

# **A Call Above Duty**

The Portrayal of the South Pacific Missionary  
in Children's Literature 1800 - 1935

Submitted by

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## **FILE CONVERSION**

This thesis was written using a word processing program incompatible with the ACU online computer system.

To allow compatibility with the ACU system the thesis was converted to a suitable form.

As a result of this process some of the original formatting was corrupted, a number of footnotes were lost and two chapters were unable to be converted.

The lost footnotes and chapters have been retyped and efforts made to produce as consistent as possible presentation throughout the thesis.

Some minor but unavoidable variations in font, spacing, etc. are still present. The author has attempted to minimize these inconsistencies wherever possible.

*This thesis is dedicated to my wife,  
Grace Nolan,  
with heartfelt thanks  
for her love and support during the time of its writing.*

*Particular thanks to  
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*Thankyou also to all others who contributed.*

## STATEMENT OF SOURCES

This thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma.

No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgment in the main text of the thesis.

This thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

Signed 

Date 13/6/00

## **ABSTRACT**

### **Aims**

The aim of this thesis is to examine the portrayal of the South Pacific missionary in children's literature published between 1800 and 1935. It examines how hagiographic literature was used to suggest to young readers that the missionary was both an emissary of Western civilisation and the incarnation of Gospel values. It seeks to document the nexus between contemporary anthropological thought, colonialism and religious beliefs which underpinned the views and values presented to the child reader.

### **Scope**

The thesis examines the years 1800 to 1935 as this period was characterised by intense public interest in the exploration of the region and gave rise to the greatest volume of publications for children featuring the South Pacific missionary. The thesis analyses biographies published for children of the more famous missionaries, including John Williams, James Chalmers, John Paton and Coleridge Patteson. Attention is also given to the missionary in fictional literature and adventure stories, in particular the popular writings of R. M. Ballantyne (most notably *The Coral Island*). Comparisons are made with the depiction of the missionary in children's literature using other locations, specifically Africa and China. The thesis also examines how women were portrayed, the connections between trade and missionary activity and the cultural bias evident in the portrayal of indigenous people and their societies.

### **Conclusions**

The thesis concludes that the portrayal of the South Pacific missionary between 1800 - 1935 was designed to enhance the status of the missionary by depicting them as being superior to secular heroes such as Captain Cook. By drawing on the imagery of the medieval knight and through the trope of 'Muscular Christianity' the missionary was depicted as having the courage of the explorer, the wisdom of a leader, the nature of a gentleman and the faith of a martyr.

The indigenous people were infantilized and the trope of cannibalism was utilised to dehumanise them. Western style housing, clothing, literacy, work ethics and technology were advocated as indicators of the superiority of Europeans, while their adoption by indigenous converts separated them from

the 'heathen' of their race. This 'superiority' of Western culture was attributed to the influence of Christianity and the Bible in particular. The missionary was shown as not only redeeming the indigenous people from sin through the revelation of the Gospel, but also as being their friend and protector who gave them the benefits of European living. In particular the 'medicine man' or spiritual leader of the indigenous religion was demonised and his influence and position assumed by the missionary who often formed a political alliance with the social leader, or Chief. The presence of the missionary was often further legitimised through the enthusiastic testimony of converts and indigenous teachers pleading for more missionaries to come to the region.

Other Europeans, such as traders and beachcombers, were denigrated as exploiting the islanders and their actions were often condemned as being worse than the 'savages.' The publications sourced and studied were all Protestant in origin, suggesting a lack of children's Catholic material on missionary endeavour in the region. Similar to the traders, the Catholics were also denounced as interfering with and complicating the task of conversion and redemption.

The role of the European female as wife of the missionary was minimised and they were usually relegated to the minor role of passive assistant to the ever-adventurous male.

The publications were a vehicle for inculcating the religious and social beliefs of a triumphant Western society and for encouraging children to support the missions either through their own vocation or through the giving and collecting of money. While they ostensibly promoted Christianity and the activities of Missionary Societies by paying homage to the faith and valour of the missionary, undoubtedly they also justified to the young reader the European cultural dominance and colonialism of the era.

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John Williams Teaches the Seventh [Commandment]

From: Basil Mathews, *John Williams the Shipbuilder*, p 53.

## **PURPOSE AND METHOD**

### **PURPOSE**

Patrick Brantlinger in *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830 - 1914*, has written,

the books the early explorers wrote took the Victorian reading public by storm. In the first few months after its publication in 1857 Livingstone's *Missionary Travels* sold 70,000 copies and made its author wealthy and so famous he was mobbed by admirers. A national hero in the late 1850's, by the end of his last African journey in 1872 he was a national saint.<sup>1</sup>

The renown of the missionaries as explorer, hero and popular 'saint' made them a central figure in children's literature who could be expected to embody the highest ideals and purest expression of the beliefs and philosophies of their society. Hourihan comments of children's literature,

the qualities ascribed to the hero and his opponents reveal much about what has been valued and what has been regarded as inferior or evil in Western culture. A consideration of what is foregrounded and what is simply omitted from these stories throws further light on the hierarchy of values which they construct.<sup>2</sup>

This thesis investigates the portrayal of the European missionary in literature published for the child reader, using the South Pacific as its setting, between the years 1800 to 1935. It examines the didactic nature of English children's missionary literature and the values it conveyed to the young reader regarding

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<sup>1</sup> Patrick Brantlinger (1988) *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914*, London: Cornell University Press, p 180.

<sup>2</sup> Margery Hourihan (1997) *Deconstructing the Hero: Literary Theory and Children's Literature*, London: Routledge, p 4.

empire and ‘civilisation’ through the representation of the missionary as their agent during the period 1800 to 1935. This involves an exposition of:

- 1) the way the South Pacific missionary was represented in books specifically written for the child reader.
- 2) the manner in which their mission in the region was portrayed in books written specifically for the child reader.
- 3) the representation of the region’s indigenous inhabitants.
- 4) how language was used by the authors and publishers of these texts to shape the attitudes and beliefs of the child reader.

In examining the material in this way, it is hoped to:

- A) identify the relationship of control and power between the adult producers of these works and their audience and,
- B) reveal the role of the missionary as a model for the child and as an emissary of Western civilisation.

## **METHOD**

Peter Hulme in *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean, 1492 - 1797*, notes that in researching texts about the Caribbean the only evidence that remains are “the very texts that constitute the discourse on colonialism.”<sup>3</sup> The same problem is encountered in researching the South Pacific, but by covering a range of texts and following “the protocols of critique”<sup>4</sup> textuality and rhetoric can be examined. Text selection is of primary importance and close attention has been given to representative publications of evangelising societies, with particular reference to the London Missionary

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<sup>3</sup> Peter Hulme (1986) *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean, 1492 - 1797*,

London: Methuen, p 8.

<sup>4</sup> Hulme, *Colonial Encounters*, p 9.

Society<sup>5</sup> and the Religious Tract Society<sup>6</sup>, who were the main publishers of children's literature about the South Pacific missionary. Analysis will be undertaken of individual publications providing a discussion of their philosophies, literary styles and attitudes to the notions of empire, work, sin, salvation, indigenous cultures, women and other denominations. These will also be compared and contrasted with children's missionary literature with settings other than the South Pacific, such as A.T. Rich's African adventure *The Schoolboy Missionaries*, to establish similarities and differences of style, theme, imagery and trope. Moreover, special reference will be made to the writings of Robert Michael Ballantyne, who wrote a number of popular children's novels featuring the South Pacific missionary.

The period 1800 to 1935 was chosen because it begins with the start of a new century which, after the voyage of the LMS ship, the Duff, to Tahiti in 1797, heralded an upsurge of interest in missionary enterprises in the Pacific. The year 1935 is significant because it was the year that the leading publishing house that produced children's literature with a religious emphasis, the RTS, ceased to exist. Its demise denoted a change in the perception of the type of publication and style of writing deemed appropriate for the younger audience, from overt proselytising to more subtle stories which still contained religious or moral undertones. The texts chosen fall within this period and form a representative cross-section of the type and range of material available during this time.

Defining the terms 'young reader,' 'children's literature,' or 'child reader,' is a task that baffles editors, publishers and authors even today. It is

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<sup>5</sup> Hereafter referred to as the LMS.

<sup>6</sup> Hereafter referred to as the RTS.



made even more difficult by the nature of nineteenth-century literature where, as Avery states:

the benevolent literate seemed to feel the cottager child and parent had the same needs and tastes in literature, and it is often impossible to decide precisely the age group for which the books published by the Religious Tract Society and Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge were intended.<sup>7</sup>

For the purpose of this paper, children's literature will mean those publications which have at least one of the following characteristics:

- 1) the title makes reference to the audience for which they were intended, eg. *Tamate: The Life and Adventures of a Christian Hero - A Book for Boys*, or *A Boy's Adventures in the South Seas*.
- 2) it has been used as a reward book by educational institutions, such as Sunday schools, and which may still bear a presentation certificate or notation on the endpapers.
- 3) the preface, introduction or front pages, make reference to the publication being printed especially for children or young people. This may take the form of an address directly to the audience, teachers or parents on the intentions of the writer, or it may be a reward certificate printed in the front pages for the achievement of a certain goal, eg. collecting money for missionary ships.
- 4) it has a child, or group of children, as the main character and was written in a style considered appropriate to the child reader of the day.
- 5) traditionally the book has been considered suitable for a young reading audience, eg. *The Coral Island*, or *Swiss Family Robinson*.

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<sup>7</sup> Gillian Avery (1965) *Nineteenth Century Children: Heroes and Heroines in English* London: Hodder and Stoughton, p 81.

The terms ‘South Sea,’ ‘South Seas,’ and ‘South Pacific,’ are used interchangeably and define that area of the Pacific Ocean which encompasses Micronesia, Melanesia and Polynesia South of the Equator (See Appendix A) The literature that has been used in this study reflects the missionary locations at the time of publication and does not include reference to all the major island groups within the defined area. The books primarily centre around Samoa, the scene of great success for the LMS, and spread in a fairly narrow band Eastwards from the South East Coast of New Guinea, through the Solomon, Fiji, Cook and Society Islands.

There is an abundance of reference material about European exploration and exploitation, of the South Seas, including the social, cultural and economic impact of European civilisation on the traditional cultures of the island people. Gunson’s *Messengers of Grace: Evangelical Missionaries in the South Seas, 1797 - 1860*, Kent’s *Company of Heaven: Early Missionaries in the South Seas*, Hartley Grattan’s *The Southwest Pacific to 1900: A Modern History*, Stanley’s *The Bible and the Flag: Protestant Missions and British Imperialism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* and Wright and Fry’s *Puritans in the South Seas* are some of the more well known academic works that have analysed the social, political and religious context which gave rise to the missionary expansion into the South Pacific and the impact of these missionaries on the indigenous cultures of the region. There are also numerous biographies of particular missionaries, such as Langmore’s *Tamate - A King: James Chalmers in New Guinea, 1877 - 1901*, or groups of missionaries such as Hilliard’s *God’s Gentlemen: A History of The Melanesian Mission, 1849 - 1942*. Brian Street’s *The Savage in Literature: Representations of “Primitive” Society in English Fiction, 1858 - 1920*, has given some insight into the portrayal of missionaries in popular literature of the era, but has concentrated on



representations of indigenous people in Africa. Some broad studies of writing for children have included general reference to evangelical writing from the period in question. These include *Tales of Adventure* by Lois Lodge, *Nineteenth Century Children: Heroes and Heroines in English Children's Stories, 1780 - 1900*, by Gillian Avery and *The Impact of Victorian Children's Fiction* by J. Bratton. *Ministering Angels: A Study of Nineteenth Century Evangelical Writing for Children* by Nancy Cutt covers the rise of evangelism and evangelical writing for children, placing it in an historical and political context. Kevin Carpenter's *Desert Islands and Pirate Islands: The Island Theme in Nineteenth Century English Juvenile Fiction: A Survey and Bibliography* and Jeffrey Richards' *Imperialism and Juvenile Literature* both analyse the themes of imperialism and its links with Christianity. Rod Edmond's text *Representing the South Pacific: Colonial Discourse from Cook to Gauguin* contains useful analysis of the representation of the South Pacific missionary, in particular Chapter Five, 'Trade and Adventure,' which examines the missionary in nineteenth-century children's adventure literature. However, all these books are concerned exclusively with fiction and do not analyse biographical or informative texts. Furthermore, they are focused on the hero and imperialist expansion in fiction: none of them investigate the representation of the South Pacific missionary as an agent of culture and imperialism specifically in children's literature.

The absence of analysis of this aspect of missionary literature has necessitated extensive primary research as the foundation of this thesis. A limiting factor has, naturally, been the availability of primary material which falls within the parameters of the topic. While it is not voluminous, what is notable is the considerable amount of material still in circulation or held in libraries, suggesting that the level of interest in this setting and theme was very

popular during the period in question. The local reference collections of Children's Literature utilised in locating material included the 'Culican Collection' at Australian Catholic University, the main collection at the State Library of Victoria and the 'Pound Collection of Children's Literature,' also located at the State Library. The 'Bayfield Collection' of the University of Adelaide was also utilised through a microfiche copy held at Deakin University, Burwood campus.

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT OF MISSIONARY ZEAL**

*“Go ye into the whole world and preach  
the gospel to every creature.”<sup>1</sup>*

“The reformation movement in Europe brought with it no sense of obligation to carry the gospel to non-Christian nations; indeed, the leading reformers were even distinctly opposed to foreign missions,”<sup>2</sup> and believed that the call to preach to nations had been fulfilled by the Apostles. In spite of these objections, following the growth of English sea power, the spread of the British Empire and the founding of the colonies in America, where the Pilgrim Fathers saw the conversion of the Native Americans as their responsibility, the first English Missionary Society was founded in 1649 to support the work of the minister John Eliot, whose efforts among the indigenous population earned him the title ‘Apostle of the Indians.’<sup>3</sup> While the Pietist movement in Germany and the Moravian Church were active in mission work early in the eighteenth century, in Britain a Church of England Clergyman, Dr. Bray, was concerned by “what he had seen of the ignorance of the clergy at home, and the far greater ignorance of the few clergy whom he found ministering in Maryland.”<sup>4</sup> In 1698 Bray founded the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge which provided parish libraries and books for the enlightenment of the clergy. In 1701 he also founded the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. Even though England lost the North American colonies between 1776 and 1783 and

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<sup>1</sup> Gospel of Saint Mark: Chapter 16, Verse 15

<sup>2</sup> Louise Creighton (n.d) *Missions: Their Rise and Development*, London, Williams and Norgate, p 47.

<sup>3</sup> Creighton, p 47.

<sup>4</sup> Creighton, p 54.

the British governments had “marked antipathy to the acquisition of new colonial responsibilities which took a very long time to evaporate,”<sup>5</sup> interest in foreign countries flourished with the activities of the East India Company, while the “published accounts of Captain James Cook’s three voyages to the South Seas between 1768 and 1780 created intense public interest in the ‘primitive’ peoples of the area.”<sup>6</sup>

### **The Anti-slavery Movement and Evangelical Revival**

The growing interest in the rest of the world and its people was apparent in the prominence and success of the anti-slavery movement and, for the evangelical critics of slavery, “the sins of a guilty nation could only be expiated, and the wrath of an angry God could only be averted, by the dedicated and unremitting actions of the faithful.”<sup>7</sup>

While this belief contributed to the fermenting of missionary zeal, growing interest in overseas missions cannot, however, be totally ascribed to the galvanising effects of the anti-slavery movement, as of great importance was the Evangelical Revival which, generated an absorbing passion for the spread of the gospel of the atoning death of Christ, a passion which found embodiment in the welter of societies, denominational and interdenominational, dedicated to domestic evangelism and foreign mission.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Brian Stanley (1990) *The Bible and the Flag: Protestant Missions and British Imperialism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, p 59.

<sup>6</sup> Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag*, p 58.

<sup>7</sup> David Hempton (1995) "Evangelism and Reform, C1780-1832 in *Evangelical Faith and Public Zeal: Evangelicals and Society in Britain, 1780-1980*, John Wolffe (ed) London, Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, p 19.

<sup>8</sup> Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag*, p 59.

One of the pioneers of this growing evangelism was William Carey, a Baptist minister, who, with twelve other ministers, formed the Baptist Missionary Society<sup>9</sup> and initiated missionary work in India. Max Warren declares that “It was William Carey who saw the ‘interdependence’ of the Gospels *and* the voyages of Captain Cook *and* the obligations of the missionary enterprise.”<sup>10</sup>

### **Opposition To Missionary Activity**

Carey’s passion for missionary activity did not proceed unopposed; in response to his work and in seeking to protect their commercial interests the powerful East India Company for example, considered missionaries to be “useless,” and as “bringing the peace and safety of our possessions into peril.”<sup>11</sup> Even within his own church Carey met stern opposition as seen at a conference where he raised the question of whether the command to ‘teach all nations’ was still relevant, but was told by the president, “Sit down young man; when it pleases God to convert the heathen, He will do it without your help.”<sup>12</sup>

### **The Missionary Response to Opposition**

Carey, however, remained undaunted and in 1792 published an influential book entitled *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens* which he began with the words,

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<sup>9</sup> Hereafter referred to as BMS.

<sup>10</sup> Max Warren (1965) *The Missionary Movement from Britain in Modern History*, London: SCM Press, p 22.

<sup>11</sup> Creighton p 58.

<sup>12</sup> Creighton, p 57.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, a little before his departure, commissioned his apostles to go and teach all nations; or as another Evangelist expresses it, Go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. This commission was as extensive as possible, and placed them under obligation to disperse themselves into every country in the habitable globe, and preach to all the inhabitants without exception or limitation.<sup>13</sup>

Before missionary activity as envisaged by Carey could be accepted, there needed to be a change in thinking about the role of man as an instrument of God's work. Stanley believes,

the crucial theological precondition for the rise of missionary concern was the weakening of the rationalistic hyper-Calvinism which had caused some mid-eighteenth century dissenters to distrust the use of any human means of urging men and women to repent and believe.<sup>14</sup>

A major influence in achieving this revision of belief, which Carey acknowledged in his 1792 publication, was the book by Baptist Andrew Fuller, *The Gospel of Christ Worthy of all Acception* [sic], published in 1785, which successfully argued that "divine sovereignty in the spread of the gospel operated through the channel of human responsibility."<sup>15</sup> Fuller had drawn on the moderate Calvinism of an even earlier evangelical with an enthusiasm for missionary work, Jonathan Edwards. Edwards had initiated a popular prayer movement in the 1740's and published an influential pamphlet in 1748 entitled *An Humble Attempt to Promote Explicit Agreement and Visible Union of God's People in Extraordinary Prayer*, which provided the model for a call to prayer in Northamptonshire in 1784. "Monthly missionary prayer meetings on this pattern remained a regular feature of congregational life in many

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<sup>13</sup> Max Warren, p 22.

<sup>14</sup> Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag*, p 59.

<sup>15</sup> Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag*, p 60

Nonconformist and some Anglican churches well into the nineteenth century,”<sup>16</sup> and Stanley contends these meetings formed the origins of two of the most important missionary societies, the BMS and LMS.

### **Revolution and the Emergence of Missionary Societies**

Brian Dickey argues that late Georgian social theory prompted efforts to promote good behaviour among the lower orders and that the emergence of Mission Societies,

was in part a response by evangelicals to the outbreak of the war against the French, which prompted some Christians to believe there was but a short time left to evangelise the world before the final Armageddon was upon them.<sup>17</sup>

The French Revolution had already increased awareness of personal liberty and the brotherhood of man, but it also shook the foundations of European society and contributed to a sense of the approaching millennium:

By 1792 it seemed even more likely that the course of the revolution in France would result in the overthrow of the Roman Catholic Church, which many Protestants identified with Antichrist. By 1798 French armies had set up a republic in Rome itself, dragged Pope Pius VI into exile, and Bonaparte was in Egypt threatening the Ottoman hold on Palestine; evangelicals speculated that the restoration of the Jews to their homeland might be imminent.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag*, p 60.

<sup>17</sup> Brian Dickey (1995) "Going About and Doing Good: Evangelicals and Poverty, 1815-1870" in *Evangelical Faith and Public Zeal*, Wolfe (ed), p 40.

<sup>18</sup> Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag*, p 61.

The atmosphere of change and transformation generated by the French Revolution was acutely felt in England where the Industrial Revolution was also changing the face of society. David Hempton contends that the combination of these two major forces of social upheaval resulted in a modification of the role played by the churches in English society, stating:

the fatal combination of major structural and demographic changes on the one hand, and the profound impact of the French Revolution on the other, seriously eroded the capacity of the Established Church to retain its role as the chief instrument for Christianising the poor. English society being what it was, therefore, the crisis of authority at the end of the eighteenth century occurred more dramatically in the organization of religion than in the organization of the state. From this perspective it is possible to view the remarkable growth of Methodism, Sunday schools, and county associations for promoting itinerant evangelism, as radical challenges to the paternalistic Anglican establishment...Largely undenominational religious associations eroded the religious control of the Established Church, not by the political means which the Church had always feared, but through the cottage prayer meetings and itinerant preaching of an increasingly mobilised laity.<sup>19</sup>

It was against this background of upheaval and change in the social fabric of church and state, combined with a general population which was beginning to move out of generations of grinding rural poverty and ignorance, that the mission societies proliferated.

### **Domestic Issues Versus Overseas Mission**

Considerable effort was expended by these societies in the relief of the urban poor that the Industrial Revolution had created and these early

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<sup>19</sup> Hempton, p 26.



missionary societies were predominantly concerned with domestic issues and the welfare of English citizens. Just as debate continues today about the need for foreign aid and the involvement of one country in the affairs of another, the debate also raged at the turn of the eighteenth century in England over the need to Christianise foreign lands when there were poor at home. This is exemplified in popular fiction by Mrs. Jellyby in Charles Dickens' *Bleak House*, who neglects her own children while she devotes herself to foreign missions and “could see nothing nearer than Africa.”<sup>20</sup> It was, however, also a time of exploration and discovery. In the grime-laden and oppressive atmosphere of the industrialised cities the public imagination was fired by the discoveries of Captain Cook in the South Seas and the lure of exotic places like India and Africa. These explorations raised a number of religious concerns, with Creighton noting:

As Cook, Livingstone, Kraph and many others opened out to the civilised world unknown oceans and continents, the missionary problem unfolded itself before the mind of Christendom. The problem was threefold: there was the call to evangelise the wide non-Christian lands which were under the Dominion of Christian powers such as India and the Dutch possessions in the East Indies, Sumatra and other islands. There was the call to minister to the Spiritual needs of the colonies in Canada, Australasia and South Africa, and there was the call to carry the Gospel to the vast heathen world outside the direct influence of any Christian power.<sup>21</sup>

### **English Civilisation Versus Heathen Passion**

Underlying each of the three quandaries outlined above by Creighton was an assumption that the world could be divided into

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<sup>20</sup> Charles Dickens (1971) *Bleak House*, London: Oxford University Press, p 36.

<sup>21</sup> Creighton, p 75.

‘civilised’ Christian nations and uncivilised non-Christian, or ‘heathen,’ lands. As England was the most powerful and economically flourishing of the Christian nations, many imbued with the missionary spirit believed “that Britain was a Christian nation peculiarly accountable to God in a way not dissimilar to Old Testament Israel.”<sup>22</sup> The assumption was that if England was great it was as a direct result of its Christian faith; this belief was found in the religious publications of the period where pre-Christian Britain was often contrasted with the contemporary times, to illustrate that “it was Christianity, and above all that national recognition of God and the Word of God in the Protestant Reformation, which made Britain what she was. The Bible had made Britain great.”<sup>23</sup>



Figure 1

“Queen Victoria presenting a bible to a foreign prince, and telling him that it was the secret of England’s greatness.” (Refer p 15)

From: W.T. Stead, *The Bairns’ Bible*, p 56.

<sup>22</sup> Brian Stanley (1995) “British Evangelicals and Overseas Concerns, 1833-1970” in *Evangelical Faith and Public Zeal*, Wolfe (ed), p 85.

<sup>23</sup> Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag*, p 161.

The vision of a sinful mankind dwelling in a fallen world and the power of the English missionary to redeem this situation, is evident in the preface to Campbell's *The Martyr of Erromanga*, subtitled *The Philosophy of Missions*:

The source of all evil in our world is ignorance of God, or enmity against him. While this enmity and that ignorance remain, and in proportion as they preponderate, sin and misery will continue to exist and prevail. The only means, therefore, of curing the maladies of human nature, and of rectifying the disorders of society, is to substitute knowledge for ignorance, and love for enmity. This will effect a recovery, and restore tranquillity, complete, universal, and permanent. The result of this substitution will be true and perfect civilisation, comprehending everything necessary to elevate, adorn, and bless mankind - the resurrection of buried intellect - the enthronement of enlightened reason - the subjugation of unhallowed passion - the infusion of real humanity - the extinction of war, with its calamities - the establishment of peace, with its blessings - the annihilation of all that is hurtful to man, and the introduction of all that is contributory to his happiness, - liberty, - literature, - arts, - science, - commerce, - just legislation, - and international harmony. Hence arise the surpassing glory of all Missionary Enterprise, and the matchless excellence of the Missionary Character, - an enterprise which comprehends all lands, all times and all men with all their interests for both worlds; and a character which forms the highest and noblest manifestation of philanthropy, patriotism, piety, and moral greatness.<sup>24</sup>

Stanley has identified four assumptions which underpinned this mode of thinking:<sup>25</sup>

1) the belief that the cultures which missionaries were penetrating were in no sense religiously neutral - rather they were under the control of the Evil One. 'Heathen' societies were the domain of Satan in all their

<sup>24</sup> John Campbell (1842) *The Martyr of Erromanga*, London: John Snow, p ii.

<sup>25</sup> Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag*, p 161.

aspects - not merely in religion, but also in economics, politics, public morals, the arts, and all that is embraced by the term culture.

2) the supposition that nineteenth-century Britain constituted a model of Christian culture and society. Britain was the archetype of the Christian nation. God's design was to create more Christian nations on the same pattern.

3) a belief that all people shared in the depravity of original sin, but, through centuries of Christian influence, English society had progressed, whereas those of a 'heathen' nature were caught in a physical and spiritual Stoneage and suffered the full blight of human sinfulness.

4) the evidence that heathens could be civilised and benefited from the missionary process. Most notable of these was the rapid growth of the church in Sierra Leone, founded as a country for ex-slaves, where 'heathen savages' could apparently be transformed into model Christians.

## **Conclusion**

The underlying belief was that natural man was ignorant and depraved and the way out of this moral mire was Christianity founded on the Bible. When this belief was coupled with the discovery of new lands in the South Seas where the civilising influence of the Christian gospel had not been heard, the moment was ripe for missionary zeal. This was to be translated into action through the formation of missionary societies dedicated solely to the conversion of the 'heathen.' These missionary societies promulgated their cause to the young through the developing genre of children's literature, the growth of which is discussed next.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **RELIGION AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF**

### **CHILDREN'S LITERATURE**

*“Children’s Literature does not exist in isolation and its significance cannot be properly appreciated unless it is explored in the broader social context.”<sup>1</sup>*

The interest of Nineteenth-century adult readers in missionaries and missionary activity is evidenced by the presence of characters like St. John in Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* or Mrs. Jellyby in Charles Dickens’ *Bleak House*. Missionary literature specifically published for children needs to be examined in the context of the changing nature of English society as well as this growing interest by the reading public in missionary activity.

#### **The Beginnings of Basic Literacy for the Masses**

The transformation of Europe during the Industrial Revolution from a rural to an industrial, urban society as outlined in Chapter One, brought with it a greater need for literacy: a factory hand who could read was able to follow written instructions and be a more productive part of a complex production process. Moreover, increased leisure time meant there was a proliferation of newspapers and small journals and evidence of the general public seeking diversion in reading can be found as early as 1719, when there were abridged versions of *Robinson Crusoe* available with at least 151 Chapbook versions published before 1820.<sup>2</sup> The unsophisticated Chapbook “provided the means by which men and women who had achieved a bare literacy, in the sense that they

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<sup>1</sup> Margery Hourihan, p 5.

<sup>2</sup> Kevin Carpenter (1984) *Desert Isles and Pirate Islands: The Island Theme in Nineteenth Century English Juvenile Fiction: A Survey and Bibliography*, Frankfurt: Verlag Peter Lang, p 22.

could read a page of print, were enabled to make the cultural leap into the industrial world of the nineteenth century.”<sup>3</sup>

However, the growth of basic literacy was seen to bring with it an element of moral risk, as the widening literate population could be exposed to new and, for the ruling class and clergy at least, disturbing ideas. As Ellis comments,

the concentration of working people in the new industrial towns of the early nineteenth century made it imperative that, if they were not to threaten the security of the Establishment as in France, they must receive some form of education.<sup>4</sup>

The education children received was mainly through Charity and Dame schools where the rudiments of reading and writing were taught, but Sunday schools were also seen as part of a sound education process as they did not interfere with weekday occupations.

### **The Growth and Role of Sunday Schools**

Laqueur observes that, “the growth in Sunday schools was almost exactly contemporaneous with the growth of publications for children.”<sup>5</sup> The literature produced for the working-class children who attended these schools came mainly in three types: as tracts and reward books given to students in schools; magazines and periodicals published by denominational or church organisations, or by Sunday school associations, and as textbooks used at school. The material used by the Sunday schools and as rewards had a strong

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<sup>3</sup> Victor Neuburg (1969) Foreword to *Chapbooks of the Eighteenth Century* by J. Ashton, London: reissued by Seven Dials Press (1969), p 9.

<sup>4</sup> Alec Ellis (1968) *A History of Children's Reading and Literature*, London: Pergamon Press, p 1.

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Laqueur (1976) *Religion and Respectability: Sunday Schools and Working Class Culture, 1780 - 1850*, New Haven: Yale University Press, p 113.

religious bias aimed at improving the morals of the young readers, but it also reflected the values and prejudices of the society which produced it; as Laqueur further notes:

Sunday school literature was at its most political when it came to England's world position. It was not a great leap from missionary stories about Cingalese superstition, Chinese mourning practices, or Indian funeral rites to statements of the inferiority of other races. By the 1850's gory descriptions of Hindoo cruelty, accounts of brave missionaries who struggled to combat barbaric practices, and requests for children to pray for the soldiers who put down the Indian Mutiny had become popular items for a Sunday school anthology.<sup>6</sup>

### **The Foundation of Specialist Publication Houses**

Since 1699 the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge had been distributing Christian literature, but it was the non-denominational LMS, the organisers of the first missionary expedition to the South Pacific, which, at its annual general meeting in May 1799, first considered the formation of a publishing house for the production of religiously edifying books and periodicals for the general English reading public. The resulting publishing house was the RTS, founded in 1799, which, in its heyday, published in two hundred languages for missionary purposes. Of great significance was the emphasis it placed on publications for children and it was to become the most prolific publisher and distributor of books with religious content for this reading audience.

With the increased number of people capable of reading, especially the children who attended Sunday school, it became apparent to concerned religious leaders that "these new readers were an easy prey for the bawdy and

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<sup>6</sup> Laqueur, p 209.

anti-religious books and broadsheets which the hawkers sold at cottage doors.”<sup>7</sup> Shortly after its formation the RTS “became aware that children were not entertained by the majority of its publications and, in 1805, inaugurated a new series which was to capture the hawkers’ market and counteract the profane and vicious tracts profusely circulated by them.”<sup>8</sup> Its success in achieving this aim can be seen by the fact that twenty five to thirty million ‘Hawkers’ Tracts’ were distributed by the the Society in 1839 and 9 710 000 tracts and children’s books left their depository in 1849 alone.<sup>9</sup> By 1850 the Society had given away 53,700 libraries to Sunday schools and day schools, each of 100 to 200 volumes, worth a total value of £214,000.<sup>10</sup> The success of the RTS and other publishers can be seen in Laqueur’s comment “a working class child in the mid-eighteenth century seldom saw the printed word. By 1850 children were inundated with textbooks, periodicals and pamphlets produced expressly for them.”<sup>11</sup>

The abolition of the slave trade had also had an impact on the evangelising and missionary content of publications for children. Nancy Cutt notes that:

the Evangelical mission drive was the second result of years of careful planning by Wilberforce and his associates. By calling year after year for action by Parliament, issuing effective propaganda on all fronts (including books for children), and finally by circulating petitions which gained nearly a million signatures in favour, the Evangelicals in 1813 forced the East India Company to open its Indian territories to missionaries. The ensuing enthusiasm for mission work lasted for a century, and is attested in hundreds of

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<sup>7</sup> Gordon Hewitt (1949) *Let the People Read: A Short History of the United Society for Christian Literature*, London: Lutterworth Press, p 16.

<sup>8</sup> A. Ellis, p 8.

<sup>9</sup> Laqueur, p 118.

<sup>10</sup> Laqueur, p 117.

<sup>11</sup> Laqueur, p 113.



tract tales and missionary magazines for adults and children alike.<sup>12</sup>

### **South Pacific Adventure and Missionary Stories**

The Foster Education act of 1870 convinced publishers that there would be a secure market for juvenile fiction and that “school and Sunday school prizes were a particular area of growth, their content and approach carefully supervised to appeal to parents, school and church authorities.”<sup>13</sup> Stories about missionaries were often used as reward books as they entertained the young reader while also providing resourceful, hardworking and pious role models.

Evangelical organisations like the Religious Tract Society and the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge and, later, individual evangelical publishers like James Nisbet and Thomas Nelson, published consciously didactic literature for children, seeking to instill obedience, duty, piety and hard work. The writers of evangelical fiction appropriated existing literary forms such as romance and allegory to expound their message. It was out of such activity that the adventure mode emerged.<sup>14</sup>

Among the literary forms appropriated by these adventure writers was the Robinsonnade, which is a story using the same premise as Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*, where a person, or group of people, are shipwrecked on a deserted island and have to form their own version of society. It was a form adopted by many writers of South Sea tales, including the popular Wyss and Ballantyne, especially as there was a vast quantity of shipping to the new frontiers of the South Pacific in the 1800’s, where a multitude of uncharted islands and unknown peoples provided the perfect setting for utilisation of this theme.

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<sup>12</sup> Margaret Cutt (1979) *Ministering Angels: A Study of Nineteenth-century Evangelical Writing for Children*, London: Five Owls Press, p 27.

<sup>13</sup> Jeffery Richards [ed] (1989) *Imperialism and Juvenile Literature*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, p 4.

<sup>14</sup> Richards, p 3.

Along with the shipwrecks and rescues, naturally, came the encounters with South Sea Islanders and the missionaries who lived among them.

### **Growth of Other Juvenile Literature**

Aside from novels which exploited this setting and highlighted the missionary endeavours of the region, there were also newsletters and magazines featuring these characteristics that were specifically produced for children. Typical of this type of publication was the LMS publication *Juvenile Missionary Magazine*, published in the mid nineteenth century which included domestic tales of children doing good or bad deeds and being appropriately rewarded or punished, but mostly contained sketches of South Sea islands where missions were established. It featured stories and correspondence from the missions, profiles of missionaries, poems and hymns on the missionary theme and letters from children which incorporated reports from their mission support groups on the activities they had undertaken to assist the overseas missions. The magazines' primary concern was the moral instruction of its readers, as seen in the Preface to the January 1846 edition which stated:

The Editor hopes next year to make its style more instructive and agreeable. It will contain some maps and short missionary sermons for the young, by some of your best friends, and sketches of Eminent Missionaries, from their birth upward, and other matters calculated to do you good.<sup>15</sup>

It placed considerable emphasis on fund raising for the purchase and maintenance of missionary ships, many of which were fully funded from the contributions of children.

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<sup>15</sup> Editor, *Juvenile Missionary Magazine*, (Volume iii), 1846, London: London Missionary Society, p iv.

## Biographies

As well as the fictional adventure story and magazines, there were also biographies published of the South Sea missionaries designed for children, mainly boys, to encourage vocations to the missions or contributions to mission funds, but always with a view to “inspire the boys and girls of Christendom with a whole-hearted enthusiasm for the conversion of the Heathen World to Jesus Christ.”<sup>16</sup> While there were individual publications, Oxford University Press produced the ‘Pathfinder,’ series at the turn of the twentieth century and these novelised biographies were also used as reward books and covered the life story of most of the more famous South Sea missionaries.

## Conclusion

As a result of all these influences, the children’s literature that was published by the RTS and other major publishers between 1800 and 1935 was often heavily didactic in tone, but the strong moral message of the books was frequently sweetened with adventure. Tales about South Seas missionaries had obvious potential as edifying literature and easily lent themselves to this popular style of writing. They combined to present to the reader exotic locations, heroic exploits, daring men on the frontier of the Empire motivated by selfless ideals, while exploiting some of the Romantic notions which had surrounded the region from the time of Captain Cook. The idealised image of the missionary formed a stark contrast with the portrayal of the indigenous people and cultures of the South Pacific and the negative representations of ‘The Other’ which are discussed in the next chapter.

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<sup>16</sup> James Paton (1892) *The Story of John G. Paton told for Young Folks*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, Preface.

**CHAPTER 3**  
**THE SOUTH PACIFIC MISSIONARY**  
**AND ‘THE OTHER’**

*“In missionary eyes, mission lands were  
the ‘Empire Of Satan.’ ”<sup>1</sup>*

Patrick Brantlinger when writing of Victorian literature about Africa, states,

the invasion of preindustrial, largely preliterate societies by men with industrialised communications, weapons, and transportation meant a deluge of ruling discourse on one side and, on the other, what appeared to be total acquiescence and silence.<sup>2</sup>

Stephen Greenblatt has also noted in texts about European responses to the discovery of the New World in the seventeenth century that “the overriding interest is not knowledge of the other but practice upon the other.”<sup>3</sup> Like the Africans and other conquered races throughout history, in children’s literature featuring South Pacific missionaries, the indigenous people were stripped of their articulation; the words they utter and the way they are represented tell the reader more about the creator of the representation than about “the other.” Margery Hourihan notes the dualistic structures of Western thought whereby a pattern of values “naturalises the dominance of the European patriarchal elite and the subordination of other cultural groups,”<sup>4</sup> so that the inferiorised group is ignored, referred to in terms which imply inherent inferiority or defined only by its lack of those qualities esteemed by the dominant group.

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<sup>1</sup> Aylward Shorter (1972) *Theology of Mission*, Cork: Mercier Press, p 21.

<sup>2</sup> Brantlinger, p 196.

<sup>3</sup> Stephen Greenblatt (1988) *Marvelous [sic] Possessions: The Wonder of the New World*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, p 12.

<sup>4</sup> Hourihan, p 16.

## The Anthropological Status of the Indigenous

The generally subordinate state ascribed to the non-Christian indigenous people found in the children's literature of the period, reflected the contemporary scientific view of a chronological development of man whereby the various races could be "given their place in the chain of development that ultimately led to the European 'civilised' man."<sup>5</sup> Brian Street further comments:

a people was given its appropriate rung on the ladder according to race. It was assumed that one's place in the hierarchy was determined by heredity; the ladder represented stages of social evolution with Anglo-Saxon at the top.<sup>6</sup>

Deriving from this view of the world in the nineteenth century was an intimate association between missionary thinking and the nature of civilisation which precluded the possibility of non-Christian cultures being valued. The presiding view came to be that those who dwelt in the South Pacific were not living in an earthly Eden, rather they were "sunk in nature's lost condition,"<sup>7</sup> and at risk of losing their souls. From the death of Cook and the turn of the century the supposedly idyllic South Pacific, "was increasingly represented as an unredeemed world requiring salvation by missionary and trader."<sup>8</sup> The missionaries were left,

never doubting for a moment that the mode of living developed on the banks of the Thames was divinely ordained for all men, and that the theology and forms of religion favoured by themselves offered the only sure way to eternal salvation. The solemn tradesmen and shopkeepers who dedicated their lives to the missionary cause were convinced that every idolater who died

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<sup>5</sup> Brian Street (1975) *The Savage in Literature: Representations of "Primitive" Society in English Fiction, 1858 - 1920*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, p 80.

<sup>6</sup> Street, p 80.

<sup>7</sup> "Juvenile Hymn for Missionary Collectors" in *Juvenile Missionary Magazine*, (Vol. 3), 1846, London: London Missionary Society, p 45.

<sup>8</sup> Rod Edmond (1997) *Representing the South Pacific: Colonial Discourse from Cook to Gauguin*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p 9.

before he heard the Gospel message dropped precipitately into a hell blazing with brimstone. Horrified at the thought of the everlasting torments awaiting the benighted islanders, revelling in sin, unaware of the coming punishment, the missionaries rushed to the rescue; with the ruthless energy of lifesavers they struggled to drag back the heathen from the awful jaws of hell.<sup>9</sup>

Bernard Smith comments in *European Vision and the South Pacific*, “Evangelism in a greater or lesser degree permeated all phases of British thought during the first half of the century,”<sup>10</sup> to the extent that the notion that the indigenous people of the South Seas were noble savages, which was the view espoused in the writings of the early explorers of the region, came to be replaced by a view that they were “ignoble savages” trapped “in the spiritual darkness of their paganism.”<sup>11</sup> From symbolising “revolutionary freedom and ideal perfectibility,”<sup>12</sup> there arose instead a

crucial distinction between the noble and romantic savage: the former was self-sufficient and most happy in his natural state, the latter was a representative of the childhood of man, interesting because he possessed the unrealised accomplishments of the child.<sup>13</sup>

## Infantilization

Infantilization was not unique to the texts which reported the exploration and Christianisation of the South Pacific; Greenblatt has noted that centuries earlier the records of early contact with the indigenous people of the Americas bore this characteristic and that “what is striking is that though they were on foreign shores, the Europeans do not feel themselves infantilized; it is rather the

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<sup>9</sup> Louis Wright and Mary Fry (1936) *Puritans in the South Seas*, New York: Henry Holt and Company, p 230.

<sup>10</sup> Bernard Smith (1989) *European Vision and the South Pacific*, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, p 318.

<sup>11</sup> B. Smith, p 318.

<sup>12</sup> B. Smith, p 149.

<sup>13</sup> B. Smith, p 330.

natives whom they see as children in relation to European languages.”<sup>14</sup> Historically, the written representation of “the other” had been largely shaped by these accounts of first attempts at communication, whether through mute signs, material exchange or verbal dialogue. The European belief in the child-like state of the indigenous people of the South Pacific was then imparted to the child reader through the imagery and language of the evangelical texts which largely recounted these initial contacts. Knowles and Malmkjaer in *Language and Control in Children’s Literature* suggest that children’s literature is a very effective means through which adults attempt to socialise children, and that through “social texts” children learn about and begin to accept customs, institutions and hierarchies.<sup>15</sup> The language of the missionary literature as “social texts” defined and legitimated the relationship between the missionary and the indigenous people. In one of the earliest South Pacific texts to feature a missionary, Mr. Willis in *Swiss Family Robinson* appears from nowhere at the moment of greatest danger to save the family and is proclaimed by the father as,

a missionary, a worthy servant of God come into these remote regions to make Him known to these wretched idolaters,

and

one of those zealous and courageous Christians, who devote their energies and their lives to the instruction and eternal salvation of men born in another hemisphere, of another colour, uncivilised, but still our brothers.<sup>16</sup>

The beginning of the speech identifies the positive aspects of the missionary with the same Christian religion as the European reader; while the father later concedes a common humanity with the indigenous people as “our brothers,” the description strongly emphasises the attributes which separate the two groups as

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<sup>14</sup> Greenblatt, p 105.

<sup>15</sup> Murray Knowles and Kirsten Malmkjaer (1996) *Language and Control in Children’s Literature*, London: Routledge, p 44.

<sup>16</sup> John Wyss (n.d.) *Swiss Family Robinson*, London: Collins, p 315.

the distinction is clearly made that these “brothers” come from a different “hemisphere” have “another colour” are “uncivilised” and, perhaps worst of all, are “wretched idolaters.” The tone of the speech is one of kindness and acceptance, sounding like a reasonable and compassionate statement of obvious fact, which subtly gives even more force to the differences between the two groups. The accentuation of the dissimilarities distances the Europeans from the South Pacific people making them others rather than the supposed “brothers,” confirming to the young reader the superiority of the Europeans by placing them on a different level of the presumed scale of humanity. Although the missionary Willis is credited with having “cast into their hearts the seeds of that divine religion which commands us to do unto others as we would they should do unto us, and to pardon and love our enemies,”<sup>17</sup> his attitude towards them is extremely paternalistic as he admits, “but how much is there yet to teach these simple children of nature who listen only to her voice, and yield to every impression! The first impulse is good, but they are so unsteady that affection may suddenly change to hatred.”<sup>18</sup> What the missionary sees as sudden and unpredictable changes of mood in the indigenous people is cited as evidence of their supposed child-like state, a comparison which again supported the scientific belief of the time whereby,

as anthropological theory held, the primitive races represented a previous stage in the development towards ‘civilised’ man, then the model of a child growing into a man could be applied to human evolution, with the European races as the mature and fully developed men and the primitive races as ‘children.’ Thus the ‘parent’ races are obliged to treat their child-like charges with the care and control of a Victorian father.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Wyss, p 326.

<sup>18</sup> Wyss, p 317.

<sup>19</sup> Street, p 68.



Barradale in *Pearls of the Pacific* further rationalises the missionary's intervention in the lives of the indigenous islanders by questioning the intelligence and morality of "Old Samoa" (ie. pre-missionary Samoa) and scorning the way they raised their children:

In 'Old Samoa' too, the parents did not love their children as they do today. They were fond of them in a way, but weakly children were left to die. Even at their best, the little ones were brought up without any good training. This was largely because the fathers and mothers had no training themselves, and therefore knew no better. At one time they would spoil their children and give them everything they wanted: at another time they would be unreasonably angry and beat them severely for trifling misbehaviour, and then soon after, they would give them a good meal of Samoan 'nice things,' to make them friends again. And so by example as well as by teaching, parents trained their children to know and do wrong.<sup>20</sup>

Barradale's simplified moral judgment of a complex and ancient society as having parents incapable of love and who deliberately teach their children to "do wrong," clearly demonstrates the lack of empathy the missionaries had for any culture except their own. He raises the spectre of infanticide and derides the traditional child-rearing practices of the Samoan culture thereby establishing the European missionary in the role of the model parent who has corrected previous malpractice. The extracts support Nicholas Thomas' view that "missionary work employed and enacted notions of infantilization and quasifamilial hierarchy in a more thorough way than any other colonial project,"<sup>21</sup> yet at least this sense of familial relationship separated the missionary from other colonisers, such as traders, by acknowledging a "shared humanity and siblingship."<sup>22</sup> The young reader therefore gains the impression of the South

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<sup>20</sup> V. A. Barradale (1907) *Pearls of the Pacific*, London: London Missionary Society, p 49.

<sup>21</sup> Nicholas Thomas (1992) "Colonial Conversions: Difference, Hierarchy and History in Early Twentieth Century Evangelical Propaganda" in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, (Vol 34), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p 380.

<sup>22</sup> Nicholas Thomas (1997) *In Oceania: Visions, Artifacts, Histories*, Durham: Duke University Press, Durham, p 40.

Pacific islanders as being in “a protosocial condition from which Christian manhood and womanhood are imagined to emerge.”<sup>23</sup> The missionaries “become parents to the boys and girls”<sup>24</sup> and the mission “is identified as the sole author of positive social change in the islands.”<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, in denouncing traditional Samoan parenting practices Barradale’s writings lend support to the existing English system of parental control and “training,” thus confirming that English children were not raised to do “wrong” like the children who had the misfortune to be born in the South Pacific.

In Lovett’s popular biography of the LMS missionary James Chalmers, *Tamate: The Life and Adventures of a Christian Hero - A Book for Boys*,<sup>26</sup> this “Christian hero” is presented throughout the text as the only mature, male presence. He often refers to the Papuan men as being “just like big boys,”<sup>27</sup> or derides a particular indigenous individual by proclaiming he is behaving “like a schoolboy.”<sup>28</sup> The disparaging allusion to boyish behaviour in a publication specifically for boys may seem ironic, but it can be read as a means of encouraging the young male reader to adopt the attitude and habits of the adult missionary “hero” and to emulate his value system. However, it is also interesting to note in Nairne’s *Greatheart of Papua*, another biography of Chalmers written specifically for children, that when he is returning to the Pacific after a vacation in Scotland, he is lauded as making “the voyage

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<sup>23</sup> Thomas, *Colonial Conversions*, p 378.

<sup>24</sup> Thomas, *Colonial Conversions*, p 385.

<sup>25</sup> Thomas, *Colonial Conversions*, p 381.

<sup>26</sup> The indigenous people of the South Pacific had difficulty pronouncing the name Chalmers and the closest attempt they could make was ‘Tamate,’ a substitute that Chalmers encouraged and which became widely accepted even in European circles due to its exotic overtones.

<sup>27</sup> Richard Lovett (1907) *Tamate: The Life and Adventures of a Christian Hero - A Book for Boys*, London: Religious Tract Society, p 170.

<sup>28</sup> Lovett, p 198.

happy”<sup>29</sup> by his antics with the child passengers as he has a snowball fight with them in the ship’s refrigeration room or challenges them in games like tug-of-war. It would appear that the capacity for child-like revelry was viewed as a positive in the character of the missionary, but as proof of a fault in the very nature of the indigenous people. Chalmers is revealed to the implied reader as an adult playing like a child, while the islanders are locked into “a perpetual childhood at the bottom of a hierarchy of races” and become “manifestations of imperial ideologies which position other nations negatively in relation to the British norm.”<sup>30</sup>

By portraying the people of the South Seas as children, paternalistic European intervention into their lives, ostensibly for their own physical and spiritual good, was easily justified. The infantilized depiction of the indigenous people in children’s literature therefore became part of the mechanism of imperialist power whereby

all the non-European regions, whose inhabitants, societies, histories, and beings represented a non-European essence, were made subservient to Europe, which in turn demonstrably continued to control what was not Europe, and represented the non-European in such a way as to sustain control.<sup>31</sup>

## **Dehumanisation and Cannibalism**

Just as infanticide was offered in these texts as a reason for the presence of the European missionary, so were the tropes of dehumanisation and cannibalism. The exclusion of the non-European from humanity is evident in children’s literature in Kingston’s *The Cruise of the Mary Rose* where Phineas

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<sup>29</sup> W. P. Nairne (1913) *Greatheart of Papua*, London: Oxford University Press, p 162.

<sup>30</sup> Clare Bradford (1999) “Fading to Black” in *Papers: Explorations into Children’s Literature*, Melbourne: Deakin University.

<sup>31</sup> Edward Said (1993) *Culture and Imperialism*, London: Vintage Press, p 127.

questions the humanity of indigenous South Americans by asking “are they men or baboons ?”<sup>32</sup> and in Ballantyne’s South Pacific tale *The Coral Island*, Ralph claims that the islanders “looked more like demons than human beings.”<sup>33</sup> However, in children’s missionary biographies and adventure stories, it is the trope of cannibalism which is constantly offered to the young reader as evidence of the depraved and ungodly state of the South Pacific islanders. Edmond notes that abhorrent social practices such as cannibalism were emphasised in South Pacific literature,<sup>34</sup> while Hulme has asserted that the trope of cannibalism is offered as “the mark of unregenerated savagery”<sup>35</sup> and is “inseparable from considerations of difference and distinction.”<sup>36</sup>

A sense of this dissimilarity is apparent from the first chapter of Ballantyne’s *The Coral Island*, where the indigenous people are described as “wild, blood-thirsty savages, excepting those favoured isles to which the gospel of our Saviour had been conveyed.”<sup>37</sup> The perception of the savagery and uncivilised state of the indigenous people is constantly reinforced through a number of bloodthirsty incidents which are described in detail and which the boys witness both in horror and voyeuristic fascination, as seen in this excerpt from Chapter Nineteen:

Next moment one of the savages raised his club and fractured the wretched creature’s skull. He must have died instantly; and strange though it may seem, I confess to a feeling of relief when the deed was done, because I now knew that the poor savage could not be burned alive. Scarcely had his limbs ceased to quiver when the

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<sup>32</sup> William Kingston (1901) *The Cruise of the Mary Rose*, London: Religious Tract Society, p 18.

<sup>33</sup> Robert Ballantyne (1937) *The Coral Island*, London: Juvenile Productions, p 153.

<sup>34</sup> Edmond, p 9.

<sup>35</sup> Hulme, *Colonial Encounters*, p 3.

<sup>36</sup> Peter Hulme (1998) “Introduction: The Cannibal Scene” in *Cannibalism and the Colonial World*, Francis Barker *et al* (ed), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p 2.

<sup>37</sup> Ballantyne, *The Coral Island*, p 13.

monsters cut slices of flesh from his body, and, after roasting them slightly over the fire, devoured them.<sup>38</sup>

In this scene involving conflict between two “savages,” the victim of the violence becomes the pitied “poor savage,” however, the one who engages in anthropophagy is transformed into an inhuman “monster.” The dehumanisation of the “savage” in this manner reinforces the message to the young reader that “cannibalism was supposedly the trait that characterised those parts of the world into which the torch of civilisation had not yet shone.”<sup>39</sup> For the missionary, as the agent of civilisation, it also became “a sign of evil to be defeated and undone.”<sup>40</sup>

In the above extract from *The Coral Island* the narrator gives a supposedly eye-witness account of cannibalism, and the child reader is given the strong impression of the islanders as “inhuman monsters”<sup>41</sup> without pity and capable of “diabolical enormities.”<sup>42</sup> Yet this eye-witness account is rare in South Pacific literature for children. Gananath Obeyesekere has questioned the authenticity of many of the stories of cannibalism from the region suggesting they often belong to the tradition of sailor’s yarns, and certainly the description given by Ballantyne is in this vein.<sup>43</sup> In children’s missionary literature, such as *The Story of John G. Paton told for Young Folks*, subtitled “Thirty Years Among South Sea Cannibals,” Paton often hints at cannibalism, or hears reports of it, but offers no personal accounts of having witnessed it. The same is true

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<sup>38</sup> Ballantyne, *The Coral Island*, p 155.

<sup>39</sup> Hulme, *Introduction: The Cannibal Scene*, p 7.

<sup>40</sup> Hulme, *Introduction: The Cannibal Scene*, p 33.

<sup>41</sup> Ballantyne, *The Coral Island*, p 212.

<sup>42</sup> Ballantyne, *The Coral Island*, p 212.

<sup>43</sup> Gananath Obeyesekere (1998) “Cannibal Feasts in Nineteenth-century Fiji: Seaman’s Yarns and Ethnographic Imagination” in Barker, pp 63 - 86.

for the many books written about the missionaries John Williams and James Chalmers.

Ballantyne also wrote an account of Cook's voyages in the South Pacific for children which is entitled *The Cannibal Islands*, and many of the titles of the books published for children stressed cannibalism, as seen in Holmes' *By Canoe to Cannibal-Land* or Hughes' biography of Chalmers *King among Cannibals*. As these titles suggest, the trope of cannibalism pervades children's South Pacific missionary literature and is further discussed in "Knights, Dragons and the Mythic Landscape," in Chapter Five of this thesis. Yet rather than a confronting reality cannibalism is a constant, implied presence that heightens the sense of adventure and is used to suggest a "natural depravity"<sup>44</sup> in the islanders from which it is the missionary's duty to redeem them. The enthusiastic exposition of the reported cannibalistic actions and rituals of the indigenous inhabitants not only provides excitement, but through it "the reader was also reminded of the superiority of European intellectual, religious, commercial and military power and, through the agency of the hero, was able vicariously to exercise this power."<sup>45</sup>

### **The Indigenous Plea for Missionaries**

Part of the purpose of establishing these tropes of infantilization and cannibalism was to influence the young European reader through literature which was constantly "affirming the superlative values of white (ie. English) civilisation,"<sup>46</sup> and persistently portraying indigenous people and their culture as innately inferior. The "before-and after"<sup>47</sup> narrative style whereby "the

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<sup>44</sup> Ballantyne, *The Coral Island*, p 201.

<sup>45</sup> Richards, p 59.

<sup>46</sup> Said, p 121.

<sup>47</sup> Thomas, *Colonial Conversions*, p 376.

narrative of conversion contrasts former savagery with a subsequently elevated and purified Christian state,”<sup>48</sup> is very commonly used in children’s literature. Chapter Four of *Pearls of the Pacific*, for example, is entitled “Samoa as it Was,” and Barradale uses the landing of the pioneer missionary John Williams as a point at which the history of Samoa is clearly divided into two parts: “Old Samoa” was the period before the arrival of the missionary John Williams, while “New Samoa” is all the events which occurred post that event. Barradale’s clear distinction between these two periods equates the landing of the missionary Williams in Samoa with all the portent associated with the arrival of Christ into human history whereby time is divided into B.C and A.D. The term “New Samoa” also implies that all that preceded this date was totally usurped, as if the sudden and momentous conversion experience which was so often related about the lives of individual missionaries could be revisited upon a whole group, in this case the Samoans.

However, to gain the support of the reader this literary form relied on the indigenous population affirming that the presence of the missionaries was both beneficial and desirable. The final chapters of Ballantyne’s *The Coral Island* resound with references to the salutary works conducted “by that excellent body, the London Missionary Society”<sup>49</sup> and the last half of the book becomes a testimony to the civilising influence of the missionaries with one of the indigenous people proclaiming of the hero Jack,

You have risked your life for one who was known to you only for a few days. But she was a woman in distress and that was enough to secure her the aid of a Christian man. We, who live in these islands of the sea, know that the true Christians always acted thus. Their

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<sup>48</sup> Thomas, *Colonial Conversions*, p 372.

<sup>49</sup> Ballantyne, *The Coral Island*, p 246.

religion is one of love and kindness. We thank God that so many Christians have been sent here. We hope many more will come.<sup>50</sup>

These sentiments echo those made earlier in the book by an indigenous teacher when he tells the boys of the thousands of islanders who still practice idolatry and are the perpetrators of “terrible sins.” He pleads with them:

‘I trust if you ever return to England you will tell your Christian friends that the horrors which they hear of in regard to these islands are literally true, and that when they have heard the worst, the ‘half has not been told them’; for there are perpetrated here foul deeds of darkness of which man may not speak. You may also tell them,’ he said, looking around with a smile, while a tear of gratitude trembled in his eye and rolled down his coal - black cheek - ‘tell them of the blessings that the Gospel has wrought here.’<sup>51</sup>

In both of the preceding extracts the reification of the dependence of the indigenous population on the European is underpinned by the universalisation of the benefits of the missionary endeavours in the South Pacific. By having these trembling words of “gratitude,” spoken by one of the indigenous missionary teachers, the author rationalises the belief that the local population are in need of and in fact seek European “salvation” and are unable to help themselves. Throughout the novel it is the few European characters rather than the many islanders who are given the chance to speak and, as the extracts reveal, on those few occasions when the indigenous people are given a voice it is usually only to justify the European’s actions. This justification, often linked with infantilization, is apparent in R. C. Nicholson’s *Son of a Savage: The Story of Daniel Bula*, the biography of Daniel Bula, an indigenous teacher in the Solomon Islands, when he is quoted as saying to an Australian audience in Melbourne in 1917,

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<sup>50</sup> Ballantyne, *The Coral Island*, p 285.

<sup>51</sup> Ballantyne, *The Coral Island*, p 254.



Give to us more missionaries. Again I say, give to us more missionaries. You have so many in this country. Can you not spare us a few more ? How can my people go straight without guidance ? They are as little children, and need to be taken by the hand and led the pathway to the Great Father.<sup>52</sup>

As the indigenous people of the South Pacific are represented as being grateful for European intervention in their lives and begging for more missionaries, naturally any romantic sense of the islands being a prelapsarian paradise before their arrival is totally dispelled. The converted islanders condemn their own history and culture as being steeped in unspeakable depravities; in contrast, the “blessings that the Gospel has wrought,” are portrayed as a direct result of the spiritual influence of the missionaries in redeeming the indigenous population from sin.

### **Housing as a Signifier of Christianity**

The tangible expression of the “blessings” affirmed in the aforementioned lines is made apparent to the reader of *The Coral Island* by the unification of the islanders’ appearance and style of living to comply with European conventions. In the Christian village

every house had doors and Venetian windows painted partly with lamp black made from candle nut, and partly with red ochre which contrasted powerfully with the dazzling coral lime that covered the walls.<sup>53</sup>

Opposed to the European sense of neatness in the Christian village are the villages of the people who have refused conversion where the narrator was

led to contrast the rude huts and sheds and their almost naked, savage looking inhabitants with the natives of the Christian village,

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<sup>52</sup> R. C. Nicholson (1925) *The Son of a Savage: The Story of Daniel Bula*, London: Epworth Press, p 93.

<sup>53</sup> Ballantyne, *The Coral Island*, p 247.

who, to use the teacher's scriptural expression, were now 'clothed and in their right mind.'<sup>54</sup>

The tidiness of the Christian indigenous people and Western innovations, like doors on huts, are offered to the young reader as evidence of the capacity of Christianity, with the missionary as its agent, to improve not only spiritual life but also physical living conditions. In nearly all the South Pacific missionary texts written for children the adoption of a European style of housing is offered as "proof that Christianity is of God,"<sup>55</sup> as evident when, with the approval of the newly Christianised Chief Tararo, the converted islanders,

commenced building a large and commodious church, under the superintendence of the missionary, and several rows of new cottages were marked out, as prosperous and beautiful as the Christian village at the other end of the island.<sup>56</sup>

Hartley Grattan contends that when the missionaries forced the natives to adopt a more English style of housing, abandoning native housing, they also were largely motivated by symbolic reasoning. They felt it would be more Christian to live in English-style houses because English Christians did. But they also felt that native-style housing, being open and airy, led to an altogether too public life; as with clothing, they favoured concealment over revelation.<sup>57</sup>

Ironically, while the differences between the character of Europeans and the islanders are often stressed, when it came to modes of dress and living conditions no allowance was made for differences in weather, landscape, vegetation etc. The emphasis on the adoption of a European style of housing and clothing reflected a reaction against the more open sexual practices of the indigenous people of the South Pacific. Ever since the first reports of early

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<sup>54</sup> Ballantyne, *The Coral Island*, p 261.

<sup>55</sup> Ballantyne, *The Coral Island*, p 247.

<sup>56</sup> Ballantyne, *The Coral Island*, p 287.

<sup>57</sup> C. Hartley Grattan (1963) *The South West Pacific to 1900: A Modern History*, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, p 200.

explorers of public intercourse, polygamy etc. among South Sea island cultures the missionaries often charged “the natives with being sex-mad and utterly immoral.”<sup>58</sup> While children’s literature was not an appropriate place for overtly raising such issues, the transition to more private forms of housing was certainly praised and encouraged in children’s publications. Barradale in the children’s book *Pearls of the Pacific*, for example, belittles Samoan housing and the lifestyle it supports, proclaiming to his young European readers in a shocked tone,

just Fancy, as people walk along the road, they can see nearly all that is going on *inside* the houses. The Samoans do not know what private life is, and they do not understand why English people sometimes like to be quiet in their homes.<sup>59</sup>

### **Indigenous Housing as Comment on a Domestic Issue**

Images of tidy, Westernised, picturesque villages are usually explained as merely reflecting the missionary ideals of order coming out of chaos and the imposition of supposedly superior Western standards over an inferior indigenous culture; however, as much as they were a comment on the changes wrought on converted foreign “heathens,” they were also a reflection on the domestic concerns of the European missions. Edmond believes that the sheer distance of the South Pacific from Europe meant that it became “an imagery zone or dream territory on to which European concerns could be projected,”<sup>60</sup> and certainly housing was a great concern of the missionary societies in Britain at the time, as A.E. Holmans in *Housing Policy in Britain: A History*, has noted, “in the nineteenth century housing conditions became the subject of public concern, which they certainly had not been in earlier centuries.”<sup>61</sup> Holmes

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<sup>58</sup> Bengt Danielsson (1956) *Love in the South Seas*, London: Allen and Unwin, p 57.

<sup>59</sup> Barradale, p 64.

<sup>60</sup> Edmond, p 131.

<sup>61</sup> A.E. Holmans (1987) *Housing Policy in Britain: A History*, London: Croom Helm, p 22.

further suggests that to a large degree the impetus for reform came from religious enthusiasm and that “there was a growth of societies for missionary activity of all kinds, including moral wellbeing at home as well as abroad.”<sup>62</sup> It was not until the *Public Health Act* of 1875 that minimum standards for sanitation in new housing were established in Britain and prepared the way for the *Housing of the Working Classes Act* of 1890. The significance attached to the cleanliness and neatness of indigenous Christian dwellings in the South Pacific children’s texts throughout the nineteenth century can be seen as not only furnishing “proof” of the benefits of Christian conversion, but also as establishing a standard for a physical environment which was not yet attained at home in Britain. In an inversion of the myth of the South Pacific living conditions being primitive and inferior to those of European society, these texts present the young reader with an idealised missionary vision and model for domestic housing reform, which reflected the benefits strict adherence to the gospel could also bring to Europe.

### **Clothing and the Indigenous Teacher**

Similar to the significance attached to the adoption of European housing, was the greater sense of modesty attributed to European clothing and in particular the mode of dress of the indigenous teachers which identified them as having assumed European values. In *The Coral Island*, when the boys meet the indigenous teacher, he displays impeccable European manners and speaks English so well that they “certainly could not have supposed him a native, but for the colour of his face and the foreign accent in his tone.”<sup>63</sup> He is dressed in a straw hat and “a respectable suit of European clothes” and his wife, also a model of conversion, is “clothed in a simple European gown and a straw hat.”<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Holmans, p 23.

<sup>63</sup> Ballantyne, *The Coral Island*, p 249.

<sup>64</sup> Ballantyne, *The Coral Island*, p 247.

To emphasise their special status in the community as a missionary couple, the teacher and his wife are set apart from the rest of the indigenous people who, although converted,

wore clumsily-fashioned trousers and no upper garment except hats made of straw and cloth. Many of the dresses, both of women and men, were grotesque enough, being very bad imitations of the European garb.<sup>65</sup>

Edmond has noted that clothes “are socially discursive and form part of a larger signifying system,”<sup>66</sup> and in these various descriptions of clothing the reader is presented with a scale of adaption to European conventions which is meant to reflect the civilised state and spiritual progress of the indigenous wearer. This is evident even in the terms used to describe the teachers: while Ballantyne refers to the unconverted islanders as “black scoundrels,”<sup>67</sup> the indigenous Christian teacher is a “sable guide”<sup>68</sup> and “sable friend.”<sup>69</sup> Sable is not just an exotic substitute for the pejorative word “black,” as it is the term used in heraldry for the colour black, therefore obliquely associating the indigenous teacher with the trope of Christian chivalry as detailed in Chapter 5 of this thesis. However, the words of Ballantyne's earlier description remind the young reader that while the indigenous teacher can be a devout missionary among his own people and perfectly mimic European attire and manners, he will never be the equal of the European as his “colour” and “foreign tone” cannot be converted.

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<sup>65</sup> Ballantyne, *The Coral Island*, p 247.

<sup>66</sup> Edmond, p 124.

<sup>67</sup> Ballantyne, *The Coral Island*, p 212.

<sup>68</sup> Ballantyne, *The Coral Island*, p 269.

<sup>69</sup> Ballantyne, *The Coral Island*, p 283.

## **Betwixt-and-Between**

The success of the missionaries was often proclaimed in terms of the number of converts and their willingness to be teachers and further preach the gospel.<sup>70</sup> Smith concludes that the indigenous teachers,

were given an intermediary status within the hierarchy of otherness in the Pacific: the brown mediator between civilised white missionary and the black and savage Melanesian or the primitive Micronesian.<sup>71</sup>

Beidelman has also noted that in the administration of African colonial society the indigenous staff were

educationally, economically and culturally betwixt-and-between modern European and traditional native cultures. The semievolved state of these staffs was essential to their usefulness; representing neither European nor native life, they interpreted each to the other.<sup>72</sup>

Certainly the indigenous missionary teacher in the South Pacific also fulfilled this function, acting as guide, interpreter and assistant to the European missionary and often venturing into areas hostile to Europeans. However, it is possible to see that the “betwixt-and-between” status accorded to the indigenous teacher reflected the predicament of the European missionary who was also caught between a number of competing pressures. These missionaries mainly came from the middle class, but aspired to a higher station; they proclaimed spiritual ideals, but needed to engage in commerce; they advocated piety, yet needed to be seen as men of action. The success of the missionaries

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70 Chapter 10 of Cousins' *The Story of the South Seas: Written for Young People* details the important role of indigenous teachers from the Pacific islands in spreading the gospel in New Guinea, while Barradale in *Pearls of the Pacific* devotes two chapters to foreign missionary work of the islander converts.

71 Vanessa Smith (1998) *Literary Culture and the Pacific: Nineteenth-century Textual Encounters*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p 83.

72 T. Beidelman (1982) *Colonial Evangelism: A Socio - Historical Study of an East African Mission at the Grassroots*, Indiana: Indiana University Press, p 5.

was presented to the young reader in terms of increasing number of indigenous teachers and their ability to successfully cross religious and social boundaries. In many ways their struggles and eventual triumphs mirrored the aspirations of the missionaries and gave promise that with persistence and faith they too would overcome the dilemmas of their situation.

### **Literacy and Redemption**

Vanessa Smith has commented that “in early missionary accounts from the Pacific, the experience of religious conversion is repeatedly equated with the experience of learning to read.”<sup>73</sup> In South Pacific children’s literature there are numerous accounts of the European missionaries astounding the indigenous people with ability to communicate with each other in writing, with the story of John Williams sending a note to his wife on a chip of wood being a favourite which is often recounted.<sup>74</sup> The absence of literacy skills on the part of the indigenous people was often equated with a state of indolence and sin as apparent in Barradale’s *Pearls of the Pacific* where the author bemoans the fact that in “Old Samoa”

Samoan children grew up to be idle and ignorant; they could not read or write; in fact there was no language they could write and no books for them to read! But not only did they grow up to be ignorant and idle; they became wicked too, because they were idle. Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do.

That was true of the Samoans. They had little to do because they did not know how to do much, and so they got into all sorts of mischief and lived very bad lives. Now the missionaries have built many schools, and written many Samoan books, and are teaching the people carpentry and printing and gardening and other useful trades. A large number of the men, and most of the boys and girls in the mission schools, know much more than their fathers and grandfathers did. They know how to use their hands and their

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<sup>73</sup> V. Smith, p 1.

<sup>74</sup> Basil Mathews *John Williams the Shipbuilder*, p 136, or Claude Field *Heroes of Missionary Enterprise*, p 299.

brains, and to occupy their time profitably; and, as a result they will grow up to be better men and women than those who have no schooling at all.<sup>75</sup>

Barradale makes direct connections between schooling, literacy, work and redemption proclaiming to the child reader the universalisation of the benefits of the missionary work. He encourages “what has been called called ‘a duty’ to natives, the requirement in Africa and elsewhere to establish colonies for ‘the benefit’ of the natives or the prestige of the mother country,”<sup>76</sup> and a recognition that “if the social circumstances change, these children grow up being no less Christian than any others.”<sup>77</sup> The author has equated this physical and spiritual benefit with being occupied in Western pursuits and having a European style of education. Smith has commented that in Ellis’ *Polynesian Researches* “writing is represented as a labour which, in contrast to the capacity of the material gift to confer immediate privilege, equalises subjects, inverting traditional hierarchies and authority.”<sup>78</sup> However, the extract from Barradale, rather than equalising the members of the indigenous society, reveals a deliberate policy of making redundant the traditional knowledge and wisdom of the elders and supplanting them with a literate culture. The established and ancient hierarchies are totally inverted and undermined by the coming generation of “New Samoa” who are removed from their domestic culture and traditional social structure. This allows the missionaries to shape the future of the society through control of educative practise and content. In the teaching of reading and writing it would appear that Greenblatt’s observation on the impact of the Spanish missionaries in the New World applies equally to the South Pacific missionary in the nineteenth century:

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<sup>75</sup> Barradale, p 47.

<sup>76</sup> Said, p 130.

<sup>77</sup> Thomas, *Colonial Conversions*, p 376.

<sup>78</sup> V. Smith, p 72.



“though the missionaries obviously intended to give a great gift, it is difficult to avoid a sense that this gift too was a kind of taking possession.”<sup>79</sup> The “gift” of literacy was yet another means of representing the indigenous people as inferior to Europeans as clearly seen in *My Trip in the John Williams*, also published by the LMS as a reward book in 1900, where the writer observes “They looked on with amazement at the book, and are hopeless as they attempt to master the meaning of those strange marks on paper which we find so simple.”<sup>80</sup>

The differentiation between the Christian Samoans and the purportedly ignorant, lazy and therefore ultimately “wicked” indigenous people is reiterated throughout Barradale’s text:

Before the missionaries went to Samoa in 1830, the people had no schools. They could not read, for they had no books, and they could not write for not one of them had ever seen his language written down. They spoke their language and that was all. They could not even learn their alphabet, for they had none to learn. They had no idea of any such thing as education. They thought a great deal about exercising the body, and were splendid swimmers and walkers and climbers, but they paid no attention to the training of the mind. To tell the truth, they were great dunces. But you must not blame them for that. They were dunces, not because they would not, but because they did not know how to learn.<sup>81</sup>

Greenblatt outlines that in Columbus’ descriptions of the peoples of the New World “the principal faculty in generating these representations is not reason but imagination.”<sup>82</sup> Although Barradale here writes with the authoritative tone

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<sup>79</sup> Greenblatt, p 121.

<sup>80</sup> R. Wardlaw Thompson (1900) *My Trip in the John Williams*, London: London Missionary Society, p 23.

<sup>81</sup> Barradale, p 129.

<sup>82</sup> Greenblatt, p 13.

assumed by the eyewitness and arrives at the conclusion that in “Old Samoa” all Samoans were “dunces,” he has already lamented the lack of any permanent language records from the time before Williams and can only be imagining what Samoa was like before any contact was made with Europeans. In an act of appropriation, Barradale’s cultural preconceptions have proclaimed indigenous Samoan culture as a devil’s playground where “Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do” and he damns it as “the very embodiment of what his culture views not only as otherness but as evil.”<sup>83</sup> The preeminence of European civilisation is established most firmly by the claim that, in line with contemporary anthropological theory, the indigenous people could never rise out of their lowly and “wicked” state without European intervention because “they did not know how to learn.” He has shown no sensitivity to, or even awareness of, the importance of the oral tradition, perhaps because European Christianity was founded on the Bible and the reading of the written ‘Word’ of God.

From Barradale’s cultural bias, any society which did not allow for this form of written revelation must necessarily have been inferior; he seems to believe that,

those who possess writing have a past, a history, that those without access to letters necessarily lack. And since God ‘speakes [*sic*] to all’ through writing, unlettered cultures (as distinct from illiterate individuals) are virtually excluded by definition from the human community.<sup>84</sup>

The missionaries are portrayed by Barradale as having given the Samoans not only the benefits of reading and writing, but also occupations which enabled redemption as the young reader is told,

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<sup>83</sup> Greenblatt, p 14.

<sup>84</sup> Greenblatt, p 10.

the missionaries from Peritania (Britain) have tried to show them what you already know, that all good work pleases God, and they have largely succeeded, by teaching them useful employments. The people are quick to see the advantages and blessings that come from using their hands and brains, and they are getting a truer idea of what God's work means.<sup>85</sup>

Indeed, according to Barradale, God can only be "pleased" by "good work," which means those intellectual and physical occupations which support and sustain a European lifestyle. Barradale's constant emphasis on the role of the missionary in teaching "useful employments" indicates how mission schools were established for "training" the indigenous people who "knew no better," in "God's work," which exclusively meant the imposition of European values and ideals. Simultaneously, through the macro-linguistic strategy of universalisation the publication is also reinforcing to the young European reader the unquestionable value of their own society's educational and work practices.

### **Changes in the Representation of 'The Other'**

David Hilliard argues in *God's Gentlemen: A History of the Melanesian Mission, 1849 - 1942*, that "The Anglicans saw their task as the creation of a self-governing church...that would conserve and not destroy the indigenous social order."<sup>86</sup> This enlightened view of the value of indigenous culture by the Anglican mission which sought "to replace mid-nineteenth century doctrines of Anglo-Saxon superiority by commitment to social equality and Melanesian leadership was largely swept away by a resurgence of European paternalism at the close of the nineteenth century."<sup>87</sup> Yet the ideal was to remain in children's

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<sup>85</sup> Barradale, p 117.

<sup>86</sup> David Hilliard (1978) *God's Gentlemen: A History of the Melanesian Mission 1849 - 1942*, Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, p 294.

<sup>87</sup> Hilliard, p 294.

literature: in 1921 Oxford University Press published Mary Debenham's *Patteson of the Isles*, a children's biography of Bishop John Patteson. In a letter to boys at Eton, Patteson proposes that there are two ways of looking at the indigenous people of the South Pacific:

You could think of them as children who were going to be children always, who were to look up to the white man for everything, and to do the work that the white man didn't care to do, who needn't bother to think for themselves, and could just be satisfied all their lives to have their consciences kept for them and do as they were told. That is one way in which the little black brother gets treated, even by those who look upon him as a little brother, and really want to make him good and happy on their own lines. And the other, the Patteson way, is to believe that to every man, black or white, God gives the power to do the work for which He put us into the world - to help other people and bring them along the right way. And the real education is the teaching of people to use that power, and giving them bit by bit, as they are ready for it, the chance to use it.<sup>88</sup>

Patteson acknowledges the integral and innate value of the indigenous person as having been "put into the world," with God-given purpose, a view far removed from the belief that they were merely sinful 'heathens' that first motivated evangelical missionary efforts in the region. We are also told Patteson believed there was always,

a danger of uncivilised people copying the dress and outside ways of Europeans and being contented with that instead of going any deeper. We have got to get it home to them that they must be good Africans and good Melanesians, not cheap copies of Englishmen, with nothing but a thin veneer on the top and the fierce, greedy, old heathen heart just the same underneath,<sup>89</sup>

and later,

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<sup>88</sup> Mary Debenham (1921) *Patteson of the Isles*, London: Oxford University Press, p 111.

<sup>89</sup> Debenham, p 109.

the hope of the Melanesian missions has always been to win the islands by means of a ‘black net with white corks’ - to train Christian natives to be missionaries to their own people, with the white man as guide and advisor until they have learnt to do without him.<sup>90</sup>

While Patteson still regards the South Pacific people as “uncivilised,” he is advocating the possibility of an authentic indigenous identity which is not just a hollow replica of European ways. Yet, it is the last sentiment, “learnt to do without,” which most clearly reveals how he sees the European role as limited and the island people as ultimately capable of self-determination. Certainly the role of the missionary as “guide and advisor” is far removed from the belief espoused earlier by John Paton that the South Pacific missionary was a rescuer responding to “the wail of the perishing heathen,”<sup>91</sup> although for Patteson it is still the “white corks” which support and sustain the entire process.

When compared to his contemporaries Chalmers and Paton and the earliest motivations for South Pacific missions, Patteson is expressing progressive views which may be the result of his university education, but also reflect a vision of missionary endeavour that was more acceptable at the time of this book’s publication in 1921. In the 1929 *Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts Handbook*, for example, heavy emphasis is placed on education for all indigenous children not just those training for mission work and, by 1949, John Burton in *Modern Missions in the South Pacific* was confidently proclaiming that the “older view” that all “the heathen were falling into an endless hell,”<sup>92</sup> had been discredited and that “the European missionary is only temporarily a part of the indigenous churches,” who must “build and

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<sup>90</sup> Debenham, p 112.

<sup>91</sup> Paton, *The Story of John G. Paton*, p 39.

<sup>92</sup> John Burton (1949) *Modern Missions in the South Pacific*, London: London Missionary Society and Methodist Overseas Missions, p 12.

plan that his own elimination can be hastened.”<sup>93</sup> However, the paternalistic and patronising attitudes were to persist in children’s literature when as late as 1954 in Dale Collins’ popular children’s book *Storm Over Samoa*, the indigenous population was still being infantilized as “schoolboys”<sup>94</sup> and children.

## Conclusion

The publication of *Pearls of the Pacific* and other material of this type as literature suitable for children gives credence to Hartley Grattan’s claim that the LMS missionaries “were short on anything we might call cultural understanding or anthropological insight.”<sup>95</sup> The missionary was portrayed as saving the South Pacific islanders from a slothful and pagan existence by giving them literacy and work skills of a European nature. The indigenous culture was scorned and the people infantilized and dehumanised. Although there is evidence of some changes in this attitude over time, children’s literature continued to perpetuate the belief that the South Pacific indigenous populations were caught in a permanent child-like state which could only be relieved by a much-welcomed missionary presence.

If the missionaries were to be portrayed in the role of saviour of the indigenous people of the South Pacific, it was necessary to present them to the reader in a manner readily identifiable with courage and honour, such as a patriotic and loyal soldier. The missionary as a soldier and hero are the focus of the next chapter.

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<sup>93</sup> Burton, p 106.

<sup>94</sup> Dale Collins (1954) *Storm Over Samoa*, London: Heinemann, p 116.

<sup>95</sup> Hartley Grattan, p 197.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **THE SOUTH PACIFIC MISSIONARY**

### **AS SOLDIER AND HERO**

*“He infinitely preferred being a missionary in the South Seas to holding the highest secular office at home.”<sup>1</sup>*

The formation of the Boys’ Brigade by William Smith in 1883 with its blending of drill and camps with religion and the establishment of other similar groups, such as the Jewish Lads Brigade, served “to blend religious, patriotic and military inspiration.”<sup>2</sup> Aside from these children’s organisations, the linking of the military with religious devotion was evident in the popular hymns of the period like *Onward Christian Soldiers* where the good Christian was portrayed as taking-up arms for Christ and fighting against evil just as a soldier would fight for what is right. Diane Langmore claims that largely due to Livingston’s influence “Christianity, commerce, civilisation, colonisation, and imperial expansion became increasingly associated, and missionaries could feel the attraction of serving a patriotic as well as spiritual mission.”<sup>3</sup> John Wolffe also comments that “the missionary adventure story had its appeal alongside the military one, and Sunday Schools guaranteed its continuing promotion.”<sup>4</sup>

### **Muscular Christianity**

The military story and the missionary tale were separate genres, yet the language and imagery of the military was used in missionary literature, converging to form what is referred to as “muscular Christianity,” a phenomena

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<sup>1</sup> Kingston, p 245.

<sup>2</sup> John Wolffe (1994) *God and Greater Britain: Religion and National Life in Britain and Ireland, 1843 - 1945*, London: Routledge, p 230.

<sup>3</sup> Diane Langmore (1989) *Missionary Lives: Papua, 1874 - 1914*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, p 46.

<sup>4</sup> Wolffe, *God and Greater Britain*, p 224.

explored further in Chapter Five of this thesis. David Rosen has noted that “for many in Victorian England muscular Christianity meant macho” involving swashbuckling violence rather than a “gentle, liberal but realistic and hard-working social activism.”<sup>5</sup> Wanton destruction and unnecessary brutal force did not reflect the values of the missionary societies whose adventure stories, biographies and other literature published for children often preferred to compare the South Pacific missionaries with the obedience, duty and honour expected from a soldier. This is a comparison centred on

the old chivalrous and Christian belief that a man’s body is given to him to be trained and brought into subjection, and then to be used for the protection of the weak, the advancement of all righteous causes and the subduing of the earth which God has given to the children of men.<sup>6</sup>

This vision of manliness was promoted in the Evangelical children’s literature as it allowed the representation of the missionary as a vigorous person full of courage who was actively involved in the action and affairs of this world while motivated and justified by the ideals of the next.

To some extent all of the biographies portrayed the missionary as a combination of sanctity and courage; in *Gascoyne the Sandalwood Trader*, the missionary Mason is described as being “bold and manly in the extreme, he was more like a soldier in outward aspect than a missionary.”<sup>7</sup> The comparison with a soldier is reinforced by use of military terms in the paragraphs that follow where the child reader is told that in spite of opposition from the indigenous inhabitants of the island the missionary “stuck to his post”<sup>8</sup> during a war

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<sup>5</sup> David Rosen (1994) “The Volcano and the Cathedral: Muscular Christianity and the Origins of Primal Manliness” in *Muscular Christianity: Embodying the Victorian Age*, David Hall (ed), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p 17.

<sup>6</sup> Richards, p 6.

<sup>7</sup> Robert Ballantyne (1900) *Gascoyne the Sandalwood Trader*, London: James Nisbet, p 33.

<sup>8</sup> Ballantyne, *Gascoyne the Sandalwood Trader*, p 34.



between the Christian and non-Christian populace. The most obvious illustration of ‘Muscular Christianity’ is James Chalmers, one of the most written about missionary/explorers in the South Seas, who is referred to as a “manly chap”<sup>9</sup> in Nairne’s *Greatheart of Papua*, a biography of Chalmers published specifically for children. His masculine spirituality is especially emphasised on those occasions where he is in direct communion with God. When he prays it is described as a “very manly thing,”<sup>10</sup> impressing upon the young readers the acceptability and desirability of a prayerful life as part of manhood. Even the title “Greatheart” bears witness to masculine strength supported by a profound faith as it alludes to Greatheart who escorted Christina and her children in Bunyan’s *The Pilgrims Progress*. Chalmers being represented to the impressionable young reader in military terms and as a manly figure is best illustrated in the preface of Lovett’s *Tamate: The Life and Adventures of a Christian Hero - A Book for Boys*, where the purpose of the author is revealed to be not only to tell Chalmers’ life story in an exciting way, but to equate the missionary with the glamour attached to secular heroes.

The preface states,

James Chalmers was as brave a man as ever fought in the British Army or Navy. He was as true a hero as any Englishman who has ever been honoured by the nation for victories won in the field or on the sea. The aim of this book is to tell the story of his life in such a way as to interest boys. The main purpose of the author has been to show that Tamate, whose great aim in life was to do good to others, was as bold, as courageous, as worthy of imitation as any explorer, man of science, soldier, or statesman whose name is famous in British annals. It is a good thing that young readers, especially boys, should see that a true Christian man can also be a hero.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Nairne, p 4.

<sup>10</sup> Nairne, p 9.

<sup>11</sup> Lovett, *Tamate*, Preface.

Chalmers was also known as the “Great White Scout,”<sup>12</sup> and his two titles signify the dilemma that confronted the authors of the children’s literature who wanted to present a religious figure, but also wanted to create a bold and dashing hero. Chalmers’ robust form of Christianity makes it hard sometimes to separate the missionary from the explorer. The portrait created by Lovett and Nairne of Chalmers as the “Great White Scout” is exemplified by the front cover of Nairne’s book (See Figure 2 next page) which shows Chalmers wading determinedly ashore wearing a pith helmet and white safari suit while surrounded by hostile looking islanders.

### **The Englishman**

Notably, Chalmers’ exploits are not compared to the bravery of just any soldier, but, it is stressed, he had the courage of the “British” fighting man, who was an essential component of the expansion and maintenance of the empire and was represented as the epitome of courage. Chalmers is also given the intellectual skills of statesmen and the daring of explorers, qualities which the reader is informed are particular to an “Englishman.” Similarly, the RTS publication *Sunday at Home*, greeted the death of Chalmers with the heading “This Really Great Englishman.”<sup>13</sup> Chalmers’ heroism is attributed to his English heritage, but ironically he was Scottish. The article apologetically admits “One might technically take exception to the word Englishman as Chalmers was a Scotsman,”<sup>14</sup> but from both the preface of Lovett’s biography and the headline of the article, it is apparent the writers are emphasising to the child reader that his laudable qualities, leaving mere technicalities aside, were attributable only to an Englishman, and in particular a “Christian” Englishman.

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<sup>12</sup> Nairne, p 69.

<sup>13</sup> Religious Tract Society (1902) *Sunday at Home*, (May to October 1902), London: Religious Tract Society, p 566.

<sup>14</sup> Religious Tract Society, *Sunday at Home*, p 566.



Figure 2

The trope of ‘Muscular Christianity’ is evoked in this image of the missionary as “Great White Scout” from the front cover of *Greatheart of Papua*, by W.P. Nairne. It shows James Chalmers wading determinedly ashore in the traditional explorers’ pith helmet and safari suit. The indigenous teacher follows Chalmers ashore. (Refer p 48)

From: W.P. Nairne, *Greatheart of Papua*, Cover.

## The Cosmic Battle and the Use of Force

The words of Lovett's preface also create a sense of the missionary being intimately and directly involved as a soldier in a cosmic battle between the forces of good and evil. This is further intensified when it closes with the words:

The book is sent forth with the prayer that the brave deeds and stirring words and consecrated life of Tamate may kindle in many a young heart the desire and the ambition to follow in his steps, as a brave soldier, in the struggle to bring light and truth and hope to those, whether at home or abroad, who are yet in the darkness and sorrow of sin.<sup>15</sup>

While aligning the missionary with the military equated them with popular notions of heroism, it also allied the missionary to a "struggle" that required "a brave soldier" to use force to gain his objective. Perhaps nowhere is this alliance more apparent than in the biography of the *The Story of John G. Paton told for Young Folks*. Paton was a Reformed Presbyterian Church Of Scotland South Sea missionary for over thirty years, but even before he left for the Pacific he demonstrated a capacity for violent action when he mastered disruptive students in his class by locking the classroom door and engaging in a free-for-all fight with them until they became subdued.<sup>16</sup> Paton's reliance on force is also apparent during his time as a missionary on the island of Tanna in the New Hebrides (now Vanuatu) as when he felt intimidated by the indigenous people he would often threaten them with military retribution making statements like "My Jehovah God will punish you; a Man-of-War will come and punish you."<sup>17</sup> Although Paton asserts a direct connection between God, punishment and the technology of war, he attributes his many apparently

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<sup>15</sup> Lovett, *Tamate*, Preface.

<sup>16</sup> Paton, *The Story of John G. Paton*, p 29.

<sup>17</sup> Paton, *The Story of John G. Paton*, p 124.

miraculous escapes from danger to the intervention of God, seemingly unaware that the threat of immediate and overwhelming military force may be more responsible for his safety than any spiritual presence. As the recounting of these events was detailed in text specifically dedicated to “young folks,” the mode of behaviour adopted by Paton can only have been seen as a worthy role model for the child, yet the actions of the missionary demonstrate to the reader that physical or technological superiority is a legitimate means to enforce one’s views on those who are weaker than yourself. When confronted with unruly students in Glasgow, Paton claimed he wanted to “rule by love and not by terror,”<sup>18</sup> but by whichever means he was determined to “conquer not to be conquered.”<sup>19</sup> His high-handed approach to teaching clearly indicated to the child reader that the same methods of brute force that were acceptably applied to unruly children at home were appropriate in converting the often infantilized indigenous people of the South Seas to Christianity.

### **Duty to the Empire and God**

While Paton illustrates the more forceful side of the union of religious and military imagery, the general identification of the missionary with a soldier created a romantic perception of their sense of duty which the young reader, reared on stories of empire and military heroism, could readily identify with. It is no surprise to find in Davidson’s *John Williams of the South Sea Islands* that he comments on John Williams’ death with the words, “Thus died a great and good man, like a soldier standing to his post,”<sup>20</sup> and concludes the book with a description of Williams as a “gallant soldier of the cross.”<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Paton, *The Story of John G. Paton*, p 30.

<sup>19</sup> Paton, *The Story of John G. Paton*, p 30.

<sup>20</sup> Norman Davidson (1925) *John Williams of the South Sea Islands*, London: Seeley, p 58.

<sup>21</sup> Davidson, p 59.

The exact nature of the gallantry and bravery of the missionaries is clarified in comments to be found in Ballantyne's South Sea adventure tale *The Island Queen*, where Otto remarks that it is "the business of an army to defend the people and keep them in order."<sup>22</sup> Further to this, the closing line of *Gascoyne the Sandalwood Trader* finds the reformed pirate Gascoyne teaching in the missionary's Sunday school and telling the children " 'God is love' and 'Love is the Fulfilling of the law.' "<sup>23</sup> For the maintenance of this "law" and "order" the missionary, like the good soldier, was shown following orders unquestioningly as made particularly evident in Elias' *A Boy's Adventures in the South Seas*, where John Williams, when questioned as to whether he should go ashore on Erromanga (the island where he was later clubbed to death) comments "soldiers do not question their officers' orders, do they ? They do not ask to be spared the field of danger, do they ? Then why should *I* question *my* Captain's command ?"<sup>24</sup> The military metaphors used about missionaries intimate to the child reader that the missionary is an obedient servant and defender of the empire, but, unlike the ordinary soldier who must follow merely mortal leaders, the missionary's "order" originates directly from God and he acts on behalf of God; whatever the missionary does, or commands to be done, therefore assumes sacred proportions and the might of infallibility.

### **Missionaries and the Myth of Cook**

While the soldier analogy was a literary device that allowed some suitable and easily understood comparisons with the duties and functions of the missionary, the lowly rank of an ordinary soldier, no matter how heroically or loyally portrayed, did not sit comfortably with the concept of the missionary as a leader of men, or as someone of equal social status and public standing as the

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<sup>22</sup> Robert Ballantyne (n.d.) *The Island Queen*, London: James Nisbet, p 47.

<sup>23</sup> Ballantyne, *The Island Queen*, p 440.

<sup>24</sup> Frank Elias (1914) *A Boy's Adventures in the South Seas*, London: Religious Tract Society, p 240.

military heroes like Captain Cook or the Duke of Wellington. To appeal to the child reader the lives of the missionaries had to be couched in terms as daring and acceptable as those of the great secular heroes so that as well as comparing the missionary to the humble soldier, they were also often compared to famous military leaders.

The death of Cook in 1779 had a profound impact on the general public in Europe and England in particular, as Edmond has noted, “Cook’s death was mythologised. It became the founding event of colonial Pacific history.”<sup>25</sup> Edmond further comments that by the end of the 1780’s two distinct myths of Cook had evolved, “One was that he had been deified by the Hawaiians: the other placed him in Europe’s pantheon of immortals.”<sup>26</sup> While often regarded as a European hero of mythical proportions, for evangelical Christians, Cook had committed sacrilege by allowing himself to be worshipped by the Polynesians and Edmond further argues “Evangelical Christianity was bound to be sensitive to any hint of sacrilege, and missionaries in the field were particularly alert to the danger of being decivilised.”<sup>27</sup> However, the vast majority of South Pacific children’s missionary literature was published in England for a predominantly British audience and therefore it is not surprising to find that Cook is portrayed as a revered figure. In Ballantyne’s *The Coral Island*, for example, when Ralph commandeers the pirate ship the only book he finds aboard is a volume of Cook’s voyages, suggesting that even the outcasts of European society had regard for the exploits and seamanship of Cook.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, in Mathews’ *John Williams the Shipbuilder* the preface is entitled “Two Captains Courageous” and compares the voyages of discovery by Captain

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<sup>25</sup> Edmond, p 23.

<sup>26</sup> Edmond, p 40.

<sup>27</sup> Edmond, p 61.

<sup>28</sup> Ballantyne, *The Coral Island*, p 229.

Cook in the South Pacific with the captaining of the first missionary ship to the Pacific and proclaims “Captain Wilson as daring a hero as even Cook had been.”<sup>29</sup>

### **John Williams as Missionary Counter-myth**

The presence of the secular hero, Cook, in children’s literature with the South Pacific missionary as its focus, provided a means to establish yet another myth, that of the martyrdom of the missionary John Williams. The death of John Williams in similar circumstances to Cook provided evangelical writers and publishers with an opportunity to make Williams the religious counter-hero to Cook.

The similarities in the deaths of the two men, killed during a visit of exploration on a Pacific island, meant Williams could be portrayed in both text and illustration as the religious equivalent of the fashionable hero of the South Seas.<sup>30</sup> Just as the death of Cook had been a favourite subject for artists in the late eighteenth century, the comparison between Cook and Williams was dramatically made by the illustrators who painted the scene of John Williams’ death in children’s publications. There are some obvious similarities between the portrayals of these two famous men.

(See Figures 3 and 4 next two pages).

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<sup>29</sup> Basil Mathews (1915) *John Williams the Shipbuilder*, London: Oxford University Press, p 11.

<sup>30</sup> The many pictorial depictions of the death of Williams on Erromanga carry undertones of “The Landing at Erromanga” (See Appendix B) which showed the hostile reception given to Cook years earlier on the same island where Williams was to die.





Figure 3

“The Death of Cook,” by Henry Evison. (Refer p 66)

From: T. C. Bridges, *The Book of Discovery*, p 225.



Figure 4

“The Death of John Williams,” by Ernest Prater. (Refer p 66)

From: Frank Elias, *A Boy's Adventures in the South Seas*, p 266.

The many pictorial depictions of the death of Williams on Erromanga carry undertones of “The Landing at Erromanga” (See Appendix B) which showed the hostile reception given to Cook years earlier on the same island where Williams was to die.

Both Williams and Cook are shown as solitary, unarmed figures being clubbed to death within sight of rescue while a nearby party of Europeans watches helplessly on, witnesses to the killing. The dissimilarities are also telling: as Cook topples forward his face reveals agony and his arms are lowered in a gesture of helplessness; Williams, however, appears serene with his eyes fixed skyward and his right arm raised to the heavens as if he is reaching for his eternal reward.

This type of evocative pictorial image in children's publications helped to develop the counter-mythology of the missionary as a hero who risked his life just like distinguished military personnel or daring explorers. However, the missionary's death was seen to be even more heroic than his military and secular counterparts as he was not seeking personal or temporal glory, but risked all in pursuit of the noblest ideal of spreading European civilisation and Christianity. These strong visual images also emphasised to the young reader the prevailing view of the innate savagery and natural depravity of the indigenous people as they were depicted performing what, to European sensibilities, was the cowardly action of attacking from behind and, in their apparently uncontrollable bloodlust, failing to recognise that those they slay are harmless, moral champions who have voyaged so far for their benefit.

The comparison of the religious mission of Williams and the military exploits of Cook, implies to the young reader that the South Pacific missionaries, and the protomartyr Williams in particular, completed and brought to Christian fulfilment the imperialist endeavours begun by the scientific explorer Cook. The myth of Cook reaffirms the patriotic and heroic antecedents of the English missionary presence in the South Pacific, but it is

supplanted by the more hallowed myth of the missionary champion Williams, who is both English explorer and religious crusader.

## Conclusion

The children's literature about South Pacific missionaries utilised the patriotic imagery popular in all forms of children's publications. However, it also extended the image of soldier and leader to portray the missionary as the natural leader of the New World of the South Pacific where his courage in founding and forming Christian societies could not be rivalled. The attempt to give a valiant status to the South Pacific missionary was plainly evident in the titles of some of the biographies about them written specifically for children. Titles such as *Heroes who have Won their Crown*, *Heroes of Missionary Enterprise*, *Missionary Heroes in Oceania* and *The Race of Heroes*, all indicate the desire to portray the missionary as a legendary figure worthy to be at the forefront of the pantheon of English heroes. He was compared favourably to the secular heroes of the era, particularly Cook, and was portrayed as bringing to fulfilment the work of civilising and converting which had been initiated by the earliest explorers.

Beyond the recognition afforded the hero, the status of the missionaries was to be further enhanced by endowing them with the characteristics of the English gentleman, as detailed in the following chapter.



## **CHAPTER 5**

### **THE SOUTH PACIFIC MISSIONARY**

### **AS A GENTLEMAN**

*“He was God’s gentleman, even to New Guinean savages.”<sup>1</sup>*

In *Missionary Lives: Papua, 1874 -1914*, Dianne Langmore analyses the Papuan mission field and notes

missionaries who had been regarded as the ‘dregs of humanity’ at the end of the eighteenth century and ‘not quite gentlemen’ in the 1850’s, were by the last quarter of the nineteenth century respected and esteemed. In England, the eminent missionaries on furlough were lionised by the church-and-chapel-going public, featured in the press, consulted by academics and civil servants, and occasionally received royalty. The romantic saga of David Livingstone’s life and death turned the missionary into a modern-day folk hero. In deputation speeches, missionaries gave glimpses of a different world, where they ruled like kings over their domains, surrounded by black subjects to whom their word was law.<sup>2</sup>

Contributing to this improved social standing was the manner in which children’s literature successfully enhanced the reputation of the missionaries by favourably comparing them with the icons of the day whereby, as noted in preceding chapters, the courage and loyalty of the common soldier was complemented by the leadership and popularity of great secular heroes. In addition, the writers of children’s missionary literature invoked the trope of the English gentleman to portray the missionary as also having a refined and

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<sup>1</sup> Nairne, p101.

<sup>2</sup> Langmore, *Missionary Lives*, p 44.

honourable position in society and the hierarchy of the Empire. Cain and Hopkins comment that

when confronted with the challenge of new frontiers, gentlemen assumed proportions that were larger than life and at times became heroic figures. The empire was a superb arena for gentlemanly endeavour, the ultimate testing ground for the idea of responsible progress, for the battle against evil, for the performance of duty and for the achievement of honour.<sup>3</sup>

Gunson further notes that by the 1850's the social status of the missionary was undergoing a change as,

the average Evangelical missionary was in the process of establishing himself more securely in the social class toward which his sympathies were directed. As a 'godly mechanic,' or as a more privileged member of a mechanic-class family, he had claimed the privileges, adopted the conventions and imitated the manners of the greater middle class. In many ways the missionary career served as a qualifying certificate in this change of status.<sup>4</sup>

The improving status of the missionary is suggested in Collingwood's children's adventure novel *The Pirate Island: A Story of the South Pacific*, published in 1885, where Captain Staunton seeks to show his gratitude to the lowly sailor Bob Legerton for saving his child's life by making him "not only a first rate seaman and thorough navigator, but also a polished gentleman."<sup>5</sup> It is the missionary "gentleman," Mr. Eastlake, who

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<sup>3</sup> P. Cain and A. Hopkins (1993) *British Imperialism: Innovation and Expansion, 1688-1914*, London: Longman, p 34.

<sup>4</sup> Niel Gunson (1978) *Messengers of Grace: Evangelical Missionaries in the South Seas, 1797-1860*, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, p136.

<sup>5</sup> Harry Collingwood (1885) *The Pirate Island: A Story of the South Pacific*, London: Blackie and Sons, p 59.

volunteers to tutor Bob and is also described as “exceptionally well qualified for the task.”<sup>6</sup>

### **From Humble Origins to Public Status**

Eastlake’s willing interest in helping Bob Legerton change his status reveals an empathy with those seeking to join the growing middle class. Certainly the humble origin of the missionary was often stressed in the children’s literature; they were generally shown to come from ordinary, working-class families and to have enjoyed the simple pleasures of childhood before undergoing a conversion experience which led them to the missions and consequently a more respected position in society. In Lovett’s biography of James Chalmers the reader is told that he is the son of a stonemason and “although Chalmers became a great missionary, there was nothing of the story-book good boy about him in his early years.”<sup>7</sup> However, at eighteen Chalmers is deeply impressed by the religious fervour of two visiting preachers and decides to “carry to the heathen the glad tidings of Jesus Christ.”<sup>8</sup> His unremarkable background and sudden religious experience is likened to other Scottish missionaries including Livingstone, Gilmour and Moffat. Mathews’ biography of John Williams also tells of a wild young apprentice boy who, like Chalmers, was influenced by powerful preaching until he “felt driven to believe that he was called to enlist as a Christian

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<sup>6</sup> Collingwood, p 60.

<sup>7</sup> Lovett, *Tamate*, p 20.

<sup>8</sup> Lovett, *Tamate*, p 20.

missionary.”<sup>9</sup> The dramatic change in the adolescent character of these two famous South Pacific missionaries from modest backgrounds is possibly being offered to the reader as proof that even if they are from humble stock or their own lifestyle is sinful, they too can reform and be involved in hallowed mission work which will also have worldly acceptance and recognition.

Yet for the humbleness of their origins and the middle-class attitudes which Gunson asserts that missionaries adopted, within English society real wealth, power and influence resided with the aristocracy. The support of a wealthy upperclass was essential to the ongoing success of the South Pacific missions as seen in Williams’ *Narrative of Missionary Enterprises* which “ended with an appeal to the sons of noblemen to value missionary above military and become ‘soldiers of the cross’ themselves.”<sup>10</sup> Williams himself is compared not only to nobility but to the highest rank of royalty when he decides he needs his own ship:

It was the first thought that any man had had of a ship that would belong to the Missionary Society to cruise among the islands. As Alfred the Great first dreamed of a navy for the people of England, Williams worked and wrote and planned for a Ship of Peace.<sup>11</sup>

Williams being compared to Alfred the Great enshrines him in the young reader’s mind as a visionary historical figure whose ideas

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<sup>9</sup> Mathews, *John Williams the Shipbuilder*, p 26.

<sup>10</sup> Edmond, p 113.

<sup>11</sup> Mathews, *John Williams the Shipbuilder*, p 73.



were revolutionary and the equal of one of the greatest leaders of the nation.

The allying of the missionary cause with nobility was achieved through a concordance of ideologies whereby

the perfect gentleman adhered to a code of honour which placed duty before self-advancement. His rules of conduct were Christian as well as feudal in inspiration, and his rank entitled him to a place in the vanguard of Christ's army, though with the knights and officers rather than among the infantry.<sup>12</sup>

The “rules of conduct” that defined what it meant to be an English gentleman in the nineteenth-century were the result of a complex mix of social and economic forces. Cain and Hopkins state that “the history of the English gentleman is therefore one of continuous evolution accompanied by social tension,”<sup>13</sup> which included the discord between traditional, aristocratic landowners and the *nouveau riche* of industrial capital. However, while the “gentlemanly code was aristocratic in origin” it depended on “status rather than birth and status could be acquired.”<sup>14</sup>

### **Missionary Gentlemen and the Code of Chivalry**

To gain the status of a gentleman meant that the missionary had to be perceived as following this code of conduct which had its origins in ancient traditions and mythology. Jeffrey Richards argues:

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<sup>12</sup> Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism: Innovation and Expansion 1688-1914*, p 23.

<sup>13</sup> Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism: Innovation and Expansion 1688-1914*, p 24.

<sup>14</sup> Edmond, p 153.

the image of the gentleman [was] as an idealised mediaeval knight, the embodiment of the virtues of bravery, loyalty, courtesy, generosity, modesty, purity and compassion and endowed with a sense of *noblesse oblige* towards women, children and social inferiors. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the language and images of chivalry had been so far absorbed into the fabric of Victorian life and thought that it was automatic to see the gentleman exclusively in terms of a latter day version of the paladin of medieval chivalry.<sup>15</sup>

The Arthurian legends and the writings of Sir Walter Scott had been considered suitable reading for children throughout the nineteenth century being taught in schools and “embraced by political movements like Young England.”<sup>16</sup> In Basil Mathews’ *The Splendid Quest*, a children’s publication about religious heroes (including James Chalmers), the knight is not merely an emblem of honour for the child reader to emulate, but is proclaimed to “have the spirit of grown-up boys and girls.”<sup>17</sup> Their eagerness for adventure is cited as their boyish nature, but they are likened to girls as they can “healthily let out all the feelings which a modern boy is ashamed to own” and “weep at the sight of a brother whom he has not seen for many months and will eagerly fall on his neck and kiss him.”<sup>18</sup> Mathews pronounces that knights are “just people who have carried a boy’s wild joy of living and a girl’s sensitiveness into the fighting days of manhood.”<sup>19</sup> He idealises the knight as an impossible amalgam of child/man and boy/girl, a perfect temperament that is

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<sup>15</sup> Richards, p 6.

<sup>16</sup> Richards, p 6.

<sup>17</sup> Basil Mathews (1916) *The Splendid Quest*, London: Jarrold, Preface.

<sup>18</sup> Mathews, *The Splendid Quest*, Preface.

<sup>19</sup> Mathews, *The Splendid Quest*, Preface.

well suited to missionary hagiography produced for the child reader. The exploitation of this convenient conceptual framework is identifiable in *Livingstone the Pathfinder*, also by Basil Mathews, where most chapters begin with a quote from Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur*. When, for example, Livingstone is departing for the mission field, his leaving is compared with Galahad's:

Before a cross they saw a knight armed all in white. He said: Galahad, sir, ye have been long enough with your father...go where adventure shall lead thee in quest of the Holy Grail. Then he went to his father and kissed him sweetly, and said: Fair sweet father, I wot not when I shall see you more till I see the body of Jesu Christ. (Malory, *Le Morte D'Arthur*, Book xvii, Ch. xiv)<sup>20</sup>

Although Livingstone was not a South Pacific missionary, association of this passage with one of the greatest heroes of the missionary movement reflects the general sense of nobility, self-sacrifice and the sacredness of the quest the authors were attempting to bestow on their cause. Moreover, the character of the missionary is portrayed as a blend of ardent young adventurer, overtly loving and respectful to his father, yet pure of heart and confident in his faith. More specifically, in Chapter Four of Lambert's *Missionary Heroes in Oceania* James Calvert is introduced to the reader with the glowing description,

now and then comes a fortunate knight of Christ before whom embattled hosts go down, and who wins his way into the city of Jerusalem and claims it in the Lord's name. James Calvert was such a knight.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Basil Mathews (1912) *Livingstone the Pathfinder*, London: Oxford University Press, p 20.

<sup>21</sup> John Lambert (1915) *Missionary Heroes in Oceania*, London: Seeley, p 115.

While the comparisons of the South Pacific missionary with the crusaders evokes the notion of reclaiming for Christ a part of the world that has been despoiled by sin and non-Christian religions, it also carries with it an ironic reconstruction of history. One of the most decried practices of the indigenous people of the South Pacific in children's missionary literature was cannibalism and it was often cited as proof of the depraved state of the people when compared to European sensibilities. Yet, as Edward Said has commented:

only in the nineteenth century did European historians of the Crusades begin not to allude to the practice of cannibalism among the Frankish knights, even though eating human flesh is mentioned unashamedly in contemporary Crusader chronicles.<sup>22</sup>

This sanitised Crusader myth of the nineteenth century was not merely a useful literary device created by children's writers, but reflected a wider trait of a changing society where leaders were seeking security in a glorified past:

At a time when the older filaments and organisations that bound pre-modern societies internally were beginning to fray, and when the social pressures of administering numerous overseas territories and large new domestic constituencies mounted, the ruling elites of Europe felt the clear need to project their power backwards in time, giving it a history and legitimacy that only tradition and longevity could impart.<sup>23</sup>

The comparison of the missionary with the knight was a way to legitimise the missionary as part of ancient tradition and ritual.

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<sup>22</sup> Said, p 16.

<sup>23</sup> Said, p 16.

This legitimization is very evident in Debenham's *Patteson of the Isles* when Patteson is made Bishop of the Melanesian Islands:

Lady Martin, looking at the young bishop kneeling in his white rochet, could not but think of the knights of old keeping vigil beside the arms which they were to wield for the honour of God and in defence of right. He looked so humble and yet, withal, so strong and steady.<sup>24</sup>

That this observation is attributed to "Lady Martin," gives the comment more credibility than if it had merely been made by the author and, furthermore, being admired by a member of the aristocracy also lends authority to Patteson's own social status. This portrait of Patteson's combination of strength and humility embodies him as the chivalrous ideal, while the use of the archaic "withal," resonates with the romantic language found earlier in the extracts from Malory. However, it is noticeable that Patteson is not just a missionary Bishop for "the honour of God," he is cast in the role of acting "in defence of right," a term which carries echoes of the royal title "Defender of the Faith." The name suggests to the reader that the missionary is charged with the responsibility of establishing and maintaining a set of social and moral standards associated with the highest possible authority, the British monarchy.

### **Knights, Dragons and the Mythic Landscape**

Similar to the way legendary knights moved through the unfamiliar landscapes, the missionary's environment was also

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<sup>24</sup> Debenham, p 82.

wonderful and alien to the reader. Brian Street comments of the African missionary:

the gentleman, with his courage, honour and chivalry, resembles the Arthurian knight, and his journey through strange lands peopled with uncouth beings resembles that of the knight through fairyland. The creatures of fairyland were like the primitives, different from the knightly heroes, with unusual powers and customs and standards other than the reader's own.<sup>25</sup>

The extent to which the South Pacific people were believed to be "different" to the Europeans could also explain the popularity of the knight imagery. Greenblatt contends that the sense of wonder created by first contact with those who are radically different to the beholder can induce a return to more familiar comparisons as he states, "to wonder is to experience both the failure of words - the stumbling recourse to the old chivalric fables."<sup>26</sup> While the imagery evoked may be mythical it also allowed the creation of a sense of extreme danger and adventure as seen in *Patteson of the Isles*, where the reader is told:

when the hero of the old wonder-tales lands on an enchanted island, there is usually a dragon somewhere about, a monster all the more mysterious and terrible because of the beauty of the spot where he has his lair. And in those fairy isles of the Pacific the dragon was everywhere behind the scenes. At any moment the rattle of his coils might be heard and the touch of his hot breath might be felt, amid all the brightness and beauty. There was the horrid discovery in one island of human bones with flesh clinging to them under freshly-turned earth,

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<sup>25</sup> Street, p 20.

<sup>26</sup> Greenblatt, p 133.

and of a stone oven where the terrible feast had been cooked.<sup>27</sup>

As noted in Chapter 3 of this thesis in the section “Dehumanisation and Cannibalism,” the missionary has not witnessed any cannibalism, it is assumed that the buried bones and ovens are part of a “terrible feast” rather than a funeral ritual or sacrifice. The association of the “fairy isles of the Pacific” with this purported cannibalism and the image of the dragon, plays on the young reader’s fear of ingestion, as found, for example, in the fairytale *Hansel and Gretel*. It also carries echoes of the myth of the Fall of Adam and Eve making the reader aware that for all the amazement at the people and the enchantment of the place, this is a fallen paradise. The dragon, as a metaphor for the indigenous religious and cultural practices, is a beast that is “moved only by passions - greed, anger and aggression”<sup>28</sup> and in the dualism of Christian thought opposes the reason, faith and selflessness of the missionary. Hourihan contends that the dragon is “a creature of darkness, of chaos and wilderness, and the embodiment of evil as it is conceived in Christian belief.”<sup>29</sup> Its presence in this children’s publication invokes common Christian imagery “which uses ingestion, digestion and regurgitation as a potent way of conveying eternal suffering - in counterpoint to the whole body of the resurrected faithful.”<sup>30</sup> It also provides a stark contrast with the beauty of the isles combined with the unsuspected danger they contain.

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<sup>27</sup> Debenham, p 47.

<sup>28</sup> Hourihan, p 113.

<sup>29</sup> Hourihan, p 20.

<sup>30</sup> Hulme, *Introduction: The Cannibal Scene*, p 33.

The sense of evil is made very real when Patteson enters one of the chief's huts and we are told:

above them on the ridge pole that supported the roof were no less than twenty-seven horrid ornaments, human skulls in fact, put there after a great fight, and round about the house the bones of the slain lay white among the beautiful tropical growth. The dragon was there, sure enough, heathenism, with its hatred and ruthlessness and wild evil ways.<sup>31</sup>

It is a description that calls to mind the “fascination of the abomination”<sup>32</sup> that led to the savagery of Kurtz in Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, and reminds the reader that the missionaries face spiritual as well as physical danger. The allusion to heathenism as the mythical, but most deadly of creatures, the dragon, emphasises that like the knights of romantic literature the South Pacific missionary must confront mortal danger in order to reclaim this “beautiful,” but fallen place; just as it was only the purity of the knight which could overcome the power of the dragon, so the faith of the missionary is the only force able to overpower the “ruthlessness and wild evil ways” of heathenism. As well as evoking the trope of cannibalism the emphasised whiteness of the bones may also suggests the lives lost by white European missionaries as they confront both the customs of the indigenous people and the fever and sickness they encounter in an uninviting environment. There are also undertones of Spencer’s *Faerie Queen* and Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, where the landscape becomes a testing-ground and metaphor for spiritual trial for the

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<sup>31</sup> Debenham, p48.

<sup>32</sup> Joseph Conrad (1982) *The Heart of Darkness*, New York: Penguin Books, p 9.



missionary who, like Christian fighting with Apollyon, must defeat the dragon of heathenism as he journeys through strange and often hostile landscapes.

The stark and sometimes horrific images that surrounded the knight-like South Pacific missionary, convey a strong impression of the exotic, distant locations and the perils that confronted them. They also strengthened the perception of the superiority of the European over the South Pacific culture as

the differences between whites and blacks, already emphasised by the nature of much reporting, were imaginatively reinforced by the superiority of the knight of chivalry to the unnatural opponents he met in romantic literature.<sup>33</sup>

### **Reconciling Christian Virtue with Imperial Violence**

Undoubtedly the missionary adventure story and biographies published for children exploited the popular conventions of Romantic chivalry, but they also allied them to the robust ideology of “muscular Christianity” which permeated writing for boys in particular, as noted earlier in Chapter Four of this thesis. Edmond comments:

one set of qualities emphasised physical courage, heart, pluck and guts. Boys being trained to run an empire should be fearless and daring. The adventure story expressed this spirit. On the other hand, moral responsibility was an essential part of Christian manliness and the manly boy had to learn to temper his physical vigour with the Christian virtues of restraint and piety.

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<sup>33</sup> Street, p 20.

In addition he argues:

The idealised figure of the medieval knight, staunch and heroic in battle but courteous, pure and compassionate in relations with women, children and other social inferiors, was repeatedly invoked to try and relax the tensions in the concept of the manly boy. It was also, as Jeffrey Richards has argued, deliberately promoted to produce a ruling elite for the nation and the expanding empire which would be inspired by apparently noble and selfless ideals.<sup>34</sup>

The balance between the missionary being a gentlemanly representative of God and a bold adventurer was to challenge Ballantyne in his South Pacific novel *Gascoyne the Sandalwood Trader*. The missionary Mason is a central character and enters the story in Chapter Four of the text, where, as already noted, he is described as being “bold and manly in the extreme, he was more like a soldier in outward aspect than a missionary.” Yet Mason’s physical courage is complemented by a moral virtue for “the gentleness of the lamb dwelt in his breast and beamed in his eye; and to a naturally indomitable and enthusiastic disposition was added burning zeal in the cause of his beloved Master.”<sup>35</sup> While endowed with religious commitment, Mason is vigorous and involved in the adventure of the story when his daughter is kidnapped by the islanders and he has to fight for her return; but his actions are always tempered by the constraints and considerations of gentlemanly conduct:

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<sup>34</sup> Edmond, p143.

<sup>35</sup> Ballantyne, *Gascoyne the Sandalwood Trader*, p 33.

it was well for the missionary, at that moment, that he had learned the art of boxing when a boy! The knowledge so acquired had never induced him to engage in dishonourable and vulgar strife; but it had taught him how and where to deliver a straight-forward blow with effect; and he now struck out with tremendous energy, knocking down an adversary at every blow.<sup>36</sup>

As Mason launches himself time and again into the fray his physical violence clearly illustrates the dilemma that confronted the missionary adventure story

of how to extirpate savagery, or even confront it, without becoming savage yourself. If the chivalric code itself is vulnerable to degeneration into mere physical violence, then the problems of grafting it on to an evangelical ideology are compounded.<sup>37</sup>

Mason's action is rationalised with the reference to the European sport of boxing as it is shown to be disciplined, controlled and subject to rules; it is presented as a stark contrast to the behaviour of the unconverted islanders who kidnapped Mason's daughter and "held that all sorts of cruelties were just in war."<sup>38</sup> Their practices are made to appear even worse when compared to the local Christian converts of whom it is noted "when a native became a follower of the Christian missionary, from that moment he became merciful, especially towards the weak and helpless."<sup>39</sup> Although violent, the actions of Mason and his followers are vindicated by the code of chivalry and the restraint the young reader is told they exhibit. Yet for all this attempted rationalisation "violence was the

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<sup>36</sup> Ballantyne, *Gascoyne the Sandalwood Trader*, p 96.

<sup>37</sup> Edmond, p 152.

<sup>38</sup> Ballantyne, *Gascoyne the Sandalwood Trader*, p 231.

<sup>39</sup> Ballantyne, *Gascoyne the Sandalwood Trader*, p 231.

foreshortened cultural lesson, the ultimate social control to which recourse was made when the attempt to control others by peaceable means broke down.”<sup>40</sup>

### **Ballantyne’s Gentleman Missionary**

The missionary is not always represented as resorting to physical violence. More often in children’s literature it is faith, persistence and moral courage that characterise the ability of the knight-like “gentleman” missionary to conquer heathenism. Ballantyne’s *The Coral Island* provides a model of a more serene yet still effective missionary when in the final pages of the last chapter an English missionary unexpectedly arrives and ultimately brings a resolution to the story through his timely conversion of the evil Chief Tararo. While the sudden and totally unexpected conversion of Tararo gives testament to the authority of the missionary, it is not a reflection of the reality of the missionary experience where, as Nicholas Thomas notes, “conversion to Christianity was frequently a drawn-out process, entailing a good deal of badgering on the part of the missionaries.”<sup>41</sup>

The child reader may well expect this miracle worker who can sway a chief and his tribe to quickly forgo generations of cannibalism, idolatry, human sacrifice and other “foul deeds of

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<sup>40</sup> Edmond, p 57.

<sup>41</sup> Thomas, *In Oceania*, p 197.

darkness,”<sup>42</sup> to be some sort of dynamic, manly figure of almost super-hero proportions. However, the narrator describes him as “tall, thin, and apparently past forty, with a bald forehead, and thin grey hair.”<sup>43</sup> He is, however, proclaimed to be an “English gentleman,”<sup>44</sup> a title that immediately endows him with all the heroic qualities of the valiant, virtuous knight. The incongruity between the meek appearance of the missionary and the marvels he has achieved do not undermine the concept of “muscular Christianity,” rather it suggests that mission work is something that ordinary people can aspire to and that the results obtained come through the power of God and not through the physical prowess of his representatives. The ordinary appearance of the missionary figure also attests to Edmond’s belief that the resolution of the tension between the competing qualities of “muscular Christianity” resulted in the “almost classless model of the moral hero” which was “an inclusive ideal which all readers of boys’ stories, for example, were invited to emulate.”<sup>45</sup>

Jack, one of the main characters in the story, had already proclaimed that the boy’s decision to attempt to save the indigenous girl Avatea from an unwanted marriage was a worthy quest when he declared,

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<sup>42</sup> Ballantyne, *The Coral Island*, p 254.

<sup>43</sup> Ballantyne, *The Coral Island*, p 283

<sup>44</sup> Ballantyne, *The Coral Island*, p 283

<sup>45</sup> Edmond, p 143.

having become champions for this girl once before, it behoves us, as true knights, not to rest until we set her free; at least, all the heroes in all the story books I have ever read would count it foul disgrace to leave such a work unfinished.<sup>46</sup>

Pirate Bill's observation in Chapter Twenty Three that the South Sea islanders need to be "tamed" and that "the missionaries are the only men who can do it"<sup>47</sup> is borne out when Jack, Ralph and Peterkin fail in their attempt to save Avatea and find themselves prisoners to be eaten at a cannibal feast. The reader is left to assume that while they possess boldness, energy and gallantry and see themselves as knights, it is only through the sheer power of the gospel when it is combined with the faith and spiritual courage of the lone "English gentleman" missionary that the quest can be fulfilled.

*The Coral Island* attempts the ideological task of bringing "the bravado of boyhood into the same world as the moral earnestness of the missionary."<sup>48</sup> The missionary brings a resolution to the novel, yet it is an unsatisfactory one as it is never revealed how he managed to convert the chief and the success of this attempt to reconcile the differing aspects of 'muscular Christianity' is questionable. While the reader is given extensive and detailed accounts of the boys' adventures, the missionary is a distant,

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<sup>46</sup> Ballantyne, *The Coral Island*, p 239.

<sup>47</sup> Ballantyne, *The Coral Island*, p 187.

<sup>48</sup> Edmond, p 149.

enigmatic figure who remains nameless and virtually a caricature; after the bravado and pace of the rest of the adventure text, this gentrified missionary figure is featureless and dull.

## Conclusion

Knowing that their young reading audience was already immured in the ideals and images of chivalry, in children's literature the portrayal of the gentleman missionary as a heroic, imperial figure drew upon the traditional images of honour and *noblesse oblige* associated with the mediaeval knight. It must be remembered, however, that for all the courage, nobility and sanctity attributed to the mediaeval knight, he was the ultimate military weapon of his time. Each of these comparisons, soldier, military leader and knight, while representing different aspects of heroism, also represented different forms of imperialist power being used to subdue those weaker than themselves. The gentleman missionary was, therefore, inexorably connected with images of dominance and colonialism, a seemingly inevitable association in a paternalistic relationship with the indigenous people of the South Pacific. Greg Denning, in a study of early European contact in the Marquesas, has characterized it as one of violence:

There was violence in the Outsiders' presumed right to possess the land; there was violence in the assumption of cultural superiority; violence in the prejudices, violence in the goodwill to make savages civilised and Christian; violence in the realpolitic of empire and progress.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Greg Denning, cited in Edmond, p 57.

The reconciliation of the tension created between gospel values and this violent imperial ideology was attempted in children's literature by giving the missionary a stature beyond the merely temporal status of military leaders and gentlemen, as discussed in the following chapter.



## **CHAPTER 6**

### **THE SOUTH PACIFIC MISSIONARY**

### **AS RELIGIOUS LEADER AND CHRIST FIGURE**

*“He is engaged in the noblest cause in which the energies of the human being can be employed – gaining subjects for the Redeemer’s kingdom.”<sup>1</sup>*

While comparisons with Cook and other European heroes raised the missionaries’ status in a secular sense, their position as religious leader was achieved in children’s missionary literature through the use of binary opposites where they were starkly contrasted with the indigenous religious leaders. Edmond states that, “many Pacific cultures were intensely hierarchical, and further complicated by vertical lines of division between, for example, priestly and chiefly castes.”<sup>2</sup> While it was common for the children’s authors to refer to indigenous people collectively as “heathens,” “savages,” “cannibals” etc., they usually also make a clear distinction between the portrayal of chiefs as the indigenous political leaders and the sacred men as indigenous religious leaders who were the natural opponents of the missionary. In children’s literature it is not surprising, therefore, to find that the indigenous sacred man was portrayed as the antithesis of all things Christian and European, while the missionary was the personification of good and ultimately endowed with Christ-like characteristics.

#### **General Attitude to Indigenous Religious Leaders**

In Lovett’s *James Gilmour of Mongolia*, the distinction between the English missionary and the indigenous priest is clearly evident when the reader is told that

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<sup>1</sup> Kingston, p 265.

<sup>2</sup> Edmond, p 13.

the missionary Gilmour could be found having tea “with priests as unlike Englishmen as it is possible for human beings to be.”<sup>3</sup> The contrast between the European missionary and the indigenous religious leader is further established in the RTS children’s publication *The Schoolboy Missionaries*, although set in Africa rather than the South Pacific, its description of the witchdoctor reveals the general hostility and disdain with which indigenous religious leaders were portrayed:

He looked a very old man, bent and decrepit. His body was smeared with grease and paint, and charcoal burned in a brazier he carried. Around his neck he wore a bracelet of human bones. Bracelets of animal bones were on his ankles and wrists. In his nose dangled a huge iron ring. His hair and beard too, were long and unkempt. Around his eyes were drawn white pictures of the idols worshipped by his tribe. He was the most terrible being upon which the boys had ever set eyes. No wonder they shuddered in dismay. When this horror had approached the crowd he spoke in a voice that was almost a shriek.<sup>4</sup>

While the Christian missionary is always portrayed in the most flattering of terms, in this meeting between “heathen” culture and European/Christian culture, the priestly representative of the indigenous religion is characterized to young European readers as the embodiment of physical repulsiveness: the narrator’s negative language creates for them a loathsome image of demonic proportions. That the witchdoctor’s “most terrible,” appearance is an externalization of his opposition to Christianity is made clear when the missionary is held prisoner and we are told, “of course the witchdoctors are at the bottom of it all. They hate all missionaries and the Christian religion.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Richard Lovett (1922) *James Gilmour of Mongolia*, London: Religious Tract Society, p 137.

<sup>4</sup> Arthur Rich (1935) *The Schoolboy Missionaries*, London: Religious Tract society, p 69.

<sup>5</sup> Rich, p 144.

### **Sacred Men and ‘Foul Deeds of Darkness’**

The sense of almost inhuman “horror” created by the description the witchdoctor in the *The Schoolboy Missionaries* is also present in many South Pacific children’s stories where the indigenous sacred men are often depicted as leaders in acts of cannibalism and human sacrifice. In Chapter Thirty One of Ballantyne’s *The Coral Island*, the boys’ curiosity leads them to observe the ceremonial offering of human sacrifice at a temple, a spectacle they find so hideous they cannot continue to watch. Although earlier they had seen and described with relish several bloodthirsty slaughters that occurred due to disputes between rival island groups, when confronted with these “inhuman rites”<sup>6</sup> of ritualized bloodshed presided over by the indigenous priests they find they cannot bear to witness them. Similarly, in *Tamate: The Life and Adventures of a Christian Hero – Told for Boys*, we discover the indigenous priests at the “great altar of sacrifice”<sup>7</sup> where they lead the community in ritual killings. In these incidents the child reader is left with no doubt that the sacred man is at the heart of the “heathen” practices which are presented as characterising indigenous society as he is found in the temple, performing his “dark deeds”<sup>8</sup>; he is, both literally and figuratively, placed at the very centre of the “foul deeds of darkness”<sup>9</sup> of the indigenous religion and culture which the missionary must confront and convert.

### **Burning of the Idols**

The perceived necessity for the complete overthrow of the indigenous religion and its leaders is evident in *Tamate: the Life and Adventures of a Christian Hero – Told for Boys*, where two of Chalmers’ indigenous Christian teachers

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<sup>6</sup> Ballantyne, *The Coral Island*, p 260.

<sup>7</sup> Lovett, *Tamate*, p 74.

<sup>8</sup> Lovett, *Tamate*, p 76.

<sup>9</sup> Ballantyne, *The Coral Island*, p 254.

assemble a crowd in “a large dark temple”<sup>10</sup> surrounded with the remains of human sacrifices and preach the gospel to them. While the event has undertones of Christ preaching in the temple, it reveals how the religious leadership of the community by sacred men was usurped by the missionaries. In children’s books the final proof of the success of the missionary in assuming the role of the religious leader was often demonstrated by the removal from the temple of the idols which were the burnt.<sup>11</sup> Chapter Twelve of *John Williams the Shipbuilder*, entitled “The Bonfire Of the Gods,”<sup>12</sup> is dedicated to describing the burning of idols on many islands that Williams visits, while at the conclusion of *The Coral Island* “the false gods of Mango were reduced to ashes.”<sup>13</sup> Perhaps even more symbolically in *Jarwin and Cuffy* it is the chief himself who sets about destroying the idols and the whole temple once he is converted to Christianity.<sup>14</sup> Emphasis on this total destruction of the idols may also have reflected a concern to completely eradicate the indigenous religion prompted by the 1857 Indian Mutiny, of which Wolffe has noted that the evangelical supporters of the missions “saw as the judgment of God on previous toleration of idolatry.”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Lovett, *Tamate*, p 215.

<sup>11</sup> Enthusiastic reports of the destruction of the idols by the indigenous people can be traced back to the beginnings of missionary endeavour in the Pacific with the first recorded burning of idols by the priest Patii on Moorea in 1815. This event was viewed by the early South Pacific missionaries who had struggled for conversions as “a wonderful thing,” (Refer: George Cousins, *The Story of the South Pacific*, p 33) and was cited as evidence of true conversion, especially when in November of the same year the Tahitian chief Pomare also ordered the destruction of idols. The burning may also be seen in reference to Deuteronomy 7:5 and 12:3.

<sup>12</sup> Matthews, *John Williams the Shipbuilder*, p 127.

<sup>13</sup> Ballantyne, *The Coral Island*, p 285.

<sup>14</sup> Robert Ballantyne (1889) *Jarwin and Cuffy*, London: Frederick Warne, p 150.

<sup>15</sup> Wolffe, *God and Greater Britain*, p 218.

### Corrupt Sacred Men, but Dignified Chiefs

The dehumanization and demonisation of the indigenous religious leaders suggests that they have an evil and ungodly nature, but it is in the revealing of their motives that the essential difference between them and the missionary is made apparent. The casting of the “heathen priest” as the central opponent of the European missionary is clearly evident in *Little Bluebird: The Girl Missionary*, where Miss Fanny comments to the child Edith Norton that “a missionary is a man sent to good work, and who does it well,”<sup>16</sup> but whose attempts to spread the Christian message to other cultures is difficult because “their heathen priests also try to keep them from hearing or believing what the missionaries say.”<sup>17</sup> While Miss Fanny gives no reason for the particular opposition of the indigenous priests, an explanation is to be found in Kingston’s *The Cruise of the Mary Rose*. Here the reader is given a graphic description of human sacrifice being offered by the sacred men who, the young reader is told, do so not out of religious imperatives, but to keep the population subdued by randomly selecting a victim so that “the priests have thus gained more real power than the chiefs themselves.”<sup>18</sup> Unlike the virtuous and selfless motives always attributed to the European missionary, the opposition to Christianity demonstrated by indigenous priests is portrayed as not originating in the sacred beliefs of their religion, but from a desire to maintain personal positions of privilege and “power” within the community.

In the struggle to assert any authority in the islands of the South Pacific the missionary Nott reached the conclusion that for successful Christian conversion

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<sup>16</sup> John Strathesk (n.d.) *Little Bluebird: The Girl Missionary*, Edinburgh: Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier, p 24.

<sup>17</sup> Strathesk, p 25.

<sup>18</sup> Kingston, p 36.

“the backing of an influential chief was always going to be essential.”<sup>19</sup> In children’s literature chiefs are usually depicted as co-operative and willing converts to Christianity, as seen in *John Williams the Shipbuilder* where many incidents are recounted of chiefs assisting Williams in spreading the gospel. The description of chief Roma-tane in particular suggests a nobility and graciousness never associated with the many terrifying images of the sacred man. He is described as having a

strong face and commanding figure. He was tall and slender. Round his loins was a lava-lava of Indian print. He also wore a shirt...long and beautiful black hair hung down over his shoulders and blew out in the breeze as he swung his body to and fro with each stroke of the paddles.<sup>20</sup>

Even if the chiefs lack such physical appeal, as in *Jim Morse, South Sea Trader* where Chief Tetiopilo is described as “gross” and with features that are “heavy and cruel,” we are also told “he held his dignity.”<sup>21</sup> However Kilo, the Kahuna (ie sacred man), who accompanies Tetiopilo is described in animalistic terms: he is covered in bones, human hair and feathers and commands more respect from the islanders than the chief as they “made room for him even more eagerly than for the king.”<sup>22</sup> (See Figure 5 next page) Even in *The Coral Island*, where the brutality and treachery of Chief Tararo has created much of the drama of the plot, once he converts to Christianity the missionary reminds the boys they “must not forget the respect due the chief.”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Graeme Kent (1972) *Company of Heaven: Early Missionaries in the South Seas*, Wellington: A.H. and A.W. Reed, p 45.

<sup>20</sup> Matthews, *John Williams the Shipbuilder*, p 106.

<sup>21</sup> J. Allan Dunn (192) *Jim Morse, South Sea Trader*, London: Thomas Nelson, P171.

<sup>22</sup> Dunn, p 172.

<sup>23</sup> Ballantyne, *The Coral Island*, p 284.



Figure 5

Chief Tetiopilo and the “Kahuna” or Medicine Man.

In a very dark picture, the static figures of the two Europeans dominate although they are held captive. They have light coloured hair while their white clothes capture the full glare of the sun. The glaring and defiant eyes of the adult European are directly on the central axis line of the picture pushing the Chief and Sacred Man to the extreme left of the frame where they are associated with the trope of cannibalism through the two skulls at their feet. The strong circular composition leads the eye to the threatening presence of the Sacred Man lurking at the rear.

From: J. Allen Dunn, *Jim Morse, South Sea Trader*, p 168.

## Missionaries Create A New Social Order

These characteristics of children's literature suggest that once the indigenous religious leader was displaced by the missionary, a political alliance was formed between the missionary leader of the new religion and the recently converted head of the new Christian society.<sup>24</sup> Similar to the Reformation, the old priestly class is deposed, their sacred symbols are burned, their places of worship destroyed while the missionary with his Bible replaces the priest in the temple as the religious leader. Nowhere is this change of roles clearer than in *The Story of John G. Paton told for Young Folks* where Paton refers to his mission as founding a "new social order."<sup>25</sup> Although Paton portrays himself as aloof from the power structure of the indigenous society and contends he "never interfered directly"<sup>26</sup> in their affairs, in reality the missionary was at the centre of society as he notes:

We trained the Teachers, we translated and printed and expounded the Scriptures, we ministered to the sick and dying; we dispensed medicines every day, we taught them the use of tools, we advised them as to laws and penalties; and the New Society grew and developed, and bore amidst all its imperfections some traces of the fair Kingdom of God amongst men.<sup>27</sup>

Just as the indigenous sacred man was criticized for having more power than the chief, we find that within this "new society" Paton has assumed a pervasive position as his mission redefined the nature of indigenous education, medicine, commerce and law. While the chiefs still remain as titular social leaders of their people, they defer to Paton as he proclaims that "in every difficulty they consulted me."<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Nicholas Thomas has noted that colonial administrations also legitimised and conserved chiefly power structures to assist their rule (Thomas, *In Oceania*, pp 199-200.)

<sup>25</sup> Paton, *The Story of John G. Paton*, p 248.

<sup>26</sup> Paton, *The Story of John G. Paton*, p 249.

<sup>27</sup> Paton, *The Story of John G. Paton*, p 249.

<sup>28</sup> Paton, *The Story of John G. Paton*, p 249.



## The Missionary as Christ Figure

Brantlinger has commented that “the goal of imperialist discourse is always to weld opposites together or disguise their contradiction.”<sup>29</sup> When the purported tyranny and power-lust of the indigenous sacred man was replaced by the cultural domination and authoritarian presence of the missionary, it was often masked and rationalized by presenting the missionary as the earthly representative of God.

In English children’s literature concerning South Pacific missionaries the reader is constantly reminded that the foundation of the British Empire was the Bible; as it was proclaimed to be a Christian Empire, the highest accolade that could be afforded any person was to be compared favourably to Christ. While, as noted earlier, missionaries were conferred with the attributes of heroic figures, they were separated from the secular by placing emphasis on the sacred nature of their vocation; missionaries were not only portrayed as national champions and the personification of the very essence of Empire, but also as incarnating the nature of Christ. In 1925 for example, the LMS published *The Medicine Man* in which one of the photographic plates is of the painting “The Healer” by Harold Copping (See Figure 6 next page) which dramatically illustrates the European vision of the role of the missionary. In the painting we see the ghostly image of Christ hovering over the missionary at work evoking a number of responses from the reader: that Christ is bestowing His divine approval on the work; highlighting the role of the missionary as Christ’s representative on earth; showing the missionary as “the healer” of the whole society not just the individual; revealing the superiority of the combination of Western science and religion and, most importantly, that the missionary is the embodiment of Christ himself.

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<sup>29</sup> Brantlinger, p 34.



Figure 6

“The Healer” by Harold Copping.

The animal horn just visible in the foreground was used by the witchdoctors to carry their medicine, but here it is cast aside to be replaced by the surgical implements and phials of Western medicine. The extended finger of Christ points directly at the missionary in a sign of approval and empowerment, while the strong inverted triangle of the composition focuses the viewer on the sick child. The joy on the faces of the indigenous people denotes their wonder as the young boy is helped from his prone position as if resurrected by ‘the healer.’

From: Edith Hutchins, *The Medicine Man*, p 128.

## Christ in the South Pacific

The major missionary figures of the South Pacific, John Williams, James Chalmers and Coleridge Patteson were all presented as religious heroes and Christ-like figures to child readers. John Williams, as the protomartyr of the South Seas missions, is the person in this form of Children's literature who is most often likened to Christ. As already noted in Chapter 3 of this thesis, in *Pearls of the Pacific*, Barradale used the arrival of John Williams to divide the history of Samoa into two parts, suggesting that the arrival of the missionary is such a momentous event for Samoa it is like the birth of Christ dividing the history of the world into B.C and A.D. Williams was often hailed by the epithet "Apostle of the South Seas,"<sup>30</sup> Chalmers was called "Apostle of the Papuan Gulf,"<sup>31</sup> Patteson was known as "The Martyr of Melanesia"<sup>32</sup> and Paton was "The Prophet of the Pacific"<sup>33</sup>; these titles suggest association with the foundation of Christianity and imply the missionaries possessed a profound faith that gave them almost a personal fraternity with Christ. Just as Christ gave his life to save sinners, these famous missionaries are shown to have devoted their lives to save the "perishing heathen"<sup>34</sup> of the South Pacific. While Christ associated with the outcasts of His society, the Samaritans, the tax collectors and the lepers, John Williams befriended "despised and conquered" Upolunans.<sup>35</sup> Patteson is portrayed as fighting against the injustices of slavery while Paton and Chalmers combat the commercial exploitation of indigenous people and cure the sick.

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<sup>30</sup> Lambert, p 121.

<sup>31</sup> Nairne, p 158.

<sup>32</sup> Jesse Page (n.d) *Bishop Patteson: The Martyr of Melanesia*, London: S.W. Partridge.

<sup>33</sup> Margret Kabell (1969) *Prophet of the Pacific: The Story of John G. Paton*, London: Lutterworth Press.

<sup>34</sup> Paton, *The Story of John G. Paton*, p 39.

<sup>35</sup> Mathews, *John Williams the Shipbuilder*, p 270.

Not only are the lives of these missionaries offered to the younger reader as exemplary, but in particular their deaths are strongly equated with the sacrificial death of Christ. Both Williams and Chalmers assume Messianic proportions before their deaths when they are presented a prophetically aware of the dangers that lay ahead, but nobly press on to encounter their fate. Chalmers dramatically leaves his Last Will and Testament atop his papers<sup>36</sup> while in *A Boy's Adventures in the South Seas* Williams spends the night before his death pacing the deck and “feeling upon himself the whole burden of those islands, and crying for relief.”<sup>37</sup> As Williams contends with his “agony,”<sup>38</sup> prior to confronting his fate, the reader is aware of a parallel between his experience and that of the anguished Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane. Just as the Agony in the Garden exposed the two distinct yet co-existing natures of Christ, His spiritual desire to do what was required to save mankind but His full humanity evident in the cry to have the cup removed from Him, Williams too reveals his extra-ordinary spiritual dimension when he feels the “whole burden,” of a suffering race. In a similar reference to the Passion of Christ, after Patteson’s death his body, pierced with five wounds and bearing a palm leaf tied in five knots, was returned to his ship by those who had killed him. For the killers this signified revenge for the five kidnap victims, but in a twist of symbolism which highlights the differences between the cultures, for Patteson’s fellow missionaries these represented the five wounds of Christ and the “the palm borne by those who came victorious from great tribulation.”<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> The circumstances surrounding the death of Chalmers are the subject of much speculation as some assert he sought martyrdom claiming he was disillusioned and emotionally unstable during his final days. (Diane Langmore (1974) *Tamate – A King: James Chalmers in New Guinea, 1877 – 1901*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, pp 105 – 125). These issues are never raised in the children’s texts where his life is not subject to criticism and his death is eulogised as a great sacrifice.

<sup>37</sup> Elias, p 249.

<sup>38</sup> Elias, p 249.

<sup>39</sup> Debenham, p 154.

## Conclusion

For the South Pacific missionary to create a “new society”<sup>40</sup> it was essential that the foundations of the old society were either destroyed or substantially modified. The previous religious practices had not only to be replaced, but the sacred men who administered them also had to be made redundant to allow the missionary to assume religious leadership. In children’s literature the sacred men of the indigenous religion are discredited as power-hungry, manipulative and less than human, indeed often as devilish in nature. By contrast, the political leaders of the islanders are given more respect, especially if they accept the missionary and Christianity. The willingness of the missionary to approve of and work with the chiefs may also reflect the fact that in the societies the missionaries came from, the concepts of royalty, sovereign leadership and an alliance between church and state were considered normal; co-operation with chiefs was therefore considered part of the civilized order. The missionaries associating themselves with the chiefs and kings of exotic places also added to their prestige within their own society where monarchy and royalty were revered.

While the soldier, hero and gentleman are points of constant comparison with the missionary, the unremitting intent of the texts is to demonstrate that the missionary is not only as courageous as any other champion of the Empire, but is in fact a unique blend of extreme bravery and boundless faith. In the children’s texts the missionary hero is constantly referred to as ‘apostle,’ ‘martyr,’ or ‘disciple’ and is often portrayed as a Christ figure. For the impressionable child reader the praise given to the missionary and the Christ-like characteristics they are constantly credited with, can only lead to the conclusion that they were the authentic representatives of true Christianity.

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<sup>40</sup> Paton, *The Story of John G. Paton*, p 249.

While children's literature praised the missionary in such high terms, the missionary societies had to contend with the very worldly economic realities of finding the means to support their work. The South Pacific missionary worked alongside other Europeans in the region such as the military and commercial traders. These traders were often involved in exploitative forms of commerce and the tensions between the need for trade and the Christian missionary are explored in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **THE SOUTH PACIFIC MISSIONARY**

### **AND TRADE**

*“Oil making, produce packing,  
journeys to and fro, filled up the time  
once spent in idleness and folly.”<sup>1</sup>*

By the nineteenth century Britain was the greatest manufacturing and trading nation in the world, but it was also a period of great debate regarding the nature of this commerce. Influencing the vigorous argument was the Municipal Corporation Act of 1835, which gave everyone the legal right to enter business, the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846 and the Royal Commission on Mercantile Laws in 1854. However, the growth of the commercial sector and the associated fierce competition “led to trading expedients such as adulteration, misleading advertising and abuse of credit.”<sup>2</sup> Evangelical organizations mobilized against the conduct of unscrupulous traders believing that there was real scope for “influence to be exerted and good examples to be presented. In this sense evangelicals promoted themselves as particular guardians of the morality of the business world.”<sup>3</sup> The evangelical organizations published many biographies of distinguished Christian business men, such as the Wesleyan William Arthur’s *The Successful Merchant* (1852) which went into 43 editions and was translated into four different languages. Similar to the hero allegories and military metaphors applied to the missionaries, these autobiographies strongly represented “the idea of commercial life as an ethical battlefield,” and “elevated the heroism required to preserve an individual’s

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<sup>1</sup> Esther Enock (1950) *The Missionary Heroine of Calabar*, London: Pickering and Inglis, p 56.

<sup>2</sup> Jane Garnett (1995) “Evangelism and Business in Mid-Victorian Britain” in *Evangelical Faith and Public Zeal*, Wolfe, p 60.

<sup>3</sup> Garnett, p 63.

integrity amidst all the pressures of commercial life.”<sup>4</sup> This ethos was directly carried over into the children’s literature of the time so that in the RTS children’s book *George Clifford’s Loss and Gain* (1871), a tale of how a young boy is forced into working in a grocer’s shop until his family fortune is restored to him, the minister states:

I do not know a finer field for the exhibition of manly principle than is offered in mercantile life. It is the low, unprincipled traders who think of nothing but money-getting, no matter how, who have brought trade into discredit; and I am quite sure of this, that whatever position a man is to occupy in the after life, an early training in business is one of the best things for him. Depend upon it, idleness and ignorance of practical business are at the bottom of a great deal of vice and misery among our wealthier classes; and I am sure Christian principle being the guide of their course no men are on the whole happier than those who by honest industry increase the wealth of others and themselves by well-conducted trade.<sup>5</sup>

Just as the indigenous people of the South Pacific were accused of being wicked due to their relaxed lifestyle, here we encounter “idleness and “ignorance” on the part of Europeans being similarly aligned with “misery and vice.” Moreover, while the role of the missionary was to redeem the islanders, we also find the rationale for the missionary to engage in “honest industry” which could elevate the welfare of the indigenous people by creating wealth and generating happiness for all through application of “Christian principle.”

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<sup>4</sup> Garnett, p 65.

<sup>5</sup> Unknown (1871) *George Clifford’s Loss and Gain*, London: Religious Tract Society, p 83.



## Commerce and Christianity

It was against this domestic background of a developing connection between religion and industry that David Livingstone's term "Commerce and Christianity,"<sup>6</sup> which he used in an address to the Senate House of the University of Cambridge on 4<sup>th</sup> December 1857, was to become a catch phrase of the British missionary movement. As early as 1789 William Wilberforce had advocated legitimate trade as the best way to stop slavery and trade with the newly-founded Sierra Leone. It was proffered as a way profitable commerce could replace the slavers and assist in the spread of the gospel. The implication of these beliefs was to be felt in the South Pacific, although, as Edmond notes, by the mid nineteenth century the excitement about the discoveries in the South Pacific was in decline and "much of the writing about it had become missionary dominated."<sup>7</sup> Certainly in children's literature the missionary continued to figure prominently as a model of Christian endeavour and Edmond further contends that:

the relative insignificance of colonialism in the Pacific during the nineteenth century paradoxically allowed the region to figure prominently in the proliferating and complex debates on the subject of colonialism itself.<sup>8</sup>

In the South Pacific the traders and missionaries were the two major colonial interests, but these groups were also "the bane of each others lives,"<sup>9</sup> as they viewed the indigenous populations from different perspectives: the traders sought commercial gain while the missionaries saw the local population as people in need of redemption. The tension between the two is evident in *The Cruise of the Mary Rose*, where the gruff trader Phineas Golding wants to shoot Patagonians for sport

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<sup>6</sup> Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag*, p 71.

<sup>7</sup> Edmond, p130.

<sup>8</sup> Edmond, p 131.

<sup>9</sup> Edmond, p 13.

remarking “We have no chance of trading with such people; and if we were to kill a few what would it matter?” He wants the South Americans “Swept away” and replaced with “civilized men with whom it would be an advantage to trade.”<sup>10</sup> It is the missionary John Harvey, *en route* to the Pacific, who challenges Golding with the claim that the indigenous people “have souls” and paraphrases his words by saying he is concerned rather that the Patagonians are “swept away”<sup>11</sup> from this life before hearing the gospel. The conflicting views of Harvey and Golding typify how the disparate roles of the missionary and the trader in the European settlement of the South Pacific are a major theme in children’s literature.

### **The South Pacific Trader – A Godless Man**

In the South Pacific it was rare for a missionary to be the first European to make contact with any island population. From 1800 onwards there were many traders who sailed the region in search of pearls, turtle shell, mother of pearl and sandalwood; the American, British and French were also hunting whales in the Antarctic and would sail through the area to replenish water and food supplies. While a few were honest in their dealings with the indigenous populations, there were many unscrupulous traders. The same motives which had sustained the slave trade and which Stanley describes as “the supreme example of the moral iniquity worked by those whose god was profit,”<sup>12</sup> were also to be found as the source of the nefarious conduct of the South Pacific traders. Graeme Kent is particularly scathing of the sandalwood traders, stating

the sandalwood traders were particularly feared and hated. As soon as it had been discovered that great forests of sandalwood trees grew on some of the Pacific islands the traders made for them. The trees

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<sup>10</sup> Kingston, p 19.

<sup>11</sup> Kingston, p 20.

<sup>12</sup> Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag*, p 72.

were felled and carried back to the ships and any native who protested was beaten up or killed.<sup>13</sup>

The poor regard for the sandalwood trader was utilized by Ballantyne in *Gascoyne the Sandalwood Trader*, where the pirate Durwood conceals his true identity by masquerading as a sandalwood trader, a role he plays with such convincing ease that the parallels between a life of piracy and a life of sandalwood trading cannot be missed. The ultimate conversion of Durwood/Gascoyne to a repentant Sunday school teacher is again testimony to the power of the gospel to reform the wayward character.

A further warning about the corrupting influence of these “godless men”<sup>14</sup> is found in Ballantyne’s novel *Jarwin and Cuffy*. By converting a local Chief the main character, Jarwin, represents the good that can be achieved by an ordinary, humble, yet truly Christian sailor who can also act in a missionary role; but the reader is also reminded of the harm that can be wrought by seamen who fail to act like Christians, as Jarwin reflects:

How much the cause of Christianity must often suffer in consequence of the conduct of many seamen, calling themselves Christians, who visit the South Sea islands and lead dissolute, abandoned lives while there. Some of these, he knew, brought discredit on the name of Jesus thoughtlessly, and would perhaps, be solemnized and sorry if they knew the terrible results of their conduct; while others, he also knew, cared nothing for Christianity, or anything in the world, except gratification of their own selfish desires.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Kent, p 66.

<sup>14</sup> Kent, p 177.

<sup>15</sup> Ballantyne, *Jarwin and Cuffy*, p 162.

## Blackbirding

However, it was not merely the environmental imperialism of the sandalwood traders which was of concern to the missionaries. The removal of islanders to work on plantations in Fiji and Australia, commonly referred to as “blackbirding,” was practiced in the South Pacific during the nineteenth century but it is not a subject that is dwelt upon in great detail in the children’s texts.<sup>16</sup> Nicholas Thomas has noted that the missionary construction of the labour trade as kidnapping or blackbirding denied the now-acknowledged active collaboration of the islanders in the practice in an attempt to

monopolize responsibility for the positive work of civilizing. Government interventions were ignored, and traders represented merely as criminal exploiters; only missionaries themselves were shown to act against heathen practices, encourage industry and create social order.<sup>17</sup>

The children’s missionary publications certainly depict the traders as “criminal exploiters” who preyed upon the trust established between the missionary and the islanders, as seen in the story of Bishop Patteson whom the young reader is told was aware of islanders

who had been invited on board a visiting ship when they went to trade with yams or sandal-wood, and they been clapped under hatches and carried off to Fiji. There were blacker stories still, of white men who had used the Bishop’s name to decoy the islanders on board, vowing that ‘Biscope’ himself was ill or had broken his leg, and had sent them as messengers to bring his black children to him<sup>18</sup>.

The depiction of the apparently callous and destructive nature of the traders is also evident in the blame attached to them for the deaths of the missionaries Williams

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<sup>16</sup> Two pages are dedicated to the need for reforming the practices of those Europeans who sought cheap labour in Debenham’s *Patteson of the Isles*, pp 136 - 137.

<sup>17</sup> Thomas, *In Oceania*, p 44.

<sup>18</sup> Debenham, p 137.

and Patterson who had the misfortune of arriving on an island after the local population had been poorly treated by traders. The culpability of the traders for the deaths of these two pioneering missionaries and Thomas' assertion that the missionaries sought to claim sole credit for 'civilising' the islanders, underpin the strong antipathy toward the traders that is found in the children's publications.

### **The Traders' Idealised Respect of Missionaries**

Although there was antipathy between the traders and the missionaries, quite often the children's fictional texts contained expressions of admiration by traders for the work of the missionaries. In Ballantyne's *The Coral Island*, Ralph finds himself aboard a ship which "trades when she can't take by force; but she takes by force when she can, in preference."<sup>19</sup> Yet even on this pirate ship there is an appreciation of the positive effect of the missionary on trade which is demonstrated when the pirates intercept the missionary schooner the "Olive Branch." The pirates do not pillage the schooner, but the author is at pains to make it known that this was not an unexpected act of mercy, rather they are taking advantage of the influence of the missionaries as the captain avows "that the only place among the Southern islands where a ship can put in and get what she wants in comfort is where the Gospel has been sent to."<sup>20</sup> The power of the gospel to create opportunities for traders, both legitimate and of the more unsavoury variety, is again stated when Pirate Bill declares:

As for the missionaries, the Captain favours them because they are useful to him. These South Sea islanders are such incarnate fiends that they are better off being tamed and the missionaries are the only ones who can do it.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Ballantyne, *The Coral Island*, p 186.

<sup>20</sup> Ballantyne, *The Coral Island*, p 186.

<sup>21</sup> Ballantyne, *The Coral Island*, p 187.

The admission from this desperate and ruthless man that the missionary is the “only” one who can bring a change in attitude to the indigenous population, reinforces to the child reader the indispensable role of the missionary in spreading the gospel to redeem the islanders from an uncivilized and sinful state. It also condemns as useless and counterproductive any attempt by the traders to use violence against the islanders. The admiration of the pirates for the missionary further suggests to the young reader the universal acclamation of the heroic status of the missionary as he and his work are even commended by those who oppose him. Where the unmerciful strategies of the traders provoke a dangerous and violent response, the courage and determination of the missionaries to spread the blessings of the gospel is purported to be the singular means by which the islanders can be “tamed” and trade made easy.

The point often made however, is that it is the unchristian actions of the traders that give greater trouble to the missionary than the indigenous people. While the islanders are shown to willingly embrace Christianity, the trader is depicted as a traitor to his country and therefore to the Christian religious convictions which underpinned European civilization. Given the terrible reputation of the traders as they are portrayed in missionary publications and that evangelicals saw themselves as “guardians of the morality of the business world,”<sup>22</sup> it is not surprising to find in *The Coral Island* that the indigenous teacher reminds the boys that they will be “worse than these savages” if they forgot their obligation to conduct themselves as Christians and if they “be not true believers, are traitors!”<sup>23</sup> This stern pronouncement is the strongest possible condemnation of the traders as it proclaims them outcasts from their own society and places them

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<sup>22</sup> Garnett, p 63.

<sup>23</sup> Ballantyne, *The Coral Island* p 259.

below the ‘heathen’ on the scale of humanity already noted in Chapter Three, a point reinforced as this denunciation is made by a converted islander.

Ballantyne reinforces the treacherous nature of the traders in *Gascoyne the Sandalwood Trader*, where the reader is told

false friends within the camp were more dangerous and troublesome to Mr. Mason than avowed enemies without. Some of the European traders, especially, who settled on the island a few years after the missionary made it habitable, were the worst foes he had to contend with.<sup>24</sup>

The young reader is given the impression of the disreputable traders being cowards who have to wait for the brave missionary to single-handedly make the island safe, then they not only exploit his pioneering work for commercial gain, but also take advantage of the missionary’s tolerant, Christian manner by being “false friends.” Unlike *The Coral Island*, this novel gives great emphasis to the trouble created by lawless Europeans rather than the problems created by cultural and religious clashes with the indigenous population. Much of the novel is given over to the complications and tribulations created by traders and pirates while the conversion of the islanders, usually found as part of the climax in the closing pages of adventure style novels, is completed well before the final chapters are reached. Yet similar to *The Coral Island*, the traders’ respect for the missionary is again made evident then they assist Mr. Mason to build a church on the island:

The white men of the place also lent a willing hand; for although some of them were bad men, yet they were constrained to respect the consistent character and blameless life of the missionary, who not unfrequently experienced fulfillment of that word: ‘When a man’s ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.’ Besides all this, all of the, however unwilling they might

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<sup>24</sup> Ballantyne, *Gascoyne the Sandalwood Trader*, p 35.

be to accept Christianity for themselves, were fully alive to the advantages they derived from its introduction among the natives.<sup>25</sup>

The point is clearly made that the dedication and “blameless existence,” of the missionary is not only able to convert the islanders, but is admired by the European traders.

### **Realities of Tensions Between Missionaries and Traders**

In the aforementioned fictional texts the missionary is portrayed as the unwilling ally of the dishonest trader as he made access to the islands more secure and furthermore, that even these unprincipled traders had to respect the brave and exemplary lives of the missionaries. However, a less cosy and more realistic view of the relationship between the trader and the missionary is given in Thomas Knox travelogue/adventure tale *The Boy Travellers in Australasia*, first published in 1888. Doctor Bronson, the character who accompanies the boys on their journey through the South Pacific comments:

the missionaries defend the natives against the dishonesty of certain classes of traders, and thus reduce their profits. There are honest men and dishonest ones engaged in commerce in Polynesia, just as there are elsewhere. When you hear a Polynesian merchant denouncing the missionaries in vehement terms, you may fairly conclude that the missionaries have stood in his way when he was attempting to defraud the natives.<sup>26</sup>

His words are echoes in the children’s novel *Tom Wallis*, where credit is again given to the missionaries for making the region safer. However, as the youthful

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<sup>25</sup> Ballantyne, *Gascoyne the Sandalwood Trader*, p 95.

<sup>26</sup> Thomas Knox (1888) *The Boy Travellers in Australasia*, Vermon: reissued by Charles E. Tuttle (1971), p 100.



Tom engages in conversation with the wide and experienced Mr. Collier, the same tension between traders and missionaries becomes evident:

‘The missionaries – English missionaries, I mean – have done a lot for us, quite apart from what they have done for the natives. And yet most trading captains have not a good word for the missionary.’

‘Why is that Mr. Collier?’

‘For many reasons Tom. One is because the advent of the missionary means less profit to the trader, less prestige to him as the one white man on one particular island. The trader wants to sell his grog and his firearms, and he ruins and destroys the natives; the missionary comes to elevate and redeem them.’<sup>27</sup>

Aside from the credit notably being given only to “English missionaries” the assessment by both Doctor Bronson and Mr. Collier of the relationship between the traders and missionaries shows them to be irreconcilable opposites whose roles place them at different end of the moral spectrum. The views of these two characters are given credibility by the personal reports of the South Sea missionary John Paton in his autobiography *The Story of John G. Paton told for Young Folks*. Chapter Twenty of Paton’s book is entitled “A Typical South Sea Trader,” and opens with a condemnation of their practices and lifestyle complaining that “the prejudices and persecution of Heathens were a sore enough trial, but sorer and more hopeless was the wicked and contaminating influence of, alas, my fellow-countrymen.”<sup>28</sup> Paton relates the conduct of a “dissipated wretch”<sup>29</sup> named Captain Winchester on the island of Tanna in the New Hebrides. The trader incites the local tribes to war then charges exorbitant prices for guns and powder. Paton describes Winchester as “glorying in war” and laments “such is the infernal depth to which we can sink, when the misery and ruin of many are thought to be more

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<sup>27</sup> Louis Becke (1905) *Tom Wallis*, London: Religious Tract Society, p 121.

<sup>28</sup> Paton, *The Story of John G. Paton*, p 75.

<sup>29</sup> Paton, *The Story of John G. Paton*, p 75.

than atoned for by the wealth and property of a few who trade in their doom!”<sup>30</sup> Not content with merely bemoaning the situation, the missionary shows himself to be a man of peace and a skilled mediator as he manages to negotiate an end to the war after three months. Winchester, who had earlier told Paton that “peace did not suit his purpose”<sup>31</sup> ironically finds himself seeking protection from the missionary and barely manages to escape the island with his life. The portrait of Winchester as a “typical trader” leaves no doubt of Paton’s disdain for traders in general, a contempt which is further strengthened when shortly after, he experiences “a never-to-be forgotten illustration of the infernal spirit that possessed some of the traders towards these poor natives.”<sup>32</sup> Paton tells of three trading vessels entering the harbour and the conversation with their captains:

The captains called on me; and one of them, with manifest delight, exclaimed, ‘We know how to bring down your proud Tannese now! We’ll humble them before you!’

I answered, ‘Surely you don’t mean to attack and destroy these poor people?’

He replied, not abashed but rejoicing, ‘We have sent the measles to humble them! That kills them by the score! Four young men have landed at different ports, ill with the measles, and these will soon thin their ranks.’

Shocked above measure, I protested solemnly and denounced their conduct and spirit; but my remonstrances only called forth the shameless declaration, “Our watchword is – sweep these creature away and let the white men occupy the soil!”<sup>33</sup>

The closing remarks are a stark contrast to Jarwin, Ballantyne’s idealized model of the thoroughly Christian South Pacific sailor, who stated “Hold onto your Bible!

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<sup>30</sup> Paton, *The Story of John G. Paton*, p 76.

<sup>31</sup> Paton, *The Story of John G. Paton*, p 98.

<sup>32</sup> Paton, *The Story of John G. Paton*, p 98.

<sup>33</sup> Paton, *The Story of John G. Paton*, p 99.

That's the watchword.”<sup>34</sup> The racist belligerence of the traders is also in direct opposition to the compassion of Paton for “these poor people,” and their glee at telling him they desire to have the people “humbled” demonstrates a complete lack of regard for the missionary’s purpose to “elevate and redeem”<sup>35</sup> the indigenous people.

### **John Williams – Protomartyr or Prototrader ?**

While numerous missionaries were killed in the South Seas, John Williams is clearly portrayed in children’s literature as the epitome of the selfless messenger of Western civilization and the gospel. What is not evident in these children’s books is that Williams’ popularity with the missionary societies which often published these books was underpinned by the commercial success he achieved. He was able to combine preaching and profit in a way that proved to his superiors that missionary enterprise in the South Pacific could be self-funding. Although the missionaries were opposed to the ruthless practices of the traders, the nexus between religion and commerce conducted by the South Pacific missionaries was seen by the missionary societies as in accordance with the views of eighteenth-century social philosophers. These included Adam Smith who had pioneered the study of economics in *The Wealth of Nations* in 1776, and the Anglican cleric Joseph Tucker who believed that commerce, government and religion were all different parts of God’s universal plan and that

the unity of God’s providential rule implied that no final contradiction between the several interests of the different spheres was conceivable; the creator had so constituted the world that

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<sup>34</sup> Ballantyne, *Jarwin and Cuffy*, p 165.

<sup>35</sup> Becke, p 121.

morality and policy, duty and interest were in fundamental harmony one with another.<sup>36</sup>

Unlike modern religious heroes, such as Mother Teresa or Archbishop Tutu, for whom association with commercial interests would be abhorrent, it is not surprising to find Williams being hailed as the ideal missionary hero as he embodied the amalgam of nineteenth-century ideals, salvation and industry.

Gunson notes of Williams that

trading acquired a virtue of its own. Commercial enterprise was as much a civilizing agent as the gospel, and although he paid lip-service to the doctrine that it was Christianity which produced the desire for civilization, he was not unfamiliar with the nature of cupidity.<sup>37</sup>

The commercial aspect of Williams' missionary work is not mentioned at all in the children's publications as his involvement in trade was part of missionary endeavour which was open to criticism. Its presence in children's literature would have eroded the purely spiritual ideals which are attributed to Williams and which these publications sought to foster in the young. The children's books instead reinforced the cult of personality, the "magnetic appeal"<sup>38</sup> and mystique of the adventurer which surrounded Williams. While his blending of commercial acumen and the gospel made him a favourite with administrators, the propaganda which enveloped his exploits was used to make even more money for the missionary effort after his death, through the publication of numerous children's novels and reward books written about him. It is a sad irony that this man, so idolized in these very publications for his ingenuity and self-reliance and who is

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<sup>36</sup> Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag*, p 71.

<sup>37</sup> Gunson, p 137.

<sup>38</sup> Gunson, p 60.

depicted as a friend to young people, became synonymous with systematic fundraising from children.

### **Missionaries use Trade to Redeem**

Given that the fiendish reputation of the commercial traders coexisted with the strongly held belief by the missionaries that commerce and Christianity were compatible, as John Williams had proved, it was not surprising that the missionaries established their own means of trade. Kent states that John Williams believed

that if the islanders were provided with work they would have less time to get into mischief. Such an attitude, adopted by most of the missionaries, was strongly backed in Britain, which was one reason why missionary work was regarded with such favour by the Government. The preachers, it was believed with some truth, were opening up new markets for British trade.<sup>39</sup>

The attitude that the indigenous people were in need of profitable work to save them from “mischief” is evident in Barradale’s children’s book *Pearls of the Pacific* where the reader is informed that the missionaries established a plantation which grew “cocoa, and indiarubber and oil palms, maize and vanilla and fine arrowroot and many other useful and valuable things.”<sup>40</sup> These plants were considered “useful” and “valuable” as they were valuable trade items and would help to sustain the mission, not because they had any particular value to the indigenous people who grew them, other than to keep them occupied in European “work.” Undoubtedly helpful agricultural skills were taught to the indigenous population, but the critics of the missionaries quickly seized on this form of commercialism and complained that “many missionaries concluded that trade by a

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<sup>39</sup> Kent, p 66.

<sup>40</sup> Kent, p 119.

godly man was a godly trade, and they laid up considerable treasures on this earth as a consequence.”<sup>41</sup> The emphasis in children’s publication however, remained that the agricultural and industrial pursuits encouraged in the islanders were saving them from vices that could only lead to Satan and eternal damnation.

## **Conclusion**

Within the limits of children’s literature there is no censure of the commercial activities of the missionaries and usually this aspect of their work is either overlooked, underplayed or revealed as having only positive benefits for the indigenous people as the missionary creates social order. The traders who plied the South Seas, however, are presented as a direct contrast to the missionaries and are generally shown to be disreputable and avaricious without compassion or concern for the indigenous people. In the fictional works their harsh manner is usually tempered by a utilitarian regard for the missionaries, but in some novels and the biography of John G. Paton, the traders are roundly condemned and denounced as being a greater trouble than the local population. While discrediting traders for their part in “blackbirding” no acknowledgement of involvement by the indigenous population is given and it was used to further denigrate the traders by connecting them with slavery while giving the missionary more status as the sole “civilizing” agents of the South Pacific. In publications designed to enhance the missionaries’ prestige to the child reader, emphasizing the trade in human beings may have implied an inability of the part of the missionary to stop the practice. It may, furthermore, have been seen as an admission that the abolition of slavery in British colonies in 1834, which was widely acclaimed by missionary societies, was a hollow victory.

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<sup>41</sup> Hartley Grattan, p 202.

While trade and Christianity are firmly linked in the missionary doctrines of the era, in children's literature at least, any reference to the commercial-activity missionary is shown to be far more connected with religious rather than temporal matters. Rather than the individual missionary or missionary societies gaining either financially or in terms of social control, the teaching of European-style agriculture and occupations was shown to be for the benefit of the populace as the work saved them from idleness and mistreatment by others. It was a stance reinforced by the consistent portrayal of the missionary as the lone and virtuous defender of the vulnerable indigenous people against the villainous and immoral exploitation of unethical traders.

It was not just the traders, however, who were presented in negative terms. As the next chapter details, inter-denominational rivalry led to a biased representation of the Catholic involvement in the region.

## **CHAPTER 8**

### **WHERE WERE THE CATHOLICS ?**

*“I must not forget to mention the impediments which the priests of Rome, chiefly Frenchmen, endeavour to throw in the way of the progress of the pure faith in Christ. To gain influence with the natives they wink at many of their vices, they teach them idolatrous faith, and try to prejudice them against the Protestants.”<sup>1</sup>*

The publications which dominate this thesis are Protestant or Evangelical in origin. The largest world faith, the Catholic religion, is not represented at all. This does not mean that the Catholics were not involved in the missionary endeavours in the South Seas, but does indicate that there were certain circumstances at play which severely limited the amount of written material for children published by them.

### **Catholic Entry into the South Pacific**

Historically the Catholics were the first European religious presence to enter the South Pacific when the Spaniard Pedro Fernandez De Quiros attempted to found New Jerusalem in the New Hebrides at the beginning of the seventeenth century. However, in what may be called the modern era of the missionary movement in the area, from 1797, it was the English Protestants who were at the forefront of European expansion into the South Pacific. It was not until 1834 that the first Catholic missionaries to the South Seas arrived with the landing of two priests and a brother in the Gambier group of islands. In 1836 the Marists entered the region with the arrival of Fr. Bataillon on Wallis Island and Fr. Chanel on Futuna Island. Thereafter the Catholic presence in the Pacific continued

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<sup>1</sup> Kingston, p 105.



to grow with further ventures into the Solomon Islands, Tonga, the New Hebrides, Fiji, New Caledonia and Tahiti.

### **Differences Between Catholics and Other Denominations**

The majority of priests who went to these islands were French Marists, although some Italians, Dutch and Germans were also present, but whatever their nationality there were two things they had in common with the Protestant missionaries. Firstly

their education, though far from rudimentary, could neither supply them with all the skill they would need in Oceania, nor with the sociological or ethnographic training which would aid in understanding the indigenous people,

and, secondly, that they

saw their task as bringing Western civilisation to the savages and thus as their having a vocation far surpassing the simple conversion of unbelievers.<sup>2</sup>

Although there were these similarities between the two groups, it was their differences which created bitter divisions. The upsurge in Catholicism in France after the Napoleonic wars was occurring at the same time as the rise in evangelism and missionary spirit in the Protestant churches of England. Prior to the arrival of the Catholic missionaries the various Protestant missionary groups and denominations had amicably divided the island groups among themselves in the belief that there was enough work for all. This harmonious situation was overthrown as

the Catholics not only would not recognise any division of the field, but rather deliberately sought to invade Protestant preserves for the purpose of rescuing the poor natives from intolerable

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<sup>2</sup> Robert Aldrich (1990) *The French Presence in the South Pacific, 1842-1940*, London: Macmillan, pp 42-43.

heresy. Since it was impossible for the Protestants to view themselves as heretics and since they on their side viewed the Church of Rome as an abomination, this attempt to invade the territories was regarded as a terrible affront.<sup>3</sup>

The longstanding enmity between the French and English was exacerbated by their religious opposition and further fuelled by the strong feelings of ardent nationalism that are always present on the frontiers of an empire, resulting in suspicion that the French priests were also acting as government agents. Even John Williams felt resentful stating:

With regard to the Catholics, you will be grieved to hear that priests are making a most desperate effort to establish Popery in the islands. I have heard that a French frigate is gone to Gambier Islands with fifty priests on board. What a call for exertion on the part of the friends of Christ of all denominations to unite hand and heart in opposing that despicable and destructive system.<sup>4</sup>

The distress of Williams is not too surprising given the observation of Charlotte Yonge that the LMS held “tenets perhaps most widely removed from Catholicism of any Protestant sect, and are not educated enough to understand the opposite point of view.”<sup>5</sup>

### **Attitudes to Catholics in Children’s Literature**

In literature, too, the high emotions and bitter feelings of the time also became evident and Avery notes “in the late 1830s the temperature of religious zeal began rising, and with its rising we must, alas, associate the ferocious religious intolerance so characteristic of the Victorians.”<sup>6</sup> Children’s literature also reflected this trend with writers like Mrs.

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<sup>3</sup> Hartley Grattan, p 206.

<sup>4</sup> Kent, p 83.

<sup>5</sup> C. M. Yonge (1871) *Pioneers and Founders: Recent Workers in the Mission Field*, London: Macmillan, p ix.

<sup>6</sup> Avery, p 98.

Sherwood producing books which contained vicious attacks against the Catholic religion.

One of the strongest condemnations of the Catholic priests in the South Seas literature for children is found in Louis Becke's *Tom Wallis*, published in 1905. After many adventures Tom Wallis finds himself on the island of Futuna, which is the setting for most of the action, an island with a mission run by the Catholic Marist priests and where the Catholic hero Peter Chanel was to die. In praising the work of the missionaries for making trade easier in the islands, Captain Hawkins is very specific stating "The missionaries - English missionaries, I mean - have done a lot for us."<sup>7</sup> His admiration for the English missionaries continues:

Tom my boy, you should read what English missionaries have done in the South Seas! It is a better tale than that of the British troops upon the blood stained field of battle; for the victories of the missionary have brought peace and happiness instead of tears and sorrow to the vanquished.<sup>8</sup>

As with the examples given in Chapter Four of this thesis, the comparison with the military hero is again present, but here it is exclusively the English who are respected, therefore excluding the efforts of the French and other nationalities that made up the vast majority of Catholic missionaries. The testimony of Captain Hawkins is reinforced by the outlawed trader Hayes who decries the actions of "the greedy priests"<sup>9</sup> thereby condemning the Catholic presence from both sides of the moral spectrum and implying that the Catholics are the pariahs of the South Pacific.

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<sup>7</sup> Becke, p 121.

<sup>8</sup> Becke, p 121

<sup>9</sup> Becke, p 141.

Yet this condemnation of the Catholic priests in *Tom Wallis* cannot be dismissed as merely English versus French national rivalry as in Chapter Ten there is a long conversation between Tom and Mr. Harvey where he begrudgingly admits “these French priests have done a lot of good in many ways”<sup>10</sup> but, when asked to expand on his position, launches into a protracted and furious denouncement of the Catholics, proclaiming:

Wait till we get to Samoa, and there you will see what the Protestant missionaries have done, and what the French priests have done, and you can size up the work of both alongside, and draw your own conclusions. I am, as I said just now, a Roman Catholic, but I know a lot about the way in which the French priests ‘Christianise’ the natives of these islands, and despise many of their ways. They have come to the South Seas under the protection of the British flag, in British ships, following in the wake of English missionaries who have done all the hard graft, then they teach their converts to hate and despise everything that is English and Protestant.<sup>11</sup>

Greater weight is given to the accusations of unjust practices as this tirade against French Catholic priests is made by one of their own faith. The priests are also shown to be like the despised traders discussed in Chapter Eight of this thesis as they take advantage of the dangerous pioneering work and tolerance of the British missionary for their own ends. This theme of betrayal is taken up again by Harvey when he relates how he was once given a bundle of school primers by a Catholic priest to distribute among the indigenous people which contained

pictures that would just grip the fancy of nine out of ten Kanakas. Pictures showing how the cruel and wicked lotu Peretania (Protestant faith) was sending people to hell; pictures

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<sup>10</sup> Becke, p 184.

<sup>11</sup> Becke, p 184.

showing an English missionary chasing after a native woman - with thundering lies printed at the foot.<sup>12</sup>

There is a footnote after this description which reads:

This school primer of which Harvey speaks was actually circulated in the South Seas by the Roman Catholic missionaries. It was printed in Marseilles, but other editions were issued from Sydney in 1866 or 1867.<sup>13</sup>

This historical annotation lends even greater credence to the ideas espoused by the disenchanted Roman Catholic. Harvey also admits to having been raised by bigoted parents who taught him to hate and despise Protestants, but when he went to sea he “found out that a Protestant was just as good a sailor as any holy Roman.”<sup>14</sup> This statement, in a book designed to be read mainly by boys, is tantamount to saying that if they harbour any animosity towards Protestants it is misplaced and they can accept the judgment of a wiser, older man who has outgrown that belief and learnt from worldly experience that it is untrue.

Harvey's sentiments on the equality of ordinary men makes the focus of his disillusion not the adherents of the Catholic religion, such as the young Catholic reader whom the author and publisher may not want to alienate, but rather directs his ire at the purportedly scurrilous behaviour of its clergy. To leave the reader in no doubt of his target, he finishes his malediction against the “good, gentle priests” with the statement that they “hate Englishmen and Americans like poison.”<sup>15</sup> The sarcastic tone of the words “good” and “gentle” cannot but reinforce to the readers the treachery and cruelty of the priests, while their supposed

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<sup>12</sup> Becke, p 185.

<sup>13</sup> Becke, p 185.

<sup>14</sup> Becke, p 187.

<sup>15</sup> Becke, p187.

hatred of both English and Americans makes them enemies of the two most powerful nations in the region who also represent the old and new forces of civilisation: Christianity and democracy. Interestingly the priests occasionally enter the story, mainly in the figure of the aging Pere` Serge, and appear to be quite friendly and welcoming, giving assistance and shelter very generously; yet, with the words of Harvey still ringing in the reader's ears, it is hard not to believe that under their venerable exterior lie harsh and duplicitous hearts.

### **The Anti-literary Catholic Tradition**

The Catholic reaction to their portrayal in these children's publications was limited and little evidence of Catholic children's publications with a South Pacific setting can be found in the period up to 1935. The reasons for this lack of Catholic children's material are manifold, but at least in part stems from a strong Catholic tradition of not using the printed word, including the Bible, for the attainment of the churches' mission. Marshall, in his 1901 publication *Christian Missions: Their Agents and Their Results*, strongly delineates the difference in approach used by the Catholic and the Protestant missionary. He believes that the early church did not need books to convert pagan Rome and that the modern Catholic missionary should follow the same methods that brought success to the Apostles and saints like Augustine, Boniface and Francis. He proclaims "that books, however sacred and persuasive, were not the appointed instruments for such a work"<sup>16</sup> and that

providence suffered fourteen centuries to elapse, and the church to win all her battles, before the art of printing, by which alone

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<sup>16</sup> T.W.M. Marshall (1901) *Christian Missions: Their Agents and Their Results* (Volume 1) New York: Excelsior Catholic Publishing House, p 10.

the scriptures could be adequately multiplied, was revealed to man. That the Bible, however precious to Christians, was not designed by its Author even to assist in converting the heathen, is evident from these considerations - that the world received it too late for any such purpose; that the Apostles and their successors neither made, nor wished to make, nor could have made if they wished, any such use of it; and lastly, that the prodigious and almost incredible dispersion of the inspired books in modern times has so utterly failed, even in a solitary instance to accomplish that result, or to promote in any measure the interests of religion.<sup>17</sup>

Marshall is not only critical of the Protestant use of the Bible, but also of the missionaries themselves. He praises the Catholic missionaries saying:

the Catholic missionary - imitating the example of St. Paul and St. Barnabas,- often receiving no salary, and always less than the wages of a common labourer,- presents himself without fear before the pagan crowd, and in spite of menaces, stripes, and death, announces to them, by word of mouth, 'the lively oracles of God.'<sup>18</sup>

Of the Protestant missionary he finds little to commend, stating:

The Protestant missionary, on the other hand, encumbered for the most part by domestic ties, and busy with incessant precautions which they suggest and justify, - for the claims of a wife and family are sufficiently sacred and imperious to precede all others,- naturally declines to enter a course so dangerous and difficult, and relies chiefly upon circulation of the Holy Scriptures, or of religious tracts, which he scatters along the coast, or dispatches into the interior, and then leaves to produce their own effect.<sup>19</sup>

Marshall's contempt for the Protestant missionaries and their use of Bibles and tracts reflects a general reluctance by the Catholic church to use the printing press to influence the young reader. The Catholic

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<sup>17</sup> Marshall, p 10.

<sup>18</sup> Marshall, p 8 (Author's punctuation).

<sup>19</sup> Marshall, p 8.

Archbishop of Melbourne, Rev. Dr. Carr, gave a paper at the First Australasian Catholic Congress held at St. Mary's Cathedral in Sydney in 1900, which addressed the question of producing Catholic literature for the young. He stated:

Wherever the Standard of the Cross has been erected the enemy of Christ has set up the printing press as an instrument of corruption. The poison is all the more dangerous because it is spread concealed either under classic drapery, or under the guise of fascinating style and prurient suggestiveness.<sup>20</sup>

The “poison” that Carr fears is the corruption of the young reader through inaccurate impressions being created of the Catholic church:

The false views of life presented in these books great and small, the pictures of morals, seductions of sin, cravings for forbidden pleasures, and gross perversions of Catholic belief and practice, are calculated to sap the foundations of morality, and to create a bitter and blind hostility to the Catholic church. The latter result - hostility to the church - is what is aimed at by those fanatical and unscrupulous writers who fill their booklets with Protestant fictions of the grossest kind, and who often succeed in planting, in the minds of the young and unwary, prejudices that last as long as life itself. Even in books given as prizes in Protestant Sunday schools are to be found such palpable and stupid perversions of Catholic doctrine as to leave the reader in much doubt whether the writers were the greater fools or greater knaves.<sup>21</sup>

Carr further urges Catholic publishers to “meet book with book, pamphlet with pamphlet, picture with picture.”<sup>22</sup> To some extent this response was made through the Australian Catholic Truth Society, but its publications were primarily designed for adults, while the children were taught in Catholic schools via the Penny Catechism and “Lives Of The Saints” books.

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<sup>20</sup> Rev. Dr. Carr (1900) "Literature for the Young" in *Australian Catholic Record* (10th September 1900) Sydney: St Mary's Cathedral, p 235.

<sup>21</sup> Carr, p 325.

<sup>22</sup> Carr, p 326.



Another possible reason for the absence of Catholic material was that the largest publishing houses for the English-speaking world in the period under study were in England and America, both of which were predominantly Protestant countries and, therefore, producing mainly Protestant publications. In Carr's 1900 speech he admits that

when the English speaking Catholic of those yet near generations wrote, they wrote in France or Belgium, in Italy or Spain. The means of education were denied to him at home. He wrote and thought in the language of the country that had afforded him an asylum.<sup>23</sup>

Later in the same paper Carr states that "Germany may be called the home of Catholic literature for the young" and that in France "beautifully illustrated" children's books "are to be met with in every Catholic book shop."<sup>24</sup> It would seem that while a lack of Catholic literature for the young was found in the English-speaking countries it was available in Europe.

### **Catholic Children's Literature in Australia**

The Catholic school system, where predominately Irish and French nuns were the teachers, meant that a religious bias away from the local region was present in the classroom. It must also be remembered that the Catholic missionaries in the South Pacific were predominantly French Marists. Fr. Peter McMurrich, archivist for the Marist fathers in Australia, points out that little material was published by them in Australia and that while the South Pacific was geographically close to Australia, the population mix in the country at the time probably meant "that Irish saints and the story of the Church in Ireland would have been

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<sup>23</sup> Carr, p 326.

<sup>24</sup> Carr, p 332.

the principal focus of any material prepared for Catholic Children in Australia.”<sup>25</sup> (See Appendix C).

Another contributing factor may also have been the lack of an English, or Irish, Catholic hero to be the focus of any children’s publications on the South Seas. Diane Langmore argues in *Missionary Lives: Papua, 1874 - 1914*, that just as young Protestants were influenced by the stories of missionaries like John Williams so also “young Catholics were similarly inspired by the biographical accounts of martyred missionaries, Chanel, Marchand and Vernard.”<sup>26</sup> The references given are *The Australian Annals* and a comment made by Andre Dupeyrat in *Le Sanglier de Kouni: Pere Cabot, Missionnaire en Papouasie*. However, while Dupeyrat admits to being influenced by Catholic biographies, he was French as were the missionaries he refers to. *The Australian Annals* were published by the French order, The Missionaries Of The Sacred Heart. Fr. Tony Caruana MSC, archivist for the order in Australia, has commented that the Annals were “a periodical geared mainly to adults.”<sup>27</sup> The Annals may have been read in classrooms or to children, but were not specifically written for children. (See Appendix D).

### **Contemporary Heroes Versus Ancient Saints**

The French Marist priest, Peter Chanel, was clubbed to death on Futuna Island in April 1841; he was beatified in 1889, but not canonised as a martyr until 1954. While the Protestants were quick to proclaim in

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<sup>25</sup> Private correspondence with author

<sup>26</sup> Langmore, *Missionary Lives*, p 38.

<sup>27</sup> Private Correspondence with author.

children's literature that people like John Williams and James Chalmers were "Apostles," while alive and "martyrs" immediately after their death, the protracted canonisation process of the Catholic church deprived it of the opportunity to celebrate a contemporary hero. By contrast with the contemporary adventurer and explorer/missionary of Protestant publications, the 1935 Annals publication *A Handbook of Catholic Action* demonstrates the type of reading being offered to Catholic children:

What healthy minded youth, glowing with a love of the adventurous, and passionately fond of heroism in word and deed, will fail to appreciate the story of the early Christian martyrs, or the hundreds of saints of modern times ? What young girl whose heart has not been sullied by erotic fiction can fail to be captivated by the story of St. Agnes, St. Cecilia, St. Philomena, St. Therese of the Child Jesus, and a thousand others?<sup>28</sup>

In fact the Catholics were extremely critical of the saint-like status given to modern missionaries like Williams. Marshall criticises both John Williams and his son for their involvement in trade, saying:

It is true that Mr. Williams was killed by natives, as Captain Cook had been; and it is impossible not to be compassionate about his dismal end, when we are informed that he was not only struck down in the prime of life, but that his body was roasted and eaten. Yet history, while it deplores his melancholy fate, can never admit his claim to title of 'martyr.' If this unfortunate gentleman, by his own or his children's act, provoked the just reprisals of men whom they had cruelly injured and robbed, the frightful penalty may inspire sorrow and regret, but nothing more.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Rev. A.J. Goodman (1935) *A Handbook of Catholic Action*, Sydney: Annals Office, p 67.

<sup>29</sup> Marshall. p 498.

## Conclusion

Given the depth of feeling between the Catholics and Protestants in the South Seas and the sensitivity of the issues involved, it is remarkable how little overtly anti-Catholic sentiment is present in the stories written for children using this setting. Even the prolific Ballantyne prefers to enthusiastically praise the work of the English missionaries rather than indulge in disparaging others. The contrast between the Catholic view of Williams' actions and death and that postulated by the Protestant children's books, illustrates further the differences in approach and method employed by the two different religious groups. The place of the Bible and the role of the printed word in general, was also another major point of variance. The continued publication of Ballantyne's *The Coral Island*, indicates that while most of the Protestant proselytising children's literature of the period has entered the archives, its popularity has not totally diminished. By contrast the lack of Catholic material strongly suggests that the Catholic tradition apparently missed the chance to popularise among the young their ethos and beliefs about the role and place of the South Seas missionary, both in the past and in the present.

The Catholics were not the only group whose activities in the South Pacific mission field was under-represented in children's literature; the role played by women was also given scant attention, a situation outlined in the next chapter.

**CHAPTER 9**  
**THE EUROPEAN FEMALE**  
**IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC MISSIONS**

*“The teachers’ wives made a cup of tea  
for the tired missionaries.”<sup>1</sup>*

Chapter Five of this thesis explored the trope of the missionary as a gentleman, but Cecillie Swaisland comments that “nineteenth century thinking on the position of women in society was dominated by the idea of the lady”<sup>2</sup> and that this meant that education for females “was geared to the ideal of womanhood, so that most middle and upper-class girls were taught only the accomplishments that would ensure early marriage.”<sup>3</sup> Those who did not marry had limited employment opportunities and while some worked as governesses or housekeepers, some went overseas to the missions. Yet the legends of the overseas missionary field were, and mainly still are, male figures like Livingstone, Williams and Schweitzer; little public acclaim is given to the work of women in missions, such as Christina Forsyth or Mary Kingsley, and this is certainly reflected in the lack of children’s missionary literature which portrays the female missionary. While there are a number of children’s books on Mary Slessor, she was usually presented as the female counterpoint to David Livingstone as, like Livingstone, she was a Scot and worked in a mill while young and studied to be a missionary before venturing to Africa. For the most part the women in children’s literature about missionaries are very minor characters, especially in those books written specifically for the young male audience, where women were usually confined to the passive role assigned to a

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<sup>1</sup> Mathews, *John Williams the Shipbuilder*, p 187.

<sup>2</sup> Cecillie Swaisland (1993) “Recruitment of Single Women” in *Women and Missions: Past and Present, Anthropological and Historical Perceptions*, Bowie *et al* (ed), Oxford: Berg, p 71.

<sup>3</sup> Swaisland, p 71.

wife or helper. Often the female presence is almost missing entirely as seen in publications as late as 1947 in the popular Paul White *Jungle Doctor Attacks Witchcraft*, part of a long series on his African experiences, and 1954 in Dale Collins' *Storm Over Samoa* where, aside from some extremely minor roles, the female is virtually absent.

### **The Male Myth**

In terms of total numbers, the minimising of the female role reflected reality. In 1797 the LMS's first missionaries to the South Seas sailed for Tahiti and among the company were five married couples. Yet in the records of this party, the only reference to the women was during a period of concern for the children's and wives' safety when one of the local chiefs had taken offence at the Europeans' actions. The only entries in the missionaries' journal regarding the women occurred as a formality to record a birth when a child was born. The male missionaries often discussed the moral temptation that the Tahitian women represented but

the much discussed temptations that the Tahitian women posed to missionary men contrasted strongly with the silence surrounding the European wives. The Elysian myth, after all, was a male story, a projection of the male imagination - in it, European women had no place.<sup>4</sup>

The potency of the male myth is evident in children's literature too where, as Margery Hourihan has noted, it is

a story about superiority, dominance and success. It tells how white European men are the natural masters of the world because they are strong, skilful, rational and dedicated. It tells how they overcome the dangers of nature, how other 'inferior' races have been subdued by them, and how they spread civilisation and order wherever they

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<sup>4</sup> Michael Cathcart *et al* (1990) *Mission to the South Seas: The Voyage of the Duff, 1796-1799*, Melbourne: History Department University of Melbourne, p 61.

go. It tells how women are designed to serve them, and how those women who refuse to do so are threats to the natural order and must be controlled.<sup>5</sup>

The servile female presence can be found in some of the earliest literature with a missionary theme written specifically for the young audience, including *Swiss Family Robinson*, published in 1812, where the mother is an extremely bland and domestic figure, often referred to as “the little mother” and on one occasion, as a “good fairy”<sup>6</sup> who provides for all the family’s wants.<sup>7</sup>

### **Women Enter the Mission Field**

Women, however, did try to find a place as active missionary figures. As early as 1815 three women offered themselves for missionary service to the Church Missionary Society, but it was determined not to send abroad unmarried women unless they were sisters joining brothers.<sup>8</sup> When, a few years later, another woman was to offer herself for service in India, Bishop Wilson of Calcutta responded:

I object on principle, and from the experience of Indian life, to single ladies coming out to so distant a place, with the almost certainty of their marrying within a month of their arrival.<sup>9</sup>

The role assigned to women for many years thereafter was as money raisers, organisers for prayer meetings or seamstresses for the indigenous people of distant lands.

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<sup>5</sup> Hourihan, p 1.

<sup>6</sup> Wyss, p 88.

<sup>7</sup> The role of the mother was changed in the sequel which was published in 1824; this sequel, however, was not written by Wyss, but by a French translator of the story and children’s writer of the time, Madame de Montolieu; this female author enhanced the mother’s role in her sequel and introduced a few other female characters, but in 1826 Wyss published his own continuation and de Montolieu’s was neglected thereafter.

<sup>8</sup> Creighton, p 114.

<sup>9</sup> Creighton, p 114.

An American missionary, David Abeel, was to bring change to this pattern when he preached in London and repeated the plea of some Chinese women, “Are there no female men who can come to teach us.”<sup>10</sup> His plea on behalf of those Chinese women was to lead to the formation of the first women’s society in 1834, ‘The Society for Promoting Female Education in the East’ and after fourteen years this society had twenty women working in foreign missions. Until 1887 the Church Missionary Society had only 103 women on its roll and of these a mere 55 had been out to missions as single women. However, in the period 1887 to 1907, 691 women were sent to the missions by the Church Missionary Society and similar growth was recorded in most of the societies both in England and America. Barr notes:

During the latter decades of the century hundreds of young women, brimming wide-open with love, trust and a burning sense of dedication, courageously uprooted themselves from pious backgrounds in Wigan or Eastbourne, Ohio or Arkansas, Swansea or Aberdeen, and went a-missioning. For the British in particular it was a neat solution to the ‘surplus of marriageable women problem’ caused by the disappearance, often final, of quantities of young men to the colonies; for the women themselves it offered what was usually their sole chance of a life of high endeavour and adventure overseas.<sup>11</sup>

Jocelyn Murray also argues:

The Missionary calling became increasingly attractive because, despite many physical hardships, it offered women a freedom they could never find in their own country. But missionary women were by definition still lay workers, and, like laymen, were generally second class missionaries, in contrast to clergy.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Creighton, p 114.

<sup>11</sup> Pat Barr (1972) *To China with Love: The Lives and Times of Protestant Missionaries in China, 1860 - 1900*, London: Secker and Warburg, p 127.

<sup>12</sup> Jocelyn Murray (1995) “Gender Attitudes and the Contribution of Women to Evangelism and the Ministry in the Nineteenth Century” in *Evangelical Faith and Public Zeal*, Wolfe (ed), p 103.



The role assigned to these female “second class missionaries” is reflected in the following advertisement that was written in 1916 for women volunteers to the South African missions by the Society For Promoting Christian Knowledge:

She must not mind turning her hand to anything. She must certainly be able to do all kinds of needlework. She will probably be asked to make chasubles, cassocks, and surplices. Then in mission stations where the priests are unmarried and there is no woman housekeeper, she will be called on to do all kinds of mending, repairing and darning. A slight knowledge of tailoring would be useful. You must certainly know how to cook properly and be prepared to cook a dinner on an oil stove.<sup>13</sup>

### **The Missionary Wife**

It is not too difficult to imagine that the expectations for South Africa as noted above were the same the world over. The description of the work of a missionary’s wife in the South Pacific is confirmed in Kingston’s children’s novel *The Cruise of the Mary Rose* where the reader is told:

A missionary’s wife has to attend to her household duties, often not slightly onerous when she has children requiring instruction. Then she has the female school to look after, adult classes to receive at her own house, to afford advice to all who ask it, to call on the sick and to administer medicine, and to visit often from house to house. She must correspond with friends at home; she has her private devotions, and must take time for reading and self-examination, or she will find that she can ill perform her other duties.<sup>14</sup>

While the recruitment of single women increased over the century, many of the women who were present in the missionary fields were there primarily because they accompanied their husbands. Kirkwood notes that missionaries were encouraged to take their wives with them for a number of reasons: their presence might be interpreted by the host society as a sign of peaceful

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<sup>13</sup> Sean Gill (1994) *Women and the Church of England: From The Eighteenth-century to the Present*, London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, p 181.

<sup>14</sup> Kingston, p 243.

intentions; they could serve as models of female behaviour and demonstrate the virtues of the monogamous family; they would reduce the risk of sexual temptation for the male missionary; they could teach the indigenous women which would also help to consolidate the conversion of males.<sup>15</sup> Although given definite roles within the mission community, missionary wives received no payment even though they were actively involved in the mission work. While the legal and social status of European women generally improved during the nineteenth-century, within the churches and evangelical movements women's roles remained relatively unchanged and "they remained ultimately subordinate to often exclusively male central power structures."<sup>16</sup> Jocelyn Murray has suggested three major reasons for this lack of progress: firstly the teachings of the Apostle Paul who seemed to forbid women in public ministry; secondly, the interpretation of Genesis as showing woman to be inferior to man, and, thirdly, the traditional teachings of the churches that leadership was a male domain and that the role of the laity, of which women were the lowest rank, was of little value.<sup>17</sup>

For all the duties assigned to the missionary wife, in the children's literature about the South Seas missionary field, the female characters are confined to secondary and ancillary roles, exemplified in the minor role ascribed to Mrs. Paton in the children's version of Paton's autobiography *The Story of John G. Paton told for Young Folks*. Upon reaching Aneityum in Chapter Ten the mainmast of the schooner, the "John Knox," breaks, and the reader is surprisingly confronted with the statement "I saved my wife from being crushed to death by its fall, managing to swing her instantaneously aside

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<sup>15</sup> Deborah Kirkwood (1993) "Protestant Missionary Women" in *Women and Missions*, Bowie, p 26.

<sup>16</sup> Peter Williams (1993) "The Recruitment of Women Missionaries" in *Women and Missions*, Bowie, p 64.

<sup>17</sup> J. Murray, p 98.

in an apparently impossible manner.”<sup>18</sup> This endangered wife appears from out of nowhere not having been mentioned earlier in the book; even though Paton recounts his parents’ courtship in Chapter Two and in Chapter Nine discusses at length how his decision to volunteer for the missions was “the subject of close deliberation and prayer”<sup>19</sup> at no point is any mention made of meeting a young lady nor of consulting with a wife. Furthermore, the mention of the “impossible manner” of his deed would appear to have no purpose other than to inflate his own heroic status. It is not until another 16 pages later that we are told the name of the wife was Mary Ann Robson and, a mere 12 lines later, she and her newly born child die, only five months after their arrival on the island. It is puzzling that Paton gives no account of her work during her short time on the island of Tanna. Her value as a missionary is, however, related by Dr. Inglis, another missionary on nearby Aneityum, as extolled in the obituary which was published in the *Reformed Presbyterian Magazine* and related by Paton:

By her death the Mission has sustained a heavy loss. We were greatly pleased with Mrs. Paton during the period of our short intercourse with her. Her mind, naturally vigorous, had been cultivated by a superior education. She was full of Missionary spirit, and took a deep interest in the Native women. This was seen further, when she went to Tanna, where, in less than three months, she had collected a class of eight females, who came regularly to her to receive instruction.”<sup>20</sup>

While the adult version of this book gives more detail of Mrs. Paton’s work through further recounting of letters and obituaries, in both the adult and children’s versions of the story, Paton’s omission of his wife’s contribution while in the advanced stages of pregnancy, can only emphasise the lower status given to the female role in mission work. This is not to say that Paton did not

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<sup>18</sup> Paton, *The Story of John G. Paton*, p 46.

<sup>19</sup> Paton, *The Story of John G. Paton*, p 40.

<sup>20</sup> Paton, *The Story of John G. Paton*, p 57.

feel the loss of his wife as his recollection of her death has a tone of sincerity and sorrowfulness and in the children's edition is accompanied by a full page illustration (See Figure 7 next page). However, even this picture reveals Paton at his wife's graveside with the caption "The lonely vigil" - the focus is on the male missionary and his suffering, his loneliness, not the sacrifice and suffering



Figure 7

John Paton at the graveside of his wife.

From: James Paton, *The Story of John G. Paton told for Young Folks*, p 56.

of his wife, a pregnant woman in an unknown and hostile place which even Paton himself had described as full of “fever and ague.”<sup>21</sup> The preface to the “Young Folks Edition” states that the tale has been rewritten to “inspire the boys and girls of Christendom with a whole-hearted enthusiasm for the conversion of the Heathen World to Jesus Christ”<sup>22</sup> but it is hard to see how failing to give a detailed and personal report of his wife’s many successes and accomplishments other than in a scant general retrospect could “inspire” young female readers.

John Paton remarried and his second wife left one of the rare published accounts of the life of a South Pacific missionary’s wife found in *Letters and Sketches from the New Hebrides*, a collection of the correspondence of Mrs. J.G. Paton published after her death. Her letters reveal an intelligent, religious, educated and politically aware woman who, in contrast to her famous but dour husband, had a mischievous sense of humour; she admits to having to constrain herself from laughing in church when the indigenous people formed their own particular adaptations of European customs and, with an openness not found in the ‘adventure’ biographies about male missionaries, relates many of the lighter incidents of daily life on a South Pacific mission station. Her husband’s autobiography was edited and republished in a children’s edition, but Mrs. Paton’s incisive and engaging insights into the life and thoughts of a missionary wife never were and, while letters may have been difficult to edit for children, neither were they used to provide material for a biography suitable for young female readers. Perhaps a woman who giggled in church was not thought appropriate material.

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<sup>21</sup> Paton, *The Story of John G. Paton*, p 55.

<sup>22</sup> Paton, *The Story of John G. Paton*, Preface.

The failure to note the achievements of the female in children's literature on the South Pacific missions would seem to be preparing the young female reader for a subservient role in later life. In *The Cruise of the Mary Rose* where the missionary John Harvey relates some of his adventures among the indigenous people, and the narrator comments of Harvey's wife "as I heard of some of the many trials and dangers they had gone through, and how calmly she had endured them, I felt how admirably she was fitted to be the helpmate of a missionary."<sup>23</sup> The confining of the female to the role of a "helpmate" is evident also in the biographies of the champion of South Pacific missions, John Williams. While Williams is hailed as the hero in Frank Elias' *A Boy's Adventures in the South Seas*, Mrs. Williams and her children are mentioned only once when they board ship. The title indicates the book was written for the male reader. By totally ignoring the female partner of the central protagonist of the story, it is implied that little worth was attached to her presence. A slightly more sympathetic view is given in *John Williams the Shipbuilder*, which unlike Elias' book, was probably written for a reading audience of both males and females. The reader is told:

He asked her to be his wife; and her love for him and for the work which he was going to do was so great that she was ready to travel to the other side of the world away from all her friends and to live among savage peoples. This, especially in those days, was braver than we can understand now; and was even more heroic in a girl of nineteen like Mary than it was in John.<sup>24</sup>

No-one could dispute Mary's self-sacrifice in undertaking the arduous life of a missionary wife at 19 years of age and it is perhaps an acknowledgement of the young female readers that her actions are noted as "more heroic" than her husband's. Yet the motivation for these actions is shown to be regard for

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<sup>23</sup> Kingston, p 230.

<sup>24</sup> Mathews, *John Williams the Shipbuilder*, p 27.

husband and “the work which he was going to do” thereby demeaning any work she may do and reinforcing the female role as dutiful “helpmate.” Mary Williams is referred to a few more times in the book, but usually in the most incidental manner or when she or one of the children is sick. It is the exploits of the males, be they European or indigenous, which are the focus of the text.

The capacity of the wife to make a real and practical contribution to the mission is found in the children’s text *Missionary Heroines*, by Charles Hayward, which contains a chapter entitled “Mrs. Margaret Cargill Of The Fiji Islands.” Mrs. Cargill was the wife of David Cargill, a Wesleyan Methodist missionary. On hearing that they are being sent from England to start a mission on Fiji, reputedly the most dangerous island in the region due to the fierceness of the indigenous people, rather than receiving the news with the unconvincing joy often found in hagiography, Mrs. Cargill is shown to have a very human nature being “dismayed but not disheartened” and stoically announcing “I am content. It is God’s will. He knows what is best.”<sup>25</sup> Her common sense and adaptability are revealed when they arrive in Fiji and it is she who devises the plan to get ashore without causing a violent response from the islanders. Once established ashore the reader is then told Mrs. Cargill

turned her attention to the women and children, and made their care her special work. Nor is there the least doubt that her work in this way made the tasks of Mr. Cargill and Mr. Cross easier than they otherwise would have been.<sup>26</sup>

Although demonstrating adaptability and ingenuity beyond that of her male companions, the efforts of Mrs. Cargill are shown only to be of use in so far as they advanced the work of the male missionary. The implicit beliefs in this

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<sup>25</sup> Charles Hayward (1900) *Missionary Heroines*, London: Collins. (This book has no page nor chapter numbers; all references are contained in the chapter “Mrs. Margaret Cargill of the Fiji Islands.”)

<sup>26</sup> Hayward (Refer footnote 25 above).

position are a form of passive ideology which Stephens has declared “powerful in effect” since it promotes unexamined assumptions and “values taken for granted in the society that produces and consumes the text, including the children.”<sup>27</sup> The inherent devaluing of the female in a text specifically designed for the adolescent female reader suggests that it was a means of conditioning the young reader for an inferior and largely unrecognised role in mission work. In a fate shared with many females in the mission fields, Mrs. Cargill declined in health and died after the birth of her sixth child. As with Mrs. Williams, her missionary endeavours, both in terms of her life and the innate value of her own work, are for the most part overlooked in favour of how she was an assistance to her husband and is typical of the portrayal of these “missionary heroines” in children’s literature.

### **The Courage of the Missionary Wife**

It must be remembered that the books about missionaries were mostly published as rewards and designed, at least in part, to encourage missionary vocations; this may help explain the under-representation of the female presence in these texts. While the men could present their dangerous and varied work as adventure in the mould of the great explorers, the life of a missionary wife was in reality solitary and arduous:

often the life of a missionary wife was terribly hard; with home and children to care for, frequent ill health, no-one to help her, surrounded by a barbarous and hostile people, missionaries’ wives needed to be of heroic material.<sup>28</sup>

Certainly in the stories of Williams and Chalmers one unifying thread is the exacting toll taken on their wives by climate, sickness and death; Chalmers’

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<sup>27</sup> John Stephens (1992) *Language and Ideology in Children’s Fiction*, London: Longman,

p 10.

<sup>28</sup> Creighton, p 113.



first wife died very soon after arrival at the mission, while Mary Williams suffered an undisclosed, but debilitating sickness throughout her time in the South Seas.

Mary was taken very ill and was indeed likely to die, lying for hours unconscious, awfully still, as one who waits the turn of the tide of life, nor knows whether it will flow again. Yet she was at last stronger; and, as she thought of her husband's great desire, she called him to where she lay and she said to him that he should go out on this new quest. Then he was glad and very proud of her. For it was a more terrible ordeal for her to stay at home and be still, than for him to go out on such an adventure.<sup>29</sup>

Even in her sickness the expectation being presented is that the safety and well-being of the wife is secondary to the husband's work. All the children's publications make it clear that it was normal and expected for the men to go off converting distant tribes while the wives were left virtually alone "at the mercy of savages who were only just beginning to know them and their ways."<sup>30</sup> However, the reader is also left in no doubt that this was the will of the women. Mrs. Chalmers refuses to accompany her husband and it is reported that

in the splendid record of nineteenth century missions no more courageous and self-denying action can be found than this decision of Mrs. Chalmers to remain alone amid a horde of cannibals for the sake of Christ's work among them, and for the benefit of her Rarotongan fellow workers. Tamate wished her to go with him. But she felt if she did the work would suffer, and the Rarotongan teachers might sicken and die.<sup>31</sup>

The dedication of the missionaries' wives as revealed in these children's texts is unquestionable and of Mrs. Chalmers, Langmore writes,

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<sup>29</sup> Mathews, *John Williams the Shipbuilder*, p 144.

<sup>30</sup> Lovett, *Tamate*, p 125.

<sup>31</sup> Lovett, *Tamate*, p 124.

it is as a missionary rather than as a woman that one sees Jane Chalmers in the mission records. She was a slight, rather stern-faced woman with her hair tightly drawn back from her face. Her courage was beyond question as was also her gentle but deep love for her husband. The reality of her faith and the intensity of her missionary zeal are also apparent in her writings.<sup>32</sup>

Langmore concludes that while the Chalmers were a compatible couple there were concerns among fellow missionaries for the health of Mrs. Chalmers:

there can be no doubt of Chalmers' love for his wife. If he was thoughtless it was because he expected the same dedication and service from her as from himself. He failed to realise that a strong constitution, as well as strong convictions was necessary for the life he led.<sup>33</sup>

Chalmers' frequent and extended absences in unexplored areas may make suitable material for a true-life adventure tale meant to enthrall the young reader, but the appropriateness of his actions with regard to Mrs. Chalmers leaves the impression "that she was called upon to make sacrifices which, even if they were made willingly, were greater than was necessary."<sup>34</sup>

A slightly more sympathetic picture of the courage and indomitable spirit of women who went to the South Sea missions is present in an account of an event in the RTS publication, *A Book of Brave Women* by Oliver Hope. The book relates historical tales designed to educate young girls in heroic bravery and Christian duty through the stories of famous women and contains titles like "True Until Death - The Story of Anita Garibaldi," and "The Angel of the Battlefield - The Story of Clara Barton." The Missionary tale from the South Seas is enigmatically called "Among the Cannibals of Fiji - The Story of Mrs.

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<sup>32</sup> Langmore, *Tamate - A King*, p 22.

<sup>33</sup> Langmore, *Tamate - A King*, p 23.

<sup>34</sup> Langmore, *Tamate - A King*, p 23.

Calvert's Little Finger." In this tale Mrs. Calvert and her friend, Mrs. Lyth, are wives of missionaries. On one occasion when their husbands are out visiting a distant island they receive a message that Chief Thakombau is going to have a cannibal feast in honour of another visiting chief. The two women dash to the scene where five of fourteen captives are already killed. Mrs. Calvert holds up her little finger in a local gesture of being willing to cut it off in return for a favour. Thakombau is staggered by her courage and agrees to release the remaining captives. The writer describes the characters as "two fearful but resolute women"<sup>35</sup> and "two gently bred English women"<sup>36</sup> and Mrs. Calvert in particular as a true heroine who was "prepared to offer her own life, her own body, in the stead of the poor dark savages who stood waiting for Thakombau's club."<sup>37</sup>

Mrs. Calvert's willingness to die for others makes hers a Christ-like action, but we are told it is not her willingness for self-sacrifice that triumphs, so much as her forceful character; it left Thakombau "amazed" to find two white women advancing toward him "in their wide-skirted, frilled gowns, and sunbonnets of that early Victorian day"<sup>38</sup> even a chief of people "more like animals than men"<sup>39</sup> was unable to "resist that most powerful influence which this world knows - the force of a strong and beautiful personality."<sup>40</sup> Unlike many incidents where male missionaries intervene to save indigenous lives, in this tale it is not the individual empowered by the gospel which is credited with the result, but rather the quality of "personality," as if the female has an innate guile or power to assert over the male, even over an island Chief who is

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<sup>35</sup> Oliver Hope (n.d.) *A Book of Brave Women*, London: Religious Tract Society, p 244.

<sup>36</sup> Hope, p 243.

<sup>37</sup> Hope, p 243.

<sup>38</sup> Hope, p 242.

<sup>39</sup> Hope, p 238.

<sup>40</sup> Hope, p 240.

supposedly more like an animal than a man. Mrs. Calvert's gesture of raising her little finger reveals an intimate knowledge of local custom which she was able to understand and apply in a moment of crisis to communicate her position, yet it is not her skill, composure or knowledge which is ultimately shown to have succeeded. Thakombau, as a Chief and a man, changes his actions as "there was a spark of chivalry within him somewhere too, for he honoured a brave woman."<sup>41</sup>

What is striking about this tale is that Mrs. Calvert and Mrs. Lyth are only able to assert their influence because their husbands were absent and they found themselves the only Europeans present and therefore felt compelled to act. Hope attempts to portray the women missionaries in a very positive and impressive manner by emphasising the quiet resolve of Mrs. Calvert and the stoic support of her companion, Mrs. Lyth. Their actions, however, are deemed to be remarkable only because they are exceptional. Furthermore, the apparent triumph of Mrs. Calvert's "strong and beautiful personality" ultimately depended on the presence of the male quality of chivalry. While Hope obviously admires the women, he negates their influence by attributing the result of the meeting to the chief. It is interesting to note that typical of the writing and thinking of the day, the credit is always given to the male, even in *A Book of Brave Women*. The trope of chivalry is invoked to endow the chief with a sense of virtue: even given the lowly anthropological status attributed to the indigenous people of the day, it is still his "honour" rather than the European female's bravery which determines the outcome of the incident.

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<sup>41</sup> Hope, p 244.

## Training the Indigenous Women

In Barradale's *Pearls of the Pacific* the work of the missionary wives is detailed as ensuring indigenous young girls were "well trained for the position of a minister's wife" as sometimes a male student:

would marry a good Christian girl who loved Jesus, but often one with little knowledge and no training for her future work. So there are classes for wives at Malua. They are taught ordinary school subjects, and shown how to sew and wash and iron."<sup>42</sup>

The perpetuation of the role of the woman as a second class missionary is extended to the indigenous women who are also being prepared to meet the needs of the male in the mission field. The idea of the missionary wives "training" the indigenous girls for marriage is also present in *Patteson of the Isles*, where we are told:

Mr. Pitt was married, and his wife was ready to help in training some of these wild island maidens, as Mrs. Selwyn and Mrs. Abraham had done, that there might be Christian wives ready to help the Christian boys by and by. The youngest lady of the party was the most obstreperous, namely, the daughter of Wadrakol and his wife Carrie; she was three years old, and apparently a young person who liked her own way and mostly got it."<sup>43</sup>

It would seem from these comments that the concept of training wives for the indigenous teachers was accepted and was quite common, but the inclusion of a three year old in such a practice emphasises how important it was considered to remove these girls from all contact with their own culture at a very young age. Moreover, these future brides had to be bought by the missionary and, as Patteson was training a large group of male teachers, he had to "purchase these

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<sup>42</sup> Barradale, p 147.

<sup>43</sup> Debenham, p 107.

young girls wholesale,”<sup>44</sup> for his large number of male students. His actions are further described:

He knew well enough that to marry a heathen wife was the surest thing to drag his boys back to the old ways, since the wife, even though she be a drudge, is the strongest power for or against religion in a South Sea hut as she is in an English home. So he wanted girls to be trained by Mrs. Palmer to be good Christian women, and he begged them from their parents, and stood on the beach before the ship sailed with a number of garments hanging over his arms - wonderful in shape and fashion, cut by his own hands - and unbleached calico. Every girl who was going to Norfolk Island put on this sort of first instalment of her wedding dress, and so went forth across the water into the new, strange world.<sup>45</sup>

Patteson's concern for his male teachers not only reveals a lack of trust in their faith, but also the same relegation of the indigenous female to the role of "drudge" or mere supporter, that has been evident in the attitude to European women as "helpmate." They were at least afforded the dignity of not being bought for a few yards of calico. The ancient prejudices are the same however, as the indigenous females are cast in the familiar role of "wild island maidens" the powerful Eve-temptress who can undermine God's work. It is also difficult to differentiate the actions of Patteson from those of the "blackbirders" discussed in Chapter Seven of this thesis as he entices young girls aboard his ship to venture to a "strange new land," without full knowledge of what they are undertaking; nor was this for a short-term labour contract. Neither the girls nor their parents could have imagined the full implications of what was being asked of them or realised that it was a lifetime contract. As the girls cross the water to a new life there are undertones of the death of their former lives and rebirth into Christian life, the ultimate fulfillment of which was the prospect of a white-wedding to a missionary. While Patteson's worries about the fledgling faith of

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<sup>44</sup> Debenham, p 132.

<sup>45</sup> Debenham, p 132.

his students may not have been completely unfounded, the complicity of the missionary wives in “training” the young girls for a subservient situation reveals their total acceptance of their own secondary role in the missionary field and again inculcates the same expectations and values to the female child reader.

## Conclusion

Certainly the work of missionary wives should not be underrated as usually the success or failure of any mission was dependent on the conversion of the female hosts, as Creighton notes:

experience soon showed that much progress could not be made amongst the men unless the women were won also. The Christian converts, unless they could be provided with Christian wives, must almost inevitably fall back.<sup>46</sup>

It is noticeable that no unmarried European women are present in these books, a fact which probably reflected the division of opinion about the appropriateness of sending them to places where it was believed “rude contact with coarse animal natures and their unrestrained display of animal instincts tends imperceptibly to blunt a modest woman’s susceptibilities.”<sup>47</sup> The perception of moral risks facing single women appears to have as much a consideration as the physical and health risks. The married women on the other hand were expected to provide models to the indigenous population and the young readers of missionary texts, of how a Christian wife and mother should behave. The portrayal of the female missionary in these children’s books is of women of great self-sacrifice and endurance; they are shown to possess

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<sup>46</sup> Creighton, p 113.

<sup>47</sup> S. Gill, p 177: citing Johnston, *British Missions in Africa* , p 718.

a fair number of the supposedly masculine attributes - most obviously, courage in the face of danger and hardship, considerable powers of organisation, and independence of judgment.<sup>48</sup>

They could rise to meet extraordinary challenges if required, yet their daily challenges were represented in children's literature as being confined to passive and secondary roles when compared to the action and daring adventure which was portrayed as the constant diet of the male missionary.

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<sup>48</sup> S. Gill, p 176.



## CONCLUSION

*“A life given to the service of God and man  
is the only sort of life worth living at all.”<sup>1</sup>*

Christine Harris’ children’s novel, *Baptism of Fire*, was published in 1996 and follows the adventures of young Hannah Stanton when she is sent to live with her missionary uncle in the South Pacific during the late nineteenth century. This modern novel contains many of the elements of the children’s stories already examined: a disreputable trader, a “native curse”, a missionary deeply committed to his sense of duty and a wife to assist him and save him from “temptation.”<sup>2</sup> Yet, in contrast to the mostly male-dominated earlier texts, the central character is a defiant and inquisitive girl and at the conclusion of the novel, when the “curse” is defeated and the uncle lives, the reader is left to ponder if this was due to natural causes or the power of prayer. While *Baptism of Fire* as a contemporary adventure story cannot be classified as colonial discourse and is far removed from the proselytising works of Ballantyne or the missionary societies, its publication suggests an enduring fascination in children’s literature with the South Pacific and the missionary in particular.

At first Hannah finds her missionary Uncle stern and “inhuman”<sup>3</sup> but learns to love him and admire his work. It is this portrayal of the missionary as a compassionate being which provides a strong link between *Baptism of Fire* and the earlier texts as they too sought to establish the South Pacific missionary as noble and admirable. Gunson notes that:

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<sup>1</sup> Debenham, p 159.

<sup>2</sup> Christine Harris (1996) *Baptism of Fire*, Sydney: Random House, p 46.

<sup>3</sup> Harris, p 170.

there has been a tendency among missionary societies to single out a few individuals whom they have decked up in glory, not satisfied only with making them saints or martyrs, but in publishing many popular accounts of them and endeavouring to perpetuate their memory in ships and institutions.<sup>4</sup>

Certainly children's publications focused intently on the figures of Williams, Chalmers, Patteson and Paton and uncritically presented them to the young readers as models of Christian endeavour in the mission field. Both the biographical texts about these and other missionaries and the fictional works of Ballantyne and others, shared the common formula of blending romantic adventure and religious instruction while lauding the superiority of European civilisation founded on the Bible. With the missionary purpose being defined as a battle between good and evil and often couched in military terms, it is not surprising that the missionaries show little if any consideration for the indigenous cultures they encounter. Beidelman has commented that:

The study of missions reveals that Europeans responded to alien cultures in ways that were callously ethnocentric and mindlessly romantic, at times poignantly altruistic and confusedly well-meaning.<sup>5</sup>

His observation is appropriate to children's literature which featured the South Pacific missionaries between 1800 and 1935, which were as much instruments of colonialism and cultural dominance as they were products of profound faith. In the children's texts South Pacific cultures were belittled as primitive and their members were infantilized and dehumanised: every aspect of the islanders' beliefs and practices were criticised and condemned as being part of a sinful lifestyle. The indigenous people were also characterised as lazy, ignorant and untrustworthy, with their potential for savagery and treachery made

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<sup>4</sup> Gunson, p 4.

<sup>5</sup> Beidelman, p 6.

particularly clear in the pictorial depiction of the death of the missionaries as they are shown being struck from behind in an apparently cowardly action. In contrast, the missionary was portrayed as a hero at the dangerous frontier of the empire, an emissary of civilisation and an altruistic holy man willing to risk his own life to help establish the Kingdom of God by the conversion of the sinful and ignorant “heathen.”

Colonial expansion and imposition of Western ideals were legitimised to the young reader by portraying the islanders as grateful for the arrival and intervention of the missionary, particularly in bringing them Christianity and the accoutrements of European society including reading and writing, Westernised living conditions and redemption through “useful” work. By contrasting the irreproachable missionary not only with the indigenous people but also with the brutal excesses of European traders, the texts also revealed the missionary as the guardian of Christian morality and founder of fair trade.

While the missionaries were characterised as being serene amid the dangers that surrounded them, an attitude attributed to their unshakable faith in God and the stoic qualities of the English hero, the trope of “Muscular Christianity” was often invoked to give the missionary a boldness and vigour associated with the secular heroes of the day. Through the use of dualisms and binary opposites, the missionary’s Christian values and integrity formed a sharp contrast to the paganism, idolatry and apparent treachery of the indigenous populations they sought to convert. In particular the sacred man of the group was discredited and replaced by the missionary as religious leader.

Although these adventure tales had common elements in storyline and characterisation, they revealed an evolution in the perception and portrayal of

the role of the missionary. In the earliest text examined, *Swiss Family Robinson* (1814), Mr. Willis is a uniquely solitary missionary figure who works in isolation to convert the local population. In most novels the missionary figure worked as a member of an organised missionary society, part of a larger group of Europeans or at least with an indigenous teacher. In *The Coral Island* (1858), the missionary is an aloof, unnamed character, more spirit than substance, who solves the problems of the other characters, but never becomes involved in the adventure aspect of the tale. He is a calming and stabilising influence who seems almost magically to appear and perform his work of conversion with disarming ease, but, importantly is assisted by an indigenous teacher who is a devout Christian and who has some responsibility in converting others of his race. Mr. Mason in *Gascoyne the Sandalwood Trader* (1864), retains spiritual, ministering qualities, yet is a far more developed character who has the emotional and physical ties of family and friends and exhibits some of the “manly” attributes valued by Ballantyne when he becomes involved in the action of the tale. While in *Jarwin and Cuffy* (1878), the fame of the real-life missionary John Williams is acknowledged, the primary ministering presence is found in the honourable, trustworthy, yet secular figure of Jarwin. It is possible that Ballantyne’s shifting emphasis in the role of the missionary in each of these novels reflects a change of his, and his countrymen’s, perception of the task of conversion in the region. There is an evolution from the early dependence on the solitary European missionary of *The Coral Island*, ably assisted by an indigenous teacher, to the more substantial and complex Mr. Mason who must deal with the difficulties of the unconverted islanders and errant Europeans alike. Finally, there is the proselytising role of ordinary seamen like Jarwin, who, with the increased trade and voyages to the region, must realise that because of their privileged English background they have a duty to perform in spreading civilisation and proclaiming the Christian gospel.

The significant role given to Jarwin also suggests a change in the nature of the adventure books. The missionary was a prominent figure in general fiction until the late 1800's, at which point the spirit of high adventure seems to have relegated them mainly to the background and the publishing of biographies by the religious publishing houses, such as the Religious Tract Society and the London Missionary Society, became more popular. There were, of course, exceptions to this trend, such as the Paul White *Jungle Doctor* series of the 1940's, but again these were the product of a religious publishing house.

In the biographies analysed there is a diversity of characters, style and discernible evolution of ideas, most notably the shifting balance of responsibility between the English missionary and the indigenous teacher. The earliest biographies on James Chalmers have the strongest adventure element, almost an imitation of the style of Ballantyne, while those that follow on John Williams and Coleridge Patteson have a finer balance of adventure and religion. In the latest of the biographies, Debenham's *Patteson of the Isles*, the reader finds not only a blend of exciting story and religious content, but a more complex and thoughtful character who gives voice to the vision of the indigenous population taking full responsibility for their own future without a European presence at all.

The most striking difference between these real-life missionary figures from their fictional counterparts is to be found in the closing chapters of the novels. The novels concluded with all the main characters happy, a triumphant missionary and a contented and converted indigenous population; the young reader is given a romantic impression of the courageous missionary still toiling with unceasing devotion to God's work in some exotic, distant land. It would seem that the missionary figure in fiction is an adjunct to the spirit of adventure

and, as a representative of the noblest aspects of European civilisation, could not suffer death, but must be shown to be resolutely continuing his sacred duty even when the hardest adventurer has had his fill and is returning to England. By contrast, in all the biographies the missionary is killed and immediately proclaimed a martyr. These biographies were the products of religious publishing houses and it appears to be their intention to equate the contemporary South Sea missionary with the sacrifice of the ancient martyrs of the Christian faith. Nevertheless their death, however gloriously it is presented, is not the final impression left by these books, as the missionary's martyrdom is taken as an opportunity to extol the virtue of the cause, to proclaim how the work initiated by the martyr continues but, if his sacrifice is not to be in vain, requires from the reader either their financial support or their own life in the form of a dedicated vocation.

The missionaries' capacity for selflessness is often most clearly evident when, in spite of premonitions of impending doom, they approach their deaths with an almost joyful sense of self-sacrifice, virtually as a culmination of the sense of duty which has permeated their lives. These deaths are often accompanied by comparisons with the death of Christ, and the murdered missionary is portrayed as a Christ figure who is the willing victim of the very people he came to save. On many occasions the death of the missionary is compared to the fate of a soldier who must obey the commands of his superior even if the task he is given is unpleasant or dangerous. The unquestioning obedience of the missionary to the will of God, even to the point of death, emphasises the strong sense of duty which was a characteristic of writing for children during this era and, as the missionary was not seeking material or temporal reward, raised him above the status of the popular military hero. Furthermore, the description of his work in terms of a battle between the forces

of good and evil, that is, Christianity and European civilisation against the idolatry and sinfulness of the “heathen,” implies that the missionary was bringing to natural fruition the task that was merely begun by the earlier, military explorers like Cook.

Some of the personal characteristics of the fictional figures are also present in the biographies of South Seas missionaries. They are endowed with the same virtues of honesty and a personal charisma which both literally and figuratively disarms the hostile islanders they confront. They are, however, diverse in character, ranging from the saintly portrayal of the protomartyr John Williams, to the more curt and exuberant figure of James Chalmers. Williams, Chalmers and Patteson are all portrayed as men of great energy whose eagerness to spread the gospel has them in constant movement from place to place, giving them a sense of energy and simultaneously breathing life into the narratives as they voyage from one exciting encounter to another.

Yet within this diversity of characters there are some stereotypical traits which can be attributed to the peculiarities of propaganda and the nature of hagiography. The missionaries are usually portrayed as having received their vocational calling in childhood and that even in these early years they had some indefinable quality of leadership which set them apart from their peers. Perhaps in attempting to appeal to the widest possible pool of potential vocations and supporters, academic achievement was not commended as a pre-requisite for missionary service; instead it was the “manly” qualities of independence of thought and decisiveness of action, coupled with a strong Christian faith, including active prayer life, which were espoused as the necessary qualities of the missionary. Often we are told of their sudden conversion experience which not only held out hope to the reader that they too may be redeemed or called to

missionary service, but also acted as a prefiguration of the event they sought to repeat among the indigenous people.

Just as the indigenous people were judged against Western ideals and beliefs, the books reveal that European women in the mission field were also subject to the values and prejudices of contemporary English society. They portrayed the role of the European female in the South Pacific missions as minimal and showed them as having a supportive rather than active presence. While young, single European women were entirely absent, the few wives of missionaries that were present were only briefly referred to, usually when they were ill or had just died, and they were mostly confined to domestic duties or the education of the indigenous women at mission institutions. Their marriages are proffered to child readers as model relationships, but these marriages strongly reinforce the biblical vision of a male-centred creation; the male missionaries are shown as having lives and ambitions entirely in accord with the will of God, while their subservient and dutiful wives were portrayed as being entirely obedient to their husband's wishes.

Another group largely omitted is the strong French Catholic missionary presence in the South Pacific. The publications examined were mainly from publishing houses with strong Protestant associations and some admonition of Catholics is not surprising. There is widespread reference to the co-operative spirit between Protestant denominations, but the French Catholic missionaries are mostly disregarded in this form of children's literature, with virtually all the malicious comments from the adult versions being deleted. The Catholics seem to have published little in English specifically for children about South Pacific missionaries.



All of the biographies of the missionaries are adaptations of adult books which were rewritten for children, but, especially in the stories of Chalmers, were not always particularly well modified for the younger reader. The involvement and recruitment of the young reader to the missionary cause appears to be the primary motivation behind the publication of the South Pacific missionary literature written for children during the period 1800 to 1935. Throughout all the texts these impressionable young readers are left with no doubt that beyond the thrills of the adventurer, the fame of the military hero or the glory of the explorer, the South Sea missionary had a character which formed “the highest and noblest manifestation of philanthropy, patriotism, piety and moral greatness.”<sup>6</sup>

With this lofty purpose as their goal, the publications were a vehicle for inculcating the religious and cultural beliefs of a triumphant English society and for encouraging children to support the missions either through their own vocation or through the giving and collecting of money. The children’s South Sea missionary literature strongly and earnestly conveyed these ideas and values to the young reader in the palatable form of the fictional adventure story and exciting biography.

The missionary was portrayed as following directly in the steps of Christ and, as a chosen messenger of God and emissary of the English vision of religious truth, was not only building and strengthening the Empire, he was also the crowning glory of man’s attempts to establish the Kingdom of God on Earth. From the first sentence to the last word of each children’s text, the author’s purpose was to create an impression of the missionary enterprise as the most noble work that could be undertaken by a member of European

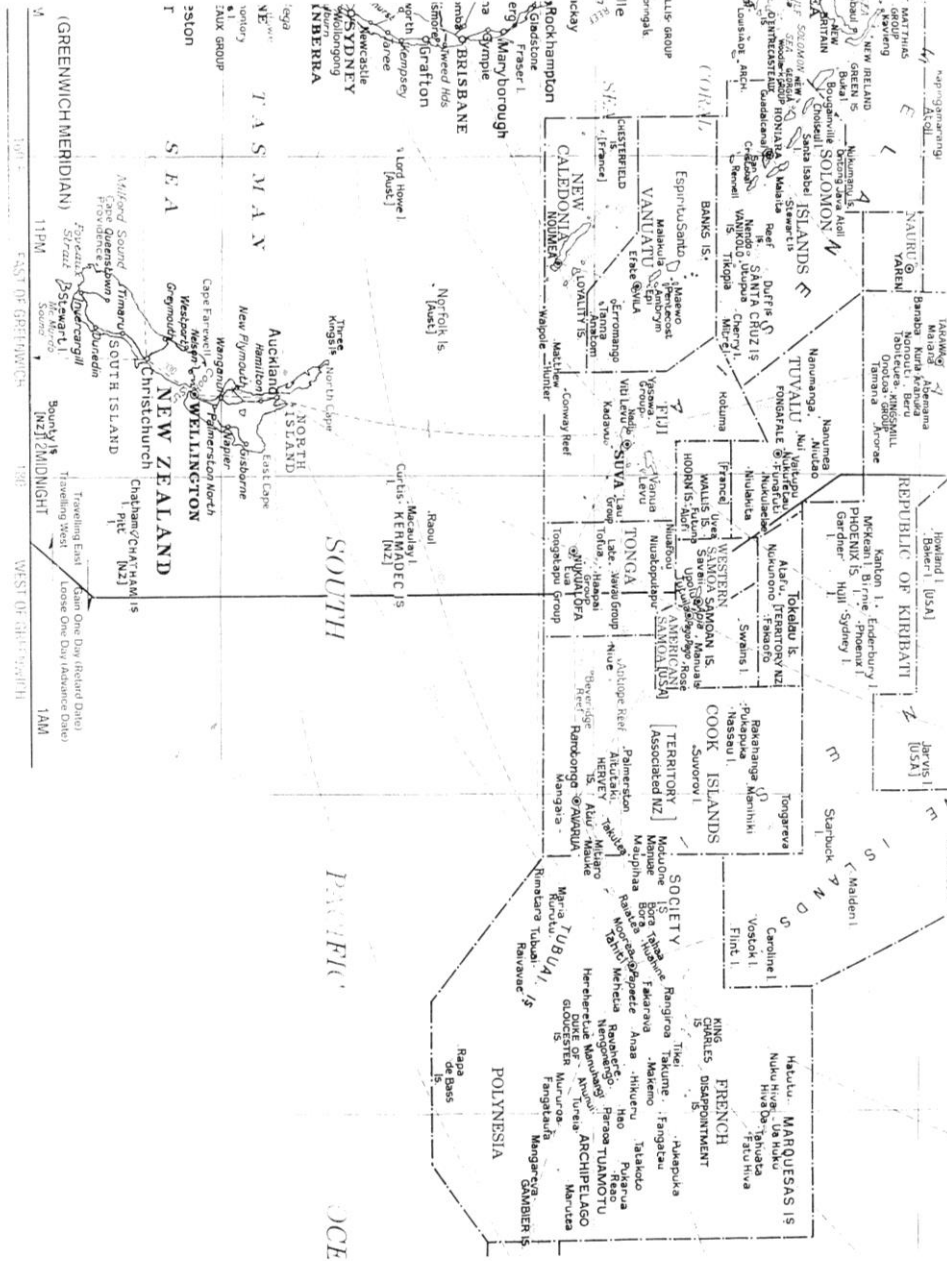
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<sup>6</sup> Campbell, p ii.

civilisation, and that, especially in the young, the summons to a missionary vocation and possible martyrdom was the highest conceivable aspiration and a call above duty.

## APPENDIX A

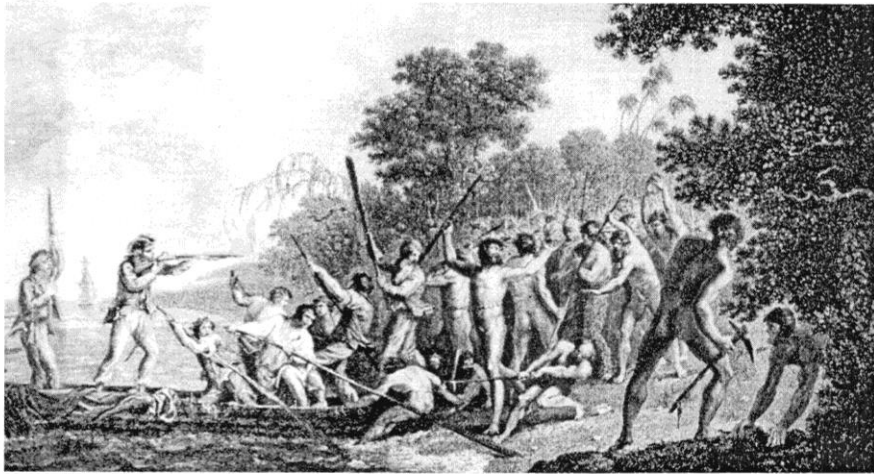
Map of the South Pacific.

From: Gregory's; South Pacific Islands; Map 185: 12th Edition.

## APPENDIX B

Cook's Landing at Erromanga, by J.K. Sherwin.

From: Bernard Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*, Plate 54.



## APPENDIX C

Letter from Fr. Peter McMurrich (SM), Archivist for the Marist Fathers,  
Australian Province.

**MARIST FATHERS  
AUSTRALIAN PROVINCE**

Telephone: (02) 816 3190  
Fax: (02) 816 1737

PROVINCIAL HOUSE,  
3 MARY STREET,  
HUNTERS HILL, N.S.W.,  
AUSTRALIA 2110

21 October 1996

Mr John Nolan  
10 College Street  
Gardenvale  
Victoria 3185.

Dear John,

Thank you for your letter of 16 October concerning the existence of Catholic material for children portraying South Sea missionaries prior to 1935.

Our Provincial archives date only from 1938, when the Australian Province was established. Marists in Australia prior to that date were initially part of the Oceania Province (1845-1925) and later the New Zealand Province (1926-1938). Each of these Provinces has its own archive in Suva and Wellington respectively.

Our Australian Province archives hold no material written for children for the period prior to 1935. I am reasonably confident that such material was never published by Marists in Australia. Prior to 1925, there were only a small number of Marist Fathers in Australia. Most were Frenchmen. They were here primarily to provide a support base for Marist missionaries in the Pacific. Most had very limited involvement with the local Church, and prior to 1925, there was no serious attempt to establish the Congregation in Australia or to solicit Australian vocations.


I can think of only two Marists who got into print between 1845-1938: one published several Theology works in the first decade of this century, and the other wrote a CTS pamphlet on Peter Chanel around 1932.

Peter Chanel was not canonised until relatively recently - 1954. Despite his geographical proximity to Australia, I suspect that Irish saints and the story of the Church in Ireland would have been the principal focus of any material prepared for Catholic children in Australia.

As regards the existence of such material in general, my guess is that it was more common in the Protestant context because it may have been prepared for use in Sunday Schools. If there was a Catholic equivalent of such material I suspect it would have taken the form of material prepared for use in Catholic schools. When I was in primary school in the 1950s, my recollection is that we had some sort of Catholic Reader and also a monthly Catholic children's newspaper, both mirroring similar publications in the State system. Whether these existed prior to 1935 I don't know. Perhaps the Diocesan Historical Commission in Melbourne, or the Catholic Education Office might be able to provide some information.

Sorry I cannot be of much help. With best wishes for your project,

sincerely,

  
**Peter McMurrich sm**  
Archivist

## APPENDIX D

Letter from Fr. Tony Caruana (MSC), Provincial Archivist for the Sacred Heart Missionaries in Australia.

**MSC Archives**  
**1 Roma Ave, Kensington 2033**  
**Phone: 9315 2246**  
**Fax: 9662 1735**

John Nolan  
 10 College St  
 Gardenvale  
 Melbourne 3185

Dear John,

I received your letter, addressed to the right person. I am the Archivist for the MSC in Australia.

1. I have been able to dig up *Annals* 1894 where the reference is made.
2. Regarding the *Annals* from 1890-1935 there are many stories about South Pacific Missionaries. I am not too sure whether they were written for *children*. No doubt, the stories could have been read in the classrooms to children, but the language used looks slightly adult. However, on closer analysis - they could have been read by children in Catholic homes. The *Annals* is a periodical geared mainly to adults. You could find these articles right through the *Annals*. As for other references, that would require some research, but we have a good library here on the South Pacific islands and the work of missionaries there - however, this is mainly adult reading.
3. I have quite a good selection of pamphlets, some dating back before 1935. These pamphlets were often read by school children. However, after glancing through these pamphlets for almost an hour, I found little on the South Pacific missionaries. But, I only looked through a small section called *Biographies*. There may be better luck in looking at other areas.

I could pursue the matter further. But I have already spent an hour looking things up, and at the rate I normally charge for research work, \$50.00/hr, you would be looking at \$100.00 for another hour as well. Do you want me to carry on looking? Otherwise, if you are ever in Sydney, you would be free to hunt things down for yourself.

Sincerely,



Fr Tony Caruana MSC  
 Provincial Archivist

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