

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Mission Studies and Intellectual History

On December 3, 1873, the designated Day of Intercession for Missions in the Church of England, Professor Max Mueller, the translator of the Vedic classics and a recognized authority on comparative mythology, delivered a lecture on missions in the nave of Westminster Abbey. Having noted all the major religious systems of human history, Mueller singled out Buddhism, Islam and Christianity as particularly significant. What set them apart and gave them a commonality superseding their obvious differences was their missionary component.

The spirit of truth is the life-spring of all religion and where it exists it must manifest itself, it must plead, it must persuade, it must convince and convert . . . Once recognize the common brotherhood of mankind, not as a name or a theory, but as a real bond, as a bond more lasting than the bonds of family, caste or race, and the questions Why should I open my hand? Why should I open my heart? Why should I speak to my brother? will never be asked again.¹

Although Mueller may have been unusual in his recognition of the missionary impulse in other religious systems, his view of mission reflects a working assumption of Victorian Christianity: the spirit of Christian truth had a built-in dynamic. Mission, if that spirit had any validity, was not really an option but a highly desirable imperative. This had not necessarily always been the case. For long

¹F. Max Mueller, Chips from a German Workshop, 5 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1890), 4:246-47.

periods in the Christian era, mission had simply not been a burning issue. But by the second half of the nineteenth century in England the religious and socioeconomic conditions that made such an assumption feasible were firmly in place. Mission had become an integral part of Victorian society and formed a major component in that society's interaction with the non-European world.

Perhaps because the confident assumption of this Christian dynamic appeared so often in mission and popular literature and because it mirrored other Victorian attitudes--i.e., aggressiveness, self-confidence, paternalism and the assumption of cultural superiority--so well, historians and other observers of mission have until recently tended to see it in rather one-dimensional terms. For Victorian chroniclers of the mission movement in particular and British imperialism in general, the mission effort was not only obligatory but provided an opportunity for the practice of those virtues of sacrifice, daring, service, and idealism that characterized the Victorian heroic ideal. This view of mission is perhaps best illustrated by the words of that penultimate missionary martyr/hero, Dr. David Livingstone: "We come among them [the heathen] as members of a superior race and servants of a government that desires to elevate the more degraded portions of the human family. We are the adherents of a benign holy religion and may by consistent conduct and wise, patient efforts become the harbingers of peace to a hitherto distracted and trodden race."²

²The Zambezi Expedition of David Livingstone, 1858-1863, quoted in The Victorian Crises of Faith, ed. Anthony Symondson (London: SPCK, 1970), p. 65.

The one-dimensional perspective on Victorian mission has also been retained by those who take a negative view of it. Indeed, few conceptions of western imperialism have proven as hardy as that which perceives a close connection between the expansion of the Christian church and the rise of colonialism. That the missionary and the colonial administrator were little more than different faces of the same imperialist coin has long been a given for both Marxist and nationalist interpreters of the colonial past. Leonard Woolf's contention that "invisible wires" connected British boardrooms, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the aristocracy and the Foreign Office has had few critics in these quarters.³ More recently, K. M. Panikkar, in his assessment of Europe's relations with Asia in the nineteenth century, has portrayed missionary activities as "the most serious, persistent and planned effort of European nations" and an important mental and spiritual support for political conquest.⁴

In either case, there is the clear implication that Victorian mission had the strength and effectiveness of a formal belief system fully integrated with other aspects of the culture. Largely because of this successful synthesis, Victorian mission has been viewed, with considerable justification, as an important manifestation of Victorian attitudes toward the non-European world. If paternalism, the assumption

³ Leonard Woolf, quoted in D. C. M. Platt, "Economic Factors in British Policy During the New Imperialism," Past and Present 39, 1968, p. 136.

⁴ K. M. Panikkar, Asia and Western Domination (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1961).

of cultural and racial superiority, and an aggressiveness born of self-confidence and faith in progress characterized these attitudes, then the same could be said of mission.

Yet in Mueller's 1873 lecture there is the articulation of another much less integrated and potentially thornier role for mission. Mission must, Mueller suggested, be the "religion of humanity at large, large enough itself to take in all shades and diversities of character and race . . ." It must, if it is to succeed, "throw off its heavy armor and face the world like David, with his staff, his stone and his sling. We want less of creeds, but more of trust; less of ceremony, but more of work; . . . less of doctrine but more of love."⁵ And Mueller had at hand a concrete example of his mission ideal--the work and writings of John Coleridge Patteson, the Anglican missionary bishop of Melanesia, murdered by Nukupu islanders the previous year. The quotations Mueller selected from Charlotte Yonge's massive Life of John Coleridge Patteson are highly significant in the context of this lecture. "I have," Patteson wrote, "for years thought that we seek in our missions a great deal too much to make English Christians. Evidently the heathen man is not treated fairly, if we encumber our message with unnecessary requirements. The ancient Church had its "selection of fundamentals." Anyone can see what mistakes we have made in India. Few men think themselves into the state of the Eastern mind. We seek to denationalize these races as far as I can see whereas we ought surely to change as little as possible--only what is clearly incompatible with the simplest

⁵Mueller, Chips from a German Workshop, 4, pp. 263-266.

form of the Christian teaching and practice. I do not mean that we are to compromise truth . . . but do we not overlay it a good deal with human traditions"?⁶

What these remarks suggest is a recognition, in a period of maximum confidence in the fundamental superiority of Western values, of the worth of an alternative and, even more surprisingly, a "primitive" culture and real doubt concerning the wholesale imposition of all things European. Such awareness is difficult to reconcile with our most persistent images of the Victorian era. In fact, although we have an amazing amount of information about the period, Victorian culture has, until very recently, retained a certain opaque quality. Lytton Strachey's contention, in 1918, that this stemmed from the proximity in time of the Victorian era obviously does not have a great deal of relevance almost seventy years later. He may, however, have had a lasting insight in his belief that the exhaustive nature of our knowledge of the Victorians actually, in some respects, obscures.⁷ Perhaps because so much changed so rapidly in the nineteenth century, scholars, in their effort to organize it all, have resorted to a veritable taxonomy of terms and labels. Any student in a survey course in modern European history has at least a nodding acquaintance with such concepts and classifications as secularization, urbanization,

⁶Charlotte Yonge, Life of John Coleridge Patteson, 2, quoted in Mueller, Chips from a German Workshop, 4, pp. 262-263.

⁷Lytton Strachey, Eminent Victorians (New York: Capricorn Books, 1963), p. 5.

industrialization, liberalism, conservatism, imperialism, and romanticism. The difficulty comes in trying to apply these concepts to the lives of real human beings who gave these abstractions the reality of action. "We have failed," as Peter Gay has said in his recent study of Victorian society, "to take the measure of their experience, their reception of the economic, political, intellectual and social changes that so radically transformed their lives."⁸

Ironically, the need for indepth examination of experience and meaning that has only recently been raised as an issue in regard to the European actors in cultural contact has long been recognized as important in the context of Pacific history. From the time of J. W. Davidson's initial efforts to separate Pacific history from imperial history, a considerable effort has been made to avoid the shallowness and misconceptions that resulted from the failure to place Pacific islanders in as complete a cultural context as possible.⁹ Given the lack of a traditional (i.e., written) historical record for vital segments of Pacific history, this effort has entailed the development of innovative cross-disciplinary approaches involving linguistics, archeology, anthropology, and careful analysis of myth and oral

⁸Peter Gay, The Bourgeois Experience, 2 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), I: p. 9.

⁹For an analysis of the specific issues of Pacific history, see J. W. Davidson, "Problems of Pacific History," Journal of Pacific History, 6, 1966, p. 521.

tradition.¹⁰ These innovations, combined with traditional historical methods, have proved invaluable in revising the perception of islanders and their culture and timeless and unchanging, or, in the period following European contact, as a people "acted upon" without any control over the monumental changes that confronted them. Certainly few Pacific historians would have much difficulty absorbing the recent emphasis of intellectual historians on the transformation of meaning by the minds of those on whom it is imposed.¹¹ Yet, to reiterate, an awareness of the necessity of providing as complete a cultural context as possible has not always extended to the other party in contact--the Europeans. Perhaps because the historical record in their case is largely written and a great deal is known about what they did, we assume we know who they were and why they acted as they did. In fact, we know very little.

In the specific case of mission, this failing and the need to correct it has been recognized since at least the late 1960s. T. O. Beidelman pointed out the obvious instructive parallels that might be drawn between historical administrators and missionaries and contemporary agencies on such issues as planned social change, communication and the exercise of power between culturally different groups, and the impossibility of doing so given the inadequate state of mission

¹⁰See Greg Denning, Islands and Beaches, Discourse on a Silent Land: Marquesas 1774-1880 (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1980).

¹¹For an analysis of the issue of meaning and experience in intellectual history, see John E. Toews, "Intellectual History after the Linguistic Turn" and Richard Harvey Brown, "Positivism, Relativism and Narrative in the Logic of the Historical Sciences," The American Historical Review, 92, 1987.

studies. "It is essential," he maintained, "to consider any missionary group in terms of its ethnicity, class and economic background. This involves two aspects: the cultural background of missionaries as this influences their behaviour in ways not logically determined by their Christian beliefs and work and also as this relates to the larger colonial milieu in which missionaries function."¹² Under culture, Beidelman listed variation in religious beliefs, educational levels, theories of conversion, the tensions between Christian ideals and hierarchical institutions, and the impact of secular life. Yet, astonishingly, most students of missionaries persisted in treating their subjects as essentially the same.¹³

To some extent, the problem of lack of discrimination that Beidelman identifies has, along with that of the submergence of the mission movement in imperialism, been addressed. Several historians have made noteworthy progress toward giving the missionary movement a historical identity of its own. The hand and glove association of mission with colonialism, for example, has been reappraised.¹⁴ Balanced, insightful

¹²T. O. Beidelman, "Social Theory and the Study of Christian Missions in Africa," Africa, 46, 1974, pp. 236-37.

¹³Ibid, pp. 239-42.

¹⁴For analyses of the relationship between mission and colonialism, see David Hilliard, "Colonialism and Christianity: The Melanesian Mission in the Solomon Islands," Journal of Pacific History, 9, 1977; Stephen Neill, Colonialism and Christian Mission (New York: McGraw Hill, 1966); Neil Gunson, "The Theology of Imperialism and the Missionary History of the Pacific," Journal of Religious History, 5, 1969.

accounts of particular missions or the mission movement in specific areas have also appeared.¹⁵ These studies have utilized a number of approaches, including collective biography, social and economic analyses of specific groups of missionaries, and, occasionally, insights drawn from anthropology and other social sciences. To a much greater degree, missionaries have ceased to be either undifferentiated heroes or faceless villains.

They continue to lack intellectual identity, however, particularly in the case of nineteenth-century Protestant missionaries. While the intellectual component of Catholic mission, particularly Jesuit mission, has received some scholarly attention, this aspect of Victorian

¹⁵For the Pacific, see David Hilliard, God's Gentlemen (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1978) on the Melanesian Mission; Kesby, "British Missionaries in the Southwest Pacific, 1842-1900," M.A. Thesis, Oxford University, 1963; James Boutelier, David T. Hughes and Sharon N. Tiffany, eds., Mission, Church and Sect in Oceania (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1978); Diane Langmore, "European Missionaries in Papua, 1874-1914," Ph.D. Thesis, Australian National University, 1981; the various writings of Neil Gunson, particularly Messengers of Grace: Evangelical Missionaries in the South Seas 1797-1860 (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1978); John Garrett, To Live Among the Stars (Suva: University of the South Pacific, 1982); David Wetherell, Reluctant Mission: The Anglican Church in Papua New Guinea (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1978); and Hugh Laracy, Marists and Melanesians (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1976). For African mission see Alan C. Cairns, British Reactions to Central African Society, 1840-1890 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965); Robert Strayer, The Making of Mission Communities in East Africa (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1978); Owen Chadwick, MacKenzie's Grave (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1959); David Neave, "Aspects of the History of the Universities' Mission to Central Africa, 1885-1900," M.A. Thesis, University of New York, 1974. Also, for two very recent studies of particular aspects of the mission movement in Hawaii, see Sandra Wagner, "Sojourners Among Strangers: the First Two Companies of Missionaries to the Sandwich Islands," Ph.D. Thesis, University of Hawaii, 1986, and Nancy Morris, "Hawaiian Missionaries Abroad, 1853-1909," Ph.D. Thesis, University of Hawaii, 1987.

Protestant mission has been largely ignored, although there are a few noteworthy exceptions.¹⁶ One possible explanation may lie in the preponderance of Evangelicals in nineteenth-century mission. Whatever their organizational talents or however much they may have reflected the spirit of the age, few scholars would place them anywhere near the cutting edge of intellectual change--the very point of greatest attraction for intellectual historians. Langmore, in examining the reading lists submitted by candidates for service in the London Missionary Society's (hereafter the LMS) Papua mission, finds no evidence that anyone, in the period from 1874-1914, is reading natural science, ethnography, anthropology, or even current theology. Only one candidate lists The Origin of Species.¹⁷ As far as Africa is concerned, H. Alan Cairns doubts whether any of the missionaries actually involved in contact between 1840 and 1890--with the possible exception of the Anglican Universities' Mission to Central Africa (hereafter the UMCA)--had any awareness of the esoteric writings on the subject. "In reality," he maintains, "the student of ideas will find little to interest him in the writing of the participants in cultural contact in this period."¹⁸

The roots of this anti-intellectualism, according to N. G. Annan, in his study of intellectual change in mid-nineteenth century England,

¹⁶See, for example, James Clifford, Person and Myth: Maurice Leenhardt in the Melanesian World (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

¹⁷Langmore, "European Missionaries in Papua," p. 77.

¹⁸H. Alan Cairns, Prelude to Imperialism, p. 91.

were in the very nature of Evangelical belief. The key to its appeal and success lay in its simplicity. Everything, in Evangelicalism, is wagered on faith and personal religious experience. The contrast this simple message offered to the rationalism and intellectuality of eighteenth-century English theology and the unemotional nature of religious practice in both Anglicanism and the older Dissenter churches formed the basis of the great religious revival of the late eighteenth century. But in the nineteenth century, this same simplicity rendered Evangelicalism particularly vulnerable to the challenges presented by historicism, Biblical criticism and new discoveries in the natural sciences. "It is not," Annan writes, ". . . an exaggeration to see Victorian (Evangelical) theology in retrospect as a tireless, and at times almost desperate, attempt to overcome the appalling weaknesses which this simple faith presented to positivist criticism."¹⁹

The intellectual rear-guard action of the dominant Evangelical element in Victorian mission may, then, at least partly explain the neglect of the intellectual experience. But to conclude that mission--and particularly Victorian mission--cannot be placed in an intellectual framework is decidedly short-sighted. "Without the intellectual enquiry," says the intellectual and church historian, Owen Chadwick, "the social enquiry is fated to crash; as fated as was the intellectual enquiry when historians asked no questions about the nature of the

¹⁹N. G. Annan, "Science, Religion and the Critical Mind" in Entering an Age of Crises, ed. Philip Appleman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1959, p. 37.

society in which ideas were propagated or repudiated."²⁰ The fact remains that missionaries of every period and of religious persuasion have been supported and constrained by very specific, articulated concepts of what man is and how he must be regarded; in short by an intellectual framework. Christianity claimed the universal applicability for its message. So it necessarily followed that the ability of the human soul and mind to receive it must likewise be universal. The fundamental nature of the people missionaries encountered was therefore prescribed for them. Whatever else they might be, the heathen had to be recognized as God's children, capable of understanding His commands and potential recipients of His love. By extension, the missionary's own attitude toward the heathen was supposed to reflect this love (love God, love His children). In the contact process, then, the missionary, operating within a particular intellectual and religious context, has always known exactly who it is he encounters (man possessed of an immortal soul and beloved of God) and how he is to respond to him (love and care).

The "rules" provided by the Christian context also determined the dynamics of contact for both the missionary and the heathen. Some degree of cultural change, from the mission perspective, was not an incidental product of contact but an absolute necessity. If, in terms of spiritual and moral awareness, nothing changed, the logic of the missionary's presence in the other culture became suspect. In terms of culture and belief, he could not, as could the trader or the soldier

²⁰Owen Chadwick, The Secularization of the European Mind in the Nineteenth Century (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975, p. 14.

or even the colonial administrator, leave well enough alone. Yet the Christian context also limited his own margin for change. The same system that required drastic revisions in the belief system of the heathen dictated that the missionary, in the face of contact with alternate visions of truth, steadfastly adhere to the fundamentals of Christianity. Any aspect of an indigenous culture in direct conflict with those fundamentals could not be tolerated.

Within their specific intellectual framework, then, missionaries have always had a clearer idea of what they must do and should do than other European actors involved in the extremely complex process of cultural contact. Mission, however, has never been able to operate exclusively within that framework. The world as it is has always intruded on and overlapped with the world as it is theoretically conceived. On the most pragmatic level, this intrusion has taken the form of political, economic, and military considerations, all of which have influenced the course of mission. Nor has a defined, universally applicable vision of man provided an absolute defense against the psychological and cultural shock of encountering "the other"; man in a cultural guise so totally different that he can hardly be recognized as man. From the sixteenth century on, Europeans encountered "the other" in a more radically different form than anything with which the societas Christiana had previously met. The process of integrating what is radically different--the process Tzvetan Todorov calls the experience of alterity--became, accordingly, far more complex.²¹

²¹Tzvetan Todorov, The Conquest of America (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1985), p. 247.

In his analysis of the Spanish experience in the New World, Todorov maintains that the experience of alterity elicited a response of either complete identity ("the other" is fundamentally the same) or complete separation ("the other" is fundamentally different). In the latter case, cultural differences tend to be ranked in terms of inferior and superior. But regardless of how "the other" is perceived, the alien culture, historically, has had little chance of being granted its own reality. If "the other" is fully human and the same as oneself, then one's own cultural arrangements should work equally well. If he is different and inferior, then he can only benefit from the imposition of a superior system. Even the perception of "the other" as different and superior--e.g., the Noble Savage of the eighteenth century--tends to be based less on a true appreciation of another culture than its utility as a means of critiquing the less ideal features of one's own cultural system.

The experience of alterity is grounded, then, in Todorov's view, in cultural egocentrism or the identification of particular values (of "I") with the universal.²² Hayden White, another intellectual historian who has examined the deep cultural roots of European perceptions of "the other," takes something of the same position in his analysis of wildness. The Wild Man serves primarily as a means of negative self-identification--what one is not or, more accurately, should not be. The Wild Man is civilized man released from social control and therefore able to act on his own destructive desires and

²²Ibid., p. 42.

impulses.²³ Again, the point of departure for viewing "the other" is found in the norms of Western culture.

In many respects, the intellectual dilemmas facing missionaries bring into sharper focus the dilemmas that cultural contact brought to Europe as a whole. Their responses to these dilemmas likewise reflect the larger culture, and because of the intensity their contact with "the other" in the field, these responses clarify and define the general response. That response, historically, has been complex. On the one hand it revealed fear and loathing of an unrecognizable "other" and an urgent desire to transform him into a known--that is to say Western--quantity. This response, in the mission context, can be summed up as "Christianity and Civilization"; an attitude with a long and none too savory history. In the special historical circumstances of Victorian mission, it was clearly the prevailing mind-set. The failure of Christian mission to accept, understand and value other cultures on their own terms has, along with its ties to an exploitive colonialism, been the focus of most negative appraisals of mission.

The missionary presence in the New Hebrides, according to one such critic, transformed "that human animal perfectly suited to his environment" into "a pitiful imitation of the western man, clad in cast off European clothing, uttering the cant phrases of the Puritan and observing with great strictness the rites of the English Sunday." There is, he declares, "A large element of the grotesque in the

²³Hayden White, "Forms of Wildness: Archeology of an Idea," in Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), pp. 150-66.

achievement of the missionary in the Pacific."²⁴ The anthropologist, Raymond Firth, while acknowledging his own debt to the missionaries who aided his field work, questions whether there can be any justification for the stress placed on indigenous custom unless one believes in a fixed, i.e., Christian, standard for measuring human values.²⁵

Missionaries themselves in many studies are held to be uninformed at best and insensitive at worse. H. Alan Cairns attributes the wholesale interference with African custom by missionaries to their complete ignorance of the peoples they professed to serve. This insensitivity and arrogance reached such proportions that without the additional impetus of imperial control, mission in the African interior would have been a complete failure.²⁶ Cairns' conclusion reflects a common assessment of Victorian mission: the Christian message as presented had virtually no appeal to non-European cultures unless some other compelling political or economic reason for its acceptance existed. Kerry Howe, for example, attributes the relative success of Christianity in New Caledonia to its association with French control. Elsewhere in the Pacific, existing hierarchical patterns of control and the manipulation of the new religion and its missionaries for their own ends by powerful members of those hierarchies is held to be the

²⁴G. N. Parsonson, "Early Protestant Missions in the New Hebrides, 1839-1861," M.A. Thesis, University of Otago, 1949, p. 5.

²⁵Raymond Firth, We, the Tikopia (Boston: Beacon Press, 1965), p. 50.

²⁶Cairns, Prelude to Imperialism, pp. 181-86.

principal reason for acceptance. Where foreign dominance, existing political patterns or obvious economic advantage failed to provide sufficient motivation, Christianity remained a marginal factor.²⁷

But the European response to "the other," as it was reflected in the mission experience, has also included such subtle elements as cultural accommodation, recognition of value in alien cultures, and the transformation of both the Christian messenger and recipient--the process Kenelm Burridge has termed "mutual metanoia."²⁸ Again, this response has a long, if somewhat more precarious, history in Christian mission. Without taking it into account, the continued vitality of a Christianity now removed from the colonial setting becomes difficult to explain. For Christianity has, in many areas, survived its mission and colonial origins and become a vital social and religious force. Obviously, if the conditions making conversion expedient initially (i.e., educational opportunities, political pressure, economic advantage) no longer exist, it becomes necessary to analyze more carefully the matter of the continued vitality of a Western religious system in non-Western settings.

Robert Strayer, in his study of the Church Missionary Society in colonial Kenya, points out that the mission church, whatever its failings, provided a means of adaption to both colonial rule and

²⁷Kerry R. Howe, Where the Waves Fall: A New South Seas Islands History from Settlement to Colonial Rule (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1984), p. 318.

²⁸Kenelm Burridge, "Missionary Occasions," in Mission, Church, and Sect, pp. 23-29.

modernization. In other words, the mission churches served as important mediators, providing, among other things, the means of articulation new concerns and concepts and of tapping into some of the resources available to the colonial masters.²⁹ Having mastered what the mission church could provide (e.g., new ethical/moral concepts, institutional structure and organization and education), the African or the Pacific Islander was in a position to make the mission church a "native" church.

In the view of many modern scholars of mission, the success or failure of this adaptive process accounts for the degree of vitality of the church once it is removed from its historical cultural context. A successful adaptation, moreover, provides the only legitimate justification for the missionary enterprise in an era that takes a dim view of paternalism and notions of cultural superiority. Quite often, this process takes place without either the design or approval of the missionaries themselves. But at least some degree of flexibility on the part of the missionary appears to be necessary. Ideally, the process becomes "mutual metanoia." Metanoia, the continuous process of transcendence, is inherent in Christianity in that it demands the rejection of the sinful present a transformation to a new moral order. As a particularly determined Christian, the missionary hopes for just such a transformation in those he serves. Unless the missionary himself undergoes a transformation in his own cultural perspective, however, he may confuse the replication of his own cultural environment with the new moral order Christianity requires.³⁰ If mutual metanoia

²⁹Robert Strayer, The Making of Mission Community in East Africa, p. 157.

³⁰Burridge, Mission, Church and Sect, pp. 23-29.

occurs, there is at least the possibility that the transformation of the mission church into the indigenous church can occur.

The interesting aspect of all this is that there were Victorian missionaries capable of that "value recognition" and flexibility needed for mutual metanoia. In the English Victorian mission effort, by far the greatest number of missionaries in whom these qualities occurred, according to scholars of mission, contemporary observers, and missionaries themselves, were associated with Anglican missions; more specifically with the three Anglican missions--the UMCA, the Anglican Mission to Papua and the Melanesian Mission--tied to some degree to "High Church" traditions in the Church of England.

Even in these instances, the ability to grant "the other" his own cultural validity and hence open the way to mutual transcendence and the development of an indigenous Christianity was a matter of degree. Evidence of paternalistic, short-sighted and confused attitudes and general frustration with those they served can easily be found among even the "enlightened" of Victorian missionaries. In the case of the Melanesian Mission, Bishop Patteson confessed he had very little idea of how to effect precisely the correct degree of change among his Melanesian converts. "It is difficult to know how to help them to change their mode of life," he wrote. "Very much, even if they accept Christianity, must go on as before. Their daily occupations include work in the small gardens, cooking, etc., and this need not be changed . . . as to clothing, I must be careful lest they should think that wearing clothes is Christianity. Yet certain domestic changes are necessary, for a Christian life seems to need certain

material arrangements for decency and propriety."³¹ And in moments of frustration, he complained that, "their God is their belly; and there is no energy among them to make them exert themselves to think about what we say."³² Walter Ivens, a competent ethnologist as well as a prominent member of the Mission, wrote in his Hints to Missionaries (1907) that natives living in the tropics lacked any natural ability to make proper choices or the self-discipline to carry them out. The missionary must, he maintained, exercise extreme patience but also avoid any suggestion of familiarity.³³

Nor did members of the Mission prove completely immune to the attractions of British naval power. Alfred Penny, a graduate who served the Mission from 1876 to 1886, found the presence of the men-of-war of the British navy decidedly comforting, both for the company their officers furnished and for the example they could provide of fair but powerful punishment³⁴ an attitude seconded by William Edgell,

³¹Charlotte Yonge, Life of John Coleridge Patteson: Missionary Bishop of the Melanesian Islands, 2 Vols. (London: The MacMillian Co., 1873), 2:254. Although a biography, Yonge's two volume Life is composed of letters and other papers belonging to Patteson and his family, many of which are not available elsewhere. It should be considered as a primary source.

³²Patteson Papers, collection of the United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (hereafter the SPG), Rhodes House Library, Oxford. 1860 letter to his father, Judge John Patteson.

³³Rev. Walter Ivens, Hints to Missionaries (London: Melanesian Mission, 1907), pp. 20-25.

³⁴Alfred Penny, Ten Years in Melanesia (London: 1887), p. 152.

himself a former naval officer who showed complete satisfaction in 1897 in finding he could utilize men-of-war to whip recalcitrant "big men" into line.³⁵

The unevenness of the process of metanoia has received scholarly attention as well. In his recent study of Melanesians who came under the influence of the Melanesian Mission, Darrell Whiteman suggests that this problem is a missionary legacy still very much with the modern Church of Melanesia. His field studies in areas evangelized by the Mission indicate that while some aspects of the introduced religion have been indigenized and well-integrated into Melanesian culture, other features have remained obtrusive and foreign. Not surprisingly, he finds that indigenization has been most successful on the level of material culture (e.g., the employment of traditional motifs in church architecture, decoration and ceremonies) and less so on the level of belief.³⁶

But having documented these failures, Whiteman gives the Mission high marks for cross-cultural sensitivity and its conscious policy of indigenization, particularly in comparison with the other missionary enterprises in the area. He finds the source of this sensitivity in the goals and ideals delineated by the Mission's Victorian founders.

³⁵Diaries for the Rev. William Henry Edgell, private collection. Australian Joint Copying Project (hereafter AJCP) microfilm #M721.

³⁶Darrell Whiteman, Missionaries and Melanesians (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1983), p. 425.

"The subsequent history of the Melanesian Mission steered a course contrary to this stated goal, but this does not detract from the initial objective of establishing an independent Melanesian church. It is unfortunate that this culturally sensitive ethos which was characteristic of the Melanesian Mission during its early years of operation, did not continue throughout the Mission's history."³⁷ In other words, to the degree that the Mission adhered to its original ideals it "succeeded" in the terms now used to critique mission. To the degree that it deviated, it has fallen prey to charges of paternalism, hierarchical control and inappropriate methods.

This positive assessment of the ideals and methods developed in the early days of the Mission occurs frequently in the literature on the Melanesian Mission. Sir John Gutch, the most recent biographer of Bishop Patteson, believes Patteson would have been disappointed in the degree of dependence exhibited by the Melanesian church a century after he formulated his ideas of indigenization. Interestingly, Gutch, himself a former High Commissioner of the Western Pacific writing only a few years before the Solomon Islands acquired independence, continues to find Patteson's vision of a balance of change and tradition a viable one for the Solomons.³⁸ The principal, and by far the most thorough, modern scholar of the Mission, David Hilliard, sees Patteson as a cautious and not particularly original thinker, but one who nevertheless

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ John Gutch, Martyr of the Islands (London: Hadder and Stoughton, 1971), pp. 214-15.

made an effort to tie the methods and policies he developed out of pragmatic necessity to theological principles. Patteson's mature mission philosophy thus took into account the distinction between the most fundamental doctrines of Christianity and those cultural additions that had to be modified if the faith was to have universal applicability.³⁹ In the early years of this century, E. Im Thurn, one-time governor of Fiji, praised the Mission for its skillful blend of missionary zeal and proper anthropological methods.⁴⁰ The pioneer anthropologist, William Halse Rivers, who worked in Melanesia in the same period, saw in the Mission's culturally sensitive evangelization a possible cure for the psychological malaise he believed to be the root cause of the depopulation of the area.⁴¹

Among members of the Mission itself, the precepts developed by Patteson appear to have become virtual holy writ in fairly short order. Although the conditions under which the Mission actually functioned changed substantially by the turn of the century, and although no substantial case could be made for the success in numerical terms of their methods, mission publications and individual missionary writings continued their advocacy of indigenization. Indeed, indigenization was extolled as the Mission's most distinctive and praiseworthy feature. Bishop Henry Montgomery of Tasmania, following an inspection tour on

³⁹Hilliard, God's Gentlemen, p. 56.

⁴⁰E. Im Thurn in Essays on the Depopulation of Melanesia, ed., W. H. R. Rivers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922), p. vi.

⁴¹Ibid., pp. 94-110.

the mission ship, the Southern Cross, wrote in 1892 that the Mission was unique among missions to the heathen anywhere in the world in that "the creation of native teachers and native clergy has been the effort from the first--not a matter to be looked forward to some day, but to be the instrument from the very beginning."⁴² Arthur Innes Hopkins, wh joined the Mission in 1891 and who would later make important contributions to the ethnology of the region, saw the missionary task in the same terms as his boyhood hero, Bishop Patteson.

I began to realize the vital truth--that natives are just ordinary human beings with ever varying shares of our vices, virtues, feelings and appetites, and reactions to the unexpected or to sympathy, just like ours. The differences that look so tremendous are really superficial and due to their so different environment, mental and spiritual and physical. To treat them as fellow human beings not a separate caste is the great secret of real approach . . . it is so difficult to get over the outward appearance and find men just like ourselves doing and feeling as we should have done and thought if in their environment and their inheritance The sophism civilize first and Christianize afterwards is a shallow unintelligent attitude.⁴³

The prevailing perception of both modern and contemporary observers of the Melanesian Mission, then, is that of a missionary enterprise in mutual metanoia did occur to some degree and that the sources for this occurrence were there from the outset. Similar views prevail in the literature pertaining to the UMCA and the Anglican Mission to

⁴²Henry H. Montgomery, The Light of Melanesia: A record of thirty-five years' mission work in the South Seas (London: SPCK, 1896), p. 9.

⁴³Arthur Innes Hopkins, Autobiography. Church of Melanesia Archives, Honiaria, Solomon Islands. Australian National University microfilm, "The Melanesian Mission, 1900-1925," pp. 15-16.

Papua. The UMCA, for example, after some initial attempts to introduce cash crops and a market economy in conjunction with Christianity, became deeply suspicious of the Civilization/Christianity formula. "We felt," wrote its second bishop, Steere,

that an exotic Church was a thing that would perish before any cold blast We have, therefore, from the first steadily set our faces against any denationalization of the people of Africa. For this purpose, we have been anxious to teach them in their own language, to accustom them to their own style of food and dress, as far as we could, in order to raise up a race of people who should not feel that they were strangers amongst their brethern.⁴⁴

In Papua, the Australian Anglican Mission, founded in 1894, drew its inspiration directly from the examples of the UMCA and the Melanesian Mission and sought to integrate Christianity into the existing structure of village life. Well aware of its own limited understanding of traditional custom and practice, it took the conservative approach of leaving untouched anything not clearly at odds with stated Christian principle.⁴⁵

This willingness to recognize at least some value in indigenous cultures even appeared in colonial administration in the same period. The governor of the newly annexed colony of Fiji (1874), Sir Arthur Gordon, in the face of considerable opposition from planters, Evangelical missionaries and some elements in the Colonial Office, sought to create a system of Fijian control of land distribution and a taxation system

⁴⁴Cairns, Prelude to Imperialism, p. 219.

⁴⁵Langmore, "European Missionaries in Papua," p. 181.

geared to the traditional economy. It was, in Gordon's view of "utmost importance to seize, if possible, the spirit in which native institutions have been framed and endeavor to work them as to develop to the utmost possible extent the latent capacities of the people for the management of their own affairs, without exciting their suspicion or destroying their self-respect."⁴⁶

The Melanesian Mission as a Case Study

How can this ability of at least some Victorians to grant intrinsic reality to radically different cultures be explained? To reiterate, the aim of this study is to provide that explanation by an indepth examination of the intellectual sources for the world-view of one group of Victorians--the members of the Melanesian Mission of the Church of England--who have been closely identified with this ability.

Although such a study has implications for other areas, it should be emphasized that it is conceived as a study in Victorian intellectual history and not as either Pacific history or a study of cultural contact. No attempt has been made to incorporate the Melanesian point of view in terms of their initial response to the Mission's message or their participation in the process of mutual metanoia. The problems involved in such an effort are, considering the diversity of the Melanesian languages and cultures the Mission encountered, immense. The very limited written record supplied by Melanesians in the period

⁴⁶J. K. Chapman, The Career of Sir Arthur Hamilton Gordon, First Lord Stanmore, 1829-1912 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964), p. 192.

covered by this study (1848-1914) is largely in Mota, a language adopted for mission use that was a second language for all but a few Melanesian Anglicans, or else in English accounts written in collaboration with the European staff of the Mission. Neither is very satisfactory from the viewpoint of intellectual history. By utilizing the methodology of anthropology, Darrell Whiteman has, in his Missionaries and Melanesians (1984) made an important contribution toward establishing the contemporary Melanesian perspective. A nineteenth-century Melanesian perspective is, however, an even more complex matter and well beyond the scope of this study.

But if the Mission has limitations as the basis of a complete study in cultural contact, it works very well as a problem in Victorian intellectual history. In addition to the on-going importance of the basic intellectual dilemmas of mission, the Victorian mission movement faced new, complex problems. The great opportunities for the propagation of the faith provided by the expansion of the British Empire and the technology that enabled men to reach and survive in the remotest regions of the globe came in precisely the same period that developments in English intellectual life called many of the basic assumptions of that faith into question. Restatement or reaffirmation of the Christian message became critical for determined Christians of every ilk, and particularly for those charged with activating its principles among the heathen. Thus Victorian mission inevitably reflected that society's response to intellectual change, even if, as in the Evangelical case, the response consisted largely of retrenchment and denial. For determined Christians who were also educated, informed men with a profound respect for reason as well as faith, the complexity of the

response increased exponentially. How did they integrate the seemingly contradictory elements of their intellectual experience, and how did this process of integration and restatement inform and influence their response to the peoples they hoped to serve?

Those who have acknowledged the unique qualities of the Victorian High Church Anglican missions have usually credited the relatively high level of education found among the members of these missions as the source of their approach to indigenous peoples. Their public school--university backgrounds are frequently cited as the basis of their cultural sensitivity while their relatively elevated and secure social status, in the view of some scholars of mission, may have diminished their need to impose their own norms on others.⁴⁷ Certainly the percentage of missionaries holding university degrees was relatively greater in the Melanesian Mission and the UMCA (although not in the Anglican Mission to Papua) than in Evangelical missions. Roughly half of those who joined the Melanesian Mission between 1850 and 1900 held university degrees as did a third of the UMCA missionaries of the same period. The figure of 50 percent is based on David Hilliard's breakdown of ordained clergy serving the Mission in these years. Of these, thirteen were university graduates and eleven non-graduates.⁴⁸ A list of men serving the Mission in any capacity found in the Blencowe collection of papers pertaining to the Melanesian Mission records

⁴⁷ Kesby, "British Missionaries in the Southwest Pacific," p. 115.

⁴⁸ Hilliard, God's Gentlemen, p. 125.

forty-four individuals who served the Mission even briefly in this period.⁴⁹ Biographical information on the entire group is incomplete, but at least twenty were degree holders. These included three Oxford graduates, thirteen Cambridge graduates and one graduate each from Durham University, the University of Melbourne, the University of New Zealand, and Queens College, Birmingham.⁵⁰

It is equally certain that the leadership of both these missions saw the university man as the ideal missionary. Bishop Steere of the UMCA consistently maintained that "we must look to the University for officers, though we may get the rank and file from other classes . . . we must have men of the highest education possible to direct the effort of rank and file."⁵¹ Although Patteson in practice frequently worked with young laymen from less than elevated backgrounds, he speculated on an "ideal" missionary; a paragon of education, resourcefulness, common sense, athletic prowess and piety who could only have come from his own public school-university background. "Every missionary ought to be a carpenter, a mason, something of a butcher and a good deal of a cook," he maintained, and in his early days in the Pacific, he constantly lamented his own lack of practical skills.⁵² But he wanted

⁴⁹Blencowe Collection, Papers pertaining to the Melanesian Mission, private collection, AJCP #M802-M806.

⁵⁰For a breakdown of the number of degree holders in the UMCA, see Neave's "Aspects of the History of the Universities' Mission to Central Africa, 1868-1900."

⁵¹Neave, "Aspects of the Universities' Mission to Central Africa," p. 55.

⁵²Yonge, Life of Patteson, 2, p. 379.

men with independent incomes, linguistic aptitude, and a very particular philosophical attitude. "A very few men, well-educated, who will really try to understand that heathenism is and will seek . . . to work honestly without prejudice and without an indiscriminating admiration for all their own national tastes and modes of thought. We need only a few."⁵³ Even a few such men were, in fact, hard to find. "What," Patteson complained to his sister in 1866, "has become of the old Eton stamp of man? I must not run the risk of the Mission being swamped by well-intentioned, but untaught men. We must have gentlemen of white color or else I must rely wholly, as I always meant to do chiefly, on my black gentlemen."⁵⁴

But to say educational levels had something to do with the attitudes and methodologies of these missions is to leave matters at a very surface level. The curriculum of the English public schools and Oxford and Cambridge was itself in transition in the nineteenth century and certainly did not insure "enlightened" attitudes toward indigenous people. The answer lies rather in the entire matrix of Victorian intellectual developments available to the members of these missions, and more specifically, to their leadership. In the case of the Melanesian Mission, these included particular traditions found in Anglicanism and in the Oxford Movement, the peculiar nineteenth-century manifestation of the High Church tradition; the Liberal Anglican response to the intellectual crises precipitated by mid-century developments in the natural sciences, language studies and history; and finally

⁵³Ibid., p. 67.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 162.

the new social science of anthropology as it began to emerge in the 1860s. A chapter has been devoted to the examination of each of these sources in turn.

In all three cases, the correspondence, diaries, published writings, and the reading matter of members of the Mission have been utilized to "place" the Mission in terms of the wider spectrum of religious and intellectual change. By far the greatest concentration is on material relating to Bishop John Coleridge Patteson, the first missionary bishop of Melanesia, and his close associate, the headmaster of the Mission's Norfolk Island school and noted authority of Melanesian languages and culture, the Rev. Robert T. Codrington, although evidence derived from other members of Mission has been included where it seems pertinent. The Mission's founder, Bishop George Augustus Selwyn, for example, is examined at some length because of his impact on the methodology of the Mission. The focus on Patteson and Codrington is partly a factor of the greater quantity of pertinent material produced by them. Patteson, despite the press of his mission duties, maintained an extensive correspondence and kept diaries containing at least occasional flashes of introspection and speculation on theoretical matters. While Codrington destroyed many of his personal papers, enough of his correspondence and published work has survived to give some idea of the man. In other cases, unfortunately, voluminous diaries have yielded little more than a complete record of wind and tide activity and an occasional "God's will be done." Given the way the Mission evolved, however, this fairly narrow focus does not seem inappropriate.

Patteson was undoubtedly the source of most of the theory and practice developed by the Mission in its early days. And because he subsidized the Mission from his private income and otherwise relied on a network of supporters formed from family and personal friends, he enjoyed almost complete freedom to apply his concepts as he saw fit. The Melanesian mission, in short, was never subject to the scrutiny of any oversight organization such as that the great lay missionary societies (e.g., the London Missionary Society and the Church Missionary Society) could exercise over their missions. Nor, despite their profound respect for the institutional Church, was the leadership of the Melanesian Mission ever subject to its authority in terms of doctrine or procedure as was the case with Roman Catholic missions in the same period that had to adhere to the precise doctrinal guidelines laid down by the Vatican and its supervisory agency for mission, the Propaganda di Fido. For the Melanesian Mission, there simply was no equivalent of the institutional control exercised over Catholic mission in matters of doctrine and dogma or the pragmatic control enjoyed by the mission societies dispensing everything from salaries to mission barrels. This independence lessened considerably the distance between the formulation of Patteson's mission ideals and their execution in the field.

The transmission of key ideas formulated by key personnel to the Mission as a whole was also facilitated by the small size of the Mission and the Mission's practice of rotating its staff between work in the islands and teaching duties on Norfolk Island. Only about forty men served the Mission for any length of time in the period from 1850-1900,

and as late as 1871, when Patteson died on the island of Nukupu, a mere six Europeans staffed the Mission. Of these, four received their training for ordination directly from Patteson. The fifth, Robert Codrington, the other major intellectual influence on the Mission and the individual closest to Patteson, served the Mission as headmaster of its training school on Norfolk Island for twenty years. In addition to his role in the training of Melanesians as teachers in the islands, Codrington indoctrinated any new European staff members in the Mission's goals and methods and undertook ordination training for those seeking holy orders. Thus, given the small size of the mission, its relative isolation in the field from both competing missions and a government presence for the first forty years of its existence, and a continuity of tradition based on personal contact and a self-conscious sense of its own uniqueness, a careful study of a few key figures should yield a good idea of the Mission as a whole and of its place in both Victorian and Pacific society.