-contact norm for Pacific Islanders, achieved by the wide spacing of children achieved through long lactation, abstinence, abortion and infanticide (Peter Pirie, "Untangling the Myths and Realities of Fertility and Mortality in the Pacific Islands" (paper presented at the Pacific

The report had ramifications beyond Fiji, for it was much discussed by contemporaries and was assumed to be generally applicable to other parts of the Pacific. Authors as varied as Rev. J.W. Burton, Captain Pitt-Rivers, W.H. Rivers and C.M. Woodford (Resident Commissioner in the Solomon Islands 1896-1915) cited it,¹⁵ but few fully understood the demographic and epidemiological processes at work. The assumption persisted that introduced disease was only one of a highly moralised complex of causes of depopulation, a complex strongly shot through with evolutionist and gendered assumptions. John Burton, writing in 1910 after eight years as a Methodist missionary in Fiji (serving the Indian community), epitomised the complex mix of discourses common in missionary considerations of depopulation:

[The Fijian] has but a light grip on life – for his ambitions are all immediate and mainly physical. Hence he falls easily beneath the breath of disease. His only hope is in an entire change of habits of life, and these can only be acquired only under the stimulus of new impulses and ambitions ... The causes of decrease have their roots in the moral and the spiritual; and the remedies must be of like nature.¹⁶

Science Inter-Congress, Suva, Fiji, 1997)).

¹⁵ John W. Burton, *The Fiji of Today* (London: Charles H. Kelly, 1910), pp. 191-221; George Henry Lane-Fox Pitt-Rivers, *The Clash of Cultures and the Contact of Races* (London: Routledge, 1927) pp. 45-58; George Pitt-Rivers, 'On Method, Approach and Diagnostic Fallacies in Dealing with the Problem of Depopulation in the Pacific', in *Report of the Seventeenth Meeting of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science, Adelaide Meeting 1924*, ed. L. Keith Ward (Adelaide: Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science, 1926), p. 480; W.H.R. Rivers, 'The Psychological Factor', in *Essays on the Depopulation of Melanesia*, ed. W.H.R. Rivers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922), p. 88; C.M. Woodford, 'The Solomon Islands', in *Essays on the Depopulation of Melanesia*, ed. W.H.R. Rivers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922), p. 70.

George Pitt-Rivers was the grandson of the anthropologist and collector Augustus Lane Fox Pitt-Rivers, founder of the Pitt-Rivers Museum in Oxford, and an amateur anthropologist himself. He undertook anthropological research in Melanesia in the 1910s.

William Halse Rivers (unrelated) (1864-1922) was a doctor, psychologist and anthropologist. Accompanied Haddon on the 1898 Torres Straits expedition and did field-work on Simbo, Solomon Islands in the 1910s.

¹⁶ Burton, *Fiji of Today*, p. 215. Burton was overstating his case, as in the Methodist Mission Annual

His analysis gave some scope to the ravages of disease, recognising the devastation of the 1875 measles epidemic, but he emphasised the failings of the Fijians, who 'seem to lack the virility and spirit' to 'combat' foreign diseases, and made the situation worse by being 'stubborn in the matter of proper treatment'. They threw away European medicines, ate unsuitable food, plunged into cold water when fevered and told lies to the doctor.¹⁷ The 'lack of virility and want of physical stamina' in turn was caused by the lack of individualism inherent in the Fijian communal system, sexual depravity encouraged by the ending of older taboos, and the 'laziness and improvidence' made possible by canned food, metal tools, modern boats and calico. He was Biblical in his rhetoric: 'The Fijian has sown to the flesh, and of the flesh he is reaping corruption'.¹⁸

Burton concluded: 'Luxury and ease are killing him, for he is now placed beyond the margin of struggle.'¹⁹ This last comment is significant, for it reflects a widespread understanding of the way introduced disease was decimating Pacific peoples. The necessity of struggle to maintain health and 'vigour' reflects Burton's at least partial acceptance of ideas derived from Darwinian biology,²⁰ ideas which had been developed by social theorists like Herbert Spencer, whose *Man vs. the State* (1884) had suggested that natural laws should be allowed to take their course, for the 'survival of the fittest must go on unhindered'.²¹

Report for 1909 the circuit reports suggested an excess of births over deaths, a check to 'the rapid decline in the population so much deplored for many years' (*Missionary Review*, March 1909, p. 8). Much of Burton's material was taken from Fiji's *Decrease Report*.

¹⁷ Burton, *Fiji of Today*, p. 203.

¹⁸ Burton, *Fiji of Today*, p. 193.

¹⁹ Burton, *Fiji of Today*, pp. 204, 205, 214.

²⁰ It is difficult to know the extent to which Darwinian and other scientific ideas were read by Pacific missionaries, though such ideas were firmly entrenched in educated circles in Britain and America by the late nineteenth century. In Burton's case we can be more certain, as he cited Darwin's *Journal of Researches* (1839) in a discussion of the role of missionaries in the islands (*Fiji of Today*, pp. 130-1).

²¹ Robert C. Bannister, *Social Darwinism: Science and Myth in Anglo-American Social Thought*

The late nineteenth century saw numerous attempts to draw lessons from evolutionary theories which could be applied in the realm of social policy. But many religious figures had some reservations about the assumption of biological determinism, the idea that science could explain all and that ethics and morality had little further role in human affairs. Frederick Temple, in his 1884 Bampton Lectures, attempted to maintain the distinction between a scientific explanation of the origins of life and what he called the 'Moral Law'. Darwin's theory of evolution was about science but the purpose of the Bible was 'to teach great spiritual and moral lessons', not to teach science. The two were related, he said, in that human beings are incomplete without an understanding of both the material and the spiritual worlds, but he reasserted his claim that humans should acknowledge that the Bible 'puts what is spiritual over what is material'.²² An unnamed reviewer felt that this 'wise and dispassionate' claim that 'the spiritual still continues to exercise its dominion over the material' should bring 'consolations and peace of mind' to the many Christians worried by the advances in science.²³

In challenging the idea that biological explanations of development could be extended to the moral or spiritual world, Temple was perhaps ploughing a lonely furrow but he was not entirely alone. T.H. Huxley, in his Romanes lecture of 1893, maintained that evolutionary theory should not be regarded as a guide to ethical behaviour. The notion that 'men as ethical beings' should look towards the

(Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1979) showed that Spencer's attempt to develop a social theory based on natural law was complex and his adherence to Darwinian theory ambiguous but his influence strong (p. 50). Conversely, Barry W. Butcher, 'Darwinism, Social Darwinism, and the Australian Aborigines: A Re-evaluation', in *Darwin's Laboratory: Evolutionary Theory and Natural History in the Pacific*, ed. Roy MacLeod and Philip E. Rehbock, pp. 371-394 (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1994) emphasised the continuity between Darwinian theory and Social Darwinism.

²² Frederick Temple, *The Relations between Religion and Science* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1885), pp. 240-245. Temple was Bishop of Exeter in 1884, and later Archbishop of Canterbury.

²³ Unattributed review of Frederick Temple, *Relations between Religion and Science*, in *The Times*, 9 January 1885.

mechanism of the struggle of existence to 'help them towards perfection' was a fallacy which arose from confusion over the meaning of 'fittest.' For, emphasised Huxley, it meant 'best adapted to changed conditions' and has no 'moral flavour.' Rather 'the ethical progress of society depends not on imitating the cosmic process, still less in running away from it, but in combating it.'²⁴

Huxley's divide between biological 'laws' and moral considerations is at the heart of the debate about the causes and consequences of Pacific depopulation. The extent to which racially determinist assumptions of extinction were accepted varied, as did the responses. At one extreme was total acceptance, the view that the laws of biology could not and should not be hindered. If 'unadapted' people died out, then so be it. In practice this view was more common with regard to Australian Aborigines, whose 'low status and poor prospects' were attributed to 'fixed biological laws' from the 1830s.²⁵ Dr Ramsay Smith, Government Health Officer for South Australia, described Aborigines as a 'side-tracked' race, which was doomed to 'inevitable extinction'.²⁶ Usually this verdict was softened in relation to Pacific Islanders, who

²⁴ T.H. Huxley and Julian Huxley, *Evolution and Ethics 1893-1943* (London: The Pilot Press, 1947), pp. 80-82.

²⁵ Butcher, 'Darwinism, Social Darwinism and the Australian Aborigines', p. 376. Butcher pointed out how convenient such an assumption was to European settlers in validating their acquisition of land. Dorothy Shineberg made a similar point in relation to New Caledonia. She suggested that various groups found it in their interest, and in accordance with their world-view, to accept a huge depopulation from 1887-1901. Such decrease confirmed the assumptions of Social Darwinists, while humanitarians could use the evidence of decline in their arguments against land seizure, taxes and corvées. Kanak were represented as 'too weak, too good or too abused to survive, according to each [writer's] particular ideology'. ['En bref, les indigènes étaient trop faibles, ou trop bons or trop abusés, pour survivre, selon l'idéologie de chacun'] (Shineberg, 'Un nouveau regard sur la démographie historique', p. 42).

²⁶ W.R. Smith addressing the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science in 1913, cited in Russell McGregor, 'The Idea of Racial Degeneration: Baldwin Spencer and the Aborigines of the Northern Territory', in *Health and Healing in Tropical Australia and Papua New Guinea*, ed. Roy MacLeod and Donald Denoon (Townsville: James Cook University, 1991), pp. 23-24, 26. Warwick Anderson suggested that Smith adopted a less evolutionist view of Aboriginal society by the 1920s.

were seen as being higher in the evolutionary ranking. Burton was explicit in his book *The Call of the Pacific* (1912), describing Australian Aborigines as ‘usually considered the lowest type of human life on our planet’, while Pacific Islanders were ranked according to well-established stereotypes. Of Fijians, he commented:

The people are of a lower grade than the Tongans, Samoans, Tahitians and Maoris. They have not nearly the same intellectual development and their civilization is of a coarser order. They are, in turn, superior to the Western peoples of New Hebrides, New Britain and New Guinea. The race gives evidences of greater capability than has had opportunity to realise itself. There seems a sort of ‘arrested development’.²⁷

Like most commentators, missionary and others, Burton believed that some effort should be taken to ensure that ‘a race of so great promise and of so narrow opportunity’ should not be ‘ruthlessly struck down’.²⁸ After all, as Lukere suggested, the very establishment of the Commission which produced the *Decrease Report* had its intellectual origins in the ‘humanitarian fervour which had brought an end to slavery’, manifest in Fiji in the ‘philo-native’ policies of Governor Arthur Gordon and his advisor Thurston.²⁹

Denoon complained that the ‘tropical health’ policy of the Papua administration was commercially oriented, protecting the workforce of the mining industry but neglecting basic public health measures such as water supplies.³⁰ Certainly the emphasis was on the health of Europeans and their employees. Hookworm campaigns (which Denoon called a ‘red herring’) took place amongst indentured labourers rather

(Warwick Anderson, *The Cultivation of Whiteness: Science, Health and Racial Destiny in Australia* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2002), p. 196).

²⁷ John W. Burton, *The Call of the Pacific* (London: Charles H. Kelly, 1912), pp. 266, 92-3.

²⁸ Burton, *Fiji of Today*, p. 193

²⁹ Lukere, *Mothers of the Taukei*, p. 30. See Chapter 2 of this thesis for further examination of such attitudes.

³⁰ Donald Denoon, ‘Temperate Medicine and Settler Capitalism: The Reception of Western Medical Ideas’, in *Disease, Medicine and Empire: Perspectives on Western Medicine and the Experience of European Expansion*, ed. Roy Macleod and Milton Lewis, pp. 121-138 (London and New York: Routledge, 1988).

than amongst women of child-bearing age, where they might have been truly helpful.³¹ But humanitarian concern was also important. In the Gulf Division in 1909 a police roadblock was set up to prevent labourers returning to their villages after dysentery broke out amongst them.³² This attempt at quarantine was not aimed primarily at preserving European health, but Papuan. The same applied to Fijian Provincial rules about kava drinking, the height of sleeping places and the number of mats in village houses. Nicholas Thomas rightly points out the elements of coercion and surveillance in such regulations,³³ but the primary motivation stemmed from the concerns raised by the *Decrease Report* and its humanitarian underpinnings. Even Captain George Pitt-Rivers, an amateur anthropologist who regarded the main problem of Pacific depopulation to lie in labour shortages for European enterprises, advocated making the 'inevitable' indigenous shock at contact with Europeans 'less lethal'.³⁴

The Death of the Noble Savage

In 1960 Bernard Smith observed that, during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, visual and literary representations moved from viewing the Pacific Islander as 'an exemplar of natural virtue' to a 'squat, swarthy highly emotional type of being completely lacking in any personal dignity'. He noted that this shift was largely the result of increased evangelical influence. Missionary writers saw Islanders as 'ignoble savages...alike in the spiritual darkness of their paganism' rather than, as many

³¹ Denoon, 'Idea of Tropical Medicine', pp. 20-21. The correlation of hookworm-induced anaemia in mothers and low birth weight in babies and subsequent failure to thrive is well attested.

³² Territory of Papua, Annual Report 1909-10, p. 32.

³³ Nicholas Thomas, 'Sanitation and Seeing: The Creation of State Power in Early Colonial Fiji' *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 32, no. 1, pp. 149-170 (1990). The level of surveillance may however be exaggerated; the enforcement possible by any 'state' agents was limited - if village chiefs neglected or chose not to enforce such rules, little could be done. On Methodist attempts to improve deathrates through 'hygienic' measures, see Lukere, *Mothers of the Taukei*, pp. 130-40, 150-56; Benjamin Danks, *Our Hygienic Mission in Fiji: Instructing the People, Saving the Children* (Melbourne: Australasian Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, 1901).

³⁴ Pitt-Rivers, *The Clash of Cultures and the Contact of Races*, pp. 27, 238.

Enlightenment thinkers had seen them, as 'noble savages ...drawing their virtue from the simple life of nature'.³⁵

As Smith and other writers have noted, 'Noble' and 'Ignoble Savages' are 'European mythical creation[s]' which serve either to provide a 'legitimation for the European process of civilization' or as a focus of 'desire and nostalgia'.³⁶ Kerry Howe linked these stereotypes of Islanders with the depopulation debate, noting that 'Fatal Impact' writers³⁷ saw South Pacific societies as idyllic, indeed as alternatives to the corruption of Europe, peopled by 'Noble Savages' and decimated by the 'deliberate or unintentional depredations, crimes and curses of civilization'.³⁸ Howe contrasted this Rousseau-inspired vision with a later view, often put forward by 'pious writers', that pre-contact Pacific societies were ridden with evil and cruel customs and their populations already declining.³⁹ Certainly 'pious' voices can be heard making such comments. Hubert Murray, a devout man, commented that the people between the Fly and the Pahoturi rivers 'must disappear before long, and when one considers their habits the only cause of surprise is that they should ever have come into existence at all'.⁴⁰ Rev. W.J. Durrad's verdict on the New Hebrides child-rearing methods was similarly damning: the feeding of new-born children was 'crude and stupid', and the struggle of the child 'infected with malaria ... living in smoky huts, irregularly

³⁵ Bernard Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*, 2nd ed. (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1989 (1960)), pp. 133, 318.

³⁶ Ad Borsboom, 'The Savage in European Social Thought: A Prelude to the Conceptualisation of the Divergent Peoples and Cultures of Australia and Oceania' *Bijdragen Tot de Taal,-Land -en Volkenkunde* 144 (1988), p. 419.

³⁷ This name, from Alan Moorehead, *The Fatal Impact: an account of the invasion of the South Pacific 1767-1840* (1966), has been given to a group of scholars, including Stannard, who have seen the European impact on the Pacific as almost totally malign, starting with depopulation caused by European disease and violence.

³⁸ K.R. Howe, 'The Fate of the "Savage" in Pacific Historiography', *New Zealand Journal of History* 11, no. 2 (1977), p. 137.

³⁹ Howe, 'Fate of the "Savage"', pp. 141-2.

⁴⁰ Murray, Review of the Australian Administration in Papua 1907-20, cited in Pitt-Rivers, *Clash of Cultures*, p. 49.

washed, subject to curious eruptions and itching inflammations' was such that many succumbed. 'It is surprising', he added, 'that any survive at all'.⁴¹ Anglican Bishop Wilson attributed much decrease in the Solomon Islands to the 'the awful devastation ... under the raids of the head hunters'.⁴²

This condemnation of indigenous practices can be seen as yet another aspect of missionary writers' emphasis on the darkness, cruelty and heathenism of the pre-Christian Pacific.⁴³ But it intersected with evolutionary beliefs which saw Pacific Islanders (and to an even greater extent Australian Aborigines) as unfitted to cope with contact with European culture and the rapid changes triggered by that contact. Brantlinger traced this belief through such varied writers as James Prichard and Robert Knox to its rationalisation in Darwin's *Descent of Man* (1872).⁴⁴ Darwin explained this purportedly inevitable decline by claiming that 'changed conditions or habits of life' and removal 'from their native country' affected the fertility of the 'wilder races of man'. Successful adaptation to new conditions was the prerogative of 'the civilised races'.⁴⁵ Indeed, such views from Darwin predated his elaboration of the theory of natural selection, for he wrote in 1839: 'The varieties of man act on each other; in the same way as different species of animals – the stronger always extirpate the weaker'.⁴⁶

⁴¹ W.J. Durrad, 'The Depopulation of Melanesia', in *Essays on the Depopulation of Melanesia*, ed. W.H.R. Rivers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922), pp. 15-16. Durrad was an Anglican missionary in the Banks Islands 1905-1918.

⁴² *AMB Review*, December 1913, p. 155.

⁴³ For further discussion on this point, see Chapter 2.

⁴⁴ Patrick Brantlinger, "'Dying Races": Rationalizing Genocide in the Nineteenth Century', in *The Decolonization of Imagination: Culture, Knowledge and Power*, ed. Jan Nederveen Pieterse and Bhikhu Parekh, pp. 43-56 (London/New Jersey: Ked Books Ltd., 1995).

⁴⁵ Darwin's letters (vol 1) cited in Brantlinger, "'Dying Races'", pp. 48-51.

⁴⁶ Darwin, *Journal of Researches*, 1839, p. 520, cited in Butcher, 'Darwinism, Social Darwinism and the Australian Aborigines', p. 380. See also Bronwen Douglas, 'Science and the Art of Representing "Savages": Reading "Race" in Text and Image in South Seas Voyage Literature', *History and Anthropology* 11, no. 2-3 (1999), pp. 193-4.

Such comments were echoed by lesser writers, who assumed that Pacific Islanders were amongst those with inherent physical or mental weaknesses. Social commentators such as Benjamin Kidd invoked Darwinian processes of natural selection to claim that it was inevitable that Europeans should 'exterminate the less developed peoples with which [they] have come into competition'. The 'Anglo-Saxon, driven by the forces inherent in his own civilisation' entered the lands of others for economic reasons, and the 'weaker races disappear before the stronger through the effects of mere contact'. This fate was not the result of 'fierce and cruel wars' but 'the operation of laws not less deadly and even more certain in their result'. So 'all the Tasmanians are gone, and the Maoris (sic) will soon be following. The Pacific Islanders are departing childless.'⁴⁷ Nothing could be done about their dying in situations in which Europeans could survive or about their failing to reproduce – what Brantlinger has called 'autogenocide', surely the epitome of 'blame the victim' arguments.⁴⁸ Contributors to the Fiji *Decrease Report* elaborated on such ideas: poor mothering, mused colonial officials, reflected Fijians' evolutionary position, since while the maternal instinct 'attains perhaps its highest development in the Caucasian races of man' (sic), the Fijian mother 'probably never equals the lower animals in attachment to her young'.⁴⁹ A similarly racist attitude can be detected in comments about the susceptibility of Islanders to unfamiliar diseases. Sir William Macgregor's

⁴⁷ Benjamin Kidd, *Social Evolution* (London: Macmillan & Co, 1894), pp. 46-7. Kidd was a British self-educated social commentator who became a best-selling author in Britain and America with the publication of *Social Evolution*. His biographer suggested that Kidd's idiosyncratic writing 'reflected the ambiguities of his age, its intellectual evasions as well as its lasting perceptions' (D. P. Crook, *Benjamin Kidd: Portrait of a Social Darwinist* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 116).

⁴⁸ Brantlinger, "'Dying Races'", p. 43. This view apparently contradicts the fear, investigated in Chapter 4, that white men were incapable of working safely in the tropics. However, it replicates the counter opinion, also prevalent, that white men were so racially superior that they could withstand all difficulties.

⁴⁹ Submission of Basil Thomson to the 1896 *Decrease Report*, cited in Lukere, Mothers of the Taukei, p. 112.

medical judgement was clear:

the greatest – in my humble opinion the most significant and ominous of all – misfortunes that have befallen the Pacific Islanders has been the introduction among them of not a few of the most serious diseases that afflict the white man, without at the same time providing the means of combating them.

He emphasised the Islanders' lack of immunity when these diseases, not yet 'domesticated', entered 'new soil'.⁵⁰ But few shared his pragmatism. Much contemporary writing expressed a genuine puzzlement about the level of Islander mortality from common European diseases, which may explain the early prevarication over quarantine. Hence Burton's assumptions (derived mainly from the *Decrease Report*) that measles and influenza alone – illnesses most Europeans survived as children – could not easily account for the death rate unless indigenous carelessness, stubbornness or racial weakness were added to the equation.

Missionaries were, as we have seen, unwilling to concede inherent racial inferiority to potential converts, for all were equal in God's sight. But the notion of 'struggle', the idea that 'luxury and ease' was what made Fijians weak, enabled Burton to use Darwinian theory within acceptable Christian discourse. Natural selection was interpreted by commentators such as Kidd to mean that 'ceaseless and inevitable struggle and competition, ceaseless and inevitable selection and rejection' was 'the first condition of progress'.⁵¹ Burton, who cited Kidd,⁵² then represented the (supposed) ease of the modern Fijian lifestyle as the main reason for their 'lack of

⁵⁰ William Macgregor, 'Disease and Its Treatment', in *Essays on the Depopulation of Melanesia*, ed. W.H.R. Rivers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922) p. 78. Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel: A Short History of Everybody for the Last 13,000 Years* (London: Vintage, 1998), pp. 195-214, gave a detailed discussion of the reasons why the 'exchange of nasty germs was so unequal' (p. 197) between European travellers and indigenous populations in the Pacific and America. He suggested that the domestication of animals in Eurasia allowed the mutation of infectious animal pathogens into germs which could infect humans, but to which human beings then developed immunity – the 'lethal gift of livestock'.

⁵¹ Kidd, *Social Evolution*, p. 39.

⁵² Burton, *Fiji of Today*, p. 240.

vigour'. There is an irony or at the least a double standard at work here and in the examples which follow, given the usual missionary damning of most 'traditional' practices. Nor was Burton alone in his analysis. The debates over population decline preoccupied many missionaries and officials from the late nineteenth century at least until the late 1920s, when the demographic figures for most Pacific communities began, slowly in many cases, to recover. Rev. W.J. Durrad from the Anglican Melanesian Mission in the Banks Islands blamed depopulation on, alongside disease and poor childrearing practices, a 'subtle apathy' which afflicted Islanders after the end of headhunting.⁵³

In 1918 the Anglican missionary journal *ABM Review* published a series of articles by a 'Melanesian Missionary' entitled 'Must the People of the Pacific Islands Die Out?'⁵⁴ The unnamed missionary considered both the causes and the possible solutions of depopulation, exemplifying a similar mixture of humanitarian concern, racialised blame and scientific response. He noted that indigenous populations were probably declining before European contact but that 'the white man's coming is the main cause of the trouble'. European influences caused a 'shock to the whole native system ... stunting and checking natural growth' through the indenture system, and disease.⁵⁵ But 'decreasing virility and interest in life' was also caused by more ease and the end of the 'strenuous and healthy' old life when trees had to be felled with stone axes. Then 'canoe making was a very long and laborious job, it meant months of labour and much healthy interest'. The Islander's 'interest in life' was destroyed by 'taking from him the old necessity of living strenuously'.⁵⁶

Non-missionary discourse reflected some mission arguments but, not necessarily sharing the same pre-suppositions, government officials and anthropologists had their own explanations for 'decline'. Hubert Murray echoed the view that peace and iron

⁵³ Durrad, 'Depopulation of Melanesia', p. 7.

⁵⁴ *ABM Review*, March 1918, p. 221; April 1918, pp.11-12; May 1918, pp. 22-23.

⁵⁵ *ABM Review*, March 1918, p. 221.

⁵⁶ *ABM Review*, April 1918, p. 11.

tools had made the Papuan's life so much less 'strenuous' that 'the tenor of his life is changed for the worse', that 'the forces for life' were weakened.⁵⁷ Islanders' opinions on the matter were not sought. Rivers' view, based on his fieldwork on Eddystone Island (modern Simbo) in the western Solomons, was rather more sophisticated, using modern psychological insights. He rejected the idea that 'native customs' caused decline or that the lack of 'struggle' weakened people. But he did believe that the European destruction of ancestor cults, warfare and particularly headhunting resulted in the 'loss of interest in life' and increased the 'potency for evil' of all the other causes such as disease. For there was an 'enormous influence of the mind upon the body' especially in people sensitised to sorcery. He believed two groups avoided this decline: those who were untouched by Europeans or had successfully resisted them, and those who had adopted Christianity 'with a whole-hearted enthusiasm' and thus had a new interest.⁵⁸ Interestingly, Denoon regarded Rivers' analysis (and others in the same volume) as the last example of a holistic analysis of the problems encountered by Melanesian communities, since it incorporated cultural and social causations as well as germs.

Denoon's comment is part of a critique of a scientific approach which devalued the understanding of the relationship between colonial power structures and health.⁵⁹ While Rivers and his contributors acknowledged more than just germs, most were not advocating Denoon's 'genuinely therapeutic' measures of better water, more trained personnel, and improved living conditions – and were certainly not understood as doing so.⁶⁰ The 'psychological factors', in Rivers' title and implicated by other

⁵⁷ J.H.P. Murray, *The Population Problem in Papua* (Port Moresby: Government Printer, 1923).

⁵⁸ Rivers, 'The Psychological Factor', pp. 91-96.

⁵⁹ Donald Denoon, 'An Untimely Divorce: Western Medicine and Anthropology in Melanesia' *History and Anthropology* 11, no. 2-3, pp. 329-350 (1999).

⁶⁰ Woodford advocated the use of tube pumps in low-lying areas ('The Solomon Islands', p. 74), but this is the only suggestion of this kind in Rivers' collection. But the categories are not always clear-cut: Raphael Cilento, regarded by Denoon as an advocate of the bio-medical model, not only rejected all talk of 'depression, helplessness and hopelessness', but advocated the public health policies of improving the food supply (he believed lethargy was the result of inadequate nutrition), and

writers, were understood by many contemporaries as equivalent to the moralised discourse of the *Decrease Report*. Rivers himself did not analyse the psychological responses he observed in racial terms; his work with shell-shocked officers during World War I had taught him that adverse psychological reactions to stress were far from confined to Melanesians. He saw traditional societies as functioning, internally consistent entities, and in regarding the drop in the birth rate as 'voluntary' when people saw little point in having children to serve on plantations, he credited Solomon Islanders with rational resistance to European interference.⁶¹

Others took a much more racialised line while still claiming a 'psychological' explanation for population decline. Pitt-Rivers saw decline as failure of 'readaptation' to new conditions: while he cited Rivers' work on kinship and genealogy, he did not refer to his psychological theories in developing his own. Pitt-Rivers racialised psychological responses: the 'considerable variation in the innate range of adaptability and capacity for readjustment of different races' disadvantaged 'savages'.⁶² He was influenced by American writers Madison Grant and Lothrop Stoddard who began writing during World War 1 but whose works, combining scientific language with political unease about the Peace Treaty, had their greatest impact in the 1920s, when they were reprinted, translated and widely disseminated.⁶³ They warned of an impending global race war as the 'natural' superiority of the European 'races' was challenged by recent internal civil war (which was how they

controlling malaria through improved drainage, quinine and mosquito nets (R.W. Cilento, *The Causes of the Depopulation of the Western Isles of the Territory of New Guinea* (Dept. of Public Health, Territory of New Guinea, 1928)).

⁶¹ Rivers, 'The Psychological Factor', pp. 97-103. See also Brantlinger's discussion on the rationality of Tasmanians' 'collective suicide' ("Dying Races", p. 52).

⁶² Pitt-Rivers, *Clash of Cultures*, p. 143.

⁶³ Madison Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 4th (orig 1916, USA) ed. (London: G. Bell and Sons Ltd, 1920); Lothrop Stoddard, *The Revolt against Civilization: The Menace of the under Man*, 3rd, original ed. (London: Chapman and Hall, 1922); Lothrop Stoddard, *The Rising Tide of Color against White World-Supremacy* (New York: Charles Scribener and Sons, 1920). For further discussion of their writings, see chapters 4 and 9. Pitt-Rivers cited both writers.

represented World War 1) and by resistance from other races. Colonised people would fight to be free of domination, claimed Stoddard, quoting the most extreme of Japanese and Muslim propagandist rhetoric.⁶⁴ Africa, important as 'the natural source of Europe's tropical raw materials and foodstuffs', and Latin America could not possibly 'stand alone' (nor could the Pacific Islands, but Melanesians are 'so few in number and so low in type that they are of negligible importance'⁶⁵); strong European rule was essential. The basis of this argument lay in biological determinism. Grant claimed that the 'great lesson of race is the immutability of somatological or bodily characteristics, with which is closely associated the immutability of psychic disposition and impulses'.⁶⁶ He used Weismann's work on cellular structure and his theory of 'germ plasm' (1891-2) to decry the 'fatuous belief in the power of environment' which he saw as an idea stemming from 'loose thinkers and sentimentalists'.⁶⁷

Pitt-Rivers used similar ideas to decry the use of the 'most pleasurable and luxurious of all emotions, indignation and pity' by humanitarians campaigning for policy changes in colonial affairs. 'Primitive races' suffered a population decline on contact with other groups for biological reasons: their 'sexual impulse' was 'habitually weaker and more easily disturbed' than in 'civilized races' – a tendency made worse by the influence of the 'Puritanical' and 'life-defeating' nature of Christianity.⁶⁸ Nor could 'improved hygiene nor many other of the supposed ameliorative conditions' help in 'preserving an unadapted race from extinction'. The resulting depopulation was only a problem in two cases: in the tropics where white men could not labour, and where indigenes 'fail to become exterminated and fail entirely to become

⁶⁴ Stoddard, *Rising Tide of Color*, pp. 89, 103, 50-53.

⁶⁵ Stoddard, *Rising Tide of Color*, p. 87.

⁶⁶ Madison Grant, 'Introduction', in *The Rising Tide of Color against White World-Supremacy*, ed. Lothrop Stoddard (New York: Charles Scribener and Sons, 1920), p. xix.

⁶⁷ Grant, *Great Race*, pp. 15-16.

⁶⁸ Pitt-Rivers, *Clash of Cultures*, pp. 145, 178-183. He cited mainly Havelock Ellis, Nietzsche and Schopenhauer. He noted that this opinion contradicted the popular view, which he described as 'superficial', of the sexual proclivities of 'savages'.

reconciled and contented under European rule.’⁶⁹ In these cases colonial rule should be limited to the maintenance of (European) life and property, for it was impossible to ‘raise people to our own high cultural level’ without changing what he called their ‘culture potential’, which ‘cannot be modified without modifying blood’.⁷⁰

It may be noted that there was a discursive contrast between missionary and secular positions in general. Missionaries took it for granted that Christianity’s influence was beneficent and would always enhance the protection and welfare of Islanders – even while some were highly complicit in evolutionist reasoning. Burton adopted some elements of a racialised approach, especially the evolutionism inherent in the notion of ‘premature civilisation’. This he defined as ‘civilization [which] has come much too rapidly’, leading to ‘incongruity, patchwork reform, and confusion’ and the imitation of ‘habits and customs of a people with more evolved instincts’.⁷¹ But he never lost sight of the possibility of amelioration inspired by Christianity; he did not share Pitt-Rivers’ assumption either that Islanders’ ‘life-denying’ involvement caused depopulation or that they were incapable of ‘readaptation’. Although Islanders had been weakened by lack of struggle, ‘the Christian Church ... has taken the view that it is her duty to make the unfit fit; and to help the weak to be strong’ – and this was possible.⁷² The position of secular writers varied: they could be supportive like Murray, downright hostile like Pitt-Rivers, or as exemplified by the the scientist Rivers, relativize religion as part of the objective mix of factors in play in depopulation.

⁶⁹ Pitt-Rivers, *Clash of Cultures*, pp. 8, 27. Pitt-Rivers defined ‘culture-potential’ as ‘the capacity to develop ... artistic, scientific or technical skills’, a capacity which was ‘correlated with *racial* not *national* history’ (*Clash of Culture*, pp. 3-4, original emphasis). After reading this volume, it comes as no surprise to learn that George Pitt-Rivers was imprisoned in Britain during World War II as a Mosley sympathiser (Nicholas Shakespeare, *Bruce Chatwin* (London: The Harvill Press, 1999), pp. 180-2). I thank Michael Young for directing me to this reference.

⁷⁰ Pitt-Rivers, *Clash of Culture*, pp. 237-9.

⁷¹ Burton, *Fiji of Today*, pp. 209-210. Burton’s own views were modified between 1910 and the 1920s; see discussion in Chapter 5.

⁷² Burton, *Fiji of Today*, p. 195

The depth of the disagreement between Burton's and Pitt-Rivers' basic premises became clear in 1924 when Pitt-Rivers attended the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science Congress in Adelaide, and made comments which were reported in the *Sydney Morning Herald* as claiming that depopulation was the responsibility of officials, traders and missionaries.⁷³ The subsequent correspondence between Pitt-Rivers and Methodist missionaries John Wheen (the general secretary of the Methodist Missionary Society), William Cox from New Britain and John Burton in the pages of the *Sydney Morning Herald* and the *Missionary Review* moved from trivial arguments about the public status of the disputed lecture, through to controversies over numbers as Cox disputed Pitt-Rivers' figures, pointing out that in the Gazelle peninsula, where missionary presence was longest established, the 'native population showed a marked increase' – a demonstration of missionaries' alacrity to jump to their own defence.⁷⁴

However, the root of the disagreement lay in Pitt-Rivers' latter-day version of the 'Noble Savage' myth. He acknowledged the integrity of indigenous systems and the place of sorcery in maintaining social structures and saw such systems as benign. There is irony in the juxtaposition of his belief in racial determinism with evidence of

⁷³ Letters to *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 September 1924, p. 12; 26 September 1924, p. 7; *Missionary Review*, November 1924, pp. 1-5. Pitt-Rivers' paper as published in the conference proceedings (Pitt-Rivers, 'Problem of Depopulation in the Pacific') was a summary of the arguments later contained in *Clash of Cultures*, and did not contain the comments referred to in the subsequent debate. I surmise that either such comments came in answers following the paper or that he gave a separate unpublished lecture. Pitt-Rivers was a vice-president of the Ethnology and Anthropology section of AAAS and edited the interim report of the section (George Pitt-Rivers, 'Committee on Vital Statistics of Primitive Races', in *Report of the Seventeenth Meeting of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science, Adelaide Meeting 1924*. ed. L. Keith Ward (Adelaide: Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science, 1926)). The son-in-law of the Governor-General, Sir Henry Forster (1920-1925), he gave his address as 'Government House', which may explain the privilege accorded to him in spite of his amateur status.

⁷⁴ *Missionary Review*, November 1924, p. 2. William Cox arrived in New Britain in 1901 and was chairman of the New Britain district from 1912-18, 1924-28 and 1930-33.

sympathy and understanding of the role of the sorcerer (to 'hold the pulse of his tribe and sustain all those subtle influences that go to form the social cement that makes the difference between a community and a horde of men') – yet the two were held together by the assumption that this functioning society was incapable of adapting to new conditions.⁷⁵ Missionary activity was deemed coercive, especially when backed up by government degrees proscribing indigenous practices such as sorcery, and its effects malign as social structures were undermined. Such arguments partly reflected older traders' arguments about the depopulation of the islands. William Wawn, a labour trader in the 1870s and 1880s, while not absolving his own colleagues, claimed that 'missionary Christianity has operated to kill [Islanders] off as surely, perhaps as quickly, as have traders' guns and rum'. Islanders were now so constrained, with the end of 'club law', that they had become 'miserable, sneaking, pitiable wretch[es]', while promiscuity, with the accompanying dangers of disease, remained rife.⁷⁶

Burton and Whéen disagreed that traditional life had been benign. Whéen cited early missionaries' accounts of the evils of sorcery and cannibalism in Papua while Burton sourced similar accounts from Papuan Government publications; for them the 'Ignoble Savage' of traditional times stood in urgent need of Christianity, though both acknowledged that some missionaries had perhaps been overzealous in the banning of inoffensive customs.⁷⁷ Burton also took issue with Pitt-Rivers' assumption that Islanders could not change; rather he felt that the degree to which Islanders had 'accommodated [their] mind[s] so quickly to the new conditions' was 'marvellous'. He rejected the suggestion that Islanders should be 'ring-fenced' by anthropologists desirous of 'specimens that might be exhibited in an ethnological museum' where they might 'be made to support or modify scientific theories'. Islanders were human

⁷⁵ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 October 1924, p. 16; Pitt-Rivers, *Clash of Cultures*, pp. 237-240. Pitt-Rivers claimed to be a disciple of Malinowski, to whom he dedicated his book.

⁷⁶ William T. Wawn, *The South Sea Islanders and the Queensland Labour Trade*, ed. Peter Corris (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1973 (original 1893)), p. 69.

⁷⁷ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 October 1924, p. 11; *Missionary Review*, November 1924, p. 4.

beings, so 'how would we prevent the native from using his freedom and obeying a deep instinct of progress that is not merely western but human?'⁷⁸ Social evolutionism and confidence that the 'instinct of progress' was universal provided a model for progress; non-European societies could take the same route towards civilisation that Europeans had earlier done. The Islanders' decline might be blamed in part on their own inadequacies, irresponsible behaviour and genetic weakness – but these were reversible with training. Pacific societies could learn from the encounter with superior European societies, ran this theory; they could learn western skills and habits – the basis of missionary endeavours in education, both religious and secular, that are examined in this thesis.

Concerned secular writers hovered between the two positions. Basil Thomson, a colonial official in Fiji for ten years, saw disease as the primary cause of depopulation but believed its effects were magnified by the decline of the 'law of custom'. Previously ritual tabus had enforced cleanliness and good childrearing practices and intertribal wars had 'conquered the natural indolence and apathy of the people'; their rejection had encouraged laziness and 'insouciance'.⁷⁹ But Thomson also believed that Fijians were intelligent enough to learn and so with the decay of custom could come education and wealth though following a western model, with training supplied by the missionaries. He concluded that as the British had looked unpromising to the Romans, so there was 'no reason to despair of the ultimate arrival of the Fijians at some degree of physical and moral prosperity'.⁸⁰

Blaming 'Evil Whites'

Unlike Pitt-Rivers and Wawn, Thomson did not blame missionaries for the 'decay of custom', for by 1840

the native civilization - for such it is fair to call it - had been so marred by the influence

⁷⁸ *Missionary Review*, November 1924, p. 3.

⁷⁹ Basil Thomson, *The Fijians: A Study of the Decay of Custom* (London: William Heinemann, 1908), pp. 387-8, 2.

⁸⁰ Thomson, *The Fijians*, pp. xviii, 390.

of worthless Europeans and the introduction of firearms that the people groaned under a system of continual war, barbarity and oppression under which no people could increase.⁸¹

Shifting responsibility for any and all malign effects of western civilisation to 'evil whites' – variously beachcombers, traders or labour recruiters – was a recurring motif in the writings of missionaries and others which also continued the denial of indigenous agency. It complicated the Noble/Ignoble savage dichotomy and made victims of Islanders, as it moved responsibility for depopulation and other evils away from both indigenous custom and missionary initiatives onto a third party but still victimized 'natives'. Frank Paton's general book on Pacific missions, *The Kingdom in the Pacific* (1913) demonstrates the weighting often given to the various causes of depopulation, with a dominant role allocated to 'evil whites'.⁸² Drawing on his experience 'since boyhood', Paton first discussed the 'causes operating independently of the white man' - 'indolence, leading to the decay of bodily and mental powers', infanticide, witchcraft, war and 'licentiousness' – no noble savages here, nor much indigenous agency. Other causes operated 'through the coming of the white man': disease, alcohol, firearms which made war 'much more deadly, and taking away the incentive to the development of physical prowess', the labour trade, the 'encouragement of immorality' and 'the numbing influence of the conviction that the black race is doomed, that it is useless to struggle against the inevitable'.

While the first group of causes might have been sufficient to cause decline, the second list undoubtedly 'tremendously accelerated the death-rate of the natives'. The 'greed of individual white men and the laxity of the governing authorities' allowed the proliferation of firearms and alcohol and the continuation of recruiting; it should be the task of governments to control them.⁸³ Missionary complaints about the wicked ways of non-mission whites corrupting new converts – sometimes the subject

⁸¹ Thomson, *The Fijians*, p. 389.

⁸² Frank H.L. Paton, *The Kingdom in the Pacific* (London: Young People's Missionary Movement, 1913). For further discussion of Frank Paton's views in the 1910s and 1920s see chapter 9.

⁸³ Paton, *Kingdom in the Pacific*, pp. 122-4.

of internal grumbling, sometimes of official complaint – had a long history.⁸⁴ Rev S.B. Fellows, writing from the Methodist mission on Kiriwina in 1895, complained to his superiors that traders encouraged Sabbath-breaking, enticing his congregation to fish for pearls on Sundays – a situation exacerbated when particularly good pearls were found one Sunday.⁸⁵ William Bennett and John Burton appealed to the Fiji Government in 1910 to disallow a planned ‘licensed hotel’ at Rewa, on the grounds that it would be too close to the mission station and school ‘with their large native population’ and too far from the police station for adequate supervision.⁸⁶

Some missionaries were on good terms with local white traders; John Goldie for example relied on the hospitality and assistance of traders in setting up his mission on the Roviana lagoon in 1902.⁸⁷ But rather more typical was the appalled attitude of Margaret Paton who, hearing that officers of the Royal Navy were about to visit her husband’s mission station, rushed to change into her ‘best muslin with black velvet bows’, only to discover that her visitors were actually ‘two villainous Slavers, with nothing on but old nether garments and woollen shirts!’⁸⁸ There is evident here a strong element of class prejudice, but the ‘Slavers’ were the subject of particular

⁸⁴ For further discussion of this point see chapter 4.

⁸⁵ *Missionary Review*, August 1895, p. 3.

⁸⁶ Bennett and Burton to Colonial Secretary, Suva, 16 November 1910, file MOM 108, Methodist Missionary Society Archives (MMSA), Mitchell Library, Sydney. Some missionaries had more idiosyncratic concerns about Western imports: Durrad believed the wearing of clothes was the ‘greatest ... of all the evil customs introduced by civilisation’ (Durrad, ‘Depopulation of Melanesia’, p. 7).

⁸⁷ The location of the first mission house, the islet of Nusa Songga, was a gift from the trader Kelly and the purchase of land for the later station at Kokenggolo was facilitated by the traders Wickham and Wheatley. Relations deteriorated as Goldie’s own developing commercial enterprises rivalled those of the older-established traders (Kim Byron Jackson, *Tie Hokara, Tie Vaka; Black Man, White Man: A Study of the New Georgia Group to 1925* (PhD thesis, Australian National University, 1978), pp. 148-150; John Garrett, *Footsteps in the Sea: Christianity in Oceania to World War II* (Geneva/Suva: World Council of Churches/University of the South Pacific, 1992), p. 78.

⁸⁸ James Paton, *Letters and Sketches from the New Hebrides by Maggie Whitecross Paton* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1894), pp. 305-6. This incident took place on Aniwa in 1879.

approbation, for as seen in Chapter 2, the Christian humanitarian attack on slavery was of long standing. Its extension to the debate over indenture is the subject of the next two chapters. Suffice it here to examine the relationship developed by missionary critics between recruitment and depopulation, only one of several arguments against indenture.

One of the earliest forceful exponents of this view was John Inglis, Presbyterian missionary in the New Hebrides, who argued that the labour traffic to Queensland was 'fast depopulating the islands and exterminating the natives'. He claimed that the drain of the able-bodied males from the western Pacific had been around 10,000 per year for the previous five years. He continued:

Allowing these to be a fifth of the population, we have 200,000 people deprived of their principal bread-winner. How society must be deranged by such a process! On the islands how much must the birth-rate be reduced, and how much the mortality of the young, the aged and the helpless be augmented, while the death-rate on the plantations is amazingly increased!⁸⁹

His figures may well be exaggerated and he underestimated of the role of women in food-production, but his was a frequent missionary complaint. John Paton from the New Hebrides claimed that 'hundreds of the best and most hopeful Native Helpers have been seduced as Kanakas to the Sugar Plantations – and the Missionary and the Islanders alike regard them as virtually dead; so very few will ever return!'⁹⁰ Several of the writers in Rivers' volume agreed that recruiting was exacerbating depopulation. Rivers himself opposed labour recruitment: it removed from the islands the reproductive cohort, it tended to spread disease, undermined mission efforts and 'fails to give that interest in life which ... forms the most essential factor in maintaining the health of a people'.⁹¹ The motives of the visiting Swiss doctor Felix Speiser for opposing recruitment were more mixed: the loss of 'the flower of the people' was a

⁸⁹ John Inglis, *In the New Hebrides: Reminiscences of Missionary Life and Work Especially on the Island of Aneityum from 1850 Till 1877* (London: T. Nelson and Sons, 1887), p. 216-7.

⁹⁰ John G. Paton, *John G. Paton D.D.: Missionary to the New Hebrides - an Autobiography*, ed. James Paton, Popular edition in one volume (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1900), p. 493.

⁹¹ Rivers, 'The Psychological Factor', p. 106

drain islands could not sustain, but recruitment also undermined local authority when it was used as an escape from indigenous punishment for wrongdoing.⁹² The Methodist missionary Ballantyne on Bwaidoga in the D'Entrecasteaux archipelago expressed concern over the level of labour recruitment, fearing that depopulation would be 'inevitable result of such a course'; even one recruiter thought the D'Entrecasteaux islands needed 'a rest' for five years as they were 'worked out'.⁹³

Dr Ramsay Smith's claim in 1913, addressing the Royal Geographical Society in Adelaide, that 'race degeneracy and extermination' in the New Hebrides originated with Sabbath observance and with missionary discouragement of war, head-hunting and indigenous marriage customs, raised objections from Anglican Bishop Wilson of Melanesia. Wilson countered by blaming depopulation on head-hunting, the labour traffic and disease, mainly caused by traders. 'Much of the evil is due to the white man', he concluded, 'but what white man?' Islanders who were coaxed from Tanna to Queensland or New Caledonia returned with guns and dysentery, both capable of causing havoc; rather, where population was increasing, this was 'sure to be due to the influence of the "new religion"'. In blaming white men for the decrease, commentators must be careful not to 'put the saddle on the wrong horse'.⁹⁴ By the 1920s, however, recruitment to Queensland and Fiji had been stopped and most labourers were recruited for the plantations of New Hebrides and New Caledonia. Anglophone missionaries and humanitarians, in opposing indenture, could then focus on the most 'evil' of the South Pacific's whites – French ones. Missionaries in the New Hebrides, both Anglican and Presbyterian, believed that French regulations to prevent abuse of the system were inadequate and advocated British rule in the New

⁹² Felix Speiser, 'Decadence and Preservation in the New Hebrides', in *Essays on the Depopulation of Melanesia*, ed. W.H.R. Rivers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922) pp. 42-44.

⁹³ MMSA Annual Report 1911, p. 121. The Methodist mission Synod also campaigned to end recruitment in the Goodenough islands from fear of depopulation (Michael Young, "'The Best Workmen in Papua": Goodenough Islands and the Labour Trade 1900-1960' *Journal of Pacific History* 18, no. 2, pp. 74-95 (1983)).

⁹⁴ *ABM Review*, December 1913, pp. 154-5.

Hebrides. Durrad regarded recruitment as 'a great source of depopulation' and claimed that, unlike the British, French traders used 'violence and craft to get recruits',⁹⁵ using, as we shall see, the same arguments against French recruitment that earlier anti-indenture campaigners had used against the British trade. In 1911 Durrad wrote a scathing account of French recruiting methods in the Torres Islands (northern New Hebrides), claiming that to take able-bodied people from the already depopulated islands was 'a crime'. For it was 'beneath the tri-colour' that 'acts of infamous inhumanity' were 'committed with complacency' and this, coupled with disease, made Durrad fear that 'extinction cannot be far distant'.⁹⁶

Frank Paton, following in his father's footsteps, waged a pamphlet war in Australia for the annexation of the New Hebrides by Britain,⁹⁷ using claims that the French were careless of native rights as his main argument. French settlers infringed native land rights⁹⁸ and kept indentured labourers, who had death rate of 30-40%, past their time; French ships were still kidnapping recruits.⁹⁹ Edward Jacomb, an English lawyer in Port Vila, took a similar line. He advocated limited commercial development of the islands but believed that too much led to undue labour recruiting which was little better than slavery and to the loss of too much land. Either of these

⁹⁵ Durrad, 'Depopulation of Melanesia', pp. 12-14.

⁹⁶ *ABM Review*, June 1911, pp. 44-5. Dorothy Shineberg also suggested that French recruiting for New Caledonia was 'the most lawless' in the Pacific from the mid 1870s and that, although regulations to control it were passed in 1893, they were rarely enforced. (Dorothy Shineberg, *The People Trade: Pacific Island Laborers and New Caledonia, 1865-1930* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999), pp. 45, 62-65).

⁹⁷ See also Roger C. Thompson, 'Commerce, Christianity and Colonialism: The Australasian New Hebrides Company, 1883-1897' *Journal of Pacific History* 6, pp. 25-38 (1971); Roger C. Thompson, *Australian Imperialism in the Pacific: The Expansionist Era 1820-1920* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1980) on the campaign waged in Victorian Presbyterian circles for the British (or Victorian) annexation of the New Hebrides.

⁹⁸ Frank H.L. Paton, *Australian Interests in the Pacific* (Melbourne: Arbuckle, Waddell and Fawckner, 1906).

⁹⁹ Frank H.L. Paton, *Slavery under the British Flag* (Melbourne: Brown, Prior and Co, 1914) pp. 4,15.

would lead to depopulation, and the French were unwilling to control either.¹⁰⁰

The dangers of depopulation were uppermost too in the thinking of Administrator Murray when, within Papua, he banned lengthy indenture and limited the number who could recruit from any one area.¹⁰¹ The most likely policy to 'stabilise the native race and save it from disintegration' was, Murray believed, the development of village plantations of coconuts, vegetables and rice, while Christianity would be 'a useful moral and social force'.¹⁰² Writing after the publication of Rivers' collection, Murray agreed that Islanders needed a new 'zest' to life, which he did not think would be provided by indentured labour. Rather, reliance on agriculture on Islanders' own land, 'encouraged' by a head tax system, would 'save the race', as long as the guardians of village traditional life, the women, remained. Women could not be recruited for plantation work and men were only allowed to be absent for limited periods, three year in 1906, later with a cumulative maximum of four years. The supposed 'pretty picture' of family groups living happily on sheltered plantations was rejected, since under it Papuans would 'degenerate into a landless peasantry' which could not be to their long term advantage.¹⁰³ Population growth was further encouraged by 'baby bonuses' and exemption from taxation for parents of four children and by 1929 Murray was happy to report that in most districts 35-50% of the

¹⁰⁰ Edward Jacomb, *The Future of the Kanaka* (London: P.S. King and Sons Ltd, 1919). Jacomb, a bilingual long-term resident of the New Hebrides, was a member of the British administration of the islands from 1911 to the 1920s. He was consistently critical of the French Administration, especially their treatment of the indigenous people, called *canagues* by the French.

¹⁰¹ The maximum indenture rate in Papua was fixed in 1909 at 2 out of 5 able-bodied males, or 10% of the total population. In fact, the actual figures of 5,585 in 1910 and 6,686 in 1915 were well below this proportion. (Territory of Papua Annual Report 1909-1910, pp. 30-32; Annual Report 1915-16, p. 26).

¹⁰² Murray, *The Population Problem in Papua*, pp. 8-9.

¹⁰³ Hubert Murray, *Native Labour in Papua* (London: The Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society, 1929); Hubert Murray, 'Australian Policy in Papua', in *Studies in Australian Affairs*, ed. Persia Campbell, R.C. Mills, and G.V. Portus (Melbourne: Institute of Pacific Relations/Melbourne University Press, 1928), pp. 249-253.

population was aged under fifteen, auguring well for future population growth.¹⁰⁴

Murray, in common with many of the missionaries, drew a clear distinction between indentured labour on other people's land, and vigorous agricultural labour on village lands. The former was generally viewed as destructive of islander populations, the latter its salvation.

The case was stated with clarity by Benjamin Danks, General Secretary of the Australasian Methodist Missionary Society, in a general article entitled 'Missions and the Labour Problem' in 1912. He wrote:

To teach the natives to work is necessary for their preservation. Next to, and indeed together with, the preaching of the Gospel of Salvation through Jesus Christ, the Gospel of Work must be strenuously taught ... The somewhat active life of the pagan must not be so relaxed under Christian teaching, as to encourage laziness, or even to allow it. At the same time, a sufficiency of work should go hand in hand with proper opportunities for mental progress, and unless this is so, the deteriorating effect of work, and only work, will be seen in a dwindling manhood.

It is at this point that the interests of the Christian Church come into view. It is her work and her glory to promote the growth of character in all that is manly and true, and if engagement in plantation work prevents that growth, or only improves men as working machines rather than as thinking human souls, she has a right to make her voice heard.¹⁰⁵

The work which would allow 'mental progress' and 'the growth of character' would not be found within indenture. But it could develop within a Christian community, guided by missionaries. As Frank Paton put it, depopulation was caused by 'the indolence and sin of the black man, combined with the evil qualities of the white man'.¹⁰⁶ It was the task of the churches to change the character of the black man by 'arresting' the 'forces of moral and spiritual decay' through the development of industrious Christian individuals and communities, as I shall investigate in Chapters

¹⁰⁴ Territory of Papua, *The Native Labour Ordinance of 1906*; Murray, 'Population Problem', p. 9; 'Native Labour' p. 7. J.H.P. Murray, *Native Administration in Papua* (Port Moresby: Government Printer, 1929), p. 45.

¹⁰⁵ *Missionary Review*, June 1912, pp. 2-3.

¹⁰⁶ Paton, *Kingdom in the Pacific*, p. 125.

6, 7 and 8. It was the task of governments to stop the white exploitation of indenture, and the two should go hand in hand. In practice, however, missionaries had to pressure governments to end indenture, the subject of Chapters 4 and 5, before missions could effectively carry out their own part in the 'saving of a noble race'.

Chapter Four

The place of indentured Pacific labour in Queensland 1870-1910

The recruitment of South West Pacific Islanders to work in the sugar fields of Queensland between the 1870s and the early years of the twentieth century was a controversial matter. It was advocated by sugar interests – planters, capitalists and their political supporters – as the only way to acquire and maintain an adequate labour force capable of working in the hot and humid conditions of northern Queensland. It was opposed by two groups. ‘Christian Humanitarians’ saw indenture as sharing elements of ‘force and fraud’ with slavery and hence opposed it, replicating the abolitionist campaign against the Atlantic slave trade.¹ These campaigners followed the usual Evangelical attitudes to human difference which emphasised equality before God and essential human similitude, even if in paternalist mode. White workers and small sugar farmers also advocated an end to Melanesian indenture, seeing it as an impediment to their own employment at higher wages. Their propaganda promoted racially-determinist ideas, saw non-Europeans in Queensland as a threat and advocated a White Australia policy. Yet these two groups could find themselves in alliance, even though Christian campaigners, in linking with white workers to end indenture to fulfil the imperatives of Christian humanitarianism, might be forced in doing so to subvert normal Evangelical attitudes to human difference. Conversely, proponents of indentured labour attempted to use arguments citing the unity of mankind. To add to the complexity, also at issue was the nature of the colony of Queensland – were whites of moderate means in small-scale enterprises or a segregated plantation economy to predominate?

¹ See chapter 2 for an examination of the Christian humanitarian arguments against slavery.

Most recent studies of the Queensland labour trade have investigated the indentured labour system in terms of the freedom or lack of freedom of workers. Some have debated, sometimes with considerable acrimony, the level of Melanesian agency as opposed to European coercion, and have considered the validity of the comparison with slavery.² Others have looked at the general political economy of the system.³ Some work has been done on the responses of white workers to the system.⁴ This chapter examines missionary, and more generally Evangelical, attitudes to use of Melanesian indentured labour in Queensland. The debates in which Evangelicals involved themselves lie on the intersection of two quite distinct, if sometimes linked, discourses. In their cross-cutting may be seen some of the disjunctures in colonial discourse discussed by Cooper and Stoler and by Nicholas Thomas, demonstration of

² See Tom Brass, 'The Return of 'Merrie Melanesia': A Comment on a Review of a Review' *Journal of Pacific History* 31, no. 2, pp. 215-23 (1996); Peter Corris, *Passage, Port and Plantation: A History of Solomon Islands Labour Migration 1870-1914* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1973); Clive Moore, *Kanaka: A History of Melanesian Mackay* (Port Moresby: University of Papua New Guinea Press, 1984); Doug Munro, 'Revisionism and Its Enemies: Debating the Queensland Labour Trade (Review Article)' *Journal of Pacific History* 30, no. 2, pp. 240-49 (1995); Kay Saunders, 'Masters and Servants : The Queensland Sugar Workers' Strike 1911', in *Who Are Our Enemies?: Racism and the Australian Working Class*, ed. Ann Curthoys and Andrew Markus, pp. 96-111 (Sydney: Hale and Iremonger, 1978); Kay Saunders, 'The Workers' Paradox: Indenture System in the Queensland Sugar Industry to 1920', in *Indenture Systems in the British Empire 1834-1920*, ed. Kay Saunders, pp. 213-59 (London/Canberra: Croom Helm, 1984).

³ E.g., Adrian Graves, *Cane and Labour: The Political Economy of the Queensland Sugar Industry, 1862-1906* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993).

⁴ See Alan Birch, 'The Implementation of the White Australia Policy in the Queensland Sugar Industry, 1901-12' *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 11, no. 2, pp. 198-210 (1965); Adrian Graves, 'The Abolition of the Queensland Labour Trade: Politics or Profits', in *Essays in the Political Economy of Australian Capitalism*, ed. E.L. Wheelwright and Ken Buckley, pp. 41-57 (Sydney: Australia and New Zealand Book Company, 1980); Joe Harris, 'The Struggle against Pacific Island Labour' *Labour History* 15, pp. 40-48 (1968); Doug Hunt, 'Exclusivism and Unionism: Europeans in the Queensland Sugar Industry 1900-10', in *Who Are Our Enemies?: Racism and the Australian Working Class*, ed. Ann Curthoys and Andrew Markus, pp. 80-95 (Sydney: Hale and Iremonger, 1978).

the complexities within the colonial state.⁵ One discourse concerned the suitability of the tropical climate of North Queensland for white settlement and white manual labour. The acclimatisation debate raged throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and, as David N. Livingstone has shown, positions taken in it related to convictions on other issues, especially monogenism and enthusiasm for white settlement.⁶ Cross-cutting this debate was another concerning the nature and acceptability of labour contracts which might be perceived as forced, a debate which had its roots in the evangelical/humanitarian fight against slavery. Between the 1780s and around 1807, the campaign against the Atlantic slave trade, waged in and out of Parliament, dramatically shifted British public opinion. Twenty years of organised campaigning by Quaker and Evangelical abolitionists influenced a new generation in British public life to accept the Christian humanitarian agenda. By the mid nineteenth century, the abolitionist argument against slavery in all its stages had been won and opposition to slavery was seen as a marker of a superior British civilisation. At issue in Queensland was whether and to what degree the institution of indenture was analogous to slavery. I examine the humanitarian impulse in missionary thinking about indenture in Queensland, the oppositional voices from within the Christian churches and the alliances formed by Christian activists in furthering their position.

⁵ Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, eds., *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 1997) pp. 1-55; Nicholas Thomas, 'Partial Texts: Representation, Colonialism and Agency in Pacific History' *Journal of Pacific History* 25, no. 2, pp. 139-158 (1990); Nicholas Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture: Anthropology, Travel and Government* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994). For further discussion, see chapter 1.

⁶ David N. Livingstone, 'Human Acclimatization: Perspectives on a Contested Field of Inquiry in Science, Medicine and Geography' *History of Science* 25, no. 4, pp. 359-94 (1987). See also Warwick Anderson, "'Where Every Prospect Pleases and Only Man Is Vile": Laboratory Medicine as Colonial Discourse' *Critical Inquiry* 18, pp. 506-29 (1992); David N. Livingstone, 'Tropical Climate and Moral Hygiene: The Anatomy of a Victorian Debate' *British Journal of the History of Science* 32, pp. 93-110 (1999); David N. Livingstone, 'Climate's Moral Economy: Science, Race and Place in Post-Darwinian British and American Geography', in *Geography and Empire*, ed. Anne Godlewska and Neil Smith, pp. 132-54 (Oxford: Blackwell Publisher, 1994).

The Development of Queensland

Early colonial governments assumed that Australia was to consist of colonies of white settlement, on the model of New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania. These colonies had small indigenous populations, though achieving control over them might involve war and extirpation. There was plenty of available land, a temperate rather than tropical climate and opportunities for white immigrants of limited means to establish themselves in small-scale enterprises. This, as Richard White has pointed out, was the image of Australia – ‘an idealised Arcadian society, a rural utopia, an Eden before the fall’ – promoted by British enthusiasts for emigration, even though these ‘varied visions of simple swains, pioneering families and well-fed peasantry’ failed to acknowledge Australia’s economic role as a large-scale supplier of raw materials for British industries and domestic development.⁷ Nonetheless the assumption that the vast majority of Australia’s population should be of Anglo-Celtic origin seemed universal. Levels of tolerance towards Chinese varied and the fate of the Aborigines was generally seen as doomed.

However the founding of the separate colony of Queensland in 1859 and the northward movement of settler populations from the 1860s onwards complicated this essentially southern assumption. Funding the colony of Queensland required the development of agriculture, and while the Darling Downs could be developed with temperate crops and animals, climatic conditions further north demanded tropical crops. The cultivation of all the tropical crops considered – cotton, bananas, coffee, sugar – was both capital and labour intensive, especially in the initial phases. Sugar cultivation attracted particular interest, especially after the collapse of Queensland cotton in the late 1860s,⁸ but the necessary bush-clearing, the building of

⁷ On the characteristics of white settler colonies see Richard White, *Inventing Australia: Images and Identity 1688-1980* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1981), pp. 32, 34.

⁸ Graves, *Cane and Labour*, pp. 10-11. The importance of cane sugar cultivation by imperial powers world-wide in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries has been investigated by Peter Macinnis, *Bittersweet: The Story of Sugar* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2002). He noted the voracious demand of the industry for capital and workers, the urgency required in harvesting the highly perishable crop and the intimate link between adequate sugar supplies and social stability in the metropolitan

infrastructure, planting, weeding and harvesting all required large amounts both of cheap land and cheap labour. Elsewhere in the world tropical crops were grown on plantations using labour which was usually non-European and in some degree unfree – slaves, convicts or labourers on various forms of indenture. Labour of any kind was scarce in Queensland, but low labour costs became even more essential as land prices rose. Around Mackay, land prices tripled between 1881 and 1882; only large scale Victorian and British business interests had adequate capital, but still 240,000 acres were sold.⁹ The visiting South Australian minister Langdon Parsons was told in 1883 that £60,000 worth of investment had been required on the Fairleigh estate at Mackay before the first crush of sugar was achieved.¹⁰ To offset such expenses capitalists continually sought the cheapest labour.¹¹ Their solution lay in indentured labourers hired mostly from the Solomon and New Hebridean Islands.¹²

Planters assumed that indenture was the only practical way of engaging non-European labour. Indenture was distinguished by the contract terms offered to labourers: a fixed term, fixed wage, a large proportion of which was often paid only at the end of the contract, and usually a return fare to their point of origin. Most importantly, these provisions were enforceable under the criminal law, not under civil law as were most labour contracts. This was regarded as essential in dealing with workers who had no assets against which civil action could be taken. It was this criminal enforcement, the long terms to the contracts and doubts about whether they were entered into freely and with full knowledge which led critics to designate

centres.

⁹ Graves, *Cane and Labour*, p. 16.

¹⁰ J. Langdon Parsons, *The Sugar Industry in the Mackay District: Notes of a Trip among the Mackay Sugar Plantations: The Coloured Labour Question in Queensland* (Adelaide: Government Printer, 1883), p. 12.

¹¹ Graves, *Cane and Labour*, pp. 16- 27.

¹² Indentured labourers also came in small numbers from the Gilbert and Ellice Islands (see Doug Munro, 'Gilbert and Ellice Islanders on Queensland Canefields 1894-1899' *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland* 14, no. 11, pp. 449-65 (1992)), New Guinea, Java, Ceylon and occasionally from other areas of east and south east Asia.

indentured labour as 'unfree'. However, it had clear attractions to employers, offering predictability of labour supply and predictability in work routines. Under this system the plantation economy thrived. The boom of the early 1880s saw great expansion in land under cane, the number of indentured labourers (11,059 were brought to Queensland in 1881-3¹³) and the total population of the colony. The sheer scale of the larger estates is striking. In 1883 Fairleigh Estate, comprising 2,500 acres, employed 250 Melanesian and 40 European workers as well as 80 horses. The CSR's Homebush estate (13,000 acres) had a rather different racial balance, with 87 Melanesians, 80 Chinese, 120 'Cingalese' and 200 Europeans on the pay roll.¹⁴

A tropical colony, growing tropical crops using indentured non-European labour - Queensland was to some a worrying anomaly. Its climate linked it with Africa, India or Java but in other respects, especially the nature of its majority population, it resembled the southern Australian colonies. This ambivalent position had much in common with the American South, a point noted by contemporary and later commentators. The American comparison, with its recently fought Civil War, highlighted the controversy over Queensland's very nature. Should Queensland be a colony of white settlement with labour and wage standards acceptable to a developing workers' movement, or should it allow coloured labour within a plantation economy, a situation seen by many - after the American experience - as inherently destabilising? As the debates around federation intensified, the Queensland labour supply debate shifted from an internal matter to a question with Commonwealth significance. Writing to celebrate the centenary of the foundation of Queensland, Raphael Cilento saw the fight against Kanaka labour, which he represented as 'not far removed from slavery' and hence Queensland's 'peculiar institution', as the main struggle of the first forty years.¹⁵ Geoffrey Bolton drew parallels between North

¹³ Geoffrey Bolton, *A Thousand Miles Away: A History of North Queensland to 1920* (Brisbane: Jacaranda Press/ ANU, 1963), p. 140.

¹⁴ Parsons, *Sugar Industry in Mackay*, pp. 12-13, 15.

¹⁵ Sir Raphael Cilento and Clem Lack, *Triumph in the Tropics: A Historical Sketch of Queensland* (Brisbane: Smith and Paterson Pty Ltd, 1959), p. 288.

Queensland and both the African colony of Rhodesia and the United States, while Kay Saunders saw Queensland's plantation system 'lock[ing] the northern colony inextricably and securely into the patterns developed in the former slave societies of Mauritius and the Caribbean'.¹⁶

Such a development was contested. From the mid 1880s, the growing white labour force demanded a role in the economic development of the colony, either as small farmers or as wage labourers. They saw the Melanesian indentured labour force as unfair competition and advocated a reorganisation of the sugar industry to accommodate smaller enterprises. They found an ally in Samuel Griffith, who as Liberal Premier of Queensland from 1883 developed policies specifically designed to prevent the growth of a southern American-style privileged planter class.¹⁷ Griffith was influenced by the belief of Henry George that the key to general prosperity lay in the agricultural workforce working their own land in smallholdings, and believed that the Conservative policy of large land grants led to speculation which benefited only the rich. The 1884 Lands Act resumed some already alienated land and re-parcelled it in smaller lots, aiming to bring 'the occupancy of moderate areas within the reach of men of small capital'.¹⁸ Griffith also gave state assistance to new central mills, which from the 1890s enabled co-operatives of small canefarmers to crush their cane without being beholden to the large planters.¹⁹ The white population in Queensland grew rapidly, moving ever further northwards.

¹⁶ Bolton, *Thousand Miles Away*, pp. vii-viii; Kay Saunders, *Workers in Bondage: The Origins and Bases of Unfree Labour in Queensland, 1824-1916* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1982), p. 40.

¹⁷ Roger B. Joyce, *Samuel Walker Griffith* (St Lucia: Queensland University Press, 1984), p. 93.

¹⁸ Joyce, *Samuel Walker Griffith*, pp. 93-4; www.henrygeorge.org.uk/hgbiog.htm.

¹⁹ Bolton, *Thousand Miles Away*, pp. 145-157. Further details can be found in Graves, 'Abolition of the Queensland Labour Trade'; Adrian Graves, 'Colonialism and Indenture System Migration in the Western Pacific 1840-1915', in *Colonialism and Migration: Indenture System before and after Slavery*, ed. P.C. Emmer, pp. 237-259 (Dordrecht/Boston/Lancaster: Martinus Nijhoff Press, 1986); Graves, *Cane and Labour*; Hunt, 'Exclusivism and Unionism'; Saunders, *Workers in Bondage*; Saunders, 'The Workers' Paradox'.

The shift to a central milling system made sugar work more inviting for white workers, either as a 'yeomanry' owning small farms, or as free employees rather than gang labour. This was more acceptable both to the workers themselves and to white society in general.²⁰ Graves suggested that hostility to Islanders grew as the central mill/small farm system developed, since Islanders were now competing much more directly with white labour, especially in the off-season. The hostility was partly based in fears that the integrity of the trades union movement was threatened by unfree labour, since the nature of indenture contracts enforced by criminal powers prohibited industrial action, so that Islanders were 'non unionisable'.²¹ The very presence of indentured labour stimulated white workers to organise through trades unions in defence of white employment.²²

The union attitude to the challenge of non-European labour was summarised in a cartoon published in the *Worker* in May 1892 (Figure 2). As far as white unions were concerned, indenture was a means to a capitalist end which left white labourers unwanted at the wages they believed they were entitled to. Unions argued that for the sugar industry to claim that it could not 'afford white wages' was ridiculous when a 20% dividend was paid to shareholders. The real problem was the Colonial Sugar Refining Company's monopoly; if proper white wages were paid, then CSR would have a choice of either passing the cost on to the consumer or reducing profits, either of which was quite acceptable to the *Worker*. South Sea Island and Asian labour was 'silently but surely degrading the white working class to an Asiate level' of wages and conditions.²³ As Doug Hunt noted, the labour movement in Queensland saw 'brotherhood, solidarity and the right to work' as the 'exclusive preserve of a homogenous group of white, predominantly British, workers'.²⁴ European workers

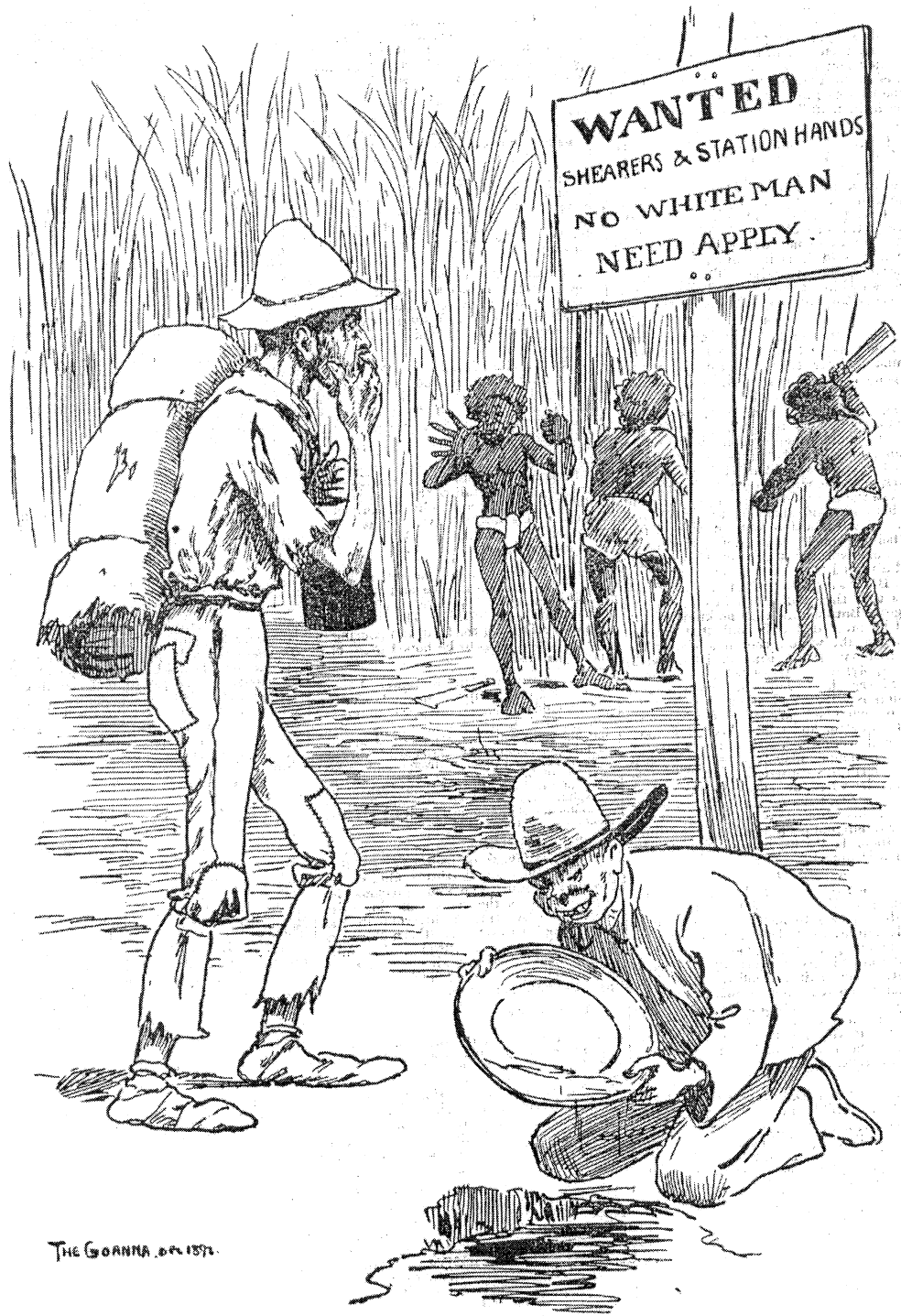
²⁰ Saunders, 'The Workers' Paradox'.

²¹ Graves, 'Abolition of the Labour Trade'; Graves, *Cane and Labour*, p. 57.

²² Saunders, 'The Workers' Paradox'.

²³ *Worker*, 26 January 1901, pp. 2, 10.

²⁴ Hunt, 'Exclusivism and Unionism', p. 80.



THE BUSHMAN'S FUTURE.

Figure 2: The fears of white labourers concerning the availability of work for them – rather than their inability to do heavy manual labour in the heat of north Queensland – are exemplified in this cartoon.

Brisbane *Worker*, 14 May 1892, p. 1.

avoided field work because of the association with indentured labour, low wages and poor conditions (complaints about having to live in 'kanaka huts' were frequent²⁵) – they did not reject it at the higher wages made possible by the £2 Federal sugar bounty introduced in 1901. Noting reports that white cane workers in the Clarence district (north NSW) were earning £60 per week, the *Worker* commented approvingly: 'That's better than allowing a lot of coloured aliens to do the work and take the money out of Australia.'²⁶ Though the uptake of the bounty was slower in the more northern districts, this appears to have been because of employer, rather than worker reluctance.²⁷

The changes in the sugar industry were described in moderate tones in Walter Maxwell's *Report upon some factors relating to the Cane Sugar Industry of Australia* (1901) commissioned by the Federal government. Maxwell saw as desirable and irreversible the trends already well under way towards the central milling system and an increased white labour force. The new form of ownership 'embrace[s] a large number of strong, responsible and progressive white settlers, with families of coming men and women' in the sugar areas.²⁸ In a comment redolent of assumptions of racial superiority, he predicted a tendency 'to substitute lower by higher forms of labour where the conditions of Nature permit', so that the 'Pacific Islander is a relatively declining factor in sugar production in Australia,' but might still be necessary north of Mackay.²⁹

²⁵ E.g. *Worker*, 11 June 1904, p. 9; 5 August 1905, p. 11. See also Saunders, 'Masters and Servants', which discusses employers' use of the Masters and Servants Act against European sugar workers as late as 1911.

²⁶ *Worker*, 2 January 1904, p 7.

²⁷ Hunt, 'Exclusivism and Unionism', p. 87.

²⁸ Walter Maxwell, 'A Report Upon Some Factors Relating to the Cane Sugar Industry of Australia', in *The Sugar Question: A Series of Papers* (Brisbane: Watson, Ferguson and Co, 1901), pp. 33-34.

²⁹ Maxwell, 'Cane Sugar Industry', pp. 67, 50.

The racial debate: can white men work in the tropics?

The assumption that crops suitable for cultivation in North Queensland had to be grown on a plantation model was coupled with racial assumptions about the inability of white men to work or have continuous residence in the tropics. Maxwell gave his caveat concerning the employment of Melanesians north of Mackay because of his belief that the heat and humidity precluded European manual labour in such a climate. Workers would be continuously sweating, causing the stomach to 'become catarrhed', leading to a failure to absorb food and anaemia.³⁰ The idea that defined human groups, distinguished mostly by skin colour, were suited to particular climatic ranges dates back to antiquity, was reinforced by the racial theories of Robert Knox and James Hunt in the mid nineteenth century, and became widely, though as we shall see not universally, accepted.³¹ As Willem Bosch explained in 1844:

We are absolutely certain about the accuracy of our hypothesis: that to every section of mankind is given a particular place by the Lord of Creation which is his Native Land, where all things are so placed as to suit him particularly and thus preserve his race. He cannot trespass the length and breadth of this boundary, without great damage to his health, and danger to his life.

In this fundamentally environmentalist argument, 'races' were assumed to have their own geographic and climatic 'bounded locales' whose transgression could lead to degeneration.³² The exact mechanism for this danger was unclear, encompassing

³⁰ Maxwell, 'Cane Sugar Industry', p. 49.

³¹ Richard Eves, 'Unsettling Settler Colonialism: Debates over Climate and Colonisation in New Guinea, 1875-1914', in *Foreign Bodies: Oceania and Racial Science 1750-1940*, ed. Bronwen Douglas and Chris Ballard (in preparation). See Warwick Anderson, *The Cultivation of Whiteness: Science, Health and Racial Destiny in Australia* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2002), especially chapters 3 and 4, for a recent consideration of the whole debate, also Anderson, "'Where Every Prospect Pleases'"; David Arnold, *The Problem of Nature: Environment, Culture and European Expansion* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), pp.149-153.

³² Cited in Cilento and Lack, *Triumph in the Tropics: A Historical Sketch of Queensland*, p. 422, where Cilento scorned such opinion, describing Bosch as a 'scientist with a singularly appropriate name'. Also cited in R.W. Cilento, 'The Conquest of Climate' *Medical Journal of Australia*, no. April (1933), p. 4. The belief in 'miasmas' and the virtues of cold weather were so widespread they are impossible to attribute definitively.

'miasmas' and a general belief in the virtues of cold weather for mental effort, but this did not diminish the fear that for Europeans to live for long periods in tropical areas was to risk mental degradation, anaemia, sickly children and a host of other rather imprecise ills. Hard manual labour in such conditions endangered European health still further.

As the nineteenth century progressed, imperial imperatives demanded the presence in tropical colonies of a white supervisory cadre, but opinion varied as to whether, and how, Europeans could adapt and acclimatise – a notion shot through with the assumptions of Darwinian natural selection and widely debated with regards to plants and animals – sufficiently to safely live in tropical areas. It was generally assumed that such residence was inherently dangerous, must be hedged around by restrictions, and should preferably be temporary. This situation concerned the social commentator Benjamin Kidd in 1898 as he considered the problem of European control of tropical resources. These were situated in areas in 'a state either of anarchy or of primitive savagery' which would have to be 'governed as a trust for civilization'. Since white men could not acclimatise to the tropics, such administration would require 'a permanently resident European caste cut off from the moral, ethical, political and physical conditions which have produced the European'. Members of such a 'caste' would live and work 'only as a diver lives and works under water', not in their 'true element'.³³ While temporary residence, with suitable precautions, was reluctantly believed possible for those undertaking supervisory or administrative roles, the belief that white men were unable to do hard physical labour in tropical climates was held as axiomatic; plantation or other manual labour had to come from non-European sources. It was widely believed that continuous residence in tropical latitudes posed particular health dangers for women, centred in rather imprecise ways on the reproductive system.³⁴ For the British, such anxieties were felt most strongly in India where a complex mystique developed, complete with social practices such as retreats

³³ Benjamin Kidd, *The Control of the Tropics* (New York: Macmillan, 1898), pp. 15, 53.

³⁴ Dane Kennedy, *Islands of White: Settler Society and Culture in Kenya and Southern Rhodesia, 1890-1939* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1987), pp. 2-5.

to hill stations and the paraphernalia of toupees, spine pads and sunproof roofs – along with the social control and distance inherent in using them.³⁵ For Americans, entering the imperial tropics rather later, the Philippines provided the site for similar anxieties and similar solutions, complete with similar enforcement of social distance.³⁶

The large plantations of northern Queensland operated through precisely such distancing. They could be categorised in sociological terms as ‘total institutions’, with the usual accompanying hierarchy. European workers, mainly in administrative and supervisory roles, came at the top of the hierarchy. Graves and Saunders described the modes of control on the plantation; many of them relied on ways of establishing distance between Islander and employer. The almost universal descriptor of labourers as ‘boys’ used by employers, visitors and commentators implied, as it was meant to, a subservient and inferior status, at its best one of tutelage. The use of pidgin, uniforms, nicknames and disciplinary rituals gave employers what Graves called ‘authoritative demeanour’ aimed at the ‘cultural neutering’ of Islanders.³⁷ A military model of ranks, parades and supervision was used to achieve and maintain discipline.³⁸ The plantation experience was essentially coercive, from the use of the Masters and Servants Act which made breaking the conditions of employment a criminal offence and punishable, through the stringencies and niggardliness of employers’ continual attempts to cut costs, to violence – as ‘effective even when not actually used’.³⁹

³⁵ Dane Kennedy, ‘The Perils of the Midday Sun: Climatic Anxiety in the Colonial Tropics’, in *Imperialism and the Natural World*, ed. John M. MacKenzie, pp. 118-40 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990); Kennedy, *Islands of White*, pp. 109-111; Arnold, *Problem of Nature*, pp. 151-160.

³⁶ Warwick Anderson, ‘Immunities of Empire: Race Disease and the New Tropical Medicine, 1900-1920’ *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 70, no. 1, pp. 94-118 (1996).

³⁷ Graves, *Cane and Labour*, pp. 125-6. See also Munro, ‘Revisionism and its Enemies’.

³⁸ Saunders, ‘Workers’ Paradox’, p. 230. She cited planter Claudius Whish’s opinion that military service in India was ‘indispensable background’ for success as a Queensland planter.

³⁹ Graves, *Cane and Labour*, pp. 129-131.

The belief that Europeans could not acclimatise to tropical climates was, however, never uncontested, as David N. Livingstone noted. During the 1898 debate between Dr Luigi Sambon and Sir Harry Johnston under the auspices of the Royal Geographical Society, a frequent locus of these concerns, Sambon suggested that the most important factor in successful acclimatisation lay in the control of tropical pathogens, that microbes posed more of a threat to white men than climate, and that their control was 'a mere question of hygiene'.⁴⁰ In this he was supported by Sir Patrick Manson, who claimed that germs caused ninety-nine percent of tropical diseases, and that 'successful colonization of tropical lands is entirely a matter of knowledge and of the application of knowledge'.⁴¹ The scientific discoveries of the 1880s to the 1900s – the 1897 discovery of the vectors of malaria transmission by Sir Ronald Ross and Giovanni Grassi, Sambon's own work on sleeping sickness, Joseph Bancroft's investigations into filariasis⁴² – changed the dynamics of the debate. The greater acceptance of parasites and bacteria as the main threats to human, especially European, health in the tropics can be seen in the publication of Manson's *Tropical Diseases* (1898)⁴³ and the founding of Schools of Tropical Medicine in London and Liverpool. What Anderson called the 'new contagionist tropical medicine', waged against pathogens through the laboratory and the scientific paper,⁴⁴ aimed to render the tropics safe for colonisation.

Yet the victory of germ theory was not complete. In 1905 Major Charles Woodruff of the US Army published *The Effects of Tropical Light on White Men*, a widely discussed work in which he exposed the dangers of 'actinic rays' which could cause

⁴⁰ Livingstone, 'Tropical Climate and Moral Hygiene', pp. 109, 104..

⁴¹ Livingstone, 'Tropical Climate and Moral Hygiene', p. 95. Manson founded the London School of Tropical Medicine in 1899 and instigated crucial experimental research on malarial mosquito vectors, despite later arguments with Ross.

⁴² Livingstone, 'Tropical Climate and Moral Hygiene'; Cilento, *Triumph in the Tropics*, pp. 430-1.

⁴³ Patrick Manson, *Tropical Diseases: A Manual of the Diseases of Warm Climates* (London: Cassell, 1898). This work has been repeatedly revised and reprinted; see, for example, C.E.P. Manson-Behr and F.I.C. Apter, *Manson's Tropical Diseases*, 18th ed. (London: Bailliere Tindall, 1982).

⁴⁴ Anderson, "'Where Every Prospect Pleases'", p. 515.

'exhaustion, loss of memory, asepsia, neurasthenia, several obscure skin diseases and some curious fevers'.⁴⁵ These 'actinic rays'⁴⁶ consisted of photochemically active radiation which caused mental and physical and mental damage to the fair-skinned through over-stimulating the nerve endings just under the skin. Thus, using a different scientific discourse based not on biology but on new advances in physics, the 'climatic peril' of the tropics was re-asserted. Even Sir Patrick Manson, advocate of the pathogen school of tropical hygiene, was impressed, accepting that 'actinic rays' could penetrate and damage the body, or could paralyse and destroy the nerve cells of Europeans.⁴⁷ Nor did either of these scientifically-based climatic theories remove the requirements for moral vigilance. Temperance and restraint, avoidance of 'imprudence, venery and misdemeanour', were still emphasised by all sides of the debate, if now expressed in the practical care required to use a mosquito net correctly, or the supervision of the kitchen work of domestic servants. There was also a new emphasis on toupees and spine pads, and experiments concerning the protective capacities of red, orange and striped underwear.⁴⁸ All this was necessary if the tropics,

⁴⁵ Woodruff, *The Effects of Tropical Light on White Men*, cited in Matthew Macfie, *Are the Laws of Nature Transgressed or Obeyed by the Continuous Labour of White Man in the Tropics?* (Melbourne: Thomas Urquhart, not dated), p. 24. Internal evidence places the date of Macfie's pamphlet between 1909 and 1916.

⁴⁶ The OED definition makes it clear that 'actinic' was used as a photographic term from 1844, and that this remained its primary meaning. Medical use of the term reflects that emphasis; J.S.C. Elkington, attempting to counter Woodruff's claims, suggested that 'the colouring matter of the blood would serve as an adequate protection from any effects of this nature, *after the fashion of a photographer's red screen*' (J.S.C. Elkington, *Tropical Australia: Is It Suitable for a White Working Race?* (Melbourne: Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, 1905), p. 4 (my emphasis)). Dane Kennedy noted that Woodruff had grasped the import of recent research into X-rays: that invisible rays could penetrate human tissue ('Perils of the Midday Sun', p. 122). Yarwood also noted that Woodruff's concerns were justified, though his opponents, primarily Elkington and Cilento, strenuously denied the possibility of radiation damage to the skin – even though Cilento contracted skin cancers (A.T. Yarwood, 'Sir Raphael Cilento and "The White Man in the Tropics"', in *Healing and Health in Tropical Australia and Papua New Guinea*, ed. Roy MacLeod and Donald Denoon, (Townsville: James Cook University, 1991), pp. 54-55).

⁴⁷ Kennedy, *Islands of White*, p. 110.

⁴⁸ Kennedy, 'Perils of the Midday Sun', pp. 122-3; Anderson, "'Every Prospect Pleases'", p. 522.

a place 'habitually presented as a moral arena', were not to be a place of European downfall and degeneration.⁴⁹

Both sides in this debate found supporters in Queensland – but with a difference. While to British and American writers climatic adaptation had imperial significance, for Queenslanders the issue had daily relevance. David Arnold examined the way the tropical regions of the world were constructed as 'other', as alternately an 'alluring dream of opulence and exuberance' and 'an alien world of cruelty and disease'.⁵⁰ Yet for Queenslanders the tropical world was home; if they were to promote white settlement of northern Queensland their task was to naturalise the exotic other. Thus the linking of theories of climatic adaptability and beliefs about the nature of white settlement, monogenism and the potential for human adaptability, noted in the metropolitan debate,⁵¹ was even more pressing in the debate over Queensland. Promoters of the plantation economy and indentured labour justified their position with arguments about the dangers of the tropical north for whites. Matthew Macfie introduced and developed Woodruff's views in his address to the Royal Geographic Society of Australasia:

Daily exposure to tropical light and heat for a lengthened period must, sooner or later, undermine the average constitution of white men ... [They will] perish within a few generations, [or] ... they are certain to become coloured themselves under nature's beneficent arrangement for protecting them, if possible, from the doom which inevitably overtakes most white persons who rashly ignore the climatic conditions in which alone their life can be prolonged.⁵²

When Dr Tom Nisbet of Townsville lamented in 1911 that in North Australia the white population would dwindle away to 'a few highly neurotic, anaemic people, incapable of reproducing their species,'⁵³ he was expressing Woodruff's fear that the

⁴⁹ Livingstone, 'Tropical Climate and Moral Hygiene', p. 104

⁵⁰ Arnold, *The Problem of Nature*, p. 142.

⁵¹ Livingstone, 'Human Acclimatization',

⁵² Macfie, *Are the Laws of Nature Transgressed*, p. 7.

⁵³ Quoted in Lorraine Harloe, 'Anton Breinl and the Australian Institute of Tropical Medicine', in *Healing and Health in Tropical Australia and Papua New Guinea*, ed. Roy MacLeod and Donald

effects of 'actinic' rays included general degeneration, moral, mental and physical. Dr Aherne at the Adelaide Medical Congress of 1908 also claimed that 'mental degeneracy' was higher than usual in white families in north Queensland.⁵⁴

This was no theoretical debate: the nature of the colony of Queensland was at stake. Initial high mortality rates in the colony began to drop after 1885, as sanitation improvements in the towns began slowly to have effect.⁵⁵ But the greatest improvements were in the south of the colony. If the white working class, small farmers and prospectors were to make a claim to the tropical north, they had to challenge climatic limitations and prove that they were as capable as Melanesians to do physical labour in hot climates. From the 1890s workers appropriated racialised contamination theories, seeing Melanesians as health risks. They were 'physical and moral wrecks ... filling the air with social disease germs more deadly than influenza and leprosy', for which they were also responsible.⁵⁶ Reports of cases of leprosy and plague focussed on the link with 'alien labour'⁵⁷ and veiled references to venereal disease were common. Morality was reportedly lax amongst the Melanesian labourers; wives were bought and sold for £5 on the expiry of a man's contract and prostitution was rife, as were 'foul diseases'. Indentured workers not only put health at risk, they also threatened racial purity, with fears of a 'piebald nation'.⁵⁸ Another writer put the issue with uncompromising hyperbole: 'It is now for Australia to say whether she will allow the black trait to foul her white body and degrade her to

Denoon (Townsville: James Cook University, 1991), p. 37.

⁵⁴ Macfie, *Are the Laws of Nature Transgressed*, p. 23.

⁵⁵ Helen R. Woolcock, "'Our Salubrious Climate': Attitude to Health in Colonial Queensland", in *Disease, Medicine and Empire: Perspectives on Western Medicine and the Experience of European Expansion*, ed. Roy Macleod and Milton Lewis, pp. 176-93 (London and New York: Routledge, 1988). Woolcock probably under-estimated the controversy about the climate of the colony and the level of support for non-European workers in northern Queensland.

⁵⁶ *Worker*, 21 May 1892, p. 2. See also Hunt 'Excluivism and Unionism', pp. 80-81.

⁵⁷ *Worker*, 16 February 1901, p. 3; 30 March 1901, p. 13.

⁵⁸ *Worker*, 16 February 1901, p. 3.

inconceivable depths'.⁵⁹ Holiday riots, as at Bundaberg in 1901, when a thousand labourers confronted the police and five were arrested,⁶⁰ were rare occurrences but they received a great deal of publicity. The image of the unrestrained savage who might attack innocent Queensland maidens was frequently evoked.

By accepting contamination as the real danger in North Queensland and locating it in the bodies of Melanesians who contaminated the physical and moral spheres, white workers could argue that the climate in itself was not inimical to white labour. Central to this argument was the role of mining. To the goldfields developed between 1865 and 1880 – Palmer, Ethridge, Charters Towers, Ravenswood – rushed thousands of white and Chinese prospectors.⁶¹ Disease, food shortages, hostility from Aboriginal groups, and tensions between Europeans and Chinese made white miners' lives difficult, but there was little evidence that climatic factors *per se* affected them particularly badly. From 1882, when the first shafts were sunk at Charters Towers, white miners worked underground.⁶² A.S.U. Gilbert argued for white workers in the sugar industry by claiming that he had successfully worked on the Ethridge goldfields in the 1870s 'when a man had to put up with all sorts of hardships that he doesn't meet with now [1892]; and hundreds of others did the same'.⁶³ Mining and associated industries helped break the climatic stereotype, so that in 1901 the *Worker* could ask:

If the white man can only perform the work in sugar mills under 'strain and difficulty', how comes it that he manages to do the work in quartz mills, meat works, shops, factories, steamers and in all the other various other fields of northern industry without being similarly affected? If it is true that he is 'practically unfit' to do these things in the sugar industry, it must also be true that he is practically unfit to do them in other industries.⁶⁴

⁵⁹ *Worker*, 9 February 1901, p. 6.

⁶⁰ *Worker*, 5 January 1901, p. 5.

⁶¹ For details see Bolton, *A Thousand Miles Away*, chaps. 3, 6.

⁶² Bolton, *A Thousand Miles Away*, p. 122.

⁶³ *Worker*, 7 May 1892, p. 1.

⁶⁴ *Worker*, 24 August 1901, p. 2.

In their preoccupation with contamination from Melanesians, both by physical germs and moral degradation, workers' newspapers were anticipating the scientific community. In 1905 J.S.C. Elkington's scientific discussion of the 'physical possibility of a considerable white population working and thriving in Tropical Australia' was published as a Parliamentary Paper. Elkington believed that the main dangers of the tropics lay in alcohol, in the presence of a 'contaminating' black population with 'injurious habits' and inadequate hygiene which allowed dysentery and similar ailments to persist. Climate was a real issue only in so far as germs thrived in hot places. Control could be achieved by quarantine (against weak and infected white migrants as well as non-whites), malaria nets, clean water, good food and hygiene, and suitable housing and clothing. With this new understanding of 'tropical hygiene' enforced by legislated regulations and 'strict supervision', tropical Australia could be a 'prize for the fittest'.⁶⁵ Woolcock noted however that sanitary reform in Queensland was 'regarded as a private rather than a public responsibility', to the frustration of the Registrar-General who regularly advocated improvements in public sanitation and personal hygiene.⁶⁶ Alongside a social Darwinian assumption of European superiority lay anxiety that the tropics was still a 'moral arena'; it was still necessary for 'every reasonable precaution' to be taken by individuals to maintain hygiene and social distance.⁶⁷

The new orthodoxy that, with care, Europeans could thrive in northern Queensland was welcomed and developed. The main reason for siting the Australian Institute of Tropical Medicine (founded in 1909) in Townsville was that '[t]ropical Australia affords a unique opportunity for studying the adaptability of the white race to a tropical climate and conditions ... a white race doing hard manual labour under a

⁶⁵ Elkington, *Tropical Australia: Is It Suitable for a White Working Race?* This was a lecture read at a meeting of the Royal Society of Tasmania, Hobart, 21 November 1905.

⁶⁶ Woolcock, 'Attitudes to health in Colonial Queensland', pp. 187-8; Cilento, *Triumph in the Tropics*, pp. 432-3.

⁶⁷ Elkington, *Tropical Australia: Is It Suitable for a White Working Race?* p. 8.

tropical sun.’⁶⁸ Its task was to establish the conditions required for such adaptation, largely through ‘defending the country against the epidemic diseases of Asia and Indonesia, and identifying and controlling those of tropical Australia and the adjacent areas of New Guinea, through continuous research’.⁶⁹ The emphasis on quarantine and public health regulation continued through the directorship of Dr Raphael Cilento, with his boundless faith that ‘the conquest of climate is primarily, essentially, the conquest of disease’.⁷⁰ But his concerns were not only medical. The AITM’s emphasis on making the tropical north habitable for Europeans was highly political, reflecting the ‘urgency of the new Commonwealth’s attachment to the “White Australia Policy”’.⁷¹ Similarly, Cilento’s concern for ‘race purity’ can be seen in his beliefs that imported non-European labour in Queensland would ‘corrupt our stock, pollute our children and debase our social order’.⁷² But since ‘human will’ was the key to adaptation and Europeans had this in abundance, they could live in the tropics for generations ‘without any loss of mentality, physique or fertility.’⁷³

Writers outside Australia were less convinced that climatic determinism could be overcome by ‘human will’. The American Ellsworth Huntington, writing in 1924, recognised the role of disease control in mitigating the effects of climate but still saw the slowing of activity in the tropics as inevitable.⁷⁴ So while Queensland had very good health statistics, this was merely through natural selection. The weak left quickly, and died elsewhere in Australia. And it would get worse: as Australia

⁶⁸ Anton Breinl, first director of the Australian Institute of Tropical Medicine, in his Annual Report of 1910, cited in Cilento, *Triumph of the Tropics*, p. 435. The type of research done by AITM, described in Yarwood, ‘Cilento and *The White Man in the Tropics*’, p. 56 and Harloe, ‘Anton Breinl and the AITM’, included studies of the blood pressure and the concentration of various minerals in the blood of Europeans in Townsville.

⁶⁹ Cilento, *Triumph of the Tropics*, p. 433.

⁷⁰ Cilento, ‘The Conquest of Climate’, p. 14.

⁷¹ Yarwood, ‘Cilento and *The White Man in the Tropics*’, p. 51

⁷² Cilento, Diary, 14 July 1929, cited in Yarwood, ‘Cilento and *The White Man in the Tropics*’, p. 62.

⁷³ Cilento, ‘Conquest of Climate’, p. 14.

⁷⁴ Ellsworth Huntington, *Civilization and Climate*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1924), p. 67.

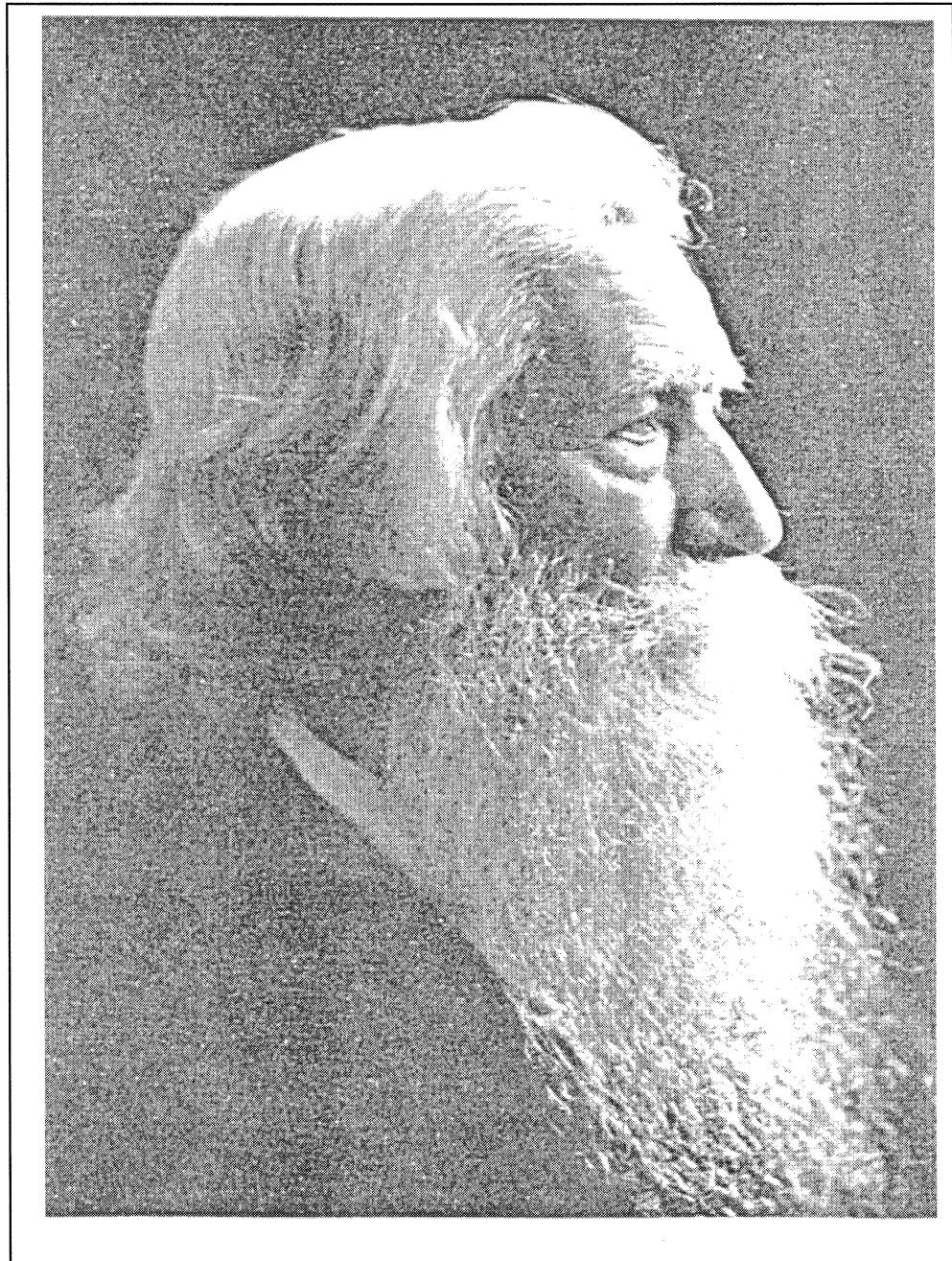


Figure 3. John Gibson Paton, from the frontispiece of his *Autobiography* published in 1901

became wealthier and offered more opportunities, 'the more likely are the bright sons and daughters to move away from the unstimulating environments and into those which most fully give scope to all their faculties', that is, they would leave Queensland and move south.⁷⁵ Internationally, the arguments still raged in the 1920s but within Australia the political imperative, with help from publicists like Cilento, was to make the White Australia policy work. The British geographer J.W. Gregory's book *The Menace of Colour* (1925) shows the influence of Australians on the climate debate. In general this is a work of racial determinism, with not a little climatic determinism, yet in discussing Australia he allowed for the possibility that a white population might thrive in Queensland. He found this 'remarkable', but he recognised the importance of good sanitation, and the new research in Northern Queensland.⁷⁶ Perhaps Gregory's view of Australia can be explained by the hand-written dedication in the copy of his book held in the library of the Australian National University Library: 'To Justice Higgins, with thanks for valued advice and elucidation of the special difficulties of the Australian section of the problem, J.W. Gregory'. The fathers of the Australian Federation, Higgins amongst them, had to convince the world that their brave experiment of a White Australia could succeed.

The Humanitarian Campaign against the Labour Trade, 1870-1894.

The fight of workers, commercial interests and some nationalist politicians for a 'White Australia' was, however, only one strand in the campaign against Melanesian indentured labour in the sugar fields of Queensland. The other came from Christian humanitarian activists. In 1894, Rev. John Gibson Paton, the Presbyterian missionary in the New Hebrides for most of the period from 1858 to 1884, declaimed his opposition to the renewed recruitment of Melanesian Islanders for the canefields of North Queensland and Fiji with a direct reference to Britain's earlier campaign against the Atlantic slave trade:

⁷⁵ Huntington, *Civilization and Climate*, pp. 380-386.

⁷⁶ J. W. Gregory, *The Menace of Colour* (London: Seeley Service and Co Ltd, 1925), pp. 202-213. For a discussion of other racially-determinist writings, especially by Madison Grant and Lothrop Stoddard, see Chaps. 3 and 9.

I feel it an honour to be maligned ... for my opposition to a Traffic, all along its sad history steeped in human suffering and atrocities ... I hope to be able to lead every Christian to regard it as a disgrace to humanity, especially to Britain and her colonies of Queensland and Fiji, seeing she has done so much to free the slaves and oppressed in other lands.⁷⁷

From the beginning of Paton's personal crusade against indenture in 1862, he and his colleague John Inglis saw themselves as direct successors to the Evangelical abolitionists. Writing in 1869, Inglis deplored the recruitment under 'false pretences' of strong young men, whose labour was needed at home, from the islands of Aneityum, Tanna and Efate: 'We emphatically protest the whole system, because it is essentially a system of slavery ... in this group the system is neither more nor less than a system of kidnapping.' In direct reference to John Wesley's tract *Thoughts on Slavery* (1774), he asserted that 'as the heart of Christianity' had 'recoiled from' slavery and 'clung to the liberty and freedom for all races', so it must now oppose this new abuse:

may we not hope that the Christian spirit in these colonies ... will be equally earnest to prevent the slightest taint of slavery ... and to see that the hands of no British subject shall be polluted with this crime ... characterised by the venerable John Wesley as "the consummation of all villainies".⁷⁸

Paton and Inglis made explicit reference to the earlier evangelical campaigns against slavery; they also used the arguments of the earlier reformers, that the recruiters used 'force and fraud' to obtain labour.

The Anglican Bishop Patteson, addressing the General Synod in New Zealand in 1871, only months before his own death, also reflected on the earlier abolitionist campaigns in opposing the recruitment of Banks Islanders. Melanesians could not communicate well enough with the traders to make anything approaching the required valid contract, he claimed; rather, 'deception and violence' – the same linkage Wesley had made – were employed by traders 'acting in the spirit of slavers'.

⁷⁷ John G. Paton, *The Kanaka Labour Traffic: Queensland's Defence, Dr John G Paton's Reply* (Southend, Essex: 1894), p. 3.

⁷⁸ *Reformed Presbyterian Magazine*, March 1869, pp. 103-108.

Evangelicals had opposed the African slave trade and had pressured the British Parliament to abolish it and enforce the prohibition because it was 'a thing evil in itself, a disgrace to humanity, and a practical repudiation of Christianity'. Similarly, Patteson advocated strong imperial legislation to regulate Pacific recruitment, enforced by British naval action.⁷⁹ Paton's protest of 1892, following the Queensland governments' decision to resume recruitment, characterised the trade as a 'system of deception and cruel oppression'. He emphasised the Islanders' misunderstandings about the duration of contracts, overcrowding during the voyage and the high death rates and overwork amongst young recruits brought 'to labour, suffer and die by the planter's greed of gain'. He concluded: 'Surely all who permit, license to collect, and employ such labour will be held responsible in the eyes of God for all its crimes; for ... I hold it is the worst kind of slavery.'⁸⁰

Many historians have investigated the links between the Christian Evangelicals, the missionary imperative and anti-slavery campaigns.⁸¹ During the early nineteenth century, anti-slavery sentiment became part of the identity of influential sections of the middle-class in Britain, 'part of a religious, philanthropic and reform complex which embraced missionary activity, temperance, peace, free trade and limited political reform'. A growing number of Protestants shared anti-slavery beliefs which 'constituted a prominent aspect of their more complex engagement in moral and social improvement'.⁸² Thus for any form of contract labour to be acceptable it had to be distinguished from slavery by emphasising the element of free agency involved in

⁷⁹ Bishop Patteson, *Memorandum on the Labour Trade*; reprinted as Appendix 1 in David Hilliard, *Protestant Missions in the Solomon Islands 1849-1942* (PhD thesis, Australian National University, 1966), pp. 549-554.

⁸⁰ *Brisbane Courier*, 23 March 1892.

⁸¹ See, for example, C. Duncan Rice, 'The Missionary Context of the British Anti-Slavery Movement', in *Slavery and British Society 1776-1846*, ed. James Walvin, pp.150-63 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982); David Turley, *The Culture of English Antislavery 1780-1860* (London/New York: Routledge, 1991); James Walvin, 'Introduction', in *Slavery and British Society 1776-1846*, ed. James Walvin, pp.1-21 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982).

⁸² Turley, *Culture of English Anti-Slavery*, pp. 9, 6, 1.

recruitment. Conversely, humanitarian condemnations of suspect labour recruitment and contracts invariably drew parallels with the coercion of slavery. Hence the modern debate concerning the level of indigenous agency in recruitment reflects, though it does not completely replicate, the contemporary debate.

To regulate recruitment in the Pacific, the Royal Navy used British anti-slavery regulations developed to counter the Atlantic trade. The years after the end of the Napoleonic Wars were marked by the emergence of cohorts of pious and humanitarian naval officers influenced by Evangelical ideals, including those which inspired the campaigns against slavery. The West Africa Squadron, established in 1808 and active in patrolling the African coast until the 1840s, enforced legislation against the Atlantic slave trade. Idealistic naval officers showed their devotion to this difficult and often thankless task, often involving fruitless chases up narrow malarial creeks, as they attempted to catch loaded slave vessels.⁸³ This naval heritage influenced the Australian Division (later Squadron)⁸⁴ to undertake what many officers saw as a similar campaign in the Pacific. Indeed, several of the senior officers in the Australian and Pacific Squadrons had served in the West Indies or West Africa in more junior ranks.⁸⁵

⁸³ For details of West Africa Squadron activities, see Hugh Thomas, *The Slave Trade: The History of the Atlantic Slave Trade 1440-1870* (London: Macmillan Papermac, 1998), pp. 574-621. On the humanitarian traditions of the Royal Navy see Jane Samson, *Imperial Benevolence: Making British Authority in the Pacific Islands* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1998), pp. 7-23.

⁸⁴ Before the 1840s regular Royal Navy patrols and operations in the Pacific were the responsibility of either the Pacific Squadron (from the Pacific Station in South America) or the East India Squadron (from the East India Station in Ceylon). The semi-independent Australian Division based at Sydney developed during the 1840s and formally became the Australian Squadron in 1859.

⁸⁵ John Elphinstone Erskine served in the West Indies and wrote in pro-emancipist newspapers in Jamaica before commanding HMS *Havannah* in the Australian Division in the 1840s and campaigning, as Liberal MP for Stirlingshire, for regulation of the Pacific labour trade in the 1870s (John Inglis, *In the New Hebrides: Reminiscences of Missionary Life and Work Especially on the Island of Aneityum from 1850 Till 1877* (London: T. Nelson and Sons, 1887), p. 307); Joseph Denman, who carried out the search for the first recruiter, Benjamin Boyd, in 1854 and was in command of the Pacific Station in the 1860s and 1870s, was a 'former African Squadron antislaver'

So when Captain Palmer of HMS *Rosario* sailed from Sydney in 1869 with orders to 'make inquiry into the kidnapping of natives alleged to be carried on by vessels flying the British flag', he took his responsibilities more seriously, it seems, than his superiors had intended. He first visited Tanna and questioned witnesses, concentrating on the indications of slavery - the forcible seizure and subsequent sale of Islanders.⁸⁶ Typical of the evidence he collected was that of elder Yanfangan:

He then said that he had seen '---' forcibly take two men by the hair of their heads and drag them on board his vessel, and then point a musket at them to keep them quiet. He knew that '---' had stolen a girl, and afterwards sold her for £2 to a Maré man in Australia.⁸⁷

When Palmer seized the *Daphne*, he charged the master under the Anti-Slavery laws: that he had 'knowingly, wilfully, feloniously, and piratically received, conveyed and removed [Islanders] ... with a view to their being used as slaves.'⁸⁸ The failure of the charge demonstrated that the Anti-Slavery Acts were not adequate to the case - kidnapping was illegal only if violence was involved.⁸⁹

This being the case, campaigners concentrated on changing the legislative framework to regulate indenture effectively. Pious naval officers and religious campaigners found common cause. The evidence to the 1872 British Parliamentary inquiry and the subsequent debates in both Houses demonstrate what Jane Samson recently criticised as the overdetermination of the humanitarian agenda by the 'retaliation' theory:⁹⁰ that

(Samson, *Imperial Benevolence*, p. 118-9).

⁸⁶ Palmer, *Kidnapping in the South Seas*, pp. 1, 46-53.

⁸⁷ Palmer, *Kidnapping in the South Seas*, p. 47.

⁸⁸ Palmer, *Kidnapping in the South Seas*, p. 132. Palmer found himself personally liable for the cost of collecting evidence, and the magistrate dismissed charges. He wrote his book in part in protest against the lack of support from his superiors. The publicity involved was one of the factors leading to the establishment of the 1872 Parliamentary inquiry, the other being the death of Bishop Patteson on Nukapu, Santa Cruz group, on 20 September 1871.

⁸⁹ O.W. Parnaby, *Britain and the Labor Trade in the Southwest Pacific* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1964), p. 17.

⁹⁰ Samson, *Imperial Benevolence*, p. 83; c.f. Dorothy Shineberg, *They Came for Sandalwood*

Islander attacks were always provoked by prior outrages by 'white savages'. This represented Islanders as guiltless victims reacting instinctively to the atrocities of others, rather than as inherently evil or dangerous. So the Earl of Kimberley, Secretary of State for the Colonies, explained Bishop Patteson's death on the island of Nukapu in 1871 by emphasising betrayal and deception on the part of whites:

Atrocious kidnappers actually made use of signals and disguises to induce the natives to think that the Bishop was about to visit them and to make them come on shipboard ... but when they came on board they were seized and carried off to the Fiji Islands. So that when ... the Bishop arrived, the natives, under the miserable and melancholy misapprehension that the Bishop was in reality an enemy, took their miserable revenge ... The guilt therefore rested not so much on the natives as upon those treacherous traffickers who had brought about such a state of mind in these unhappy people.⁹¹

Testimony from John Paton and John Inglis, recounting at length the kidnapping of Islanders and the killing of the crew of the *Fanny* in 1871, attempted to demonstrate how such a reaction could develop. A fight at Nguna Bay between the crew of the *Fanny* and Islanders, in which a number of Islanders and whites were killed, was followed by a retaliatory raid by local whites. They shot at Islanders and killed at least one, raided huts and arrested two Raratongan teachers whom they believed implicated in the initial attack. Paton and Inglis linked subsequent attacks on the ships *Maria Douglas* and *Marion Rennie* leading to the deaths of their crew members to this punitive raid – 'one sows the wind, and another reaps the whirlwind'.⁹² They

(Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1967), pp. 199- 214. Shineberg actually used the phrase 'retaliation-only interpretation' and discussed a number of other possible motives for Islanders' attacks on whites, suggestions Samson did not follow up.

⁹¹ Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, 3rd series, vol. 211 (1872), p. 186. Patteson, in a spookily prophetic report written eight months before his death, had claimed that that contact with 'nefarious' white traders aroused 'all the worst suspicions and passions of the wild untaught man', but that unfortunate results of such arousal should be held the responsibility of the white 'savages', not Islanders (Patteson, *Memorandum on the Labour Trade*, p. 553).

⁹² Further Correspondence respecting the Deportation of South Sea Islanders, GB Parliamentary Papers (House of Commons) 1872, vol. 43 (Cmd 496), pp. 21-25. Their letter had also been published in *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 September 1871 and *Reformed Presbyterian Magazine*, February 1872, pp. 60-65.

concluded: 'If this traffic in labour cannot be carried out...without more or less of these fearful results to those engaged in it, as well as the ruinous effects to the natives, by all means let it be wholly interdicted'.⁹³

Jane Samson noted, rightly, that such analyses, which motivated successive senior officers of the Royal Navy to adopt a 'benevolent, protective view' of Islanders alongside a 'condemnation of white men defined as threats to "Christianity and Civilization"',⁹⁴ limits Islander agency. Central to her position is her reading of the research of Peter Corris, Deryck Scarr and Clive Moore as having incontrovertibly 'shown us how questionable humanitarian representations of the labor trade could be'.⁹⁵ Corris, Scarr and Moore⁹⁶ indeed showed the extent of Islander cooperation in labour recruitment, recognising, as Moore put it, that 'it is demeaning to the intelligence of Melanesian people to presume that they presented themselves to be kidnapped from the same beaches on the same islands, generation following generation, for forty years or more'. However, while acknowledging voluntary recruitment, Moore nonetheless saw European actions as 'exploitative ... taking advantage of Melanesia's small-scale societies', a situation he described as 'cultural kidnapping'.⁹⁷ Nor can Islander motivations be considered uniform. Judith Bennett found that that many coastal dwellers preferred the more profitable alternative of trading rather than encouraging group members to volunteer for recruitment, indicating a clear appreciation of the best way to acquire benefits from interaction with Europeans.⁹⁸ Doug Munro suggested that some coastal groups 'kidnapped' bush

⁹³ Deportation of South Sea Islanders, p. 25.

⁹⁴ Samson, *Imperial Benevolence*, p. 25.

⁹⁵ Samson, *Imperial Benevolence*, p. 116.

⁹⁶ Corris, *Passage, Port and Plantation*; Moore, *Kanaka*; Deryck Scarr, *Fragments of Empire: A History of the Western Pacific High Commission 1877-1914* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1967).

⁹⁷ Moore, *Kanaka*, p. 47.

⁹⁸ Judith Bennett, *Wealth of the Solomons: A History of a Pacific Archipelago, 1800-1978* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1987), p. 87.

people for the labour traders.⁹⁹ Studies by Moore and Munro of the place of recruitment in the Melanesian male life cycle showed another facet to the complex internal dynamics at work within Melanesian societies: the manipulation of young men by their elders. The 'exodus of ebullient young males served to dilute a potentially disruptive influence' in Malaita.¹⁰⁰ Gender issues were also important; Melanesian men discouraged women from recruiting, Margaret Jolly suggested, so that island society was maintained intact and men could move advantageously between two worlds.¹⁰¹

The most persuasive questioning and re-interpretation of the 'kidnapping/slavery' debate comes from Dorothy Shineberg's recent study of the indenture system in New Caledonia. She commented that, while its incidence declined, kidnap was always possible and familiarity may have made Islanders less wary of whites and thus more vulnerable. A period of plantation labour was potentially advantageous to a community; it was the only way breech-loading rifles, which could influence the relative position and power of island communities and individuals, could be acquired. But unity of purpose should not be assumed; elders, who desired the benefits, decided the number and identity of the young men who would be recruited. This was occasionally noted by contemporaries, though rarely by missionaries. Admiral Erskine stated in the House of Commons in 1871, that recruitment involved 'embarking natives from one group, either by their own consent or purchase from their chief',¹⁰² and an observer on the *Empreza* in 1892 noted that boys were coerced by their elders to sign up: 'out step a couple of old men with a youngster between them; the first sacrifice is made; the boy tumbles into the boat and his elderly friends

⁹⁹ Doug Munro, 'The Pacific Islands Labour Trade: Approaches, Methodologies, Debates' *Slavery and Abolition* 14, no. 2 (1993), p. 87.

¹⁰⁰ Munro, 'Pacific Islands Labour Trade', p. 92.

¹⁰¹ Margaret Jolly, 'The Forgotten Women: A History of Migrant Labour and Gender Relations in Vanuatu' *Oceania* 58, pp. 119-139 (1987).

¹⁰² Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, 3rd series, vol. 210 (1872), p. 1667.

march off in triumph with the geegaws'.¹⁰³ Shineberg concluded that the indenture of Pacific Islanders 'was never a free contract between equal parties',¹⁰⁴ thus raising precisely the issues seen as crucial by humanitarian critics of the system.

As I have already demonstrated,¹⁰⁵ the issue of a valid 'free contract' was as critical to contemporaries as it is to the historiographic debate. According to classical liberal theory, government regulation of work conditions was only acceptable to protect those who for some reason were unable to enter freely into contracts they were offered. Coercion was regarded as unacceptable; the parties to a contract must be able to understand the provisions and be free to reject or accept them. To deny adult non-Europeans free agency can be seen as paternalist. And paternalism, along with sentimentality, was on frequent display in campaigning literature consistently from the 1860s to the 1900s. While the arguments against slavery, and by extension indenture, were grounded in a profound belief in fundamental human similitude of all people, it is noticeable that in comparison with the rhetoric of Wesley or Thomas Clarkson,¹⁰⁶ Paton and his colleagues placed less emphasis on the human characteristics shared by Europeans and Melanesians. Inglis portrayed Islanders as unsophisticated, 'a credulous, gullible people', their 'ignorance, their credulity, their passions, their impulsive feelings' exploited by recruiters. But this also made them oppressed and therefore under 'God's own special care'.¹⁰⁷ By emphasising the use of dominating physical power, the size of the recruiting ships, the use of guns, the overall sense of social disruption, Christian humanitarian activists moved moral responsibility away from Islanders and evoked sympathy for their defencelessness. Paton's suggestion in 1894 that some chiefs had 'an understanding' with recruiters,

¹⁰³ *Worker*, 24 December 1892.

¹⁰⁴ Dorothy Shineberg, *The People Trade: Pacific Island Laborers and New Caledonia, 1865-1930* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999), pp. 229-238.

¹⁰⁵ See chapter 2.

¹⁰⁶ For details see chapter 2.

¹⁰⁷ *Reformed Presbyterian Magazine*, March 1869, pp. 105, 108.

accepting 'certain wares' in return for recruits,¹⁰⁸ was an atypical recognition of the Melanesian dynamics at play. For to admit chiefly involvement in recruitment was to sully, or at the very least complicate, the image of Islander victimhood – though it is clear from such occasional comments that some missionaries recognised a more complex reality. These exaggerations and omissions led Samson to describe missionary representations of the labour trade as 'questionable',¹⁰⁹ but the rhetorical purpose in asserting the essential innocence of Islanders is clear. It was a protective use of paternalism, the assertion of naive, almost infantilising, cultural innocence to achieve humanitarian ends, though the tactic risked, unintentionally, challenging the basic assumption of human similitude.

With Islanders represented as innocent victims and culpability moved to white traders, missionaries could claim that Islanders needed the protection of good Europeans. The expressions of brotherhood that formed the basis of the Christian humanitarian project were coupled with the recognition that superior Western technology made European exploitation of the rest of the world possible. It was then the responsibility of Europeans to use that power humanely and it would be held to their account if they did not. Inglis expressed it as the need to 'protect the poor, helpless natives from the cupidity of our own countrymen'.¹¹⁰ This sense of accountability and duty, so typical of the Evangelical conscience,¹¹¹ linked the campaigns against the Atlantic slave trade and Pacific recruitment for indenture.

The 1872 British Parliamentary inquiry into the recruitment of Pacific Islanders, triggered by Patteson's death, heard testimony from missionaries from a number of denominations, reflecting the common ground developed earlier between Methodists, Quakers, Unitarians, Presbyterians and Anglicans who had co-operated on the

¹⁰⁸ Paton, *Kanaka Labour Traffic*, p. 25.

¹⁰⁹ Samson, *Imperial Benevolence*, p. 116.

¹¹⁰ Inglis, *In the New Hebrides*, p. 221.

¹¹¹ For further discussion see chapter 6.

committees and campaigns of the anti-slavery cause.¹¹² Correspondents included the Presbyterians Paton and Inglis, the Anglican missionaries R.H. Codrington and Charles Brook, the Methodists Lorimer Fison and Stephen Rabone, the Anglican Synod of Sydney and the General Assembly of the NSW Presbyterian Church.¹¹³ Their testimony, which represented Pacific Islanders as innocent and deceived by evil whites, resulted in Imperial legislation which allowed recruiting only by licensed ships with a government agent aboard. New laws regulated the contracts and conditions on the plantations, which were subject to inspection.¹¹⁴ In spite of continuing inadequacies of inspection and high death rates on the plantations, regulation brought about a period of relative orderliness, although it did not satisfy missionary critics.

The 1880s, however, saw a rapid expansion of sugar cultivation in Queensland, followed inevitably by labour shortages. As a result the New Guinea islands (the Louisiade and D'Entrecasteaux islands, New Britain and New Ireland) became Queensland recruiting grounds during 1883 and 1884.¹¹⁵ Already accustomed to local employment by German companies, Islanders from these areas initially volunteered, only to resist with violence when they realised that these new ships were taking them much further and for much longer. A spate of clashes, in which Islanders and recruiters were killed, led to inquiries in Queensland. Missionaries and naval officers were again in alliance, concentrating on issues of fraud and deception. When the Captain of HMS *Swinger* apprehended the recruiting ship *Forest King*, he had on board Samuel McFarlane of the LMS as a passenger – and translator.¹¹⁶ Recruits

¹¹² Turley, *Culture of English Anti-Slavery*, p. 9.

¹¹³ *Deportation of South Sea Islanders*, passim.

¹¹⁴ For details of Queensland and Imperial regulation passed in the 1860s and 1870s, see Parnaby, *Britain and the Labour Trade*, pp. 58-65, 155-170.

¹¹⁵ Peter Corris, "'Blackbirding' in New Guinea Waters 1883-4: An Episode in the Queensland Labour Trade" *Journal of Pacific History* 3, pp. 85-106 (1968).

¹¹⁶ *Brisbane Courier*, 10 September 1884, p.5. See also William T. Wawn, *The South Sea Islanders and the Queensland Labour Trade*, ed. Peter Corris (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1973 (original 1893)), pp. 349-350. The court found that the arrest by John Locke Marx,

reported that they thought they were going to Queensland for only three months; when McFarland told them the real term (three years) they refused recruitment, and the ship was seized on a kidnapping charge.

The concerns around recruiting in the New Guinea islands culminated in the trial of three members of the crew of the *Hopeful* in 1884 for the murder of two Islander recruits. The publicity surrounding the case rested on the uniqueness of a conviction of white men for the murder of Islanders, though few expressed this directly. Pleas for mercy for the convicted men were couched in other terms. The *Brisbane Courier* claimed that the death sentence should be commuted because of previous laxity in such cases:

we neither deny their guilt nor palliate their crime. The murder of a black man is in all respects as foul a deed as the murder of a white ... [but] the fact is that as a community our hands are not clean; we have so often condoned or refused to notice crimes of this nature that we have tempted violent and reckless men to commit them.¹¹⁷

It was left to the Sydney press to be more blunt:

Our Brisbane correspondent hints that much of the agitation may be traced to a feeling that the life of no white man should be taken for that of a black ... It is a curious application of the maxim *De minimus non curat lex* to plead that murder has been treated as a mere incident in these transactions, and therefore should not be punished as the law directs.¹¹⁸

The 1885 Royal Commission into the labour trade provoked by the *Hopeful* case and others, however, focussed on the charges of deceit and coercion, rather than the lamentable views of relative human worth expressed by Brisbane campaigners – in other words, an examination of the criteria for slavery using the criteria of the evangelical reformers, although no missionary or naval witnesses were called by the Commission. At issue were the accuracy of translation and levels of understanding:

Captain of HMS *Swinger*, was justified but the owners and master of *Forest King* were absolved from being 'knowingly involved in kidnapping' (*Brisbane Courier*, 24 October 1884).

¹¹⁷ *Brisbane Courier*, editorial 5 December 1884.

¹¹⁸ *Sydney Morning Herald*, editorial 19 December 1884.

the commissioners were concerned about the accuracy both of the evidence presented to them by labourers recruited on the voyages to New Guinea and the adequacy of interpretation on board the recruiting ships. It became clear that the word 'yam' used to signify a year was not widely understood, that there was often no interpreter on board, and when present he was rewarded according to the number of recruits acquired and thus had an incentive to be deceitful. Translation difficulties preoccupied the commission and led them to conclude that 'even under the most favourable circumstances the natives had very little conception of the real purpose for which they were invited on board or engaged to go in the ship to Queensland'. The commissioners rejected the racist slur that 'an attribute of the savage or semi-savage is untruthfulness'. Since they had not understood the contracts, Islanders were deemed not 'free agents': they had effectively been kidnapped.¹¹⁹ Though in many ways the abuses in New Guinea recruitment in 1884-5 were not typical, the evidence of the commission provided the opportunity for the Queensland Premier Sir Samuel Griffiths to ban the labour trade. All Melanesian labour was supposed to leave Queensland by 1890.

In 1892, in the face of economic depression after the financial crisis of 1890-91, Griffiths decided to renew Pacific recruitment, with strengthened regulation.¹²⁰ John Paton protested,¹²¹ but this time the campaign against indenture was rather different. Until this point, most Christian opinion, certainly most vocal opinion, had supported anti-indenture campaigns. The campaign of 1892-4 saw Christian opinion divided. In the pages of the *Brisbane Courier* and in a plethora of pamphlets, Paton engaged in increasingly acrimonious debate with Rev. Alex Smith, Convenor of the Queensland Presbyterian Heathen Mission Committee. Paton continued his usual rhetoric, describing how 'poor downtrodden, defenceless Islanders' were seized by 'fiendish

¹¹⁹ Report of the Royal Commission – Recruiting Polynesian Labourers in New Guinea and adjacent islands; *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, 1885, II, pp. 797 ff.

¹²⁰ Parnaby, *Britain and the Labour Trade*, pp. 186-189.

¹²¹ Paton's silence during the controversies of 1884-5 can be explained by his trip to Britain and his preoccupation with issues concerning the mission ship *Dayspring* during this time.

crews in human form' to take part in a trade which was 'tearing children away from their parents and parents from their children, wives from their husbands and husbands from their wives'.¹²² His colleague A.K. Langridge claimed that regulation could not eliminate the abuses of recruitment and that even in 1892 'the system is little better, in some ways *even worse than slavery*'.¹²³

But if Paton's arguments had not changed since the 1860s, the response to them had. Three days after Paton's article was published in the *Brisbane Courier*, Smith responded, as subsequently did Mr.H. St.George Caulfield, Inspector of Pacific Islanders, and the Anglican Rev.W. Morris of Bundaberg.¹²⁴ All three made similar points: that while the abuses Paton described may once have been true, they were no longer applicable in the new era of regulation. Indentured Islanders were well looked after on plantations which were regularly inspected, and often re-engaged at the end of their contracts. Inspector Caulfield claimed that Pacific Islanders were free to bring any complaint against their treatment to him but never did and indeed often wept when they had to return home.¹²⁵ In other words, fraud and force, the hallmarks of slavery, no longer applied and indenture now conformed to the regular norms of commercial life. This exemplifies the shift noted by Kay Saunders: that while opponents to indenture emphasised the abuses of the recruitment process, its advocates emphasised the improved conditions in Queensland. She cited Codrington's admission that he could not 'remember to have heard that [indentured labourers] were badly treated in Queensland'.¹²⁶ The two sides, in discussing different facets of Melanesian employment, were talking past each other.

¹²² *Brisbane Courier*, 23 March 1892, p. 5.

¹²³ A.K. Langridge, *The Queensland Kanaka Labour Traffic since 1885: Evidence and Opinions of the Evils and Abuses of the Traffic since the Report of the Royal Commission in 1885, Being a Supplement to Dr John G. Paton's Protest* (London: Hazell, Watson and Viney Ltd, 1892) p. 3, original emphasis.

¹²⁴ *Brisbane Courier*, 26 March 1892 p. 6; 8 April 1892, p. 5.

¹²⁵ *Brisbane Courier*, 8 April 1892, p. 5.

¹²⁶ Codrington, evidence to the 1872 British Parliamentary inquiry, cited in Kay Saunders, 'The Pacific Islander Hospitals in Colonial Queensland' *Journal of Pacific History* 11, no. 1 (1976), p.28.

Christianity on the Canefields

As the growing white population divided on the issue of indenture, part of the debate was about the nature of the society being created in Queensland. Planters wanted cheap labour, but were increasingly defensive about the conditions endured by that labour. Jane Samson suggested that humanitarians had long evoked the spectre of evil white men: sandalwood traders, according to Erskine in the 1840s; labour traders, according to Palmer in the 1870s.¹²⁷ Now white Queenslanders as a whole, according to Paton and Langridge, had inherited the mantle of 'savage whites'. Paton described recruitment as 'demoralising and ruinous to all concerned with it ... God cannot smile on any trade so steeped in human suffering and bloodshed, nor can He bless those who sanction and encourage it.'¹²⁸ But this time, by concentrating on the nature of plantation life, some Queensland clergy defended themselves and their reputation. The division between Paton and Smith was particularly embarrassing to the Presbyterian Church, evident in the obfuscations in Rev. Alexander Hay's *Jubilee Memorial of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland* (1900), in which Smith was praised for his efforts for 'the instruction of the Polynesians in the truths of the Gospel', and Paton for his assistance in this project.¹²⁹ Paton omitted reference to such assistance in his own memoirs, rather concurring with the London Missionary Society (LMS)'s view that to send teachers to the indentured labourers would imply approval of the system.¹³⁰ Hay's discussion of the 1892 *Brisbane Courier* debate was circumspect; Smith was praised for having 'vindicated triumphantly both the Church

¹²⁷ Samson, *Imperial Benevolence*, passim.

¹²⁸ *Brisbane Courier*, 23 March 1892, p. 5.

¹²⁹ Alexander Hay, *Jubilee Memorial of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland, 1849-1899* (Brisbane: Alex Muir & Co, 1900), pp. 103, 108. Melanesian labourers were frequently described as 'Polynesians'. The artificial terminological divide between 'Melanesia' and 'Polynesia' was very fluid in Anglophone writings, at least until the 1880s. For further discussion of this point see Helen Gardner, *Cultures, Christians and Colonial Subjects: George Brown's Representations of Islanders from Samoa and the Bismarck Archipelago* (PhD thesis, La Trobe University, 1999), chap. 5.

¹³⁰ David Hilliard, 'The South Sea Evangelical Mission in the Solomon Islands' *Journal of Pacific History* 4 (1969), p. 41.

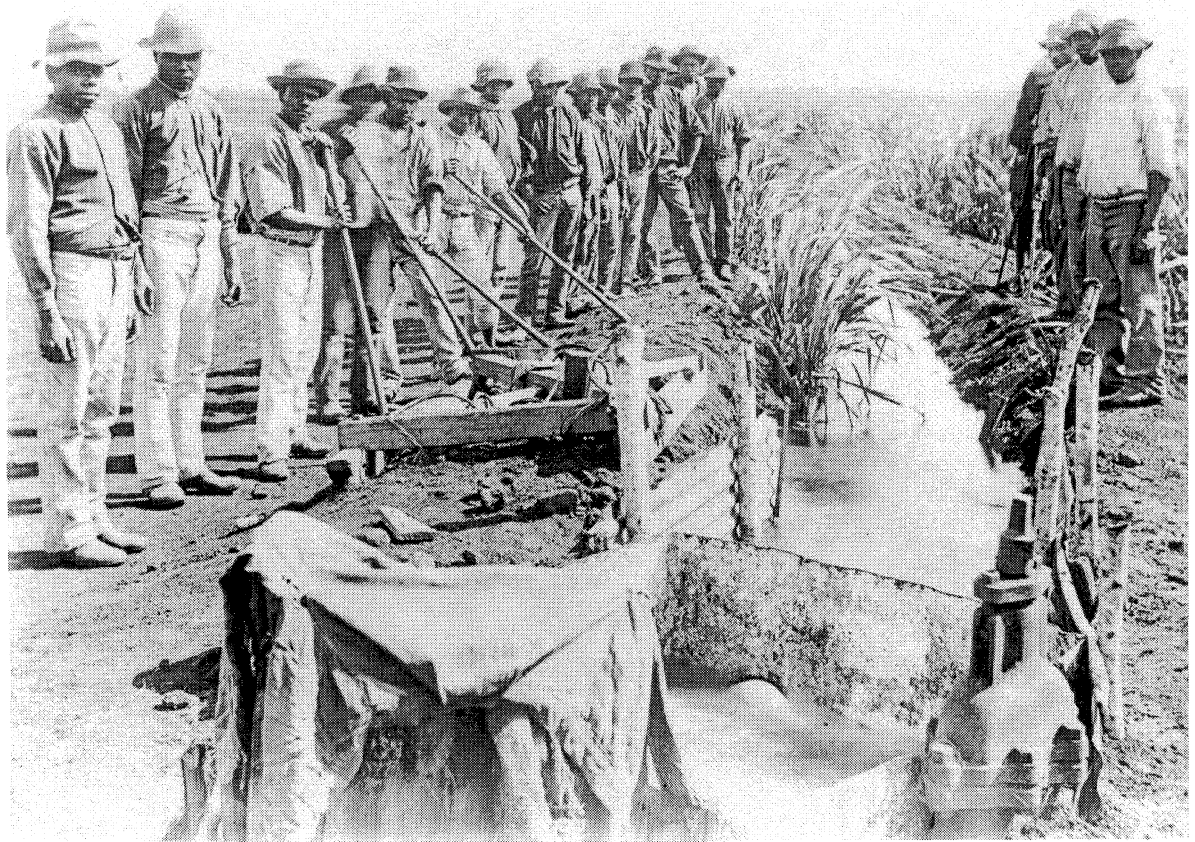


Figure 4. Islander sugar-cane workers on Bingera Plantation, Bundaberg. Late 1890s.



PRO-KANAKA AGITATORS.

Figure 5. This cartoon links the Queensland churches with capitalists and the Government in the 'slavery' of the indentured Islander workers.

Brisbane *Worker*, 2 November 1901.

and the Government from the aspersions that were cast upon them' by persons unnamed.¹³¹

One of Smith's main complaints was that Paton's charge 'wound[ed] to the very quick the sensibilities of most of the Christian godfearing men and women of this colony.' He then continued, clearly in rhetorical mode:

Are we really, for the sake of earthly gain, winking at such horrible crimes and atrocities? ... Even to allege such charges, without the most incontestable proofs, must be galling in the extreme, and even revolting, to the Queenslanders as a whole, while the aspect in which it will publicly exhibit the colony will not only damage our credit in the eyes of the commercial world, but load us with obloquy before the united humanity and Christianity of the entire civilised world.¹³²

Queenslanders rejected the tag of white savage by attempting to prove that the conditions of Melanesian indenture were far from slavery. According to Smith, one of the advantages for Islanders of indenture was that it exposed them to Christian teaching, to which they 'prove themselves most susceptible', being 'increasingly anxious to listen to the Gospel'.¹³³

Modern historians have taken a rather different tack. Adrian Graves represented the promotion of Christian religion as a form of social control, especially as practised by the non-denominational Queensland Kanaka Mission (QKM) started by Florence Young, sister of the Fairymead plantation owners Henry and Ernest Young, in 1886. Graves stressed the submissiveness inculcated by the promise of rewards in the hereafter and the use of education to improve productivity.¹³⁴ It was a suspicion shared by white workers. Cartoons in the trades' union organ, the *Brisbane Worker*, portrayed employers and churches in alliance to maintain 'Kanaka slavery', with shackles and Bible working together to produce a docile and uncomplaining

¹³¹ Hay, *Jubilee Memorial*, p. 104.

¹³² *Brisbane Courier*, 26 March 1892.

¹³³ Alex C. Smith, *The Kanaka Labour Question, with Special Reference to Missionary Efforts in the Plantations of Queensland* (Brisbane: Alexander Muir and Morcom, 1892), p. 26.

¹³⁴ Graves, *Cane and Labour*, pp. 167-171.

workforce (Figure 5). Certainly that was often the effect, as Young's own writings made clear. Missionary efforts amongst Islander labourers were sponsored by employers; the first missionary class was organised by the estate overseer. 'I'll send you some Boys next Sunday', was his response to Florence's request to be allowed to evangelise; whether attendance was entirely voluntary is not clear.¹³⁵ Her teaching emphasised the need for her Christian 'Boys' to be sober, hardworking and reliable and it was on these grounds that she persuaded other planters not only to allow their workers to attend Christian instruction, but also to contribute financially to the mission.¹³⁶ After two years of operation, Florence noted that the local policeman said he had nothing left to do, so peaceful were the Islanders.¹³⁷ 'Several employers have stated', she noted in her third Annual Report, 'that they have far less trouble with drink now' and that the workers were 'quiet, well-behaved and peaceable.'¹³⁸

The Pacific Islander congregations and classes set up by the Queensland Presbyterian Church could be seen in a similar light, though with greater emphasis on the practical as well as spiritual benefits of 'civilisation'. The Presbyterian Kanaka Mission co-operated with the establishment. 'The planters in the Mackay district', commented Alex Smith, 'are not only well disposed to the mission, but give it every support in their power.' Many planters' wives gave classes themselves, planters allowed their workers time off for classes, and most supported the mission financially.¹³⁹ The Presbyterian minister at Mackay, Walkerston, declared that it was his 'deep-seated conviction' that 'a very great deal of good is being done to these Polynesians ... that they are improved physically, mentally and spiritually' through their indenture.¹⁴⁰ Violent attacks on Europeans or other Islanders were 'exceedingly rare' after four

¹³⁵ Florence Young, *Pearls from the Pacific* (London: Marshall Bros. Ltd, 1924), p. 39.

¹³⁶ Young, *Pearls from the Pacific*, pp. 47-8.

¹³⁷ *Not In Vain*, 1887-8, p. 3.

¹³⁸ *Not In Vain*, 1888-9, p. 4.

¹³⁹ *Brisbane Courier*, 26 March 1892.

¹⁴⁰ Cited in Smith, *Kanaka Labour Question*, p. 11. This is an expanded version of the article published in *Brisbane Courier*, 26 March 1892.

years of mission influence, even by Malaitan men, previously ‘an exceptionally savage portion of the islanders’.¹⁴¹ The Presbyterians aimed to both convert and civilise, and prided themselves on their educational efforts. Islanders began to open savings accounts, for ‘new habits of industry get stirred up. They are not satisfied with a bare living, they long to laypast’.¹⁴² The Presbyterians also insisted on strict conformity with European Christian domestic norms; only children of legally married parents would be baptised.¹⁴³ The strong connection between planters and the local Presbyterians is clear in Smith’s account, hence the widespread perception that the production of a model work force was an aim of the mission.

It is therefore tempting to go no further than Graves’ analysis of religion as social control. However, it is clear that Florence Young and the Presbyterians saw their mission in a different light, as the work of God. Young began her mission after discovering that there were on her brothers’ estate ‘men and women who had never heard of Christ, and for whom nothing was being done to teach them the way of salvation. And it seemed dreadful.’¹⁴⁴ She saw her task as evangelistic: ‘that God may be glorified in the salvation of many souls’. Indenture was a blessing, for it opened a door ‘wide open for reaching and evangelising these heathen Islanders under such favourable conditions, who are almost, as it were, crying out to us to teach them’.¹⁴⁵ Since many communities in the New Hebrides and Solomon Islands had not yet received a missionary, indenture gave Melanesians a unique opportunity to learn about Christianity. The theology of salvation, with rewards reserved for the afterlife, saw physical conditions as of little relevance. The value of the spiritual opportunity presented by indenture outweighed any material discomforts, which were only of this world. Therefore the QKM did not criticise the indenture system and opposed

¹⁴¹ *Brisbane Courier*, 17 November 1892.

¹⁴² Smith, *Kanaka Labour Question*, pp. 15-17.

¹⁴³ Patricia Mercer, *White Australia Defied: Pacific Islander Settlement in North Queensland* (Townsville: James Cook University, 1995), p. 11.

¹⁴⁴ Young, *Pearls from the Pacific*, pp. 38-9.

¹⁴⁵ *Not In Vain*, 1898-9, p. 5.

attempts to end it. Responding to reports of the injustices of indenture, QKM's journal *Not In Vain* published a letter from Mrs Stott, after a visit to a service at Bundaberg:

Years ago I read severe comments upon what was termed the worst kind of slavery carried on between Queensland and the South Sea Islands ... Now ... I feel both they and we should thank God for permitting them to come, and for giving even those who belong to islands where there are no missionaries this blessed opportunity of hearing the Gospel.¹⁴⁶

Miss Young did not criticise the system, of which her family was part. While she described the death-bed scenes of many of her 'Boys', it never seems to have occurred to her that rather too many of them were dying, or to question health care standards. Others have commented on the high death rates from respiratory and other infections and the poor standards of medical care,¹⁴⁷ but for Young death-bed scenes were an opportunity for Christian witness. In 1894 an Ellice Islander died at Bundaberg 'but his death was so beautiful that one could not but rejoice that such a testimony should be given before the hospital inmates'.¹⁴⁸ In 1902 *Not In Vain* included accounts of four deaths, including that of a child, all told in similar vein.¹⁴⁹

Other missions did not go so far in marginalising the physical. Alex Smith disputed the mortality figures used by critics, rather than portraying workers' deaths as primarily the entry to heaven, or as an improving example to others. Reporting after a trip to Mackay, he gave mortality figures of 156 out of 2846 Islanders in Bundaberg, and 98 out of 2816 in Mackay. This was, he admitted, higher than the equivalent death rate amongst whites, but 'is it not true that the dark races ... are gradually dying out, whether in their own native settlements, or elsewhere?'¹⁵⁰ Thus any real

¹⁴⁶ *Not In Vain*, 1899-1900, p. 11.

¹⁴⁷ Graves, *Cane and Labour*, pp. 75, 99. See also Bolton, *A Thousand Miles Away*, p. 82; Mercer, *White Australia Defied*, pp. 13-20; Saunders, 'Pacific Islander Hospitals'; Ralph Shlomowitz, 'Mortality and the Pacific Labour Trade' *Journal of Pacific History* 22, no. 1, pp. 34-55 (1987).

¹⁴⁸ *Not In Vain*, 1894-5, p. 5.

¹⁴⁹ *Not In Vain*, 1902-03, pp. 6, 17.

¹⁵⁰ Smith, *Kanaka Labour Question*, p. 21.

responsibility for the situation is denied by the use of a cliché.

Moreover, apart from this profoundly Eurocentric view, it is clear from the comments of Alex Smith and others that many Islanders, for their own reasons, showed considerable enthusiasm for this new religious teaching. The scale of involvement of Melanesians with the QKM in particular, both as students and teachers, is striking. In 1901 the Annual Report summarised fifteen years of evangelism in Queensland: 13 (European) missionaries and 85 'native teachers' had between them held 9,401 classes with an aggregate attendance of nearly 300,000 during the previous year, and 1,546 Islanders had been baptised since 1886.¹⁵¹ By 1899 some converted Islanders were 'being led to make agreements with employers in places hitherto unreached' by European missionaries, and then started up classes which were usually well attended.¹⁵² These classes 'so faithfully initiated by the Christian Boys' were emphasised to the mission's supporters – but the teachers were still 'Boys'.¹⁵³ One of the attractions of these classes was clearly literacy; reading and writing were taught through Bible verses and stories. QKM taught in 'pidgin', rather to the scorn of other missions who used standard English, and according to the 1901 census many Islanders resident in Queensland were 'at best semi-literate' since much 'reading' was really only rote learning.¹⁵⁴ Nonetheless, Moore demonstrated that the literacy and understanding of European ways acquired by long residence in Queensland, and particularly through mission schools, enabled an 'élite core of literate' Melanesians to influence the Queensland government to allow them to stay after 1906.¹⁵⁵ Mercer also suggested other attractions of mission classes: that the 'rare positive gesture' from Europeans was welcome in a generally hostile environment and that the social

¹⁵¹ *Not In Vain*, 1900-01, p. 6.

¹⁵² *Not In Vain*, 1898-99, p. 7.

¹⁵³ *Not In Vain*, 1899-1900, p. 5.

¹⁵⁴ Mercer, *White Australia Defied*, p. 66.

¹⁵⁵ Clive Moore, "Working the Government: Australia's Melanesian Diaspora and the Government 1863-1908" (paper presented at the 'States and Territories' conference, ANU, 10-11 December 1998).

cohesion of classes, outings, services and meetings provided some compensation for the loss of island sociality.¹⁵⁶ In spite of opposition to their continued residence, this 'élite core' of Islanders was by 1906 established as a part of the Queensland working class.

This élite group was, however, an exception; most Islanders who were influenced by Christian teaching returned home to the islands under the pressure from the advocates of the White Australia policy. Yet here again the ambivalence of the churches towards indenture is evident. The QKM in general opposed the ending of indenture – perhaps reflecting the self-interest of the Young family – but also recognised that the return of Christian Islanders provided an excellent opportunity to extend evangelism to the Solomon Islands, for as Florence Young put it: 'God had enlarged our borders'.¹⁵⁷ Her first journey to Malaita took place in 1904 and a Solomon Islands branch of QKM was established as returned labourers volunteered as evangelists to their own people. The small Anglican missions – Selwyn Mission outside Mackay, run by Mrs Robinson, the wife of a local mill manager, and a small school at Bundaberg run by Rev. J.E. Clayton – deliberately encouraged their pupils to become missionaries. Bishop Stone-Wigg of New Guinea toured the cane fields in the 1890s recruiting teachers for his new mission, with considerable success; between 1895 and 1906 twenty four ex-indentured labourers from Queensland travelled to Dogura to join his mission.¹⁵⁸ Indenture may have been an evil, as the Anglican humanitarian Codrington always maintained, but it indirectly staffed the new Anglican mission in New Guinea.

¹⁵⁶ Mercer, *White Australia Defied*, pp. 10-11,

¹⁵⁷ Young, *Pearls from the Pacific*, p. 139.

¹⁵⁸ David Wetherell, *Reluctant Mission: The Anglican Church in Papua New Guinea 1891-1942* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1977), pp. 100-6. See also E.C. Rowland, *The Tropics for Christ: Being a History of the Diocese of North Queensland* (Townsville: Diocese of North Queensland, 1960), pp. 105-9.

Humanitarians and Workers Meet?

By the late 1890s two vocal groups – humanitarians and workers – opposed indenture. But while they agreed on its abolition, they held fundamentally differing views on why indenture should be ended. Paton and friends saw it as an iniquitous system which tricked Islanders into conditions of employment which were inherently unjust, while white workers objected to cheap competition for jobs and other opportunities. Would the two wings of opposition unite, and on what terms? John Paton's relationship with White Australia advocates was ambiguous, but he was co-opted by them after publishing his 'Appeal' to Griffith not to resume labour recruitment in 1892. The 'Appeal', separately printed, was distributed by the *Worker* and advertised there as 'particularly suitable for Church door distribution'.¹⁵⁹ The *Worker* also became involved in Paton's arguments with Alex Smith, accusing Smith of trying to make white workers accept the same conditions of work as Melanesians.¹⁶⁰

In the same issue the *Worker* published a letter from Rev. J.S. Pollock (apparently also a Presbyterian) in which he used the language of human similitude alongside support for the white workers' position: 'Is it a just and right thing to secure service for a small fraction of its value and hold the servant in bondage to make sure you get it, simply because he is a black fellow and can be taken advantage of?'¹⁶¹ Here is an early articulation of a shift in workers' representations that saw Melanesians as exploited rather than the source of unfair competition and contamination. Increasingly, the *Worker* had the sophistication to see indentured labourers as only part of the problem, especially after late 1901 when it was becoming clear that the Pacific Island Labourers Bill was likely to pass through Federal Parliament. This ended Melanesian immigration from 1904 and provided for the deportation of time-

¹⁵⁹ *Worker*, 2 April 1892, p. 3.

¹⁶⁰ *Worker*, 9 April 1892, p. 1.

¹⁶¹ *Worker*, 9 April 1892, p. 1. The *Worker* claimed the *Brisbane Courier* had refused to publish Pollock's letter because 'everyone knows how the commercial press is attempting to gag the White Australia cry.'



EXPLOITERS AND EXPLOITED.

Figure 6: This cartoon, published after most Pacific Island labourers returned to the Islands, marks a shift in their representation by white workers. Here 'Kanaka labour' is grouped with child and women workers amongst the 'exploited'.

Brisbane *Worker*, 5 November 1901.

expired workers by 1906.¹⁶² Once the *Worker* was convinced of the passage of the bill, the tone of the comment about indentured labourers began to change.

Melanesians were less of a threat and, while still being seen as tools of the capitalist system, they began to be perceived as its victims. Discussions of threats to health and purity declined. Cartoons began to portray the blackbirding system as slavery and the Melanesians as victims of capitalist exploitation as were white workers (Figure 6). In much of the writing about Melanesians, hostility is mixed with a strange paternalism and the *Worker* consistently referred to Melanesians in general as the stereotypical, but also individualised, “Tommy Tanna”. Indeed, an article of 1904 warned against ‘racial hatred’, for ‘to despise or detest a man because of his nationality or the colour of his skin is opposed to every principle of fraternalism, humanity and justice’.¹⁶³

Attitudes towards Melanesian labour were increasingly distinguished from attitudes towards other non-European labour, presumably because Melanesian labour was perceived as under control. A letter from ‘RTW of Mackay’ describing the Palms sugar plantation in 1905 talked offensively of ‘Japs, Chows and other cheap rubbish’ and yet sympathetically, almost lyrically, described Melanesians setting out for work:

Fancy these poor unfortunate women with their babies slung on their backs, being forced to go out at daylight these bitter cold frosty (sic) mornings, to work in the cane fields till dark, all for a sweet spud and a little bit of meat and about half a crown a week for wages!¹⁶⁴

Fear of competition rather than racial antipathy *per se* was at the root of white workers’ concerns.

The *Worker* campaigned against coloured labour, ‘but what we are really fighting against is cheap and servile labour’ and the ‘degrading influences’ of a ‘lower civilisation’; when the wages and morality have risen, the objection would be gone.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶² Moore, *Kanaka*, p. 275.

¹⁶³ *Worker*, 26 March 1904, p. 2, also quoted in Graves, *Cane and Labour*, p. 67. Graves saw such comments as exemplifying the ‘historically specific ideological origin of [workers’] ideas’ but failed to give sufficient weight to the date of the article, i.e., after late 1901.

¹⁶⁴ *Worker*, 29 July 1905, p. 11.

¹⁶⁵ *Worker*, 26 March 1904, p. 2.

Arguing in Marxist mode, the *Worker* saw the real enemy as the capitalist who wished to obtain labour as cheaply as possible; the indentured labourer was merely the tool. Regular linkages were made between planters in general, the large sugar companies such as CSR and the Melbourne-Mackay Sugar Company, the conservative State Government, and the *Brisbane Courier* newspaper. The only virtue of the Melanesian labourer in the eyes of the planters was his cheapness: 'If the sugar capitalists were to be compelled to pay their kanakas a white man's wages ... they would drop Tommy Tanna like a hot brick.'¹⁶⁶ And here lay the rub. No-one ever suggested such a thing. Since paying equal wages to non-European employees was unthinkable to everyone in the debate, the tension between the maintenance of a high wage economy and the claims of human similitude could not be resolved. Paton and some other churchmen did try to link 'White Australia' with humanitarian ideas. Joseph Kirkby, a Congregationalist minister in the 1870s and 1880s, opposed indenture both on humanitarian grounds – he collected evidence of kidnapping and sent it to the LMS – and as a threat to white workers. When he led public meetings in Dalby and Sydney against the use of coloured labour, his racist position became clear as he claimed that any mixing of races 'could only issue in the degradation of all concerned'.¹⁶⁷ Paton found himself in a similar bind: his friend Langridge noted that Paton had 'no concern' with the 'political genesis' of the White Australia movement but that he 'watched and prayed over' it, hoping it would bring about the end to labour recruitment.¹⁶⁸

Interestingly, the tension between the two groups advocating the end of Melanesian indenture was foreseen by an English visitor to Australia as early as 1871. Anthony Trollope, having visited north Queensland, was certain that Melanesian labourers were not slaves and suggested that 'an ill-conducted enthusiasm may not only debar Queensland from the labour which she requires, but also debar these poor savages

¹⁶⁶ *Worker*, 12 October 1901, p. 2.

¹⁶⁷ Edward Sidney Kiek, *An Apostle in Australia: The Life and Reminiscences of Joseph Coles Kirkby, Christian Pioneer and Social Reformer* (London: Independent Press Ltd, 1927), pp. 51, 85.

¹⁶⁸ Langridge, *Later Years*, p. 104.

from their best and nearest civilisation.¹⁶⁹ He believed that Paton was activated by genuine philanthropy but was misled, since '[t]hose who go to Queensland for three years are sent back to their islands with their hands full, in good health and with reports of a life far better than that which Providence has given them at home'.¹⁷⁰ But he did draw one clear distinction – that while the humanitarian objections to indentured labour were based on the older concerns about force and fraud, the opposition within Queensland was on quite different grounds. Workers, worried about the protection of white labour and believing Melanesian labour a threat to their own standards, based their arguments in hate: '[the worker] in his zeal hates the shining Polynesian, whom he sees, with a warmth greater even than that which the philanthropist throws into his love for his unseen man and brother'.¹⁷¹ He was one of very few contemporary observers to draw this distinction, who recognised that the moral and emotional inconsistency of any alliance between humanitarian and worker views must render it fraught, at the very least.

Yet White Australia prevailed with the passing of the Immigration Bill of 1901 and the return of most Melanesian indentured labourers in 1906. Federation of white colonies was achieved. The racial debates were forgotten by the Christian churches outside Queensland in their preparations for Federation. Their time was taken up with other causes: the issues of prayer in parliament, whether the nation should be acknowledged as 'under God', the exact wording of the preamble, precedence in the federation parades and ceremonial, and attempts to subdue latent sectarianism. The issue of whether the state had any role in religion weighed much more heavily with clerics than debates about the racial nature of the state.¹⁷² The Methodist Rev. Edwin

¹⁶⁹ Anthony Trollope, *Australia*, vol. 2 (Gloucester, UK: Alan Sutton Publishing Co, 1873 (1987 reprint)), p. 59.

¹⁷⁰ Trollope, *Australia*, vol. 2, p. 64.

¹⁷¹ Trollope, *Australia*, vol. 2, p. 63.

¹⁷² Ian Breward, *The History of the Churches in Australasia*, ed. Henry and Owen Chadwick, Oxford *History of the Christian Church* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001); Richard Ely, *Unto God and Caesar: Religious Issues in the Emerging Commonwealth 1891-1906* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1976). The Anglican Rev. T. Holmes in a sermon preached in Sydney on 17 April

Watkin, preaching in 1898, claimed that national righteousness, without which Australia would fail to reach her great potential, demanded the recognition of God in political, social and individual life, the keeping of the Sabbath and the keeping of the Ten Commandments.¹⁷³ Similarly, Bishop John Harmer of Adelaide saw 'national righteousness' dependent on 'the personal righteousness of those to whom you entrust the helm of State', especially in matters of pecuniary and sexual rectitude.¹⁷⁴ The general belief was expressed explicitly by some clergy that God had 'dowered' Australia (as Rev. Alexander Marshall put it) to European settlers, linking natural and European assets – 'a magnificent territory ... vast stores of mineral wealth ... a strenuous people, one in blood and language, joined under the freest constitution in the world to the mightiest Empire in the world' and blessed by Christianity.¹⁷⁵ Bishop William Chalmers of Goulburn claimed that 'God has enriched the British race with manifold good gifts' for the purpose of evangelising and civilising 'Australia Federata'.¹⁷⁶ Similar beliefs were more implicit in Harmer's recognition of 'God's guiding hand in politics'.¹⁷⁷

The White Australia policy remained mostly unopposed for other reasons. Some

1898 deplored the failure in the discussions to 'make a definite profession of the Christian religion' without which Federation 'must come sooner or later to ruin' (cited in Scott Bennett, ed., *Federation* (Melbourne: Cassell Australia, 1975), p 53).

¹⁷³ Edwin I. Watkin, *Australia's Privileges and Responsibilities: The Substance of a Sermon Preached in the Wesleyan Church, Barkly Street, Ballarat, on Sunday, April 3 1898*. (Ballarat: Haisman and Gazzard, 1898), p. 12.

¹⁷⁴ John Harmer, 'National Righteousness', in *The Church and the Commonwealth: Twelve National Sermons Preached on the Occasion of the Opening by the Heir-Apparent to the Throne, of the First Australian Parliament, the Ninth Day of May A.D. 1901*, ed. Horace F. Tucker (Melbourne: Melville and Mullen, 1901), pp. 29-30.

¹⁷⁵ Alexander Marshall, 'Christ the Sure Foundation', in *The Church and the Commonwealth: Twelve National Sermons*, ed. Tucker (1901) p. 99.

¹⁷⁶ William Chalmers, 'Australia Federata', in *The Church and the Commonwealth: Twelve National Sermons*, ed. Tucker (1901), p. 38.

¹⁷⁷ Harmer, 'National Righteousness', p. 27.

denominations were preoccupied with developing their own Federal bodies.¹⁷⁸ The demands – especially in education and health – of the rapidly growing nation were considerable, particularly in Queensland. The Anglican Bishop of Carpentaria was primarily concerned about the welfare of his growing white flock. The white women in his diocese were ‘anaemic and ailing’, found childbirth unusually difficult and their children ‘grew too fast, and without vigour’.¹⁷⁹ His colleague Bishop Frodsham of North Queensland, with similar concerns, helped set up the Institute of Tropical Medicine in 1907 ‘to do research into the causes of those tropical diseases which affected the life of white men in North Queensland, particularly ague and certain fevers.’¹⁸⁰ While this was certainly in line with the agenda of Cilento and other advocates of the White Australia policy, the immediate concern of the bishops was the direct need of their people. The Presbyterian Assembly in 1891, in a break from its procedural debates about federal union, issued a ‘Manifesto on the Labour Question’ which addressed the growing industrial strife and the Great Strike by sympathising with both employers and workers and advocating systems of conciliation; it did not address the indenture question.¹⁸¹ Christian church leaders preached sermons and passed resolutions supporting Federation but they were, in the words of the Assembly of the Victorian Presbyterians, commending the ‘building up of a great national life and brotherhood’.¹⁸² They had normalised and accepted the new immigration policy.

¹⁷⁸ The various colonial Presbyterian Assemblies united in 1901, the Methodists developed a Federal structure in 1902.

¹⁷⁹ Macfie, *Are the Laws of Nature Transgressed*, p. 18.

¹⁸⁰ Rowland, *Tropics for Christ*, pp. 50, 141-2. Frodsham’s concern was deepened by the severe sickness of his daughters and the death of their governess from ‘gulf fever’ in the late 1880s. He remained rather uncertain about the success of the ‘great colonising experiment’ of Europeans in the tropics, but felt it ‘worth trying ... far stranger things have happened’ (George Horsfall Frodsham, *A Bishop's Pleasaunce* (London: Smith, Elder, 1915), pp. 235-44).

¹⁸¹ James Mullan, ‘One Nation, One Church: The Federation of the Colonial Presbyterian Churches’ *Church Heritage* 12, no. 1 (2001), pp. 24-25.

¹⁸² Rev. Dr. Rentoul, cited in Bennett, *Federation*, p. 49.

Yet we may end with the occasional dissident voice that regarded Australia as having a responsibility to the rest of the region, that kept alive the ideal of human similitude. A pamphlet written (in fairly dreadful verse) by one George Morison in 1912 objected to the White Australia policy because it was not neighbourly, that it rejected people who were of 'one blood' through an 'unjust, heartless and oppressive ban' on non-whites in Australia. As such it could not be 'righteous'.¹⁸³ Rather more in the mainstream, on 11 August 1901 the organising agent in Australia for the LMS and former missionary in Samoa, Rev. Joseph King, preached at the Independent Church in Melbourne, entitling his sermon 'A Christian Contribution to the Question of a White Australia'.¹⁸⁴ Preaching from Paul's letter to the Ephesians,¹⁸⁵ one of the texts beloved of the anti-slavery campaigners, he questioned both the viability and the ethics of the White Australia policy. For Australasia (he still held out a hope that New Zealand would join the Federation) inevitably had to 'act as foster-father to a considerable population of aboriginal tribes', who needed to be better protected than they often had been. But King was also talking about a wider responsibility, for 'the Commonwealth prospectus is much wider than the continent', extending to what he called the 'Australian group', seemingly including Papua, New Guinea and the closer

¹⁸³ George Morison, *The Commonwealth and Alien Restriction: A Plea for the Stranger and for National Righteousness* (Geelong: H. Thacker, 1912). The tone may be judged from the following sample:

A 'White Australia!' – Whence this eager cry?
 And what its meaning? Does it signify
 The *Commonweal*, responsive to such name? ...
 Alas, it is not so! Heaven's rule sublime,
 Beneficent for men of every clime,
 Whate'er their colour, lineage, or estate;
 Or strong or weak; learned or illiterate ...
 To man's best interest, man, in selfish pride,
 Has dared presumptuously to set aside !

¹⁸⁴ Joseph King, *A Christian Contribution to the Question of a White Australia* (Melbourne: Independent Church, Collins St., 1901).

¹⁸⁵ Ephesians 3: 14-15: For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.

Pacific islands.¹⁸⁶ He was concerned about issues of brotherhood and righteousness; Australia was in the process of determining attitudes towards ‘the weak and dependent races clustering around our gates’ and it would be an immoral thing if Islanders were in future to be excluded after they had been encouraged to see Australia as the exemplar of a ‘broader brotherhood’ and a place where they could get help, further training, and support. His was a minority voice, perhaps one of Henry Reynolds’s ‘whisperings in the heart’.¹⁸⁷ Within the Australian body politic it would be marginalised for many years, yet never completely subverted:

We must start from the right place. The only right place from which to start our Commonwealth life is the eternal source of righteousness, and at that source we shall learn that there are rights of brotherhood and rights of guardianship, and rights even of Good Samaritanship, which neither Churches nor nations can possibly ignore without loss.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁶ The prevalence around the time of Federation of the view that ‘Australasia’ might be a larger political entity including New Zealand and at least some Pacific Islands, has been recently discussed by Donald Denoon, ‘Re-Membering Australasia: A Repressed Memory’ *Historical Studies*, (forthcoming).

¹⁸⁷ Henry Reynolds, *This Whispering in Our Hearts*, (Allen & Unwin: St. Leonards, 1998) examines those (mostly) Christian humanitarians who ‘stood up and demanded justice for the Aborigines, even on the most troubled frontiers and when conflict was at its height’ (p. xvi). His title cites Sydney barrister Richard Windeyer’s 1842 musing that in spite of apparently sound legal reasoning behind the abrogation of Aboriginal rights, his conscience was not quieted by such arguments : “How is it our minds are not satisfied? What means this whispering in the bottom of our hearts?” (p. 21). Many of Reynold’s conclusions have resonances with this thesis.

¹⁸⁸ King, *A Christian Contribution*, p. 7.

Chapter Five

The Methodist Mission and the Fiji labour supply, 1870-1920: variations on a humanitarian theme

Missionary responses to indenture in Fiji show both continuities with the campaign by John Paton and others against recruitment for the Queensland canefields and differences from it. In common were the general requirements of sugar cultivation and the humanitarian concern about forced and cruel labour. But while Paton and his colleague John Inglis had used emotional arguments in their campaign, their counterpart in Fiji, the Methodist missionary Lorimer Fison, took a different approach, reflecting Thomas Clarkson's legalism as opposed to John Wesley's passionate rhetoric.¹ The connection between beliefs concerning human similitude and attitudes towards indenture are manifest in the Fiji debates; Fison's claim that Pacific Islanders lacked the legal capacity to contract their labour relied on evolutionist arguments which were, in essence, racially based. Confronted twenty years later with a changed political situation and Indian indenture in Fiji, the Methodist John Burton employed arguments which marked a reprise of Paton's views, but in relation to a different group of people: imported Indian labourers. In the debate over Indian indenture, Europeans held varying opinions about racial hierarchies, reflected in their positions in the indenture debates.

¹ Thomas Clarkson, *An Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species, Particularly the African* (Translated from a Latin Dissertation Honoured with the First Prize in the University of Cambridge 1785) (London: J. Phillips, 1786); John Wesley, *Thoughts Upon Slavery* (London: R. Hawes, 1774); see discussion in Chapter 2.

Britain consented to the Cession of Fiji in 1874 somewhat reluctantly and only on the understanding that Fiji should be cheap to administer, which meant that taxation revenue was needed to offset the inevitable administrative expenditure. The first Governor, Sir Arthur Gordon (1874-1880), had to repay his initial grant-in-aid of £100,000 and his government remained in deficit throughout his period in power.² The only source of revenue perceived as viable was the development of plantation agriculture for export. In the 1860s the main crop attempted had been cotton, in response to the price rise caused by the American Civil War. But this proved less than satisfactory for the Fiji climate and by the mid 1870s sugar was being considered as an alternative crop. But both cotton and sugar are labour intensive crops and Fiji's distant position from markets meant its producers were always somewhat marginal. Cheap labour was essential – and indenture seen as the obvious structure for employment. The source and contract terms of labour were debated over the next fifty years by the Fiji Government, small planters, commercial firms such as the Colonial Sugar Refining Company (CSR), Methodist missionaries and the Fiji and Australian press. This chapter investigates these debates and the role in them of Methodist missionaries, especially Lorimer Fison and John Burton, both articulate writers who, while they did not always reflect the opinions of their colleagues, led the debates concerning indenture.

As argued in the previous chapter, it was the fixed term of contracts and the criminal sanctions surrounding their enforcement which marked indenture as a controversial form of employment. Its certainty made it attractive to employers and yet the element of coercion led to uneasiness on the part of some Europeans. This chapter explores the rationales of colonial officials, planters and missionaries for accepting or rejecting the institution. It quickly becomes clear that there were profound disjunctures within the colonial community, indeed within the missionary community. Nicholas Thomas has commented that colonialism in Fiji was ‘a modern and subtle project.’³

² Michael Moynagh, *Brown or White? A History of the Fiji Sugar Industry 1873-1973* (Canberra: Australian National University, 1981), p. 17.

³ Nicholas Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture: Anthropology, Travel and Government* (Cambridge: Polity

Motivations were by no means always clear or definite and dissonances between varying colonial voices were frequent. Such dissonances were frequently reflective of the racial and religious assumptions underlying notions of relative human otherness and distance; it is my aim to explore some of these subtleties.

The option of Fijian labour: communalism or commerce

As it became clear in the late 1870s that Fiji cotton cultivation was under-performing and sugar cultivation the most likely profitable alternative, various sources of labour were considered by colonial officials and planters. For economic development of the colony to proceed, plantation agriculture was deemed critical, but it required a consistent and reliable source of labour available to planters at a reasonable price. The three sources considered were local Fijian groups, Islanders from other parts of the Pacific, predominantly the Solomon and New Hebridean Islands, or imported labourers from a more distant source, such as India or China. As in Queensland, some sort of contract system was assumed necessary.

Fijian labour was cheapest but it was not readily available. The legal situation with regard to Fijian recruitment varied over time. Prior to cession, Fijians were free to work for white settlers and under the Cakobau government had to pay a poll tax, which many raised by plantation work. But it was work for which they showed little enthusiasm. Any consideration of Fijian plantation labour also involved attitudes towards the communal and chiefly nature of Fijian society and the resulting customary work patterns. Methodist missionaries, by the 1870s well-established throughout the island group, held complex views on the nature of Fijian traditional society, views which affected their attitudes towards attempts to extract labour, either by chiefs or commercial planters. The most prolific missionary writer on Fijian labour issues was the Methodist Lorimer Fison (Figure 7), and while his views were not always reflective of wider Methodist opinion, they were the most consistently thought out. Moreover, his points of disagreement with other missionaries throw light on the

Press, 1994), p. 124.



Figure 7. Rev. Lorimer Fison.

This widely-reproduced photograph appeared in *Missionary Review*, January 1923, p. 6.

relationship between European attitudes towards chiefly hierarchy and towards the acceptability of particular work-practices.

In Fiji during the 1870s and 1880s, Fison was a vocal campaigner on many Pacific issues in Australian newspapers as well as in mission publications. However his articles in the Australian press on Pacific labour issues have been virtually unused by historians because they were mostly written under pseudonyms. Fison served in Fiji from 1863 to 1871 and again from 1875 to 1884 as Principal of Navuloa Theological Institute training Fijian ministers and teachers. He was one of the intellectuals of the Mission, relatively well educated, with wide interests which included politics and anthropology. He was also a prolific writer; many of his letters to his Sydney superiors were over twenty pages long.⁴ The identification of Lorimer Fison as 'Outis' (writing in the Victorian *Daily Telegraph*), 'Hardy Lee' and the Levuka Correspondent (in *Sydney Morning Herald*) and other noms de plume was made by the missionary scholar Alan Tippett in his 1956 MA thesis on the South Pacific labour trade.⁵ This valuable lead has been neglected, perhaps because Tippett's later career at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena put him out of the secular academic mainstream. Tippett's thesis contended that the injustice of labour recruitment and the plantation in the southwest Pacific was the root of 'present-day racial problems'. He saw indenture as slavery – thus reflecting earlier missionary positions – 'built on the concept that the white man was born to rule and the brown to labour, the white to coerce and the brown to obey.'⁶ He saw Fison as one of the main opponents of indentured labour, an analysis which, judging by Fison's newspaper

⁴ Fison was an undergraduate at Caius College, Cambridge, but was rusticated for an unspecified 'misdemeanour' and did not graduate. The file of his letters from 1875-1878 is in the Methodist Missionary Society Archives (MMSA), Mitchell Library, Sydney, file MOM 104.

⁵ Alan R. Tippett, *The Nineteenth Century Labour Trade in the South West Pacific: A Study of Slavery and Indenture as the Origin of Present-Day Racial Problems* (MA, The American University, 1956), p. 63 (lodged at St Mark's Library, Canberra TIP/70/7/3) and other writings, e.g., Alan R. Tippett, 'The Pseudonyms of Lorimer Fison 1857-1883', in *Research and Writing 1974-76* (St Mark's Library, Canberra: not published).

⁶ Tippett, *Nineteenth Century Labour Trade*, p. 79.

articles, may not do justice to the complexity of his position.

Tippett identified Fison with the pseudonyms from the commonplace books, unarguably Fison's, which he had in his possession.⁷ In one of these, entitled 'Published Articles', Fison pasted copies of the 'Hardy Lee' (1876-7) and Levuka Correspondent (1881-3) articles, along with notes about payments made to him (at £2 a column) and occasional typographic corrections. Thurston also told his sister that Fison was the *Sydney Morning Herald* correspondent in 1883.⁸ Further direct confirmation comes from Brunson Fletcher who in 1919 identified 'Hardy Lee' as Fison.⁹ These newspaper articles, then, can be regarded as part of the Fison corpus and can be used in investigating his attitudes to Fiji labour issues in the 1870s and 1880s.

Fison had two main concerns about the labour supply for Fiji sugar plantations and other commercial enterprises. First, he recognised the economic imperatives: he saw a steady supply of reliable labour as critical to the success of the colony. But he also insisted on a framework of law with regulations and contracts, carefully administered, to protect both labourers and employers. A clear exposition of these beliefs, with its legalistic language and appeals to the 'reasonable', was made in 1881 in relation to Indian indentured labour:

[A recent judgement] shows the coolies on one hand that the law will not permit them to commit brutal assaults ... and the planters ... that if they do not treat their labourers fairly they will not be allowed to retain them. If there be no unreasonable notions on either side ... there seems no opening for disagreement, and the coolies fully

⁷ now in St Mark's Library, Canberra, (TIP 70/49/2 – containing the 'Hardy Lee' and 'Levuka Correspondent' articles and TIP 70/49/9 – containing the 'Outis' articles, amongst other items).

⁸ J.B. Thurston to Mrs Eliza West Morton, 12 August 1883 (Thurston Papers, in possession of Dr Deryck Scarr). I thank Dr Scarr for referring me to this document.

⁹ C. Brunson Fletcher, *The Problem of the Pacific* (London: William Heinemann, 1919), p. 73. As Fletcher was at the time editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, he presumably confirmed this from the newspaper's archives.

understand how to appeal to the law for redress against too exacting an employer.¹⁰ The problem was to ensure both a legal contract with regulation over both sides and adequate labour availability; the frequent incompatibility of these requirements led Fison into some inconsistencies and difficulties. Interestingly, Fison issued an early challenge to the prevalent view that Europeans were unable to work in the tropics, saying the point was not proven since carpenters and other tradesmen were employed at such latitudes. However, he stopped short of suggesting the importation or the widespread use of white labour and recognised that, 'whatever may be the true relative value of the two types of labour', planters would demand non-European labour from some source.¹¹

Fison recognised the Fijian's reluctance to involve himself in plantation labour and explained it by reference to Fijian subsistence affluence and the work habits associated with it:

the natives easily supply themselves with their chief articles of food, while the sea, the coral reef and the mudbanks furnish what to them is a sufficient *thoi*, or accompaniment to their vegetable diet ... It cannot indeed be said that they are altogether indolent, for they will work hard enough at times; but they like to work in their own way, at irregular fits and starts, and after a wasteful disorderly fashion which has driven even the most soberminded employers well-nigh beside themselves with fruitless rage.¹²

Such work patterns were attributed to the type of Fijian social organisation, without specialisation or need for money. Fison's identification with employers' frustrations and needs grew greater over time but in one of his earlier articles he made an interestingly relativistic observation:

We are accustomed to despise the savage because he is content with that with which we should be horrible discontented, and cares little or nothing for the things we value highly. But we may yet discover that, though we can teach him much, we have something to learn from him ... it would be hard for us to prove that the careless apathy of the Fijian lies further from the golden mean on the one side than our own

¹⁰ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 October 1881.

¹¹ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 July 1876.

¹² *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 October 1876.

feverish hurry lies from it on the other.

But whether the 'Fijian's aversion to constant work be a mark of wisdom or of folly' it was none the less real, Fison believed, and alternative labour would have to be found.¹³

A temporary, limited solution was found in allocating the labour of Fijian prisoners. The pre-cession, supposedly independent government headed by the Vunivalu (Chief) of Bau, Seru Cakobau, had hired out to planters the labour of criminals and 'heathen mountaineers ... found guilty of rebellion'. These included the Lovoni people of Ovalau, who had resisted Cakobau's rule, and hill people from Ba, who had risen in protest in 1873 and been put down by a combined force of settlers and Eastern chiefs.¹⁴ Though Fison noted that the latter had rebelled 'against a sovereign to whom and to whose forerunners neither they nor their fathers had ever owed allegiance', he found their forced labour acceptable. They 'lived in a state of chronic hostility with one another and with the coast tribes', and 'their subjugation was ... necessary to the pacification of the country'.¹⁵ In other words, by fighting Cakobau's government, such people had forfeited their normal legal rights to give their labour freely or not at all and their labour could, indeed should be coerced if the state was to maintain its authority. But such an expedient could hardly solve the labour supply problem.

Other solutions had to take into account the overall nature of Gordon's administration in Fiji. This has been widely debated, especially the extent to which the 'traditional'

¹³ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 July 1876.

¹⁴ For details of these revolts, and the nature of Bauan/European collaboration, see Janice Anderson, *The Collaboration of Fijians and Europeans for Control of the Viti Levu Interior 1867-1876* (BA Hons. thesis, Australian National University, 1974); Peter France, *The Charter of the Land: Custom and Colonization in Fiji* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp. 93-95; Martha Kaplan, *Neither Cargo nor Cult: Ritual Politics and the Colonial Imagination in Fiji* (Durham/London: Duke University Press, 1995); Deryck Scarr, *The Majesty of Colour: A Life of Sir John Bates Thurston. Volume 1: I, the Very Bayonet* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1973), pp. 218-225.

¹⁵ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 July 1876.

system which he promoted actually resembled pre-Cession indigenous practice.¹⁶ Generally, however, the declaration of land inalienability and the structures of 'indirect rule' have been regarded as protective of Fijians who were seen as vulnerable and in danger of extinction after the 1875 measles epidemic. Consistent with his promotion of the Fijian communal system, Gordon's native taxation system demanded that Fijians produce, on village land, crops to be sold by the Government to cover their poll tax.¹⁷ He also allowed the chiefs to continue customary labour demands known as *lala* from villagers for communal projects and their own gardening and other needs.¹⁸ These two exactions differed in history and beneficiary. But outside commentators, planters, and dissident Fijians tended to equate them,¹⁹ since by demanding Fijians' time and labour, both had the effect of tying Fijian males to the village communal system under the authority of the chiefs and preventing their participation in a wage economy.

The attitude of Methodist missionaries to the vexed issue of chiefly control of Fijian

¹⁶ Views which generally support the authenticity of Gordon's claims to have continued Fijian systems have been held by Deryck Scarr, *Fiji: A Short History* (Sydney: George Allen and Unwin, 1984) and J.D. Legge, *Britain in Fiji, 1852-1880* (London: 1958). France, *Charter of the Land*, sees Gordon's system as an imposition over the whole group of structures only occasionally present in the eastern areas, Ian Heath, 'Towards a Reassessment of Gordon in Fiji' *Journal of Pacific History* 9, pp. 81-92 (1974) emphasises Gordon's pragmatism, while Brij V. Lal, *Broken Waves: A History of the Fiji Islands in the Twentieth Century* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1992) notes the difference between Gordon's theory and practice.

¹⁷ For details of the native taxation system, see Sir Arthur Gordon, *Paper on the System of Taxation in Force in Fiji* (London: Harrison and Sons, 1879); Lal, *Broken Waves*, pp. 22-25; Timothy J. Macnaught, *The Fijian Colonial Experience: A Study of the Neotraditional Order Prior to World War II* (Canberra/Miami: The Australian National University, 1982) esp. pp. 7-9, 21-27.

¹⁸ For further details of the institution of *lala* see Lal, *Broken Waves*, pp. 20-22; Macnaught, *Fijian Colonial Experience*, pp. 38-48; Deryck Scarr, *The Majesty of Colour: A Life of Sir John Bates Thurston: Viceroy of the Pacific* (Canberra: Australian National University, 1980), pp. 5-35.

¹⁹ Gordon specifically complained about his critics' tendency to conflate the two issues: Sir Arthur Gordon, *Fiji: Records of Private and of Public Life 1875-1880, Volume 3* (Edinburgh: R. & R. Clark, 1904), p. 288; Gordon, *Paper on Taxation*, p. 29.

labour varied. Methodist Chairman Frederick Langham²⁰ was involved in a lengthy correspondence with Thurston and Gordon in 1881-2 over the issue of chiefly demands regarding the communal plantings required for taxation purposes. Langham, in a series of letters, some published in the pages of the Melbourne *Argus* and some direct, claimed that in some parts of Fiji the work required to produce the taxation allotment was oppressive. Women, the sick, those who cared for them and old people were forced to work in 'government fields', which were often miles from the village. Claiming that deaths had been caused by forced work, he linked native taxation with Fijian depopulation.²¹ Another missionary, Isaac Rooney, writing to the *Sydney Morning Herald*, linked depopulation to the neglect of villages and that in turn to the native taxation system. He also blamed chiefly *lala* demands for the neglect of domestic gardens and even for deaths, as people were drowned travelling to ceremonial gatherings and dances for visitors.²² It may well be, as Scarr put it, that the culture sanctioned such chiefly oppression,²³ but that did not eliminate missionary concerns that on humanitarian grounds chiefly demands should be controlled.

This dispute must be seen in the context of changing relationships between the Methodist Church and the chiefs which, as Andrew Thornley showed, tended to shift from early mutual dependence to a more contested and ambivalent relationship.²⁴

²⁰ **Frederick Langham:** Born 1833 in Australia, Methodist missionary in Fiji from 1857 to 1895, based for 29 years on Bau, and Chairman of the Fiji District 1870-95. During this time he developed the close identification between the Fijian chiefly system and the Methodist church, but clashed frequently with Gordon over detailed policy. Died 1903.

²¹ Langham to *Melbourne Argus*, 3 September 1881 and 4 February 1882 (reprinted in 'Correspondence relating to the Native Population of Fiji', British Parliamentary Papers 1884-5, vol. 53. Cmd 4434. These letters are also reprinted in part in William Fillingham Parr, *Slavery in Fiji* (London: Clarence and Co, 1895), pp. 13-17.) Gordon denied the existence of 'government fields', which was correct as far as ownership was concerned, but this was the term popularly used for *mataqali* lands set aside for taxation crops.

²² *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 August 1880.

²³ Scarr, *Fiji: A Short History*, p.106.

²⁴ Andrew Thornley, *Fijian Methodism 1874-1945: The Emergence of a National Church* (PhD thesis, Australian National University, 1979) chap. 3.

Early missionaries, dependent on the chiefs' generosity and support for their very survival, had incorporated them within a new Christian order, attempting to accommodate their secular power, while locating traditional religious power in the *bete* (priest), who could then be marginalised.²⁵ This was only partially successful but the continued spiritual power of converted Christian chiefs encouraged a strong partnership between missionary and chief. From the 1880s, however, with the new colonial administration providing an alternative focus of power and path to chiefly advancement, issues of status and supremacy challenged this relationship.²⁶ The years from 1878 saw an increasing struggle between the government and mission for influence over the chiefs and people. At issue were land and the annual church collections, the *vakamisoneri*, which government officials viewed as direct competition to government taxation and which, according to missionaries, they tried to delay or subvert. 'The Fijians were never greater slaves than they are today', complained William Lindsay, claiming that administrator Finucane was fixing the dates of Methodist missionary collections.²⁷ In the course of the struggle, Thornley suggests, the Methodists 'became antagonists of the means of government rule – chiefly authority – and claimed to identify themselves with the Fijian villagers'.²⁸

Such a move put Langham and Rooney in curious company. They had always aimed to maintain the village economy but under their own paternalist protection: they did not advocate Fijian plantation labour. However, they found themselves co-opted by the most vocal critic of chiefly excesses, William Fillingham Parr, a failed planter. Parr claimed that native taxation amounted to a form of slavery, that the demands made of Fijians by their own chiefs were far in excess of those made of indentured

²⁵ Nicholas Thomas, 'Kingship and Hierarchy: Transformations of Politics and Ritual in Eastern Oceania' *History and Anthropology* 7, pp. 107-31 (1994); Christine Weir, *Islanders Observed: Contrasting Representations of Fijians in the Writings of Missionaries and Other Westerners 1800-1860* (MLitt. thesis, Australian National University, 1994) p. 23.

²⁶ Thornley, *Fijian Methodism*, pp. 78-9.

²⁷ Lindsay to George Brown, 11 December 1899, MOM 165; see also Isaac Rooney to Chapman, 18 September 1876, MOM 165; Fison to Chapman, 31 January 1876, MOM 104, MMSA.

²⁸ Thornley, *Fijian Methodism*, p. 208.

labourers, and that therefore Fijians would be better off working on his plantations at 18 pence per day. His self-interest was obvious and Parr's extremism (Scarr called him 'clearly a maniac'²⁹) hardly lent the campaign credence. But he was influential, partly because he appropriated missionary critics of the system, frequently citing Langham and Rooney in his newspaper articles and pamphlets.³⁰ After his return to London in the early 1890s he continued his campaign, giving a lecture entitled 'Slavery in Fiji' to the Balloon Society in 1895.³¹ Such publicity interested the Evangelical body, the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society who continued to raise the issue of chiefly enforcement of Fijian labour in their journal. Questions, which had originated with the Society, were asked in the British Parliament and forced Chamberlain to order a review of taxation policy,³² and the Society's 1903 petition to the King claimed that Fijians were flogged and imprisoned for refusing to contribute forced labour.³³ The ending of compulsory taxes-in-kind in 1908 stemmed in part from this campaign.

Fison's position on chiefly exactions was more ambivalent than Langham's. In general he approved of Gordon's support of the communal system and felt that taxation-in-kind was usually no hardship. But chiefly demands could be excessive and Gordon's deliberate policy of local administration through chiefly appointments as *Roko Tui* and *Buli* was an 'exaltation of the chiefs and a grinding of the faces of the poor'. For Gordon 'does not know, and no one could make him believe, that the

²⁹ Scarr, *Fiji: a short History*, p. 106.

³⁰ E.g., William Fillingham Parr, *The Bane of Sir Arthur Gordon's Disingenuous Utterances and the Antidote of the "Fiji Times" Editorial Comments and Exposure* (Sydney: Gibbs, Shallard and Co, 1883).

³¹ Parr, *Slavery in Fiji*. The Balloon Society of London described itself as 'the popular scientific, literary and art society', and held regular lectures during the 1880s and 1890s on such topics as 'The benefits of a native Indian naval reserve' (October 1885), 'The jubilee of the penny post' (1890), 'An examination of some teetotal arguments' (1885), and 'The occulting telegraph and its inventor' (June 1890).

³² *Anti-Slavery Reporter*, March-May 1903, p. 71.

³³ *Anti-Slavery Reporter*, Aug-Oct 1903, pp. 121-2.

people are grievously, scandalously oppressed under his rule. He knows only what the chiefs say ... we hear the groans of the people, for they come to us in their griefs'.³⁴ He applauded Gordon's warning to the Council of Chiefs in 1882 that he had heard 'the murmurings of the people against their undue exactions' and that 'if the chiefs could not rule justly', the 'present system of native government' would be replaced by direct European rule.³⁵ While he had long been a critic of chiefly exactions, Fison, with a strong belief in the need and potential for Fijian 'progress', had a less hostile attitude towards individual regulated recruitment than most of his missionary colleagues. Nor was he keen to be associated with Parr whose 'roaring ... drowned the milder complaints of men who had reasonable complaints to make in reasonable speech' making him 'a positive boon to the enemy' in any debate where 'the weapons are fact and argument'. For

when he has a good case he is sure to spoil it by overstatement, and a bad one seems to be quite as acceptable to him as a good one. Give him the weakest possible case against Sir Arthur Gordon, and he is in his warpaint in a moment, and away on the warpath hungry for scalps.³⁶

Fison scorned such attitudes, so far from his own measured legalism. He was pleased that the voluntary recruitment of Fijians increased during 1883, under Gordon's more stringent regulations passed that year. Rather than staying at home, he commented ironically,

to work out their own taxation with joy and gladness, [Fijians] appear to be manifesting an increasing desire to turn their backs upon these delights to 'place themselves in the hands of the unscrupulous planters.' After some half-dozen years experience of the two alternatives, they seem to prefer the latter.³⁷

As 'Atu Bain has shown, Fijians worked extensively on plantations as well as in domestic situations and under a similar indenture system to Melanesians and Indians. Indeed, she has estimated that 25% of the total adult male Fijian population was

³⁴ Fison to Chapman, 15 July 1878, MOM 104, MMSA.

³⁵ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 January 1882.

³⁶ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 May 1883.

³⁷ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 January 1883.

employed outside their own villages in 1882 and 15% in 1901.³⁸ This level of outside employment was contrary to the professed communal ideals of both the colonial government and the Methodists and was largely concealed in the writings of both groups. But even if it were greater than assumed or admitted, the Fijian labour supply could not meet the needs of the sugar plantations.

Fison's dominant attitude towards the use by planters of Fijian labour was influenced by his beliefs concerning Fijians' competence to act individually as legal adults. Long interested in anthropology, Fison was one of several missionaries who provided ethnographic data to metropolitan theorists developing social evolutionary ideas, his main correspondents being E.B. Tylor and Lewis Henry Morgan.³⁹ As already examined, the use of missionary informants assisted anthropological theorists such as Tylor and Morgan in the metropole, even while some missionary resistance to the conclusions of the resulting social evolutionism remained. Fison was personally more enthusiastic about social evolutionary theory than some other missionaries, as he made clear in 1877 in a passage which infantilised the 'barbarian' as an earlier stage of 'us':

If we reason concerning these natives from our own premises, we shall make endless mistakes concerning them. Our mind-world is altogether different from theirs ... if we would understand the thought and feelings of savage tribes, we must go far down below the present surface of our own mental status until we reach that of our remote ancestors.⁴⁰

³⁸ 'Atu Bain, 'A Protective Labour Policy? - an Alternative Interpretation of Early Colonial Labour Policy in Fiji' *Journal of Pacific History* 23, no. 2 (1988), p. 135.

³⁹ On social evolutionism, see Chapter 2; on the way such a theory operated in India see Nicholas Dirks, 'The Policing of Tradition: Colonialism and Anthropology in Southern India' *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 39, no. 1, pp. 182-212 (1997). Stocking notes that the collaboration between Fison and A.W. Howitt, a police magistrate in Gippsland, in their study of the social organisation of the Kurnai and Kamilaroi people of Victoria contributed 'in a significant way' to Tylor's seminal essay (1888) on marriage and descent George W. Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology* (New York: Free Press, 1987) p. 259. See also George W. Stocking, *After Tylor: British Social Anthropology 1888-1951* (London: Athlone Press, 1996), pp. 17-34, on Fison's collaboration with Howitt.

⁴⁰ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 February 1877.

By this a priori reasoning, Fijians were at a stage of development – which Fison later identified, according to Morgan’s schema, as the ‘Middle Period of Barbarism’⁴¹ – in which

the tribe is the unit, and not so much as the separate existence of the individual is recognised ... We believe in individual responsibility, in “every man bearing his own burden”. But not so does the savage reason. With him the responsibility is not individual, but corporate; the tribe is involved in the consequence of every act. Hence no man is a free agent ... he must do that which is customary ... For custom is the tried and approved law of life, which has been handed down to him from his fathers.⁴²

As a result, a Fijian could not make an individual decision to give his labour to an employer. Fijians who had volunteered for plantation labour in pre-Cession days ‘went not because they wanted to go but because their chiefs told them to go’.⁴³ Under Gordon’s Native Labour Ordinance (1875), a labourer not only needed his chief’s consent but had also to convince a magistrate that he understood the terms and conditions of the contract and entered into it by ‘his own free will’. Fison generally approved of the Ordinance; indeed he had advised Gordon to implement such a scheme, believing that there was ‘no valid objection’ to freely-given plantation labour. However the conditions Fison advocated were the labourer’s free consent – problematic since he concurrently saw Fijian commoners as unable to give such consent – and an assurance that sufficient able-bodied men remained in the village for subsistence gardening; they did not include the chief’s consent *per se*, and certainly not his coercion.⁴⁴ For Fison, the Fijian’s prime responsibility was communal – to his group rather than just to his chief – and his recruitment for outside labour threatened the whole group: ‘he is bound to contribute his share to the support of the tribe, and he cannot turn his back upon the tribal responsibilities by removing himself out of

⁴¹ France, *Charter of the Land*, p. 118.

⁴² *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 February 1877. Another distinguishing feature of ‘Middle Barbarism’, according to Morgan’s theory, was that land was unalienable, communally held by tribal groups, not as a holding of the chief.

⁴³ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 October 1876.

⁴⁴ Fison to Gordon, 16 September 1875, in Sir Arthur Gordon, *Fiji: Records of Private and of Public Life 1875-1880, Volume 1* (Edinburgh: R. & R. Clark, 1897), p. 509.

their way, except by common consent.⁴⁵ His approval of any recruitment then was shot through with inconsistencies.

Fison's social evolutionary views did not, however, imply that Fijian society should remain static. Change was implied in the very idea of 'evolution', but he believed that development should take place within a communal context. He regarded the Fijians' economic role to be work on their communal lands, where he believed they could earn money over and above their tax commitment, while they continued to be organised in a traditional manner. He reported on Fijian groups communally growing cane in the Rewa delta in 1881 and potentially raising £4000, £1500 more than their tax commitment.⁴⁶ Such money could be used to purchase manufactured goods and thus improve their lifestyles (and incidentally develop a market for such goods). In the early 1870s, Fison had theorised that 'to the savage the group is the individual' and that social evolutionary 'progress' consisted in moving towards 'the individualising of the individual'.⁴⁷ This, he concluded in relation to Fiji, could be achieved through communally-based experience but aiming at eventual individual responsibility. He approved of a government scheme for purchasing boats on Fijians' account, rather than allowing them to trade on their own account, 'for they are minors still, and it is as absurd to claim the full "liberty of the subject" for them as it would be to assert it on behalf of our own children who are still under the schoolmaster's birch.'⁴⁸ But it was through such endeavours that individual economic responsibility would be developed.

His advocacy of communal economic activity forced Fison to confront the nature and extent of chiefly authority. Fison found this authority problematic since Fijians were, he believed, at an evolutionary stage where the rule of the chief should not dominate

⁴⁵ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 February 1877.

⁴⁶ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 October 1881.

⁴⁷ Cited in Stocking, *After Tylor*, p. 27.

⁴⁸ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 January 1882.

the group, either in terms of landownership or labour exactions.⁴⁹ The chiefly land sales of the pre-colonial years were contrary to Fijians' own rules as deduced by Fison: 'natives had no right, according to purely native custom, to alienate their lands'. But Fison recognised that Fijians had not protested about land sales by chiefs who had not the right to make them and they did obey their chiefs, leaving them vulnerable to excessive demands either in communal fields cultivated for taxation purposes or in the exactions of *lala*.⁵⁰ This presumption that certain actual behaviour was 'inappropriate' to his stage of 'Middle Barbarism' may be the source of Fison's ambivalence over the rights of chiefs and the acceptability of outside employment for Fijians. The intimate relationship between beliefs concerning racial hierarchy and the place of Fijians within such ranking scheme, and their suitability for particular employment, is clear.

As the mission accustomed itself to colonial government and the more conciliatory A.J. Small⁵¹ succeeded Langham as Chairman of the Methodist Mission, relations between government and mission improved. During a strike over native taxation assessments in Serua and Namosi in 1901-2, the local Methodist missionary Nolan supported the government against the local chiefs and people with the unintended

⁴⁹ Fison's belief that land was owned communally by the group (originally defined as the *yavusa* rather than the later *mataqali*), rather than being held by the chief, was developed in his 1880 lecture 'Land Tenure in Fiji' (Central Archives of Fiji and the Western Pacific High Commission, microform, National Library of Australia, Canberra). There has been much debate about the influence of this lecture on subsequent government policy: see France, *Charter of the Land*, pp. 117-28.

⁵⁰ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 January 1883. In this extraordinary article, writing under the *nom de plume* 'Levuka Correspondent', Fison attempted to distance himself (under his true name) from the assumption of the Government that because the land sales were illegitimate under native custom, they were therefore illegal under European law. Fison maintained that 'when people do what they have no right to do, thereby allowing vested rights to accrue [to others], they must take the consequences of those acts'.

⁵¹ **Arthur James Small**: Methodist missionary in Fiji from 1879-1924, Chairman of the District from 1900 to 1924. A methodical administrator, he had very close relationships both with the Fijian people and the colonial government. Died in Fiji in 1925.

consequence that they converted to Catholicism.⁵² Asked by the government to assist in recruiting Fijian labour to replace striking Indians in 1921, most missionaries overcame their general resistance to outside employment and complied.⁵³ But the aim of both government and church was to maintain cordial relations between themselves and the chiefs; maintaining the communal system advantaged both. Langham's successors continued consolidating the Fijian Methodist Church as a church of villages, led by chiefs, grounded in the communal system, with such success that the linkage of *lotu* (church), *matanitu* (government) and *vanua* (both land and the communal system) is seen as the basis of Fijian identity to the present.⁵⁴

The Melanesian Alternative: legalistic opposition

Unable to resolve the inherent contradictions in his position regarding Fijian labour, and recognising that in any case it was scarce, Fison turned to the possibility of continuing to use 'Polynesian' labour (Melanesians from the Solomons and New Hebrides), as had been done on a limited scale since the 1860s.⁵⁵ Foreshadowing the

⁵² David Bamford, *Protest as a Means of Influencing Colonial Rule: The Fijian Experience 1900-1903* (BA Hons. thesis, Australian National University, 1979)

⁵³ Thornley, *Fijian Methodism*, pp. 218-9. One missionary, Robert Green on Kadavu, acted alone and refused the CSR recruiter use of the mission boat, believing that recruitment led to 'empty villages, denuded gardens, as well as to broken family, community and church life' (Robert Green, *My Story: A Record of the Life and Work of Robert H. Green* (Melbourne: privately printed, 1978), pp. 58-9). This comment, with the suggestion that the outcome of such recruitment was relatively well-known, is one of very few in missionary writings which hints at Bain's conclusions. He transfers the usual litany of missionary complaints against recruitment to different target – the Fijian chiefly system.

⁵⁴ Joseph E. Bush, 'The *vanua* Is the Lord's' *Pacific Journal of Theology* 13, pp. 75-87 (1995); Joseph E. Bush, 'Land and Communal Faith: Methodist Belief and Ritual in Fiji' *Studies in World Christianity* 6, no. 1, pp. 21-30 (2000); Paula Niukula, 'Religion and the State', in *Fiji in Transition*, ed. Brij V. Lal and Tomasi Vakatora, pp. 53-79 (Suva: University of the South Pacific, 1997).

⁵⁵ Fison, aware of the anthropological debate on the terms 'Melanesian' and 'Polynesian', noted that amongst them 'there is not a Polynesian to be found' (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 October 1882). On the use of the terms 'Melanesian' and 'Polynesian' see Helen Gardner, *Cultures, Christians and Colonial Subjects: George Brown's Representations of Islanders from Samoa and the Bismarck Archipelago* (PhD thesis, La Trobe University, 1999); for the origins of the Polynesia/Melanesia

later arguments of Scarr and Corris,⁵⁶ Fison noted that Melanesians were subject to push factors:

From many of these islands a certain proportion of the natives are, doubtless, willing to emigrate; from the smaller because of the pressure of hunger during the frequent droughts, and from the larger because of the unutterable misery produced by their incessant wars. Nor is the spirit of adventure wanting in the South Seas.⁵⁷

We may note that this attributes to Melanesians more individualised enterprise than is attributed to Fijians. But like most commentators Fison assumed that the islands of New Hebrides and the Solomons were becoming depopulated.⁵⁸ This he did not attribute to recruitment directly but rather saw as a fact of nature which was being exacerbated by the loss of able-bodied males; 'the South Sea races,' he commented, 'do not appear to be prolific ... they are everywhere decreasing'.⁵⁹ This was a reason for stopping recruitment, not so much for the humanitarian reasons espoused by Paton, as because it meant that the islands were an unreliable and therefore increasingly expensive source of labour. Melanesian recruitment was less efficacious than required.

There were also legal problems. In 1873 Fison, writing in the *Daily Telegraph* under the pseudonym 'Outis', had led a newspaper campaign against the abuses of the system, especially as revealed by the 1872 trial of crew members of the recruiting ship, the *Carl*. They were found guilty in an Australian court of the murder of Melanesian recruits who had been shot when they offered resistance to recruitment.⁶⁰

dichotomy, see also Bronwen Douglas, 'Science and the Art of Representing "Savages": Reading "Race" in Text and Image in South Seas Voyage Literature' *History and Anthropology* 11, no. 2-3, pp. 157-201 (1999).

⁵⁶ Peter Corris, *Passage, Port and Plantation: A History of Solomon Islands Labour Migration 1870-1914* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1973); Deryck Scarr, *Fragments of Empire: A History of the Western Pacific High Commission 1877-1914* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1967).

⁵⁷ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 October 1876.

⁵⁸ As noted in Chapter 3, 'depopulation' was assumed rather than real in some areas.

⁵⁹ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 October 1876.

⁶⁰ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 December 1872.

Gordon, as High Commissioner of the Western Pacific, implemented new regulations in 1877, partly in response to such cases. These gave Melanesian labourers legal protection through the appointment of Government Agents to oversee regulations concerning recruitment, translation of contracts, terms and conditions of employment, and return voyages. Writing in late 1876, Fison outlined the new regulations and suggested that they were theoretically satisfactory, especially as ‘the name of Sir Arthur Gordon is sufficient to assure us that every precaution will be taken against wrong-doing.’ But he went on to argue that although the regulations if implemented would give protection, they would be impossible to carry out. No government agent could possibly communicate with all language groups. The privations on board a recruiting ship made the job of agent less than desirable. Regulation, Fison concluded would remain impracticable; Gordon might mean well, but

we may very reasonably doubt whether he will be able to find a sufficient number of suitable agents, and it is certain that, lacking such men, all his precautions will be of no avail, for supervision in Fiji is useless without inspection in the islands.⁶¹

In 1882, however, as the labour supply problem in Fiji worsened, Fison took a more permissive attitude to recruitment. He noted, paralleling the arguments of Alex Smith in Queensland, the improvement from the ‘bad old days’ of the early 1870s. In 1873 he had said that if ‘reasonable security’ could be given of a contract, fully understood by islanders, fair treatment and wages, and a guaranteed return to the place of recruitment, then the trade should be accepted. Now, he claimed, such conditions were met and he demonstrated the claim with accounts of an agent who insisted on full rations being supplied before he would allow any further recruiting and another who refused to allow recruiting on a ship whose crew had stolen from islanders.⁶² But he was then in the rather curious position of defending both his earlier stance and his present one while maintaining his anonymity. Commenting on the public debate between John Paton⁶³ and planters, he revealed why ‘the Revs. F. Langham and L.

⁶¹ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 October 1876.

⁶² *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 December 1882.

⁶³ For Paton’s role in the campaign against the labour trade, see chap. 4 above.

Fison' had recently been quiet on the subject of the labour trade. Perhaps, he suggested, 'they have been silent because they have found nothing to complain of since our government took the regulation of the trade into its own hands. I happen to be in a position to state that this inference represents the actual fact.'⁶⁴

This disingenuousness questions the purpose of Fison's anonymity. Tippett suggested that Fison used *noms de plume* partly to avoid appearing biased and partly from an intellectual inferiority complex caused by having failed to complete his Cambridge degree; he stopped using pseudonyms once he was awarded an MA degree from the University of Rochester in New York.⁶⁵ The issues surrounding supposed missionary bias are more complex. The Presbyterian missionaries John Paton and John Inglis from the New Hebrides were, by the 1880s, well known for forthright, sometimes almost inflammatory condemnations of the labour trade, but one of their arguments was that recruiting in the New Hebrides worked against the interests of Christian evangelism in the islands. Fison consistently rejected this argument as a form of special pleading. In 1871 he commented (under his own name) that to oppose emigration or outside employment for converts *per se* underestimated the strength of Christianity which was 'not a weak sickly hothouse plant which dies when exposed to the freshness of the outer air ... its work is not to take men out of the world, but to teach them to overcome the world, and in overcoming it, to cleanse and purify it'.⁶⁶ In 1883 he was still claiming, this time again under a *nom de plume*, that arguments which sought primarily to protect Christian missions were self-interested rather than legalistic or even humanitarian.⁶⁷ Clearly he wished to be taken seriously by governments and felt that the language of the law would promote this better than the language of the pulpit.

Fison appealed to the legal 'rational man'. In an early piece written under his own

⁶⁴ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 August 1883.

⁶⁵ Tippett, 'Pseudonyms of Lorimer Fison'.

⁶⁶ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 December 1871.

⁶⁷ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 August 1883.

name, he expounded this belief:

however deeply soever our hearts be stirred, we should discuss this matter coolly and dispassionately. There is no need for onesided or highly-coloured statements. Nay, more – there is urgent need to avoid them ... there is scarcely a good cause on earth which has not suffered from the intemperate zeal of its partisans.⁶⁸

This is in an article about the murder of Bishop Patteson, an event which shocked the British Christian world. But Fison continued his article with a relentless accumulation of evidence to support his case that the Bishop was murdered by Melanesians seeking revenge on a leader of the tribe whose members – the labour recruiters – had done wrong to them. If somewhat legalistic, it is an effective argument, and in a style which Fison continued throughout his life. It also stands in sharp comparison to the strategies adopted by other missionary critics of the labour system: emotive and appealing to the Evangelical abolitionist tradition. These were techniques Fison eschewed; both could be seen as markers of missionary prose. Having chosen his legalistic mode of discourse, perhaps he felt it necessary to hide his missionary identity in order to maintain his credibility.

The *girmitya* ‘solution’ to the labour supply problem

After rejecting Fijian labour and recognising the inadequacies of Melanesian labour, Fison supported Gordon’s scheme to import Indian indentured labourers – a point on which Tippet was silent. He saw three main arguments in favour of the proposal: Indians were not a declining race and so could prove a reliable source of labour; they came from a culture used to legal frameworks and so could understand legal contracts; since both ends of the journey were in countries under British imperial control, the regulations could be properly enforced.⁶⁹ There is here an elision of culture and individual: Fison took it for granted that, because a written legal framework existed in India and had existed long before the British Raj, individual

⁶⁸ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 November 1871.

⁶⁹ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 October 1876. Although indentured Indians did not arrive in Fiji until 1879, Gordon raised the possibility almost as soon as he arrived in Fiji in 1875, making it a matter of public comment.

Indians understood its workings; he did not test the assumption. As John Kelly demonstrated, Indian ignorance of the legal mechanisms of colonialism was profound and frequently exploited; complaints about fraud perpetrated through ‘pieces of paper’ formed part of the argument against indenture.⁷⁰ Interestingly, Fison did not consider the Indians’ religious affiliation, though this was an issue of great concern to later missionaries – and he did mention the heathen status of Chinese labour, ‘the pigtail wearers’, when small numbers were imported in 1882. For reasons that are not clear, Fison’s fears concerning imported Chinese labour – that it would ‘be very difficult to prevent quarrels between them and the natives, on grounds which need not be here particularised’⁷¹ – evidently did not apply to Indian labour which Fison saw as the best option for Fiji. This is not a position from which he ever resiled but he was concerned about the scheme’s cost. His apparent change of heart towards a greater acceptance of recruiting in the southwest Pacific in 1882-3 was partly motivated by the high cost to small planters of contracting the Indian immigrants from the *Poonah* in September 1882 – £31 per head.⁷² He foresaw that such high costs would lead to the demise of small planters and the consolidation of the sugar industry in the hands of large companies. In this he was correct.

For Fison, the validity of the institution of indenture was not in question; the debate concerned the legal ability of workers to make contracts and the regulation which forced employers to keep to them. Although he was seen by Tippet as in the Christian humanitarian tradition, Fison’s arguments did not centre on religious grounds or humanitarian grounds, but legal ones. During the 1872 British Parliamentary inquiry into the recruitment of Pacific Islanders, Fison gave testimony

⁷⁰ John D. Kelly, *A Politics of Virtue: Hinduism, Sexuality, and Countercolonial Discourse in Fiji* (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. 27-28.

⁷¹ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 October 1882. Presumably he meant competition over women. Very little seems to be known about the small number of Chinese indentured labourers imported in the 1880s. There is a cemetery containing the remains of some of them on the golf course on Malololailai island.

⁷² *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 October 1882.

alongside John Paton, Inglis and Codrington,⁷³ but close examination of his position shows differences from theirs. Because of his doubts about the ability of Fijians to make individual contracts and his questioning of the effective regulation of the South Pacific trade, Fison believed that the answer to Fiji's labour problems lay with the indenture of Indian labourers. He had few legal doubts about their position and their recruitment was, he believed, well regulated. There remains however the irony of insisting on the legal ability of labourers to bind themselves to a system of labour which depended on criminal sanction. It took another 25 years for a Methodist missionary to suggest truly free labour as the answer to Fiji's labour problems.

From Fison's time until 1901 the Methodist Church paid little attention to the *girmityas*, the indentured Indians. In the sugar areas around the Rewa, the missionary Henry Worrall, whose main responsibility lay with Fijians, began in the 1890s to raise alarms about the danger posed by Indians to Fijian Christians. Although the Indian catechist John Williams arrived in 1892, the Mission Board in Sydney saw evangelising *girmityas* as low on their list of priorities.⁷⁴ So did other missionaries in Fiji; what concerned them was the effect of Indians on their converts. Fijians had accepted Christianity at the hands of the Methodists and in doing so begun to progress up an alternative Christian hierarchy; 'heathenism' characterised the *girmityas*.

By 1900 the identification between Fiji and the Methodist Church of Australasia was strong. The success of Christianity in Fiji was the jewel in the Methodist crown. In 1875 George Brown had sent the first group of Fijian missionaries to convert other Pacific people – a demonstration of just how loyal and sincere Fijian Christians could be. These missionary Fijian teachers and native ministers had progressed up the putative Christian hierarchy under the tutelage of Australian missionaries and were

⁷³ See chapter 4.

⁷⁴ For details of Methodist catechists and teachers to the Indians prior to the arrival of Bavin and Burton see Morven Sidal, *Hannah Dudley, Hamari Maa: Honoured Mother, Educator and Missioner to the Indentured Indians of Fiji, 1864-1931* (Suva: Pacific Theological College, 1997).

now themselves converting others. But there was also a fear that the majority of Christian Fijians had not reached such maturity, and could be easily subverted by evil. As Worrall put it;

If we are to conserve our work here WE MUST EVANGELISE THE HINDU. The vital force of our body *ecclesiastic* will not be improved by what may be called a subcutaneous injection of old world heathenism ... Having brought a shipwrecked race out of the great depth of its sins, let us, in God's name, carry it high up out of the reach of the incoming tide, or *we may have to do our work over again*.⁷⁵

Evangelism of Indians, then, was to protect Fijians rather than for their own sakes. The proprietorial attitude of Methodist missions towards 'their' Fijian converts is clear in the 1910 comment of a Methodist visitor to Fiji, Mr. Morley: 'If we do not Christianize these Indians, they will Paganize our Fijians'.⁷⁶ While those who worked with Indians – particularly Hannah Dudley, John Burton and Richard Piper – saw their conversion as an end in itself, the view that it was merely a means to the end of preserving 'our' Fijian Christian heritage was prevalent both in Australia and in Fiji.

The Methodists upgraded their mission to the Indians by sending ordained European missionaries: Cyril Bavin to Lautoka in 1901 and John Burton to Nausori in 1902. Initially they did not concern themselves with the indenture system. The position of Bavin, sent to minister to both Europeans and Indians in Lautoka, was particularly compromised; he owned CSR shares. He saw the spiritual needs of *girmityas* as important but only if they did not interfere with the commercial interests of CSR. He regarded the physical conditions of Indian indenture as of little importance and did not attempt to visit the lines.⁷⁷ His colleague Harry Kent argued in 1907 that to go anywhere near Indian homes in the daytime would make the men so 'suspect' that the missionary might receive 'some physical disability of a rather hurtful nature'.⁷⁸ As late as 1914, Bavin commented that life on the indenture 'lines'

⁷⁵ *Missionary Review*, May 1893, p. 2. Emphasis and italics in original.

⁷⁶ *Missionary Review*, February 1910, p. 13.

⁷⁷ *Missionary Review*, October 1903, pp. 5-6. His father Rainsford Bavin was on the Governing Board of the Queensland Kanaka Mission – see chapter 4 above.

⁷⁸ *Missionary Review*, October 1910, p. 7.



Figure 8. Rev. John Wear Burton, Superintendent of the Nausori Circuit of the Methodist Mission, Fiji, 1909.

From J.W. Burton, *Our Indian Work in Fiji* (1909), p. 49.

compares very favourably with the life of those industrial centres in the homelands where working classes are crowded together in dingy tenements. It is a matter of surprise and thankfulness that the life of the 'lines' is not worse, considering the undue proportion of India's criminal classes who emigrate to Fiji.⁷⁹

The main evils of the system were the lack of education for children and the scarcity of women; both, he felt, were surmountable.

Questioning the 'solution': racial hierarchy revisited

What opposition there was to the indenture system came from John Burton (Figure 8). In a series of articles for the *Missionary Review* in 1903/4, and with as yet limited experience of the conditions of indenture, Burton was moderately approving of the system, following the usual official and mission line:

The whole system of Indenture is under Government control, and every effort is made to eliminate anything like abuse. On the whole the Indians are well cared for and their life here must be very much more tolerable than what they have been accustomed to in their own country. The company provides them with 'Lines' in which they live, and though they appear to us, who are used to a superior style of living, to be very crowded and wretched, yet they seem to be fairly well satisfied.⁸⁰

He described the task system as 'a very fair one', though he pointed out that it created friction. But even here he acknowledged problems; the indentured labourers worked long hours, starting work at 6.30 am, not finishing till 5.30 p.m., and with often a long walk to and from the place of work. This could be seen as close to Fison's position: the legal niceties should be maintained and it was not clear that they always were.

Burton's assumption that the *girmityas* were low-caste and from sordid, probably criminal, backgrounds tallied with the views of other Methodists. Worrall was explicit: the presence of Indians in an 'intensely degraded state' had 'added a most remarkable percentage to the crime and disease of the community'. Even their buildings – a metaphor, it seems, for their owners – 'look as if they were always

⁷⁹ Cyril Bavin, 'The Indian in Fiji', in *A Century in the Pacific*, ed. James Colwell, pp. 175-98 (Sydney: William H. Beale, 1914), p. 181.

⁸⁰ *Missionary Review*, November 1903, p. 6.



Figure 9: The cover to John Burton's 1909 pamphlet *Our Indian Work in Fiji*. The artwork is by Burton's colleague Richard Piper, missionary to the Indians in the Lautoka area.

drunk – reelingly, staggeringly, incapably drunk and disorderly.’⁸¹ This representation of Indian labourers in Methodist writing as ‘coolies’ – low class or low caste, dirty, ignorant and superstitious, and often criminal – became typical. John Wheen, visiting General Secretary of the Methodist Missionary Society, characterised the *girmityas* as part of an ‘invasion’ of ‘great multitudes of aliens who bring with them traditions and beliefs, customs and prejudices that must prove inimicable to the moral and spiritual advancement of the native race.’⁸² These people were, in the eyes of most missionaries in Fiji, morally suspect and likely to overwhelm and corrupt the orderly Christian Fijians.

By 1909 Burton’s neutral observation of indenture had turned to condemnation. There were earlier hints of a change of opinion in Mrs Deane’s account of a visit to Burton’s station in 1907. She went with Burton to the ‘lines’, which she described as ‘simply dreadful’, to attend a service. ‘I was much interested in the women’, she added, ‘for though they seemed happy I am told that they lead most wretched lives’. Presumably it was Burton who was doing the ‘telling’.⁸³ By 1909 his views were clear. In *Our Indian Work in Fiji* (Figure 9) he began his chapter on indentured labourers in forthright tone:

The life on the plantation as an indentured labourer is not of a very inviting character. The difference between this state and absolute slavery is merely in the name and the term of years. The coolies themselves ... frankly call it (*narak*) hell. The wages are low and the cost of living is comparatively high ... The accommodation appears to us very wretched ... there are some (lines) where the coolies are herded together like so many penned cattle amid the most insanitary conditions and indescribable filth.⁸⁴

⁸¹ *Missionary Review*, May 1893, p. 1. For an interesting discussion of the elevated violent crime rates amongst Indian indentured labourers, see John D. Kelly, ‘Fiji Indians and the Law, 1912’, in *My Twenty One Years in the Fiji Islands*, ed. Totaram Sanadhya, pp. 154-210 (Suva: Fiji Museum, 1991). Crimes against property, however seem to have been rare; Burton comments on the honesty in Indian communities (*Missionary Review*, December 1903, p. 7.)

⁸² *Missionary Review*, July 1910, p. 10.

⁸³ *Missionary Review*, August 1907, p. 3.

⁸⁴ John W. Burton, *Our Indian Work in Fiji* (Suva: Australasian Methodist Missionary Society, 1909), pp. 15-16. This and other passages quoted from the 1909 pamphlet are reprinted in almost identical

He acknowledged that the Immigration Department was careful in its administration of the system, but the system itself was 'open to reflection of the gravest sort'. This was the most forthright condemnation of indenture ever to have come from the Methodists. Moreover, it was not a complaint that the regulations were being disregarded but a challenge to the system itself, as dehumanising and degrading.

Interestingly, there was very little adverse criticism from within church circles to the publication of the 1909 booklet. Indeed, Small, as Chairman of the Fiji District, thought it 'should do much good'⁸⁵ and the Methodist Missionary Society sent a copy of the book to every Methodist minister in Australia, recommending it for reading by study groups within churches.⁸⁶ But this recommendation reflected the wider Methodist concern that 'the Orientalisation of the Pacific' presented the Methodists of Australia with an instance of 'great need' but also of great 'danger.' Burton too saw the Christian status of Fiji threatened from two sources: the depopulation of Fijians and the introduction of Indians:

The Christian population is passing away and the non-Christian peoples are increasing by leaps and bounds. What does it mean? It means simply this: *That unless tremendous and sustained effort be put forth, FIJI MAY BE HEATHEN AGAIN WITHIN THE CENTURY.* Dare we allow that? There is still need for the prayer of that dying saint, John Hunt: *O, Let me pray once more for Fiji! Lord for Christ's sake bless Fiji! Save Fiji! Save Thy Servants! Save Thy people! Save the Heathen - in Fiji!* May-be he is praying still.⁸⁷

Burton linked the need to evangelise Indians with the dying prayer of John Hunt, Fijian Methodism's 'founding saint'.⁸⁸ The story of his preaching and death, retold

form in John W. Burton, *The Fiji of Today* (London: Charles H. Kelly, 1910). The whole pamphlet is reprinted in Brij V. Lal, ed., *Crossing the Kali Pani: A Documentary History of Indian Indenture in Fiji* (Canberra/Suva: Division of Pacific and Asian History, ANU/ Fiji Museum, 1998), pp. 121-140.

⁸⁵ Small to Wheen, 12 May 1909, MOM 106, MMSA.

⁸⁶ *Missionary Review*, January 1909, p. 14; October 1909, p. 7.

⁸⁷ Burton, *Our Work*, p. 12, also p. 64. Italics and emphasis in original. The depth of missionary concern on this issue drove both Burton and Worrall to outbursts of typographic exclamation.

⁸⁸ John Hunt died of dysentery on Viwa in October 1848 and his dying prayer (which Burton quoted)

countless times in mission literature, became one of the charter myths of Fijian Methodism. Alongside his concern for the physical and spiritual needs of non-Christian Indians, Burton echoed the general Methodist view which saw their arrival as undermining the work of Hunt. Indeed, in Burton's rhetoric the very islands were personified, under threat of becoming heathen. Thus he held simultaneously two rhetorical modes: one based on the pollution threat of non-Christian Indians to Christian Fijians, the other based on wider humanitarian concern for Indian individuals – the tension between the two was not made explicit, but both discourses were present. By focussing on the first, the Methodist mission could espouse Burton's pamphlet and his work; his criticism of the indenture system seems in 1909 not to have been noticed, or at least not to have raised comment.

In 1910 Burton's much larger work *The Fiji of Today* was published, including a history of the Methodist mission amongst Fijians and four chapters on the Indian Mission which were a virtual reprint of the 1909 pamphlet. This time Burton came under attack from two quarters. The hostility of his missionary colleagues was aroused not by his indictment of indenture but by his representation of Fijians, which made up the majority of his book. The historical sections are unsophisticated for such a usually perceptive writer, following closely earlier missionary accounts which saw Fijian history as a battle in which Christianity conquered heathen evil. Reminiscent of Watkin's earliest descriptions of the horrors of pre-Christian Fiji, there is lengthy recapitulation of all the emblematic markers of heathenism: cannibalism, widow-strangling, war. The picture is one of unmitigated horror replaced, through the heroism of the missionaries, by Christian light.

This was uncontroversial. It was Burton's comments concerning contemporary Fijians which disturbed his colleagues. He recognised the profound sincerity of some of the older Fijian preachers and he acknowledged that much 'progress' had been made

was credited by the mission as instrumental in the conversion of Cakobau and the other Eastern chiefs, and hence the people of Fiji. While not technically canonised (since this is not Methodist practice), Hunt has been held in comparable esteem amongst Fijian Methodists.

from the pre-Christian times. But ‘the old leaven of licentiousness, cruelty, and lying is still in his character’.⁸⁹ The problem Burton saw as stemming from mass conversions, leading to a religious state of ‘paganism tinged with Christianity’. In his autobiography, written in his eighties, Burton wrote that he objected to the common missionary view that Fijians ‘had been changed, as if by the waving of a magic wand, from horrible blood-thirsty cannibals to saintly Christians who were an example to the people in the home land’.⁹⁰ He believed these ‘missionary enthusiasts’ to be wrong and was convinced that much Fijian Christianity was ‘superficial’. He was determined to show that much more skilled teaching was required, for ‘we must grant these raw undeveloped races time for their evolution’.⁹¹ This suspicion of the depth of conversion and the subsequent vulnerability of Fijians accentuated fears of their ‘moral contamination’ from imported vices and other religious ideas.

Burton’s belief in an evolutionary racial hierarchy, allocating Fijians to a fairly low rung, was unmediated by any intimate experience of Fijian culture or people, such as the experience which led Codrington to reject similar classifications in relation to ‘his’ people.⁹² Lacking direct knowledge, his evolutionist judgements of Fijians were harsh. Unlike most other missionaries, who had effectively incorporated themselves into it, Burton was not enthusiastic about the Fijian chiefly system. He described disapprovingly how Fijians ‘treated their missionaries much as they did their chiefs’, by sitting on the floor before them.⁹³ He criticised the communal system as understood and protected by Gordon. Many pages of *The Fiji of Today* were devoted to decrying the power of the *buli* (government official entrusted with the continuance

⁸⁹ Burton, *The Fiji of Today*, p. 156. This image is puzzling - in Biblical imagery ‘leaven’ is used to denote the small spark of good which helps the whole human spirit or society to rise (Matthew 13:33). Burton here used it to denote the evil which may contaminate the whole society, a rather disturbing inversion.

⁹⁰ John W. Burton, *The Weaver's Shuttle: Memories and Reflections of an Octogenarian* (n.d), typescript MLMss 2899, Mitchell Library, Sydney, p. 69.

⁹¹ Burton, *Fiji of Today*, pp. 162, 165.

⁹² See chapter 2.

⁹³ Burton, *Weaver's Shuttle*, p. 56.

of the communal system) and the communal custom of *kerekere*, both of which were seen as stifling individual enterprise. Burton blamed the lack of individualism in Fijian society, whether in terms of individual conversion or individual economic enterprise, for many of its ills, including depopulation. This critique resonates with the debates Timothy Macnaught described in official discourse during the same period.⁹⁴ Burton's chapter entitled 'The Passing of the Fijian' concluded that the communal system, sexual depravity, 'premature civilisation', and laziness were the causes of depopulation. The answer lay in the policies then being pursued by Governor im Thurn: Western education and industrial training and freeing the communal system of land use to encourage commercial farming. And such action would have to be continued for many years, for, in a comment suggesting transmission of degradation from one generation to another in spite of Christian conversion (in an strange reverse-Lamarckian way), Burton warned that the pre-Christian 'terrible past' was always 'casting a shadow on the present' and even Christianity 'cannot at once erase the effects of those dark hours of the race'.⁹⁵ It was such passages which were the probable reason for George Brown's severe reservations about publication, demands that Burton rewrite some parts to 'tone down criticisms', and which caused Wheen, in reviewing *The Fiji of Today*, to comment that he could not 'accept in every detail Mr. Burton's very pessimistic prophecy'.⁹⁶

Almost all the sections of *The Fiji of Today* which concern Fijians were informed by the writings of others, not by personal experience. The historical sections drew on the writings of the missionaries James Calvert and Joseph Waterhouse, the discussions on depopulation were mainly a summary of the 1896 Decrease Report, and much of the argument advocating the virtues of industrial training was a compilation of various missionary writings on experiences in Africa. There were few discussions of personal encounters and the style is didactic and flat. One concludes that Burton did not know

⁹⁴ Macnaught, *Fijian Colonial Experience*, esp. chaps. 1-3.

⁹⁵ Burton, *Fiji of Today*, p. 225.

⁹⁶ Brown to Danks, 4 July 1908, MOM 110, MMSA; Burton, Weaver's Shuttle, p. 70; *Missionary Review*, January 1911, p. 6.

much about the Fijian community and was not particularly interested in it. His interest rather was captured by the Indian community, a group that he saw as intellectually superior to Fijians. In an early *Missionary Review* article he described revealingly an encounter between the two groups, a rare example of a personalised description of Fijian people. Burton described a rather hair-raising boat trip from Suva to Navua, accompanied by an Indian catechist and young Fijian boys more enthusiastic than skilful. Eventually they made it into the calm of the Navua River:

“Sahib!” exclaims the hitherto terrified Catechist; “our lives are snatched back from death. See how great dangers we meet by trusting ourselves to these dwellers in the jungle, whose minds have never been exercised by thought.”

The Catechist evidently thinks that this is the proper place to retaliate upon the Fijians, who have been taunting him with being unable to swim.

“I would rather trust myself to one of these children of nature on a journey such as this,” replies the missionary, “than to all the Persian and Sanskrit scholars of Hindustan.”⁹⁷

The Fijians have practical skills, the Indians intellectual ones; Burton appreciated both, in their place, but the ‘children of nature’ comment shows where he thought the Fijians’ place was. Burton’s use of evolutionist language in relation to Fijians declined after World War 1 – during which he served as YMCA chaplain in London – and the peace settlement; during the early 1920s his attitude to social evolutionism was complex and ambivalent.⁹⁸ More noticeable changes in attitude were evident after Burton’s visits to Papua and New Britain as General Secretary of the Methodist Missionary Society in the late 1920s. There he saw Fijian teachers and ministers working effectively and came to know them personally. In 1926 Burton described the ‘real winning of souls’ achieved by Fijian, Tongan and Samoan pastors and teachers in Papua. There were now congregations of three hundred where five years previously all had been heathen: ‘it is simply marvellous to see what have been done by some of the South Sea Island teachers’.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ *Missionary Review*, August 1904, p. 5.

⁹⁸ See discussion of Burton’s position on the League of Nations Mandate in New Guinea in Chapter 9.

⁹⁹ John W. Burton, *Our Task in Papua* (London: Epworth Press, 1926), p. 78.

Most of Burton's descriptions of Fijians before the late 1920s and his early descriptions of Indians fall into the category of what Mary Louise Pratt has described as the 'normalising discourse' of 'manners and customs' portraits in nineteenth century travel writing.¹⁰⁰ In this genre, the people to be described are 'homogenised into a collective "they", which is distilled even further into an iconic "he"... the subject of verbs in a timeless present tense.' In 1903 Burton shifted between the singular and collective in his comments about various supposed Indian traits of character:

It is often said that the Indian is mean. So he is, in many ways; but there is also a generous side to his nature. He gives in a very fine spirit – as though the favour were on the giver's side. They are kind to old age and weakness. They are polite in manners, respectful to superiors, courteous to equals, and, as a rule, exceedingly docile.¹⁰¹

Such essentialising, normalising discourse was applied to both Fijians and Indians. So the Fijian was 'a happy man delighting in the sunshine, birds and flowers', while the Indian was personified as 'intellectually ... a man not to be treated with contempt'.¹⁰²

By 1910, such essentialised descriptions of Indians were much rarer in Burton's writing. In *The Fiji of Today*, they were complemented by personalised accounts. Burton quoted conversations with named people, introduced them as individuals. We meet the low-caste Baramool planning to reform his thieving ways after his overseer stood up for him in court, and John Wilson Banerji, son of a Christian minister and Cambridge-educated, who, convicted of embezzlement was 'getting used to' indenture.¹⁰³ In his description of better educated people, evoking distinctions based not on race but on something close to class, Burton empathised with the educated, the Hindu pandits, Muslim mullahs and students who were to be particularly pitied for living 'amidst all the filth, sin and wretchedness of the Coolie Lines.'¹⁰⁴ He described

¹⁰⁰ Mary Louise Pratt, 'Scratches on the Face of the Country; or, What Mr. Barrow Saw in the Land of the Bushmen' *Critical Inquiry* 12, pp. 119-43 (1985).

¹⁰¹ *Missionary Review*, December 1903, p. 7.

¹⁰² *Missionary Review*, January 1904, p. 3.

¹⁰³ Burton, *Fiji of Today*, pp. 275, 281.

¹⁰⁴ *Missionary Review*, November 1903, p. 7. These observations about the varied origins of the

his religious debates with the Hindu pandit later identified as Totaram Sanadhya,¹⁰⁵ and with a Muslim *maulvi*. This writing is vivid; the use of the present tense here adding to the immediacy of the events rather than essentialising, and Burton's own presence as observer is evident. Indeed, he is certainly the missionary described (in the third person) preaching 'in spotless white suit and broad brimmed helmet' in Hindustani with an accent which 'sounds a trifle English'.¹⁰⁶

But while other missionaries objected to the representation of Fijians in *The Fiji of Today*, the government and CSR, presumably unacquainted with the 1909 pamphlet, were offended by Burton's condemnation of indenture. In July 1910 Governor May wrote formally to Small, rebutting Burton's claims about the evils of the indenture system.¹⁰⁷ Small tried to deny involvement.¹⁰⁸ But Burton was impenitent and defensive, claiming that he had 'given the government credit for improvements' but that 'there is the CSR Co to contend against.' Some labour lines still did not have latrines and conditions were not 'wholesome or healthy,' even through stricter regulation about the standards of accommodation and sanitation had been introduced in 1908.¹⁰⁹ The conditions of indenture cried out for change on humanitarian grounds. Burton was passionate, far from the careful legalistic arguments of Fison. The

girmitiyas are unusual in contemporary missionary or other European discourse and anticipate the statistical work done on the subject by Brij V. Lal, *Girmitiyas: The Origins of the Fiji Indians* (Canberra: Journal of Pacific History, 1983).

¹⁰⁵ Burton, *Fiji of Today*, p. 323; Weaver's Shuttle, p. 67. For Totaram's account of the same dialogues, see Totaram Sanadhya, *My Twenty-One Years in the Fiji Islands*, trans. John D. Kelly and Ultra Kumari Singh (Suva: Fiji Museum, 1991) pp. 73-79, and Brij V. Lal and Yogendra Yadav, 'Hinduism under Indenture: Totaram Sanadhya's Account of Fiji' *Journal of Pacific History* 30, no. 1, pp. 99-111 (1995).

¹⁰⁶ Burton, *Fiji of Today*, p. 301. Burton's interest in Indian language and culture persisted. In 1923, on an official visit to Papua as Methodist Mission General Secretary, he entertained Papuans and missionaries with a rendition of Indian songs (*Missionary Review*, December 1923, p. 5).

¹⁰⁷ K.L. Gillion, *Fiji's Indian Migrants: A History to the End of Indenture in 1920* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 167.

¹⁰⁸ Small to Colonial Secretary, 13 August 1911, MOM 108, MMSA.

¹⁰⁹ Small to Danks, 28 August 1912, reporting Burton's response to Government criticism, MOM 107.

regulations introduced to ameliorate the system were not being observed, but they could not mitigate the evils of the system in any case.

Broadening the humanitarian impulse

Burton's criticism of the indenture system was influential. *The Fiji of Today* was read in India and formed part of the growing call there to abolish the system. Burton's role was acknowledged by others. Before leaving India for Fiji in 1915, Gandhi's emissary, the English Anglican clergyman C.F. Andrews,¹¹⁰ had read and been impressed by the book. Once it was clear that indenture was to be abolished, he wrote to Burton:

I know what an intense joy to you it will be that the indenture system is to be utterly abolished ... I do feel very strongly that your book (the 'Fiji of Today') was the pioneer and did the pioneer work, and it is due to that book perhaps more than to any other single cause that the whole indenture system was shown up in its proper light.¹¹¹

In his unofficial 1916 report to the Indian government, Andrews praised the actions of Burton and Hannah Dudley, who 'saved the whole Indian community from falling to the lowest level of ignorance and vice'.¹¹² Pandit Totaram Sanadhya, who wrote in his memoir of his time in Fiji, also acknowledged this:

Rev. Burton did a lot for our people. They used to flock to him and tell him their tale of woe. He would plead on their behalf to their master ... (He) was the first person in Fiji to raise his voice against the indenture system.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ **Charles Freer Andrews:** Born 1871 in England. Missionary with the Anglican Cambridge Mission in India 1904-13, mostly as Principal of St. Stephen's College, Delhi, before severing, amicably, his connection with the Anglican mission to work with Gandhi and the Indian Trades Union Congress. He paid two visits to Fiji, the first in 1915 with William Winstanley Pearson, the second longer visit in 1917 alone. Died 1951.

¹¹¹ *Missionary Review*, September 1916, p. 10; also quoted in Gillion, *Fiji's Indian Migrants*, p. 178. For details of the campaign in India against indenture in Fiji, see Gillion, *Fiji's Indian Migrants*, pp. 165-189.

¹¹² Charles Freer Andrews and William Winstanley Pearson, *Report on Indentured Labour in Fiji: An Independent Enquiry* (Calcutta: 1916), p. 45.

¹¹³ Lal and Yadav, *Hinduism under Indenture*, p. 111. Totaram wrote that he planned to translate *The Fiji of Today* into Hindi (*21 Years in Fiji Islands*, p. 78). As far as I know he did not do so.

John Kelly, in his remarkable study of the Indian experience in Fiji, noted how the representation of *girmitiya* life was focussed by both Indians themselves and by Europeans around issues of sexual morality. That focus was maintained in spite of dramatically opposing attitudes towards the causes of 'immorality'. For the *girmitiyas* themselves, the attacks on women's virtue were mobilised into a 'Hindu moral rhetoric' which located outrages (*atyâchâr*) in the polluting of pure women through the conditions of indenture. These outrages, when reported in India, formed the basis of the struggle to end indenture. For most Europeans, 'immorality' was represented as inherently racial in its origin, rather than the result of the uneven gender ratios, overcrowding and inherent violence of the indenture experience.¹¹⁴ Worrall, writing in 1894, described 'vices and diseases that through long centuries have become hereditary in the life and character of a race', a comment which links racial determinism and Lamarckian-style ideas about the transmission of morals.¹¹⁵ Those holding such views believed that Indian morals could only improve on contact with Europeans, hence Bavin's comment that indenture 'does more good than harm to the class of Indians who have emigrated to Fiji'. After 'five years' training, the Indian invariably improves mentally, physically and morally', he claimed, giving the discipline of field labour the status of education.¹¹⁶ Indian religion, especially Hinduism, the religion of the majority of *girmitiyas*, was seen in much the same light as Fijian traditional religion, as 'degraded' and the source of evil. Worrall summarised its influence as 'caste prejudice, idolatrous surroundings and the influence of the priests' and emphasised elements he regarded as superstitious.¹¹⁷ Bavin took a somewhat more sophisticated line, recognising an ancient sacred literature but criticised 'hoary-headed' Hinduism's ethics, seeing the caste system as

¹¹⁴ Kelly, *Politics of Virtue*, pp. 30-41.

¹¹⁵ *Missionary Review*, January 1894, p. 11. Worrall's writing was unpleasantly condemning of several targets; an earlier article (*Missionary Review*, June 1893) consisted of a four-page diatribe against Catholic priests.

¹¹⁶ Bavin, 'Indians in Fiji', p. 183.

¹¹⁷ *Missionary Review*, September 1897, p. 2.

proving that as religion it was as opposed to human equality.¹¹⁸

C.F. Andrews, who spent many years as lecturer at St Stephen's College in Delhi before his two trips to Fiji, saw the moral trajectory of the *girmityas* as following the opposite path, with previously chaste women degraded by the indenture experience.¹¹⁹ After his 1915 visit, he wrote of the 'moral ruin' of life in the 'lines' leading to the 'wreck' of 'the whole Hindu fabric of life'. The festivals which gave meaning to life in India were in Fiji abbreviated and without their religious basis; 'Hindu degradation could not go lower'.¹²⁰ But two years later, he reported that it had: 'The state of Indians has reached a lower moral tone and degradation now than two years ago, when I saw it before; so terribly does evil repeat and multiply itself.'¹²¹ This view must be understood in the light of his general representation of Hinduism – that it was a religion which gave meaning, ethics and structure to the lives of its followers. Moreover, Hinduism had been reformed and purified by recent trends in India. In his 1912 book *Renaissance in India*, Andrews discussed the influence on Indian education of western scientific thought and of Christian missions, which, while making few converts, had succeeded in 'leavening the old religious conceptions of the people of the east' so that 'wherever they have spread there has been a quickening of new life'.¹²² This had in turn stimulated reform within Hinduism: Andrews saw reform movements such as the Brahmo Samaj of Ram Mohan Roy and the Arya

¹¹⁸ Bavin, 'Indians in Fiji', p. 190.

¹¹⁹ Kelly, *Politics of Virtue*, pp. 33-37.

¹²⁰ Andrews and Pearson, *Report on Indentured Labour in Fiji*, p. 36.

¹²¹ Statement by the Rev C.F. Andrews, MA, before members of the Methodist Mission Board, Sydney, January 16 1918, in Board Minutes, MOM 206, MMSA. A widely read summary of Andrews' findings and conclusions in relation to Indian indenture is contained in his article 'The Future of the Church in the Pacific', which details the moral degradation of women and the role the Church ought to play in ameliorating the situation. It was published in *Missionary Review*, March 1918, pp. 7-9; *Australasian Intercollegian* (journal of the Australian Student Christian Movement), March 1918, pp. 9-12; *Church Standard* (Anglican weekly), 18 February 1918.

¹²² C. F. Andrews, *The Renaissance in India: Its Missionary Aspect* (London: Church Missionary Society, 1912), p. 11.

Samaj as influenced by both the theology of the Upanishads and the morality of Christianity; freed of idolatry, the 'purer faith of the ancient scriptures of Hinduism' had embraced 'a new moral fervour and a new intellectual freedom' which led to 'the liberalising and humanising of Indian life'.¹²³

Burton, who left Fiji in 1911 because of the ill-health of his daughters, came independently to a similar if less academic understanding of Hinduism. While he never ceased attempting to convert Hindus, he came to value their religious and philosophic system, especially as expressed by the more learned members of the community. Burton's and Sanadhya's accounts of their dialogues both give the impression of two intelligent men, each determined not to be converted by the other, enjoying a stimulating debate about life, death and everything in between. Nor was it only with Sanadhya that Burton had such debates. In a passage written soon after his arrival in Fiji, he described a Pandit's readiness to draw parallels between Hindu religious writings and the Gospels which they read together. Interestingly, Burton was prepared to pray and worship with Hindus, even if he found the music 'weird'.¹²⁴ Another similar experience resulted in the eventual conversion of Guru Gobind Das, who read St. Matthew's Gospel and the Ramayana alternately to his disciples and ended up running a Christian school under the baptismal name of Nicodemus.¹²⁵ It was such experiences which led Burton to his considered position on Hinduism which he expressed in a 1914 sermon farewelling two missionaries to serve in India. In it, he told them to portray Christianity as the 'fulfilment of all that is best and true in every religion', for there are 'elements in Hindu philosophy which will serve ... as a

¹²³ Andrews, *Renaissance in India*, pp. 111, 114. For more on the assumptions of Christian 'liberals' like Andrews that Hinduism when reformed by Christianity could achieve Indian nationalist aspirations, see Gerald Studdert-Kennedy, 'Christian Imperialists of the Raj: Left, Right and Centre', in *Making Imperial Mentalities: Socialisation and British Imperialism*, ed. J. A. Mangan, pp. 127-43 (Manchester/New York: Manchester University Press, 1990); Hugh Tinker, *The Ordeal of Love: C.F. Andrews and India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1979).

¹²⁴ *Missionary Review*, January 1903, pp. 7-8.

¹²⁵ *Missionary Review*, October 1908, pp. 1-3. This account of a conversion in the lines includes an evocative description of social and religious life under indenture.

footstool to lead the people to Christ'.¹²⁶ Burton saw reform movements within Hinduism, purifying it of 'superstition', developing monotheistic tendencies, and accommodating Western science, as a precursor to widespread Christian conversion. In a series of articles in the *Missionary Review* in 1915 on Rabindranath Tagore, Burton claimed that his religious poetry had the 'intensity of the psalmist' and might have been written by Thomas à Kempis, so similar were its understandings to orthodox Christian ones. He went so far as to suggest that Tagore was 'leading, consciously or unconsciously, masses of thoughtful and refined people in India nearer Christ'.¹²⁷ This proto-Christian attitude to Hindu revival movements may have been somewhat misguided, given the rivalry which developed in Fiji between Methodist and Arya Samaj schools and the low rate of Christian conversion. But it did mean that Burton, after 1912 a mission administrator in Australia, and Richard Piper in Navua and then Lautoka, who shared many of his views, were able to develop a constructive attitude towards Indians in Fiji and become respected as educators and health providers.

However, many of the Methodists in Fiji found the appreciation of Hinduism which emanated from Andrews and Burton, and their strident opposition to indenture, difficult to accept. Most had backed Small against Burton in the 1910 row over *The Fiji of Today* and were wary of Andrews both in 1915 and in 1917. His proposal that Hindu religious leaders of a high calibre were needed in Fiji and that the government should give grants to schools for Indians started by all religious bodies, were seen as 'startling' by missionary R.L. McDonald.¹²⁸ In early 1918, en route between Fiji and India, Andrews spent some weeks in Australia¹²⁹ and in January met with members of

¹²⁶ Sermon reprinted in *Missionary Review*, September 1914, pp. 8-10.

¹²⁷ *Missionary Review*, September 1915, p. 12; October 1915, p.11. Interest in Tagore's poetry was heightened when he won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913. A review of *Gitanjali* was published in the *LMS Chronicle*, April 1914, p. 93.

¹²⁸ *Missionary Review*, May 1917, p. 14.

¹²⁹ He met with various Christian and women's groups concerned with the issue of indenture and accompanied by Burton and Frank Paton addressed the conference of the Australian Student Christian Movement (*Australasian Intercollegian*, March 1918, pp. 2-8).

the Methodist Mission Board. He asked them to back his campaign to have all remaining indentures revoked and to pressure the CSR and the Fiji Government to institute reforms on the plantations, mainly relating to male supervision of women's work gangs and hospital wards. Before making a decision, the Board asked the opinion of missionaries stationed in Fiji. Richard Piper thought Andrews' assessment and recommendations fair. But others saw them as 'one-sided', 'generalisations', and described Andrews as 'impatient' and 'impractical'.¹³⁰ What clinched the argument against Andrews, however, was the recognition of his political role. R.W. Steadman noted that Andrews was 'closely connected with a powerful political party in India' which was 'seeking by means of destructive criticism of British Administration in India to further the cause of Home Rule for India'.¹³¹ If the Methodist Mission supported Andrews, it could be seen as disloyal to the Fiji Government and by extension the British Government, especially once the Fiji Legislative Council had rejected the criticism. Bavin already felt that 'Government underlings have got their knife into us on account of [Burton's] book',¹³² he had no desire to repeat the experience with any further criticism of indenture. And anyway, by 1916 indenture was ending; there was no need for further controversy. Andrew Thornley commented that the Methodists have 'been proud to call Burton...their own, but with little justification'.¹³³ But once indenture was safely abolished and the arguments surrounding it dead, Burton could be reclaimed as a reformer and the criticism of him forgotten.

Because he rejected the indenture system, we cannot then assume that Burton regarded the economic development of Fiji as unimportant. Rather, he saw free Indian settlers as an integral part of the economy. Bavin portrayed the free Indian

¹³⁰ Evidence of Richard Piper, A.J. Small, C.O. Lelean, Board Minutes, 7 June 1918, MOM 206, MMSA.

¹³¹ Steadman to Wheen, 27 April 1918, in Board Minutes, 7 June 1918, MOM 206.

¹³² Bavin to Wheen, 23 September 1913, MOM 109.

¹³³ Andrew Thornley, 'The Methodist Mission and Fiji's Indians: 1879-1920' *New Zealand Journal of History* 8, no. 2, (1974), p. 150.

community as an irreligious, immoral, cynical, and exploitative group who used the Fijians for their own 'subtle ends' and were 'picking out the eyes of the land' with their settlement.¹³⁴ Burton agreed about the moral degradation caused by the low ratio of women and the irregularity of family life caused by indenture, the effects of which spilled over to free Indians. But, with his more positive representation of Hinduism, he also emphasised their vigour and vitality and their hard work and detailed their large and growing share of the retail and agriculture industries of Fiji. For, he said, 'there are very few free Indians of any length of residence in the colony who are not, from their standpoint, fairly well off ... they constitute industrially the most important element in the community'.¹³⁵ The source of Fiji's economic growth was to be the free Indian farmers, growing cane and other crops on leased land and working for wages on the open market.

The debates over who should provide commercial labour for non-subsistence economic activity in Fiji revealed differences within the Methodist Mission, not only on the substantive issue but also on whether the basis for that discussion should be legal, religious or humanitarian. The debates exemplified the relationship between hierarchical racial views and the resulting policy assumptions about who should be employed under particular conditions. The arguments over *lala* and the commercial employment of Fijian commoners reflected the ambiguity inherent in grounding the Fijian Methodist mission in a chiefly structure which could be seen as oppressive to commoners, complicated further by evolutionist assumptions that legal individualism was inappropriate for Fijians at their 'present stage'. Relationships with government and planters introduced further variation: planters' attempts to acquire Fijian labour were expressed in challenges to government policy with some missionaries co-opted as ambivalent allies. The compromise acceptable to most, Indian indenture, found favour because of its apparent legal as well as economic advantages. But it relied on the conflicting propositions that poor Indian labourers were 'lower' than Fijians in the presumed racial hierarchy, but at the same time 'advanced' enough to understand

¹³⁴ Bavin, 'Indian in Fiji', p. 185.

¹³⁵ Burton, *The Fiji of Today*, pp. 308-9.

legal contracts. Burton's challenge to the indenture system was couched in humanitarian arguments which were now extended to Indians, but they had their own inconsistencies. He was inverting, rather than rejecting, the evolutionary framework accepted by most other Methodists. Nonetheless, in rejecting indenture as an institution for all human groups he was reflecting an international shift of opinion towards international responsibility which ultimately dominated in Fiji and would find other expression in the enthusiasm for the League of Nations trusteeships of the 1920s.¹³⁶

¹³⁶ See Chapter 9.

Chapter Six

‘To Promote the Growth of Character’

Methodist missionary William Bromilow, writing in 1903 after a routine visitation around his mission district of Papua, finished his report thus:

As Missionaries we never lose sight of the main object of our mission to these islands – the salvation of the people from their sins. Thank God we have clear cases constantly occurring, and then we have the training of our converts – no light task even though there is clear evidence of “modification of character.” May we ever have the grace of wisdom.¹

Like many missionaries, he saw his work at having two distinct phases – the initial conversion, the point of decision to follow the *lotu*, and then the training of the new converts in the Christian way. The notion that full acceptance into the Christian community required some ‘modification of character’ and ideas about how this could be achieved require further analysis. Concerns about the development of the mature Christian life gained relevance as the pioneer period of missions passed and the missions became institutions with large numbers of converts whose behaviour did not always live up to Christian expectations as envisaged by the European missionaries. As already considered, missionaries frequently believed that the development of ‘Christian character’ and the new interests promoted through acceptance of Christianity were prerequisites for arresting the assumed depopulation, concurring with John Burton’s view that Islanders needed to ‘be made fit’ for the ‘inexorable struggle’ of life and motivated to engage in it.² The resulting period of normalisation, domestication and the development of routine has been widely discussed, but

¹ *Missionary Review*, May 1903, p. 3.

² John W. Burton, *The Fiji of Today* (London: Charles H. Kelly, 1910), p. 240. For discussion on the debates surrounding depopulation see Chapter 3.

normally in terms of the outward changes encouraged, and some have suggested forced, by the mission establishment.³

I wish to place a greater emphasis on the internal changes expected on conversion, starting with the mission notion of what conversion entailed. The European evangelical tradition took seriously the concept of *metanoia*, 'turning around', after the conviction of sin and subsequent repentance. Most individual European missionaries could give the time and place of their own personal experience. Thus

³ Discussions of domestication influenced by the missions in the Pacific include Bronwen Douglas, 'Provocative Readings in Intransigent Archives: Finding Aneityumese Women', *Oceania* 70, pp. 111-29 (1999); Bronwen Douglas, "Recuperating Indigenous Women: Female Sexuality and Missionary Textuality in Melanesia" (paper presented at the Association for Social Anthropology in Oceania annual meeting, Auckland, New Zealand, 23 February 2002); Richard Eves, 'Colonialism, Corporeality and Character: Methodist Missions and the Refashioning of Bodies in the Pacific', *History and Anthropology* 10, no. 1, pp. 85-138 (1996); Patricia Grimshaw, 'New England Missionary Wives, Hawaiian Women and "The Cult of True Womanhood"', in *Family and Gender in the Pacific: Domestic Contradictions and the Colonial Impact*, ed. Margaret Jolly and Martha Macintyre, pp. 19-44 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Margaret Jolly, 'Sacred Spaces: Churches, Men's Houses and Households in South Pentecost, Vanuatu', in *Family and Gender in the Pacific*, ed. Jolly and Macintyre, pp. 213-35 (1989); Margaret Jolly, "'To Save the Girls for Brighter and Better Lives": Presbyterian Missions and Women in the South of Vanuatu 1848-1870', *Journal of Pacific History* 26, no. 1, 27-48 (1991); Michael Young, 'Suffer the Children: Wesleyans in the D'entrecasteaux', in *Family and Gender in the Pacific*, ed. Jolly and Macintyre, pp. 108-34 (1989). For discussion relating to Africa see Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa*, vol. 1 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991); John L. Comaroff and Jean Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: The Dialectics of Modernity on a South African Frontier*, vol. 2 (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 1997); for other parts of the world see Jane Haggis, *Professional Ladies and Working Wives: Female Missionaries of the LMS, South Travancore District, South India in the Nineteenth Century* (PhD thesis, University of Manchester, 1991); Catherine Hall, 'Missionary Stories: Gender and Ethnicity in England in the 1830s and 1840s', in *Cultural Studies*, ed. L. Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula Treicher, pp. 240-276 (New York: Routledge, 1992). One of the few writers concerned with 'industrial' training for young men is Tony Austin, *Technical Training and Development in Papua 1894-1914* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1977).

John Hunt, early missionary to Fiji, described how at a prayer meeting at the age of seventeen 'a most overwhelming influence came upon me, so that I cried aloud for mercy for the sake of Christ'; he later saw this experience as the moment of 'new birth'.⁴ Fifty years later and in a different tradition, Florence Young, founder of the Queensland Kanaka Mission, attended a prayer meeting in Dunedin, New Zealand, and described her reaction to the words of a hymn: 'It was like a flood of electric light turned on in a dark room ... The Holy Spirit had done His blessed work.'⁵ Indigenous reasons for a change of religious allegiance did not always, or indeed usually, conform to these norms.

The concept of 'conversion' is undoubtedly complex and is the subject of much theological, anthropological and sociological debate,⁶ with which I do not intend to

⁴ John Hunt, *Journal*, vol. 1, p. 17. ML A3349. Mitchell Library, Sydney.

⁵ Florence Young, *Pearls from the Pacific* (London: Marshall Bros. Ltd, 1924), p. 29.

⁶ Particularly relevant for a historian are the anthropological arguments of Robin Horton which link economic, sociological and religious change (Robin Horton, 'African Conversion', *Africa* 41, no. 2, pp. 85-108 (1971); Robin Horton, 'On the Rationality of Conversion', *Africa* 45, no. 3, pp. 219-36 (1975)). Other considerations of religious change in Africa which have a strong sociological component, and which resonate with the situation in the Pacific include Paul Stuart Landau, *The Realm of the Word: Language, Gender and Christianity in a Southern African Kingdom* (Portsmouth, NH/Cape Town/London: Heinemann/David Philip/James Currey, 1995); J.D.Y. Peel, 'The Pastor and the *Babalawo*: The Interaction of Religions in Nineteenth Century Yorubaland', *Africa* 60, no. 3, pp. 338-67 (1990); J.D.Y. Peel, 'Religious Change in Yorubaland', *Africa* 37, no. 3, pp. 292-306 (1967).

More missiological in approach is Alan R. Tippett, *Solomon Islands Christianity: A Study in Growth and Obstruction* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1967) which described the acceptance of Christianity in the Solomon Islands in the early twentieth century in terms of 'power encounters', a fundamentally theological concept (pp. 101-06).

Anthropological considerations of the process and nature of religious change in the Pacific are numerous, including John Barker, 'Introduction: Ethnographic Perspectives on Christianity in Oceanic Societies', in *Christianity in Oceania: Ethnographic Perspectives*, ed. John Barker, pp. 1-24 (Lanham/New York/ London: University Press of America, 1990); John Barker, 'We Are *Ekelesia*': Conversion in Uiaiku, Papua New Guinea', in *Conversion to Christianity: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives on a Great Transformation*, ed. Robert W. Hefner, pp. 199-230

involve myself in detail. Historians of the Pacific have frequently marked the spread of Christianity in terms of numbers attending church or school, numbers of churches or adherents, or the relative size of differing denominations. But modern historians have recognised the difficulties inherent in using such markers of religious change, the problems of determining the motivation and depth of change. Thus Andrew Thornley interspersed his account of the numerical growth of baptised Christians and church buildings on Lakeba in Fiji in the 1840s with discussion of the political constraints on chiefs changing religious allegiance.⁷ Wetherell, discussing the growth of the Anglican church in Papua around 1910, noted numerical growth but also considered the relationship between converts' desire for access to white men's wealth and technology.⁸ The fundamental problem, however, remains that no-one can see into another's heart and mind to measure the degree and motivation of 'conversion'.

(Berkeley/ Los Angeles/Oxford: University of California Press, 1993); Kenelm Burridge, *In the Way: A Study of Christian Missionary Endeavours* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1991); Kenelm Burridge, *New Heaven, New Earth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969); Ben Burt, *Tradition and Christianity: The Colonial Transformation of a Solomon Islands Society* (Chur, Switzerland: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1994); Bronwen Douglas, 'Autonomous and Controlled Spirits: Traditional Ritual and Early Interpretations of Christianity on Tanna, Aneityum, and the Isle of Pines in Comparative Perspective', *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 98, pp. 7-48 (1989); Deborah Gewertz and Frederick Errington, 'On Pepsico and Piety in a Papua New Guinea "Modernity"', *American Ethnologist* 23, no. 3, pp. 476-93 (1996); Margaret Jolly, 'Devils, Holy Spirits, and the Swollen God: Translation, Conversion and Colonial Power in the Marist Mission, Vanuatu, 1887-1934', in *Conversion to Modernities: The Globalization of Christianity*, ed. Peter van der Veer, pp. 231-62 (New York/London: Routledge, 1996); Matthew Spriggs, "'A School in Every District": The Cultural Geography of Conversion on Aneityum, Southern Vanuatu', *Journal of Pacific History* 20, no. 1, pp. 23-41 (1985); Geoffrey White, 'Symbols of Solidarity in the Christianization of Santa Isabel, Solomon Islands', in *Culture and Christianity: The Dialectics of Transformation*, ed. George R. Saunders, pp. 11-31 (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988); Geoffrey White, *Identity through History: Living Stories in a Solomon Islands Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

⁷ Andrew Thornley, *The Inheritance of Hope: John Hunt, Apostle of Fiji* (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, 2000), pp. 240-245.

⁸ David Wetherell, *Reluctant Mission: The Anglican Church in Papua New Guinea 1891-1942* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1977), chap. 5.

My aim here, as has been the case for many recent historians,⁹ is to examine the meanings religious change had for those attempting to implement it. The concerns of the missionaries and the motivations of indigenous converts are two separate issues, which may or may not coincide; my interest is in both – considered separately. The main focus of this chapter is on the understandings and efforts of Methodist missionaries in the Pacific; they are not necessarily representative of other denominations, though their experience certainly resonates with those of others, but the extent of their written records provides a rich and accessible series of case study.

Individual and mass moments of dramatic Islander conversion were greatly prized by missionaries, as can be seen in the way they were repeated for Australian audiences over the years. The *Missionary Review* published a series on ‘Missionary Heroes’ in 1910, and several of its heroes were islanders. The account of Fijian Ratu Elijah Verani’s conversion falls under the European model of *metanoia*. He learned to read without becoming a Christian, then was moved to tears by the Passion story in Matthew’s gospel, a clear example of the Biblical text’s power to act without intermediary on the soul of the reader. David Livingstone had long expounded such a position, writing to Rev. Dr. Tidman in 1855:

I do not undervalue the importance of conversion and salvation of the most abject creature that breathes, it is of overwhelming worth to him personally, but viewing our work of wide sowing of the good seed relative to the harvest which will be reaped when all our heads are low, there can, I think, be no comparison ... Let the seed be sown and there is no more doubt of its vitality and germination than there is of the general spring and harvest in the course of nature.¹⁰

This claims a remarkable degree of agency for the gospel itself, the idea that the sacred text of the Bible had sufficient power to cause a change of heart in its reader

⁹ As well as those mentioned above, see the discussions on ‘conversion’ in Diane Langmore, *Missionary Lives: Papua 1874-1914* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989), pp. 145-152; Hugh Laracy, *Marists and Melanesians: A History of Catholic Missions in the Solomon Islands* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1976), pp. 74-88.

¹⁰ Letter from Livingstone to the Rev. Dr. Tidman, 12 October 1855; letter 59 in David Chamberlain, ed., *Some Letters from Livingstone, 1840-1872* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1940).

without the need of other intermediaries, even white missionaries. This idea, in direct descent from Luther, underpinned Protestantism, but it also implied a trust in indigenous reception of the gospel which was not shared by all white missionaries.

Verani's biographer continued the story:

"Then" said Verani, "I belong to Jesus". He immediately sent word to his king that he would become a Christian, who replied that when he became a Christian, he, the king, would kill him. He replied: -"I fear you, but I fear the great God more. It will be a bad thing if you kill me, but it would be a fearful thing if the great God cast me into hell."¹¹

Verani's story had also been serialised in 1899.¹² Similar expressions of faith, somewhat ritualised in their repeated inscriptions, can be found in occasional reported testimonies of dying islanders, such as those published in the 1890s in the *Missionary Review*. Arthur Small claimed he could 'regularly fill half the space' of the journal – mercifully the editor rejected the offer – with such testimonies as that of Lekima Serukaitoga:

On the day he died, having been bathed and dressed, he exclaimed while we were all present, "I see heaven today. Oh! The light I see there! Oh the light in this heavenly city!" ... Now when he had seen the great place, he turned to us and said, "There is no need to question me. Be faithful." He then prayed, "Lord, Lord pity me, pity me!" Having said this he died.¹³

Meriwalesi Samanunu had a similar deathbed vision during a measles outbreak, but on praying that she wished to be used in the Lord's work, she recovered and became a teacher first at Matavelo Girls' School, then on Rotuma in 1909.¹⁴ But it was also recognised that such an experience was far from universal – and modern observers might also note that such dreams and visions, particularly in those close to death, may well be couched in a particular indigenous idiom.

Rather more common in a Pacific context was a mass experience of conversion and this led to its own problems. John Hunt, pioneer Methodist missionary to the Fijians

¹¹ *Missionary Review*, January 1910, p. 28.

¹² *Missionary Review*, February, March 1899.

¹³ *Missionary Review*, July 1895, p. 9.

¹⁴ *Missionary Review*, July 1905, pp. 9-10.

who was revered throughout the Pacific, was much concerned with sincerity. He valued individual, as opposed to mass, conversion and fretted about the varied motivations behind the shift in allegiance. He was excited by the 'revival' at Viwa in October 1845, with the highly emotional preaching meetings conducted by native teachers at which people were 'pricked to the heart & cried in agonies of prayer for mercy'. This was an individual response in a communal setting, reminiscent of earlier Methodist manifestations in England. People fainted, 'had no control whatever of themselves for hours' and made such a noise weeping that the preacher could not be heard. Hunt did consider whether the level of emotion might be hysterical but then concluded: 'the level of affection is not surprising when it is considered that they were murderers, cannibals etc very recently. Ordinary repentance is not the kind of repentance we should expect to see in such sinners'.¹⁵

Most Islanders did not experience *metanoia* comparable to those in the European Evangelical tradition, or at least did not express change in these terms, leading missionaries to doubt the sincerity and completeness of the conversion. I will not attempt to adjudicate on the reality or sincerity of religious change, but the missionaries did. This concern centred around both behaviour and what that behaviour implied in term of moral change – in the discourse of the time, the need for and process of the development of 'character' or 'conscience'. Missionaries were well aware that Islanders acknowledged a Christian allegiance for a whole variety of reasons. Cakobau's acceptance of Christianity before the battle of Kaba was welcome but its political motivation, finally triggered by the US Consul's threat to destroy Bau and sweep its inhabitants 'from the face of the earth', was clear not only to later historians but also to the missionaries at the time.¹⁶ The missionaries' belief that God's hand was visible in the world of men allowed them to accommodate such events as divinely-inspired. Thus Calvert confronted Cakobau concerning his political reversals and his leg ulcer: 'Now, the Lord has tried you in various ways, and

¹⁵ Hunt, Journal, vol. 2, pp. 309-311 (19 October 1845).

¹⁶ James Calvert, *Fiji and the Fijians: Mission History*, vol. 2 (London: Alexander Heylin, 1858), p. 335.

afflicted you.’¹⁷ It was time to take note of these warnings and declare allegiance to the Christian God. But a general belief that God ordered the ways of the world to bring men to Him, a belief in Providential leadings, was not in missionary eyes a substitute for heart-felt conviction and such conviction was not always readily obvious. In Fiji, as in Tonga and Samoa, mass shifts in allegiance followed the conversion of a chief, which was in itself motivated by a variety of factors. The missionaries recognised the political power wielded by chiefs and indeed attempted to enhance it in the case of Christian chiefs, while at the same time working to separate the secular and sacred elements of chiefship in order to enable the appropriation of the sacred elements by the *lotu*.¹⁸ They welcomed the mass conversion of commoners but also had reservations about the sincerity of the new adherents. The Methodist practice of a period of instruction as ‘class members’ and similar schemes in other missions dealt fairly adequately with the lack of knowledge but the adherent’s sincerity was often viewed with some doubt.

Apart from conversions motivated at least in part by political considerations and the mass following of commoners when a chief converted, one of the main contexts for adopting or rejecting the *lotu* was in cases of sickness. In the era before the introduction of Western biomedicine, which in the Pacific meant the end of the nineteenth century, missionaries did not possess therapeutic methods markedly superior to those of local healers. However, Islanders often appealed to missionaries for assistance in cases of sickness. They acted to broaden their therapeutic options in cases of real concern but, more importantly, they acted to access the spiritual power of the new religion. The belief that sickness was caused by spiritual malaise, offence given to gods or spirits or a rupture of the social and religious universe was widespread throughout the Pacific, and resonated with the mission view, which also

¹⁷ Calvert, *Fiji and the Fijians*, p. 334.

¹⁸ See Nicholas Thomas, 'Kingship and Hierarchy: Transformations of Politics and Ritual in Eastern Oceania' *History and Anthropology* 7 (1994), p. 125; Christine Weir, *Islanders Observed: Contrasting Representations of Fijians in the Writings of Missionaries and Other Westerners 1800-1860* (MLitt. thesis, Australian National University, 1994), pp. 23-26.

saw illness in spiritual terms.¹⁹ Fijians and missionaries shared an assumption that for complete healing one had to recognise the power of the spiritual being whose help was wanted so that to apply to the missionaries for healing demanded some level of acknowledgment of the Christian God. But a change of allegiance from the old gods to the Christian one was a serious, indeed dangerous, step, especially for chiefly rulers. It risked alienating the old gods who were still feared as powerful, while the efficacy of the Christian God was unproven. It could also undermine the authority of the chief in cases of revolt or dissension and his prosperity from the cessation of first-fruits ceremonies. It was not to be undertaken lightly.

Fijians responded to sickness which traditional ritual and remedies did not conquer with a limited recognition of the power of Christianity and a willingness to consider options, but often rejected a shift in allegiance. This varied response to epidemic sickness has been investigated for other parts of the Pacific, particularly in Bronwen Douglas' series of studies of different islands of the New Hebrides and New Caledonia. She has shown how the Tannese in 1843 rejected, and indeed sometimes attacked London Missionary Society (LMS) and Presbyterian missionaries, seeing them as vengeful sorcerers with the power both to harm and to heal, powers which were believed to reside together.²⁰ On Aneityum in the 1850s and 1860s, Presbyterian missionaries were personified as the emissaries of a more powerful, fundamentally benign deity whom it was appropriate to propitiate, leading to widespread adherence to the Christian religion, especially after an influenza epidemic which most of the Christians survived.²¹ The response of islanders to sickness could involve the adoption of Christianity even though it was perceived as inherently dangerous and

¹⁹ For further details see Christine Weir, 'Fijian and Missionary Views of Health and Sickness, Life and Death in the Early Contact Period', in *Engendering Health in the Pacific: Colonial and Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. Margaret Jolly and Victoria Lukere (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, in preparation).

²⁰ Bronwen Douglas, *Across the Great Divide: Journeys in History and Anthropology* (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1998), pp. 232-3.

²¹ Douglas, *Across the Great Divide*, pp. 236-240.

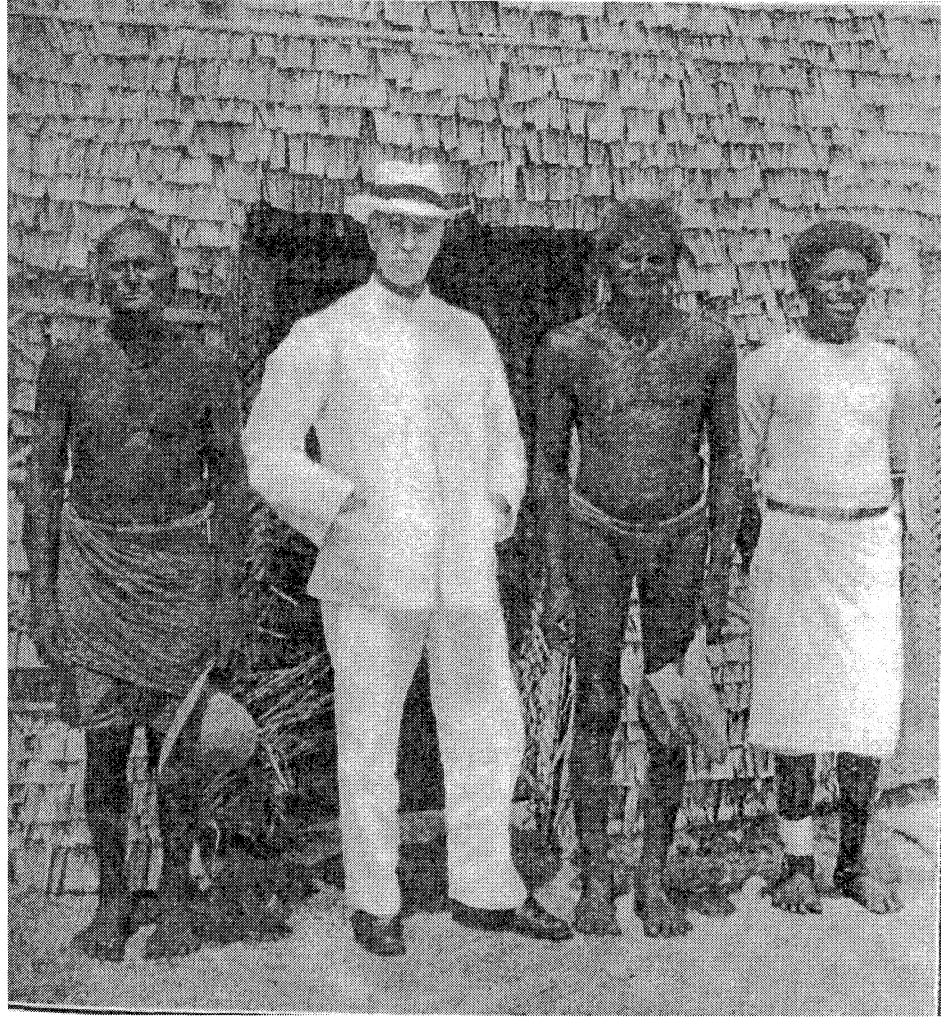


Figure 10: Original caption –
'Brothers All'.

Methodist General Secretary John Wheen, convert Boas Suga,
and his senior relatives Gamu and Gumi. Roviana, Solomon
Islands.

Missionary Review, October 1917, p. 7.

death-dealing, since it was regarded as so powerful. This seems to have happened in New Caledonia during the measles epidemic of 1860-1, once Catholic notions of the after-life had also been appropriated.²²

Methodist missionaries in the Solomon Islands at beginning of the twentieth century commented at length on a phenomenon which was remarked on elsewhere: the practice of older people allowing their children and other young people to have links with the missionaries, indeed to convert, but not doing so themselves. John Goldie's early converts at Roviana were predominantly young, often teenagers. Tippet suggests that this age distribution reflects the sodalities, age group- rather than status-based, which existed amongst the 'detribalised people' (slaves and orphans) who were not subject to the constraints of the elders.²³ The position of at least some of the older men was ambivalent. In his account of his 1917 tour of Roviana as General Secretary of the Methodist Missionary Society, John Wheen, described in detail his encounter with the father and uncle of convert Boas Suga. He visited Suga's father, Gumi, and uncle, Gamu, whom he describes as 'rigid conservatives'.

But, he added:

They have a profound belief in the Missionary and in his message. They rejoice in the transformation which has been wrought in their land by the Gospel. They do not hesitate to express their thankfulness that the young men and women and the little children are being saved from the evils and superstitions which abounded ... they encourage the younger generation to conform to the teaching of the Word of God. But ... they have not made public confession of faith in Jesus as a personal Saviour.²⁴

Wheen believed they soon would make such a profession. The two old men might just have been being polite; it is clearly dangerous to take such claims entirely at face value. Yet they were hospitable and not putting obstacles in the way of their young kinsman. They consented to having their photograph taken with Wheen, standing outside Gamu's bush house (Figure 10). One of the older men is respectable in dark

²² Douglas, *Across the Great Divide*, pp. 303-312.

²³ Tippet, *Solomon Islands Christianity*, pp. 55-61.

²⁴ *Missionary Review*, October 1917, p. 6.

sulu, the other in loin cloth, but neither looking ill at ease, flanked by the young Boas in gleaming white shirt and sulu and Wheen in white tropical suit and hat. Entitled *Brothers All*, it falls into the 'Black and White' genre discussed by Eves.²⁵ The ambiguity of the old men's position in relation to the Methodists teases the viewer across the ages.

It was clear then to many missionaries that Islanders converted – or failed to convert – for a variety of motivations and that conversion did not always mean what they expected it to mean. In their more candid moments longer-serving missionaries recognised these ambiguities; indeed it is because they left such hints that it is possible to read their texts 'against the grain' in the way Bronwen Douglas and others have done. The development of colonial states in the Pacific added further complications: access to the benefits of the new wealth and culture depended on literacy and other skills needed for involvement in the western economy - and these could usually only be attained through the missions. The attractiveness in material terms of what the missions were offering led to a tension within the mission community over the need to concentrate on 'spiritual' work as against the advisability of more secondary activities such as schools and clinics. These tensions were deeper and more longstanding than some modern commentators have acknowledged; the confusion and sense of unease with which missionaries viewed many of their new converts is often palpable.

To an earlier generation it had been simpler. John Hunt had concentrated on Biblical teaching and the presentation of the new religion.²⁶ He rejected any idea that 'savages' required less than thorough teaching by theologically trained missionaries and disputed the LMS' view that 'godly mechanics' could adequately present the

²⁵ Richard Eves, "Black and White, a Significant Contrast: Missionary Photography in the Pacific" (paper presented at the 12th Pacific History Association Conference, Honiara, Solomon Islands, 1998).

²⁶ Thornley, *Inheritance of Hope*, passim and esp. pp. 322-3, 437-6.

Gospel.²⁷ His aim was conversion to 'scriptural Christianity, the conversion of sinners to God', work for which training and commitment were necessary. He also feared that the Fiji missionaries had too many distractions from 'secular affairs' which interrupted the teaching of the way to repentance and Christian perfection. He wrote: 'I believe the less missionaries have to do even with the arts of life, the more successful they will be in saving souls'.²⁸ Interestingly, Hunt's hagiographic biographer Stringer Rowe discusses only part of this comment, ignoring the criticism of the LMS system, and claims 'it would be unjust' to argue that Hunt did not appreciate the good of bringing to 'an uncultured people' the 'benefits of what is understood by civilization'.²⁹ A close reading of Hunt suggests that he did indeed largely discount such 'benefits', seeing Christianity as a matter for the soul alone. In his treatise *Entire Sanctification* (1853) he expounded on his own quest. This was to live a more holy life with 'entire purity of heart'; he feared that many of the Fijians were converting to obtain material benefits.³⁰

The Methodist assumption that the introduction of Christianity presupposed involvement in other elements of 'civilisation' became more powerful and insistent in the early years of the twentieth century.³¹ In 1847 Walter Lawry, General Superintendent of Wesleyan Missions in the South Seas (based in New Zealand), made a pastoral visit to Fiji and Tonga. He observed that although the Christian villages were 'improved' this was an internal change: 'the mind is changed, while the

²⁷ See Niel Gunson, *Messengers of Grace: Evangelical Missionaries in the South Seas 1797-1860* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 35.

²⁸ Hunt, *Journal*, vol. 2, pp. 360-364 (1 May 1846).

²⁹ George Stringer Rowe, *The Life of John Hunt, Missionary to the Cannibals* (London: Hamilton, Adams and Co, 1860), p. 215.

³⁰ John Hunt, *Entire Sanctification: Its Nature, the Way of Its Attainment and Motives for Its Pursuit* (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1853), p. 7.

³¹ Most denominations debated the relative importance of 'Christianising' and 'civilising', coming to varying conclusions in different times and places. For a discussion of the debates in Papua from the 1870s to the 1910s, see Langmore, *Missionary Lives*, pp. 121-26. The arguments were not entirely stable even amongst Methodists in the Pacific Islands over a 50-year time span, as I show.

outward circumstances are only slightly improved'. Little change had taken place in the physical environment. Lawry complained:

They taste a piece of beef, and say, "It is very good." "Then why not keep some cows?" the Missionary asks; and they reply, "Because we can do with what we have, and the cows would eat of our vines and our sugar canes, and we are not fond of fencing in our cultivations. We prefer to lie down and talk, or sleep, or smoke."³²

While Lawry bemoaned this reluctance to accept Western 'improvements', he did not press his point. But by the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the conflation of ideas of Christianity with 'civilization' and the duty of the missionary to bring both material skills and changes in life-style, as well as the Gospel, was well established. It is with this conflation that this chapter is concerned.

If there were no conversion in the established western sense of the term, no easily calculated moment of *metanoia*, but rather a decision to declare a Christian commitment derived from one or several of a number of causes, then evidence of sincere Christian allegiance had to be found elsewhere. Increasingly, a shift in behaviour was deemed necessary and evidence of the expression of certain virtues and practices was sought. I have deliberately linked virtues and practices because that is the way they were often understood by missionaries, but the exact relationship between them needs clarification. Richard Eves demonstrated the missionary view of the connection between bodily changes – clothing, housing, and deportment – and religious and moral change. Jean and John Comaroff, writing on the reception of Christianity by the Tswana of southern Africa after the arrival of LMS and Methodist missionaries in the 1840s, saw a 'change of consciousness' which encompassed belief, control of the body and lifestyle changes, including the acceptance of western notions of time, labour and physical space.³³ But the difficulty in much of this writing is that it tends to overestimate the importance of outward change and underestimate that of inward change. This is understandable; outward change is so much easier to

³² *Wesleyan Methodist Monthly Notices*, December 1848, p. 199.

³³ For a detailed exposition, see Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, *Revelation and Revolution*, vol. 1; Comaroff and Comaroff, *Revelation and Revolution*, vol. 2. .

observe, document and comment upon, as Geddie noted in 1850: a 'change in the conduct and habits of the natives' did not necessarily confirm 'a more deeply seated change – a change of heart'.³⁴ The reluctance on the part of secular modern commentators to fully appreciate, or even comprehend, the religious changes sought by the missionaries, leading to a failure to properly evaluate motivation of either missionary or convert compounds the problem. It is made still harder by the necessarily secular nature of academic discourse which deliberately eschews certain registers of 'religious' language. Dipesh Chakrabarty pointed out this dilemma particularly clearly in discussing Ranajit Guha's masterly analysis of the Indian Santal revolt of 1855. He noted that giving voice to the Santals involves acknowledging – somehow – their understanding that the instigator of the revolt was their God and that their expression of motivation was explicitly religious, while maintaining a rationalist discourse. As Chakrabarty put it:

The supernatural was part of what constituted public life for the non-modern Santals of the nineteenth century. This, however, simply cannot be the past in the language of professional history ... Fundamentally, the Santal's statement that God was the main instigator of the rebellion has to be ... converted [into other language] before it finds a place in the historian's narrative.³⁵

A historian cannot accept uncritically the language of religious causation and remain intellectually respectable. One must find a way of acknowledging the understanding of the protagonist while still maintaining some analytical distance from it, a balance which is not easy. Chakrabarty's insight may well explain nervousness when writing about the religious domain; the disavowal of anything 'theological' can lead to an over-compensation through an emphasis on the practical, and the outward.

The major difficulty some critics (myself included) have found with the Comaroff's three-volume opus on Tswana encounters with Christianity and modernity is their deliberate eschewal of discussion of the Christian theology of the missionaries.³⁶ In

³⁴ Douglas, *Across the Great Divide*, p. 224.

³⁵ Dipesh Chakrabarty, 'Minority Histories, Subaltern Pasts' *Humanities Research*, (1997), pp. 23-4.

³⁶ Comaroff, *Revelation & Revolution*, vol 1, p. 321 fn. 26. See discussion in chap. 2.

their second volume they included an analysis of the reception of Christianity by the Tswana which is certainly more detailed and subtle than that attempted earlier. They conclude that the missionaries failed to convert many to the Christianity they envisaged, quoting the missionaries' complaints about 'backsliding' and lack of moral commitment. Taking the opinions expressed in missionary texts at face value to a surprisingly degree, the Comaroffs conclude that the move of Tswana into the church 'does not mean there was a mass change of heart; many of the new "converts", as the evangelists were aware, were no more than "nominal" Christians'.³⁷ The missionaries to the Tswana, just like the ones in the Pacific, knew the difficulties of seeing into the heart – it took time, patience and wisdom for them to see that the 'hardy hybrid strain propagated some way off from the closely tended mission garden'³⁸ might be a valid, if appropriated and transformed, form of Christianity.

Unable to see into the hearts of their converts, concerned about their sincerity and worried about 'backsliding', it is not surprising that missionaries concentrated on the 'refashioning of the body' as Richard Eves put it so neatly. Margaret Jolly, in describing the project of domestication promoted by the Presbyterian missions in the southern islands of Vanuatu, showed how the missionaries and particularly their wives sought to introduce a model of housing suitable for the new Christian nuclear family. They taught such domestic skills as sewing and laundry work and gave women Christian instruction, including literacy (which Jolly saw as at possible variance with a domestic ideal).³⁹ Richard Eves, using published and unpublished material concerning the Methodist mission to Papua from the 1890s, considered missionary attempt to change the outward behaviour of their converts. He detailed the specific regimes of regulation formulated by missionaries attempting to control the physical bodies of converts and demonstrated the linkages missionaries drew between changed bodily forms – relating to clothing, deportment and sexual behaviour – and inward moral and religious change. Thus, he claimed, 'conversion was confirmed in

³⁷ Comaroff, *Revelation & Revolution*, vol. 2, p. 107.

³⁸ Comaroff, *Revelation & Revolution*, vol. 2, p. 85.

³⁹ Jolly, "'To Save the Girls for Brighter and Better Lives'".

the eyes of the missionaries by the acquisition of a visibly distinct form of body',⁴⁰ for 'changing consciousness ... proceeded through changing the body'.⁴¹

However, a concentration on the promotion of outward change with 'the formation of a new Christian identity' can lead to an underestimation of the moral and spiritual dimension of that Christian identity. For what was at stake was moral change: the acceptance of a new religious identity and ethic; missionaries went to Papua or elsewhere to introduce Christianity not to make people wear clothes, and to suggest otherwise is to confuse secondary with primary motivations.⁴² Habits of cleanliness, orderliness and other appropriate bodily behaviours were desirable and appropriate for Christians, indeed were markers of religious change. However, they were necessary but not sufficient; only God knew the state of the soul. Clothes did not make a Christian and only to a limited degree could 'character and conversion ... each [become] signs of the other.'⁴³ Secular poststructuralist feminist/postcolonial usages of the concept of *embodiment* lend themselves to these kinds of utilitarian materialist explanations, but examination of *religious* change demands a more intellectual and emotional understanding of protagonists' actions.

Perhaps it is more helpful to shift Eves' perspective slightly. Eves suggested that missionaries believed that embodied practice led to changed morality through the development of acceptable habits, or 'character'. An alternative interpretation of these closely linked ideas may be to start with the moral change and see it as leading to changed bodily practice through the development of conscience or 'character'. There is good reason to suggest this shift. Christianity, from its origins influenced by both Hebrew and Greek thought, has always emphasised the word, *logos*. Control of the

⁴⁰ Eves, 'Colonialism, Corporeality and Character', p. 86.

⁴¹ Eves, 'Colonialism, Corporeality and Character', p. 87.

⁴² Stuart Piggin, 'Halevy Revisited: The Origins of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society: An Examination of Semmel's Thesis', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 9, no. 1, pp. 17-37 (1980) makes a similar point.

⁴³ Eves, 'Colonialism, Corporeality and Character', p. 89.

mind, of the thoughts, was stated by its founder to be more important than control of the body.⁴⁴ In a religion concerned with qualities of heart and mind – repentance, atonement, confession, adoration – rather than attitudes of the body, the aim of missionaries was the creation of ‘a new heart.’ It may be noted here that the necessity for a change of heart held good for all converts, European or Islander – it was not racially distinguished. John Paton, later to be a Presbyterian missionary in the New Hebrides, described the conversion of ‘Infidels’ in the ‘degraded’ slums of Glasgow⁴⁵ in very similar terms to those he later used about the New Hebridean Islanders. The assumption was that ‘a new heart’ would lead to new bodily behaviour, since any uncontrolled, lascivious, violent, lazy or quarrelsome behaviour was inconsistent with that new heart. The training of ‘character’ lay in examining, regulating and enforcing the links between the two – the development of the conscience. Training only the behaviour of the body was incomplete. However, it was the linkage of body and mind which was important. It is not my aim to replace undue emphasis on the body with undue emphasis on the mind and heart. What was important both in the eyes of the missionaries and of their converts was the manifestation of inward virtues in a changed body, essentially interlinked.

The account of John Paton of the response of Islanders on Aniwa as they encountered Christianity in 1867 provides an example of this linkage. According to Paton’s own account, which in general tends to emphasise his own importance, the pressure to adopt certain lifestyle changes along with a change of religious allegiance often came from Islanders. If a new spiritual power was being propitiated, then that had to be made clear to all, a response missionaries encouraged, at least in part because they

⁴⁴ Matthew 15: 18-20. And Jesus said ... Those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.

⁴⁵ John G. Paton, *John G. Paton D.D.: Missionary to the New Hebrides - an Autobiography*, ed. James Paton (popular edition) (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1900), pp. 33-51. See also Ron Adams, *In the Land of Strangers: A Century of European Contact with Tanna, 1774- 1874* (Canberra/New York: Development Studies Centre, Australian National University, 1984), pp. 87-93.

shared many of the same beliefs about efficacy. Paton noted that the Islanders' first attraction was to his goods, especially any form of steel. But they quickly realised that Paton was teaching about a new source of spiritual power. He safely challenged the taboos of the old gods and then sank a well at the height of a drought. As the water bubbled up, the chief praised the efficacy of the Christian God: 'Wonderful is the work of your Jehovah God! No god of Aniwa ever helped us in this way. The world is turned upside down, since Jehovah came to Aniwa!' The Islanders acknowledged Paton's God as more powerful, or, as Paton put it, 'the back of Heathenism was broken'.⁴⁶ Paton held assumptions about the efficacy of his God which had parallels with those of the Aniwans, and couched it in very similar terms. After the sinking of the well, the Islanders marked their spiritual shift. They destroyed – by fire or burial – the ancestral shrines and their contents.

The Aniwans then adopted two forms of change. They donned clothes, since 'the first visible difference betwixt a Heathen and a Christian is – that the Christian wears some clothing, the Heathen wears none'. Sometimes this veered to the excessive, as when the bride Yakin 'determined to show the extent of her Christianity by the amount of clothing she could carry upon her person ... [she] appeared dressed in every article of European apparel, mostly portions of male attire, that she could beg or borrow'. This included all sorts of garments, piled on in unconventional combinations. Paton saw her as a figure of comedy but realised her pride and determination and had some sympathy for her position, as well as embarrassment for his own, as he continued, 'I little thought what I was to bring on myself when I urged them to come to Church. The sight of that poor creature sweltering before me constrained me for once to make the service very short.'⁴⁷ The desire of Islanders to mark themselves as Christian through the use of clothes was followed by the performance of ritual to the Christian God, in this case the saying of grace before meals, family prayers night and morning and Sabbath observance. Then came

⁴⁶ Paton, *Missionary*, pp. 345-357.

⁴⁷ Paton, *Missionary*, p. 341.

attendance at school. Paton comments:

The first traces of a new Social Order began to rise visibly on the delighted eye...young and old now attended School ... Thefts, quarrels, crimes etc., were settled now, not by club law, but by fine or bonds or lash, as agreed upon by the Chiefs and their people. Everything was rapidly and surely becoming "new" under the influence of the leaven of Jesus. Industry increased. Huts and plantations were safe. Formerly every man, in travelling, carried with him all his valuables; now they were secure, left at home.⁴⁸

The discursive juxtaposition of physical and moral change is striking, as is the agency involved in the choices made by Islanders. Paton implied that they, not he, chose what Christian practices the converts adopted first. They had been accustomed to carrying all their goods for fear of theft, but 'finding this state of matters troublesome' they agreed at an 'Assembly' to outlaw dishonesty. This utopian outcome did not eventuate immediately, but 'they held at it under the inspiration of the Gospel and prevailed'.⁴⁹ In their eyes, the changes in ritual and morality and the wearing of clothes were interlinked, the one a symbol of the other.

The ability to manifest Christian virtue in appropriate outward behaviour came from internal discipline – what was variously described by missionaries as 'conscience' or, often, 'character'. It was an ability which, missionaries acknowledged, took time and experience to be developed and it was natural that those very new to Christianity would not always act according to mission expectations; they were but 'babes in Christ'. In Kiriwina (Milne Bay Province, PNG), the Methodist missionary Gilmour expressed tolerance towards the men of his class meeting: 'Were it not that our trust is in [God] ... we might despise the weakness of faith, the crudeness of conception and the earthliness of much that [the class meeting] reveals; but it is God's work, and we lack not evidence that they are a people whose hearts He has touched'.⁵⁰ On another occasion he commented that though the men were 'rough gems'; nonetheless

⁴⁸ Paton, *Missionary*, p. 357.

⁴⁹ Paton, *Missionary*, p. 358.

⁵⁰ *Missionary Review*, April 1903, p. 12.

'in the Great Master's hands they shall yet shine'.⁵¹ Failure to live up to the Christian moral code was regretted, but regarded as to a degree inevitable. In 1899 an unnamed Sister on Dobu reported the case of a baptised girl, who wrote, read and sewed well, running away with her friend's husband. The sister was saddened but partly blamed herself, feeling the girls had not received the attention they deserved, and recognised they were 'children in Christ', in need of prayer.⁵² Precisely what 'children in Christ' implied, whether it was purely a spiritual judgement or whether it conveyed immaturity or incapacity in other aspects of life. Evolutionist assumptions that Islanders were at an earlier stage of human development from Europeans and would take generations to 'catch up' remain a subtext in many missionary pronouncements.

Just about all missionaries believed that conversion to Christianity would improve Islanders' 'characters' and lives, as well as give them a place in heaven. It was when judging the potential of Islanders and the magnitude of possible improvements that racial assumptions affected missionary hopes about changes at conversion. The LMS missionary in Lifou (Loyalty Islands), James Hadfield, described 'our gentle islanders' as lacking 'the most precious and sustaining characteristics of Christianity'. He continued:

Undoubtedly the bulk of the people have received a measure of the Divine Spirit – as much, we would gladly believe, in many cases, as their partially developed natures are capable of. They are still in a state of transition, emerging from the corrupting and soul-destroying bondage of the past, and their full emancipation can only be secured by carefully educating and guiding them to a wise use of the liberty which the Gospel of Grace has procured for them.

Hadfield continued that Islanders did not understand the concepts of 'fair-play, justice, conscientious-scruple, independence, economy, punctuality, industry, thrift, cleanliness, manliness, moral courage, chastity, obligation duty, etc', but he was confident that they could, with care, be taught them.⁵³ Nonetheless, his evolutionist

⁵¹ *Missionary Review*, March 1903, p. 6.

⁵² *Missionary Review*, August 1899, p. 8.

⁵³ *Chronicle*, July 1907, pp. 130-131.

assumptions are clear; the references to 'partially developed natures', 'state of transition' suggest more than Christian immaturity, though certainly including it. William Slade, a Methodist stationed at Ra in northern Fiji, pinpointed his concerns about his converts in 1901: people lacked a conscience.

The fear of punishment and the hope of reward play a much more important part in regulating a native's action than an acute sense of right and wrong. On such elementary, though fundamental, virtues as truthfulness, honesty, morality, faithfulness to his word, payment of debts, constancy to friends, etc., the Fijian native is not so much influenced by the sanctions of conscience as by personal convenience and gain.⁵⁴

This meant that there was an 'absence of the element of disgrace and shame' and fewer communal sanctions on unacceptable behaviour. There is an irony here: shame is widely used as a communal sanction in Pacific cultures, often to the missionaries' chagrin. Fison complained of Fijians that 'no man is a free agent ... he must do that which is customary ... For custom is the tried and approved law of life';⁵⁵ communalism was perceived as a yoke stifling individual initiative. Burton made similar critiques.⁵⁶ Missionaries could criticise the lack as well as the power of communal sanctions like shame – a clear example of having it both ways. Again there is a racially-determined element here, for Slade put this sad state of affairs down to an inherent lack of intelligence, for 'the natives [of Ra province] are greatly less intelligent here than the people of Lomaloma' (though they were more intelligent than Papuans).⁵⁷ His assumption of declining intelligence to the west is clearly influenced by popular social evolutionary ideas about Polynesians and Melanesians. Evolutionist assumptions should not be exaggerated, for missionaries less influenced by racially-determined views agreed that there was need for converts to develop inner control, but nor should they be ignored.

Concern about the development of inner control was, however, not confined to the

⁵⁴ Methodist Missionary Society of Australasia (MMSA) Annual Report 1901, p. xlix.

⁵⁵ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 February 1877.

⁵⁶ See chapter 5 on both Fison's and Burton's attitude to communalism.

⁵⁷ MMSA Annual Report 1901, p. xlvi.

Pacific. Collini, one of the few writers to examine, rather than assume, the concept of character sees it as an essential part of evangelical discourse, universal in nineteenth century Britain. It involved acting according to the moral requirements of Christian life without the need for external constraint. Slade called this 'the sanctions of conscience'; those who called for the development of character were advocating the same thing. Collini notes that 'character' and the need to develop and protect it were invoked by all spectrums of political opinion but he has to resort to dictionary definitions to elucidate what it might mean. He concludes (using the definitions of the OED) that 'character may be used in a descriptive sense, referring to 'an individual's settled dispositions', what today we might call 'personality', or in more evaluative manner, referring to 'the possession of certain highly-valued moral qualities'. So to talk of 'the development of character' was to advocate the enhancement of these qualities.⁵⁸ The aim was to instil, mainly in children, attributes which would ensure that outward behaviour and inward belief did indeed mirror each other. Thus the converts of the Pacific were equated with metropolitan children, again an evolutionist touch. Both needed to develop the requisite Christian virtues, for without true mirroring there was always a danger of lack of sincerity which, as Morgan has shown, was such a concern at the time.⁵⁹ She too suggests that evangelicals saw clothes and bodily movements as reflecting inward truths, rather than vice versa - 'the most minute details of physical appearance', she says, 'were thought to betray the innermost recesses of the heart', and links this to the popularity of physiognomy throughout the nineteenth century.⁶⁰

The intimate connection between the state of the soul and the state of the body was believed in the Pacific, too, to involve a change in people's faces on conversion to Christianity. 'Heathen' islanders were assumed, in an idiom which seems to have been particularly pronounced amongst women writers at the turn of the century, to be

⁵⁸ Stefan Collini, 'The Idea of 'Character' in Victorian Political Thought' *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 35 (1985), pp. 30-33. Also Marjorie Morgan, *Manners, Morals and Class in England, 1774-1858* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1994), p. 63.

⁵⁹ Morgan, *Manners, Morals and Class*, pp. 69-80.

ugly, showing their 'degradation' in their faces and their lack of vitality in their bodies. Mrs Nicholson, writing from the Solomon Islands soon after her arrival in 1911, described the women as 'in the saddest possible conditions ... I could scarcely believe that they were really women'. The 'terrible superstition and degradation', which she saw confirmed by the custom of widow-strangling, was linked with their 'sad, sorrowful faces'.⁶¹ Bromilow described the villagers of Sineta, Kiriwina as 'walking about in a listless manner', seemingly 'indifferent at the arrival of visitors'.⁶² Mrs Rooney, at Bambatana (Choiseul) in the Solomons, felt the need to start sewing classes because 'the women were so dirty and miserable looking and I felt I would like to do something for them'. After a few weeks she reported, 'there is a marked difference in the appearance of many of them, and although it may not seem much, it is leading on to better and higher things'.⁶³ This change was more than just the addition of skirts and blouses; it was facial. Sister Davey, describing a Roviana chief who had earlier taken a hostile attitude to the Mission, wrote: 'I have really seen that man's face gradually change and when he stands up to speak in church ... one feels that the light of heaven is on his face'.⁶⁴

But even a shining face was not a universal guide and the concern with sincerity persisted. The way to avoid doubt, in the view of evangelical writers, was to develop certain virtues that would encourage the true mirroring of behaviour and morality. What were these virtues? Two passages from Paul's letters to the early Christians form the basis of missionary thinking:

Put on therefore, as the elect of God, ... mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering, forbearing one another... and above all these things put on charity (Colossians 3: 12-14).

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law (Galatians 5: 22-23).

Those who have suggested their own lists of Christian virtues, both nineteenth

⁶⁰ Morgan, *Manners, Morals and Class*, p. 70.

⁶¹ *Missionary Review*, November 1911, p. 17.

⁶² *Missionary Review*, September 1895, p. 3.

⁶³ *Missionary Review*, April 1907, p. 15.

⁶⁴ *Missionary Review*, September 1914, p. 18.

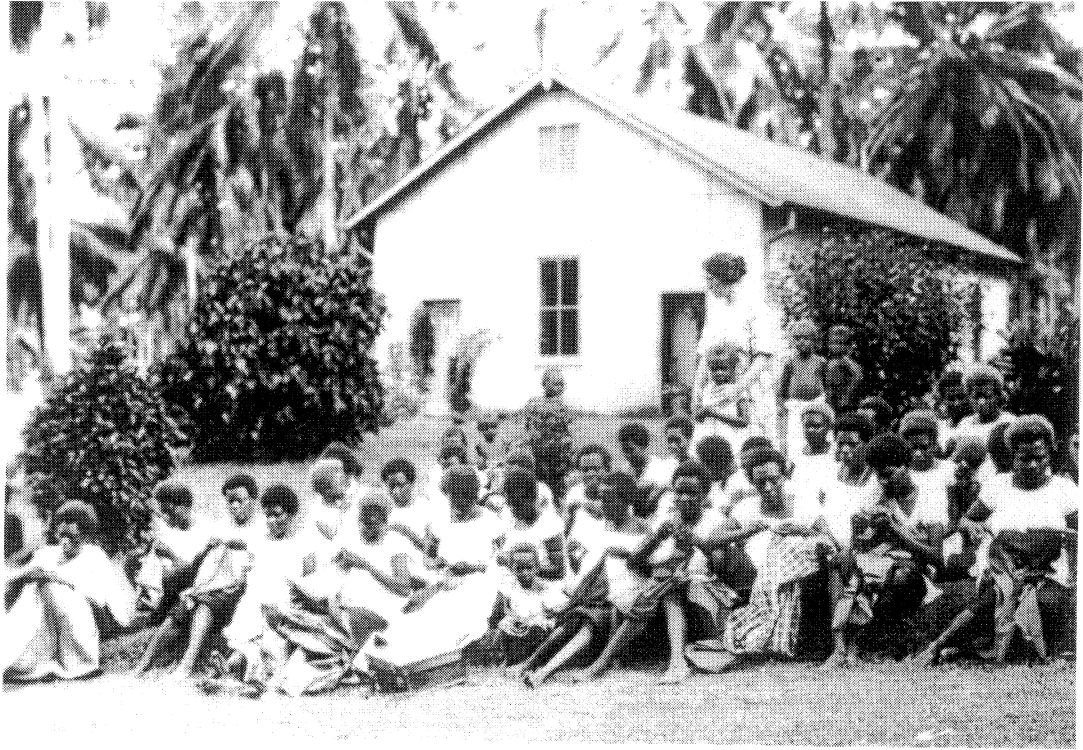


Figure 11: Encouraging the domestic – ‘Mrs Wright’s Sewing Class’, New Britain.

Photo: From the collection taken by J. Burton during his visit as General Secretary in 1925, Methodist Overseas Mission archives, Mitchell Library, Sydney (MOM 246, no. 30).

Reproduced in *Missionary Review*, April 1926, p. 3.

century writers and modern commentators, reflect Paul's dictums. Collini lists 'self-restraint, perseverance, strenuous effort, courage in the face of adversity' with an 'intimate dependence on a prior notion of duty.'⁶⁵ Bradley suggests 'self-denial and restraint', and quotes Hannah Moore: 'Patience, diligence, quiet and unfatigued perseverance, industry, regularity, and economy of time' and 'a course of self-control over those tyrannising inclinations which have so natural a tendency to enslave the human heart'.⁶⁶ Slade's list is quoted above. However, what is striking about these lists is the emphasis on the term which appears only in the Galatians list: 'temperance' or as modern versions have it, 'self control' (which is how it was understood – it meant much more than opposition to alcohol, important though that was to many missionaries).

The nineteenth-century interpretation of Paul placed greater emphasis on honesty, industry and restraint, virtues particularly useful for the emerging middle classes of Britain strongly influenced by evangelical thought and newly involved in business. As Bradley put it, 'In place of honour, they substituted the concept of duty'. Honesty, restraint and industry were precisely the qualities which inspired confidence in customers and suppliers and provided the basis for an alternative ethic to the older aristocratic code of honour.⁶⁷ For the emerging middle classes of Britain, Christian virtue was used to stake a claim within a new order of authority, in competition with the old order. Davidoff and Hall's portrait of the Quaker, Unitarian and Independent (Congregational) business houses of Birmingham, including the Cadburys, Frys, Galtons, Albrights and others, shows this ethic at work. Further north such a list would have included Methodists as well. Davidoff and Hall also noted, however, that as the century progressed, the 'stronger', more 'manly' virtues of orderliness and self-control – and the concept of work – were emphasised as a counter to the other, more

⁶⁵ Collini, 'The Idea of "Character"', p. 36.

⁶⁶ Ian Bradley, *The Call to Seriousness: The Evangelical Impact on the Victorians* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1976), p. 150, quoting Hannah More.

⁶⁷ See Bradley, *The Call to Seriousness*, pp. 152-7.

self-sacrificial virtues, which came to be seen as 'feminine'.⁶⁸ The missionaries themselves constantly use the imagery of work; thus Lyth, preaching the first sermon in a new church on Lakeba, declared, '[it] is an honour I do not deserve. Others have laboured and I have entered into their labours'.⁶⁹ Death was conventionally described in evangelical discourse as 'rest from one's labours'. Emotionalism became more distrusted – though it had always been seen as a particularly Methodist characteristic and as such somewhat scorned by other Evangelicals. But amongst Methodists too the concern was with duty, self-restraint and, favourite compliment of the age, 'earnestness'.

It was in these terms that European missionaries praised their Islander colleagues and converts. The early Islander missionaries, the first into many Melanesian areas, were described often in terms of their bravery, but the other virtues, especially forbearance and patience, were also highly praised. Aminio Baladrokadroka, pioneer Fijian missionary to New Britain, was, according to William Brown, 'the bravest of the brave', a 'painstaking worker' and 'an earnest, patient, hard-working, loving man.'⁷⁰ Viliami Taufa's obituary after 30 years service in New Britain described him as having 'a simple, sunny, trusting, submissive disposition'. His other virtues included obedience, service and patience, but also the ability to preach forcefully and effectively.⁷¹ The Fijian missionary in New Britain, Jeremaia Camaira, gained both indigenous and European respect from his 'righteousness of character and steadfastness of purpose'.⁷² Such virtue might come easily to certain personalities but for most it took considerable effort – of body, but mostly of will and that had to be encouraged.

⁶⁸ Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (London: Hutchinson, 1987), p. 111.

⁶⁹ Richard Lyth, *Journal*, 25 Jan 1846. B535, ML.

⁷⁰ *Missionary Review*, June 1911, p. 22.

⁷¹ *Missionary Review*, November 1917, pp. 16-17.

⁷² *Missionary Review*, April 1926, p. 5.

If the required virtues were not in evidence, they needed to be developed. How then was this to be achieved? Through training, came the usual answer, through doing, through performing certain actions which would teach regularity, order and self-discipline. This was seen, however, not only as a training of the body, but primarily the training of the will. Implicit is the assumption that imposed discipline will lead to the development of self-discipline. Bourdieu's notion of the 'habitus' is useful here, with his emphasis on practice, on the performance of actions which are then seen as so self-evident that they do not need to be explained.⁷³ Bourdieu rejected the dualism which suggests that an act must be either self-transparently conscious or determined by an external source, or that the relationship between belief and action is a causative one. Rather, he saw a dialectic between the two:

All the actions performed in a structured space and time are immediately qualified symbolically and function as structural exercises through which practical mastery of the fundamental schemes is constituted ... the whole social order imposes itself at the deepest level of the bodily dispositions.⁷⁴

These ideas have resonance with the missionary idea that the regularising of the clothes, housing and work habits of converts should be practised alongside Biblical teaching about the Christian virtues to develop a new Christian person. The refashioning of the body, the introduction and institutionalising of certain domestic and bodily practices, such as described by Eves and Jolly were clearly an attempt to establish a milieu where the Christian virtues were regularly acted out in the hope that they would become internalised. Similar arguments were used by Methodist teacher Mary Ballantine in insisting on Matavelo School in northern Fiji being as far as possible a boarding school:

Too much cannot be said in favour of getting the girls to come and live in the compound, and thus keep them away from the bad influences of village life. Those who live in the town are in many cases dull and listless, and anything in the way of mental exertion seems too much trouble. Late and irregular hours, and in many cases

⁷³ Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

⁷⁴ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (London: Polity Press, 1990), pp. 56-7, 74-5.

smoking, are to blame for this. When we remember the laxity of village life and the little parental control the girls have ever known, we pity them.⁷⁵

The Biblical teaching together with the practical influence of the enclosed Christian community of the school were seen as mutually supporting, though it should be noted that Ballantine was criticising Fijian villages which were at least nominally Christian.

It was widely believed that the performance of manual work had moral worth of itself. While its origins are unclear, this belief seems to combine two notions: the sacralising of work and the imposition of discipline. By the second half of the nineteenth century, the assumption that manual work had moral power, provided it was undertaken with a particular attitude, was common. Its main practical manifestation were the 'industrial missions' – schemes to train young people, mostly boys, in a variety of artisan and rural skills. Enthusiasm for industrial missions was never as widespread in Catholic as in Protestant circles but the ancient Benedictine dictum *laborare est orare* (to work is to pray)⁷⁶ was cited by the few Catholic advocates of industrial missions, and was clearly one of the ideological origins of the movement. In Protestant missions, industrial schemes were highly popular, as the frequency of articles concerning such enterprises in the journal *International Review of Missions* attests. To explain the required moral attitude towards work, H. B. Frissell, principal of a mission-based industrial school in the American south, quoted the verse of a hymn originating with the Anglo-Catholic Oxford Movement. This was a very different theological tradition, which in itself shows the universality of such ideas about the sanctity of work in nineteenth-century Britain:

The trivial round, the common task
Will furnish all we ought to ask:-
Room to deny ourselves, a road,

⁷⁵ MMSA Annual Report 1905, p. liv. Missionaries often translated the Fijian word *koro* as 'village' or 'town' somewhat indiscriminately. This appears to be the case in this quotation, where both words seem to refer to the same place.

⁷⁶ For further details on the Benedictine ethic of work see R. W. Southern, *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages*, ed. Owen Chadwick, *The Pelican History of the Church* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1970) pp. 217ff.

To bring us daily nearer God.⁷⁷

Frissell expounded further on his understanding of 'character building'. Under this rubric he included the development of co-operation and a spirit of service which would lead to self-respect. His students worked with the local community as they practised their skills, sewing for the poor, mending their fences and reading to them, and thus developed an ethic of service. Their close contact with practicalities meant that students' intellectual life was 'of a saner character than that which emphasises only the academic side of education', for the intellect was not to be ignored, but was best developed through the training of the hand. It was through acquiring skills, developing the values of co-operation and service, and by curbing the temper and countering inclinations to laziness that the student became self-supporting, productive and more moral. The knowledge that he or she (Frissell acknowledges the role of women) had this ability led to self-respect and confidence, along with a position and influence within society.⁷⁸ The discipline of work, especially self-discipline and the deferment of gratification, was assumed to be a good in itself. Emmett Scott described the training at Tuskegee, a similar institution, as leading the student to look up and forward. He [sic] learns how the idea of beauty can be actualized in home and social life; how faithful performance of every duty means nobility of character; how the value of achievement is determined by the motive behind it. But beside these, the one aim ... is the high honourableness of all kinds of work intelligently done.⁷⁹

The nature of work was changing in the Pacific Islands, however, as it had a generation or so earlier in Britain. E.P. Thompson examined work patterns in England before the coming of industrialisation, when activity was dominated by the seasons, tides and weather, and characterised by its periodic nature - bouts of frantic busyness and seasons of relative idleness - and by the lack of distinction between 'life' and

⁷⁷ H. B. Frissell, 'The Value of Industrial Education' *International Review of Missions* 4, no. 15 (1915), p. 420, citing John Keble's hymn "New Every Morning" *English Hymnal* no. 260.

⁷⁸ Frissell, 'Industrial Education', pp. 424-5.

⁷⁹ Emmett J. Scott, 'Present Achievements and Governing Ideals', in *Tuskegee and Its People: Their Ideals and Achievements*, ed. Booker T. Washington (New York: D. Appleton and Co, 1906), p. 26.

'work', a situation very like that the missionaries met in the Pacific. He noted that the acceptance of more regulated industrial tempos, with regularity and constant rhythm, was slow but that by the 1830s and 1840s capitalist notions of time were well-entrenched within the English working class, encouraged by religious, particularly Methodist, exhortations about the importance of time being spent productively.⁸⁰ The theological belief underpinning this co-incidence of capitalist efficiency and moral rectitude is represented by Boyd Hilton as based on an emphasis on 'atonement' rather than 'improvement', with an accompanying focus on the wickedness of humanity, as a response to the excesses of the French Revolution.⁸¹ An increased sense that all actions would be judged in the hereafter and an increased anxiety about the state of the individual soul led to diligent accounting of all use of time and possessions. All time had to be well spent. It is this idea that the Methodist Sister Minnie Billing was expressing when she wrote of her class in Dobu, Papua:

It is wonderful how well the girls write and sew, especially the latter – they would put to shame many white girls. But however much or little knowledge they may gain, from an educational standpoint, the benefit of the discipline and regular routine on the moral part of their natures is incalculable.⁸²

But there is a problem in the assumption that the frequent practice of acceptable acts made them habitual. The first may be theoretical: Bourdieu pointed out that the *doxa*, the domain where 'what is essential *goes without saying because it comes without saying*',⁸³ can only persist in the absence of challenge and change, in a closed world. But the very conditions of the colonial world of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were dominated by change and competing ideas. In such a situation the mission station might have attempted to be a closed world, but the realities of unconverted

⁸⁰ E.P. Thompson, 'Time, Work-Discipline and Industrial Capitalism', *Past and Present* 38, pp. 56-97 (1967).

⁸¹ Boyd Hilton, *The Age of Atonement: The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought 1795-1865* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), p. 4. See also Victor Kiernan, 'Evangelicalism and the French Revolution', *Past and Present* 1, pp. 44-56 (1952).

⁸² *Missionary Review*, March 1895, p. 3.

⁸³ Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, p. 167. Emphasis in original.

kin, commercial influences and the differentiated world of the Europeans made orthodoxy the best the missionaries could hope for, and that was far from certain. The other problem lay within the evangelical world view. As several writers have pointed out, the evangelical conscience was constantly self-reflexive, questioning its own immortal state through examination of actions – and thoughts. Indeed, undue dependence on developing habit was dangerous. As Collini pointed out, there is a paradox, long realised, in ‘trying to contrive that citizens should pursue aims which were only of value if pursued voluntarily.’⁸⁴ Christian virtue, to be virtue, should be deliberately exercised. Bradley called British Victorian evangelicals ‘obsessed’ with judgement and with being found wanting. He noted their desire to be always ‘growing in “blessed resemblance” to God’ and their ‘orgies of self-criticism’, particularly centred around their use of time.⁸⁵ The missionaries of the Pacific shared this self-reflexivity about the state of their own souls: their journals regularly contain a form of spiritual accounting, especially on anniversaries and the end of the year. Such a concern was passed on to their converts. Accounts of class meetings – even in the early days of the mission in any particular place – emphasised self-examination. George Brown, visiting the Solomon Islands in 1911 recounted the testimony of converts:

One young man said: “... The temptations of Satan this week have been strong, but I have been leaning on Christ.” Another one said: “I am seeking, seeking for light”, and another one: “many of my friends serve Satan, and they direct their efforts to pull me back, but I cling to Christ.”⁸⁶

Formulaic these statements may be but they also show the self-reflexivity expected by the mission, and incidentally a particular awareness of individuality on the part of the convert. The Comaroffs noted a similar aim on the part of Protestant missionaries in Africa – to ‘recast Southern Tswana personhood’ into ‘the modernist African subject’ (while at the same time maintaining colonial control through an ascription of

⁸⁴ Collini, ‘The Idea of “Character”’, p. 34.

⁸⁵ Bradley, *The Call to Seriousness*, p. 23.

⁸⁶ *Missionary Review*, June 1911, p. 7.

primitivism).⁸⁷

This chapter has placed emphasis on the moral advocacy, often neglected or underplayed, of attempts to change the both the physical and domestic practises of converts. Yet the internal inconsistencies in some of this advocacy about the importance of external change, and the tension between training and the required self-reflexivity remained ever-present. Adding to the complexity were elements of evolutionist thinking which overlaid the universal Christian demand for a 'new heart' on conversion. The interaction between inward and outward change was complicated and the advocacy of training in certain Christian virtues inexorably moved towards a simple promotion of carpentry classes: it was always easier to concentrate on the more practical issues. The following chapter examines the way in which theories about the need to model and practise practical behaviour and about the moral virtues inherent in manual labour were manifested in 'industrial missions' in several areas of the Pacific.

⁸⁷ Comaroff, *Revelation and Revolution*, vol 2, pp. 369-70.

Chapter Seven

Industrial Missions: from the World to the Pacific Islands

The view that converts needed to be 'trained' to become mature Christians and overcome the defects in character that missionaries were all too ready to attribute to them may have been close to universal; assumptions about the nature of that training varied, and were often shot through with racial preconceptions. Any schemes for the training of converts tended to come under the general rubric of 'education' and mission societies, especially Protestant ones, were the earliest providers of schools in many areas of the non-European world. The frequent designation of Christian communities as 'school people' in many Melanesian contexts make this clear, as does the local conflation of the categories preacher/catechist/teacher; they might have been distinguished by the mission hierarchy, but at the local level the distinction was less obvious.¹ The ambiguity is marked linguistically in Bislama in the meanings of *skul* as 'Christianity' or 'church' as well as 'school'. Everywhere they went, both

¹ See, for example Matthew Spriggs, "'A School in Every District': The Cultural Geography of Conversion on Aneityum, Southern Vanuatu" *Journal of Pacific History* 20, no. 1 (1985), pp. 23-41, in which Spriggs uses this conflation of school and Christianity effectively within his title. Amongst many other articles considering the linkage of religious and educational specialist see particularly Geoffrey White, 'Symbols of Solidarity in the Christianization of Santa Isabel, Solomon Islands', in *Culture and Christianity: The Dialectics of Transformation*, ed. George R. Saunders (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), pp. 11-31; John Barker, "'We Are Ekelesia": Conversion in Uiaku, Papua New Guinea', in *Conversion to Christianity: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives on a Great Transformation*, ed. Robert W. Hefner, pp. 199-203 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

Protestant and Catholic missionaries opened schools, primarily to teach literacy, Bible study and some general subjects to both adults and children already linked with the mission. In this they manifested Protestant assumptions about the power of the word of God when read by individual Christians in their own language or Catholic concerns about educating converts more generally. In most places, a system of village schools under the charge of local teachers taught literacy and some general subjects beyond those needed for ostensibly 'religious' purposes as a way of consolidating the Christian community. By 1900 such schools were universal throughout Fiji and, in spite of many complaints about the quality of education, had achieved a degree of success – 50% of the Fijian population was estimated to be literate in 1911.² It was education beyond this basic stage which aroused controversy; as Christian communities grew they needed to train their own pastors,³ but they also needed to consider the educational needs of others.

The new mission enthusiasm: 'industrial mission'

While missions developed a variety of partly secular post-elementary educational schemes in many countries, between the 1890s and the 1930s 'industrial missions' – schemes to train young people, mostly boys, in a variety of artisan and rural skills – moved from their rather limited origins to become the new enthusiasm of missionary circles, Catholic and particularly Protestant.⁴ Industrial training could be an adjunct to a general literary education but increasingly it took on a life of its own, taught in separate departments or institutions. Whether education should be technical or academic was widely debated in mission circles. These debates were often about

² Andrew Thornley, *Fijian Methodism 1874-1945: The Emergence of a National Church* (PhD thesis, Australian National University, 1979), p. 230, citing the first government census of Fiji.

³ For discussion of the training of mission employees – teachers, pastors and ministers– see chapter 8.

⁴ Niel Gunson suggests that the concept 'had its roots in the civilizing schemes of the early Catholic and Evangelical missions' (W.N. Gunson, 'Victorian Christianity in the South Seas: A Survey' *Journal of Religious History* 8, no. 2 (1974), p. 193). Moravians, the Basel Missionary Society and the LMS were involved in industrial mission schemes from the 1830s. (Tony Austin, *Technical Training and Development in Papua 1894-1914* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1977), pp. 3-5.

somewhat prosaic matters but the most sophisticated centred around the nature of the new Christian man or woman, what sort of convert the missions were trying to produce.

Modern anthropologists and historians have become interested in such issues, but most have concentrated on the domestic roles of women rather than the artisan training of men and few have looked at the debates within mission circles about their intentions in this area.⁵ The rationales given for technical training, the ideas behind the 'industrial mission', are complex and need disentangling. There is a link between technical training and the missions as a reflection of the Protestant work ethic, or as part of the control of colonial bodies or as evidence of mission/commercial collusion, but none of these themes fully explains the movement. Allan Davidson's brief study of the business dealings of the United Church in the Solomons,⁶ in which he considered the benefits or otherwise of such ventures for the modern church, concluded that the intentions behind such schemes were mixed, there was confusion between commercial and training motives, and that the advocacy of such schemes as evangelistic opportunities was fraught with complications. I intend to show that such

⁵ See, in relation to the Pacific Islands, Bronwen Douglas, 'Provocative Readings in Intransigent Archives: Finding Aneityumese Women' *Oceania* 70 (1999), pp. 111-129; Bronwen Douglas, 'Christian Citizens: Women and Negotiations of Modernity in Vanuatu' *The Contemporary Pacific* 14, no. 1 (2002) pp. 2-6; Richard Eves, 'Colonialism, Corporeality and Character: Methodist Missions and the Refashioning of Bodies in the Pacific' *History and Anthropology* 10, no. 1, pp. 85-138 (1996); Patricia Grimshaw, 'New England Missionary Wives, Hawaiian Women and "The Cult of True Womanhood"', in *Family and Gender in the Pacific: Domestic Contradictions and the Colonial Impact*, ed. Margaret Jolly and Martha Macintyre, pp. 19-44 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Margaret Jolly, 'Sacred Spaces: Churches, Men's Houses and Households in South Pentecost, Vanuatu', in *Family and Gender in the Pacific*, ed. Jolly and Macintyre, pp. 213-35; Margaret Jolly, "'To Save the Girls for Brighter and Better Lives': Presbyterian Missions and Women in the South of Vanuatu 1848-1870' *Journal of Pacific History* 26, no. 1, pp. 27-48 (1991); Michael Young, 'Suffer the Children: Wesleyans in the D'entrecasteaux', in *Family and Gender in the Pacific*, ed. Jolly and Macintyre), pp. 108-34.

⁶ Allan K. Davidson, 'The Church's Business: An Examination of the United Church's Involvement in Industrial Missions and Commercial Activities' *Catalyst* 12, no. 1, pp. 108-28 (1982).

a state of affairs has been the case since the beginnings of the movement and that the many and varied motivations could result in drastically different outcomes. This chapter will investigate the archaeology of the idea from its rather varied roots and attempt to disentangle some of the main principles.

In 1904, the *Chronicle*, the monthly magazine of the London Missionary Society (LMS), published a series of articles on 'Industrial Missions in Theory and Practice' in which missionaries from a variety of mission fields discussed their experience. The first two, by Wardlaw Thompson (General Secretary of the LMS from 1881 to 1914 and in general an enthusiast for industrial schemes), investigate a range of motivations, and possible drawbacks, for the policy. For it was recognised that there might be pitfalls - the most obvious being that industrial missions diverted missionaries from their prime function of evangelism. Thompson felt this a particularly great danger in areas where conversions were rare; concentrating on artisan training usually produced interest and was, he felt, 'the line of least resistance'. The 'danger' was compounded by the frequent interest taken in industrial work by governments and other agencies; the missionary could be tempted to demote the less popular evangelistic work to second place.⁷ There was also the danger that any mission activity which appeared commercial could be misunderstood, with the aim of self-support misinterpreted as personal aggrandisement. For:

if the mission becomes a mission estate, worked partly for the benefit of the people, but also with a definite purpose of pecuniary profit for the mission, an element is speedily introduced which becomes perilous to the missionary ... A missionary society ought to limit its industrial labours within such bounds as are set by the constant and earnest recognition of the great spiritual end of its being.⁸

It was a stricture which could easily be ignored – and was.

⁷ See, for example, Rev. W.C. Willoughby's comment in the *Chronicle*, January 1904, that in South Africa 'the Imperial Government is very keen on industrial education for the natives, and will give considerable grants in aid' (p. 6).

⁸ *Chronicle*, February 1904, p. 42.

As investigated in the previous chapter, it was widely believed that 'industry', manual labour, made converts better people and better Christians. This was a consistent theme through the *Chronicle* articles. Walker talked of the development of a 'robust Christian character'. He explained further:

A truer conception of Christianity will prevail when the duty of work as well as worship is more fully impressed upon the natives ... A spirit of independence and self-respect will be fostered, and a more robust type of character will be developed.⁹

The Jesuits working in the Zambesi area, who ran extensive industrial and agricultural schemes, believed their converts needed to be 'instructed by word and example how to lead a clean and wholesome life' and to 'be persuaded that idleness and laziness are degrading to man and productive of sin and misery, while, on the other hand, *daily hard work is an honourable thing* and a source of happiness and contentment.'¹⁰ Albert Lloyd, a traveller in Africa sympathetic to mission activity, described the situation in Uganda this way:

It is not fair to expect that a young man just lately won from heathenism, with environments of evil, can live purely and honestly, unless something be given to occupy his time ... the devil is altogether too smart for the lazy man. Work is the grand remedy, whether it be in the fields, or in the house, or on the road.¹¹

Similar comments can be found in the writings of almost all missionaries and administrators concerned in any way with industrial missions. The assumption that there was a moral power in work undertaken with the right attitude, which usually meant work which was performed alongside Christian instruction and development, is a constant factor in the debate but, as this chapter examines, there were other specific factors in particular places and situations.

⁹ *Chronicle*, April 1904, p 101.

¹⁰ Great Britain Board of Education, Special Reports on Educational Subjects, Volume 14, 1905 (Cmd 2379), p. 288, emphasis in original. Also cited in John W. Burton, *The Fiji of Today* (London: Charles H. Kelly, 1910) p. 247.

¹¹ Albert B. Lloyd, *Uganda to Khartoum: Life and Adventure on the Upper Nile* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1906), p. 7. This book covers 'missionary efforts amongst the Pagan tribes of the great Dark Continent', alongside long descriptions of elephant hunting and the pursuit of other wildlife. Lloyd praised industrial missions (pp. 71-2); A.J. Small, Chairman of the Fiji Methodist Mission 1900-24, read and was influenced by this section (Thornley, *Fijian Methodism*, p. 242 fn).

Wardlaw Thompson also considered more pragmatic aspects of industrial schemes and saw a somewhat accidental beginning in many of them. Many missionaries or their European assistants were themselves artisans and used their skills to build their houses, churches and boats; if they were not they had to learn quickly. Some missions, such as the Presbyterians, required missionaries to acquire such skills in advance; John Geddie learned printing and typesetting, house-construction and boat-building, as well as some medicine before departing for New Hebrides.¹² In the process they often taught manual skills to their converts, a pattern found in both Catholic and Protestant missions since both lacked European manpower and finance and thus needed local assistance. Even the Sacred Heart mission based at Yule Island, which initially brought European Lay Brothers to undertake the building, gardening and practical running of the mission, later found it needed to supplement their work with local help. The mission, according to its historian Dupeyrat, deliberately eschewed the work of Islander assistants as inferior, preferring to use only European Brothers in the building of churches. Their work was praised in the 1909 general report to the Catholic Congress in Sydney:

[The Church] stands there overlooking the entire village, but to build it the Brothers have had to be in turn woodcutters, builders, carpenters, blacksmiths, joiners, thatchers; to build the altar and finish the decorations of the Sanctuary they had to be cabinet-makers, painters and gilders ... The Lay Brothers are to be found at work all over the area of the Missions ... from station to station they travel, their tools on their shoulders, to begin ever anew their venturous work.¹³

However during and after the First World War the supply of European Brothers was impossible to sustain. In spite of grave initial doubts about the ability of Papuans,

¹² R. S. Miller, *Misi Gete: John Geddie, Pioneer Missionary to the New Hebrides* (Launceston: The Presbyterian Church of Tasmania, 1975), pp. 16-17.

John Geddie: Born 1815 in Scotland, brought up in Canada. Pioneer Presbyterian missionary on Aneityum, New Hebrides 1848-1864, 1866-72.

¹³ *Annals of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart* (monthly journal of the Sacred Heart (OLSH) order in Australia), November 1909, p. 364. This journal carried only very limited missionary news, rather concentrating on devotion and liturgical teaching to the Catholic faithful.

who were seen as 'idle, ignorant and unable to understand', Mgr. de Boismenu instigated a deliberate apprenticeship policy. By the mid 1920s, the trades of carpentry, tinsmith, blacksmith, and general mechanic were being taught to boys, and sewing, cooking and housework to girls. While Dupeyrat rebutted the criticism that the mission kept for its own benefit the young people it trained, the initiative for the apprenticeship scheme came from the lack of skilled manual labour within the mission; Dupeyrat's account was accompanied by photographs of liturgical buildings and furniture made by the apprentices.¹⁴ Similarly, the Methodists in Papua began boat-building largely to ease the perennial transport problems of the island circuit.

However, such action was often more deliberately vocational and most writers waxed enthusiastic about industrial missions. Social concern was one of the motivations. In some areas, industrial artisan training allowed converts to improve their social position, especially the landless in India where 'their means of subsistence are at all times precarious' and 'their intellectual and moral advancement' was unlikely in conditions of 'grinding poverty'.¹⁵ In India, at least, there was very real concern about poverty and lack of employment and a desire to provide converts with a livelihood – all the more necessary given the reluctance of higher-caste Hindus to employ Christians. Rev. A. Dignum writing from Salem in South India saw his aims as helping some of the lads in our mission to find useful employment, and to save them from growing up in idleness in our midst or drifting beyond our control to places where work is more easily obtained and more remunerative than in their villages.¹⁶

In other areas, the Pacific Islands amongst them, it was thought that, once fighting and head-hunting had been prohibited, 'new employment must be found for energy, and new occupation must be given to time'.¹⁷

¹⁴ André Dupeyrat, *Papouasie: Histoire De La Mission 1885-1935* (Paris: Editions Dillen, 1935), pp. 427-432.

¹⁵ *Chronicle*, September 1904, p. 224.

¹⁶ *Chronicle*, September 1904, p. 224.

¹⁷ *Chronicle*, January 1904, p. 9.

There were also more pecuniary motivations. It was recognised that Christian converts would not be able to support their own churches and teachers unless they had a cash income.¹⁸ The idea that industrial endeavours would help make missions self-supporting was a recurring one. The dangers, as expounded by Thompson, led some to advocate the use of a separate company for industrial work. Frank Walker did this in Papua and endorsed the idea in his article¹⁹ – which may be seen as a piece of special pleading. But he also set out clearly the aims of his company:

1. To create a social environment for the natives of New Guinea favourable to the development of a robust Christian character.
2. To enable the native Christians to become independent and the mission self-supporting.²⁰

This was to be achieved through the Papuans cultivating coconuts on their own land, which was possible given the land tenure situation in most of the Pacific Islands.

Edinburgh, Africa and the American South: the theory developed

The increasing interest in the place and purpose of industrial training schemes within the world-wide missionary movement can be seen in discussions at the first World Missionary Conference – a gathering of the missionary societies of most Protestant denominations – held in 1910 in Edinburgh. The Conference organised its deliberations around a number of Commissions which developed agendas, questionnaires and discussion before the conference, then published their conclusions. Education was the concern of the third commission, chaired by Bishop Gore of Birmingham; it entitled its report ‘Education in Relation to the Christianisation of National Life’. Prompted by the emphases of the questionnaires distributed, concern centred on the role of mission schools within national and colonial school systems, the medium of instruction and the balance between academic and religious instruction. But a chapter was devoted to ‘industrial training’ in which it became apparent that ‘the questions which arise in the provision of industrial or vocational

¹⁸ *Chronicle*, January 1904, pp. 8-9. The issue of mission self-support is discussed more fully in Chap. 8.

¹⁹ *Chronicle*, March 1904, pp. 70-72.

²⁰ *Chronicle*, April 1904, p.100.

training on a large scale, are pressing with increasing urgency upon the thoughts of missionary leaders at the present time.²¹ These debates were continued in the journal *International Review of Missions*, founded in 1912 by J. H. Oldham²² in the flurry of enthusiasm following the Edinburgh Conference.²³ Around twenty articles about various aspects of 'industrial missions' were published in the years 1912 to 1925, which gives some indication of the level of concern and interest. The Catholic perspective was missing from the World Missionary Conference and its offshoots; an omission noted and regretted.²⁴

The assumption that certain forms of education were suitable for particular racially-defined groups, people at 'different stages of development', is clear from the beginning of the discussions. The deliberations of the World Missionary Conference show such preconceptions on the part of their authors and contributors, especially in the varying attitudes towards Christian education in India and Africa. In India and Ceylon, Christian mission schools and colleges were maintained not just for the education of converts; indeed it was a matter of concern that fewer than half of all Christian children were in school.²⁵ Rather there was a perceived need to change

²¹ World Missionary Conference, Report of Commission III – Education in Relation to the Christianization of National Life, 1910, p. 114.

²² **Joseph Houldsworth Oldham:** Born 1874 in India, the son of a military officer. Employed in India by the Scottish YMCA from 1897-1900, though was never ordained. Organising Secretary of the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh 1910, after which he continued working on ecumenism through the 'Edinburgh Continuation Committee', as editor of the *International Review of Missions*, through involvement with the World Student Christian Federation and through educational work, especially in Africa. Wrote *Christianity and the Race Problem* (1924), died 1969.

²³ The subtitle on the first issue, dated January 1912, reads: 'A quarterly review issued by the Continuation Committee of the World Missionary Conference, 1910.'

²⁴ The authors of the World Missionary Conference (WMC) report noted the lack of Catholic input which they regarded as 'serious'. 'It is all the more serious', they continued, 'because the Roman Catholic Church has shown a very special power of making a distinctive and lasting impress on its pupils by means of education.' WMC, Report III, p. 2.

²⁵ The figure was given as just under 43% in 1910, leading to fears of 'an ignorant Church'. WMC, Report III, p. 6.

general attitudes in India – what was called the ‘leavening’ or diffusion principle. The report writers put it this way:

So far as the ideals of “the new India” are Christian or semi-Christian; so far as the conceptions of Divine Fatherhood and human brotherhood, and Christian moral ideals, have come to prevail; so far as caste distinctions have weakened and the true position of women recognised; so far as prejudice against Christ and Christianity has been broken down, – it is to the education given in mission schools and colleges that a great part of this good result is attributed.²⁶

All this was seen as preparatory to conversion. It was acknowledged that most pupils in Christian schools and colleges were not Christian, but missionaries hoped that generalised moral uplift and increased ‘spiritual influence’ would eventually lead to conversion.

Similar attitudes were expressed in relation to China, where mission education was seen as

a silent, slow-moving, and yet irresistible force gradually leavening the life of the nation by the power of truth. The results of missionary education are seen in the creation of an atmosphere in which it is possible for the Church to live and grow; in the effect produced on the influential classes who become more friendly towards Christianity and more ready to consider its claims ... in providing China with a worthy system of education; ... in furnishing a new spiritual basis for the life of society in place of the old foundations, which are being removed.²⁷

Missions which did not appeal to this intellectual level were seen in this discourse as having ‘marked limitations’. Oldham, reviewing a book on Hudson Taylor’s China Inland Mission, felt the lack of theological training and rejection of critical Biblical scholarship amongst its missionaries meant it left untouched ‘large parts of China’s

²⁶ WMC, Report III, p. 11. A similar view was expressed about the LMS college at Bhowanipore which became a college of Calcutta University in 1912. There around 700 mostly Hindu boys were taught academic subjects and Christian religion; few converted but the mission was confident that ‘the leaven of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is working to sweeten and purify and elevate the Hindu character, to break down the strongholds of ancient superstition and evil practice, and prepare the way for the coming of the King’ (*Chronicle*, November 1913, p. 243).

²⁷ WMC, Report III, p. 30.

rich and manifold life.²⁸

Indeed missionaries took developments within Hinduism, especially the Arya Samaj movement and the writings of Rabindranath Tagore, as evidence of the efficacy of the 'leavening' theory. J.W. Burton's sympathetic views of Hinduism²⁹ were replicated by other missionaries. However, an approach which attempted to link Hindu philosophy and Christianity within an essentially intellectual discourse demanded an emphasis on the education of the élite. As Principal Rudra of St Stephen's College, Delhi, put it: 'What is needed in India ... is that we shall profoundly impress some part, no matter how small, of that class of Indian society which is directing the main streams of national advance.'³⁰ An emphasis on higher education could be 'a powerful force for winning and training converts, and for creating a Christian sentiment and so elevating the non-Christian community.'³¹ Interestingly, the author of the second comment was that same A.G. Fraser who praised schemes to transform ex-slaves in the American South into respectable members of their community through training in manual labour.³² Here was the rub. Why the difference between the education needed for the élite of Ceylon, India or China and freed black slaves? Indian and Chinese students were described as 'the sons of officials, literati, merchants and gentry', 'higher castes', 'influential classes' and similar epithets. In other words, there was an élite amenable to religious thought, even if of a more mystical and less rational type than Western Christianity, a group to be influenced.

The section in the World Missionary Conference report on education in Africa was entirely different in tone. Here 'the native' was assumed to have different educational

²⁸ J.H. Oldham, 'Romance and Reality in Missionary Work: Fifty Years of the China Inland Mission' *International Review of Missions* 4, no. 15 (1915), pp. 448-55.

²⁹ See discussion in Chapter 5.

³⁰ WMC, Report III, p. 12.

³¹ WMC, Report III, p. 12.

³² A.G. Fraser, 'Impressions of Hampton Institute' *International Review of Missions* 1, no. 4 (1912), pp. 704-14.

needs from white students, an assumption not made about élites in India for whom secondary and higher education were seen as suitable – though the assumed educational needs of low caste and poor Indians approximated much more closely African norms. The vocabulary itself was different; terms such as ‘tribal’, ‘native’, ‘primitive’ and assumptions such as the prevalence of laziness and irrationality are dominant, while they are downplayed or at least seen as easily countered in the chapters on India and China. Evolutionist assumptions about the present capability and potential of Africans and Pacific Islanders permeated the debate. These were the people for whom the virtues of manual labour were apparent.

This evolutionism reflected the dual origins of the ‘industrial missions’ movement in Africa and the American south, in attempts to assist people who either had been or were in danger of becoming slaves. One strand came from David Livingstone, a complex man with apparently contradictory attitudes towards missionary endeavour. He was at the same time a believer in the ‘itinerant’ method and a believer in a civilising mission. In general he promoted a method involving rapid movement through the countryside, preaching and teaching as he went and leaving God’s word to do its own work, though this did imply that someone else would do more consistent teaching. One might suggest that such a ‘hands-off’ position was at least partly a result of Livingstone’s wanderlust. Commerce was also encouraged – as part of the fight against slavery which Livingstone, along with other abolitionists, believed corrupted everyone connected with it. He believed that the production of cotton, sugar and other commodities in Africa on ‘healthy inland commercial stations’ would so undermine the demand for slave-produced crops that ‘slavery among our kinsmen across the Atlantic will, in the course of some years, cease to assume the form of a necessity to even the slaveholders themselves’.³³

By the late nineteenth century, this linkage of commerce and civilisation with

³³ David Livingstone, *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa* (London: Ward, Locke and Co, 1857), p. 580.

spiritual regeneration was pervasive and compelling, even though the idea was virtually unknown in missionary circles before Livingstone and his editors and followers. The image of the missionary-explorer who advocated commerce and Christianity to cure the evils of slavery was well-established in popular religious literature within a few years of Livingstone's death.³⁴ Most of Livingstone's contemporaries saw the need for settled missions and in practice so did Livingstone himself. Ideas which Livingstone had only partly articulated were developed by his followers. Famous African mission schools with extensive industrial departments such as Livingstonia, Lovedale and Tiger Kloof were named after Livingstone or founded specifically by his disciples.

A second strand of thinking relating to the 'industrial mission' came from the United States, from the black education movement of General Samuel Chapman Armstrong and Booker T. Washington. Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute was founded in Virginia by the Civil War hero Armstrong in 1868 to educate black freedman communities in agricultural and industrial skills and enable them to gain rural employment. Industrial training was adopted independently in Africa and the USA but links were rapidly made.³⁵ Armstrong believed that alternatives to the institution of slavery could be developed through artisan and agricultural skills and that the resulting economic development would put relationships between the races in the American south on a new footing. Armstrong's prize student Washington founded Tuskegee Institute in Alabama in 1881 on very similar principles. These enterprises, as was evident in the title of Washington's book *Up From Slavery* (1901), attempted to accommodate the black population of the southern states in a post-slavery

³⁴ Dorothy O. Helly, *Livingstone's Legacy: Horace Waller and Victorian Mythmaking* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1987), chap. 7.

³⁵ Kenneth James King, *Pan-Africanism and Education: A Study of Race, Philanthropy and Education in the Southern States of America and East Africa* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), pp. 45-50. August Meier, *Negro Thought in America 1880-1915: Racial Ideologies in the Age of Booker T. Washington* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1963) suggests that the ideological roots of enthusiasm for industrial education go back to the Swiss educationalist Johann Pestalozzi (1746-1827) (p. 85).

environment.

The philosophy of the Hampton and Tuskegee Institutes was explained admiringly by many visitors. A.G. Fraser, a Church Missionary Society missionary and principal of a school in Ceylon which operated on very different lines, visited Hampton Institute in 1912 and wrote enthusiastically of a school which had transformed 'negroes turned adrift from the ruined plantations, huddled together in filth, moral and physical, and with neither the opportunity nor the intelligence required to earn their daily bread'³⁶ into leaders who 'look out over the wide field of their whole race to study how they may best learn to help wisely in the years to come'.³⁷ This was to be achieved through practical training in thirteen specified trades for both boys and girls, physical self-reliance and a well-developed commitment to service. Fraser quoted an unnamed alumnus addressing the students thus:

The man who owns his own home and cultivates his land and lives a decent life is no problem anywhere ... Let no one of us ever be ashamed or humiliated when we are called workmen; let us be proud of the distinction ... Remember also that though a negro, and black, and belonging to a backward and somewhat undeveloped race, God meant you should be as honest, as industrious, as godly as any human being that walks on the face of God's green earth.³⁸

Evolutionism here had been assimilated and accepted by those it deemed 'undeveloped': the non-threatening nature of the Hampton/Tuskegee model was triumphant. Artisan training and self-reliance together aimed to produce respectable black rural workers, whose health standards and lifestyle did not threaten their white neighbours. It was a great boast of Hampton that in 1912 only two of its graduates had ever been convicted of a crime.³⁹

Industrial missions had advocates beyond the missionary movement. One of the earliest theoretical expositions of such endeavours was in the British Board of

³⁶ Fraser, 'Impressions of Hampton Institute', p. 707.

³⁷ Fraser, 'Impressions', p. 709.

³⁸ Fraser, 'Impressions', p. 710.

³⁹ Fraser, 'Impressions', p. 711.

Education Special Report of 1905. This generalised study of education in the Empire concentrated its focus on the education of the white children of the Empire.⁴⁰ However, the two volumes which considered imperial education include extensive appendices covering 'native education' with responses from a large number of mission bodies, mainly in Africa, to a questionnaire on the provision and suitability of 'manual, industrial or agricultural education for natives'.⁴¹ The reports, from a variety of Catholic and Protestant bodies, provide a comprehensive insight into missionary assumptions about industrial training and its practical outcomes. Even the secular and pragmatic Board of Education projected a moral view of such training, asking: 'Does it appear that industrial and agricultural education is having good effects (a) on the character of the natives receiving it; (b) on their economic efficiency.'⁴² Most missions gave comprehensive replies regarding character, universally regarding it as improved by manual work, though to varying degrees. W.J. Rottman of the Basel Mission on the Gold Coast, in west Africa, believed that 'training in useful industries' had 'a most energetic influence on the character and a decisive work upon the will of the natives' and that agricultural projects gave a 'lesson not only on the value of time, but also on the dignity of labour'.⁴³ A slightly less resounding endorsement came from James Stewart of Lovedale in Southern Africa that 'there is nothing in work *per*

⁴⁰ Great Britain Board of Education, Special Reports on Educational Subjects, 1905, Vols. 13 (Cmd 2378) and 14 (Cmd 2379). The section on Fiji in Vol. 13, for example, considered only the Suva and Levuka Public Schools, both catering to European children, and made the astonishing claim without racial qualification that education was compulsory in Fiji.

The Special Reports on Educational Subjects came from the Office of Special Inquiries and Reports within the Board of Education, a think tank under the leadership of Michael Sadler (no relation to the British parliamentarian of the 1830s mentioned in chapter 2). Reports 13 and 14 came out after Sadler's departure, the finale to the productive era of the Office. In general, Sadler's view on technical education was that it should come after a good secondary education, not be a substitute for it, on the German model which he had extensively researched (Lynda Grier, *Achievement in Education: The Work of Michael Ernest Sadler 1885-1935* (London: Constable, 1952)).

⁴¹ Board of Education report, vol. 13, pp. 323-4. The Blantyre Mission of British Central Africa is the only institution to reprint the questionnaire, but the others were clearly responding to it.

⁴² Board of Education report, vol. 13, pp. 323.

⁴³ Board of Education report, vol. 13, pp. 297, 299.

se to make a man moral, without additional influences', but as the principal of one of the largest industrial training schools in Africa, he clearly believed that the Christian teaching at his school provided the 'additional influences'.⁴⁴

The irony remains that the Christian humanitarian anti-slavery impulse gave rise to educational systems where the basic philosophy assumed racial inferiority, or at least accepted the reality of social systems which depended on racial subordination. It had always been part of Booker T. Washington's aim at Tuskegee to 'improve' race relations – through an acceptance of the ex-slave's proper place in the world as rural, agricultural and Christian. The 'transforming effect and influence' of the successful employment of black people in such areas would lead to their acceptance by whites so that Tuskegee could be, as Washington's secretary Emmett Scott put it, 'an agent of civilization ... to stand for a kindlier relationship between the races.'⁴⁵ This attitude, which Fraser called 'race feeling', was essentially non-threatening to whites – as it was meant to be. Other missionary writers praised industrial mission schemes precisely as a way of achieving what Edward Shillito, an LMS missionary, described as 'fellowship between races'. 'The world has become like a ship,' he wrote, 'and the races are passengers who cannot avoid each other'; education of the ex-slave in skills which would enable him to earn a living and grow in 'character' would help eliminate friction.⁴⁶ As Washington put it in his 1895 Atlanta Exposition speech, 'No race can prosper till it learns there is as much dignity in tilling a field as in writing a poem. It is at the bottom of life that we must begin, and not at the top. Nor should we permit our grievances to overshadow our opportunities'.⁴⁷ W.E.B. DuBois, a more radical

⁴⁴ Board of Education report, vol. 13, p. 339.

⁴⁵ Emmett J. Scott, 'Present Achievements and Governing Ideals', in *Tuskegee and Its People: Their Ideals and Achievements*, ed. Booker T. Washington (New York: D. Appleton and Co, 1906), p. 27.

⁴⁶ Edward Shillito, 'Samuel Chapman Armstrong' *International Review of Missions* 8, no. 31 (1919), pp. 357-65; James Henderson, 'Industrial Training in Africa: The Situation in South Africa, with Special Reference to Lovedale' *International Review of Missions* 3, no. 19 (1914), pp. 336-43, made a similar point in the South African context.

⁴⁷ Booker T. Washington, *Up from Slavery* (New York: Gramercy Books, 1901(1993)), p.161.

U.S. black leader, referred to this speech as the ‘Atlanta Compromise’;⁴⁸ the compromise was that blacks would refrain from political action in return for white investment in the South.

The concomitant industrial training started as a ‘compromise solution to racial discrimination’; it was a deliberate attempt to educate blacks to the life that whites would allow them to lead.⁴⁹ As such, it appealed to white benefactors as the ‘solution of the negro problem.’⁵⁰ This meant it was also controversial; DuBois and Marcus Garvey, after initially supporting Washington, began to attack the assumptions about the place of black people implicit in Washington’s policy. When government and philanthropic support for the Hampton/Tuskegee model began to undermine the funding of black liberal arts colleges which aimed to place black students in élite educational establishments in equality with whites, opposition grew from more radical black leaders. But it was Washington’s model that was influential at the World Missionary Conference of 1910.

In the Pacific Islands

Missionaries in the Pacific Islands took up the international discourse and enthusiasm to varying degrees. Some had read about Livingstonia, Tuskegee or Tiger Kloof. John Burton cited Washington and the British Board of Education reports in *Fiji of Today* (1910). In general, missionaries in Oceania focussed on much the same issues as their colleagues in Africa and America, but in the Pacific Islands the debate had an extra twist – the preoccupation with depopulation. While missionaries were disturbed by the assumed downward demographic trends, they believed that Pacific Islands societies could with assistance learn to cope with the encounter with ‘superior’ European influences. It was their humanitarian job to provide that assistance. Danks’

⁴⁸ W. E. B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, ed. David W. Blight and Robert Gooding-Williams (Boston: Bedford Books, 1997 (1903)), p. 63. For further discussion of the political and racial philosophy of Washington and DuBois see Meier, *Negro Thought in America*, esp. chaps. 8 and 9.

⁴⁹ King, *Pan-Africanism and Education*, chap. 2.

⁵⁰ President Taft, cited in Fraser, ‘Impressions’, p. 708.

comment that teaching Islanders to work was ‘necessary for their preservation’ resonated with his colleagues who desired to play their part in ‘the saving of a noble race.’⁵¹

Many missionaries agreed with Frank Paton that ‘the indolence and sin of the black man’ was part of the cause of depopulation. Pacific Islanders were threatened by the influx of western influences and this threatened the well-being of their societies and even their very existence. The remedy was ‘a combination of spiritual teaching and industrial training. The problem is first how to instill the desire to work, and then how to train him to work effectively’.⁵² In 1919 James Colwell, an Australian Methodist writer, put it succinctly:

We must adapt ... our Mission methods to the needs of the native races, already Christianised. Though Christians the natives are still children. Their characters and minds must be developed. The native is inherently lazy. He loves play and he shirks work ... He must be taught the value of work and the dignity of labour. This means that industrial missions must play a much larger part in the programme of the future.⁵³

The social evolutionism evident in the international debate and in Colwell’s equating of Islanders to children with undeveloped minds was no impediment to industrial training, for social evolutionism provided a model for progress. Non-European societies could take the same route towards civilisation that Europeans had earlier. But the ideology of the industrial mission was picked up in various ways in the Pacific Islands, sometimes mirroring the international ideal, sometimes as a cover for commercial interests, sometimes to develop a complete alternative culture. Here I examine a variety of responses.

The industrial mission, however, was never uncontested as a method of Christian training or widely accepted within Catholic bodies or the sacramental Anglican

⁵¹ *Missionary Review*, June 1912, p. 2. The extended quotation is cited in chapter 3.

⁵² Frank H.L. Paton, *The Kingdom in the Pacific* (London: Young People's Missionary Movement, 1913), pp. 125, 137.

⁵³ *Missionary Review*, July 1919, p. 4.

Missions in the Pacific region. Amongst historians, too, the influence of the movement is debated. Wetherell and Austin have shown the strength and influence of the industrial mission schemes in Papua, while John Garrett is rather dismissive of the whole movement.⁵⁴ There is certainly evidence that in many cases actions did not live up to the rhetoric and that schemes were short-lived and underfunded. One of the reasons for their under-performance lies in the somewhat less than enthusiastic response of Islanders, which I also examine.

Kwato: creating an alternative world

The LMS missionary Charles Abel's enterprise at Kwato is the most extensively studied missionary endeavour in the Pacific Islands, being the subject of David Wetherell's full-length study as well as articles by Tony Austin. It also raised the most controversy, ending in a rift with the LMS in 1918. Abel's enterprise was unique in the region as an attempt to create an alternative society, an Anglicised élite removed from their villages to the Kwato station who could form the nucleus of a new Papuan society.

Part of the rationale for Abel's mission related to depopulation and thus resonated with the concerns of other missionaries; he believed that Papuans would die out on contact with 'stronger' and 'fitter' Europeans unless they gained in 'vigour' through 'finding new manual occupations in place of warfare'.⁵⁵ The belief in the virtues of manual work is epitomised in Abel's comment in 1900 that in the labour of draining the swamp at Kwato, 'we were laying the foundations of character'.⁵⁶ Where he

⁵⁴ Tony Austin, 'F.W. Walker and Papuan Industries Limited' *Journal of the Papua and New Guinea Society* 6, no. 1 (1972); Austin, *Technical Training in Papua*; John Garrett, *Footsteps in the Sea: Christianity in Oceania to World War Two* (Geneva/Suva: World Council of Churches/University of the South Pacific, 1992), passim; David Wetherell, *Charles Abel and the Kwato Mission of Papua New Guinea 1891-1975* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1996); David Wetherell, 'The Fortunes of Charles W. Abel of Kwato 1891-1930' *Journal of Pacific History* 17, no. 4, pp 195-217 (1982).

⁵⁵ Wetherell, *Abel and the Kwato Mission*, pp. 33-34.

⁵⁶ Charles Abel, *Kwato, New Guinea, 1890-1900* (London: C.E. Roberts, 1900), p. 15.

differed was in assuming that this could only be achieved by removing young children from their villages and bringing them up at Kwato, which Wetherell describes as 'a strong centre of assimilation',⁵⁷ entirely away from traditional influence. Abel's attitude towards traditional Papuan culture was uncompromising; he wrote that villages were permeated by 'a flood-tide of filthy speaking, indecent symbols, and open unchecked immorality'.⁵⁸ In an account of his mission apparently written for children, he made reference to the people's 'personal uncleanness', the 'emotional shallowness' imposed by custom and laziness, and included long passages describing sorcery, warfare and the subsequent torturing of prisoners.⁵⁹

Once removed and 'inside the fence', the children were brought up in a highly-disciplined environment with musters five times a day, 5.30 a.m. sea baths, twice-daily prayers and regular cricket to encourage a 'growing intelligence and deepening character'. In 1909 Abel wrote:

It will be easily understood that a very important part of training children in New Guinea is the *discipline* of the mission station. I have had this word, painted in bold, scarlet block letters hanging up in my school for months at a time, and have delivered many addresses from this text.⁶⁰

The children were given a general education and trained in manual and domestic skills. They were to be the *Isibaguna*, the 'first generation' of a new kind of Papuan. By their own skills they would sustain themselves economically while, protected by their Christian morality, they would thrive and reproduce.⁶¹ Within a few years, the growing carpentry workshops secured government building contracts and built boats for private businesses and the Kwato cricket team frequently played against the white

⁵⁷ Wetherell, *Abel and the Kwato Mission*, p. 97. The parallel with the assimilationist and Aboriginal child removal policies of various Australian governments is obvious and tantalising.

⁵⁸ *Chronicle*, January 1898, p. 17.

⁵⁹ Charles W. Abel, *Savage Life in New Guinea: The Papuan in Many Moods* (London: London Missionary Society, 1901) pp. 21, 41-2, 99-103, 138-145.

⁶⁰ *Chronicle*, August 1909, p. 149. Emphasis in original.

⁶¹ Wetherell, *Abel and the Kwato Mission*, chap. 2.

Samarai XI.⁶² Their skills and renewed lives would strengthen them to take an active part in Papua's economy, though there was an ambivalence about how far they should compete with white artisans, a concern which Schilling shows was prevalent in other areas of substantial (or potential) white settlement such as Kenya.⁶³ At Kwato, Abel expected high standards in technical work, which were often achieved. Melanesians held positions of authority in Enesi Industries, the company controlling the Kwato plantations. Wetherell suggests that Abel developed at Kwato 'a conception of the Church as a "peculiar people" – a religious aristocracy', a predestined 'elect' in the Calvinist sense.⁶⁴ Such a view implies a positive view of his converts, if not of the rest of society. This group of young people, with more missionary time and effort spent on them than any other group, was to be Papua's salvation.

Descriptions of Kwato suggest a hierarchical yet intimate relationship between Abel and his converts. The ideal of the Victorian family pervaded Kwato, with meals taken communally and evenings spent together with English pastimes and books. Abel saw considerable potential in his converts. Yet at the same time Abel regarded himself as indispensable; unlike many other missionaries, he did not see his task as making himself redundant. Relics of an evolutionist distrust of Papuan capabilities combined with a political belief that Papua was to be a country of white settlement where Papuan and European would co-exist in partnership – redolent of Booker T. Washington's advocating improved race relations through making ex-slaves more 'acceptable' to white society. Abel aimed to give Papuans a strong place in that partnership but he put effort into securing his family's financial stake in Kwato

⁶² Wetherell, *Abel and the Kwato Mission*, pp. 43-9, 54, 152; Austin, *Technical Training in Papua*, pp. 57-58.

⁶³ Austin, *Technical Training in Papua*, pp. 20-23; Donald Schilling, 'The Politics of Vocational Education in Kenya', in *The Politics of Education in Colonial Algeria and Kenya*, ed. Elsa M. Harik and Donald G. Schilling (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Centre for International Studies, 1984), pp. 49-99. In Kenya there was some promotion of African training as a useful foil to Indian aspirations, but also widespread fear that if Africans' skills were developed they would provide undue competition for white artisans.

⁶⁴ Wetherell, *Abel and the Kwato Mission*, pp. 109-110, 127, 142-3.

because he envisaged their future being in Papua. As Wetherell put it, 'Abel's goal of fulfilling the leadership potential of Melanesians was envisaged only within the context of his own absolute authority'.⁶⁵ Yet many of the descendants of Abel's converts, English-educated and sophisticated in their relationships with Europeans and western thinking, became leaders in the newly independent Papua New Guinea.⁶⁶ The distinguishing features of Abel's mission – the degree of social and religious separation from the surrounding society, the sheer scale of the enterprise, and the way Abel envisaged his own continued presence within it – made it unlike other industrial schemes in the Pacific Islands.

The classical model

More typical examples of the industrial mission can be found amongst the Methodists. Davuilevu Industrial Training Institute near Suva was started in 1908 as an addition to the already sizeable educational establishment, which included training for teachers and ministers.⁶⁷ It was the brainchild of John Burton and can be seen as a classic, if short-lived, example of industrial mission theory in practice. He developed it as an extra duty beyond his responsibilities to the Indian community in the Nausori area because of the magnitude of the problems he believed Fijians faced. Using language steeped, even if stylishly, in evolutionist assumptions, Burton explained what he saw as Fijians' needs:

The race at this juncture wants a man who cannot merely parse a verb, but who can guide unerringly a plough ... The salvation of the race demands the type of man who can push truly a plane and strike squarely an anvil. Better far to master the prose of land manuring and swamp draining than the poetry of Milton. Better for him, for a generation or two, to sit at the feet of Vulcan than of Euclid.⁶⁸

By 1910 the Methodists in Fiji were operating in a changed environment for, especially close to Suva, the increasing numbers of Europeans and the greater

⁶⁵ Wetherell, *Abel and the Kwato Mission*, p. 124.

⁶⁶ Wetherell, *Abel and the Kwato Mission*, pp. 235-41.

⁶⁷ For more on the educational establishments at Davuilevu, see chapter 8. The theological and teacher training departments moved from their earlier site at Navuloa to Davuilevu during 1908-1913.

⁶⁸ Burton, *Fiji of Today*, p. 242.

economic activity they brought meant that Islanders were being drawn into non-traditional economic spheres whether they wished it or not. Coupled with Social Darwinist assumptions of struggle, this contact was assumed to mean danger for the 'backward races', a phrase used by many missionaries. Burton believed, as already discussed, that the development of manual work was necessary for Fijians to prevent depopulation. He explained his philosophy of 'Salvation by Work', the rationale for the industrial enterprise at Davuilevu, in *The Fiji of Today* (1910) and in a later article in the *Missionary Review*. Fijians were not yet ready for academic education; they needed 'ultra-primary' rather than secondary education.

Burton was explicit about the responsibility of the mission, as he saw it, to help Fijians adjust to the changed conditions which contact with Europeans had brought them.⁶⁹ 'At the present stage of ... [their] evolution', he noted, Fijians would benefit from the example of Tuskegee,⁷⁰ thus proving that Burton at least was closely following the international debate and attempting to implement its theories in Fiji. For without new 'vigour' – a frequent term from missionaries who saw island life as inherently easy-going – the abolition of old customs, primarily fighting, meant greater indolence, a particular danger for 'infant races'. Manual labour had 'a redemptive value' for Fijians, a word Burton used in two senses. He saw in the Fijians' effective use of their land and resources their only hope of economic redemption, for 'the market in Fiji for skilled manual and agricultural labour is never likely to be glutted',⁷¹ a comment which suggested at least some Fijian involvement in non-subsistence economic activity. He advocated the resurgence of Fijian crafts of housebuilding and woodworking, citing Washington's dictum of emancipation through 'working with the hands'.⁷² But manual labour also had redemptive potential for the individual, as 'the discipline of systematic and purposeful effort must reflect

⁶⁹ *Missionary Review*, February 1910, p. 9.

⁷⁰ Burton, *Fiji of Today*, p. 241.

⁷¹ Burton, *Fiji of Today*, p. 242.

⁷² *Missionary Review*, February 1910, p. 9.

its virtue upon his soul'.⁷³ Indeed it was hoped that practical training would help counter the supposed 'decided moral and ethical weakness in the Fijian character', the 'lewd thought and evil desire' and the 'carelessness and indifference of the average native.'⁷⁴

A technical teacher, Matthew Whan, was employed and instruction began in carpentry. By 1910 all the wooden furniture requirements of the educational complex at Davuilevu were made by the boys at a cost saving to the mission. But, said Burton, the main gain was to the 'character' of the Fijians. In the place of sporadic work habits, a boy had to work accurately and consistently: 'It is discipline – just the discipline that he most needs. It has a subtle and unanalysable ethical value for him'.⁷⁵ The consistency of work and the standards demanded were not easy but many boys, claimed Burton, were 'coming out of the ordeal bravely and well.' In this he was supported by Arthur Small, chairman of the Fiji Methodist Mission, who believed that educating boys 'industrially' was 'the principal lever by which this young nation can be elevated to an honourable position among the industrial peoples of the earth'.⁷⁶ The produce of the Davuilevu workshops was of high quality and sold quickly and there were plans to expand technical education within the syllabus of provincial and central schools.⁷⁷ After Burton's departure from Fiji in 1911 there were attempts to maintain his scheme; carpentry apprentices were still taken on in 1917 but, overall, industrial mission work was then assessed as existing 'only to a very limited degree'.⁷⁸

⁷³ Burton, *Fiji of Today*, p. 241.

⁷⁴ Burton, *Fiji of Today*, p. 253.

⁷⁵ *Missionary Review*, February 1910, p. 10.

⁷⁶ A.J. Small, 'Educational Work of the Methodist Mission in Fiji' *Transactions of the Fijian Society*, (1912-13).

⁷⁷ *Missionary Review*, February 1910, p. 10. This article, however, does not make it clear how small Whan's school was. By 1912, 38 boys had received tuition (Thornley, *Fijian Methodism*, p. 242).

⁷⁸ Methodist Church of Australasia, *Report and Recommendations of the Commission Appointed by the Mission Board to Visit the Fiji District in 1917* (Sydney: Methodist Missionary Society of Australasia, 1917), pp. 43-44. There were 16 apprentices in carpentry and boatbuilding at Davuilevu

One can only guess how thoughtful Pacific Islanders responded to the evolutionist assumptions – that industrial training was appropriate for ‘less developed races’ or that it was necessary to improve the defective ‘character’ of Islanders – in any advocacy they encountered of industrial missions. However it is notable that the most successful technical education scheme in the Methodist domain was run by R.A. Derrick at Davuilevu in the late 1920s and 1930s and was at its peak later than the period under discussion here. Two factors marked this scheme apart from the industrial missions of the 1900s and 1910s. It offered technical and agricultural education to a high standard, concentrating on skills like motor engineering, plumbing and electrical engineering which fed into the growing employment opportunities developing around Suva. At least as importantly, Derrick did not stress manual work as a moral good; rather he taught the building, use and maintenance of modern machinery, and taught skills for life rather than for character development. This was education rather than moralism; enrolments rose in spite of relatively high fees.⁷⁹

But this lay in the future. In the 1910s, Burton’s view that industrial education was the answer to depopulation was shared by many of his colleagues. Mr. Shoebridge, a visiting lay industrial teacher to the Yasawas in western Fiji, believed that

the discipline of industrial training and the stimulus of higher ideals of life and duty are necessary in order to save these interesting and loveable people from deterioration and decay ... These people need to be saved, not from cannibalism and idolatry, but from strong temptation to indolence, encouraged by the ease with which the soils and climate yield all the necessities of life.⁸⁰

in 1916 (Paper entitled ‘Industrial Missions’, 1916, in file E/10/(ix), Methodist Missionary Society of Australasia papers, National Archives of Fiji (hereafter MMSA NFA).

⁷⁹ A. Harold Wood, *Overseas Missions of the Australian Methodist Church Fiji* (Melbourne: Aldersgate Press, 1978), pp. 296-7, 301-3. Derrick left the Methodist Mission in 1936 to found the Government technical school which for many years bore his name (and is now the Fiji Institute of Technology).

⁸⁰ *Missionary Review*, October 1908, pp. 7-8.

Methodist concern extended to the education of girls, especially since the 1896 Decrease Report had effectively blamed depopulation on Fijian women. The girls' school at Matavelo founded in 1899 had an academically undemanding curriculum, emphasis rather being placed on 'sewing, the care of the sick, the care of children, the English language, and sanitation', subjects which resonated with the concerns of colonial officials about the 'decrease of the Fijian race'.⁸¹ W. Brown in 1918 saw girls' education in 'domestic arts and discipline' as 'one of the avenues towards the ultimate salvation and preservation of a noble race'.⁸²

Other Methodists attempted to follow Burton's lead, at least in part. Matthew Gilmour in Papua, whom Ross Mackay described as 'a good example of the industrial missionary',⁸³ introduced carpentry classes from around 1905 which developed into a boat building enterprise. This was regarded with great pride, especially when in 1911 the students built two punts, a boathouse, boat captain's house and a 'splendid motor launch' called *Ulele*, saving the mission around £250 and easing the perennial transport problems of the island circuit.⁸⁴ Gilmour had a high regard for technical training as 'a builder and moulder, and maker of men'. For there was 'quite a development in character when a boy finds he has actually created something'.⁸⁵ The mixture of pecuniary and moral motivations can be seen in this comment:

New and better systems of agriculture, house and boat-building, may be made the means of reducing Mission expenditure, but what is better still: it will afford many a young man the opportunity of living a better life because more independent, manly and useful than is at present possible.⁸⁶

There are, however, questions about how effectively this training was carried out. In

⁸¹ Victoria Lukere, *Mothers of the Taukei: Fijian Women and 'The Decrease of the Race'* (PhD thesis, Australian National University, 1997), pp. 149-151.

⁸² *Missionary Review*, January 1918, pp. 13-14.

⁸³ Ross Mackay, *Catholic and Methodist Missionaries in the Milne Bay Province of Papua New Guinea, 1930-1980* (PhD thesis, Australian National University, 1999), p. 62.

⁸⁴ *Missionary Review*, March 1912, p. 10.

⁸⁵ Gilmour cited in Austin, *Technical Training in Papua*, p. 132.

⁸⁶ *Missionary Review*, May 1908, p. 15.

1914 Gilmour reported that there had been no instructor all year, so that the only work carried out had been some building.⁸⁷ Gilmour saw himself as educating ‘all-round men’ who would enhance their Papuan homes and villages, rather than European-style artisans – for whom there were virtually no employment prospects.⁸⁸ He had little real faith in Papuan abilities in carpentry and did not engage in the careful training, such as in the use of tools, measurement and formally-drawn designs that the Tuskegee model advocated to produce benefits.⁸⁹ This was a frequent problem; articles in the *International Review of Missions* regularly warned that the industrial option was not a cheap or easy one. J.H. Oldham approved the emphasis on ‘the formation of character through habit-forming activities in the class-room, the field, the shop and the house’ and believed ‘the training of the mind through observation and manual labour [was] an invaluable means of developing character’. But he warned that not all schemes were ‘up to the standard of Tuskegee or Lovedale’ and inferior ones did not bring the desired benefits.⁹⁰ Weston, a missionary from South India, warned that ‘mission industrial schools should be schools, and not factories under another name’ – and if they were to educate then they would not be profitable.⁹¹ Boats built by Gilmour’s students in the 1930s were found to be defective and the industrial training did not come up to the standard required for a government grant.⁹²

A preoccupation with copra

Burton’s Davuilevu scheme can be seen as a classic, if small and short-lived, ‘industrial mission’ concerned with the moral content of work, aiming at ‘improving

⁸⁷ *Missionary Review*, February 1914, p. 11.

⁸⁸ Austin, *Technical Training in Papua*, pp. 132-136.

⁸⁹ Mackay, *Catholic and Methodist Missionaries*, p. 98.

⁹⁰ J.H. Oldham, ‘Christian Missions and the Education of the Negro’ *International Review of Missions* 7, no. 26, pp. 242-47 (1918), reviewing studies of black education in South Africa. In the first quotation he cited Samuel Armstrong.

⁹¹ C.W. Weston, ‘The SPG School at Nazareth’ *International Review of Missions* 2, no. 6, pp. 342-52 (1913).

⁹² Mackay, *Catholic and Methodist Missionaries*, p. 98.

the race' and demanding high standards. Gilmour's carpentry workshops represent a similar attempt. Other Methodist schemes had a rather different character, often becoming little more than copra plantations. The plantation on Ulu Island off New Britain was purchased in 1897 to provide an income for the mission and food for the students at the neighbouring George Brown College, a goal both reasonable and necessary. In 1900 it was reported that 150 acres of coconut palms and extensive food crops had been planted by the students under the supervision of Fijian teacher Viliame Taufa. But it was regarded as important that this work had all been done 'without infringing on the time devoted to their school work' – this was not manual work performed for any inherent virtue.⁹³ However, Ulu plantation proved unwieldy for just the students to manage as more clearing was carried out and food crops developed – including a 'splendid yam' weighing ninety-seven pounds.⁹⁴ As a result other labour was employed.

In 1905, for the first time, 56 'labour boys' were reported in residence under A.S. Booth as manager. The exact terms of their employment are not clear, but it was a form of indenture. Here is the irony of employing indentured labour in New Britain in spite of the campaigns waged by Fison and other against recruitment in the southwest Pacific Islands, though it should be noted that indenture was the only legal way to employ labourers for extensive periods. Recognising the irony, the mission declared that the plantation was 'not a commercial concern only, but that it minister[s] to the spiritual needs of the people, training them to be industrious, and affording educational opportunities and Christian instruction' and would 'teach the scientific cultivation of the coco-nut'.⁹⁵ Later accounts of the Ulu endeavour make it clear that

⁹³ Methodist Missionary Society of Australasia (MMSA) Annual Report for 1900, pp. lxxiv-lxxv. The normative nature of much educational endeavour means that it was little discussed in mission publications – it was only mentioned at times of crisis or failure. So for Methodist educational enterprises the compulsory Annual Reports give the best systematic reporting of the mundane, but even they are often cryptic.

⁹⁴ *Missionary Review*, July 1904, p. 8.

⁹⁵ Benjamin Danks, 'New Britain', in *A Century in the Pacific*, ed. James Colwell (Sydney: William H. Beale, 1914), p. 525.

it was a combination of commercial and evangelical enterprise; the workers employed were given some schooling, mainly religious in content, and taught 'advanced methods of agriculture', while the profits made by the sale of copra assisted the mission.

It seems that a variety of agricultural skills were taught within the New Britain mission; the efforts of the Fijian missionary Jeremaia Camaira to teach the cultivation of new crops are remembered there today.⁹⁶ In 1908, the first year the term 'industrial mission' was used of the enterprise, 78 'recruited boys' were employed and 550 coconut palms and 100 rubber trees planted.⁹⁷ By 1911, 96 were employed with plans to increase this to 125 and the profits from copra amounted to £800. A sawmill was set up, elementary carpentry and housebuilding were taught and the mission buildings were enlarged and furnished in this way. The 'progress' was however measured in rather different terms: the major success was that two 'boys' had become local preachers.⁹⁸ The Annual Report of 1907 made this mixed motivation clear:

not only have the young men brought to labour on the island been taught an improved method of agriculture, but numbers of them have learned to know and love God. School is held with the "boys" two hours every morning, and their presence on the plantation is made to serve their spiritual interests, while assisting in the development in what is fast becoming a very valuable asset of the Mission.⁹⁹

Labour was employed 'under proper safeguards', claimed Benjamin Danks,¹⁰⁰ and indenture, always emphasised as entirely voluntary, was justified by the encounter the labourers had with Christianity. In 1916 it was reported that many labourers had converted and that there was a 'marked improvement in the character of these young men ... we are helping young men to be *men*.'¹⁰¹ A similar pattern was followed in Papua. In 1908 a copra plantation at Ubuia was established with recruited labour on

⁹⁶ Mike Lowe, personal communication.

⁹⁷ MMSA Annual Report 1908, p. 119.

⁹⁸ MMSA Annual Report 1911, p. 86.

⁹⁹ *Missionary Review*, March 1908, p. 7.

¹⁰⁰ Danks, 'New Britain', p. 525.

¹⁰¹ *Missionary Review*, October 1916, p. 16. Emphasis in original.

the same lines as Ulu Plantation, which Gilmour visited for ideas in 1909.¹⁰²

But some defensiveness about the system can be detected in W.H. Cox's comments, in response to 'awkward' questions:

It seems clear that many native peoples are unfitted by natural training and temperament to stand the shock of civilisation – ought the Missionary, who comes as their saviour, to become their leader and counsellor in commercial life? The native must trade – ought the Missionary to father him and train him for independence in this region?¹⁰³

In 1916 the Board discussed indenture, accepting John Burton's recommendation that as a principle in connection with our Industrial enterprises that the utilization of recruited labour should be dispensed with as soon as practicable and that more emphasis be placed upon the training of our own mission students in habits and methods of industry and less attention paid to the development of industrial (sic) for mere commercial profit.¹⁰⁴

A report of 1916 emphasised the training provided, the 'development of character on good moral lines' (in Goldie's words) and the resulting possibilities for economic independence, or group and for the mission both for the individual.¹⁰⁵ The Board concurred, reiterating their requirement that 'Industrial Work' be conducted 'with due regard to the educational and spiritual interests of the natives employed therein'.¹⁰⁶

That the issue was sensitive, however, is clear from the footnote to the recommendation:

The Board considers that the use of the term 'recruited labour' in connection with Industrial Mission work is calculated to convey a wrong impression. The Board finds

¹⁰² MMSA Annual Report 1909, pp. 107-8.

¹⁰³ *Missionary Review*, June 1916, p. 8.

¹⁰⁴ Board Minutes, 2 February 1916, file MOM 205, Methodist Missionary Society of Australasia (MMSA) papers, Mitchell Library, Sydney.

¹⁰⁵ A paper circulated by the Board with responses to questions sent to most missionaries in 1915 gave notice of the motion reproduced above, and noted Small's opinion that 'especially in Mission carried out amongst partially developed Native races ... industrial work should never be regarded as a mere adjunct, but a prime essential' ('Industrial Missions' 1916, E/10/(ix) MMSA, NFA)).

¹⁰⁶ Board Minutes, 7 February 1917, MOM 205, MMSA.

that such labour when employed on our Mission Stations is voluntary in character and that the native labourers are protected by regulations laid down by the Government Authorities.¹⁰⁷

Though there was never any accusation of force or fraud in these arrangements, John Wesley cast a long shadow. Changing the name did not eliminate the anxiety, but limited mission employment of indentured labourers continued in Papua till the 1930s.

The next resolution in the same Minutes, however, exemplified one of the reasons for maintaining commercial enterprises, in practice copra plantations, for financial profit. It suggested re-ordering district administration to 'mak[e] more real to our people the ideal of a self-supporting and self-governing Church'. For mission districts to move towards self-support was becoming both a financial necessity and a matter of policy from around 1910. While in Fiji and further east, yearly community giving to the mission (*vakamisoneri* in Fiji) was culturally acceptable,¹⁰⁸ this had proved less successful in Melanesia, leaving mission-owned copra plantations as one of the few ways of earning money. There was no objection, indeed there was encouragement, to church members raising money for the mission through the sale of copra produced by their own labour (on mission-owned land or otherwise). The problem arose when other labour was used. But the limits of what was acceptable were not fully clarified by the Board and resulting controversies recurred regularly during these years. The cause of the final split between Charles Abel and the LMS was similar. Both parties agreed that for church members to contribute labour to plantations which paid for mission services was right and acceptable; disagreements arose of the level of supervision of individual missionaries by the mission and the scale of the enterprise.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Board Minutes, 7 February 1917, MOM 205.

¹⁰⁸ The traditional giving of material support to maintain religious leadership and practice was co-opted by the Methodists in Fiji (Andrew Thornley, 'The "Vakamisoneri" in Lau, Fiji: Some Comments' *Journal of Pacific History* 12, no. 1-2, pp. 107-12 (1977); Thornley, *Fijian Methodism*, pp. 251-265. For further discussion of the policy of mission self-support, see Chapter 8.

¹⁰⁹ Wetherell, *Abel and the Kwato Mission*, pp. 108-112.

The empire of John Goldie in the Solomons tested the ambiguity about what was commercially permissible. Goldie followed the rhetoric of Burton and the practice of New Britain. He has long been seen as the archetypal advocate of 'the industrial mission', partly because his own writings were steeped in the rhetoric of the civilising nature of work. He wrote of 'savage islanders' for whom conversion to 'merely a creed' the 'nominal membership of a new human society called the Church' was not enough unless it also involved 'a new vision, new aspirations, and new power to will and to do – in other words a new life'.¹¹⁰ In 1912 he regretted that too many Christian converts had 'learned nothing of industry, honesty, or cleanliness' but 'love[d] to strut round quoting passages of the Bible, singing hymns and shaking hands on the slightest provocation'. Goldie called such a man a 'religious loafer', a phrase he used on other occasions.¹¹¹

To get the best from these people we must teach them to be industrious, honest, clean and self-reliant, and, if need be, self-sacrificing. We must show them how to apply the new standard of conduct and the moral we have forced upon them. We must teach them to translate Christian creed into Christian practice

This was to be done through industrial mission work, including the teaching of carpentry.¹¹² By 1916 he was claiming:

It is a fact that the mental and moral discipline, the habits of industry, cleanliness, unselfishness, cultivated under a kindly Christian compulsion, and Christian encouragements, have produced in our Solomon Islands Mission hundreds of fine strong Christian men.¹¹³

As Goldie put it, the aim of an industrial scheme was 'not to build houses, but to build character'.¹¹⁴ Commenting after a storm denuded the plantation at Kokengelo of its nuts he wrote, '[T]he actual profit is not the first consideration ... but the

¹¹⁰ *Missionary Review*, July 1916, p. 2.

¹¹¹ John F. Goldie, 'The Solomon Islands', in *A Century in the Pacific*, ed. James Colwell (Sydney: William H Beale, 1914), p. 583; see also *Missionary Review*, July 1916, p. 4.

¹¹² Goldie, 'Solomon Islands', pp. 583-4.

¹¹³ *Missionary Review*, July 1916, p. 4.

¹¹⁴ *Missionary Review*, July 1916, p. 3.

splendid work it enables us to do in the way of training our young people'.¹¹⁵

Goldie has been criticised by modern commentators precisely for this preoccupation with industrial schemes. Tippett saw the industrial nature of the Methodist mission as 'problematic' since it hindered by its administrative burdens the effort given to evangelism.¹¹⁶ John Garrett, like Tippett, saw Goldie's preoccupation with carpentry and plantations as slowing the development of an indigenous leadership, biblical translation and local ownership of the Church.¹¹⁷ But both Goldie and his critics made an interesting conflation – that of industrial training and the development of commercial coconut plantations – and assumed that his actions reflected his claims. However, careful examination of the records of the mission (though many were lost during World War II) suggests that there was more rhetoric than reality in Goldie's claims to have run an 'industrial mission'. What he was really running was a copra plantation.

It began, as did the planting at other mission stations, as the planting of coconuts and food crops to support schoolboys while they studied. Goldie was following the example of New Britain but he took it to new heights. By 1906, 5000 coconut trees had been planted and the ground cleared for another 4000, and Lever Bros. were giving the mission £50 per year 'to show their appreciation' for the development of such a resource.¹¹⁸ Planting went on apace; by 1919 the main Bangga plantation on the Roviana lagoon had around 25000 trees and covered 500 acres¹¹⁹ – much bigger than Ulu. Accordingly, the Mission Board in Sydney showed considerably greater suspicion of Goldie's plans than those in New Britain. Some further reasons for their

¹¹⁵ *Missionary Review*, January 1917, p. 13.

¹¹⁶ Alan R. Tippett, *Solomon Islands Christianity: A Study in Growth and Obstruction* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1967), pp. 45, 66-67.

¹¹⁷ Garrett, *Footsteps in the Sea: Christianity in Oceania to World War Two*, pp. 76-81.

¹¹⁸ MMSA Annual Report 1906, p. cxxxviii.

¹¹⁹ District Report 1918, MOM 185, MMSA; cited in Kim Byron Jackson, *Tie Hokara, Tie Vaka; Black Man, White Man: A Study of the New Georgia Group to 1925* (PhD thesis, Australian National University, 1978), p. 281.

hesitancy may be sensed in Goldie's 1909 plea that the mission lands should be developed while the protectorate still had 'freedom from vexatious labour restrictions', a situation which was unlikely to last,¹²⁰ in his constant claims that if the mission did not develop their lands they would lose them, and in the requests for a new boat which put the transport of copra as one of the priorities for such a vessel.¹²¹

Nicholson, Goldie's colleague on Vella Lavella, also used language connecting manual labour and Christian teaching:

it is no easy matter to transform low-living natives into intelligent, industrious, conscientious *men*, but we are firmly convinced that industrial work, linked of course to Christian teaching and example, is the *method* par excellence ... in developing the land we are developing the people.¹²²

Commercial imperatives drove the Solomon Islands missionaries but they knew the international rhetoric and the arguments necessary to persuade the Board. Goldie appealed to fears of depopulation from labour recruitment, echoing the case which had made John Paton famous and which appealed to old missionary enthusiasms. In 1910 Goldie claimed that in one village near Roviana all the able-bodied men had recently been recruited in one day. He said he had visited the 'pitiabie' old people left and claimed that Rooney had had fifteen of his scholars carried off by recruiters.¹²³ It is not easy to judge whether Goldie was lying or was making an exceptional event sound typical. Kim Jackson suggests the former.¹²⁴ Certainly the claim that the New Georgia area had been plagued by rapacious blackbirders, rebutted by the research of Jackson, Judith Bennett and others, was repeated in the 1920s Methodist mission film *Transformed Isle*.¹²⁵ At the same time the mission was without qualm using

¹²⁰ Goldie to Danks, 17 November 1909, MOM 116, MMSA.

¹²¹ Goldie to Danks, 18 December 1910, MOM 168.

¹²² *Missionary Review*, May 1916, p. 22.

¹²³ Goldie to Danks, 18 December 1910, MOM 168.

¹²⁴ Jackson, *Tie Hokara, Tie Vaka*, p. 280.

¹²⁵ *Transformed Isle*, a 35-minute film about Nicholson's mission station on Vella Lavella, was made by American filmmaker Edward Salisbury in association with Nicholson around 1921. It includes shots of copra cultivation and matmaking and reconstructions of head-hunting and labour recruiting.

indentured labour from Malaita on its own plantations.

By 1911 the level of Goldie's personal involvement in copra planting and trading was causing concern within the Methodist Mission, though it should be noted that his chief-like energy and its efficacy led local people to see him as 'endowed with supernatural power', a source of *mana* 'in equal recognition with their ancestral spirits'.¹²⁶ His interest in the Mundi Mundi estate on Vella Lavella, owned primarily by Goldie's father-in-law Mr Teague, and the use of the Mission boat *Tandanya* in transporting Mundi Mundi copra were vexed issues which, with variations, recurred periodically. When challenged about the level of his involvement, he threatened to resign from the mission – a ploy which was oft-repeated.¹²⁷ In 1914 the Methodist Board Minutes noted that a copy of a resolution, not the first, disapproving of missionary trading had been specifically sent to Goldie.¹²⁸ Goldie even served as Chairman of the Solomons Islands Planters' Association 'for several years' until 1921.¹²⁹ Arguments with other traders about mission trade – and by extension

To Nicholson's annoyance, Salisbury returned to America with the footage and showed the more sensational parts without the mission sequences, as well as publishing stills in the magazine *Asia* (Edward A. Salisbury, 'A Napoleon of the Solomons' *Asia, the American magazine of the Orient* 22, no. 9 (1922), pp. 707-20, 746). Nicholson went to the US in 1923 to retrieve the film (Goldie to Sinclair, 29 May 1923, NZ Methodist Archives, PMB 930) and it was first shown in Sydney during the February 1925 Methodist Synod meeting (*Missionary Review*, March 1925, p. 14). It was then purchased by the Laymen's Missionary Movement (an auxiliary missionary support group) and shown around Australia to enthusiastic audiences. In Western Australia, 'night after night packed halls and theatres have been the result ... this new method of telling the story is enlarging our constituency' (*Missionary Review*, July 1925). The film is also discussed in Nicholas Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture: Anthropology, Travel and Government* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), pp. 135-142.

¹²⁶ Esau Taqasabo Tuza, *The Emergence of the Christian Fellowship Church: A Historical View of Silas Eto, Founder of the C.F.C.* (MA thesis, University of Papua New Guinea, 1975), pp. 35-38.

¹²⁷ Goldie to Brown, 30 January 1911; Goldie to Danks, 1 February 1911, MOM 168; Board Minutes, 5 May and 18 May 1911, MOM 204.

¹²⁸ Board Minutes, 6 November 1914, MOM 205.

¹²⁹ *The Planters' Gazette: the journal of the Solomon Islands Planters' Association*, April 1921, p. 7.

Goldie's personal trading – being conducted on preferential terms continued after the New Zealand Methodist Church took over responsibilities for the Solomon Islands. In 1928 the New Zealand Board of Mission wanted to sell the Bangga plantation, since they felt it was 'not the task of mission' to be involved in such an enterprise, but debate about the status of Bangga had waged since 1923.¹³⁰

What is much less apparent is the level of skills training given to Roviana converts. Many did grow coconuts on their land and traded the nuts profitably.¹³¹ In this sense training in copra production enabled New Georgians to use their own land to gain commercial benefit without the need to become labour recruits. The level of responsibility of the Methodist Mission for this outcome is more problematic; clearly the intricacies of commercial copra production were learned from a variety of sources and the attempts of the Mission to keep young men on the Mission station rather than working their own land acted in the opposite direction. A few local men became skilled boatmen under the instruction of the Fijian captain of the *Tandanya*. In 1910 Goldie suggested teaching carpentry,¹³² but there is little evidence that it was carried out consistently. The first technical instructor, Mr Williams, left after 3 months.¹³³ A successor, Mr Oldridge, lasted a little longer, but the report of 1914 mentioned only a small amount of building for the mission and the laying of a concrete cricket pitch.¹³⁴ Goldie might have believed he had a duty to teach his converts practical skills for the modern world but in practice those skills were confined to the arts of coconut

¹³⁰ Goldie to Sinclair, 1 March 1923; Sinclair to Goldie 8 February 1928 (NZ Methodist Archives, PMB 930). The Solomon Islands Methodist mission was transferred from Australian to New Zealand control in 1919. Although Goldie opposed the move, the New Zealand Methodist authorities had even less chance of exerting control over him than the Australian and he remained in charge of the mission at Roviana until 1952 (excluding the war years). Bangga was not sold.

¹³¹ Judith Bennett, *Wealth of the Solomons: A History of a Pacific Archipelago, 1800-1978* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1987), pp. 82, 100-02.

¹³² Goldie to Danks, 18 December 1910, MOM 168.

¹³³ Goldie to Danks, 19 July 1911, MOM 117. Williams fell in love with Sister Mabelle Davey, but she failed to reciprocate his feelings.

¹³⁴ MMSA Annual Report 1914, p. 81.

cultivation which were usually performed by imported labour. In 1929 Frank Hayman, acting Chairman of the District in Goldie's temporary absence, wrote tartly about his boss' methods: 'To suggest ... we have anything to learn from Fiji, or New Britain, is to place oneself immediately beyond redemption. The last heresy is to suggest we put Christ before copra'.¹³⁵

Welchman and the Melanesian Mission

The popularity of industrial missions was not universal in the Pacific Islands. Welchman of the Anglican Melanesian Mission in the Solomon Islands saw them, in Hilliard's words, as 'a foolish and unspiritual distraction'¹³⁶ and gave his critique in a series of articles in 1906 in the *Southern Cross Log*, journal of the Melanesian Mission. Welchman took each of the usual arguments for industrial missions in turn and rebutted them. At the root of his objections was the basic proposition he attributed to industrial mission proponents, that not only was European technology superior to that of Islanders but that all European ideas were superior. It was a proposition he disputed. Melanesians could adequately supply all their own material needs. Traditional housing was cooler, cheaper, more aesthetically pleasing and more practical than western-style 'board' houses, could be abandoned without trauma at times of sickness or death and did not require furniture for comfort.¹³⁷ Clothing was unnecessary and did not encourage good health. Agricultural schemes were usually failures for 'the natives know far more about their own soil, and plants, and conditions of tending them than any white man can ever know.' They did not readily assimilate new foods. 'Are they to be blamed, and called idle, because they grow the food that gives them the least trouble and is the most suitable?' he asked.¹³⁸ Nor should the division of labour be criticised; men did more agricultural work than they were often credited with, since they did the heavy work of clearing and women

¹³⁵ Hayman to Burton, 16 March 1929, MOM 554.

¹³⁶ David Hilliard, *God's Gentlemen: A History of the Melanesian Mission, 1849-1942* (St Lucia, Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1978), p. 225.

¹³⁷ *Southern Cross Log*, May 1906, p. 11.

¹³⁸ *Southern Cross Log*, June 1906, pp. 4-5.

'would resent the idea of a man doing their work,' a comment which resonates with a modern Solomon Islander's critique of Western feminist assumptions about women's labour.¹³⁹ If people wished to adopt some western technology such as metal tools, that should be their free choice but it carried no particular moral weight. Nor did he think it true that carpentry or sewing improved 'deftness and accuracy of eye' or patience, for Melanesians already displayed these attributes; such claims were 'simply a fraud to catch the superficial visitor.'¹⁴⁰ He scorned excessive needlework beyond the most basic of needs, suggesting that such work was undertaken primarily to gain money and praise for the mission society when 'fancywork' was sold in Australia. This analysis ignores the possibility, suggested by Bronwen Douglas, that women enjoyed the sociality and perhaps the creativity of sewing.¹⁴¹

More controversially, Welchman questioned the basic assumptions that true conversion required a change in outward lifestyle. Patteson, the founder of the Melanesian Mission, had commented on the lack of relevance of 'civilisation' to Solomon Islanders, suggesting that 'we ought surely to change as little as possible – only what is incompatible with the simplest form of Christian teaching and practice.'¹⁴² Welchman agreed; teaching trades was not 'progressive', but rather a mistake, if it is not an invention of the Devil himself to prevent men seeing the true issue of mission work, the saving of souls, by pandering to human instincts and putting the world before Christ. If a man can be civilized for and by Christ his own life will be changed for the better, without the need of altering his native civilization, which is of no mean order.¹⁴³

For Welchman, change of heart was required at conversion. The missionary's task

¹³⁹ *Southern Cross Log*, June 1906, p. 6. Alice Aruhe'eta Pollard, ed., *Givers of Wisdom, Labourers without Gain: Essays on Women in Solomon Islands* (Suva and Honiara: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, 2000)

¹⁴⁰ *Southern Cross Log*, June 1906, p. 6.

¹⁴¹ Douglas, 'Provocative Readings in Intransigent Archives'.

¹⁴² J.C. Patteson, quoted in George W. Stocking, *After Tylor: British Social Anthropology 1888-1951* (London: Athlone Press, 1996), p. 35.

¹⁴³ *Southern Cross Log*, August 1906, p. 35.

was 'to teach a new condition of things to minds hitherto steeped in deep ignorance of self and the future ... to teach the meaning of sin and with it self control.' Welchman shared this emphasis on conversion with other mission writers, but for him the proof of change did not lie in the change of outward habit. For Patteson, Welchman and others in the Melanesian Mission, it was the grace of the sacraments, not 'virtues' inherent in manual labour, that enabled converts to grow as Christians. Change of heart came through the love of God and once this happened 'the outward signs of civilization may be absent, but the inward will be there'.¹⁴⁴

Welchman's influence persisted; Bishop Wilson's later plantation scheme around Maravovo on Guadalcanal remained mostly on paper.¹⁴⁵ Some debate on whether there should be more industrial work took place during the early 1920s,¹⁴⁶ and a description of Maravovo Industrial School in 1924 mentioned boys learning carpentry, milking, general gardening, as well as Christianity and literacy. The missionaries were 'providing incentives to work ... trying to instill the principle of work for work's sake' and trying to revive native arts and crafts.¹⁴⁷ In a 'study circle' book of 1927, industrial missions along with boat building and 'decorative work' were advocated to 'stabilise' and 'enrich' life and improve agriculture but there was little indication of action.¹⁴⁸ In 1924 the missionary in charge of Maravovo, Rev.G.

¹⁴⁴ *Southern Cross Log*, September 1906, p. 48.

¹⁴⁵ Hilliard, *God's Gentlemen*, p. 226.

¹⁴⁶ *ABM Review*, April 1922, pp. 26-7; June 1924, pp. 58-50; August 1924, pp. 92-3, 97-98.

¹⁴⁷ *ABM Review*, December 1924, p. 161.

¹⁴⁸ Arthur Ivens, ed., *Melanesia Today: A Study Circle Book* (London: SPCK for the Melanesian Mission, 1927) pp. 96-106. The Study Circle movement was important in the 1910s and 1920s in Protestant churches in Britain and Australia. It was part of increased lay involvement; small groups, ideally of six members under a leader, studied books about missionary activity, aiming to 'understand the wholeness of Christ's mission and claim, and the wholeness of man's need and duty' (*Chronicle*, January 1912, p. 21; several similar exhortations to readers to join such a group were published between 1910 and 1917). Several of the works considered in this thesis (e.g., John W. Burton, *The Call of the Pacific* (London: Charles H. Kelly, 1912); Paton, *Kingdom in the Pacific*) were written as Study Circle books.

Warren, reported that the school was 'struggling along in a hand-to-mouth fashion', appealed for funds, then somewhat undermined his case by concluding that 'one cannot agree with the implication that WORK is the only name under heaven whereby men can be saved'.¹⁴⁹ This ambiguity underlay any industrial work undertaken by the Anglicans in the Solomon Islands; they did not really believe the basic presuppositions.

The Academic alternative

Welchman's critique of the industrial missions ideology resonated with that of A. Victor Murray's *The School in the Bush* (original 1929).¹⁵⁰ This deeply humane book was in large part a response to two surveys of African education undertaken by an American philanthropic organisation, the Phelps-Stokes Fund, in association with several missionary societies and under the leadership of Thomas Jesse Jones.¹⁵¹ The manual, practical and rural-based educational priorities advocated by Phelps-Stokes commissioners were, in Murray's view, unstimulating and condescending in their assumption about African abilities. They also aimed to maintain European political

¹⁴⁹ *ABM Review*, June 1924, p. 59. Emphasis in original.

¹⁵⁰ A. Victor Murray, *The School in the Bush: A Critical Study of the Theory and Practice of Native Education in Africa*, 2nd ed. (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd, 1938 (original 1929)).

¹⁵¹ Thomas Jesse Jones, *Education in Africa: A Study of West, South and Equatorial Africa by the African Education Commission* (New York: Phelps-Stokes Fund, 1922); Thomas Jesse Jones, *Education in East Africa: A Study of East, Central and South Africa by the Second African Educational Commission in Co-Operation with the International Education Board* (New York: Phelps-Stokes Fund, 1924). The commissions were headed by Thomas Jesse Jones, a Welsh-born American, and were influenced by the philosophy of Tuskegee and Hampton. The missionary links were stronger with the first commission (to the West, South and Central Africa in 1921) than the second. In general the reports recommended mass education in the vernacular and with a strong emphasis on 'home activities', agriculture and 'healthful recreations', downplaying the need for secondary or higher education in English or French. Although the *International Review of Missions* reported that an unnamed Methodist missionary in Fiji (possibly W.E. Bennett) had cabled their London office for six copies of the Phelps-Stokes Report because 'the whole question of native education in the South Pacific' was a 'pressing one' (*International Review of Missions*, July 1924, vol. 13:3, p. vi), there is little evidence that these reports had much influence in Oceania.

dominance, especially in colonies of considerable white settlement such as Kenya.¹⁵² In contrast, Murray demonstrated confidence in the ability of Africans to accept Christianity and use it to develop a society to suit their own conditions, with appropriate support from Europeans.

Murray particularly questioned the assumption that manual work developed 'character'. 'Character', Murray wrote, was rather

built up by [a student's] association with other people in action and in thought, by facing moral issues in the atmosphere in which they rightly can be solved, and by learning good manners from those who have them ... character building is not a property inherent in things or in occupations.¹⁵³

While teaching skills was useful, there was a danger that educating non-European people 'along their own lines' (a phrase frequently used in the international debate on industrial missions) really meant was that they should be 'kept in [their] place'. Rather, mission education should teach not just western skills but also European culture, including Shakespeare, for that was the only culture Europeans could impart with any honesty. Students would then decide for themselves what meaning education had for them.¹⁵⁴

This faith in students' ability and integrity was in marked contrast to the assumptions of the industrial mission movement that disciplined manual work was the most suitable education for non-Europeans. This assumption was shared by missions and Government, especially in Papua, of all the areas of the southwest Pacific the one closest to being a colony of white settlement. John Kadiba has shown how Hubert Murray opposed education for Papuans beyond Standard V and felt in 1938 that another generation could pass before secondary education need be considered.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² See also King, *Pan-Africanism and Education*, passim and esp. 95-135.

¹⁵³ Murray, *School in the Bush*, p. 211.

¹⁵⁴ Murray, *School in the Bush*, p. 306, 326-9, 336.

¹⁵⁵ John Kadiba, 'Murray and Education: Some Observations on the Ambivalence of Colonial Education Policy in Papua before World War II', in *Papua New Guinea: A Century of Colonial Impact 1884-1984*, ed. Sione Latukefu, pp. 279-89 (Port Moresby: University of Papua New

Hank Nelson discusses the reaction to the three groups of Papuans sent for training in Australia as medical assistants in the 1930s.¹⁵⁶ He found it focussed on fears that Papuans might regard themselves as equal, or approaching in equality, with whites. Papuans wearing European clothes particularly incensed white residents, as did the assumption that they could be 'proper students' attending a course at Sydney University. The idea was denounced as 'Utopian' and likely to lead to the 'disruption of the established pattern of life'¹⁵⁷ – in other words the racial pattern of life.

Certainly there is evidence that students wanted academic education, preferably in English. In Fiji, where educational provision was best established, post-primary education had existed since the mid-nineteenth century with the establishment of the District Training Institution at Navuloa (later moved to Davuilevu). This was theological in its emphasis as expected in a training school for ministers and teachers for the mission, as was George Brown College, established in New Britain in 1900. A general curriculum was taught, but the requirements for preaching took precedence over more secular subjects.¹⁵⁸ After attending Navuloa, teachers went out to villages, usually not in their own district, to staff the primary schools. But Navuloa's emphasis on theology and general poor standards led to many village school teachers having received little more secular education than their more advanced pupils. Although the village school system achieved relatively high Fijian literacy rates, complaints from government inspectors and missionary examiners about standards led to a review of

Guinea, 1989). See also D.J. Dickson, *Government and Missions in Education in Papua and New Guinea*, with Special Reference to the New Guinea Anglican Mission 1891 to 1970 (MEd thesis, University of Papua New Guinea, 1971); D.J. Dickson, 'Murray and Education: Policy in Papua, 1906-1941' *New Guinea* 4, no. 4, pp. 15-40 (1969/70).

¹⁵⁶ Hank Nelson, 'Brown Doctors, White Prejudice: "Oh to Be a Medical Assistant in the 1930s"' *New Guinea* 5, no. 2, pp. 21-8 (1970).

¹⁵⁷ Nelson, 'Brown Doctors: White Prejudice', p. 26. However, the first doctor to serve in the Methodist hospital at Salamo in 1925 was a Fijian, Rev. Dr. Wilisoni Lagi. He trained in Suva. I have not been able to find any reaction from Murray to his appointment.

¹⁵⁸ For more discussion of the training of pastors see Chapter 8.

the Methodist education system led by George Brown in 1900.¹⁵⁹

Fijian Chiefs, too, complained that the Methodist mission was not providing post-primary education suitable for them, although it had earlier promised to establish a school for the sons of chiefs with education in English on the model of similar schools in Africa. Methodist lack of appreciation of these concerns gave an opportunity for Catholics and Seventh-Day Adventists to fill the breach.¹⁶⁰ In response to the review, a number of Methodist High Schools was established. Navuloa added to its programs one to train teachers for the new schools and to this end adopted a 'more advanced programme'. This was to consist of

a definite and progressive three years' course in Theology, Biblical Criticism, Bible Study, Homiletics, English, Arithmetic, and Geography, together with a little History, Science and Book-keeping, the principle that underlies the curriculum being that, whatever will be of value to students as Teachers afterwards, must be included. Their intense desire for higher learning is the most hopeful feature of the work, and with judicious guidance will a tremendous power for good.¹⁶¹

By 1900 there were 165 boys in residence taking various courses – far more than on any industrial training course until the late 1930s – and enrolments grew steadily. Physiology, 'ambulance work' and first aid were added to the curriculum in 1902.¹⁶² The new high schools immediately proved popular as they began to meet a need for better Fijian education which was expressed through the early years of the twentieth century. In 1910 the Boys' High School at Nuisawa in Cakaudrove taught 'Scripture, Writing, English, Arithmetic, English History, Geography and Drill', a syllabus

¹⁵⁹ Thornley, *Fijian Methodism*, pp. 232-235.

¹⁶⁰ Thornley, *Fijian Methodism*, pp. 237-240. The Methodists operated such a school, which included English in the curriculum, briefly in the 1870s. The Government's school for the sons of chiefs, Queen Victoria School, was founded in 1906 and was followed by a number of provincial boarding schools. On Fijian demands for improved and higher education, especially in English, see also Brij V. Lal, *Broken Waves: A History of the Fiji Islands in the Twentieth Century* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1992), pp. 72-74, 83-86.

¹⁶¹ MMSA Annual Report for 1901, p. lx.

¹⁶² MMSA Annual Report for 1902, p. lvii.

almost identical to that at Navuloa High School in 1903.¹⁶³ Beside this growth, Burton's industrial mission at Davuilevu appears puny.

The 1900 Fiji Methodist review of post-primary education made no mention of 'industrial training'. At all the new schools, students performed sufficient agricultural and other manual work to feed themselves and keep the fabric in order. There are references to the need for planting land – that there was insufficient at Navuloa was a serious concern by 1903¹⁶⁴ – but gardening, rethatching or general repairs undertaken by the students were essential house-keeping and of no particular virtue in themselves. Too much manual work imposed on students could lead to trouble. In 1913 a number of trainee teachers at Davuilevu staged a 'disgraceful revolt', in the words of Chairman A.J. Small. Thirty-five students went to Suva without permission and were then insufficiently penitent.¹⁶⁵ However it seems that the students' dissatisfaction was intensified by the very disruptive period they had just experienced, when little study was possible. All the manual labour, spread over five years, of building the new 'town' at Davuilevu had been done by students including making 12,000 concrete blocks for the construction of Baker Hall.¹⁶⁶ The missionaries regarded this manual labour as necessary rather than morally 'improving'. The work, said Bennett, had been 'freely given us from sheer love to the work of God and the glory of His cause'.¹⁶⁷ It seems he overestimated the students' acquiescence in substituting manual for academic work.

The international rhetoric of the industrial mission, with the added dimension of

¹⁶³ MMSA Annual Report for 1910, p. 59; MMSA Annual Report for 1903, p. lviii.

¹⁶⁴ MMSA Annual Report for 1903, p. lviii; Thornley, 'Fijian Methodism', p. 237. The shortage of planting land was the main motivation for the move of the Teacher Training Institute, the Theological Institute and the Boys' High School from Navuloa to Davuilevu progressively from 1908 to 1913.

¹⁶⁵ Small to W.E. Bennett, 21 May 1913, F/1/1913, MMSA NAF.

¹⁶⁶ See Wood, *Overseas Missions of the Methodist Church – Fiji*, pp. 293-296; MMSA Annual Reports 1908, 1909, 1910, 1911 and 1912.

¹⁶⁷ MMSA Annual Report 1909, p. 53.

depopulation, was picked up and followed in the Pacific Islands, but the results varied. Some schemes trained boys in useful skills, some experience was gained in the commercial realities of the new economy, communities earned money for the maintenance of their schools and churches. But in general a lack of resources and staff, and a certain ambivalence about the principles, led to limited results. By the 1910s, Fijian students were expressing a definite preference for academic education over the moralised industrial training advocated by many missions. Their reactions were similar to those of Kenyan students, who favoured the academic education offered by the multi-denominational academic Alliance High School over the Jeans Schools developed on the recommendations of the Phelps-Stokes Commissions.¹⁶⁸ By 1910 employment opportunities for Fijians who managed to get a post-primary education were opening up as government and commercial workers – indeed some who were ear-marked for employment within the Methodist mission were snapped up by other employers, much to the chagrin of the mission. Students in Papua, New Britain and the Solomon Islands had less choice of educational provision and had to accept whatever education they could obtain, but there, too, academic and theological education attracted more students than the small industrial schemes. In 1917 Goldie, promoter of industrial missions, gave glowing reports of academic and theological studies at Roviana College, which was where the ‘finest young men of New Guinea and Vella Lavella and even dark Bougainville’ studied.¹⁶⁹

For the missions’ most able students were consistently encouraged to take theological training and become pastors, ministers and teachers. These young men (and to a lesser degree, young women who were trained to be their wives) were the apprentices of the missionaries, with a place in the new Christian order. At the same time as advocating industrial missions for the ‘salvation of the race’ or as the most suitable education for ‘undeveloped peoples’, the missions themselves were indicating by their actions that they prized religious and academic education. This was the

¹⁶⁸ Schilling, ‘Politics of Vocational Education in Kenya’.

¹⁶⁹ *Missionary Review*, January 1917, p. 13.

education all the missions developed first and where they encouraged their brightest students to continue. Advancement through the mission system was of the few routes to employment outside the village economy, though only in Fiji was there likely to be much employment available outside the mission. It was through employment as a teacher or pastor that a young man could rise up the hierarchy of the new Christian world, as a 'fellow worker in the Master's vineyard'.

Chapter Eight

'Fellow labourers in the Master's Vineyard'

In 1925, in an issue of the *Missionary Review* celebrating fifty years of the Methodist mission to New Britain, General Secretary John Burton described the Fijian, Tongan and Samoan pioneer missionaries taken by George Brown to New Britain in 1875 in these terms:

And what shall we say of the heroism and devotion of these brown men and women? Only a generation, at most, removed from savagery, and yet they were here in New Britain enduring fever, loneliness and constant anxiety for the sake of Him Whom they knew but imperfectly.¹

He went on to list 'in bold type the honoured names of these simple sincere South Sea Island missionaries, who hazarded life during those first two years', frequently alone. The references to bravery and stoicism, the recent heathen past and a faith which was heartfelt if unsophisticated in its intellectual understanding recur frequently in European accounts of their Islander colleagues. Praise and condescension were juxtaposed. Alongside articles about the girls' school and reviews and photographs of the previous fifty years in New Britain, the same issue carried the second part of the biography of Aminio Baledrokadroka, the only one of Brown's original group still alive in 1925. The Fiji missionary T.N. Deller described him as 'a leader of his brethren', trusted by the European missionaries Brown and Benjamin Danks, and 'an able preacher and a man of prayer'.²

This chapter examines the European representation of Islander Christians in the employ of the various missions, who were thus colleagues of the European missionaries. Aminio was one of thousands of Pacific Islanders who ministered in

¹ *Missionary Review*, August 1925, p. 2.

² *Missionary Review*, August 1925, pp. 7-9.

their own communities or travelled away from their own areas as teachers and pastors in the employ of Protestant denominations during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.³ They could be termed, according to denomination, as teacher, pastor, catechist, deacon or Native Minister, though the term used usually implied a lesser status than those held by Europeans. Collectively, they were often referred to as 'native agency'. The tension that underlies this thesis between the Christian recognition of human similitude and an evolutionist distrust of Islander capabilities is clearly evident in European dealings with their Islander colleagues. European missionaries moved between a desire to see Islander teachers and ministers as fellow evangelists, co-inheritors of the Kingdom of God, guided as were Europeans by the Holy Spirit, and the assumptions of junior status, incorporating racially-based notions of inferiority.

It has been the recent aim of some historians to restore to centre stage the 'Islander missionaries' – meaning all Pacific Islanders including wives involved in overseas evangelism, regardless of their official status.⁴ Niel Gunson's writing and particularly John Garrett's three-volume history of Christianity in Oceania brought the Islander missionaries into the limelight, Garrett taking as the title for his first volume the words of the Tongan missionary to Fiji, Joeli Bulu: 'I will *lotu* that I may live among the stars'.⁵ Garrett looked at the development of a distinctively Pacific Islands

³ The history of Islanders missionaries starts earlier than the period under discussion. Polynesian teachers began working in Fiji and 'Western Polynesia' from the 1830s, Aneityumese teachers were being used elsewhere in the New Hebrides from the late 1850s, and the Melanesian Mission was sending converts back to preach in their home islands by the 1850s. Catholic missions used indigenous catechists in a similar fashion to Protestant indigenous teachers, but in this chapter I concentrate on the Protestant experience.

⁴ In using the term 'Islander missionaries', I follow Doug Munro and Andrew Thornley, *The Covenant Makers: Islander Missionaries in the Pacific* (Suva: Pacific Theological College/Institute of Pacific Studies at the University of the South Pacific, 1996), a book dedicated to 'redirect[ing] Pacific Islander missionaries back into the forefront of public and academic inquiry' (p. 4).

⁵ John Garrett, *To Live among the Stars: Christian Origins in Oceania* (Geneva/Suva: World Council of Churches/University of the South Pacific, 1982); *Footsteps in the Sea: Christianity in Oceania to*

theology within independent island churches. In recent years scholars have examined more closely the missionary links between Melanesia and the communities further east. This emphasis has led to a more nuanced understanding of encounters between Christianity and Pacific Islanders in different island communities. Pacific Islander scholars, particularly research students at the Pacific Theological College, have called upon largely untapped oral and vernacular written sources to write the histories of individual Islander missionaries and Christian communities.⁶

The exact number of Islanders who evangelised away from their own area is uncertain but was probably in the thousands. The register in the Pacific Theological College chapel in Suva, a chapel dedicated to the Islander missionaries, lists around 1,500 but more recent research suggests this figure is too low.⁷ In general they travelled from the eastern Pacific Islands towards the west and the north. The London Missionary Society (LMS) first used 'native agents to pioneer the way for more cultured workers' in 1821 in Tahiti;⁸ Tahitian missionaries went to Tonga and Samoa; Tahitians and Tongans to Fiji; Methodist Tongans, Fijians and Samoans to Papua,

World War Two (Geneva/Suva: World Council of Churches/University of the South Pacific, 1992); *Where Nets Were Cast: Christianity in Oceania since World War Two* (Suva/Geneva: Institute of Pacific Studies/World Council of Churches, 1997); Niel Gunson, *Evangelical Missionaries in the South Sea, 1797-1860* (PhD thesis, Australian National University, 1959); Niel Gunson, *Messengers of Grace: Evangelical Missionaries in the South Seas 1797-1860* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1978).

⁶ See individual articles in Ron and Marjorie Crocombe, ed., *Polynesian Missions in Melanesia: From Samoa, Cook Islands and Tonga to Papua New Guinea and New Caledonia* (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, 1982); Andrew Thornley and Tauga Vulaono, eds., *Mai Kea Ki Vei? Stories of Methodism in Fiji and Rotuma* (Suva: Fiji Methodist Church, 1996); Munro and Thornley, *Covenant Makers*; *Pacific Journal of Theology*, II:14, 1995.

⁷ See the discussion in Doug Munro and Andrew Thornley, 'Pacific Islander Pastors and Missionaries: Some Historiographical and Analytical Issues' *Pacific Studies* 23, no. 3/4 (2000), fn. 4.

⁸ J.J. Ellis 1889, cited in Sione Latukefu and Ruta Sinclair, 'Pacific Islanders as International Missionaries', in *Polynesian Missions in Melanesia: From Samoa, Cook Islands and Tonga to Papua New Guinea and New Caledonia*, ed. Ron Crocombe and Marjorie Crocombe (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, 1994), p. 1.

New Britain and the Solomon Islands; LMS Raratongans and Samoans to the Loyalty Islands and the New Hebrides. The Anglicans trained Banks Islanders who went to the Solomons and Queensland indentured labourers from the Solomon Islands who evangelised in Papua – and this does not exhaust the list. Their mortality rate was appalling; especially in malarial Melanesia; Munro and Thornley suggest an overall death rate of one in five, exceeding that of indentured labourers on plantations.⁹ Regional recruitment on this scale was not repeated elsewhere in the world but in the Pacific Islands, especially in Melanesia, most missionaries were not Europeans but other Islanders.

This chapter considers the experience and the representation of both home-based and overseas Islander Christian leaders, though I draw disproportionately on overseas Islander missionaries for my examples. This is because they were the focus of contemporary European missionary journals and have been the main interest of recent scholarly work which rectifies their omission from general histories of the Pacific Islands, both mission and secular.¹⁰ The earliest general history of the Fiji Methodist mission by James Calvert (1858) virtually ignores Tongan teachers apart from a brief mention in his introduction and in the chapter on Ono, where Polynesians could hardly be overlooked since they were the only missionaries present.¹¹

Although the letters and journals of Calvert's colleagues Richard and Mary Ann Lyth, John Hunt and David Cargill have frequent scattered references to the Tongan teachers, their preaching and classes and it is known that the Tongans were crucial eyewitnesses to many of the events Calvert describes, mention of their actions was omitted. Certainly no reader of Calvert's chapter on the mission to Somosomo would know of the Tongan teachers who came in 1839 or of the others who joined them, including Mosese Kaulamatoa and his wife Sophie, whom Mary Ann Lyth described

⁹ Munro and Thornley, 'Historiographical Issues', p. 16.

¹⁰ Munro and Thornley, 'Historiographical Issues', pp. 3-6.

¹¹ James Calvert, *Fiji and the Fijians: Mission History*, vol. 2 (London: Alexander Heylin, 1858).

in her private letters as 'my old friend and support'.¹² Many missionary journals and memoirs gave considerable prominence to the assistance given to European missionaries by Islanders. George Brown and William Bromilow gave glowing testaments to the work of Islander pioneers.¹³ Some memoirs ignored Islanders' contributions but in general the testimony of individual missionaries was more appreciative of Islander teachers than 'official' histories. Unfortunately, their omission from general studies of Pacific history continues.¹⁴

In spite of the paucity of written records left by Christian Islanders – for cultural and educational reasons, not to mention limits on their time and resources, Islanders tended to write less than their European counterparts – most of the few existing accounts come from evangelists serving outside their own communities. Lorimer Fison translated the autobiography of Joeli Bulu, Codrington translated the writings of Clement Marau, Anglican missionary to the Solomon Islands,¹⁵ and scattered through the monthly journals, particularly of the Methodists and Anglicans, are samples of their letters, sermons and photographs. The publication of the writings of Ta'unga, a Rarotongan missionary to New Caledonia, and more recently of Semisi Nau, a Tongan who worked in the Solomon Islands, have increased the capacity of historians to understand the motivations and experiences of the Islander missionaries.¹⁶ Vernacular mission magazines that circulated in Fiji and further east,

¹² Crawford Papers, 'Letters Home' no. 41, 11 November 1842. Mitchell Library, Sydney (hereafter ML) MLMss 3952.

¹³ William Bromilow, *Twenty Years among Primitive Papuans* (London: The Epworth Press, 1929); George Brown, *George Brown, D.D, Pioneer-Missionary and Explorer: An Autobiography* (London: Charles H Kelly, 1908).

¹⁴ See for example their slight mention in Donald Denoon, ed., *The Cambridge History of the Pacific Islanders* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

¹⁵ R.H. Codrington, ed., *The Story of a Melanesian Deacon, Clement Marau, Written by Himself* (London: SPCK, 1894).

¹⁶ The publication of R.G. Crocombe and Marjorie Crocombe, *The Works of Ta'unga: Records of a Polynesian Traveller in the South Seas 1833-1896* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1968) has been described as the impetus for the spate of studies on 'pastor historiography' in the

though not yet used to their full potential, also contain letters and descriptions for supporters in the missionaries' home islands.

Islander missionaries – those who served outside their home area – were, however, a sub-set of the wider category of indigenous teachers and pastors, though the definition of 'overseas' is not always entirely clear. For a Fijian teacher or minister, service in distant New Britain or New Georgia amongst people of a different language and culture was a step further and qualitatively different from being posted to any part of the Fiji islands. For a teacher from many parts of Melanesia, the distinction was less clear-cut. To serve in a community that was different in language and culture, even if close to home, was to be an outsider with all the tensions that entailed. Many of the issues relating to Islander overseas missionaries applied equally to home-based village pastors and teachers; furthermore, many individuals worked both at home and overseas at different times in their careers.

But the interstitial position held by Islander missionaries from Fiji and Polynesia, intermediary between European missionaries and indigenous communities – in Melanesia during the period under discussion – draws into clear focus the assumptions and tensions generally surrounding Islander employees of the missions. Munro and Thornley note that the historical record includes 'allegations of worldly pretensions, political opportunism and other human imperfections', alongside an 'explicitly celebratory literature that idealizes and ennobles' Fijian and Polynesian missionaries.¹⁷ These shifting representations reflect a characteristic tension in European attitudes: Fijian and Polynesian missionaries were viewed variously as

1980s and 1990s (Munro and Thornley, 'Historiographical Issues', p. 6). Allan K. Davidson, ed., *Semisi Nau, the Story of My Life: The Autobiography of a Tongan Methodist Missionary Who Worked at Ontong Java in the Solomon Islands* (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, 1996) was edited and published after being found in a little black notebook in the store room of Rarongo Theological College near Rabaul. It comprises the English translation made by Sister Mary Gartrell of Semisi Nau's autobiography. The Roviana language original is lost.

¹⁷ Munro and Thornley, 'Historiographical Issues', p. 15.

supportive colleagues or cultural inferiors, as heroic martyrs or incompetent troublemakers. Also relevant are differences between denominations and over time. The position of Islander missionaries was always ambivalent: they were caught between their European superiors and those they attempted to convert and serve, subject to criticism from both sides. Fijian and Polynesian missionaries to Melanesia were often the 'advance guard', predecessors to a 'proper' mission with European missionaries. It was, for example, only after four years of evangelism by Fijians, Tongans and Samoans, at least a year of it without Brown's assistance, that Benjamin Danks was sent as the second European missionary to New Britain. But they were also criticised for physically dominating local populations, falling short of the missionaries' exacting sexual standards and complaining about their conditions.

Islander missionaries have also suffered from historiographic ambiguity. Modern analyses of mission activity, in moving away from an emphasis on European missionary action, often concentrate on the reception of Christianity by the receiving communities. Again, the missionaries, neither one nor the other, tend to be ignored. Their reputation has been coloured by an emphasis on Polynesians' physical dominance over Melanesians though most such examples relate to Samoans serving in LMS areas who were often seen as overbearing, lordly and too reliant on physical means of controlling their Papuan converts.¹⁸ My concern is not so much about the representation of these teachers and pastors to a modern audience, relevant though that clearly is to Islander historians. Rather it is to examine the historical record, public and private, to place these contemporary representations by Europeans within a wider context and to begin to consider, however tentatively, Islanders' own self-representations.

¹⁸ E.g., David Wetherell, 'Pioneers and Patriarchs: Samoans in a Non-Conformist Mission District in Papua 1890-1917' *Journal of Pacific History* 15, no. 3, pp. 130-54 (1980); David Wetherell, *Reluctant Mission: The Anglican Church in Papua New Guinea 1891-1942* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1977), chap. 4. Munro and Thornley suggested that less emphasis on Samoan pastors and teachers might lead to 'a somewhat different picture' of tension between missionary and pastor ('Pacific Island Pastors: Historiographical Issues' p. 17).

'The Euthanasia of Mission': the ideal?

The need to train local teachers and ministers as quickly as possible for their home area and for wider evangelism had long been recognised amongst Protestants and was rapidly implemented in the Pacific Islands. In 1844 the LMS established Malua Theological College in Samoa to 'provide every village in Samoa with an educated *faiifeau* (pastor/teacher)'.¹⁹ This example was followed by the Methodists in Tonga, Fiji and then Melanesia, by the Anglicans in New Guinea and Solomon Islands and the Presbyterians in the New Hebrides.

In Fiji, the Methodists recognised after the mass conversions in the late 1840s and 1850s that if Fijian congregations were to have access to preaching and the sacraments, Fijian teachers had to be trained and some in due course ordained. The first training scheme was developed by Richard Lyth in the 1850s leading to the establishment of the District Training Institution at Navuloa (later at Davuilevu, outside Suva) under the guidance of Lorimer Fison, Joseph Waterhouse and William Bennett.²⁰ This, as already noted, was the course the missionaries encouraged their most able and promising converts to follow. Most of the students trained as teachers but a few were ordained as ministers almost every year from 1855, usually older men who had been teachers for many years.²¹ The Fiji Methodist system was replicated in New Britain with the founding of George Brown College at Ulu in 1900 which, like Navuloa, aimed to educate teachers and catechists, 'the work of training soul-winners'.²² Though starting from a much lower educational base than in Fiji, it aimed

¹⁹ Featuna'i Liua'ana, 'For Jesus and His Church: Malua Theological College - a Historical Survey of 150 Years of Theological Education' *Pacific Journal of Theology* 14 (series II) (1995), p. 53.

²⁰ Laurel Heath, *Matai-Ni-Mate: Carpenter of Sickness* (PhD thesis, University of Queensland, 1987), pp. 391-408, 455-8; Andrew Thornley, *Fijian Methodism 1874-1945: The Emergence of a National Church* (PhD thesis, Australian National University, 1979), pp. 51-55.

²¹ See listings in Thornley, *Fijian Methodism*, Appendix 1. Such men were still serving probationary periods as long as six years (after three years' college study) in 1919 (*Missionary Review*, February 1919, p. 6).

²² Methodist Missionary Society of Australasia (MMSA) Annual Report for 1900, p. lxxv.

to teach a similar curriculum. The students, numbering between 27 and 56 in any one year, studied Biblical exegesis, writing skills, arithmetic, the geography of Europe and sermonising.²³ It was not easy: several months' study were lost in 1905 when teaching proved impossible until Benjamin Danks and recent Fijian arrivals learned the same language as the students.²⁴ By the 1920s, the training colleges at Raluana (New Britain), Panaieti (Papua) and to a lesser extent Roviana (Solomon Islands) began to graduate men capable of taking the role of teacher and, more rarely, minister.

Such colleges readily attracted students since they were the only providers of education beyond a rudimentary village level. Thornley suggests that the 'opportunity for further education and material improvement' were motivating factors for students entering Fijian training institutions, as were the desire for increased status and escape from older chiefly exactions.²⁵ This is not meant to question the sincerity of such students but to recognise the complexity of human motives. For it was the European missionaries, who had themselves left their home countries, who imparted to their converts the view that to be a catechist, teacher or pastor was both the natural and advantageous path for a bright young man and that overseas service was the epitome of the Christian endeavour. European missionaries introduced their converts to a distinctive Christian order which encompassed a hierarchy based on distance from heathenism and adoption of specific Christian virtues.²⁶ Though frequently subverted by more racially-based assessments, such an alternative hierarchy had great attraction for Fijians and Polynesians in mission employment.

If growth in Christian knowledge, worship and behaviour was the main criterion for status in this new world, then Islanders had reason to believe they could, by adopting Christian virtues and involving themselves in the work of the Christian community,

²³ MMSA Annual Report for 1903, p. xciv.

²⁴ MMSA Annual Report for 1905, p. lxxxv.

²⁵ Thornley, *Fijian Methodism*, p. 49.

²⁶ See discussion in chapter 2.

achieve comparable status to Europeans. The missions provided just such a route for Christian advancement. Moreover, if work within the mission at home gave status in the new Christian hierarchy, to become an overseas missionary carried increased prestige. Although the role of pastor to an established congregation was the intended destination for most students, it was the pioneer work of evangelism, it seems, that was most attractive to them. It conferred commensurate status; on most overseas postings Fijians and Samoans had 'more scope for personal growth and local initiative' than those who worked under close supervision at home.²⁷

The Evangelical Christianity preached by the Protestants in the nineteenth century assumed the duty of all converts to spread the Gospel, a theological imperative derived from the Great Commission.²⁸ The Methodist George Brown's plan to use Fijian, Tongan and Samoan missionaries to evangelise New Britain in 1875 was couched in these terms. There was universal pride in reports that when volunteers were called for at Navuloa, the Fiji Training Institute, the entire graduating class volunteered, or that in Samoa, those who answered the request were represented as direct descendants of the prophet Isaiah, replying 'Here are we, send us'.²⁹ Though by the early twentieth century it was not assumed that all Methodist school students would remain in the employ of the mission, the most praised students were those who remained within the Methodist fold. Navuloa was seen as 'the strategic point for Missionary work', with its students going out to the rest of Fiji and regularly to New Britain, Papua and the Solomon Islands. The annual reports of the Institute cite the number of volunteers for overseas service as its prime achievement each year; the four for the Solomon Islands and three for New Guinea in 1902 were praised twice in

²⁷ Garrett, *Footsteps in the Sea*, p. 182.

²⁸ Matthew 28:19-20. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.

²⁹ *Wesleyan Methodist Notices relating to the Missions under the direction of the Australasian Wesleyan Methodist Conference* (hereafter *Notices - Aust Ed*) April 1875, p. 83. Cf. Isaiah 6: 8.

one report for their bravery and zeal.³⁰

From its inception, Matavelo Girls' School at Ba emphasised Bible study, interest in mission activities and the activities of the Sunday school alongside domestic subjects, but its greatest ambitions were realised in 1907 when three of the School's girls were accepted as missionaries. 'Already', enthused the superintendent C.O. Lelean, 'fruit of a noble kind is seen in the going forth of a Fiji Sister to New Britain, another to Rotuma, and another to the Indian Orphanage in Davuilevu'.³¹ Both Europeans and Islanders viewed overseas service as the peak achievement of the mature Christian. LMS attitudes were similar: the *Chronicle* reported that around 1820 the people of Atui (Cook Islands) had prepared for war by presenting human sacrifices to 'hideous fetishes', by 'weird dances and strange cries' and by launching their canoes over the bodies of 'wretched slaves'. But in 1917, with great pride, the same community sent out the chief's son as a missionary to Papua.³²

There were, however, other less exalted reasons behind the employment of Fijian and Polynesian missionaries. It was assumed, not always correctly, that elements of shared culture and lifestyle would make contact with and conversion of other Islanders easier and that Fijian and Polynesians would master Melanesian languages faster than Europeans. Sadly ironic, in view of the appalling death rate from malaria, was the original European belief that Fijian and Polynesians (as 'natives') would stand the climate in Melanesia better than Europeans.³³ Islanders were also easier to recruit than Europeans and much cheaper to employ. In 1908 the Methodist standard

³⁰ MMSA Annual Report for 1902, pp. lvi-lvii.

³¹ MMSA Annual Report for 1907, p. 23. One was Merewalesi Samanunu, who went as a teacher to Rotuma in 1908 (see below); Oripa went to New Britain. Accounts and photographs of both women were periodically reproduced in the *Missionary Review* – e.g. February 1908, p. 4; May 1909, p. 16; June 1912, p. 21. I have not been able to discover the name of the student who went to Dilkusha Orphanage, though it is interesting that working with Fiji Indians was perceived as comparable to a posting to New Britain.

³² *Chronicle*, January 1926, pp. 3-5.

³³ *Notices - Aust Ed*, April 1875, p. 82.

payment to Fijian and Polynesian teachers was £10 per year plus various settlement allowances, raised to £12 in 1911. This was a small fraction of the salary paid to a European married ordained missionary, £15 a month in 1911.³⁴ Fijian and Polynesian teachers and catechists were also expected to grow at least a proportion of their own food and land for this purpose as well as a house-site and building arrangements were negotiated with local landowners when a teacher was placed in a village. Not only were they the preachers and teachers, they were also the housebuilders, boatbuilders and gardeners of the missions. Their conditions of service – smaller houses, less pay, more remote work – showed an obvious discrepancy from the way European missionaries were treated; this discrepancy, however, was rarely discussed or justified by the latter.

Yet, while it might be tempting to see the missions' use of Islander teachers as merely pragmatic – and such motivation certainly existed – the use of Fijian and Polynesian workers conformed to developing mission theory which encouraged European missionaries to have confidence in the capabilities of their converts and the divine guidance available to them. In 1851 Henry Venn, Secretary of the British Anglican Church Missionary Society, produced a memorandum which encapsulated his mission strategy. He drew a clear distinction between missionary and pastor: the first 'preaches to the heathen', the second 'ministers in holy things to a congregation of Native Christians'. He envisaged that those in the second category would increasingly be locals and that 'the ultimate object of a Mission' should be 'the settlement of a Native Church, under Native Pastors, upon a self-supporting system'. This required the training of a local pastorate, a local source of finance and independent decision-making to achieve 'the *euthanasia* of mission'.³⁵ Venn's ideal was of a 'self-

³⁴ Shackell to Danks, 2 February 1911, file MOM 117, Methodist Missionary Society of Australasia (MMSA) papers, Mitchell Library, Sydney.

³⁵ Henry Venn, *The Native Pastorate and Organisation of Native Churches* (1851), cited and discussed in Timothy Yates, *Venn and Victorian Bishops Abroad: The Missionary Policies of Henry Venn and Thier Repercussion Upon the Anglican Episcopate of the Colonial Period 1841-1872* (Uppsala, Sweden: Swedish Institute of Missionary Research, 1978), pp. 117-120. See also Stephen Neill, A

governing, self-supporting and self-propagating' church emerging from the mission field. The third aim, for a self-propagating church with indigenous clergy, was the one that mission societies regarded as their primary imperative. A little earlier (and independently), Rufus Anderson of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) advocated self-government and self-support of the Hawai'ian church, leading to early independence for the church in 1852 and the adoption of his strategy by the ABCFM elsewhere.³⁶ While neither of these mission theorists was directly involved in the south-west Pacific area, similar attitudes can be seen amongst leaders of the denominations involved in the evangelisation of Melanesia. Before around 1910, the theory was not clearly articulated, but encouraging financial contribution from converts with the ultimate aim of self-support and the training of indigenous teachers and pastors were evident early in most missions.

The Anglican Melanesian Mission developed an interesting variation on the theme. Bishop Selwyn planned to bring young boys to school in Auckland (and later to the college developed by Bishop Patteson at Norfolk Island) to teach them the rudiments of Christianity 'that they might go back and teach their own countrymen; to make a beginning towards teaching them to be Christians'.³⁷ This scheme was flawed in not acknowledging the low status of young people in most Melanesian societies and in

History of Christian Missions (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1964), pp. 259-60; A. Scott Moreau, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2000), p. 999; Kenneth Scott Latourette, *The Christian World Mission in Our Day* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1954), p. 87. The advocacy of church development through 'self-government, self-support and self-propagation' was often referred to in mission literature, particularly in China, as the 'Three-Selfs Movement'. See for example, Rev. Cheng Ching Yi of Peking writing in the *Chronicle*, August 1914, p. 178.

³⁶ Garrett, *To Live among the Stars*, pp. 57-9. Part of the localisation, however, involved twenty-two white missionaries becoming Hawai'ian citizens with land grants from the ABCFM. See also Moreau, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary*, p. 60.

³⁷ H.W. Tucker, *Memoir of the Life and Episcopate of George Augustus Selwyn, Dd.* (London: Wells Gardner, Darton and Co, 1879), vol 1, p. 304.

the inadequacy of the training.³⁸ But behind the scheme lay 'great confidence in the mental capacity of the natives themselves' and the assumption that they could be educated 'not merely to receive a certain amount of education themselves, but to be the future teachers and missionaries.' Patteson was convinced by 1864 that such a plan was 'a practical and reasonable one'.³⁹

When in 1879 a group of converts returned to their home island of Mota under the leadership of George Sarawia to found a Christian community, soon followed by a second group, Patteson saw this as vindication.⁴⁰ After Patteson's death, the inadequacies of the scheme became apparent and more European missionaries moved to the islands. The system of a 'black net with white corks', explained to children as the 'black net being the native clergy and teachers, and the white corks being the bishop, clergy and others supervising the work',⁴¹ required that the corks come rather closer to the net. However, ordinations of Melanesian priests and deacons continued, with the liturgical and sacramental recognition expected for their status.

Within a few years of their establishment, then, Evangelical and Anglican missions had set up training for local teachers, catechists and priests. Bishop Stone-Wigg of New Guinea declared his aim – with apparent reference to Venn's principles – at his consecration in 1898: 'to make the Church in New Guinea a Native Church, manned

³⁸ For more on Selwyn's scheme and Bishop Patteson's adaptations see Garrett, *To Live Among the Stars*, pp. 182-189, 296-7; David Hilliard, *God's Gentlemen: A History of the Melanesian Mission, 1849-1942* (St Lucia, Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1978), pp. 19-51; Hugh Laracy, 'Selwyn in Pacific Perspective', in *Bishop Selwyn in New Zealand*, ed. Warren E Limbrick, *New Zealand Academic Monographs* (Palmerston North, New Zealand: The Dunmore Press, 1983), pp. 121-35; Tucker, *Memoir of the Life of G.A. Selwyn*.

³⁹ J.C. Patteson, Lecture on the Melanesian Mission, delivered at Sydney 1864, p. 6.

⁴⁰ Hilliard, *God's Gentlemen*, p. 58-61. George Sarawia was ordained deacon in 1878, priest in 1873.

⁴¹ Australian Board of Missions, *The King's Command: How the Church in Australia Has Obeyed It* (Sydney: Australian Board of Missions, 1918), p. 2. Hilliard (*God's Gentlemen*, p. 10) cites this phrase, which apparently originated with Selwyn. It was frequently used in ABM literature to describe the workings of the Melanesian Mission.



Figure 12: Original caption –
'First Native Ordination in New Guinea,
Rev. C. King, Rev. S.R.M. Gill, Bishop Sharp, Rev. H. Newton, Rev. J.E.
Fisher, Rev. Peter Rautamara, Rev. Edwin Nuagoro.'
The ordination as deacons of Peter Rautamara and Edwin Nuagoro, 20
September 1914 at Dogura.

ABM Review, December 1914, p.170.

by a Native Ministry and self-supporting'. His first Islander teachers were ex-indentured Solomon Islander and New Hebridean labourers from Queensland. However, he 'wasted little time creating a Papuan agency' through St Aiden's College at Dogura.⁴² Peter Rautamara and Edwin Nuagoro (Figure 12) were the first ordained deacons, Rautamara becoming the first Papuan priest in 1917.⁴³ The LMS also had a training college, Vatorata, in Papua. Indeed, any growing mission had no real alternative to employing indigenous teachers and pastors; sufficient European missionaries were unavailable and would have been unaffordable. Theory and practical necessity conveniently intersected.

The second of Venn's three aims, self-support, proved more problematic but from the mission societies' point of view was even more critical. Missionary societies were usually financially hard-pressed; encouraging local converts to fund their own pastors was appealing. The tradition of self-support was well established in the Evangelical sending churches. The LMS held large missionary meetings in London, at which missionaries on furlough addressed gatherings of children and adults to raise funds. The children of Congregational Sunday Schools in England and Australia supported the series of *John Williams* LMS mission ships from the 1850s to the 1960s.⁴⁴ In the Australian Methodist Church, children during the 1890s supported the mission ship *Meda*, often referred to as the 'children's ship'. Annual donations for missions were traditionally collected once a year until 1923 when a 'Systematic Giving League' was instituted.⁴⁵

⁴² Wetherell, *Reluctant Mission*, pp. 100-06, 273.

⁴³ *ABM Review*, December 1914, p. 170. The photograph accompanies an article entitled 'First Native Ordination in New Guinea' celebrating the ordination of Peter Rautamara and Edwin Nuagoro as deacons; other photographs of them appeared in an appeal supplement in 1915. Peter Rautamara was ordained priest in 1917 with similar publicity (*ABM Review*, March 1918, pp. 211-2).

⁴⁴ In the 1960s, I attended an English Congregational Sunday School and collected 'ship halfpennies' for the LMS mission ship *John Williams VII*. For the launching of this ship see *Chronicle*, November 1962, pp.202-209; January 1963, pp. 22-24; November 1963, pp. 283-291.

⁴⁵ Individual collectors pledged a certain amount per week and kept it in a box 'rather than relying on a big "effort" once a year' (*Missionary Review*, September 1923, p. 21). This systematic giving

The transference of such ideas to converts was natural. Moreover, in Polynesia the Methodists and the LMS discovered a method of self-support by co-opting the traditional giving of material support to maintain religious leadership and practice. One Tongan teacher encouraged his converts by telling them that, while in the past they had given seasonal offerings 'to the devil', so now they should give them to the *lotu*.⁴⁶ In Fiji, offerings traditionally given to the ancestral spirits were now presented to the mission. The system was formalised in the 1850s as the *vakamisoneri* where produce – in the Lau islands, coconut oil – was collected yearly for the mission.⁴⁷ Similar collections were also used for special purposes. Fijian Methodist congregations, for example, contributed overseas; in 1893 the people of Lakeba donated £28 to the mission in New Guinea 'as a thank-offering to God for the benefits they have received from the preaching of the Gospel'.⁴⁸

Further west there were greater problems, exacerbated by the lack of a tradition of support for a priestly caste. LMS and Methodist missions experimented with the *Mei*, an attempt to extend Polynesian ideas into Papua, with some limited success. Methodist converts in Papua contributed £144 in 1912, rising to £1615 in 1916. The Anglicans resisted such a move, seeing it, with justification, as 'an appeal to village rivalry and prestige'.⁴⁹ So they remained reliant on Australian and British donations – and poor. The Melanesian Mission, whose peripatetic system proved expensive in spite of the very low pay of priests and missionaries, attempted to raise support through their English aristocratic connections and Patteson's own private income. The limited plantation scheme at Maravovo raised some income and in 1922 Rev.

proved more successful than the annual meeting, the reverse of the situation in the Pacific – indicating the very different earning patterns in the different societies.

⁴⁶ Cited in Andrew Thornley, 'The "Vakamisoneri" in Lau, Fiji: Some Comments' *Journal of Pacific History* 12, no. 1-2 (1977), p. 108.

⁴⁷ Thornley, 'The *vakamisoneri* in Lau'; Thornley, *Fijian Methodism*, pp. 251-265.

⁴⁸ *Missionary Review*, March 1895, p. 5.

⁴⁹ Wetherell, *Reluctant Mission*, pp. 276-7.

C.E. Fox described the development of a small plantation on Santa Isabel 'to achieve the necessary step of self-support for the Anglicans on the Solomon Islands'. A coconut plantation on mission land was worked by communicant members from the surrounding villages on a roster system; the money raised paid the teachers and the costs of church building and medicines.⁵⁰ Goldie's copra schemes, whatever their limitations in terms of technical training, did provide the Methodist Mission in the Solomons with needed funds.

By 1910 progress had been made with regard to two of Venn's three principles. The Protestant missions of the southwest Pacific region were training pastors, teachers and priests for their growing congregations, used the converts from their older fields to evangelise new areas and had in place schemes, of varying efficacy, to encourage financial self-sufficiency. When the leaders of the Protestant missionary societies from Europe and America, as well as some indigenous clergy, met for the influential 1910 World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, Pacific Islands leaders could justifiably feel that national churches were developing from the old 'mission fields'.⁵¹ The second Commission on 'The Church in the Mission Field' emphasised the importance of the 'transition from the elementary stage of dependence on a foreign mission to that of the self-support of the young Church'. The aim was to make overseas missionaries redundant. Its success required an independent national or regional church structure which could take decisions, plan schemes for financial self-support and maintain theological training, which the commission thought should be of a high standard, to provide sufficient pastors and ministers. The conference was widely and approvingly reported in Australian mission journals, and one of very few missionaries to attend the Edinburgh conference from Oceania was an LMS missionary from Samoa, James Newell. Newell was a member of the Commission on

⁵⁰ *ABM Review*, Sept 1922, p. 98.

⁵¹ World Missionary Conference, Report of Commission II - The Church in the Mission Field (1910). See chapter 7 for more on the Edinburgh Conference, also W.H.T. Gairdner, *Edinburgh 1910: An Account and Interpretation of the World Missionary Conference* (Edinburgh: Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier, 1910).

the Church in the Mission Field and had already implemented a council of Samoan advisors, the *toeaina*, for the Samoan LMS church, a more radical scheme than most missions were prepared to contemplate.⁵²

For it was the third of Venn's principles, that of self-government, which proved most difficult to implement. The WMC deliberations emphasised the interconnectedness of all three aims, since 'as long as [the new church] depends financially on the mission, it can neither realise its responsibilities nor become conscious of its powers'. Yet locals tended to be reluctant to pay for an organisation in which they had no say.⁵³ To allow decision-making by Islanders or even extensive consultation with them, particularly in matters which involved scrutiny of the actions of European missionaries, was threatening to European prestige and challenged all the latent evolutionary theories examined in earlier chapters.

The Fiji Methodist experience demonstrates such tensions. Fijians were ordained early but there was ambivalence about the speed at which Fijian Ministers should be given real authority, especially beyond their local village. In a letter to the General Secretary in Sydney, Lorimer Fison addressed the early suggestion of his colleague Joseph Waterhouse that 'a native Ministry could alone supply the wants of Heathenism' and his attempt to introduce greater rights for Fijian staff.⁵⁴ In general, Fison resisted giving further authority to Native Ministers, believing such a move was premature although ultimately inevitable. If Fijian Ministers were accepted as full members of the District Meeting, they would gain the right to attend Conference in Sydney and vote on matters relating to the European missionaries. According to Fison, Fijians' understanding of financial and administrative matters was limited, so speed here was inadvisable. On the other hand, the treatment of some Native Ministers by their supervising missionary was disgraceful. Rev. Samuel Brooks in

⁵² Garrett, *Footsteps in the Sea*, pp. 199-200. Three delegates from the Anglican Melanesian Mission attended (Hilliard, *God's Gentlemen*, p. 217), but apparently no Methodists or Presbyterians.

⁵³ WMC, Report II, p. 87.

⁵⁴ Waterhouse 1862, cited in Thornley, *Fijian Methodism*, p. 56.

Viwa was expecting them to act as his servants which Fison described as a 'monstrous arrangement ... our native brethren have been treated unjustly and tyrannously'.⁵⁵ They were 'brethren' and should be treated with respect but they were not full equals.

Many missionaries echoed the New Hebrides Presbyterian missionary John Geddie's opinion that 'the natives of each island are the best and most persevering agents for that island' and that missionaries from outside were but a temporary expedient.⁵⁶ But implementing any other arrangements ran into problems as mission authorities or individual missionaries failed to have sufficient confidence in their converts. In 1860 Geddie ordained seven Anelgauhat men as 'ruling elders', thus introducing the pastoral Presbyterian 'polity', but was told by his superiors in Nova Scotia that the introduction of full Presbytery government was 'in the present circumstances premature'. 'No doubt it was,' he noted somewhat regretfully. 'But what a major step it would have been towards autonomy, thus early in the history of the work.'⁵⁷

The representations of Islanders by European missionaries and mission societies during these years centred on various themes, most not conducive to the kind of confidence which would allow the sharing of authority. Here I examine two popular images of Islander converts in general and the way they impinged on relations between European missionaries and their Fijian and Polynesian colleagues: the heroic and the familial. There is some shift between the two representations over time – the Fijian and Polynesian missionary as hero in general belongs to the pioneering years and the familial image to more settled times – but there is much overlap between

⁵⁵ Fison to Chapman, 27 October 1875, MOM 104, MMSA; Thornley, *Fijian Methodism*, pp. 56-61.

⁵⁶ R. S. Miller, *Misi Gete: John Geddie, Pioneer Missionary to the New Hebrides* (Launceston, Tasmania: The Presbyterian Church of Tasmania, 1975), p. 257.

⁵⁷ Miller, *Misi Gete*, pp. 255, 266-7. Presbyterian systems of government have most authority vested in the regional Presbytery, made up of the ministers and some elders from each congregation. Pastoral care and oversight are the responsibility of the congregational elders, who are 'ordained' for the task.

them.

Islander missionaries: the heroic model

The dominant representation of early Fijian and Polynesian missionaries in the pages of the *Missionary Review* and books for popular consumption about the Methodist mission portrayed them as heroes and martyrs endowed with the Christian virtues of forbearance, endurance, obedience and suffering. This interpretation was epitomised in representations of the Fijian teachers who accompanied George Brown to New Britain in 1875. Brown had, as contemporary journals and his *Autobiography* make clear, emphasised to the Fijian and Samoan teachers (and to mission supporters) the dangers they faced. The Fiji colonial government reinforced the warnings. Brown reported the interview of the nine Fijian missionaries, led by Aminio Baledrokadroka, with the government officials:

Mr Layard [a senior official] ... then told them about the people, that they were great cannibals and very fierce; that the islands were very unhealthy ... He told them they would be left alone and without protection or support for some months ... Aminio stood up, and with deep feeling said that they were not surprised at what they had been told ... He said, 'We have fully considered this matter in our hearts; no-one has pressed us in any way. We have given ourselves up to do this work and if we die we die, and if we live we live.' You may be sure I was well pleased to hear the noble fellow speak out so well.⁵⁸

This story ranks as one of the 'charter myths' of the Fiji mission, rehearsed in Sunday School lessons and books to Australian audiences, both at the time and later, with proprietorial interest and pride.⁵⁹ Such men as Aminio Baledrokadroka had progressed up the Christian hierarchy under Australian tutelage and now went to convert other Islanders.

⁵⁸ *Notices - Aust Ed*, Oct 1875, p. 121, also Brown, *Autobiography*, pp. 79-80.

⁵⁹ Benjamin Danks, 'New Britain', in *A Century in the Pacific*, ed. James Colwell (Sydney: William H. Beale, 1914), p. 511; see also *Missionary Review*, June 1911, p. 21 for the same story told for children; a two-part biography of Aminio Baledrokadroka in *Missionary Review* July and August 1925 and an extended obituary in *Missionary Review*, January 1926.

The dangers Brown had warned against proved all too real. On 4 April 1878, two groups of missionaries left the coastal area of New Britain to visit the Gazelle interior, arranging to rendezvous in the hills. One group of four Fijian men was attacked and killed and their bodies distributed amongst the local villages. The second group, also of four Fijians, realised the danger, retreated and reported back to Brown. This attack and Brown's subsequent reprisal raid have been much discussed, both at the time and later. Brown's long explanation in his *Autobiography* was supplemented by other European accounts.⁶⁰ The Fijians' murder made martyrs of them and increased their heroic status. In his memoirs, Benjamin Danks described visiting the house of one of the victims, Sailasa Naucukidi, where his family had also come under attack a year or so after the murders.

Here must have sat the brave women while they expected death. Only a little clearing, surrounded by wild, lustful men who shouted their insulting messages; threatening them with death and the oven ... I stood and prayed for grace to make a noble end like Sailasa's should the work demand it. It was a consecrated spot, hallowed by sacrifice and tears.⁶¹

In 1925, John Burton, then General Secretary of the Australian Methodist Mission Board, wrote of the incident: 'Martyrs' blood had been shed, and the seed sown from

⁶⁰ Wilfred Powell, *Wanderings in a Wild Country: Or Three Years Amongst the Cannibals of New Britain* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington, 1883); Benjamin Danks and Wallace Deane, *In Wild New Britain: The Story of Benjamin Danks, Pioneer Missionary, from His Diary* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson Ltd, 1933). Brown's motivations and explanations have been analysed in detail by Helen Gardner, *Cultures, Christians and Colonial Subjects: George Brown's Representations of Islanders from Samoa and the Bismarck Archipelago* (PhD thesis, La Trobe University, 1999). Work has also been done on the Tolai response: Heinz Schütte, 'The Six Day War of 1878 in the Bismarck Archipelago' *Journal of Pacific History* 24, no. 1, pp.38-53 (1989); Klaus Neumann, *Not the Way It Really Was: Constructing the Tolai Past* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1992); Frederick K. Errington and Deborah B. Gewertz, *Articulating Change in the "Last Unknown"* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1995). From their work we can see how the Christian *lotu* was perceived as being *bought*, in the form of an Islander missionary, by one Tolai group from another.

⁶¹ Danks, *In Wild New Britain*, p. 33.

which the Church would spring.’⁶²

Another pioneer to rank in courage and sacrifice alongside Aminio and his colleagues was the Tongan Semisi Nau who, along with his Samoan colleague Pologa, was taken to Ontong Java in 1906 by John Goldie, Chairman of the Methodist Solomon Islands District. Goldie left them there, although they faced such hostility from the local chiefs that they were unable to land for three months and were confined to their small boat in the lagoon, relying on sympathetic locals for food and water. The account of this ordeal was told twice in the pages of the *Missionary Review*⁶³ and Brown included it in his *Autobiography*, where he commented that ‘no more heroic act has been recorded in modern missions’ than Semisi and Pologa’s three months in the boat.⁶⁴

The death of other Fijian and Polynesian missionaries was treated as martyrdom for the faith. Josiah Mau, a Tongan catechist in Panieti, gave a harrowing account of the death of his wife, Seluaia, from an attack. She was ‘a good woman, devoted to God and to our church’, according to the introduction by the missionary Fletcher. Bromilow later described her as having ‘dignity and self-possession ... inward vision and experience, very impressive in its obvious sincerity’, and saw her death as being in the tradition of the early martyrs.⁶⁵ Rev. James Osbourne, reporting the death of Eneri Vuki from respiratory disease, described him as ‘a diligent and most trustworthy man’ and the most ‘genuine Christian’ he had worked with in 15 years.⁶⁶ The LMS Secretary James Newell, on a visitation to the Ellice Islands in 1895, made very evident the difficulties and isolation of the Samoan pastors there: two had died

⁶² *Missionary Review*, August 1925, p. 3. Burton was modifying a quotation from Tertullian: ‘The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church’.

⁶³ Brief account in *Missionary Review*, November 1909, p. 17; full account in *Missionary Review*, June 1911, pp. 8-9.

⁶⁴ Brown, *Autobiography*, p. 531.

⁶⁵ *Missionary Review*, Jan 1897, pp. 7-8; Bromilow, *Twenty Years Among Primitive Papuans*, pp. 166-170. The story of Seluaia was told again in *Missionary Review*, February 1910, pp. 22-23.

⁶⁶ *Missionary Review*, August 1904, p. 4.

and another was ill and wanted to return to Samoa. He was given medicine and asked to 'hold on for a little longer' because no replacements were available.⁶⁷ Newell described the affection in which the Samoans were held by Ellice Islanders and the way the widows had attempted to continue their husbands' work.

Yet the exact terms of this admiration bears examination. It centred on the Christian virtues of forbearance and endurance, stoicism in the face of suffering and obedience to the will of God and of the white missionaries. Semisi's courage and devotion were understood and appreciated as part of this tradition. Goldie praised Semisi's 'devoted and self-sacrificing services' in his chapter of *A Century in the Pacific*, almost his only comment about an Islander missionary.⁶⁸ Seluaia's greatest virtue was that she forgave her attacker on her death-bed, that of her husband Josaia was his 'resignation' in the face of her death.⁶⁹ William Deane described Jemesa, a Fijian missionary who had returned weakened by fever after ten years in New Guinea, as 'steadfast' even after his years of difficult service.⁷⁰ Semisi Nau's own account of his time in the Solomon Islands makes it clear that this ethic of suffering and sacrifice was well internalised. Semisi described his own motivation in overtly religious terms: 'I was glad to take up the burden of Jesus Christ ... that of seeking the lost' – an image he frequently repeated, evidence of the absolute certainty of his mission but also of a concern which overcame local indigenous hostility. He had confidence that God would protect him and his colleagues but also saw suffering as a necessary part of the missionary's work.

I knew that there were two portions for those who would tell out the Message of Jesus Christ – prison & death. Their path was already made known by blood for Stephen, Paul & Peter & many others had been killed & had entered into heaven & were now united with the heavenly host.⁷¹

⁶⁷ *Chronicle*, January 1895, p. 8.

⁶⁸ John F. Goldie, 'The Solomon Islands', in *A Century in the Pacific*, ed. James Colwell (Sydney: William H Beale, 1914), p. 579.

⁶⁹ Bromilow, *Twenty Years Among Primitive Papuans*, p. 168-9.

⁷⁰ *Missionary Review*, October 1911, p. 24.

⁷¹ Davidson/Nau, *Story of my Life*, p. 95

Semisi Nau was not only courageous, he was submissive to the orders of Goldie and other European missionaries. It is unclear whether the decision that Semisi and Pologa should stay at Ontong Java in the boat was their own or was forced on them by Goldie, though Semisi insisted it was his choice and Goldie concurred.⁷² In a later incident over postings, Semisi felt some resentment but vowed to submit to Goldie's will, assuming it also to be God's will.⁷³

Missionaries saw such virtues as particularly worthy and remarkable in such new Christians but believed that guidance was still necessary. Some of the nuances of the admiration can be seen in this comment from Ulu Circuit, New Britain, in 1902:

While devoutly thankful that we now have a white missionary in charge, careful inquiry into the general condition of the work fills us with thankfulness for the great success achieved by these men, who, but recently redeemed from heathenism themselves, are now nobly striving to spread the news of salvation through Christ, and that with a degree of success such as commands our admiration.⁷⁴

Effective European supervision was theoretically vital, even if often in practice absent, because those 'recently redeemed from heathenism' were perceived as lacking Christian maturity and wisdom even if they were second-generation Christians. To a degree, this perception was racially determined, especially in the eyes of some missionaries such as Brooks, about whom Fison complained that he saw all Islanders as inherently inferior. Most commonly, however, this racial perception was moderated through another image, that of the Christian family.

The familial model

Benjamin Danks described Fijian missionaries in New Britain in 1895 thus: 'Those splendid men and women with black skins and pure hearts are big children in the simplicity and earnestness of their characters'.⁷⁵ Modern sensibilities would characterise the remark as racist or at least paternalist – with all that entails. For

⁷² Davidson/Nau, *Story of my Life*, p. 97; Goldie, 'Solomon Islands' p. 579.

⁷³ Davidson/Nau, *Story of my Life*, p. 109.

⁷⁴ *Missionary Review*, February 1902, p. 3.

⁷⁵ *Missionary Review*, February 1895, p. 2.

Danks not only explicitly compared the Fijians to children, he concurrently praised them, suggested that their understanding was unsophisticated, and conveyed considerable affection for them. European accounts were filled with ambivalence toward Fijian and Polynesian missionaries: a mixture of admiration for their courage and devotion, mixed with a reluctance to accord them full adult status. They were seen as under tutelage, as apprentices needing guidance. But European missionaries also evinced a strong identification with Islander Christians, a proprietorial interest in their actions, a recognition of a familial relationship under God. As Hilliard put it, European missionaries 'fitted easily into the pre-cast role of white guardian and guide of an affectionate brown flock'.⁷⁶

The explicitly familial image is particularly strong in the material produced for Australian supporters by the Methodist and Anglican missions, as compared to LMS journals. For the British-based LMS, the 'South Seas' and 'Papua' missions were but a small part of a much larger enterprise which sent missionaries to India, China, Madagascar, South Africa and elsewhere. By the late nineteenth century, many individual issues of the *Chronicle* contained little or nothing about the Pacific Islands missions which were now among the minor, if more successful, undertakings of the LMS.⁷⁷ The Australian Methodist conference, which took over Wesleyan mission activities from the British parent body in successive stages from 1855, saw the Pacific region in a much more intimate and domestic light than any British body. There were elements of colonialism here but also a level of intimacy and identification at an

⁷⁶ Hilliard, *God's Gentlemen*, p. 219.

⁷⁷ Max Quanchi, 'The Imaging of Pastors in Papua', in *The Covenant Makers: Islander Missionaries in the Pacific*, ed. Doug Munro and Andrew Thornley (Suva: Pacific Theological College/Institute of Pacific Studies at the University of the South Pacific, 1996), p. 160; Max Quanchi, 'The Invisibility of Gospel Ploughmen: The Imaging of South Sea Pastors in Papua' *Pacific Studies* 20, no. 4 (1997), p. 88 notes that LMS literature such as the *Chronicle* in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries rejected 'photographs of dour earnest missionaries, smiling cotton-clothed converts, stoic South Seas pastors posing with their families' in favour of more exotic images, since 'discovering others', the growing enthusiasm for anthropology, had come to have more appeal than stories of conversion.

almost familial level. The British pioneer missionaries to Tonga, Samoa and Fiji were successively replaced by Australians and a number of the British pioneers settled in Australia or New Zealand, sometimes occupying high positions in the church.⁷⁸ John Watsford, the first Australian-born missionary to Fiji, founded a dynasty which was influential in Australian Methodist circles for a century; his affectionate title 'Father Watsford' was literal as well as metaphorical.⁷⁹

The Methodist *Missionary Review*, while it included some 'anthropological' material, was dominated by accounts of conversion, district reports and travel accounts by mission dignitaries which emphasised the content of church services and inspection of schools. The proportion of images of missionaries, not always dour and earnest, was high and there were many smiling cotton-clothed converts, pastors and their families, mission launches and new church buildings. Such images comprised most of the photographs presented to Australian readers during the years 1890 to 1930. Thus the exploits of long-serving missionaries were well-known to regular readers of the *Missionary Review* who were familiar with their names, photographs, location and work. They read extracts from missionaries' letters home, reports of their travels, news of their domestic trials and triumphs. It was standard for missionaries on leave in Australia or New Zealand to undertake 'deputation work', giving talks and sermons in Methodists churches, to women's groups and missionary support groups. As technology allowed, such talks might be illustrated with lantern-slides of scenes from the Pacific Islands. While this procedure was adapted from practice in Britain, the smaller numbers, both of missionaries and supporters, and the restricted field of operation meant that Australian activity in and in support of missions in Oceania was more intimate and personal than similar British-based activity.

⁷⁸ This was true of James Calvert, Thomas Williams, George Brown, John Burton and others.

⁷⁹ Watsford was in Fiji from 1844 to 1853 and active in Australian church and mission affairs until his death in 1907. Watsford's daughter Emma married Benjamin Danks, a missionary to New Britain 1878-1886, then General Secretary 1907-1913; their son James was a missionary in New Britain 1878-80. The Danks' daughter married Wallace Deane, a missionary to Fiji 1907-1915 and a writer on the Pacific.



Figure 13: It was customary for parties of Fijian and Polynesian Methodist missionaries passing through Sydney to pose for formal photographs with mission staff. This studio portrait shows a group of Fijians en route to New Guinea, posing with Revs. George Brown and Benjamin Danks. This example was not reproduced in *Missionary Review*.

Photo: Methodist Overseas Mission archives, Mitchell Library, Sydney, MOM 311, where it was entitled 'Dr. G. Brown and a party of Fijians who went to New Guinea'. Not dated, probably around 1900.

This familiarity was extended to Fijian and Polynesian missionaries. In the 1890s some Australian and New Zealand Methodist congregations had a close identification with Fijian and Polynesian teachers through sponsorship schemes. It cost £20 a year to sponsor a Fijian, Samoan or Tongan teacher in Melanesia; £10 to sponsor a Melanesian teacher. Churches, Sunday Schools, Christian Endeavour Societies and private individuals took up the challenge.⁸⁰ In 1901 Burwood Ladies' College students held a concert which raised £12 for 'their' Native Teacher in New Britain.⁸¹ In return, such groups received news from 'their' teacher translated into English by the local European missionary. It is impossible to know the number of such letters which reached Australia and New Zealand but while the involvement was no doubt paternalist, it was also close. A few such letters, presumably selected and edited for their suitability, were reprinted in the *Missionary Review* and will be examined below.

Converts and Islander missionaries sometimes accompanied European missionaries home on furlough, also addressing church audiences and meeting local supporters.⁸² Photographs of Islander missionaries, who were named more often in Methodist than in LMS material, also aided recognition. Formal studio portraits were taken in Sydney en route to the Islanders' mission stations and were frequently reproduced in the *Missionary Review*. The hierarchy of the posed photographs speaks for itself: seated Europeans are always at the centre of the group surrounded by Islanders, a ranking particularly evident in a studio portrait from around 1900 of a group of Fijians en route to New Guinea posing with the Methodist mission leaders (Figure 13). Yet often all participants were named when the photographs were reproduced for

⁸⁰ Sponsors were periodically listed in *Missionary Review*; e.g., August 1896, pp. 1-2.

⁸¹ *Missionary Review*, June 1901, p. 11. The scheme was still operating as late as 1916 when Australian and New Zealand sponsors were reminded that 'their' students faced difficulties in writing and should always receive replies to letters sent (*Missionary Review*, June 1916, p.19).

⁸² See for example the account of the visit of Mataio Tapoivan of Papua to Australia, and his address to the General Conference in 1920, in *Missionary Review*, June 1920, pp. 6-7.



Figure 14: Original caption –

‘Three Tongan Missionaries bound for Solomon Islands.

Back row: Timote Oto’eta, Nafetalai Fotu, Baula Hoaifaiva and wife (Kesaia Uta), Wiliami Baogo;

Middle Row: Mele Fotu, Miss Moulton, Rev. B. Danks, Mrs. Chapman, Mele Baogo;

Front row: Ana Laumanu, Moala Toutai, Mele Baogo, To’a Baogo.’

Another example of the Sydney formal studio portrait of Islander missionaries. In this case all participants including wives and older children are named for publication.

Photo: *Missionary Review*, December 1911, p.13.



Mary Wallace and her Sister, Lolohea.

Figure 15: Mary Wallace (usually spelled 'Merewalesi') and her sister Lolohea, on Merewalesi's departure as a missionary sister to Rotuma, 1908. She was already well known to readers of the *Missionary Review* through reports of her schooldays at Matavelo Girls' High School.

Photo: *Missionary Review*, June 1909, p. 16.

the Australian readership, as in an example from 1911 (Figure 14), increasing the viewer's level of identification with the subjects – and invoking some tension with the visual ranking. The photograph of Merewalesi (Mary Wallace) and Lolohea, taken a year after the departure of Merewalesi Samanunu as a missionary teacher to Rotuma (Figure 15),⁸³ demonstrates the familiarity of some Islanders to Australian readers. Merewalesi had already been introduced to them as an ideal student and then teacher's help at Matevelo School, a 'wise ruler, but also a loving big sister to the girls',⁸⁴ and progress reports from her, in sole charge of a village school some distance from the supervising missionary, are scattered through the *Missionary Review* for the next few years. Her sister Lolohea trained in Australia as a kindergarten teacher and later founded the Methodist Women's organisation *Ruve* in Fiji.⁸⁵

The photograph in Figure 16 was recently reproduced by Max Quanchi to demonstrate the bringing of Western material culture and behaviour to Islanders, as well as the anonymity of island pastors.⁸⁶ However, the photograph's intended message was quite different when it was published in the *Missionary Review* in July 1925 to illustrate the role of the pioneer missionaries to New Britain. Then entitled 'Three veterans of the New Britain Mission: Rev. Livai Vola Vola, Rev. Dr. Brown and Rev. Aminio Bale', it accompanied the two-part biography of Aminio

⁸³ The photograph was entitled 'Mary Wallace and her sister, Lolohea'. Though Merewalesi is a popular Fijian girl's name which originated with Mary Wallis, the wife of an American sea captain of the 1840s who spent many months in Fiji (see Mary Wallis, *Life in Fiji, or Five Years Amongst the Cannibals, by a Lady* (Boston: William Heath, 1851), the spelling in *Missionary Review* is as above.

⁸⁴ *Missionary Review*, July 1905, pp. 9-12.

⁸⁵ Thornley and Vulaono, eds., *Mai Kea Ki Vei? Stories of Methodism in Fiji and Rotuma*, pp. 105-109; Victoria Lukere, *Mothers of the Taukei: Fijian Women and 'the Decrease of the Race'* (PhD thesis, Australian National University, 1997) pp. 198-202; Marama Sovaki, 'Women in Fijian Methodism', in Thornley and Vulaono, eds., *Mai Kea Ki Vei? Stories of Fijian Methodism in Fiji and Rotuma*, pp. 99-114.

⁸⁶ Quanchi, 'The Invisibility of Gospel Ploughmen', p. 91.

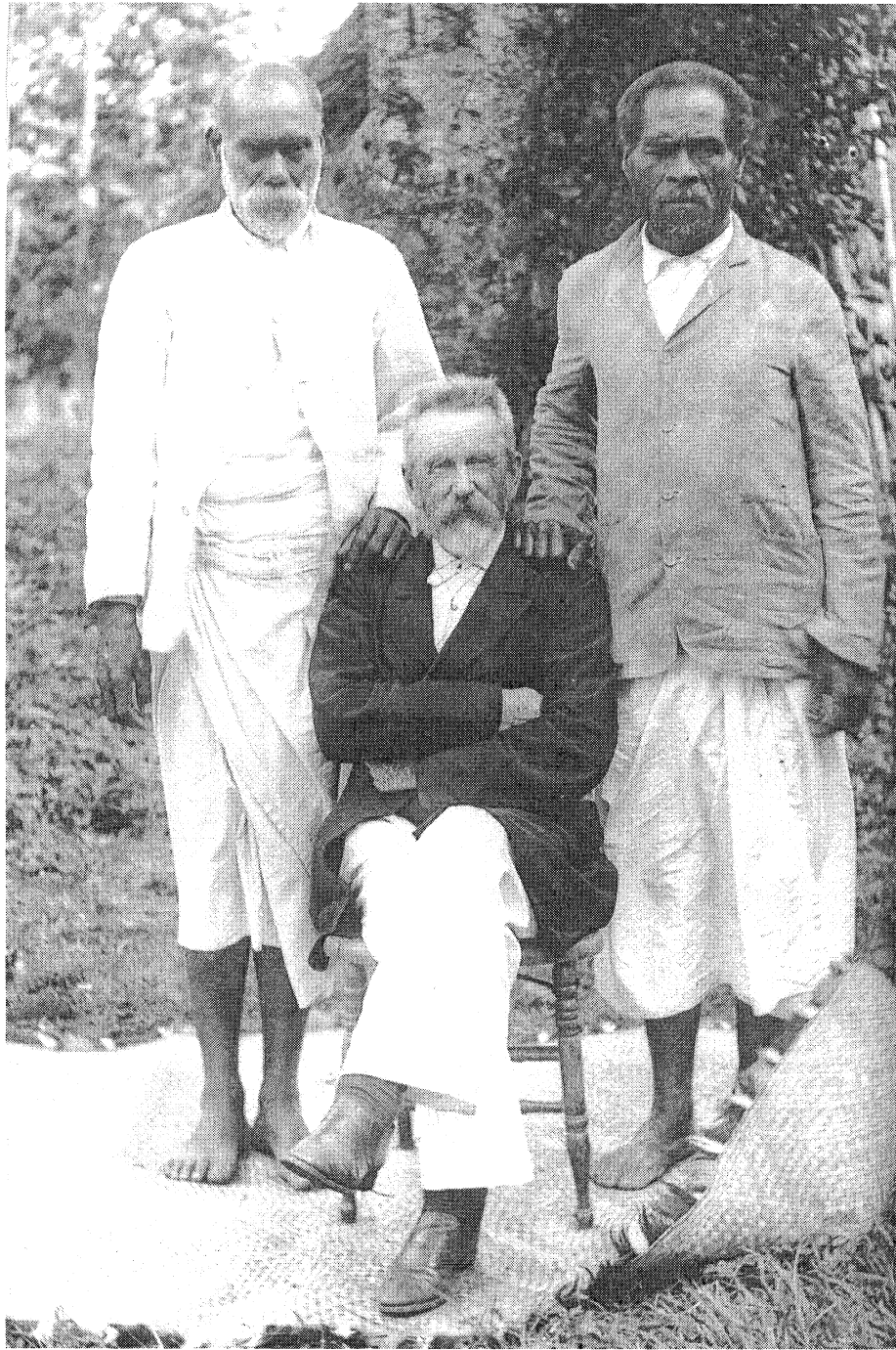


Figure 16: 1925 caption –
'Three veterans of the New Britain Mission: Rev Livai Vola Vola, Rev.
Dr. Brown, Rev. Aminio Bale'.

This photograph from the Methodist mission's pioneer days in New
Britain was reproduced for the 50 year Jubilee in 1925.

Photo: *Missionary Review*, July 1925, p. 6.

Baledrokadroka and was meant to symbolise not only the hierarchical order taken for granted by European missionaries but the mission's acknowledgment of the practical significance of Islander 'agency' within that hierarchy.⁸⁷ The Christian status of both Fijians is clear – they were both ordained – and yet they stand while Brown sits. Though their indigenous status is not clear in this photograph, Ratu Livai's chiefly rank was important in his leadership position amongst the Fijians in New Britain in the 1870s. Aminio was also of chiefly stock and he was a cousin of Josua Mateinanui who had accompanied William Cross and David Cargill to Lakeba and then Rewa in the 1830s during the heroic early phase of the conversion narrative in Fiji itself. Aminio, like so many of the Europeans, came from a mission family.⁸⁸

The same identification, if with a slightly different slant, can be seen in the Anglican material. While not all Australian Anglican churches supported the Anglican Board of Missions (ABM) and its missions in Solomon Islands and New Guinea,⁸⁹ those who

⁸⁷ *Missionary Review*, July 1925, p. 6.

⁸⁸ Interview with Leba Mataitini, Suva, 6 August 1997. A later descendant, Aminiasi Baledrokadroka, went as a missionary to Papua in 1891 (MMSA M/28, National Archives of Fiji (NAF), Suva, Fiji). See also Tevita Baleiwaqa, 'Josua Mateinanui', in Thornley and Vulaono, eds., *Mai Kea Ki Vei? Stories of Fijian Methodism in Fiji and Rotuma*, pp. 20-32.

⁸⁹ Listings of supporters of the ABM, regularly published in *ABM Review*, show that they were concentrated in Victoria, South Australia and in those parishes of NSW and Queensland which are still regarded as Anglo-Catholic in leaning. More Evangelically-oriented parishes tended to support the London-based Church Missionary Society (CMS) and its missions in Africa and China, about which *ABM Review* regularly complained. While the CMS had supported Samuel Marsden's mission to the Maori from 1814, it was not active in other parts of the Pacific. Relations between the CMS and the Anglo-Catholic Bishop Selwyn of New Zealand were somewhat fraught (see William P. Morrell, 'Selwyn's Relations with the Church Missionary Society', in *Bishop Selwyn in New Zealand*, ed. Warren E Limbrick, *New Zealand Academic Monographs* (Palmerston North, New Zealand: The Dunmore Press, 1983) pp. 75-93), though they were better with his colleague John Coleridge Patteson, the Bishop of Melanesia, at least at the personal level (Garrett, *To Live Among the Stars*, pp. 60-66, 183-5). On the frequent controversies between colonial bishops and the Anglican missionary societies see Yates, *Venn and Victorian Bishops Abroad: The Missionary Policies of Henry Venn and Their Repercussion Upon the Anglican Episcopate of the Colonial Period 1841-1872*, pp. 92-109.

did received similarly intimate news of European missionaries and converts. Such reports included photographs demonstrating the progress of Islanders through to ordination and news about church-building, boat-building and the progress of school children. The Anglicans also used sponsorship schemes; in 1917 parishes were asked to raise £10 a year to support one of seventeen students at St Aiden's College, Dogura, in return for which they would be sent 'the name and a short report of the student'.⁹⁰ The personal involvement of parishes was also encouraged through the allocation of Lenten self-denial offerings to the Melanesian and New Guinea Missions. Children in particular were encouraged, through their own magazine the *Herald* which carried stories about children's lives in the Solomons and New Guinea, to donate the money they would have spent on sweets and suchlike in Lent – and to support adult Islanders with the assumptions of relative status that entailed. All this tended towards a 'junior status' for Islanders. The *Herald* regularly infantilised mission teachers and helpers as in a letter which made fun of the faulty arithmetic of a New Hebridean schoolteacher who was 'uncertain at division and quite unreliable at problems'. The child readers of the *Herald* were assumed to be able to do rather better.⁹¹

But the representation of those Anglican converts who reached the priesthood shifted in accordance with the sacramental nature of the Anglican missions. The common nomenclature for a priest in both Anglican Papua and the Solomon Islands was 'Father', a relationship that Wetherell suggests Islanders readily accepted 'as a means of security against the changes being thrust upon' them.⁹² But the mode of address 'Father' was also used in Anglo-Catholic parishes in England or Australia where the racial dimension was lacking. The use of the term in Melanesia both personified the authority, leadership and responsibility of the European missionary and marked a continuity with Anglican practice elsewhere, adding yet another dimension to the idea of the mission family. But the title and its accompanying status were readily extended

⁹⁰ *ABM Review*, May 1917, p. 25.

⁹¹ *Herald*, August 1910, p. 103.

⁹² Wetherell, *Reluctant Mission*, p. 149.

to Melanesian priests who were paid on a scale more comparable to Europeans than was the case with most ordained Islanders.⁹³ The account of Peter Rautamara's ordination as priest makes it clear that Europeans, and not just those closely connected with the mission, were prepared to receive communion from his hands – an act at odds with the prevailing racial attitudes in Papua in 1917.⁹⁴

The familial image was complex and polyvalent. The familiarity of converts to European and Australian missionaries and their supporters, and the concomitant pride in converts' achievements, remained part of the image, but other elements were also present. Catherine Hall, writing on the Baptist mission to ex-slaves in 1840s Jamaica, points out how Evangelical Christian males 'privileged themselves as narrators, those who represented others, the leaders, the guides, the parents of the universal imperial Christian family'.⁹⁵ Christian belief in human similitude did not necessarily imply equality but rather the possibility of relationships between people, as members of the same species, as children of the same God. But in an Evangelical nineteenth-century British family there existed a well-regulated hierarchy based on age, gender and degree of affinity, affecting access to resources and power but also implying the responsibility of protection for all members. The head of the family had legal powers over other members, including the right to act on their behalf – this was one strong component of the metaphor which carried over to the missionary context.

The missionary saw his congregation and subordinates as his family – he was responsible for their welfare. George Brown, faced with Fijian and Polynesian missionaries sick with malaria in New Britain, complained that the Fijians' behaviour

⁹³ European priests were paid between £100 and £150 p.a.; Melanesian priests £25-£35 p.a. (Hilliard *God's Gentlemen*, pp. 62, 146). Most European clergy in the Evangelical missions were paid roughly double the rate received by white Anglican priests while their ordained Islander counterparts received around the same as ordained indigenous Anglicans.

⁹⁴ *ABM Review*, March 1918, p. 211.

⁹⁵ Catherine Hall, 'Missionary Stories: Gender and Ethnicity in England in the 1830s and 1840s', in *Cultural Studies*, ed. L. Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula Teichler (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 243.

added to their sickness. When Timoci died, Brown's frustration peaked:

Some of them are awfully pig-headed when they get sick & have given me a lot of trouble to keep them alive in spite of themselves. I have had lots of trouble to get them to make raised bedsteads, it isn't *vaka Viti* [the Fijian way] I suppose and so I had to boss some of them pretty stiffly at our last *bose* [meeting] & make them do it.⁹⁶

This was coercion for their own good, beneficent paternalism, perhaps necessary given the Fijians' lack of familiarity with malaria, but his language adds to the impression that Brown had no hesitation in acting in an assertive manner over Fijian and Polynesians, though he also left them to face dangers alone. In a more settled environment, missionaries did not often allow responsibility to their subordinates, including ordained native ministers, European mission sisters, or their congregations. Brooks' demand for domestic service from Fijian Ministers was an extreme case, but until the 1930s European missionaries exerted considerable control over Fijian ministers. They showed reluctance to extend serious theological training to Fijian staff or grant them any real measure of authority. They voiced concern about the skill level of Fijians, especially in administrative matters, and claimed that continued European authority was necessary to counter the dominant influence of chiefs.⁹⁷

Questions of authority and status

It has already been suggested that part of the appeal of overseas service in the pioneering phase of missionary work was the greater independence and higher status achievable by Fijian and Polynesian teachers and pastors compared with their prospects at home. The archives suggest that from 1900-1920 the most-praised attributes of the pioneer Fijian and Polynesian missionaries – physical courage and endurance – became less valued. As the missions became more established and work became more routine, the familial view of the mission with its constraints and surveillance replaced the heroic representation of the pioneering phase. Greater

⁹⁶ Brown to Langham, 8 July 1878, Brown papers, ML A1686-3, Mitchell Library, Sydney.

⁹⁷ Thornley, *Fijian Methodism*, pp. 42-45; Andrew Thornley, 'Custom, Change and Conflict: Fijian Wesleyan Ministers 1835-1945', in *Melanesia: Beyond Diversity*, ed. R.J. May and Hank Nelson (Canberra: RSPAS, Australian National University, 1982), p. 136.

opportunities for the employment of Christians with post-primary qualifications within their home communities, especially in Fiji, led to fewer volunteers for overseas service, especially of the most talented. Certainly the European missionaries thought so. There were a series of sexual scandals involving teachers. Mesulame in New Britain 'fell with a Samoan girl' – a teacher's wife – then ran away from the mission, only to return and attack two European mission sisters in their beds.⁹⁸ In one letter to Fellman in New Britain, Small detailed two separate cases which had come to light during teachers' furloughs; Joanna Seinairau, a teacher's wife, lost her infant son overboard in a storm off Kadavu, 'at which his mother confessed to infidelity', while Semi's wife also confessed but a reconciliation was being attempted.⁹⁹ Numerous other such incidents are reported in the Methodist archives for these years.¹⁰⁰ This was not the way the heroic pioneers had behaved. Fellman's rather wistful comment that the current Fijian and Polynesian missionaries were 'of less fervent piety than the brave godly men who went out years ago' summed up the views of many European missionaries.¹⁰¹

The greatest tension between European missionaries and their Fijian and Polynesian colleagues was experienced in the Solomon Islands. John Goldie, who was more dominating in his approach to Fijian and Polynesians than most European missionaries, had little faith in the abilities of his teachers, resulting in a string of disputes. The first murmurings of discontent came in 1906 over teachers' pay and gardening land. The complaints about money continued, and when Maiteci, Simioni Teke and Samuela Agarau co-signed a letter to Sydney listing their grievances in 1908, the matter came to a head. They demanded a rise in pay to £5 a quarter, since bought food was expensive but there was, they claimed, little garden food.¹⁰² This

⁹⁸ Fellman to Danks, 16 September 1910, MOM 111, MMSA.

⁹⁹ Small to Fellman, 24 January 1912, MMSA F/1/1912, NAF, Suva.

¹⁰⁰ E.g., Small to Fellman, 17 April 1912, MMSA F/1/1912; Fellman to Small, 3 February 1912, MMSA F/1/1912, NAF.

¹⁰¹ Fellman to Small, 12 January 1911, MMSA F/1/1911, NAF.

¹⁰² Maiteci, Teke and Agarau to Danks, 7 April 1908, MOM 116, also copy in MOM 238, MMSA. Agarau was a Guadalcanal man who had become a Christian while a labour recruit in Fiji.

claiming lack of access to land, or resentment at having, unlike the white missionaries, to do their own gardening? This letter caused something of a stir, especially as it was followed by others in the same vein written by other teachers. The teachers at Vella Lavella were neglected by Nicholson and Rooney was attempting to censor their letters.¹⁰³ Shackell was intimidating people by carrying a gun.¹⁰⁴ Clearly morale was low; as Maiteci put it to Danks, 'We your boys are tired, for we are few who take Jesus Christ to the people of this land, and slowly moves the *lotu*'.¹⁰⁵ All parties approved General Secretary Danks' plan to visit the Solomons in an attempt to reach a resolution.

On 1 April 1909 all available missionaries and teachers met Danks at the mission headquarters at Roviana to investigate 'certain statements by two of the teachers'. The minutes of the meeting show it to have been an inquisition.¹⁰⁶ It was not a typical event but the arguments used on this occasion were also used elsewhere, perhaps more moderately. While a judicial approach might have seemed to the Europeans to be the natural way to deal with accusations, one can only surmise how intimidating the ten Fijian and Samoan teachers found the presence of the General Secretary of the Methodist mission plus the three resident European missionaries, Goldie, Rooney and Nicholson, sitting formally while each complaint was examined and a judgement, underlined in the minutes, was made on each. Aminio Maiteci stuck to his complaints, but the others, if they had backed him before, deserted him now. They denied asking Maiteci to speak on their behalf. Over the main bone of contention, teachers' pay, it was agreed that this was not the responsibility of the European missionaries in the District, but of the Board in Sydney. Other issues were not discussed. It is hard not to see this meeting as an exercise in the European reassertion of control. Maiteci was condemned as 'a mischief maker' and dismissed by the

¹⁰³ Maiteci to Danks, 1 May 1908, MOM 116.

¹⁰⁴ Teke to Danks 16 August 1908, MOM 116.

¹⁰⁵ Maiteci to Danks, 21 September 1908, MOM 116.

¹⁰⁶ Minutes of a meeting of missionaries and teachers at Kokegelo, Roviana, 1 April 1909, in MOM 116.

mission, to be sent home in disgrace. Simioni Teke was contrite and returned to the flock; European control had been reestablished and alternative analyses of the situation discredited.

This story also raises interesting parallels between the treatment of Fijian and Polynesians and that of European mission sisters, another rather ambivalent category comprising nurses and teachers, many of whom had little training or status. Maiteci and Teke complained not only of their own treatment but also of that meted out to Sister Moore. She had come to New Georgia expecting to teach in the girls' school and help with medical work but resigned after a few months, complaining that she was not provided with the medicines she needed, that she had been banished to the islet of Nusa Songa and that she had to do all her own housework without any girls to help her.¹⁰⁷ Teke's explanation of her departure centred on her 'wretched conditions' and lack of household help; he claimed he had helped Sister Moore with her cooking. More significantly, Mrs Rooney had interfered with the girls' school, taking all the classes herself, and had 'vie[d] with the nurses'.¹⁰⁸ Clearly relationships within the mission were poor. More specifically, if Islanders or single women disagreed with the dominant position of European missionaries and their wives, they found themselves ostracised and disciplined. Against this threat, some sisters and Fijian and Polynesians formed supportive alliances, for as Maiteci put it: "If... English people are not cared for ... who then will look after or care for us?" Sister Moore's case was considered at the April 1909 meeting where it was claimed that ten people had tried to help her, that she had requested to live alone and that she had turned down teaching opportunities.¹⁰⁹ We cannot now assess the truth of any of these claims but the attempt to reassert white male control is again evident.

Yet some of the European missionaries knew that at least some of Mateci's

¹⁰⁷ F.E. Moore to Danks, 1 March 1908, MOM 116.

¹⁰⁸ Teke to Danks, 31 April 1908; 9 September 1908, MOM 116.

¹⁰⁹ Minutes of a meeting of missionaries and teachers at Kokegelo, Roviana, 1 April 1909, in MOM 116.

accusations had substance. Goldie had already notified Danks about Nicholson's inconsistent handling of the teachers and the dissatisfaction on Vella Lavella.¹¹⁰ Shackell's lack of judgement and strong impetuous streak had been previously made evident;¹¹¹ further accusations about his high-handed manner were to culminate in his removal from Ontong Java by the Resident High Commissioner in 1911.¹¹² On the issue of the teachers' pay, both Rooney and Goldie recognised the validity of the complaints and the Board in Sydney raised the rates in 1911.¹¹³

However, the teachers' complaints were not just centred on money and material matters, although that was how the Europeans represented the debate.¹¹⁴ For the teachers, issues of status were critical. Aminio Maiteci put it clearly:

There is one thing that is clear to us, and that is that Mr Goldie desires to place us Fijians on the same footing as the natives of this place ... It is true we have the same black skin, but these are darkness, but we know the things of good and evil.¹¹⁵

The Fijians believed themselves closer to the Europeans than to the heathen Solomon Islanders through sharing the status of 'Christian'; the European missionaries' insistence on the evils of heathenism – in New Georgia represented by headhunting and on Vella Lavella by widow-strangling – made a hierarchy based on Christian criteria quite clear. The teachers believed they had gained an elevated place in the Christian hierarchy not just through acceptance of the Christian gospel and adoption of Christian virtues but by going further and accepting the challenge of evangelism.

¹¹⁰ Goldie to Danks, 16 July 1908; Goldie to Danks, 28 Oct 1908, MOM 238.

¹¹¹ He took part in a punitive raid to the Marovo Lagoon in late 1908. Goldie was ambivalent about this action: 'the wisdom I question very much ... but there is absolutely nothing to condemn him for', he wrote to Sydney. Goldie to Danks, 14 January 1909, MOM 116.

¹¹² David Hilliard, *Protestant Missions in the Solomon Islands 1849-1942* (PhD thesis, Australian National University, 1966), pp. 275-80. A boxful of acrimonious correspondence between the Methodists and Commissioner Woodford and between Goldie, Shackell and the Sydney Methodist authorities over the Ontong Java affair can be found at MOM 168.

¹¹³ Board Minutes, 2 and 9 June 1911, MOM 3.

¹¹⁴ Rooney complained that the teachers were 'everlastingly crying out about the miserable stipends they receive'. Rooney to Danks, 31 August 1908, MOM 116.

¹¹⁵ Aminio Maiteci to Danks, 14 August 1906, MOM 116.

of Christian virtues but by going further and accepting the challenge of evangelism.

Using the same rhetoric as the white missionaries, the Fijian and Polynesian teachers' estimation of their own position conformed to western Christian tropes: they were messengers of the light to a benighted people. This can also be seen in a series of letters written by teachers to the General Secretary or to sponsors and published in *Missionary Review* in the 1890s (although the mediation inherent in the translation and editing of such letters by European missionaries, in the field or in Sydney, must not be ignored as a contributory factor in the tone of what was eventually published). As the Fijian Samson Leletha who worked in New Guinea put it:

We, your children who are engaged in heralding the light, are but few amongst a large number ... New Guinea is a great land – we strive that the whole may be lifted, but we cannot because we are so few.¹¹⁶

The teachers' critique of Melanesian life resonated with that which European missionaries had made for decades, including about pre-Christian Fiji. Samson saw New Guinea as a 'dark and difficult land'. Alesana, a Samoan missionary in Kiriwina, claimed:

the minds of the Kiriwina people are like the minds of the beasts, they have no sense of shame ... The whole land belongs to Satan ... they are very impure in their conduct ... The land is dark, the minds of the people are dark. When shall their minds be enlightened?

Christianity would, he feared, not be established quickly because of the chiefs who were believed to control the yam harvest and the weather – and who would lose power if Christianity were accepted, a comment which shows that here the Islander teacher had an acute understanding of local political realities.¹¹⁷ In a later letter, Alesana enumerated the Kiriwinians' faults as stealing, fornication, fighting, filthy language and polygamy – a list based strongly on the Ten Commandments.¹¹⁸ Samuela, Alesana's Fijian colleague, told the local people that he had come to preach

¹¹⁶ *Missionary Review*, July 1896, p. 5.

¹¹⁷ *Missionary Review*, December 1895, pp. 9-10. The letter was originally addressed to his sponsors, the Taranaki Street Sunday School, Wellington, NZ.

¹¹⁸ *Missionary Review*, January 1897, pp. 5-7. Also originally addressed to Taranaki St Sunday School.

the gospel 'because your spirits are diseased and dark and your minds lustful'.¹¹⁹ He saw himself as the bringer of the light, as the European missionaries had taught him.

Yet Goldie and his colleagues refused to recognise the teachers' status, allowing their own belief in a racial hierarchy which placed all Islanders at a similar level to override the Christian hierarchy which the Fijians had internalised. The teachers resented it. Maiteci attacked the Christian credentials of Rooney and Goldie, claiming that they were telling local Islanders to work on the Sabbath. 'The doings of these two are not like unto their words', he wrote, 'they say one thing and do another'.¹²⁰ In this way, he represented the Fijians as the true missionaries, loyal to the Methodist leadership in Sydney, while the Europeans indulged in various unchristian behaviours. The response of Goldie and Rooney was outraged denial and a counterattack on the Christian stature of the Fijians. Rooney wrote:

I often wonder whether some of these men have ever been converted. After reading some of [their] letters ... which are nothing but a pack of lies I find it hard to believe that they are the epistles of fellow labourers in the Master's Vineyard.¹²¹

The 1920s: more indigenous clergy and the beginnings of self-government

The representation of Islanders as junior members of the Christian family militated against their acceptance as equals and the growth of self-government in the developing Island churches. But from the 1910s, changes gradually took place and Islander leaders began to gain greater recognition as full colleagues of the European missionaries. The interest generated by the Edinburgh Conference influenced missionary societies to revive Venn's 'Three-Selfs Policy'. They were further encouraged by Roland Allen's influential *Missionary Methods: St Paul's Methods or Ours?* (1912), written after eight years' experience as a missionary in China, which argued that the missionaries should follow Paul's example of short stays, rapid

¹¹⁹ *Missionary Review*, April 1897, p. 10. Originally addressed to Ashfield Christian Endeavour Society.

¹²⁰ Maiteci to Danks, 29 December 1906 (Fijian original and English translation). MOM 116.

¹²¹ Rooney to Danks, 31 August 1908, MOM 116.

training of an indigenous Christian leadership and then allowing the Holy Spirit to guide the new Church. This method he compared unfavourably with that of the Western mission societies which maintained a large European presence in African, Asian and Pacific Islands Christian communities for fear of the lack of capacity of converts.¹²² Allen's book was read by Charles Abel, who probably considered it but was isolated from attempts made by other missions to implement the suggestions, and by William Bromilow, who saw it as a distant aim.¹²³ Frank Paton's *Kingdom in the Pacific* (1913) used the terminology and ideology of Venn and the Edinburgh Conference:

Our object in sending out missionaries is not to form new branches of our own Church, but to plant and develop a strong native Church that will ultimately be self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating.¹²⁴

These aims made the situation of Fijian and Polynesian missionaries somewhat complicated. When, in 1930, the Methodist New Britain District informed the Board in Sydney that they no longer needed Pacific Islands staff since their own training courses were now graduating enough clergy, the Board thanked the Samoan, Tongan and Fijian churches 'for their help and sacrifice'. But there was also some relief that the extra cost of overseas recruitment could now be avoided. Europeans and Fijian and Polynesian missionaries were always the financial responsibility of Sydney, while the responsibility for local teachers lay with the local community and the status of local ministers varied from place to place.¹²⁵ As Burton wrote about Papua in 1926, 'We must train men and women, to make unnecessary, some day, the white missionary, and the South Sea Island teacher who costs so much in travelling

¹²² Timothy Yates, *Christian Mission in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 60-61.

¹²³ David Wetherell, *Charles Abel and the Kwato Mission of Papua New Guinea 1891-1975* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1996), p. 172.

¹²⁴ Frank H.L. Paton, *The Kingdom in the Pacific* (London: Young People's Missionary Movement, 1913), p. 76.

¹²⁵ Board Minutes, 4-9 February 1930, MOM 208.

expenses ... It is the trained native preacher who can best instruct his people'.¹²⁶

European missionaries attempted to dispense with the services of overseas Fijian and Polynesian missionaries faster than they aimed to make themselves redundant. This was partly because of costs but also to implement the theories originating with Allen and the Edinburgh Conference. The growth of Methodist theological training meant that, by the 1920s, most 'teachers', 'catechists' and 'deacons' – positions filled in the past by Fijian and Polynesian missionaries – were now local converts. In 1923 the Methodist Board formally adopted Venn's 'Three Selves' as policy, stating as a major objective

the Christian instruction of evangelised peoples along lines which will result in the establishing of indigenous Christian Churches which, as soon as possible, shall become self-supporting and shall be entrusted with the responsibility of self-government and with the privilege of taking part in the great task of the Evangelisation of the World.

Greater responsibility was to be devolved to local congregations and indigenous ministers and all local clergy were to be paid locally. Though it was recognised that the financial demands would present difficulties, 'The Churches on the mission field shall be affectionately urged to recognise their own privilege of sharing in this responsibility'.¹²⁷ The photographs of smiling Papuan and New Britain teachers, especially those in responsible positions, in the pages of the *Missionary Review* parallel those of the Fijian missionaries a generation earlier (Figures 17 and 18).

The indigenisation of the Methodist clergy took longer to implement in the Solomons than in New Britain or Papua because Goldie was distrustful of the standard of his local teachers. Alan Tippett blamed later religious secession movements in the Western Solomons on the delay in training local teachers and the reliance on help from outside.¹²⁸ But Goldie also had perennial disagreements with Fijian teachers, of

¹²⁶ John W. Burton, *Our Task in Papua* (London: Epworth Press, 1926), p. 82.

¹²⁷ Board Minutes, 6 April 1923, MOM 207.

¹²⁸ Alan R. Tippett, *Solomon Islands Christianity: A Study in Growth and Obstruction* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1967), chap. 5.



Figure 17: Mataio and Madiu, pioneer local staff members at the Training Institution at Salamo, Papua.

Photo: *Missionary Review*, July 1925, p. 23.



Figure 18: Original caption –
'Apelis To Maniot, Principal Native Tutor of the George Brown College, New Britain, and his wife. He is of excellent character, and of exceptional abilities. Apelis has for many years rendered distinct service in an important position.'

By the mid 1920s, the Methodist training colleges in Melanesia were producing teachers and catechists for their own congregations and staff for the colleges.

Photo: *Missionary Review*, September 1925, front cover.

whom the majority, he said, 'have been lazy, dirty and deceitful, and anything but a good example to the people here', and with Samoans, claiming 'they simply cannot do the work'. He then suggested importing only Tongan workers whom he claimed stood the climate better and whom he apparently regarded as more biddable.¹²⁹ In 1922, after the Solomon Islands district had been transferred to the responsibility of the New Zealand Methodist Church, Goldie investigated the possibility of employing Maori teachers but he was still asking for recruits from Fiji as late as 1928 – without much success.¹³⁰ For by then, mission authorities in New Zealand and Australia saw no reason why Goldie should not be training his own staff locally.

In the Anglican parts of the Solomons, self-propagation of the Gospel progressed with the Melanesian Brotherhood, founded by Ini Kopuria in 1925 as an evangelistic order. Young men took vows for a fixed period to take the Gospel to the interior, making it, as Garrett notes, a realisation of Patteson's dream, 'a model for a self-propagating church'.¹³¹ Darrell Whiteman represented the order as stemming from the 'desire for Melanesian initiative and organisation in an environment ... increasingly dominated by paternalistic Europeans', since from the 1870s to the 1910s Melanesian priests and teachers were increasingly excluded from policy-making.¹³² Nonetheless, the ordination of Melanesian priests continued, so that in 1919 it was proposed in the *ABM Review* that the policy of 'white corks holding up a black net' could be changed to one of 'black nets and black corks' after the ordination of two more Melanesian priests. The aim was a 'native priesthood and a strong body of faithful communicants'; white missionaries could soon be withdrawn because 'the

¹²⁹ Goldie to Danks, 19 October 1909, MOM 168; Goldie to Danks, 10 March 1910, MOM 116.

¹³⁰ Goldie to Sinclair, 28 April 1922; Sinclair to Goldie, 8 February 1928; 7 June 1928, Methodist Church of New Zealand, Solomon Islands District correspondence, PMB 925.

¹³¹ Garrett, *Footsteps in the Sea*, pp. 348-350; Hilliard, *God's Gentlemen*, pp. 227-232. The Melanesian Brothers remain highly respected although they are now involved in community development and peacemaking as well as evangelism.

¹³² Darrell L. Whiteman, *Melanesians and Missionaries: An Ethnohistorical Study of Socio-Religious Change in the South West Pacific* (PhD thesis, Southern Illinois University, 1980), pp. 337-345.

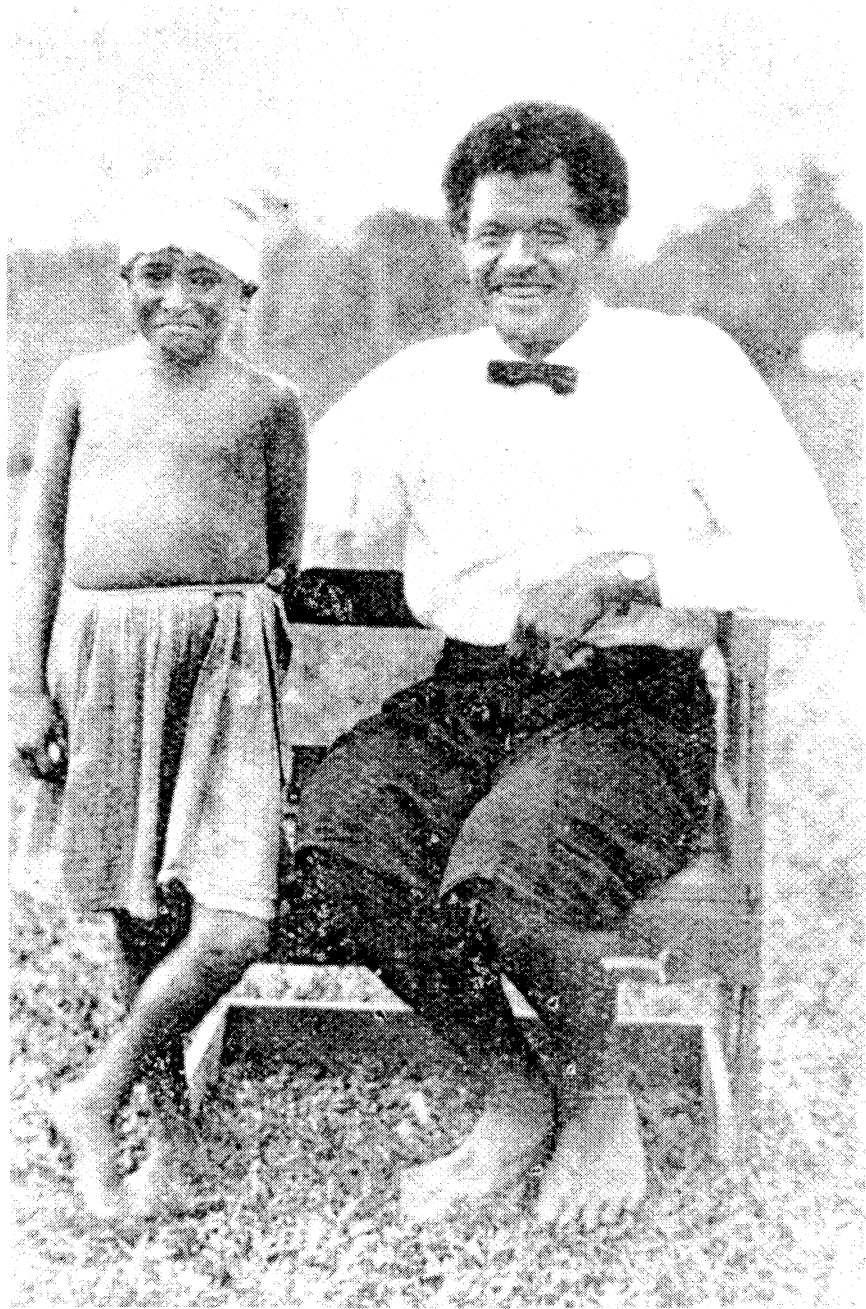


Figure 19: Rev. Dr. Wilisoni Lagi, Fijian missionary, in confident and relaxed mood with Arisi, his first patient at Salamo Hospital, Papua, 1925.

Photo: *Missionary Review*, November 1925, p.12.



Figure 20: Rev. Dr. Wilisoni Lagi in more formal pose.

Photo: *Missionary Review*, December 1926, p.19.

float will still be there – only BLACK’.¹³³

The result of the growing numbers of Melanesian teachers, catechists and, increasingly, ordained ministers was that the only remaining Fijian and Polynesian missionaries in Melanesia were fully ordained or had special skills. As such they were closer in status to the European missionaries, and Europeans were more prepared to grant them that status. This is evident in various ways. From 1924 the listings of overseas missionaries in the front cover of *Missionary Review* includes the overseas Fijian and Polynesians and most have the title ‘Rev’. Their appointments, retirements and deaths were now always acknowledged, photographs were captioned with names and reports of their work had a greater recognition of competence and ability. Fijian Rev Dr Wilisoni Lagi, both an ordained minister and qualified medical practitioner, worked at Salamo, Papua from 1925 to 1934. His appointment as one of the first two medical missionaries of the Australian Methodist Church – the other was Dr Adelaide Gault who went to India – was much heralded. Lagi was the subject of a lengthy article¹³⁴ and his photograph appeared several times, in relaxed and formal pose (Figures 19 and 20). He was not, one feels, a man lacking in confidence in his own abilities. Comments from colleagues show similar appreciation: ‘He has been most successful in his work and is winning the confidence of the people very quickly ... In 3 1/2 months he has treated 375 cases.’¹³⁵ Rev. Jeremaia Camaira of New Britain (Figure 21), minister and school principal, was accorded similar respect and is still remembered today for his agricultural education. On his departure on leave a European colleague wrote:

In almost every village the people regret his going and pray for his safe return. In fact it is difficult to find words capable of expressing the esteem in which this little family of Fijian Christians is held by the people amongst whom they have worked for the past six years. It is the result of a righteousness of character and steadfastness of purpose.¹³⁶

¹³³ *ABM Review*, November 1919, p 124. Emphasis in original.

¹³⁴ *Missionary Review*, December 1926, pp. 18-20.

¹³⁵ *Missionary Review*, November 1925, p. 12.

¹³⁶ Michael Lowe, personal communication; *Missionary Review*, April 1926, p. 5.



Figure 21: *Missionary Review's* custom of reproducing photographs of missionaries arriving and leaving their postings was extended to Fijian and Polynesian missionaries serving overseas from the 1910s. These portraits mark the return of Rev. Jeremaia Camaira and his wife to New Britain after furlough in Fiji.

Photo: *Missionary Review*, May 1927, p. 8.

SPECIAL BOARD NUMBER.

MARCH 5th 1930
XXXIX.—No. 17.

ONE SHILLING AND
SIXPENCE PER ANNUM
POST FREE

The MISSIONARY REVIEW



Rev. Ioane Siatua, Samoan Native Minister,
Bwaidoga, Papua, and His Wife.
—Photo: Rev. G. H. Hewitt.

PUBLISHED BY THE
Methodist Missionary Society of Australasia
OUR FIELDS—TONGA, SAMOA, FIJI-
(NATIVE & INDIAN), PAPUA, NEW BRITAIN,
THE NORTHERN TERRITORY, AND INDIA.

Figure 22: Samoan minister Rev. Ioane Siatua dressed for preaching duties in Papua.

Photo: *Missionary Review*, March 1930.

The images from this era show self-confident Fijian and Polynesian ministers in charge of Melanesian congregations. They seem now to have achieved the status and respect their predecessors had suffered and fought for – a respectability epitomised by the photograph reproduced on the cover of the *Missionary Review* in 1930 (Figure 22) of Samoan Rev. Ioane Siatua and wife in Papua, 1930.

Chapter Nine

‘Our Two Mandates’: bringing themes together

In May 1921 the Australian Mandate Administration took over control of the ex-German colony of New Guinea. The League of Nations, set up under the 1919 Versailles Peace Treaty ending the First World War to maintain the embryonic peace, in general disapproved of colonialism and supported self-government for smaller states. However, it was recognised under Article 22 of the League’s Covenant that some peoples were ‘not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world’. Such territories could be administered by others under the authority of a League of Nations Mandate which in the case of New Guinea was designated to Australia. In such a case, the ‘well-being and development’ of the indigenous people was laid on the Administering Power as ‘a sacred trust of civilisation’.¹

The Image

In the same month, May 1921, the Methodist *Missionary Review* carried a remarkable image, apparently designed as a poster (Figure 23), which provided a Christian humanitarian commentary on Australia’s new responsibility. The creator of this image is not named though it was surely not a Western Australian. It was probably John Burton who was actively involved with the *Missionary Review* in 1921 and formally took over as editor in May 1922. Entitled ‘Our Two Mandates’, the poster juxtaposes state and Christian responsibilities. The left side carries two texts: the

¹ Covenant of the League of Nations, Article 22 clause 1.

OUR TWO MANDATES

1. The COMMONWEALTH

"To those Colonies . . . which are inhabited by peoples not yet able to stand by themselves, there should be applied the principle that THE WELL-BEING AND DEVELOPMENT of such peoples form a sacred trust of civilization."

—THE COVENANT OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS.

2. The CHRISTIAN CHURCH

"We then that are strong, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. . . . For even Christ pleased not Himself."

—THE MISSIONARY APOSTLE.

OUR RESPONSIBILITY

1,000,000
PEOPLE
NEED THE HELP
AND GUIDANCE
OF A
HIGHER RACE

THE
Brown Pacific
Appeals
TO
White Australia



Take up the White Man's Burden—
Send forth the best ye breed—
Go, bind your sons to exile,
To serve your Captives' need.

Our Missions Seek the Material,
Moral, Social and Spiritual
Welfare of these People.

Can we whose souls are lighted
With Wisdom from on High
Can we to men brought
The Lamp of Life deny?

Figure 23: 'Our Two Mandates'

quotation from Article 22 of the League of Nations Covenant concerning the ‘sacred trust’ in which administering powers should hold Mandated Territories and the first stanza of Rudyard Kipling’s poem ‘The White Man’s Burden’ (1899). These texts invoked responsibilities of the Commonwealth Government. Balancing them on the right are a citation from Paul’s letter to the Romans – ‘we who are strong ought to bear the burden of the weak’ – and part of the missionary hymn by Bishop Reginald Heber of Calcutta, ‘From Greenland’s icy mountains’.² These latter texts indicate the responsibilities of the Australian churches.

In the centre, under the heading ‘Our Responsibility’, is a map including Australia, the island of New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, flanked by coconut trees and the profile figure of an adult Melanesian man with indigenous facial markings. The dominant symbolic stress is on the obligation demanded of Australians in both the secular and religious spheres; there remains an implicit assumption that they were complementary. This iconography marks a reassertion of the watchwords of an older Evangelical tradition: obligation and duty, the seriousness and ‘labour’ implicit in the practice of Evangelical Christianity.³ Yet alongside the language of duty and obligation and the reference to modern secular political realities – indeed, immediately below the words taken from the Covenant of the League of Nations – there is recourse to the ongoing language of social evolution: ‘the Brown Pacific’ needs the ‘help and guidance of a higher race’.

The image and the debates on which it commented resonate with other representations discussed in this thesis and rehearse the debate between Christian and secular writers on matters of evolution, racial difference, the notion of ‘progress’ and resulting practical policies. Some arguments were modified in various ways from their earlier manifestations. But the complexity and interweaving of evolutionist and familial attitudes towards Islanders, debates about whether Islanders should be

² Romans 15:1-3. Heber’s hymn is no. 547 in the ‘English Hymnal’. It was composed in 1819 for a missionary meeting some years before he went to India.

³ See further discussion in Chapter 6.

exploited or protected, taught or ignored, the basic assumptions about the similitude of all human beings entangled with beliefs about the relative superiority and inferiority of certain racially-defined human groups, all continued. The debates of the 1920s which centred on the Australian administration of the Mandate in New Guinea resonated with the earlier debates, and provide a point of concluding reflection. In this chapter I shall take each of the elements of the poster in turn and relate them to the themes of the thesis as a whole.

The Context for the Poster

The destruction and devastation of World War 1 led to a widely-shared longing for a mechanism that would maintain peace and ensure that the past war could never be repeated. This vision, most notably connected with the American President Woodrow Wilson, aimed to ‘vindicate the principles of peace and justice in the life of the world as against selfish and autocratic power’ through councils of collective security which would intervene to prevent quarrels escalating.⁴ Wilson was the son of a Presbyterian minister; a profound Christian motivation underpinned his public life. His biographer John Mulder emphasised his belief in a covenant between God and human beings within which human beings had the responsibility to give the world structure and order.⁵ The Covenant of the League of Nations, with its provision for regular conferences, marked the culmination of that vision – but the failure of the United States to ratify the covenant or take part in conference deliberations undermined the whole system.

Historians’ subsequent judgement on the League of Nations has been harsh: ‘an almost total failure, except as an institution for collecting statistics’⁶ or ‘a mere

⁴ Woodrow Wilson, speech to the United States Senate, 2 April 1917, cited in Thomas Knock, *To End All Wars: Woodrow Wilson and the Quest for a New World Order* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 121.

⁵ John M. Mulder, *Woodrow Wilson: The Years of Preparation* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1978), pp. 269-277.

⁶ Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: A History of the World, 1914-1991* (New York: Pantheon

buttress of the existing settlement'.⁷ The major powers systematically deprived it of any ability to be effective, mostly by absenting themselves. Yet in Australia and the Pacific Islands, the League of Nations Covenant did have a particular importance, perhaps proving the truth of Norman Davies' comment that the League 'played a major role in the management of minor issues, and a negligible role in the management of major ones'.⁸ Australia's mandate over New Guinea proved to be a site of debates in Christian and secular circles over the level and nature of the responsibility thus evoked. An active League of Nations Union in Melbourne aimed to educate citizens 'to equip themselves to discharge their responsibilities for a National undertaking'.⁹

In May 1921 the Australian military government of the former German New Guinea was replaced by a civilian administration under the terms of the League of Nations Mandate. Exactly what this Mandate meant was the source of considerable tension within Australia. Prime Minister W.M. Hughes saw control of New Guinea mainly as a strategic matter, ensuring that 'the great rampart of islands stretching around the north-east of Australia' would, as he had demanded at Versailles, be 'held by us or by some Power in whom we have absolute confidence'.¹⁰ Not once in his lengthy speech to Parliament on his return from Versailles did he use the words 'sacred trust' or refer to article 22 of the Covenant, which he had elsewhere opposed as 'an untried theory'.¹¹ To Hughes, New Guinea's importance lay in what it could give Australia

Books, 1994), p. 34.

⁷ David Thomson, *Europe since Napoleon* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1966), p. 642.

⁸ Norman Davies, *Europe: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 950.

⁹ F.W. Eggleston, *The Australian Mandate for New Guinea: Record of Round Table Discussion* (Melbourne: Macmillan/Melbourne University Press, 1928), frontispiece.

¹⁰ W. Hughes, Speech to the House of Representatives, 10 September 1919 (in Hansard (Australia) vol. 89, pp. 12163-79). On Hughes' attitude to the Peace Conference, see also Avner Offer, *The First World War: An Agrarian Interpretation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), pp. 371-76.

¹¹ W.J. Hudson, *Australia and the League of Nations* (Sydney: Sydney University Press/Australian Institute of International Affairs, 1980), pp. 27-30. For further discussion of Australian policy and official attitudes towards the Mandated territory see also Hank Nelson, 'Frontiers, Territories and

and not vice versa.

Billy Hughes rejected the humanitarian emphasis of the Mandate in favour of 'a peace which rested upon the lasting foundations of decisive victory' and his hostility to Wilson was unrelenting.¹² Within Australia, such thinking resonated with fears about the possibility of invasion and the development of the White Australia policy which had originated in the late nineteenth century but were still strong in the 1920s. The concerns in Queensland about a Pacific Islander workforce, the fear that such a workforce would 'pollute' the white race, were considered in Chapter Four of this thesis. Once doubts about the ability of white men to work in the tropics had been assuaged, economic and racial motives combined to maintain 'White Australia', but anxieties remained. Australian fear of a possible 'invasion' of their territory by Asians was evident in both fictional and non-fictional popular writing. Robert Dixon, in his study of British and Australian imperial fiction, analysed stories and articles in the *Lone Hand* in the years before 1914, finding them preoccupied with the vulnerability of an unguarded northern coastline and an unoccupied hinterland.¹³ A four-part series in 1909 entitled 'Our Unfinished Commonwealth' called for the Northern Territory to be 'promptly taken over and effectively occupied and garrisoned', otherwise it 'may yet be the means of turning our white race to a degraded mixture of black and tan.' Hughes' demand for the 'island ramparts' reflected the same fear.

Hughes' ambivalence about the League of Nations, however, was but a pale shadow of the strident opposition coming from parts of the United States to everything that

States of Mind' (paper presented at the 'States and Territories' conference, Australian National University, 10-11 December 1998).

¹² W. Hughes, Speech to the House of Representatives, 10 September 1919; Hudson, *Australia and the League of Nations*, chapter 1.

¹³ Robert Dixon, *Writing the Colonial Adventure: Race, Gender and Nation in Anglo-Australian Popular Fiction 1875-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) chapter 8. See also Humphrey McQueen, *A New Britannia* (Melbourne: Penguin Australia, 1970), pp. 56-60.

the League represented. The biological determinism permeating the writings of Lothrop Stoddard and Madison Grant, warning of impending war between the 'naturally superior' European 'races' and those they ruled, gained in popularity during the 1920s.¹⁴ Several other scientific developments around the turn of the century also reinvigorated a popular view of heredity based on biological determinism. Galton's statistical modelling suggested that certain characteristics could be promoted within a population through selective breeding and the rediscovery of Mendelian genetics provided a mechanism for Darwinian natural selection.¹⁵ These developments gave a certain credibility to the demands of Grant and Stoddard for 'world-eugenics' to avoid the mixing of races and to encourage the 'highest' to reproduce.¹⁶ Since the laws of nature determined that biology and heredity were everything, Grant and Stoddard claimed, then direct rule by those of 'worth and merit' should be the norm, thus undermining democracy. Biological determinists attacked democracy and socialism on racial grounds and discounted them as

¹⁴ Madison Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 4th (orig 1916, USA) ed. (London: G.Bell and Sons Ltd, 1920); Lothrop Stoddard, *The Rising Tide of Color against White World-Supremacy* (New York: Charles Scribener and Sons, 1920); Lothrop Stoddard, *The Revolt against Civilization: The Menace of the under Man*, 3rd, original ed. (London: Chapman and Hall, 1922). For a summary of their arguments, see Chapter 3.

¹⁵ Pat Shipman, *The Evolution of Racism: Human Differences and the Use and Abuse of Science* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994), pp. 113-116. Mendelian theory was not fully developed until the work of H.A. Fisher and J.B.S. Haldane on population genetics in the late 1920s but by around 1920 the basic outlines were clear. Haldane himself had grave reservations about the way such science was used by policymakers, describing eugenics as 'largely the product of a class struggle based on the desire of the governing class to prove their innate superiority' (from a 1936 report on genetics). In 1937 he opposed British eugenicists who were trying to extend German racial measures to Britain, commenting: 'When we use the word fit we must ask "fit for what?" And that brings us up against the whole question of social ideals'. William Greenslade, *Degeneration, Culture and the Novel 1880-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 254-5.

¹⁶ Peter J. Bowler, *Evolution: The History of an Idea* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 1984), pp. 289-296; John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism 1860-1925* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1955), pp. 153-152; Shipman, *Evolution of Racism*, pp. 111-128.

sentimental. Grant rejected altruism and the 'vain phantom of internationalism',¹⁷ seen as both unscientific and potentially dangerous.

Those who believed that the Mandate was a 'sacred trust' and rejected biological determinist arguments against the League's demands for international responsibility had to confront this literature, which was reprinted regularly and translated into many languages, and actively defend their position. The Covenant of the League of Nations brought the issues of international justice and social concern to a world stage and Australia, as a Mandated power, became a player. Faced with assumptions that New Guinea was a prize which could be exploited with scant regard for the consequences for indigenous peoples, Christian humanitarians were again forced to defend justice and mutual responsibility on the grounds of the psychic unity of humankind. The poster 'Our Two Mandates' can be seen as part of the campaign to support the Wilsonian view and to arouse general interest in the administration of the Mandate.

The Secular elements of the Poster: the responsibilities of protection

The poster of May 1921 is divided vertically with the quotations from the League of Nations Covenant and from Kipling on the left. The citation from Article 22 of the Covenant emphasised (in capitals) the principle that 'the well-being and development' of those peoples 'not yet able to stand by themselves' was the prime responsibility of the Mandate Power. This was the position which had been promoted by Hubert Murray, the chair of but also the minority voice on the Commission tasked with forming the Mandate Administration for New Guinea. The majority of the Commissioners (Attlee Hunt and Walter H. Lucas) wanted to settle large numbers of returned soldiers on the ex-German plantations and believed the 'sacred trust of civilization' demanded by the Mandate could be fulfilled by abolishing flogging.¹⁸

¹⁷ Madison Grant, 'Introduction', in *The Rising Tide of Color against White World-Supremacy*, ed. Lothrop Stoddard (New York: Charles Scribener and Sons, 1920), p. xxx.

¹⁸ Final Report (1920) of the Royal Commission on Late German New Guinea: report by the majority of commissioners, p. 29. Printed in Papers of the Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, session 1920-21, vol iii, pp. 1539-1621.

Murray had been Administrator in Papua since 1906; his mode of government, though subject to both contemporary and modern criticism, was in general seen as taking into serious account the interests and concerns of Islanders and as such was approved of by most missionaries. Fearing that the aim of the Mandate was 'the development of the country solely in the interests of the European settler', with the role proposed for New Guineans being solely 'to assist the European with his labour', he advocated maintaining expropriated German plantations as a Government-owned business 'in the public interest'.¹⁹ Murray's vision did not proceed; the majority report was accepted. Nor was he offered the Administrator's job in the mandated territory, which went to an ex-soldier, General Wisdom. The ex-German plantations were expropriated for soldier settlement. 'Returned soldiers are heroes and all the rest of it', Murray commented, 'but their idea of a native policy differs from mine'.²⁰

The concern to administer New Guinea with justice and humanity was also strengthened by humanitarian guilt about the fate of Aborigines within Australia. Hank Nelson notes how this theme recurred in debate over the administration of Papua in the early years of Federation,²¹ and Burton's comments in 1928 reflected the same concern over what he saw as the less than ideal administration of New Guinea:

Australia has had very little experience of native races; for the less that is said about our relations with Australian Blacks the better. In Papua, it is true, we have managed with more than ordinary ability a native race, but even there we had only a skeleton of efficient men, and we could not well spare any for a new venture.²²

The language of justice was not new to Burton, as his campaign to end the indenture of Indians in Fiji, discussed in Chapter 5, makes clear. A series of seminars and 'round tables' about the mandate for New Guinea, addressed by both church and

¹⁹ Report of the Royal Commission on Late German New Guinea: report of the chairman, pp. 55, 68-9.

²⁰ Hubert Murray to Gilbert, 2 December 1919, in Francis West, ed., *Selected Letters of Hubert Murray* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 106.

²¹ Nelson, 'Frontiers, Territories and States of Mind'.

²² John W. Burton, 'The Australian Mandate in New Guinea', in *Studies in Australian Affairs*, ed. Persia Campbell, R.C. Mills, and G.V. Portus (Melbourne: Institute of Pacific Relations/Melbourne University Press, 1928), p. 223.

secular figures, were organised with a desire to administer New Guinea with greater humanity than had been achieved with Aboriginal people. The League of Nations was seen as the model.

The poster's emphasis on the 'well-being and development' of the indigenous people, as opposed to the benefit of commercial interests or returned servicemen, backed Murray's vision for New Guinea. As Chapters Four and Five investigated, missionary attitudes to Melanesia had long been protective of Islanders. Continuing the abolitionist tradition inherited from John Wesley, William Wilberforce and Thomas Clarkson, missionaries protested against recruitment and indenture because they believed them to be coercive. From the testimony to the 1872 British Parliamentary inquiry into the death of Bishop Patteson, through Fison's campaign against the recruitment of Islanders for the Fiji sugar fields, to the debates and controversy amongst Presbyterians concerning Melanesian recruitment to Queensland, missionary opinion rejected such recruitment. Any disagreements amongst them, such as that between Presbyterians in Queensland in the 1890s, concerned the existence or otherwise of force and fraud. But missionaries were not alone; British Naval captains shared their concerns, as did many members of the general public. It was secular rather than mission groups who raised the main alarm over the 1884 *Hopeful* case. However, the Brisbane campaigners used the established missionary criteria of deceit and coercion in their appeals to Sir Samuel Griffith to suspend recruitment, linking religious and secular concerns.²³ Indeed, the very words 'sacred trust', although used in the secular League of Nations Covenant, have religious connotations, as does the word 'covenant'. The creator of the poster, which appeared in a missionary journal, had a religious world-view and yet appealed to secular and governmental authorities to fulfil their obligations, using a religious discourse only in part. He continued the religious influence which had been exerted in political abolitionist campaigns in Britain and in the anti-indenture campaigns in Australia investigated in this thesis.

²³ See Chapter 4.

The citation from Kipling in the bottom left-hand corner of the poster needs consideration. Kipling has been regarded as an apologist for Empire and the linking of 'The White Man's Burden' with missionary appeals might be interpreted as Christian missions firmly embracing imperialism. Yet this would be to ignore the elegiac and sacrificial elements in Kipling's poem, elements which seem to resonate with Burton's and Paton's position. For when Kipling published the poem in 1899,²⁴ he saw the obligation of white man to bring peace and end terror, famine and sickness in the non-white world as one which would cost 'thankless years' and 'the hate of those ye guard', which would leave 'the best ye breed' living and often dying far from home, and which would probably end in failure. As Jim Zwick suggested,²⁵ while Kipling's poem represents imperial rule as a noble endeavour, it is also a warning of the costs of that endeavour. It is this sacrificial element, with such resonance in Christianity, that Frank Paton, citing Kipling's poem alongside Romans 15, evoked in 1913:

If it is true that we who are strong ought to bear the burden of the weak, then we have a terrible past to atone for, and a great work before us which we have hardly begun to touch as yet. Surely this is a national duty, the white man's burden and the white man's privilege.²⁶

Kipling was similarly quoted by Burton in 1921 when he invoked the 'white man's burden' to curb European appropriation of 'profit and advantage' from the 'vast wealth and tropical resources' of the Pacific Islands without concern for the 'undeveloped peoples of these islands'.²⁷

²⁴ 'The White Man's Burden' was published in the US in *McClure's Magazine* in February 1899, as commentary on the American obligation, as Kipling saw it, of ruling the Philippines.

²⁵ Zwick, Jim. "'The White Man's Burden' and Its Critics." <http://www.boondocksnet.com/ai/kipling/> In Jim Zwick, ed., *Anti-Imperialism in the United States, 1898-1935*. <http://www.boondocksnet.com/ai/>

²⁶ Frank H.L. Paton, *The Kingdom in the Pacific* (London: Young People's Missionary Movement, 1913), p. 35. Frank Paton was the son of John Paton, a pioneer Presbyterian missionary in the New Hebrides. Born and brought up on his father's mission station, Frank returned there after education in Australia and Europe as a missionary in his own right. He then became a mission administrator in Australia.

²⁷ *Missionary Review*, January 1921, p. 3.

Christian humanitarian support for colonialism as a protection for indigenous people was an established tradition. As discussed in earlier chapters, the link between missionaries and colonialism was complex and fluid but the protection provided by colonial rule against the outrages of 'evil whites' under no legal constraint was seen as a reason for missionaries to support it. George Brown advocated greater colonial control in the southwest Pacific as a curb on the labour trade while Frank Paton campaigned for British, or Victorian, control over the New Hebrides to end alleged French mistreatment of indentured workers.²⁸ Missionaries sought to influence colonial governments to favour 'native interests' (and often themselves) over trading interests and claimed the credit if protective measure were enacted. The protective 'colonialism' of the League of Nations Mandate could be seen in the same way. The review editor of the LMS *Chronicle* praised W. Allen Young's *Christianity and Civilization in the South Seas* (1922) as 'one of the things widely desired, viz, a work which links the League of Nations with Christian Missions'.²⁹ Missionary protection of indigenous peoples was implicitly equated at least by some with the League of Nations Mandates; Young's argument resonated with contemporary events though in fact his book made absolutely no mention of the League while maintaining that 'the principle that it was the duty of the government to protect the rights of native races' was first promoted by missionaries.³⁰

²⁸ Helen Gardner, *Cultures, Christians and Colonial Subjects: George Brown's Representations of Islanders from Samoa and the Bismarck Archipelago* (PhD thesis, La Trobe University, 1999), chapter 4; Frank H.L. Paton, *Australian Interests in the Pacific* (Melbourne: Arbuckle, Waddell and Fawckner, 1906); Frank H.L. Paton, *Slavery under the British Flag* (Melbourne: Brown, Prior and Co, 1914). See also Chapters 3 and 4.

²⁹ *Chronicle*, June 1922, p. 156. W. Allen Young's *Christianity and Civilization in the South Pacific: The Influence of Missionaries Upon European Expansion in the Pacific During the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press, 1922) was the 'Robert Hubert Memorial Prize essay for 1920' at Oxford University. Young had apparently never visited the Pacific Islands or had links with the region.

³⁰ Young, *Christianity and Civilization in the South Pacific*, p. 37.

The Religious elements of the Poster: evangelism and education

On the right-hand side of the poster are a quotation from Paul's letter to the Romans and one from a well-known missionary hymn. Paul claimed that sacrificial love, beyond the requirements of the Jewish Law, should be the watchword for Christians. Advocating such action to the Australian churches reminded mission supporters of their responsibility to fellow Christians in the Islands who were poorer, less well-educated and in need of Christian nurture. Paul's identification on the poster as 'the Missionary Apostle' further emphasised the authority of his words for the contemporary missionary endeavour and placed Australian Christians as direct inheritors of his actions.

The lower quotation from Heber spoke predominantly of the missionary duty to spread the Christian message, echoing the Great Commission from Matthew's Gospel.³¹ This was represented as bringing the Christian light to the 'benighted', the same tropes and motivation that had long influenced missionaries to the Pacific. As discussed in earlier chapters, the pioneer missionaries used the metaphor of enlightening the heathen who were perceived to be in darkness, blind and in thrall to 'evil' or at the very least to 'misguided' religions. Heber shared this view; the second stanza of his hymn – widely quoted in missionary literature – reads:

What though the spicy breezes blow soft o'er Ceylon's isle;
Though every prospect pleases, and only man is vile?
In vain with lavish kindness the gifts of God are strown;
The heathen in his blindness bows down to wood and stone.

The metaphor of bringing light to the blind or to the darkness was adopted by the Islander missionaries discussed in Chapter 8, who saw themselves as the inheritors of the missionary tradition, a view encouraged by their European mentors and superiors. Evangelical missionaries always considered Christianity the greatest gift that could be given to Islanders. Missionary motivations could be mixed and complex but the predominant driving force remained religious. By the 1920s, the populations of the Pacific Islands were largely Christian but some remained 'unreached' – actually far

³¹ Matthew 28:19-20.

more than Australians realised in 1921, prior to the exploration of the New Guinea Highlands in the 1930s.³² The task of conversion was not complete and nor was the creation of new Christians, mature in their faith and changed in their lives. Ranged alongside religious change – indeed, according to many Evangelical missionaries, a necessary corollary to it – were the goals of education, changes in attitudes towards work and ‘growth in character’, the subject of several chapters of this thesis.

Between these citations is a Melanesian figure. He is an adult male with indigenous facial markings and body ornamentation but it is not clear whether he was intended to illustrate a heathen or a Christian Melanesian, especially as male converts in Papua did not wear clothes on the upper body. Certainly, he is not a figure of sentimental appeal, as a child or sick person might have been, but neither has he any accoutrements of war or of pre-Christian religious worship. Perhaps his very ambiguity is deliberate – he could represent either the heathen in need of the Gospel or the new Christian in need of education, employment opportunities and further religious enlightenment.

‘Our Responsibility’: the common ground

The centre of the poster is headed, in large capitals, ‘Our Responsibility’ and comprises several elements. The map shows Australia (in white), the island of New Guinea (with Papua and the territory of New Guinea together in black) and the Solomon Islands (in white, rather indistinct). In its very composition, the map emphasised these countries’ physical proximity, the nature of their shared region. It reminded missionary supporters of the particular responsibility of Australian churches, especially the Methodists and Anglicans, towards the Pacific Islands – specifically to Papua and New Guinea as Australia’s colony and mandate, where they supplied most of the missionaries and regarded converts with a proprietorial eye, as already discussed. While the familial aspect of this relationship is downplayed in the

³² Relative to the population of Australia at the time – around 5.2 million – the approximately 1.5 million inhabitants of the Highlands represent a large number of people.

poster, it was emphasised in a lecture given by John Burton in Melbourne under the auspices of the League of Nations Union, where he described the Covenant as a daring scheme for corporate living, which transcends every other attempt in human history to provide an enduring and practical basis for human society. In looking out upon the nations of the earth it sees them as one great human family and has for its objective the promotion of true family feeling.³³

The map made no distinction between the Mandated Territory of New Guinea and the colony of Papua, long held by Australia; the obligations seemingly applied to both. Hubert Murray, the Administrator of Papua, had advocated but failed to achieve a joint administration and yet this map was an apparent visual endorsement of his position which implicitly endorsed his policy of protection of Islanders.

As considered in Chapter 8 and elsewhere, the notion of protection was closely related to ideas of evolutionism. The statement alongside the map makes this clear: '1,000,000 people need the help and guidance of a higher race'. People who supported the ideals of the League of Nations rejected racial determinism based on biological distinctions but they did not necessarily reject evolutionary assumptions. In his 1916 book *The Passing of the Great Race*, Grant claimed that the 'great lesson of race is the immutability of somatological or bodily characteristics, with which is closely associated the immutability of psychic disposition and impulses'.³⁴ Those who saw themselves as the heirs of the abolitionists, who had declared their solidarity with slaves under the slogan 'Am I not a Man and a Brother' and had campaigned against indenture in the Pacific, could not accept this reinvigorated racial discourse and produced various rebuttals. While late nineteenth-century racial ideas of social evolutionism, such as those of Morgan, Maine and Tylor, assumed the existence of relatively more 'advanced' and 'inferior' groups, the reasons for 'inferiority' or 'backwardness' were based on environmental, climatic or religious ideas rather than

³³ John W. Burton, *The Australian Mandate in Relation to Our Duty to Native Races* (Melbourne: Australian Student Christian Movement, 1921), p. 3. This lecture was delivered in May 1921, the same month that the poster, probably also Burton's work, was published.

³⁴ Grant, *Great Race*, p xix

biological ones. Certainly, as adopted by the missionary correspondents of the metropolitan theorists, evolutionist ideas allowed for potential change and development amongst non-European peoples, especially under Christian guidance.³⁵ This view had been reasserted in Frank Paton's study book (1913) in which he demonstrated the missionary use of a new discourse of international responsibility, a variation on older humanitarian concerns.³⁶ Paton, like earlier missionary writers such as James Watkin, Thomas Williams and Benjamin Danks, did not hesitate to expound on the 'evils' of the pre-Christian Pacific – such as cannibalism, war and widow-strangling. Like them, he saw this 'depravity' as induced by the thralldom of pagan religion and geographic isolation rather than inherent lack of ability.³⁷ George Williams, a commentator on Paton's book, made explicit what he understood to be Paton's position:

the difference is between the actual and the potential or possible life of a people. A people may be appallingly degraded, but it is only race prejudice which assumes that the degradation is due to essential inferiority ... is it not both irrational and unChristian to assume that the backward races are essentially inferior races?³⁸

Acceptance of the 'degradations' of heathenism did not, in Paton's eyes, equate with belief in immutable hierarchies based on race. It might not be clear whether heathenism produced 'degenerate' societies or whether 'degeneration' (due to distance and length of time from true faith and civilization as a result of the Fall) produced heathenism or moral degradation, but isolation, economic and social

³⁵ For further discussion of nineteenth-century racial beliefs, see Chapter 2.

³⁶ Paton, *Kingdom in the Pacific*. Paton was influenced by the rhetoric of the 1910 Edinburgh World Missionary Conference (see chapters 7 and 8), and his book can be seen as part of the newer internationalist missionary discourse.

³⁷ Paton, *Kingdom in the Pacific*, pp. 2-3.

³⁸ George J. Williams, *Suggestions to Leaders of Mission Study Circles Using "The Kingdom in the Pacific"* (Melbourne: Australian Missionary Study Council, 1914), p. 8. This work is a separate 'guide' to Paton's book with teaching notes, questions and suggestions. It is not clear whether Paton had any input to this guide; Williams' summary of Paton's position is in general accurate and fair. Study groups (called 'circles') are, however, firmly steered to the desired conclusions.

'backwardness' and heathenism were clearly linked in his scheme. The alleviation of the evils of this complex lay with Christianity and the accompanying education and changes of lifestyle and morals already discussed, which nations like Australia and Britain had a humanitarian duty to share with Islanders.

J.H. Oldham's *Christianity and the Race Problem* (1924) provided Australian Evangelical Christians/humanitarians with a further welcome and cogently argued rebuttal of the 'scientific' racism of Stoddard and Grant.³⁹ Oldham's treatise was a sophisticated attempt to develop an alternative Christian analysis of racial relations by attacking the determinism of Stoddard and Grant, both of whom were cited, on scientific, economic and ethical grounds. Where Stoddard saw biological race as the determining factor, Oldham's explanation for differential development incorporated history, culture and geographic circumstance. This essentially environmentalist argument, which saw 'race' (he preferred the word 'peoples') as a sociological rather than a biological concept, recognised potential for progressivist change and development and reasserted the psychic unity of mankind. He even questioned the dominance of natural selection theory, suggesting that Lamarck's theory of the transmission of acquired characteristics had not been disproved.⁴⁰ With an echo of evolutionism, he proposed that social separation might be natural between 'those

³⁹ J.H. Oldham, *Christianity and the Race Problem* (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1924) For details on Oldham, see Chapter 7. His book was widely read in Australia. Burton approvingly reviewed it in *Missionary Review*, December 1924, pp. 1-2. Reviews and recommendations also appeared in *Missionary Review*, September 1924, pp. 18-19; *AMB Review*, August 1925, p. 90; *Chronicle*, August 1924, p. 190. An Australian synthesis of Oldham's views (though not acknowledged as such, in spite of virtually verbatim citation) can be found in Kenneth H. Bailey, *Racialism and Christian Missions* (Melbourne: Methodist Layman's Missionary Movement, 1924), a lecture given to the Methodist Laymen's Missionary Movement on 30 October 1924 which applied Oldham's ideas to the situation in New Guinea.

⁴⁰ Oldham, *Christianity and the Race Problem*, pp. 52-3. Oldham had a life-long interest in education, both in India and Africa; a member of the British Government's Advisory Committee on Native Education in Tropical Africa, he wrote jointly with Lord Lugard definitive policy statements on African education.

whose conditions of life are separated by centuries', but he expected that education would rapidly change this situation. The real difference, he claimed, was in levels of knowledge.⁴¹

The foregoing, then, is the background to the evolutionism inherent in the poster – it was fundamentally environmentalist and incorporated notions of protection. This is in apparent tension with the claim that 'The Brown Pacific Appeals to White Australia'. The statement, replete with obvious racial distinctions, echoes the many 'appeals' of missionary societies to their supporters for funds and assistance – a mainstay of missionary journals of the period under discussion – like James Watkin's 'Appeal' of 1838 for funds and volunteers for the new Methodist mission in Fiji.⁴² But unlike Watkin, who mostly presented his perception of Fijians' needs and wrote 'on their behalf', the creator of this poster purports to speak for Pacific Islanders. The subtle shift of voice has several effects. It suggests that Islanders might actually have been involved in the poster's creation but with no other evidence this seems unlikely. More probable is the assumption on the part of European missionaries that their identification with their converts was so close that they knew their thoughts and could speak for them. The accuracy of this assumption is questionable but it again echoes the familial images so common in the Pacific missions – fathers could speak for their children. However, the shift might also mark the beginnings of a recognition that Islanders ought to be consulted through the growth of self-governing churches. As investigated in Chapter 8, European missionaries had great difficulty in practice in accepting the transfer of authority to Islanders, though they acknowledged it as theoretically desirable. This tension seems reflected in the European recognition that Islanders ought to be the ones appealing for help, while still regarding themselves as able to speak for Islanders.

⁴¹ Oldham, *Christianity and the Race Problem*, pp. 164, 76.

⁴² See discussion in Chapter 2. Watkins wrote 'on behalf of this cannibal race' and claimed his appeal was 'supported' by the 'wailings of widows and the cries of murdered human beings', but he did not put words into the mouths of Fijian (*Wesleyan Methodist Monthly Notices*, March 1838, pp. 24-27).

The breadth of the missionary humanitarian response to belief in human similitude and mutual responsibility can be seen by examining the 'mission statement' below the Melanesian figure: 'Our Missions seek the Material, Moral, Social and Spiritual Welfare of these People'. Just about all the issues raised in this thesis can be included within its scope, emphasising the interconnected nature and the interdependence of the issues I have discussed. The order here is interesting: while evangelism was always seen as critical, this need is last in the list, perhaps in recognition of the poster's deliberate juxtaposition of religious and secular concerns. But evangelism was never the end in itself; by the 1920s the issue of the development of local churches, self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating, was seen as critical to the continued spiritual growth of Island Christians, even if European missionaries had difficulties in accepting some actual manifestations of the goal.

The 'growth of character' and the development in Christian knowledge, explored in Chapters 6 and 7, fell under the rubric of the 'Moral Welfare' of Islanders. The widespread concerns of missionaries about the linkage of mind and body, the outward demonstration of inward change manifest in the wearing of clothes, changes in deportment, observance of time schedules and discipline of manual labour were all seen as matters of 'moral' concern and, as I have demonstrated, were of great importance to late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century European missionaries. The poster's creator implies that they held abiding interest in the 1920s. 'Social Welfare' is a broad term, and it is unclear exactly what the creator of the poster had in mind. But concerns about health, social peace and order, the viable continuation of societies in the face of threatened depopulation all could be included and had been the concern of mission societies for decades

'Material Welfare' encompassed not just the protection from unfair recruitment, but also included the missions' industrial missions discussed in Chapter 7, at least insofar as they included effective practical training and the encouragement of means of self-support, both for families and villages, but also for the developing 'new churches'. This goal links with the symbolism of the coconut palms in the poster, in part a visual

representation of Pacific flora but also a symbol for the modern Pacific Islands economy. It was coconut plantations that General Wisdom wished to establish for returned servicemen in the Mandated Territory where he assumed Islanders would work under indenture, but it was also small village plantations that Murray saw as the means of economic self-sufficiency for Papuans. Coconut oil provided the Fijian churches with income, especially in Lau, and copra provided income for Solomon Island Methodists from Goldie to villagers. Along with sugar cane in Fiji and Queensland, the coconut palm was a symbol of indenture but in practice it was also the source of a cash income which provided Islanders with schooling and access to the technological goods of modernity.

Conclusion

Other religious advocates for a Christian humanitarian approach to the League of Nations and Australia's Mandate in New Guinea also mixed religious and secular arguments, evolutionism and the discourse of economic justice. The editor of the Anglican *ABM Review* saw the Covenant's 'great principles of international brotherhood, co-operation and responsibility' as 'fundamentally Christian principles' and their adoption as 'due to Christian missionary work', while praising the provisions made for what he still called 'child races'.⁴³ W.N. Lawrence, an LMS missionary writing from Papua, believed that the formation of the League was 'a step towards the realisation of the brotherhood of man and the Kingdom of God on the earth'.⁴⁴ The Australian Student Christian Movement backed the League of Nations as 'an institution whose principles were entirely in harmony with Christian ethics'. It welcomed the New Guinea Mandate and urged members to use their influence 'to encourage the Federal Government in carrying out the high ideals of Article xxii of the Covenant'. International topics, including the White Australia Policy and policy

⁴³ *ABM Review*, September 1920, p. 104. He also claimed the Covenant had only twice been surpassed – by the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount, and twice equalled – by Magna Carta and the Constitution of the United States of America.

⁴⁴ *Chronicle*, March 1919, p. 41.

towards the Mandated Territories, should be studied by student groups.⁴⁵

Evangelism still, as always, constituted a large part of the Christian duty towards Islanders but increasingly the concomitant material responsibility was expressed in the secular language of the League of Nations, the discourse of education, protection, development, justice – and was seen as an obligation towards all Islanders, not just those who responded positively to Christianity. Buoyed by Christian idealism, Oldham, Paton and Burton opposed ‘scientific racism’ on ethical grounds, based in the Christian belief in the essential unity of humankind. While their writing did not move away entirely from notions of social evolutionism, it acknowledged the corollary of protection for those still needing assistance. While arguments based on moral and humanitarian grounds were explicitly denounced by biological determinists, missionary writers using them were able to appeal to a new authority – that of the League of Nations and a new internationalism. This rhetoric had considerable resonance in Australia as the new Mandate over New Guinea triggered reflection within and beyond missionary circles. Attempting to engage a secular as well as a religiously-committed audience, humanitarians employed the discourse of international relations and the associated new science of economics to further their ongoing message of Christian humanism as the principle which should guide relations with the Pacific Islands and Islanders. This contribution to an important public policy debate of the 1920s was an extension of the intersections between missionaries, Christian evangelism and public attitudes to the Pacific Islands and their indigenous inhabitants that have been the subject of this thesis.

⁴⁵ Report of the Commission on World Student Christian Federation International findings, 14 May 1923. Australian Student Christian Movement archives, MS 980 (Box 65, item 3/5), National Library of Australia. The same report noted the view of the commission that the White Australia Policy could only be justified ‘if Australia were to be used to the full by citizens of British stock and traditions’. If such a population did not completely occupy the continent, then other groups should be admitted; anything else was a ‘dog-in-the-manger attitude’.

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