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CHOISEUL AND THE MISSIONARIES

The Methodist Mission on Choiseul, Solomon Islands, 1905-1941.

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This thesis is dedicated to my husband Graham, without whom I may never have heard of Choiseul.

ABSTRACT

This project will examine the impact and the progress of Methodist missionary work on Choiseul from 1905 to 1941. The predominant European contact on Choiseul was with missionaries and this was significantly more recent than many of the other islands in the group. Choiseul was unattractive for settlement or commercial development because the lack of arable land meant that it was unsuitable for large plantations to be established. A lacuna exists in the current historiography of the Solomons with regard to Choiseul. A study of the Methodist Mission on Choiseul offers the opportunity to examine the development of the mission, and the people on the island during the period under study, and fill that gap. The nature of conversion to Christianity on Choiseul, and the way the missionaries, including European, Solomon Islanders and Pacific Islanders, operated, cooperated, and disagreed with the Choiseulese and with each other will be examined to help answer the question, to what extent was Choiseul a Methodist, or a missionary, island.

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My family have put up with the stresses and mess of a thesis. Liz – thanks for lunches, Sarah – thanks for puddings, and Rob – thanks for marrying Michelle and providing me with a very useful resource in her father, and thanks for a place to stay on the Gold Coast! My husband Graham has endeavoured to answer many questions about Choiseul and has helped with the research at the archives. Thank you for your patience as I try to fulfil my dream – I love you all.

Glory be to God for his help and strength.

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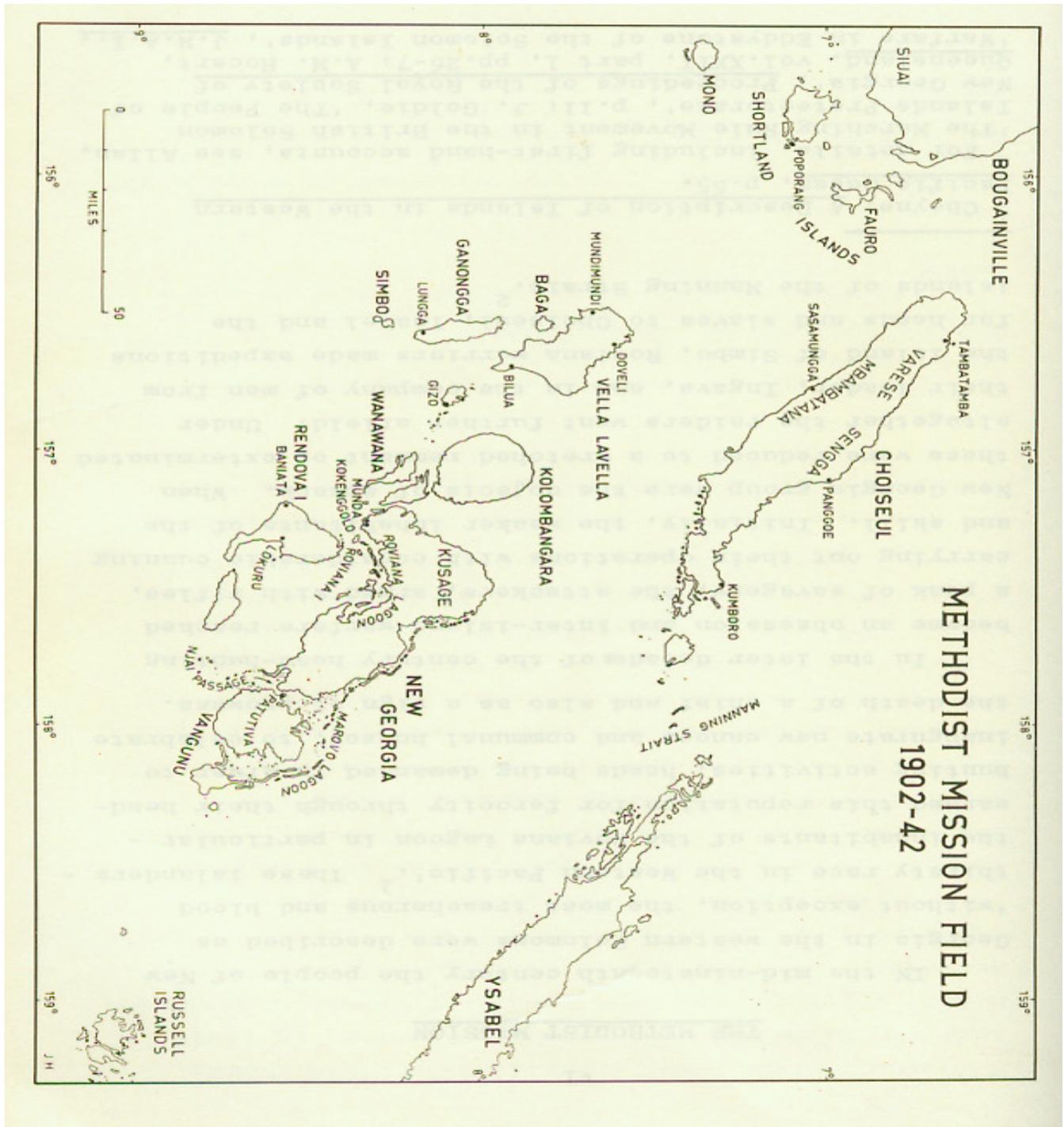
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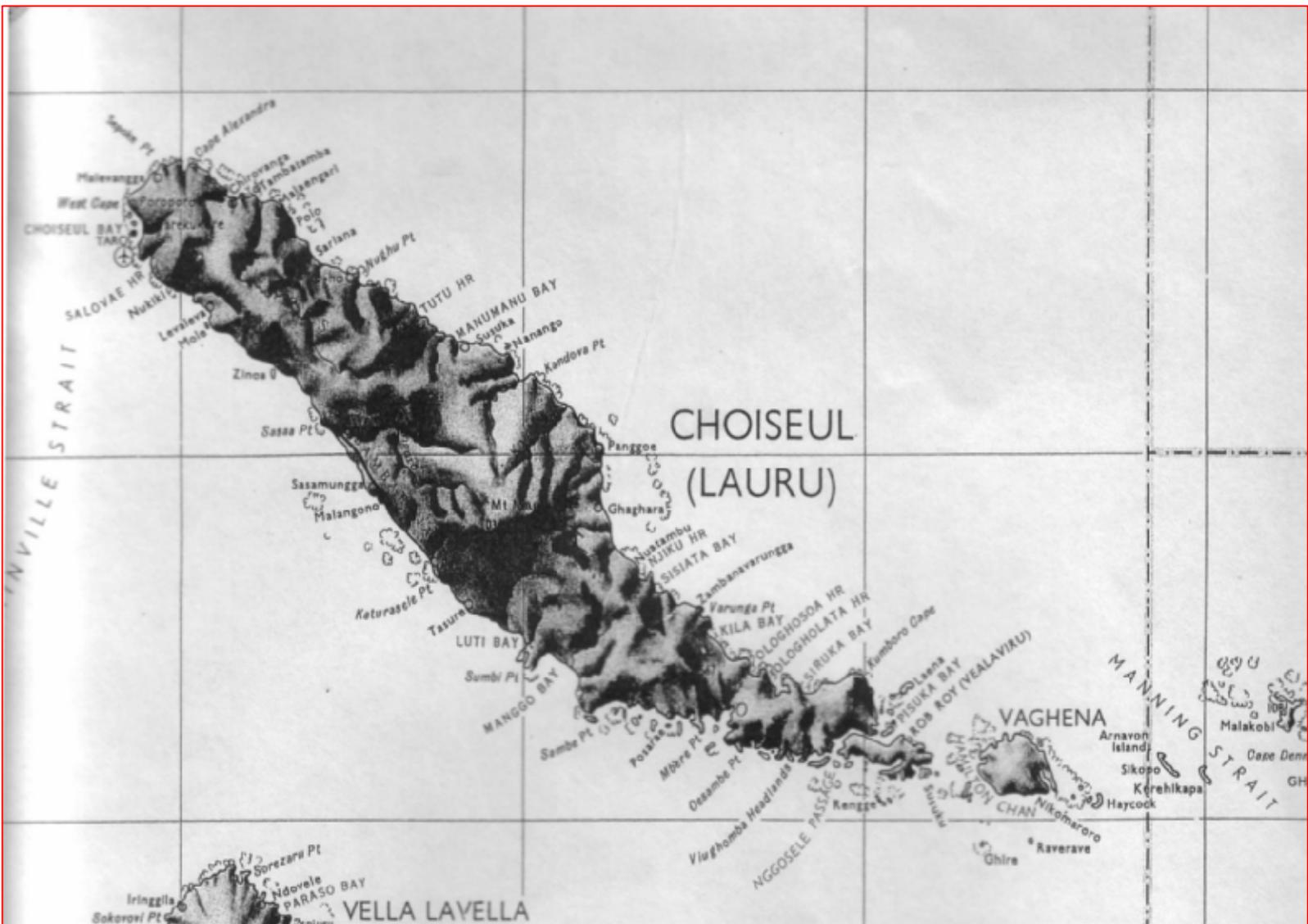
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David L. Hilliard, "Protestant Missions in the Solomon Islands, 1849-1942", (Australia National University, 1966).





ABBREVIATIONS

AMMR	Australasian Methodist Missionary review
ATL	Alexander Turnbull Library
MAA	Methodist Archives Auckland
MOM	Methodist Overseas Mission Australia
NLA	National Library Australia
NZMT	New Zealand Missionary Times
NZMWMU	New Zealand Methodist Women's Missionary Union
OD	Open Door
PMB	Pacific Manuscripts Bureau
UoA	University of Auckland
WPHC	Western Pacific High Commission

INTRODUCTION

Sir Hubert Murray, Lieutenant Governor of Papua in 1923, stated, 'Unless the Missionary is here to help him, the native is left like a ship without a rudder, and will run a great risk of being wrecked in the sea of an alien civilisation'.¹

In 1954 the McDonald family arrived on the island of Choiseul in the Solomon Islands to begin their ten years of missionary service for the Methodist Church. They were accompanied by their two sons, Graham and Leslie. Two more sons were born, in 1954 and 1960, David and Barry. The family returned to New Zealand in 1963, and served in several Methodist Circuits before retiring to Beachlands. I met Graham through the Methodist Central Mission in Auckland, and, after we married, I often spent time viewing slides of the life of a missionary family on Choiseul, and was particularly intrigued with the way the Choiseulese were dressed in European style clothes. One slide that fascinated me was of the wedding of Leslie and Mary Boseto, with both dressed as traditional bride and groom, Leslie in a dark suit and tie, and Mary in a white wedding dress. In 2005, Associate Professor Hugh Laracy suggested that a history of Choiseul was needed, and so I began considering the idea of writing about the three missions on Choiseul. The predominant mission on the island was Methodist, which covered the widest geographic area, so, with the knowledge I already had, I embarked on a study of the Methodist Mission on Choiseul.²

The thesis looks at the time period 1905 to 1941. The first Australian Methodist missionary was placed on Choiseul in 1905, and the outbreak of the war with Japan in 1941 led to the immediate evacuation of most of the missionaries. While the missionaries were away from Choiseul, Choiseulese teachers kept the church going, so there was a viable group of Christians awaiting the return of the missionaries in 1946.

With such a thesis, the researcher depends on archival sources for a significant amount of their information. In her article, Carolyn Steedman says she took with her to the archive an idea of what she wanted to find, which included taking a past that affected what she was searching for.³ I too take myself to the archive. My religious beliefs, my feelings about missionaries, my preference

¹ *Open Door*, n.d., p.14.

² See maps of the Western Solomons and Choiseul.

³ Carolyn Steedman, "Something She Called a Fever: Michelet, Derrida, and Dust", *The American Historical Review* 106, no. 4 (2001).

for one mission over another, influences of parents, husband and in-laws, themselves missionaries, cause an awkward juxtaposition of loving kin and critical scholarship. The influence of other people's ideas about missionaries, and about some of the individuals who were on Choiseul, such as S. Rabone Rooney, Harold Rycroft, Vincent Le Cornu Binet and John Rudd Metcalfe had an effect on the resulting analysis. Writings from the Australian Methodist Overseas Mission Board staff (some were also missionaries in their own right) such as Benjamin Danks, John Wheen, John Francis Goldie, and Clarence T. J. Luxton needed close scrutiny in order to elicit what the writer was actually trying to say. I am a chronicler of missions on Choiseul, seeking stories, observing conflict, searching for information to confirm my preconceived ideas, the 'how awful that they did that to the Choiseulese' view, the 'I told you so' aspect. The automatic assumption is that because people were there as missionaries, their accounts are accurate, or alternatively, utterly self-interested, when archives sometimes tell a totally different story.

The selection of material to be used has posed a problem. Because of the dearth of references to Choiseul, and of correspondence to and from the missionaries and only brief references in government reports, I was compelled to look at a large amount of material about missions in the Solomons in the hope that I would find something. Initially my research included only material filed as referring to Choiseul and to particular missionaries. However I found that references to Choiseul could be made in many diverse documents, so my search parameters have been widened. This sounds indiscriminate but it seemed to be the only way to find material. It also helps me to place Choiseul in context and to develop questions and analytical approaches to the past. From this material I gleaned much which addressed the questions I am asking. Another problem was how to detect Solomon Islanders' agency, intention and practice, when such sources almost systematically write them out as insignificant actors, or impose a predetermined interpretation on their actions and encounters.

It was a relief for me to discover that the anti-colonial and anti-missionary attitudes towards certain archival sources have now been tempered with a more investigative approach, rather than a blanket dismissal of such writings. Mission sources have long been viewed as describing paternalistic views towards the people being worked with and thus many of the gems that can be found amongst the otherwise tedious records have been missed. Bronwen Douglas and Richard Eves both indicate a change of heart in this area, Douglas especially about women. The deconstructing of missionary texts has given them new life and significance. Reading beyond the

mundane and seeing the underlying meaning, whether or not the writer was aware of them, has given new insight into their actions.

Methodist Church Archives have provided me with a large proportion of my information. Missionaries wrote many letters, and those directed to the mission headquarters in Australia and New Zealand have, for the most part, been preserved. Most of the mission correspondence is held at the Auckland archive. A large part of the inward correspondence to the Australian Methodist Overseas Mission Board is missing from the archives in Sydney. David Hilliard noted that it was missing in the 1960s. However, the replies to the missionaries usually give a good indication of what had been in that correspondence. Missionary John Metcalfe kept a diary which was microfilmed and it is now available for research. This provided me with numerous insights into his interpretation of the life of a missionary on Choiseul. His daughter, Lisa Corben, has published a book, *My Father's Journey*, based largely on the diary.⁴ Missionary sister Coralie Murray kept a diary during her short term on Choiseul and access to this has provided me with information on the medical matters that she had to deal with, as well as her personal insights. Mission periodicals from both Australia and New Zealand contribute more information and provide a rich, although selective, source of material. The difficulties with this type of material are that the contents have already been selected by the editor and so are sanitised, usually to present a story that promotes interest and financial support. Some of the correspondence from missionaries has the editors' markings on it so the omissions may be seen.⁵ The *Australasian Methodist Missionary review (AMMR)* 1891-1913, which was renamed the *Methodist Review (MR)* 1913-1922, provided material about the first missionaries to Choiseul. While most of the articles are written by men, there are some by women. The New Zealand Methodist missionary periodical *Open Door* 1922-1975, was published after New Zealand assumed responsibility for the mission area in 1922. It too contains reports from the mission field, and photographs were often used to illustrate the articles. The Western Pacific High Commission archives provide the Protectorate Administration's view of the activities of the mission, and they contain descriptions of its intervention when required.

The study will largely build on David Hilliard's work about Protestant Missions in the Solomons Islands, Lisa Early's work on the lives and work of the female missionaries of the Methodist mission in the Solomon Islands, and Milton Talasasa's work on Pacific Islander and

⁴ Elizabeth Corben, *My Father's Journey* (Melbourne: 2000).

⁵ Rooney to Danks, 3 August 1910, Box 116, MOM.

Solomon Islander missionaries in the area.⁶ Literature specifically focussed on Choiseul is sparse. Harold Scheffler's anthropological study, *Choiseul Island Society*, and Wardlow Friesen's demographic study of labour movements on Choiseul are among the only works specifically about the island.⁷ The island is mentioned by several historians and anthropologists, such as Judith Bennett, *The Wealth of the Solomons*, Hugh Laracy, *Marists and Melanesians*, W.P. Morrell, *Britain in the Pacific Islands*. There is a general history of the Methodist mission in the Solomons written by missionary C.T.J. Luxton, *Isles of Solomon*, and several regarding prominent people from Choiseul, including George Carter, *Ti E Varane*, and Alan Leadley, *Ever Widening Circles*. There are also other stories about Solomon Islanders who were converted by the Methodist mission including George G. Carter, *Yours in His Service: a reflection on the life and times of Reverend Belshazzar Gina of Solomon Island; David Voeta; the story of a pioneer missionary*, and Reginald Nicholson, *Son of a Savage: the story of Daniel Bula*, and A. Harry Voyce, A .H. Voyce, *Peacemakers: the story of David Pausu and the Uniting Church of Bougainville*.⁸ While they contain useful information, a critical analysis of the Methodist mission on Choiseul does not yet exist. The value of such a work is that it is focussed on one community of missionaries, which interacts with each other and with the Choiseulese. Hilliard argues that 'only with a microcosmic study of Christianity within a defined area is it possible to examine [the missionary movement]'.⁹ Such a detailed focus allows a close examination of the tensions that exist in such an environment.

Chapter one will introduce Choiseul, and examine its discovery and early contact with Europeans, who included traders, whalers, and the British Royal Navy. Choiseul received appreciably less attention from Europeans than other islands in the Solomons. The physical

⁶ David L. Hilliard, "Protestant Missions in the Solomon Islands 1849-1942", (Australia National University, 1966); Lisa Early, "If We Win the Women: The Lives and Work of Female Missionaries at the Methodist Mission in the Solomon Islands, 1902-1942", (Otago, 1998); Milton Talasasa, "His Name Fades Like an Echo' : The Contribution of Pacific Islanders and Solomon Islanders to the Work of the Methodist Mission in Solomon Islands, 1922 to 1952", (University of Auckland, 2004).

⁷ Harold W. Scheffler, *Choiseul Island Social Structure* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1965); Wardlow Dean Friesen, "Labour Mobility and Economic Transformation in Solomon Islands: Lusim Choiseul, Bae Kam Baek Moa?", (Auckland, 1986).

⁸ Judith A. Bennett, *Wealth of the Solomons: A History of a Pacific Archipelago, 1800-1978* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1987); H. Laracy, *Marists and Melanesians: A History of Catholic Missions in the Solomon Islands* (Canberra: ANU Press, 1976); W.P. Morrell, *Britain in the Pacific Islands* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960); C.T.J. Luxton, *Isles of Solomon* (Auckland: Methodist Foreign Missionary Society, 1955); George C. Carter, *Ti E Varane* (2001); George G Carter, *David Voeta: The Story of a Pioneer Missionary* (Auckland: 1973); George G. Carter, *Yours in His Service: A Reflection on the Life and Times of Reverend Belshazzar Gina of Solomon Islands*, ed. Esau Tuza (Honiara: University of the South Pacific Centre, 1990); Alan Leadley, *Ever Widening Circles* (Auckland: Wesleyan Historical Society, 2002); A .H. Voyce, *Peacemakers: the story of David Pausu and the Uniting Church of Bougainville*, (Wesley Historical Society New Zealand, 179).

⁹ Hilliard, "Protestant Missions in the Solomon Islands 1849-1942", p.ii.

environment of Choiseul was inhospitable to Europeans, and thus its usefulness to them was limited. There is very little flat land around the coast, so there was no attraction for plantation owners to set up coconut plantations there, although both Burns Philp and Levers made abortive attempts to establish plantations.¹⁰ Violence by Solomon Islanders was usually punished by the British administration ordering punitive attacks, either by a Royal Navy ship or an armed attack by individuals. Choiseul was subject to two recorded punitive attacks, in 1881 and 1905. These had a profound effect on the islanders and, in the latter case, on the mission. Rev Dr George Brown was determined to establish a mission in the area, but needed to discuss comity arrangements with the Church of England Melanesian Mission who were also active in the area. These discussions provided an insight into the sectarian determination of the two groups to maintain a grip on the spiritual life of the area.

Chapter two looks at the conversion of the Choiseulese. The methods used by the mission and their effects on the Choiseulese form the main part of this chapter. The missionaries destroyed idols, or at least removed them from the Choiseulese. Traditions surrounding childbirth and menstruation, and other traditional medicines were frowned upon and if possible prevented from taking place by the missionaries. There was what was seen as criminalisation of childbirth by taking the women into hospital and apparently keeping her captive during the birth and post-partum period. A phenomenon at the time was the rise of the amateur ethnologist, often missionaries, who collected artefacts for museums in Europe. The role of the civilising mission will be considered as the missionaries determinedly modernised life on Choiseul. Industrial Missions were developed in the area, although not to any great extent on Choiseul. Islanders were encouraged to work in the mission gardens and plantation, and to help to build houses and churches. Along with European civilisation came its trappings, such as wearing clothes. Sewing was usually the first thing the women were taught by the missionary wives, then followed hygiene practices and European ways of gardening, and eating. Missionaries broke down family structures by bringing girls to the station to be trained in European household tasks. Schools began, with lessons taught in the local vernacular if it was known well enough, or in English.

The lives of the Methodist missionaries on Choiseul are considered in the next two chapters. I have dealt with the men in one and the women in the other. The intricacies of the complex relationships that develop in such confined environments stand out in the accounts in diaries and

¹⁰ ¹⁰ Buckley and K Klugman, *The Australian Presence in the Pacific, Burns Philp, 1914-1946*, Sydney, 1983, pp. 252-256.

correspondence. The missionaries had very definite preferences about those with whom they wished to work, and these were often expressed strongly. Unfortunately there was little that could be done to remove someone that was disliked. I also pay attention to the dilemma of the Pacific Island teachers. These men and women were in a strange country with a different climate and they often succumbed to malaria and other diseases. This group has been less studied than the European missionaries, but it does feature occasionally in archival sources and periodicals, although not very significantly. Women are another hidden group in the archives. Their contributions are limited to occasional articles in the periodicals and occasional letters when their husbands were unable to write reports. Records of the applications for mission service of the female staff still exist, and can be useful in determining the motivations of the women.

As an overview of Methodist missions on Choiseul, it is hoped that this thesis will begin to address a lacuna that exists in Pacific Mission historiography.

CHAPTER 1

‘ONLY ONE DEGREE REMOVED FROM AN ANIMAL’¹

Christian missions were one of the most influential agencies affecting the history of the modern development of many Pacific islands. Many parts of the Pacific are now, by percentage of population, more Christian than the countries from which the original missionaries came. More particularly, Choiseul was one of the last islands in the Solomons group to receive missionaries. Three denominations became involved in missionary work there: the Methodists, Seventh Day Adventists and the Catholics. Harold Scheffler, who lived on the island and studied the Choiseulese (Choiseul Islanders’) social structure, quotes those who remembered the early days of the missions as recounting that they saw the only difference between themselves and the white people as being the ability to read and write. They told him that they realised only the Mission schools offered the means to achieve this. With Choiseul often overlooked by the British Protectorate administration, as well as by the European traders, it offered a mission field ripe for harvest. The journey of the Methodist Mission to Choiseul was not smooth and faced strenuous opposition from the Anglican Melanesian Mission. The Methodist missionaries Dr. George Brown and Reverend John Goldie, though, were determined men and their persistence eventually brought the first missionary to Choiseul in 1905.

For many years the Solomon Islands had been a seductive illusion. Early explorers voyaged to the South Pacific searching for the fabled Land of Ophir, and the mines of King Solomon. The area remained a mystery until the nineteenth century, when it began to open up to the rest of the world following the arrival of whaling ships and traders. Valuable items such as *bêche de mer*, sandalwood, and mother-of pearl were harvested to satisfy the markets in Europe. With the arrival of missionaries from Australia and Britain, contact with Europeans increased on most islands; but Choiseul, one of the largest islands in the group was initially left out of this exchange. Covering an area of 3294 square kilometres, there was thought to be a population of about 5000 when

¹ Caption on a photograph in Martin Johnson, *Through the South Seas with Jack London*, Cedar Springs, 1972.

the missionaries arrived. Choiseul was rarely visited by whaling ships or traders. With an inhospitable landscape, jagged mountains which came down to the coast, little arable land and few landing places without reefs, Choiseul was not welcoming to ships. It was also off the main European shipping routes. While the Choiseulese frequently travelled to neighbouring islands such as Vella Lavella, forging affinal links with the people, the majority of the population remained unseen and untouched by western civilisation. In 1879 the Methodist missionary Rev. Dr. George Brown passed through the Western Solomons on his way to New Britain, and began a quest to establish a mission station in the area. After successfully beginning a mission at Roviana in 1902, he planned to expand to nearby Choiseul and outlying islands. Thus began a dispute with the Melanesian Mission, creating an ungodly ruckus in mission circles as the leaders of both missions fought for their territorial rights. Although outwardly cautious, Brown was quietly determined to achieve his goal in the Western Solomons by any means. The rhetoric at the time of the comity dispute about Choiseul was filled with accusations about encroaching on the other's territory and when Goldie joined the fray, the discussions became increasingly bitter.

During his exploration of the Pacific in 1567-68, Álvaro de Mendaña was the first recorded European to encounter 'The Isles of Solomon'. He named one island San Marcos, because he encountered it on Saint Mark's day. This was later to be renamed Choiseul by the Frenchman Louis de Bougainville.² Mendaña's subsequent expedition and then one led by Fernandez Quirós failed to locate the islands again and so belief in their existence was relegated to the realms of fable. Commander Phillip Carteret was the next to stumble upon the group in 1767, and concluded that 'if there were any such islands, their situation in all our charts is erroneously laid down'.³ Bougainville contributed markedly to returning the Solomons to their correct position on his charts

² The island group was actually named by a cartographer in Europe, Bouâche, who never voyaged to the South Seas. They were named on the basis that they were the fabled Ophir of King Solomon. This island is not to be confused with the San Marcos named by Quiros in the Banks Group.

³ Colin Jack-Hinton, *The Search for the Islands of Solomon 1567-1838* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962) 247.

during his voyage of 1768.⁴ In the records of his voyage round the Solomons in 1838 Jules-Sebastien-César Dumont d'Urville did not mention Choiseul.⁵

The next Europeans to document their arrival in the area were the whalers who worked the waters of the South Pacific, and the traders. They recorded sightings of but did not necessarily make contact with, Choiseul. The trader and whaler Andrew Cheyne recorded in his journal that he was at the mid-point between Cape Alexandré and the north-west point of Choiseul Bay, about five miles offshore, when he saw coral rocks under the boat.⁶ An inhospitable landscape, volcanic and mountainous, and an equally hazardous ocean floor hindered contact with the island. Reefs, such as Bougainville had described, guarded the entrances to many suitable landing places, including Sasamuqa and Choiseul Bay. The lack of any obviously arable land deterred possible settlers and plantation owners. There were several recorded sightings and possible contacts by whaling ship between 1803 and 1900. These included the *Patterson*, from the USA, in 1803; the *Cattlin*, Australia and New Zealand, 1835/36; the *Marshall Bennett*, 1836; the *Peruvian*, USA in 1855; the *James Arnold*, USA c1858; the *Two Brothers*, 1859; the *Ontario* (USA) 1864; the *Helen Mar* 1874; the *Kate Kearney*, 1874; the *Zephyr* 1880, and the *Helena*, 1881.⁷

In 1884, Germany extended its New Guinea Protectorate to include Choiseul. The Solomons became a British Protectorate in 1893, but the northern and western islands, which included Choiseul, remained under German administration. The whole of the Solomons was never a colony of Britain. The Berlin treaty between Britain and Germany in 1899 returned Choiseul and Santa Isabel to Britain, and Germany kept Bougainville and took possession of Western Samoa. In *Die Chinesengefahr in den Deutschen Südseekolonien [The Danger of Chinese in the German South Seas colonies]*, the effect of the loss of Choiseul and Isabel was discussed with regard to the question of labour for Samoa. It was suggested that Samoa should continue to focus on hiring labour from elsewhere in Melanesia instead of resorting to Chinese workers, who might contribute to

⁴ *ibid.*, p. xviii, Charles Claret Comte de Fleurieu, was the principal geographer in France. He updated the position of the Solomon Islands in the 1780s.

⁵ *ibid.*, p. xx.

⁶ Dorothy Shineberg, ed., *The Trading Voyages of Andrew Cheyne 1841-1844* (Wellington: A.H. and A.W. Reed, 1971), pp. 302-303.

⁷ Bennett, *Wealth of the Solomons: A History of a Pacific Archipelago, 1800-1978* pp. 350-355.

the demise of the Samoan population by introducing diseases, and who were deemed ‘to press down the value of the colony’.⁸

The Resident Commissioner for the Solomons, Charles Woodford, pointed out that Choiseul was ‘little visited by traders’ and it was not until about 1898 that C.N. Tindal, an established trader in the Western Solomons, is recorded as attempting to ‘settle a resident trader there’.⁹ Little mention of Choiseul occurs in the German administration’s Annual Reports, though in 1898-99, reference was made to continued raids on Isabel and Choiseul by headhunters, and to the ceding of those islands to Germany in 1899. However, there is no evidence that either administration ever visited them.¹⁰ As late as 1908, the Annual Report of the British administration declared that no visit was paid to the island ‘for want of chart and coal’ and attributed the unrest on the island to the ‘total neglect of the administration’.¹¹ In 1900 the British administration began to annex those parts of the Solomons that had previously been German territory. Woodford visited Isabel and Choiseul on the ship *Torch*, raising the British flag on these islands and handed a proclamation of British sovereignty to the natives; and on or by the 23 August 1900, Choiseul came undoubtedly under the British administration.¹²

Contact between the islands, including Choiseul, by the indigenous people in this area was traditionally along historical trading networks. The sons of the big-man Gorai, from the nearby Shortland Islands, were in great demand as crew on the boats trading in the Bougainville/Choiseul region.¹³ Bush people often traded with the coastal people, exchanging string bags, vegetables and pigs for fish, coconuts, and, in later years, material goods obtained from traders and returned labourers.¹⁴ Slaves were also traded between the islands. They were often captured to provide human sacrifices at the time of

⁸ Augustine Kramer, ‘Die Chinesengefahr in den Deutschen Südseekolonien [The Danger of Chinese in the German South Seas colonies]’, in *Deutsche Kolonialzeitung*, 19, 4, 1902, pp. 51-52.

⁹ Report on Headhunting, Woodford to High Commissioner, 16 January, 1899, WPHC 295/98.

¹⁰ Peter Sack and Dymphna Clark, ed., *German New Guinea; the Annual Reports* (Canberra: Australia National University Press, 1979).

¹¹ Solomon Islands, Condition, August 1908, CO225, Western Pacific 858. The report was written by Captain Vaughan Lewis, based on information gathered from Government officials, old traders and missionaries. It was not as a result of a visit to the island, Solomon Islands, Condition, August 1908, CO225, Western Pacific 858.

¹² Proclamation of British Protectorate over the Solomon Islands, Choiseul, Report by C Woodford, Resident Commissioner, WPHC 91/00.

¹³ Ian MacNeill, *Sweet Horizons; a History of the Solomon Islands* (Potts Point: Acland Press, 2000)p. 115.

¹⁴ Bennett, *Wealth of the Solomons: A History of a Pacific Archipelago, 1800-1978* p. 11-12.

the launch of a new canoe, or as part of funerary rites for a chief. They were generally well treated, and usually became part of the family group. There is a danger of exaggerating the reputation of the island based only on the evidence of some interested parties such as the missionaries. The local 'slave-trade' was grossly misrepresented with recent work showing that it was 'captive kinsmen', with most 'slaves' becoming incorporated into local societies, for example, and their descendants became members of the lineages into which they married. Judith Bennett described the process of pacification of the people with the introduction of government-enforced laws which stopped the so called 'slave trade' between the Shortland Islands, Choiseul, New Georgia and Isabel, slowing some of the population decline.¹⁵ The complicated Melanesian system of establishing lineage meant that although slaves could marry into their captors' community, they had no rights to any property, and sometimes lost any right to status and land on their own island. '*hemi lusem paspot finis*' defines the situation succinctly.¹⁶ On Vella Lavella, this phrase refers to men and women from another island marrying into a Vella LaVellan family, and losing the right to any tribal representation of their own. Many Choiseuse live on Vella Lavella and thus fall under this restriction. It would also probably have applied to slaves who were accepted into these families.

Labour recruiters played an important role in establishing contact with these islands and altered the balance of power between places such as Choiseul, which were unable to attract traders to their shores, and other islands which could. It was probable that Choiseuse were recruited from islands other their home as the people were known to travel widely within the group and it was unlikely that labour ships would have attempted to land along the inhospitable coast.¹⁷ Often the Solomon Islanders went with the labour recruiters willingly because the returns for sending the young men to Australia were considerable. Not only did the labourers receive cash payment from the recruiters themselves but their appetite for material goods such as axes, knives and cloth was able to be satisfied.¹⁸ However, their return home could be fraught with difficulties because if they were dropped off at the wrong part of the coast their chances of survival at the hands

¹⁵ *ibid.* p. 112.

¹⁶ Sarah Krose, unpublished article, 2007.

¹⁷ WPHC Lists.

¹⁸ Bennett, *Wealth of the Solomons: A History of a Pacific Archipelago, 1800-1978* p. 83; Laracy, p. 36.

of the resident tribes were extremely slim. For example, two of William Hamilton's labourers were entrusted to the Melanesian Mission vessel *Southern Cross* to be returned to their home on Choiseul. As the ship cruised along the coast of Choiseul the boys made very expressive gestures, chopping at their necks with their hands saying 'No more stop there; all finish'. When they finally reached their home area, Babatana, the boys willingly went ashore to rejoin their people.¹⁹

Published accounts of violence meted out to the islanders by the British (and German) administrations were widespread in some of the British and American print media.²⁰ Using naval ships to bombard the coastlines of the islands where alleged perpetrators lived, the expeditions frequently killed innocent people and destroyed villages. Occasionally parties of armed men, both traders and government officials, and islanders recruited for the occasion, made punitive expeditions into inland parts of the islands to ensure that justice was dealt to all likely suspects. In 1881, several of the crew of the trading ship *Zephyr*, including three white men and some natives, had been murdered and the vessel plundered. The murderers allegedly came from Babatana, on the west coast of Choiseul. A comment was made, perhaps as justification for a punitive attack, that all the natives in the area are 'a bad lot and their heads [are] against every man, white and black alike'.²¹ The Royal Navy vessel *Emerald* was directed to proceed to a village on Choiseul. At Babatana a chief was persuaded to come with the crew to act as a guide, and perhaps for protection. After escaping the treacherous reef there and struggling through more reefs in Choiseul Bay, the party was led to a place about ten miles north where the chief pointed out a village on the top of a hill. On their arrival, the systematic destruction of the village began. Most of the people of the village had run for the hills and bush, except for one elderly woman. Her fate was decided when the Babatana chief tomahawked her, causing serious head wounds. After the ship's doctor had treated her (fruitlessly, as she would not keep any bandages on) she was taken to a place away from the fires which were razing the village to the ground. When a canoe

¹⁹ Wilson Cecil, *The Wake of the Southern Cross; Work and Adventures in the South Seas* (London: John Murray, 1912) p. 238-240.

²⁰ *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 5 January, 1887, p. 5; *Los Angeles Times*, 11 February 1900, p. 14; *New York Times*, 10 October 1898, p. 7.

²¹ WPHC 20/80; Wilson, Cecil, *The Wake of the Southern Cross; Work and Adventures in the South Seas*, pp. 238-240.

house was burnt, the captain expressed regret at having to destroy the ‘two beautiful war canoes and several other ones’. The chief was duly returned to Babatana by ship as promised.²²

In 1905 there was another punitive attack on Choiseul, this time near the Methodist Mission Station at Babatana.²³ This was retribution for the murder of Captain Findlayson on the *Savo*, allegedly by two of his Babatana crew, which took place earlier the same year. Captain William Hamilton, who was a plantation owner and operated a pearling trade from Choiseul, formed an armed team to search for the perpetrators.²⁴ The Methodist Mission Station at Babatana was affected, at least emotionally, by this raid. Benjamin Danks, the Secretary for Foreign Missions, expressed his gratitude that God had spared the life of the Methodist missionary, Stephen Rabone Rooney ‘through the troubles that have come upon you in connection with the death of Mr Findlayson’.²⁵ Rooney was newly arrived at Babatana on Choiseul and was the only white person living in the area at the time. He compared the situation on Choiseul to similar situations in New Britain:

The punitive expedition did not discriminate between guilty and innocent. With some it seemed to shoot down a black man is no great sin. There was no serious consequence to Rooney following very drastic punishment administered to the people. Glad you were able to secure the safety of the Babatana people. It will do Rooney good to have saved them. I hope the work of your teachers and mission will soon make such expeditions absolutely unnecessary by reason of changed hearts and lives of the people.²⁶

Hamilton had plantations and pearling stations on Choiseul. The *Savo* was recovered when Julius Oein, from Hamilton’s pearling station on Wagina Island, reported that he sighted it while ‘trading around Babatana’, with the ‘whole village passing trade and gear over the bow to their friends’. While searching for the culprits, he located Finlayson’s

²² WPHC 20/80, pp.1-8; Journal of George C Pitts, Rough logbook on HMS Emerald journey around the South Pacific, MSX-7488, NLA; Journal and Remarks Book, James Hay, Lieutenant, HMS *Emerald*, MS 2226; Diary kept aboard HMS *Emerald* during the time spent in the Solomon Islands, 1 January 1880-25 August 1881, J G Burns, MSX 7863, ATL.

²³ I have been unable to locate any official documentation regarding the punitive expedition, although the mention of the District Commissioner, Edge-Partington, implies that there was at least informal approval of the expedition by the Administration.

²⁴ Captain William Hamilton, Diaries and Pearling Logs, Microfilm 87/197, University of Auckland Library, Hamilton had plantations and pearling stations on Choiseul.

²⁵ Danks to Rooney, 674, 6 November 1905, Letterbook 52/1, MOM, Mitchell Library, Sydney.

²⁶ Danks, 676, n.d., Letterbook 52/1, MOM.

Colt revolver and 300 cartridges, as well as some 'trade goods' such as a tin of kerosene, some spoons, bags of rice and some clay pipes. The two crew members who had made their escape, Sikini and Fufunu from Alu, were brought to District Commissioner Edge-Partington to whom they reported the events that had led to the death of Captain Finlayson at the hands of the four Babatana crew members, and the subsequent theft of the ship. Edge-Partington was satisfied that the Alu crew were not implicated in the murder, and were, in fact, lucky to have escaped with their heads, as he observed that communications and interaction between Choiseul and the Shortlands at the time was almost non-existent.²⁷

The Methodist missionary George Brown had organised a punitive expedition following the murder and alleged eating of three missionary teachers in New Britain several years earlier, on the grounds that every white person now felt that their lives were in danger. The incident was not the sort of response expected of a missionary. Although he was later exonerated of wrongdoing, the event remains an enigma in the annals of Methodist history. George Carter notes that the result of the incident was a change in attitude towards the missionaries from begrudging acceptance to respect, because the New Britain people recognised and understood the action Brown took.²⁸ Revenge attacks were also meted out by the indigenous people. Referring to his experiences in other parts of Melanesia, Bishop George A. Selwyn of the Church of England Melanesian Mission, had observed that retaliation would be made against next vessel or white man that arrived on their island after they had been badly treated; irrespective of whether those just arriving were in anyway connected with the offense. He pointed out the inherent dangers of visiting an island when it was impossible to know which a vessel had last been there and how the natives were treated during the visit.²⁹

²⁷ William Hamilton, *Diaries and Pearlring Logs*, 87/197; Acting Resident Commissioner British Solomon Islands, regarding Captain Finlayson: notes in connection with circumstances attending death of, WPHC, 179/1905.

²⁸ George G. Carter, *A Family Affair: A Brief Survey of New Zealand Methodism's Involvement in Mission Overseas 1822-1972*, (Auckland: Institute Press, 1973) p. 57.

²⁹ Darrell L. Whiteman, *Melanesians and Missionaries; an Ethnohistorical Study of Social and Religious Change in the Southwest Pacific* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1983) p. 112; Hugh Laracy, 'Selwyn in Pacific Perspective', in Warren E Limbrick, ed., *Bishop Selwyn in New Zealand 1941-68* (Palmerston North: The Dunmore Press, 1983), pp. 121-135.

Punitive expeditions were an indiscriminate means of meting out justice to the islanders and were also often excessive in their violence.³⁰ Bombardment by a naval vessel killed anyone in its way but the islanders frequently observed the arrival of the vessel from a distance and were able to retreat to the temporary safety of inland areas. The attacks helped to assuage the sense of outrage felt by the British, while demonstrating to the islanders that the British were the more powerful people, and that if they did anything bad to a white man they would be punished. Retaliatory violence also fitted into the traditional cultural understanding of avenging attacks among the islanders. Revenge attacks between tribes were traditional and a precise count of heads taken was kept. When the British (and German) administrations conducted attacks, it was almost acceptable behaviour to the islanders, although these attacks were much more indiscriminate than any traditional revenge. Newspaper reports about them were usually the only information that the public received about the Solomon Islands and this inevitably painted a negative picture of the area.³¹ Negative stereotyping continued in newspapers and in mission periodicals. With the initial contacts between Europeans and the Solomon Islanders often violent in nature, missionaries operated in a context that was dangerous and unknown.

The idea of a Methodist Mission in the Western Solomon Islands had its origins in the vision of George Brown. The Methodist Church in Australia had been active in the Pacific for about 50 years prior to 1899. Their missions to Tonga and Fiji had been successful and they were training ministers and teachers to evangelise other parts of the Pacific. With the evangelical revival creating an upsurge in missionary activity towards the end of the nineteenth century, there was a race to claim the un-evangelised areas of the world. Diane Langmore argues that by the end of the nineteenth century the concern for the immortal soul of the heathens became more of a desire to improve their earthly condition, with indigenous peoples' transformation from the 'perishing' heathen to the 'suffering' heathen becoming the main motivation for Protestant missionaries.³² This theme continued into the twentieth century with newsletters and articles in periodicals

³⁰ John Mayo, "A Punitive Expedition in British New Guinea 1886", *Journal of Pacific History*, no. 8 (1973) pp. 88-99.

³¹ For example see 'Cannibalism in South Seas,' *New York Times*, November 6 1900., 'Cannibals Kill Seven Men,' *New York Times*, November 15 1898.

³² Diane Langmore, *Missionary Lives* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989) p. 42.

describing the conditions in which the Solomon Islanders, and other Melanesians, lived as ‘degrading’, ‘dirty’, ‘filthy’, and ‘appalling’. Bronwen Douglas, quoting 19th century Presbyterian missionaries in the New Hebrides, says that they wrote ‘the people had sunk almost too low to be reclaimed’.³³ The idea of the needy ‘black baby’ was used in the *New Zealand Missionary Times (NZMT)* periodical in 1925, with a ‘Black Baby Bazaar’ being held to raise funds for the mission.³⁴ One feature of the periodicals was the children’s section. In the *NZMT*, it was The League of Young Methodists (LYM) who kept the fires burning. Pacific Islanders were represented as ‘the lovely, black members of LYM’, belonging to the Black Diamonds Chapter.³⁵

The stratification of the various coloured races was being developed in 1756, when Charles de Brosses launched a type of racial stratification which was to characterise thinking about the Pacific; albeit his goal was to encourage French colonisation in the Pacific. He placed Australians (Aborigines) at the bottom, the Papuans next. After d’Urville’s treatise in 1832, the stratification put the Melanesians at the bottom, Micronesians next and, at the top, the Polynesians.³⁶ Missionaries were attracted to Melanesia because the people represented stereotypical savage heathens, as opposed to the ‘Noble Savages’ of Polynesia, who even prompted classical comparisons. In 1768, Bougainville described a Tahitian girl who boarded his ship as follows: “The girl carelessly dropped a cloth which covered her and appeared to the eyes of all beholders such as Venus shewed herself to the Phrygian shepherd, having, indeed, the celestial form of the goddess’. Melanesians’ skin was very dark, and d’Urville described them as having: ‘Flat noses, wide mouths and unpleasant features, and their limbs are often very frail and seldom well-shaped . . . and they [are] much closer to a barbaric state than the Polynesians and Micronesian . . . their aptitudes and their intelligence are also generally largely inferior to those of the copper-skinned race’.³⁷ In the 1850s, John Webster , a

³³ Bronwen Douglas, "Encounters with the Enemy? Academic Readings of Missionary Narratives on Melanesians", *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 43, no. 1 (2001) p. 44.

³⁴ *NZMT*, 29 August 1925, p. 12.

³⁵ Tom Dent, ‘League of Young Methodists’, *NZMT*, 28 February 1925, p. 10.

³⁶ Serge Tchekézoff, ‘A Long and Unfortunate Voyage Towards the Invention of the Melanesia/Polynesia Distinction 1595-1832’, in *The Journal of Pacific History*, 38, 2, 2003, pp. 189-190.

³⁷ *ibid.*, p. 169. The term Melanesia was thought to have been coined by French navigator J.-S.-C. Dumont d’Urville, in 1832. For a discussion of the origin of the term Melanesian, see: Serge Tchekézoff, ‘A Long and Unfortunate Voyage Towards the Invention of the Melanesia/Polynesia Distinction 1595-1832’; Tom Ryan,

Scottish adventurer who eventually settled in the Hokianga in the north of New Zealand, described Solomon Islanders as: ‘Almost black with woolly hair. They were not prepossessing in their appearance. They are not so well formed nor so graceful as the brown skinned Polynesians - a low, projecting forehead gives a disagreeable appearance’.³⁸

Selwyn, on his first voyage said that he was yet to meet a ‘Savage’ in the English sense of the word, and considered them to have similar feelings to white men and to have a like sense of right and wrong. He compared the supposed ferocity of the savage with the propensity of the French to ‘shed blood like water’.³⁹ The term Melanesian came into wider use by the Catholic Marist Mission in 1843 when Bishop Épalle wanted the term used to describe the vicariate that was being established which included the Solomons and New Guinea.⁴⁰

Methodist George Brown had made a voyage through the Solomon Islands in 1879 on route to New Britain, and saw there a vast potential mission field waiting to be claimed. The Church had already commenced work in New Britain and other parts of British New Guinea and there was a feeling that it was over-extending its resources. Following several requests over a period of at least two decades from Solomon Island labourers in Fiji for the mission to go to their homeland, Brown, though usually enthusiastic about such matters, actually suggested a cautious approach to opening this new field. Nevertheless, the 1901 Conference passed a resolution that a mission in the Solomons be started ‘. . . at the earliest possible time’.⁴¹ The Methodist Conference had a tendency to act impulsively and allow emotion to take over in the decisions its members made regarding missions.⁴² Their urgency was due not only to evangelical fervour, but also due to the risk that another denomination might pre-empt them in the area. The Catholics in the Shortland Islands to the northwest posed a putative threat but they did not establish a mission in the

“‘Le President des Terres Australes’”: Charles de Brosses and the French Enlightenment Beginnings of Oceanic Anthropology’, *Journal of Pacific History*, 37:2 (2002), p.184, p.169-170.

³⁸ John Webster, *Last Cruise of the Wanderer*, Sydney, n.d., p. 65-66.

³⁹ Whiteman, *Melanesians and Missionaries; an Ethnohistorical Study of Social and Religious Change in the Southwest Pacific* p. 111.

⁴⁰ Hugh Laracy, ‘Colin and Melanesia’, in *Catholic Beginnings in Oceania; Marist Missionary Perspectives*, Alois Greiler SM, ed., (Hindmarsh: Australasian Theological Forum, 2009), pp. 87-103.

⁴¹ *ibid.*

⁴² Carter, *A Family Affair: A Brief Survey of New Zealand Methodism's Involvement in Mission Overseas 1822-1972*, p. 85.

New Georgia area until 1911, and then only briefly.⁴³ The Melanesian Mission had been active in most of the Solomons, with the exception of the western area. They had a very successful mission on Isabel, a large island to the east of Choiseul, as well as on Malaita and on Guadalcanal to the south. However, Allan Tippett attributed the failure of the Mission to expand its work to the other areas of the Solomons to a lack of personnel and finances and because Selwyn's plan to train Solomon Islanders to become evangelists was taking too long. Tippett argues that the speed with which things were happening was perhaps deliberately slow, and may have restricted Melanesians' success in becoming priests or deacons.⁴⁴

After his second journey through the Solomons, Brown opined that the work of the Melanesian Mission was appalling, amounting to neglect of the people. He commented that the population seemed to have declined during the 20 year gap between his visits, suggesting that this was because of the continuation of headhunting and the spread of introduced disease. In 1891, bombardments by the HMS *Royalist* to avenge the deaths of several white people had led to the destruction of thousands of heads, which caused a huge upsurge in headhunting to restore the balance.⁴⁵ Both the ritual importance of headhunting, and its economic significance led to the need to keep adequate stocks of heads. It was linked to interisland exchange, and also to trade in material goods. Because the canoes were large, they were visible to the island being attacked and so the idea that they may be carrying trade goods led to the islanders coming to the coast to greet their visitors. On some of the islands in the Western Solomons, heads were taken for specific purposes such as launching a new canoe or releasing a widow from confinement.⁴⁶

On his earlier visits to the area, Brown had made the acquaintance of one of the traders, Frank Wickham. It was a relationship that proved invaluable during the early years of the establishment of the Mission. In 1899, both he and another trader, Norman Wheatley, provided accommodation, transport and moral support to Brown.⁴⁷ The people of Roviana, the area chosen by Brown to set up the Mission, were known as 'the most

⁴³ Laracy, *Marists and Melanesians: A History of Catholic Missions in the Solomon Islands* .

⁴⁴ Alan R Tippett, *Solomon Island Christianity: A Study in Growth and Obstruction* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1967) p. 38ff.

⁴⁵ Hilliard, "Protestant Missions in the Solomon Islands 1849-1942", , p. 237; Rodman Margaret and Cooper Matthew, ed., *The Pacification of Melanesia* (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1977), p. 97.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 99-104.

⁴⁷ *AMMR*, 6 November 1899, pp. 1-3.

treacherous and bloodthirsty race in the Western Pacific'.⁴⁸ Wickham was able to explain the purpose of the mission to the local people, although Ingava, a local chief with great influence, remained unwilling to accept the new venture.⁴⁹

On his visit in 1901, Brown encountered a much more friendly Ingava, and he observed that '[t]here is no man better known in Rubiana than Mr Wickham and . . . no one has more influence with Igave (sic) . . . than he has'.⁵⁰ Ingava showed encouraging signs of favouring the mission after seeing Brown's lantern slides. The administration was clearly in favour of the Methodist Mission setting up in the area. Woodford had put the government ship *Lahloo* at Brown's disposal, and the assistant commissioner, Mahaffy, encouraged Brown to establish a mission on Simbo, a nearby island.⁵¹ However, Brown still favoured the Roviana Lagoon. Although Wickham had not been able to persuade Ingava to maintain his friendly attitude towards the mission he was prepared to continue to discuss the matter with him.⁵² Brown observed that the chiefly structure of the area was known to be opposed to Christianity, and that headhunting was the basis of the islanders' way of life. As an area untouched by any other mission and apparently having the greatest need, it was an obvious choice for Brown. Nevertheless, the door seemed to be shut due to the chiefly opposition. Resistance to Christianity came from Ingava and Bera, another big-man from the Marovo Lagoon, but, with the support of the resident planters and traders, Brown took up the challenge.⁵³ His attitude was that it was better to arrive without having asked the permission of the chiefs than to come in the face of a refusal.⁵⁴

The first mission party, comprising Brown, John Goldie, Stephen Rooney and J S Martin, a builder, four Fijian teachers and wives, three Samoan teachers and their wives and two Solomon Islanders, arrived at the Roviana Lagoon on 24 May 1901.⁵⁵ They were accompanied by Woodford, who again spoke to Ingava to explain the purpose of the

⁴⁸ Carter, p. 38.

⁴⁹ See Hilliard, "Protestant Missions in the Solomon Islands 1849-1942", for details about the establishment of the Mission in the Roviana area.

⁵⁰ *AMMR*, 9 September 1901, p. 3.

⁵¹ *ibid.*, p. 4.

⁵² *ibid.*

⁵³ Tippet, p. 55.

⁵⁴ *AMMR*, 8 October, 1901, p. 2.

⁵⁵ *ibid.*, 6 May 1902, p. 5.

mission. The result of the discussion was that the mission would receive no opposition from either the chiefs or the people; but nor would they be received with any enthusiasm.⁵⁶

Expansion of the mission began soon after its establishment and other stations were established on Vella Lavella Simbo and Ontong Java, with Fijian, Samoan or Tongan teachers leading the work until a white missionary was found. In 1904 the first formal missionary contact with Choiseul was made by John Goldie and some Fijian teachers. This was not an entirely successful encounter. In 1905, the District Synod held in Gizo passed a motion to recommend to the Conference in Australia that they should 'include within the bounds of the district the large island of Choiseul, and to constitute it a separate Circuit'. It was also decided to 'recommend the appointment of the Reverend S.R. Rooney as superintendent of that Circuit'.⁵⁷

An undated report in the *AMMR* of 4 March 1905, described the reluctance of some of the people on Choiseul to allow the missionaries to land.⁵⁸ Although Goldie could see that there were many clearings on the hills near Senga, the area where he was attempting to place a missionary, indicating a large population, the people were afraid to approach the coast. His next attempt was on the north-west coast, which was nearer the other islands, and so had had much more contact with people who knew about the missionaries, unlike the seaward east coast. They agreed to receive a missionary and so a Fijian teacher named Feresa was left to 'do his best to lead the people to a knowledge of Christ as their Friend and Saviour'. He was also left with a good supply of medicines.

Another attempt was made to land at Kumbora, but the opposing Choiseulese had again erected a barrier of strong bush vines or *ariso* across the only place that a dinghy could go ashore, and were shouting and gesticulating wildly. However, Goldie broke through the barricades and went ashore where Muna, a Samoan teacher, was established in a house belonging to a friendly chief. He had to leave after only a short time. There were several explanations for his departure. It was reported that the Choiseulese in the area remained hostile and, also, that he had left because of ill health. On a subsequent visit to Kumbora, Goldie was told that Muna had to leave because of a headhunting raid

⁵⁶ *ibid.*, 7 July 1902, p.

⁵⁷ *ibid.*, 4 April, 1905, p. 2.

⁵⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 5-7.

contemplated by the Senga people.⁵⁹ Luxton's version is that the people had tied him to a raft and set him adrift with no food or water. People on a passing canoe had rescued him and taken him to Roviana.⁶⁰ Hilliard used Luxton's reference in his work. Goldie now found the people at Kumbora much more amenable to the idea of a missionary, but only if he came from Roviana and was a white man. Goldie reported that he was still under suspicion and he was followed everywhere by armed bands of Choiseulese. In August 1905, Goldie wrote that a Pacific Island missionary named Jereti had been placed with the recalcitrant Kumbora people and that things were finally going 'splendidly'. Nevertheless, when Rooney arrived at Sasamuqa there was dissension among the people about whether or not to accept a missionary. However, Rooney, not waiting for a consensus, went ashore anyway.⁶¹



Figure 1: An early photograph of Sasamuqa Bay with men fishing. McDonald Collection

Opposition to the Methodist Mission being established in the Western Solomons, and on Choiseul came from a surprising direction. A letter from Solomon Islands labourers in Fiji, described in the missions periodical, the *Australasian Methodist Missionary Review (AMMR)* as 'a cry from Macedonia'. This compares the request to the Apostle Paul's dream about a man from Macedonia begging Paul to 'come over to Macedonia and help us'.⁶² The letter confirmed the putative neglect by the Melanesian

⁵⁹ Muna, clearly not put off by his reception and treatment on Choiseul, later worked on Simbo.

⁶⁰ Luxton, p. 72; Hilliard, note, p. 255.

⁶¹ *ibid.*, p. 73.

⁶² Acts 16:8-10, New International Version of the *Bible*.

Mission on Ngela and Bukotu [sic], and the writer observed that it did not grow and 'Christianise all the people'.⁶³ Nevertheless instances of headhunting on Isabel had almost stopped, and Geoffrey White contends that the whole island had converted to Christianity.⁶⁴ Danks wrote that the area around New Georgia had been left untouched because of a lack of funds on the part of both missions.⁶⁵ Brown's attitude remained cautious due to a desire to consult the Anglican Bishop of Melanesia, Cecil Wilson, about the proposed venture. But the emotionalism of the 1901 conference swept these niceties aside and Brown was sent off to plan a mission. On the way to the Solomons he met Wilson on Norfolk Island and began negotiations that became increasingly acrimonious over the next six years until an uneasy agreement was reached.⁶⁶ A report in the *AMMR* in 1901 stated the reasons for the Methodist Mission's conviction that it had the right to send missionaries to the Western Solomons. They contended that their mission differed from that of the Melanesian Mission because the Methodist missionaries and teachers would live in the areas they were evangelising; whereas in contrast, the Melanesian Mission had central bases from which their missionaries were sent out. The Methodists believed that it was important for a missionary to live amongst the people to set an example of how to lead a Christian life. Demonstrating how a Christian family lives, and also the way Europeans treated women were considered important, active roles for the missionary. The writer contended that 'Christianity is the only religion in the world which gives woman her proper place in the home and in society'.

Furthermore, the sphere of the Melanesian Mission work had been portrayed ambiguously on the most recent Anglican map. While it omitted to include the western Solomons in their sphere, the attached statement said that because their area encompassed all that land between 130° to 170°, which included Choiseul, there was a need for a faster ship and for more men, thus implying intention and purpose. The Methodists asserted that the area they wanted to work in was quite different in language and custom, from the area currently occupied by the Melanesian Mission; therefore they did not believe that they

⁶³ *AMMR*, 4 December, 1901, p. 4 and 6 December 1898, np.

⁶⁴ G.M. White, *Identity through History: Living Stories in a Solomon Island Society* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991) p. 12.

⁶⁵ *AMMR*, 4 December 1901, p. 4.

⁶⁶ Carter, *A Family Affair: A Brief Survey of New Zealand Methodism's Involvement in Mission Overseas 1822-1972*, p. 88. See later in this chapter.

were encroaching on the territory of another mission. The Methodists judged the people of New Georgia to be the cruel and savage enemies of the people on Isabel, and that by bringing the Gospel to them peace would be achieved. Thus the many islanders of both Isabel and Choiseul could again feel able to live along the coast instead of being restricted to the inland areas.⁶⁷

The dissent between the Methodists and the Melanesian Mission had its origins in the early 1900s, when Brown approached Anglican Bishop Cecil Wilson about the comity agreement that supposedly existed between the two groups.⁶⁸ The Commissioner of the Solomons, Charles Woodford, clearly wanted to avoid problems and had agreed to sell land only to missions that wanted to establish their work where there was no other mission operating. This limited the Methodists to the Western Solomons, unless they could negotiate an arrangement with the Melanesian Mission to swap their claim over Guadalcanal or Malaita for the area. The British administration supported the Methodists. In 1905, Wilson expressed his concern that the Methodists had continued with their plan to place a European missionary on Choiseul. He complained that he had kept the compact by not placing a teacher on New Georgia since the Methodist Mission had started. Nonetheless, then Methodists contended that for many years they had been deaf to 'repeated, persistent and pathetic appeals . . . in the hope that you would send one of yours'. Even if the area was considered a possible region of expansion 'in the indefinite future', Brown did not believe that was sufficient justification to 'leave the tribes to live and die without the knowledge of the Gospel of Christ'.⁶⁹ The 1903 discussions between Wilson and Goldie had been confusing. Whether or not an agreement had been reached was unclear. Goldie did not suppose that the understanding and plan of mutual cooperation depended on the exclusion of Choiseul from the sphere of Methodist operations. He was adamant that there was no mention of Choiseul in his notes from the meeting in Sydney. While there had been verbal exchanges, no agreement had been signed. The conclusion reached took more the form of a gentleman's agreement. Goldie asserted that while he may have said the Methodists had no intention of going there at

⁶⁷ *AMMR*, 4 December 1901, p. 8.

⁶⁸ Wilson to Brown, 8 January 1905, 51, MOM; David Hilliard also discusses this disagreement in Hilliard, "Protestant Missions in the Solomon Islands 1849-1942", pp.243-248, 254-258.

⁶⁹ Brown to Wilson, 7 July 1905, 224, MOM.

present, he had not intended to exclude Choiseul from the Methodist sphere entirely. As a result of Goldie's intransigent attitude towards landing a missionary on Choiseul, an incensed Wilson placed teachers in Marovo and on Choiseul in 1905, much to Goldie's dismay.⁷⁰ This incident was brushed aside by Reverend Henry Welchman, from the Melanesian Mission, in 1907 as just being some teachers who had gone there without permission and he accused Brown of 'publishing a scandal' about the incident⁷¹. The teachers were removed not long after their arrival ostensibly due to the demands for workers in other parts of the Solomons.

The Melanesian Mission did not like to be beaten in its missionary endeavours. The Anglicans saw the untouched Melanesian islands as places where one of the original purposes of their mission could be achieved. That was to create a church which was built on a model that was closer to what they considered to be the true church than could be done in developed countries, and the idea that they were being challenged in their claims to the area was distasteful to them. Perhaps the exposure of the lack of attention paid to the area under dispute by the Melanesian Mission made them feel guilty and so they were attempting to cover this up by fighting more forcefully for it. On the other hand, mere denominational jealousy may have been another motive for the vehement objections to the Methodist moves. After dealing with the more reasonable Brown, Bishop Wilson was faced with the volatile Goldie. Using persuasive words, Wilson tried to tame this impertinent colonial upstart who had the audacity to challenge the might of the Anglican Church. As Goldie became more indignant, so Wilson became more reasonable. In fact Goldie was censured by Brown for a letter he wrote to Wilson regarding the matter:

There is no justification for the language used and the accusations made. You must have been unwell or in a very extraordinary state of mind. There seems to be something in your constitution which makes you imagine things that no human being ever intended to accuse you of which also impels you to make statements which, to say the least, are not in good taste.⁷²

The matter was resolved in 1907, with the Methodists not expanding to the east of Choiseul and the Melanesian Mission not expanding to the west of Isabel.⁷³ The

⁷⁰ *ibid.*

⁷¹ Brown to Welchman, 6 December 1907, 44 in 227, MOM; Welchman to Brown, 5 March 1908, 438, 227, MOM.

⁷² Brown to Goldie, 12 December 1907, 89, Box 227, MOM.

⁷³ Brown to Goldie, 25 July 1907, 394, Box 226, MOM.

acrimonious exchanges later that year concerning Melanesian Mission teachers did not seem to affect the conciliation that had been reached.

Despite its isolation and attracting appreciably less recorded European contact, Choiseul has, nevertheless, been drawn into the wider world of the Western Solomons and beyond. In doing so it has maintained its identity while interacting with supra-local institutional entities, with the Methodist mission playing a large role in achieving this. The conflict over this territory demonstrated the determination of the missions to gain access to the few remaining virgin mission fields, not only to spread the Gospel but also to be able to satisfy their own institutional goals.

Chapter 2

‘FREE CHILDREN OF NATURE, . . . [WHO] MUST BE TAMED’.¹

In early 1916, Daniel Voeta from Ranongga Island responded to what Methodist missionary George Carter called a ‘message of love’ from the missionary Pita Zitambulu. Using a characteristically Methodist expression, he said that he had felt loveless and abandoned due to family tragedies, and that, on hearing the Christian message ‘[his] heart ha[d] been warmed’. Carter adds that ‘the message of the love of God preached and demonstrated won over the loveless one’.² Robert Moffatt, a missionary in Africa in the mid 1800s, quoted by Alan Tippett, wrote ‘Nothing but grace could change the savage’.³

Members of the churches in the missionaries’ home country expected heathens to be converted to Christianity. They wanted to see changes occurring in the people who received the missionaries. The methods used to do this, and the effect these had on the Choiseulese need to be examined to assess the degree of imposition of ideas, the amount of agency that the Choiseulese had and the overall effects of this need to be scrutinised. One of the mission aims of the Methodist Church in 1925 was ‘To win the people of the Western Solomons to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and to teach them the mind and purpose of God.’ In the Great Commission in the New Testament, Jesus commands the Disciples to ‘go and make disciples of all nations, baptis[ing] them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach[ing] them to obey everything I have commanded you’.⁴ The task was to convert people to Christianity. For adherents to the Christian message it was a command, not an option. The reasons that people converted to Christianity ranged from divine intervention to the less spiritual, such as the desire for material goods or for power.⁵ Often the successes of missionaries baffled them

¹ John J Tschauder, "D.K.B. 1900 " in *Papers on the history of the Catholic Missions in Papua New Guinea and other parts of Melanesia, 1845-1996* (Canberra: Pacific Manuscripts Bureau, ANU, 1999).

² Carter, *David Voeta: The Story of a Pioneer Missionary* .

³ Alan R Tippett, *People Movements in Southern Polynesia: Studies in the Dynamics of Church Planting and Growth in Tahiti, New Zealand, Tonga and Samoa* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), p. 176.

⁴ Matthew 28:19 NIV.

⁵ Jean and John Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution; Christianity: Colonialism and Consciousness in South Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991)p. 11.

more than the failures. The working of God could not be denied when whole island populations were converted.⁶ Missionaries noted that it could be expected that the heathen would demonstrate ‘deep and pungent convictions when they first become converts . . . it has not had time to work its way down to the heart’.⁷ Assessment of the outward signs of a changed life was used to measure the degree to which traditional beliefs had been repudiated.

Conversion was seen by most Evangelicals as occurring at a single instant, although some believed a period of sanctification after conversion was also required. Methodists in the 1850s believed that conversion was a single instantaneous event which would have been preceded by many hours of agonising in order to reach the joy of salvation.⁸ This idea gradually changed. In the mid 1800s, there was a belief that there had to be repentance, which was seen as a deliberate turning away from sin, and conversion had to be personal. Conversion was the human dimension, and regeneration into a new life was divine.⁹ It was seen as the beginning of faith, with redemption as the object, and with Christian activity as the consequence.

By 1889 most Methodists still maintained that conversion occurred at a single instant, but they did not prescribe any particular kind of conversion experience or emotional response. Conversion without outward manifestations as confirmation of the experience was considered by the Methodists to be genuine because it was believed that there was an ongoing progression towards complete sanctification.¹⁰ Neither intellect nor emotion was excluded from the conversion experience. Conversions were ‘sparked by intellect, fed by emotion’.¹¹ By 1903, most Methodist ministerial candidates in Britain saw conversion as a gradual enlightenment, for belief in an instantaneous conversion was being eroded.¹² John Metcalfe, the Methodist missionary on Choiseul, wrote in 1923 that

⁶ George A Rawlyk, Bebbington, David W., Noll, Mark A., eds., *Evangelicalism: Comparative Studies of Popular Protestantism in North America, the British Isles and Beyond, 1700-1990*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 314.

⁷ *ibid.*

⁸ David W Bebbington, *The Dominance of Evangelicalism. The Age of Spurgeon and Moody* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity Press, 2005) p. 23.

⁹ *ibid.* p. 32.

¹⁰ *ibid.* p. 35.

¹¹ David Sokol, "Portrayals of Childhood and Race in Sunday School Conversion Narratives 1827-1852", *Methodist History* 40, no. 1 (2001).

¹² Bebbington, *The Dominance of Evangelicalism. The Age of Spurgeon and Moody* , p. 36.

conversion was not an immediate spiritual change, and he uses the story of Stephen Gadapeta, reportedly the first person to be baptised on Choiseul, to as an example.¹³ He described conversion on Choiseul as not an immediate spiritual change from an old way of life to a new one. He argued that if there were no limitations placed on the word conversion, there were definitely many more people who could be described as converts.¹⁴

In Britain, Methodist Class Meetings played their part in the process of regeneration after conversion. These meetings were originally a requirement of Wesley's for membership of the church in the eighteenth century, drawing together groups of new converts who were working out their salvation. Members of a group were held together by the common goal of working out their salvation, so when Calvinism intruded with its idea that the essential stage of a Christian's life was getting saved and nothing could change this or was needed to change it, a division occurred between these people and Wesleyan Methodists. Working towards salvation in class meetings under this theology was redundant for the group as it became a fellowship of those who had already arrived, rather than needing to work out their salvation.¹⁵ The Methodist missionaries continued to follow these traditional routines on the mission field. Notwithstanding the decline in meetings in England, Class Meetings for new converts continued to be held in the Solomons after 1902 to consolidate the faith of the new converts. Within British Methodism, rousing conversion stories were replaced with an emphasis on outward signs of sanctification in lifestyle.¹⁶

Robert Hefner defines conversion and Christianisation as 'reformulation of social relations, cultural meanings and personal experiences in terms of presumed Christian ideals'.¹⁷ However, he did not see the change as requiring the abandonment of all pre-existing ideas since he allowed room for some of the old ones to co-exist with the new.

¹³ John Metcalfe. 'A Typical Solomon Island Convert', *Open Door*, June 1923, pp. 2-3; Rooney to Danks, June 11 1910, MOM.

¹⁴ *Open Door*, June 1923, p. 2.

¹⁵ Charles Edward White, "The Decline of the Class Meeting", *Methodist History* 40, no. 4 (2002), p. 208-211.

¹⁶ George Thompson Brake, *Policy and Politics in British Methodism 1932-1982* (London: Edsel, 1984), p. 5-6.

¹⁷ Robert W. Hefner, ed., *Conversion to Christianity. Historical and Anthropological Perspectives on a Great Transformation* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), p. 3.

His use of the term reformulation suggests remixing, using some of the old ideas while adapting some of them and leaving others untouched, leading to a form of syncretism.¹⁸ Raymond Firth argues that in Tikopia (an island near the Solomons) not all phases of intellectual, emotional and operational change synchronised exactly. Conversion occurred in stages with, for example, acceptance of a new religion while, at the same time, retaining elements of the old religion.¹⁹ From the beginning of the twentieth century there was greater cultural sensitivity among missionaries, resulting in an uneasy awareness of syncretism and appropriation in the beliefs of converts. This forced missionaries to admit that traditions needed to be acknowledged and remain incorporated to some extent in the Islanders' altered lives and beliefs. Methodist missionaries in the Solomons aimed to indigenise Christianity, thus enabling the people to live as Christians and remain members of their own society. The Australian Methodist Overseas Mission wanted a 'sturdy native agency, an agency of taking the initiative wherever required'. The mission needed to 'solve the problem of complete dependence of our native church upon the mission and the Mission Board'.²⁰ A declaration from the World Missionary Conference, published in the *Australasian Methodist Missionary Review (AMMR)* in 1911 affirmed that the goal of missions was the formation of an indigenous church: 'It is only through the Native Church that the social evils of heathendom can be radically dealt with, and only through it that the Gospel will . . . find its way to the centre of national feeling'.²¹

There were pressures on the Choiseulese not only in favour of conversion, but also against it. While mass conversions do not appear to have been common on Choiseul, Tippett argues that Methodist reports treat such movements lightly in their records. Individual conversions appeared to have been the norm, with no records of whole villages converting although this cannot be discounted. Coercion to convert may have occurred on a one to one basis. Conversion could be brought about by a multi-individual decision, with one person influencing another, rather than a mass movement.²² Moreover, there were those who actively opposed the missionaries' message by attempting to cast spells

¹⁸ *ibid.* p. 4.

¹⁹ Raymond Firth, *Rank and Religion in Tikopia. A Study in Polynesian Paganism and Conversion to Christianity* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1970), pp. 413-415.

²⁰ Danks to Goldie, 15 November 1912, 667, Box 62, MOM.

²¹ *AMMR*, 4 February 1911, p. 11.

²² Tippett, *Solomon Island Christianity: A Study in Growth and Obstruction*, p. 108.

on them and by destroying their property. While the effects of these actions were temporary, in many cases they delayed the conversions of many islanders. Sometimes threats were physical, such as when a heathen chief on Choiseul threatened to shoot anyone who attended church.²³ Local witches (the term was used for male or female and also often described old women with no magical powers) were upset by allegiances being transferred to the Christian church and they predicted that disasters would befall those who knowingly transgressed tabus. The first girls to accept Christianity in the Solomons were subject to curses of leprosy and insanity from the witches who were worried about the downfall of their old religions.²⁴

Still clearly under the power of traditional beliefs, the people were often reluctant to go to the mission to receive medical attention. After the wife of a Fijian teacher delivered her baby on the mission station and not in a specially designated hut, Helena Goldie carried the new baby into a building where male Solomon islanders were working. This was a clear breach of the local tabu that forbade men to go near the mother or baby for 15 days, until after the performance of certain rites. All except two of the men reacted angrily and fled from the area, not even venturing back to claim their wages, while the old women cursed the mission.²⁵ The two Christian men who remained, Gombi and Kambo, were rebuked by the non-believers but their reply was that they were not afraid of the old teachings and now believed in the new teachings of the Methodist church. They also added that the dangers of coming into contact with a newborn baby were nothing compared with the dangers of filth and disease.²⁶

David MacLaren writes about the concerns of the Kwaio people on Malaita, another of the large islands in the Solomons, because the design of the Seventh Day Adventist hospital at Atoifi failed to pay attention to traditional tabus. It permitted drinking water to flow in pipes beneath the maternity ward, and bodily fluids from the mouth were mixed with excrement in the waste system. Smoke from the incinerator used for destruction of placenta, body parts removed during surgery, and blood was able to rise

²³ Rycroft to Wheen, 4 June 1911, MOM.

²⁴ Luxton, *Isles of Solomon*, p. 46.

²⁵ *ibid.* p. 37,

²⁶ J F Goldie, "News from the Solomon Islands," *Australasian Methodist Missionary Review*, December 4 1903. p. 4.

above shrines and the belief was that it would defile them.²⁷ The same factors would have caused suspicion of the medical facility on Choiseul, and the Islanders would be reluctant to attend the clinic there. The reluctance of many Solomon Islanders to avail themselves of medical treatment in hospitals continued until at least the late 1950s.

Although the editor of the *AMMR* noted in December 1904 that missionaries were concerned with ‘the work of evangelising the heathen’, Diane Langmore argues that, by the end of the nineteenth century, concern for the immortal soul of the heathen had been replaced by a desire to improve their earthly condition. This meant that the ‘suffering’ heathen, not the ‘perishing’ heathen became the motivation for Protestant missionaries.²⁸ In an interview for *The Open Door* in 1924, Goldie describes the state of the people when he arrived in the Solomons as ‘fierce, naked, dirty, crafty and cruel . . . They knew nothing of love, only of passion. They had no written language.’ He further says ‘they are as a child people and weakness and complaint almost scare them’.²⁹ In a defamation of the ‘other’, the predominant idea of the darker skinned people was of ‘fallen man’ or ‘noble savage’, the latter being more often applied to the lighter skinned Polynesians than to the very dark skinned Melanesians. The Melanesians were seen both as savages and as childlike. Father John Tschauer of the Society of the Divine Word Mission, described the natives in the Western Solomons in the late 19th century as ‘Free children of nature, our people, and they must be tamed, which will take months and even years’. Included amongst his ‘boys’ were two from Choiseul.³⁰

Degradation was an overarching notion that Bronwen Douglas identified in missionary writings in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A state of degradation was inherent in the term ‘heathen’. If this state did not exist, there was no need for the saving grace of the gospel on their lives, so it had to be invented, and degradation was believed to be at its lowest point in Melanesia where, Douglas quotes from a nineteenth century missionary diary, ‘the people had sunk almost too low to be reclaimed’.³¹

²⁷ David MacLaren, “Culturally Appropriate Healthcare in Kwaio Solomon Islands: an action research approach”, (Griffith, 2006), pp. 33-35.

²⁸ Langmore, *Missionary Lives* p. 42.

²⁹ E. Parsons, ‘Chat with Rev. John F. Goldie’, *The Open Door*, June 1924, p. 4.

³⁰ Tschauer, "D.K.B. 1900 "

³¹ Douglas, "Encounters with the Enemy? Academic Readings of Missionary Narratives on Melanesians", , p. 44.



Figure 2: Boy with ulcers caused by Yaws. Edna White Photographic Collection MAA

On their visit to the Solomons in 1920, members of the New Zealand Methodist Board of Foreign Missions, William Sinclair and John Court, however, noted that the race was ‘well worth saving’.³² Disease was considered to be indicative of a depraved lifestyle, with the common skin diseases of the area, such as a type of native ringworm called *bakua*, sometimes being mistakenly identified as sexually transmitted. The people were consequently labelled as sexually depraved, although this would be only hinted at in reports published by the mission.

Missionaries in the nineteenth century described women on Aneityum, New Hebrides being ‘brutalised’, enslaved and ‘the victim of every species of suffering’.³³ Methodist missionary Stephen Rabone Rooney described the Choiseulese in 1907 as ‘a frightfully dirty, sickly, and lazy crowd, before the advent of the missionary three years ago’.³⁴ He believed that his efforts had encouraged the Choiseulese to move their homes to the coast. The missionary response to the degraded state of the islanders was to teach them hygiene and present them to the wider Methodist world as clean and not unlike white people. Missionary Mrs Nicholson, on Vella Lavella in 1921, brought her charges to a special event on the mission station. They were described as ‘bright bonnie lassies dressed in spotless white’.³⁵ In 1912, ‘Mrs Rooney [was] getting hold of the women and

³² *NZMT*, January 1 1921, p. 12.

³³ Douglas, "Encounters with the Enemy? Academic Readings of Missionary Narratives on Melanesians", p. 44.

³⁴ S.R. Rooney, ‘The Solomon Islands’, in *AMMR*, 4 April 1908, p. 22.

³⁵ *NZMT*, May 21 1921, p. 12.

girls on Choiseul', and Reginald Nicholson wrote to Benjamin Danks that 'Mrs N's girls are a delight. They were filthy little creatures of habit. Now they have lost the village look and are quite graceful and attractive'.³⁶ Articles regularly reiterate the fallen state of the islanders. Their degradation, dirtiness, pitiful and hopeless conditions, and their 'unprepossessing appearance . . . betelnut stained mouths . . . skin disease and general repulsion' served to motivate the desire to give financially and spiritually to the mission.³⁷



Figure 3: Mrs Rooney with some of the first women to hear the Gospel on Choiseul.
McDonald Collection.

A 1923 article in the *New Zealand Methodist Times (NZMT)* described Daniel Bula, a Methodist convert from Vella Lavella, as a child of savages from an 'intensely heathen tribe' and that he was now a 'bright light amid a dark and superstitious people'.³⁸ Bula described his people as 'dwelling in darkness, worshipping stone or wooden idols [which] did not lighten our burden or make glad our hearts. Now we know the true God we do nothing but rejoice every day'.³⁹ Tropes of savagery were also a feature of missionary reports. Vincent Binêt wrote an article about two tally sticks. The sticks were notched, with each notch representing an atrocity performed by one tribe on another, thus keeping a record so that reparation could be made. *The Open Door* has a photograph of a

³⁶ J F Goldie to Danks, 19/9/1912, MOM; Nicholson to Danks, 3/9/1912, MOM.

³⁷ A A Bensley, *NZMT*, October 8 1921, p. 12.

³⁸ *NZMT*, 10 January 1925, p. 9.

³⁹ *NZMT*, 30 July 1910.

‘Choiseul Man of Darkness escorted by the Children of the Light’, which depicts a man in traditional warrior garb carrying a spear and a shield, accompanied on both sides by two men dressed in white.⁴⁰ Another photograph showed a Solomon Islander ‘Waiting’.⁴¹

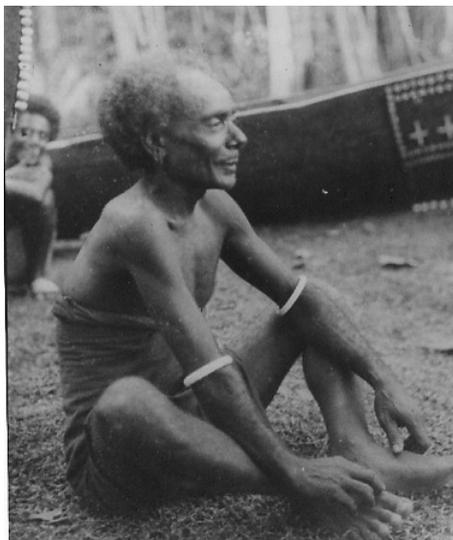


Figure 4: Waiting. McDonald Collection.

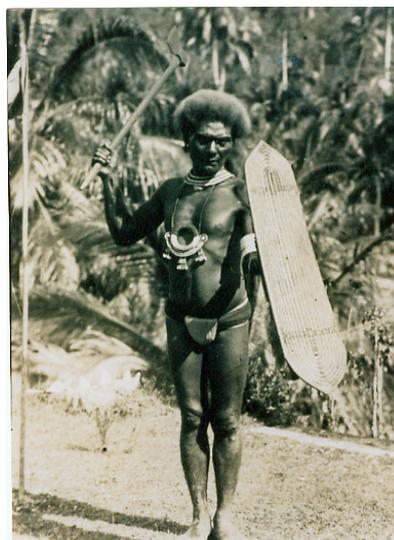


Figure 5: Navala, a Choiseul chief.
McDonald Collection.

In a letter to the Methodist Overseas Mission (MOM) headquarters in 1910, Rooney prayed that the ‘wild, savage, superstitious and sin-stricken people of [the] Tepazaka [area of Choiseul] would come under the spell of the Gospel. He wrote that ‘scores of the people are enquiring the way of salvation and are intensely in earnest about their spiritual welfare’.⁴² He clearly rejoiced in the way the natives were abandoning their old-time customs and superstitious beliefs. Baptismal services, he said ‘are the order of the day’. In 1910 he had baptised 21 adults and children on the previous Sabbath, and nine of them were women and girls. Rooney writes that that ‘the most inspiring and blessed experience . . . is to see the new converts in class . . . that they have a good grip of the right thing is beyond doubt’.⁴³

⁴⁰ V Binêt, *The Open Door*, December 1925, p. 13.

⁴¹ *ibid.*, June 1931, cover.

⁴² Rooney to Danks, 11 June 1912, Box 117, MOM.

⁴³ *ibid.*

Visible lifestyle changes were an indication that indigenous religion had been relinquished.⁴⁴ The view was both that everyone who changed their style of dress became Christians, and all who became Christians changed their mode of dress.⁴⁵ Civilising became synonymous with missions as their work became more focussed on civilising and converting in whichever order seemed appropriate. Alan Tippett contends that missionaries civilised by organising; by co-opting the government, commerce and the Church into complex relationships.⁴⁶ The Christianising and civilising urge have been inextricably mixed over centuries of European history.⁴⁷ Other denominations, such as Catholics and Seventh Day Adventists, often had diverse and contradictory designs on a location causing ambivalent feelings between the missions. All missions were determined to gain converts for their own church, by any means. Although there was some cooperation, uneasy relationships generally existed between the other Europeans, such as traders, plantation owners, and the mission, while the main consideration of missionaries should have been whether or not their actions were valuable in spreading the Christian Gospel.

Melanesia provided a field that was very different from that of Polynesia, where Methodist missionaries had been working for many years. The absence of a hereditary chiefly system in Melanesia meant that the 'from the top down' pattern of conversion used in Polynesia did not occur. On Isabel, a neighbouring island to Choiseul, several influential Big-men were converted by the Anglican Melanesian Mission, encouraging others to follow, but this was not a common pattern. David Wetherell argues that, in effect, missionaries often brought an end to customary leadership because of their authority.⁴⁸ The development of an industrial mission in the Solomons immediately involved the mission in capitalism, although only on a small scale. The mission represented spiritual beliefs but also served the practical role of bringing civilisation. This uneasy ambivalence in the mission's purpose often caused misunderstandings and

⁴⁴ Robert F Berkhofer Jr, *Salvation and the Savage: An Analysis of Protestant Missions and American Indian Response, 1787-1862* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1965) p. 112.

⁴⁵ *ibid.* p. 111.

⁴⁶ Tippett, *People Movements in Southern Polynesia: Studies in the Dynamics of Church Planting and Growth in Tahiti, New Zealand, Tonga and Samoa*, p. 187.

⁴⁷ Jeffrey Cox, *British Missionary Enterprise since 1700* (New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 13.

⁴⁸ David Wetherell, *Reluctant Mission; the Anglican Church in Papua New Guinea 1891-1942* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1977), p. 161.

confusion. The Methodist missionary John Goldie was accused by other Europeans of owning plantations for commercial purposes. The goal of the missionaries was spiritual, but it was coupled with the goal of bringing their way of life to the Choiseulese. Arguments about the role of missions in this usually concluded that both conversion and civilising were significant activities. The development of the industrial mission in the Solomons provided a source of income for the mission, and a small income for the islanders who worked there, as well as being part of the civilising process.

Wetherell argues that industrial missions educated the Melanesians away from racial indifference.⁴⁹ The development of sawmills and plantations which used Solomon Island labour kept hands fruitfully occupied. It also created businesses which sometimes detracted from the primary aim of the mission; to win people for Christ. The work also helped to alleviate the state of apathy which had occurred when the rate of depopulation increased as new diseases were introduced, and head hunting was stopped. Because of the social significance of headhunting which included valuable alliances for trade and war, its cessation led to a sense of purposelessness for many Solomon Islanders, and the resulting lethargy made them reluctant to take part in any activity.⁵⁰ Mission stations became shrines of worship and learning as well as sites of industry. Critics argued that industrial missions caused entanglements with commerce and the administration but Methodists considered it their duty to hasten the expansion of civilisation as well as Christianity.⁵¹ James Nason points out that the Christian missionaries in the Micronesian Mortlock Islands in the mid 1800s were just as interested in civilising as converting the heathen. Millenarian beliefs of some missionaries there at that time meant that it was important to get everybody cleaned up; living in proper houses and in 'sanctified' domestic arrangements.⁵²

⁴⁹ *ibid.* p. 215.

⁵⁰ W.H.R. Rivers, *Essays on the Depopulation of Melanesia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922), pp. 91-108; Margaret Rodman and Cooper Matthew, *The Pacification of Melanesia*, (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii 1977), pp91-108.

⁵¹ Tippet, *People Movements in Southern Polynesia: Studies in the Dynamics of Church Planting and Growth in Tahiti, New Zealand, Tonga and Samoa* pp. 27, 173-176; Wetherell, *Reluctant Mission; the Anglican Church in Papua New Guinea 1891-1942* , p. 224.

⁵² James D Nason, "Civilising the Heathen: Missionaries and Social Change in the Mortlock Islands " in *Mission Church and Sect in Oceania*, ed. Boutillier James A Daniel T Hughes (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1978), p. 125.

Christianity, Darrell Whiteman argues, replaced many of the traditional tabus with other tabus. Because the Old Testament God was portrayed as a God of vengeance who punished with sickness and disasters in the environment, the new moral code was often followed out of fear. Traditionally in many Melanesian societies, moral lapses were effectively reinforced by sorcery, and when missionaries forbade its use there was sometimes an increase in petty crimes.⁵³ Rusiate (Richard) a Fijian teacher in the Solomons, preached detailed sermons on the punishment for miscreants that awaited them in hell with, as Helena Goldie wrote, ‘not one detail left out. The other Fijians would shiver and my hair would really stand on end’.⁵⁴

Outward signs of a changed life did not always signal a change in the soul. There was the desire to please the new white people and to be rewarded with material goods. There was the safety of being in agreement with the white men, thus being protected by and from the power that they could invoke, such as bombardments by the navy. Furthermore there was a reduced likelihood of being attacked by other islanders. The means by which people were converted and became church members varied. Not only were Solomon islanders confronted with a Gospel message which they had never heard before, but they were also faced with a new way of life. To ensure that the convert was sincere, the missionaries decided when the convert was ready for baptism and church membership. A life well-lived and knowledge of the basic rules of the church seemed to have been the prerequisite for church membership on Choiseul. This was not given lightly in most of the Methodist mission areas. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the Methodist missionaries in North America demanded a minimum six months trial for converts and an examination on the correctness of their faith and their knowledge of, and willingness to follow, church rules.⁵⁵ All subsequent missionary organisations were cautioned to maintain the purity of the church by careful admission to membership, thus delaying any rapid growth in numbers. Similar tests of the suitability of converts to be members continued into the twentieth century in the Solomons where the Methodists also required a trial period, which required the converts to enrol in Christian education.

⁵³ Whiteman, *Melanesians and Missionaries; an Ethnohistorical Study of Social and Religious Change in the Southwest Pacific*, pp. 225-226.

⁵⁴ Helena Goldie, ‘Twenty Years Ago’, *The Open Door*, March 1923, p. 8.

⁵⁵ Berkhofer Jr, *Salvation and the Savage: An Analysis of Protestant Missions and American Indian Response, 1787-1862* p. 58.

Missionaries also assessed their suitability for church membership and participation in communion. A trial of at least twelve months was required before baptism could take place. The numbers of trial members were listed in the mission statistics.⁵⁶ Notwithstanding the goal of the mission was to save souls, long probationary periods meant that the first baptisms were not carried out for some years after the arrival of the missionaries in the Solomons. In New Georgia, the first baptismal service was not held until 1908. On Choiseul, Stephen Rooney baptised his first converts on 28 August 1910. Even then some women on Choiseul were not permitted inside the church building until 1913, due to a traditional tabu on married women and widows entering a sacred building. It was believed evil spirits would possess women if they entered the church which would then be carried back to their villages. A traditional ceremony based on the local spiritual beliefs was held to lift the tabu and allow women to participate in services inside the church building.⁵⁷ This presented an odd case of allowing traditional ceremonies to determine participation in Christian services.

Communion in the Methodist Church could only be celebrated by an ordained minister, and, in the days of the circuit-riding pastor in England, this meant that it was often only once a year that a pastor arrived at a parish to conduct such a service. This set the pattern for scheduling Methodist communion services. With the advent of domiciled ministers, there was greater frequency but it still was not (and still is not) celebrated weekly. In the Solomons, Methodists usually celebrated communion only once a year at the Synod meeting, and initially, no Solomon Islanders present were allowed to take part. In the late 1920s and 1930s, some missionaries began to allow Polynesian and Solomon Island teachers and carefully selected islanders to participate in the service.⁵⁸ The infrequency of communion services reduced the need for ordination of Solomon Islander ministers as they were not required to conduct the services, justifying the delay, or perhaps, reluctance, of the mission to ordain Solomon Islanders.

In the 1840s, the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in New Zealand under Bishop G. A. Selwyn kept Maori clergy subordinate to the British counterparts until they

⁵⁶Luxton, *Isles of Solomon* , pp. 44-45.

⁵⁷ *ibid.* p. 79.

⁵⁸ Hilliard, "Protestant Missions in the Solomon Islands 1849-1942", , p. 339. There are some records of 'The Sacrament' being taken on Good Friday, and also offered to a sick missionary, Ada Saunders.

attained a similar education standard.⁵⁹ By allowing them the title of catechist, a separate status was created which prevented the exercise of clerical duties.⁶⁰ The Methodists also permitted a selected few Solomon Islanders to be catechists but, again, the role did not allow the same clerical activities as an ordained minister. In the Solomons the first minister was not ordained until 1938, followed by two more who were ordained in the period in the period to 1964.⁶¹ The belief that the standard of the education of the Solomon Island teachers was too low continued into the 1920s when more Polynesian teachers were brought to the area even though there were many Solomon Islanders who could have taken on the role of teacher. Whether or not it was a deliberate act to stall the development of native agency, it considerably slowed down any prospect of the development of a body of indigenous teachers, and, ultimately, an indigenous church.⁶²

A claim was made in an article in the *NZMT* that, even after twenty-one years of contact with Christianity in the Solomon Islands, Satan still 'seems to be a dark and malicious power . . . dark horrid years invest [Solomon Islanders'] minds . . . the superstitions of a long line of heathen ancestry come crowding in'.⁶³ The new religion had to provide everything that it was believed the traditional religion had provided. To be a worthy replacement it had to meet specific needs and provide satisfaction. Missionaries often destroyed idols or encouraged new converts to remove and destroy the significant objects of their old religion. Contradictions occurred when missionaries were also amateur anthropologists, or were collecting items for museums and for interested individuals. The powerlessness of the inanimate objects was proved by the missionaries handling them and often storing them at their homes. Goldie wrote that his veranda was almost full of idols being kept for collectors such as George Brown.⁶⁴ He related the story of Dalekana from Seqa, who carried his god with him in a basket. After a physical fight between him and one of the missionary sisters where they both attempted to hold on to one of the mission girls to prevent Dalekana taking her as his third wife, he declared that

⁵⁹ Cox, *British Missionary Enterprise since 1700*, p. 166.

⁶⁰ *ibid.* p. 104.

⁶¹ Hilliard, "Protestant Missions in the Solomon Islands 1849-1942", pp. 575-577. These were Belshazaar Gina in 1938 and Timothy Piani in 1952. Gina was not accorded full authority and could not administer communion.

⁶² Tippet, *Solomon Island Christianity: A Study in Growth and Obstruction*, pp. 60-63

⁶³ *NZMT*, 18 August 1923, p. 12.

⁶⁴ Tippet, *Solomon Island Christianity: A Study in Growth and Obstruction*, p. 110.

'twice I took my god out of the basket and sacrificed to him and prayed, and twice he has deceived me and led me astray. He has mocked me and lied to me'. After the sister shared the Gospel message with him he said, 'I give in. I am a sinful man, but I will now give up all idea of this wrong . . . '. Goldie describes Dalekana as a changed man; no longer the 'scowling dreadful savage . . . but laughing and happy'.⁶⁵ This incident resembles the Biblical example of the confrontation on Mount Carmel as the prototype for the contests staged by the missionaries between their God and the traditional gods.⁶⁶ It was believed that when a god died, its cause died with it so destruction of idols was a demonstration of crossing taboos and still surviving.

While conversion to Christianity may have appeared complete, there were still what Tippett calls neo-pagan resurgences, such as the Maasina Rule in the Solomons, and the John Frum cargo cult in Vanuatu.⁶⁷ These coexisted with the missionaries and were characteristically syncretistic. Visible symbols were important to the Solomon Islanders and so missions often had marching brass bands which practised drills daily.⁶⁸ In the second half of the twentieth century, the Etoist movement began in the Western Solomons and evolved into the Christian Fellowship Church.⁶⁹ Although it caused consternation among the Methodist missionaries, it had little influence on Choiseul. This break-away movement followed the self-proclaimed prophet, Silas Eto, a former Methodist who believed that he had received the mantle of authority from Goldie, and who encouraged very emotional expressions of worship which the Methodists described as 'pentecostal'.⁷⁰

⁶⁵ J Goldie, *The Open Door*, June 1934, p. 9.

⁶⁶ 1 Kings 18:18-45, N.I.V.

⁶⁷ Hugh M Laracy, ed., *Pacific Protest: The Maasina Rule Movement Solomon Islands 1944-1952* (Suva: University of the South Pacific, 1983).

⁶⁸ Tippett, *People Movements in Southern Polynesia: Studies in the Dynamics of Church Planting and Growth in Tahiti, New Zealand, Tonga and Samoa* p. 215; Elisabeth Corben, *My Father's Journey*, (Melbourne: 2002), John Rudd Metcalfe, *My Father's Journey* p. 54. Helen Mary Aldred, "Ifi Palasa : Brass Bands in Tonga ", (Victoria, 1997).

⁶⁹ Tippett, *People Movements in Southern Polynesia: Studies in the Dynamics of Church Planting and Growth in Tahiti, New Zealand, Tonga and Samoa* , p. 215.

⁷⁰ Frances Harwood, "The Christian Fellowship Church: A Revitalization Movement in Melanesia", (PhD thesis, University of Chicago, 1971); Tippett, *Solomon Island Christianity: A Study in Growth and Obstruction*



Figure 6: Brass band trained by Tongan missionary Paul Havea. Photographic Collection MAA.

In 1920, John Court and William Sinclair from the New Zealand Board of Foreign Missions visited as much of the mission in the Solomons as possible, including Choiseul. They believed that the introduction of new interests would raise the Islanders from the apathetic state caused by the void left when head hunting ceased, and they suggested that the mission must make life fuller and richer for the people. Solomon Islanders should be taught to cultivate the land and rebuild their ‘cheerless and unsanitary villages’ in ‘healthier’ areas.⁷¹ The aims of the Mission should be to save a race which was living in the Stone Age and build the people up to have strong, stable Christian characters. The Islanders, they believed, would become honest, clean, industrious and self-reliant, understanding the dignity of labour. Sinclair and Court thought that ‘this child race can be saved and built solidly into the Kingdom of God’.⁷² In an article in the *NZMT* headed ‘Not an Option, but an Obligation’, the plans for the mission to the Solomons were outlined. At their 1923 conference, New Zealand Methodists declared: ‘in the view of the urgent needs of the unevangelised portion of the field, the time has arrived for a definite challenge to our church for men and means with a view to evangelising the whole of the Solomon Islands District within a definite term of years’.⁷³ That year the church reported that, in its new possession, church membership was 3000 and the total attendance was 10,000 in the whole of the Western Solomons field.⁷⁴

Success of the mission work was measured and recorded in various ways. Given the Methodist predilection for numbers and statistics, lists are readily available in the

⁷¹ *NZMT*, 1 January 1921, p. 8 and 12.

⁷² *ibid.*

⁷³ *NZMT*, 9 June 1923, p. 8.

⁷⁴ *NZMT*, 7 January 1922, p. 8

minutes of Quarterly Meetings and Synods. The interpretation of the numbers leads to a picture of irregular rates of growth, with static periods and sudden upsurges in numbers attending church. In 1904, the Methodists reported that the New Georgia mission was enjoying success as many villages were requesting teachers, and there was much less opposition to the mission than there had been in the beginning of the work.⁷⁵ Attendances at Sunday services and at day schools were also an important measure of success, and growth in this area was a cause for celebration.⁷⁶ There were, in 1904, about 200 people under instruction by the Methodist missionaries in the Roviana Lagoon area, with about half of them attending classes regularly.⁷⁷ The opening of a Sabbath School in the Roviana district was another 'red-letter' day for the mission. Increasing attendances caused Rooney to thank God for 'this very acceptable and beneficial change from the old order of things'.⁷⁸ Another measure of success was the defeat of old traditions such as the rituals surrounding childbirth. In 1904, Goldie noted that when another child was born at the mission station, 'not one of them [students in the day school] stayed away from us'. This he took as a sign of progress for which 'we thank God and take courage'.⁷⁹ He also noted that the attendances at Sunday services, held on the veranda of the Mission house at the head station, Kokeqolo, presumably after he had removed his collection of artefacts, had fluctuating attendances due to local opposition, nevertheless he describes the attention paid during the services as 'splendid'.⁸⁰

In April 1905, Synod reported that on Choiseul there were 13 Church members, one member on trial, 176 Sabbath [school] scholars, 277 Day [school] scholars, and 1600 attendants on public worship.⁸¹ In 1912 there were 23 full members, eight on trial, and by the end of the year there were 51 on trial. A big jump occurred in September 1913, when there were 86 full members and 335 on trial.⁸² Although the factors cannot be confirmed,

⁷⁵ "New Georgia," *Australasian Methodist Missionary Review*, March 4 1904. p. 4.

⁷⁶ J F Goldie, "News from the Solomon Islands," *Australasian Methodist Missionary Review*, April 4 1904. p. 10.

⁷⁷ J F Goldie, "From the Solomon Islands," *Australasian Methodist Missionary Review*, May 6 1904. p. 4.

⁷⁸ Stephen R Rooney, "News from Ruviana, Solomon Islands", July 4 1904, *AMMR*, n.p.

⁷⁹ J F Goldie, "The Solomon Islands Mission. A Long Fight with Death," *Australasian Methodist Missionary Review*, June 4 1904. p. 4.

⁸⁰ S. R. Rooney, "News from Ruviana Solomon Islands", *AMMR*, 4 July 1904, p. 8.

⁸¹ *ibid.*, 4 April 1905, p. 2.

⁸² Minutes of Quarterly Meeting held at Sasamuqa, Choiseul, 15 September 1913, George G. Carter Papers, MAA.

this jump may be due to the lifting of the tabu on married women or widows entering the church building in 1913.⁸³ There is no indication of how many women had previously been part of the church, with any references to them usually indicating only their participation in classes for sewing and other domestic skills. In 1916, Harold Rycroft reported that the classes at Sasamuqa were too big to carry on in an acceptable manner because the boys he had helping him clear land for a plantation were forced to attend.⁸⁴

By 1928, there were 673 church members, 481 school attendees, and 1139 church attendees on Choiseul alone.⁸⁵ By July 1929, there were 2500 attendants at public worship, 1178 members and 181 members on trial.⁸⁶ Numbers increased slowly at first rose quickly in the 1920s and 1930s. This may be attributed in part to an increase in the number of teachers available, the use of Choiseulese teachers, and the appointment of a second missionary on the island, as well as to a spiritual move across the island. Quarterly business meetings were another feature of Methodist church administration which were continued by some missionaries in the Solomons. Rooney conducted them until he left in 1913, but his successor, Harold Rycroft, did not find them worthwhile so he did not run them. At each Quarterly meeting there were more requests for teachers to be sent to villages. It was not until 1913 that the first Choiseulese, Joshua Tanawoqa, was sent to the Circuit Training Institution at Sasamuqa to be trained as a teacher. At least four more went to the District Training Institution in 1926.⁸⁷ Whether the indigenous teachers were more successful than those from other Pacific Islands is not clear, but there may have been an intrinsic pride in one of their own reaching the respected status of teacher and being permitted to lead *Lotu*.

Between 1920 and 1949 missionary John Metcalfe was stationed at Sasamuqa on the western coast, as well as a brief time spent at Teop, on Bougainville, and Vincent le Cornu Binêt established the mission station on the east coast at Senga, from 1917 to 1932. The Choiseulese were becoming more interested in the church as a result of the resolution of a long standing feud on the east of the island which brought peace to much of the area. Notwithstanding the peace settlement, internecine fighting continued on

⁸³ Luxton, *Isles of Solomon*, p. 79.

⁸⁴ Rycroft to Wheen, January 24 1916, MOM.

⁸⁵ Babatana Membership Returns for the year ending September 1928, George G. Carter Papers, MAA.

⁸⁶ Minutes of Quarterly Meeting held at Sasamuqa, Choiseul, 17 July 1929 MAA.

⁸⁷ *ibid.*, 9 July 1926 MAA

Choiseul until the late 1930s.⁸⁸ It is noteworthy that there seems to have been only one Sabbath school on the island until the late 1920s, and that was not able to be held every week. It was reported to be running satisfactorily, with enthusiastic attendees. Sister Ethel McMillan, who was appointed to the island in 1916, took responsibility for running the school, and in 1928, there were 70 students attending.⁸⁹

The way the Choiseulese were attracted to the *Lotu* (Christian church) varied with each missionary. Each brought their own distinctive way of conveying their faith, and of coercing or convincing the islanders to adopt the new beliefs. Determining whether or not Choiseul was a Methodist island depended on the results of the work done by the missionaries. The Choiseulese were not converted in a mass movement. Individual conversions were the most common pattern, followed by groups of individuals. Clearly there was no pressure from Big Men as on Santa Isabel, or the chiefs in Polynesia and decisions to accept the new Christian faith seem to have been made thoughtfully and without any coercion, other than that of the mission. The gradual influence of the church through the converts spread over much of the island until by the mid-1930s it was said the last pagan village had been reached and there were only a few intransigent old men refusing to associate with the church. Missions believed that they worked within a framework of power over the indigenous people, aiming to impose their beliefs and their culture on them in a curious intersection of wanting to impose but also wanting to share their faith. They colonised in a sense by replacing existing customs and ideas with their Eurocentric culture and, until the early twentieth century, they frequently rode roughshod over existing belief systems. Statistics from Quarterly Meetings and the annual Synod show the numbers of those on trial for membership and graphically illustrate the attention that was paid to this. The nature of the conversion was something that was carefully evaluated by the missionary to determine how genuine and complete it was before admission to full church membership. Given that the numbers of Methodist members have steadily grown over the years up to World War II, Choiseul could be now described as a Methodist Island.

⁸⁸ Tom Russell, *I Have the Honour to Be* (Spennymoor: The Memoir Club, 2003), pp. 32, 36, 47.

⁸⁹ Minutes of the Quarterly Meeting held at Sasamuqa, Choiseul, May 3 1928, George G. Carter papers, MAA.

CHAPTER 3

‘COME OVER AND HELP US’ (The Cry of the Macedonian)¹

Among the European missionaries in the Western Solomons prior to the Second World War, two stand out; John Francis Goldie and John Rudd Metcalfe. Each spent many years in that mission field, with Goldie retiring in 1951 after almost 50 years, and Metcalfe retiring in 1957 after 37 years. Both men were determined and stubborn. They disagreed with each other about, amongst other things, matters of church membership and the choice of a suitable boat for the mission. They did agree though, that the people of Choiseul were not capable of taking on leadership responsibilities without extensive training. According to Metcalfe, Goldie often left administrative tasks in a mess which Metcalfe had to clear up. Both men were ambitious, and Metcalfe longed to become chairman of the Solomon Islands Methodist Missionary District – something he eventually achieved in 1951. Blatantly self-opinionated, biased, racist, and paternalistic, each of these men had ambivalent attitudes towards the Polynesian missionaries appointed to Choiseul. Neither suffered fools gladly and both had problems with the missionary sisters and other staff who were sent to work in the Solomons. Nevertheless, both had the desire to see the people of the Solomons become Christians and live according to Christian tenets.

Another Methodist missionary who served on Choiseul was Stephen Rabone Rooney, (1905-1913) the first white European missionary. He was followed by Harold Rycroft, (1913-1917), then Vincent Le Cornu Binêt (1917-1932). The differing temperaments of these men meant that they expressed their faith and their evangelical desires in different ways. Dr Clifford James and his wife were appointed to Choiseul by the Mission in 1928 and their strait-laced attitudes added a new ingredient to the complex mix of personalities.

To supplement the mission staff, Polynesian missionaries came from Tonga, Samoa and Fiji. They proved to be able leaders but have remained almost invisible in

¹ Acts 16:8-10.

mission records. This chapter will attempt to bring the Polynesians on Choiseul out of this obscurity. While Milton Talasasa has undertaken a study of these teachers, he acknowledges that there is scope for more research in this area. His sources for names included a tapa cloth made in 2002 for the centenary of the Methodist Mission in the Solomons, as well as some oral accounts. The present focus on Choiseul has elicited names from the minutes of Synod, and Quarterly Meetings on Choiseul which expands Talasasa's list of missionary names. The research for this chapter is based on observations from and interpretations of correspondence to the Australian Methodist Overseas Mission and the New Zealand Board of Foreign Missions, personal diaries, minutes of Quarterly Meetings held on Choiseul, comments from the correspondence of other missionaries, and also on secondary sources.

This chapter surveys the lives of missionaries on Choiseul, and points to the conclusion that of these men, Metcalfe was the most significant figure in the spread of the Methodist Church on that island between 1920 and 1941. The edited version of his diaries, published as *My Father's Journey* by Elizabeth Corben, is her selection and interpretation of what was written. It is, however, a useful tool in establishing what Metcalfe did, and reveals some of his thoughts and feelings.² The diaries contain much information not included in the book, and richly augment other sources of information about the period. Although the emphasis is on Metcalfe, this is not intended to detract from the efforts of the earlier missionaries, Rooney and Rycroft. The lack of correspondence in the archives from these men leaves the researcher dependent on edited accounts in the *Australasian Methodist Missionary Review (AMMR)*, and upon minutes of the Quarterly Meetings. In actual fact these earlier missionaries worked in a much harder mission field as they were the pioneers and faced an almost unknown land and people. The glamour of the unknown appealed to many missionaries as they went into areas which had not hitherto been penetrated by Europeans. While coastal areas had been contacted the inland parts of the island remained virgin territory for the missionaries. The forbidding terrain gave rise to wild imaginings about the dangers that might be there, making every sortie into these areas a new and perilous adventure.

² Corben, *My Father's Journey*

Missionaries created a world they wanted to occupy by imposing their ways on to the existing culture. They divided life into compartments that suited their lifestyle; they built 'proper' houses and imposed 'proper' dress standards.³ All the experiences of life such as birth and death were influenced by the missionaries. Hugh Laracy argues that 'Promoting temporal well-being and preaching the word are complementary'.⁴ Generalisations about missionaries as cultural vandals, or as glory-seekers, or, conversely, as straightforward instruments for good are simplistic.⁵ Their motives were far more complex than this. The position of missionaries was ambiguous. On the one hand they intended to help, providing health care and education, while on the other hand they have been stereotyped and vilified as culture wreckers. They sought cultural change from their converts, especially in the early days of the mission. Although their aim was conversion they sought to Christianise the Choiseulese as well. Mary Huber and Nancy Lutkehaus describe the process of Christianisation as involving the 'reformulation of social relations, cultural meanings and personal experience in terms of putatively Christian ideals'.⁶ While civilising was sometimes seen as a prerequisite for conversion, this mission preached the Gospel from its inception, bringing education and health care to the Choiseulese as well as the Gospel. The aspirations, intentions and practices of the missionaries were formed within the contexts of their own cultural and religious backgrounds and these contributed to their motivations. Some of the influences on the missionaries included the ways in which the people of the South Seas were represented in literature, denominational publications and the news media of the day; each playing a significant role in the development of the stereotypical images of the 'native'. The 'native', a term encompassing all non-Europeans, was considered by the colonisers as

³ By 1931 it was considered bad for the Choiseulese to wear clothes because of the high risk of becoming ill as a result of not washing the clothes or keeping them on when wet or wearing too many at once. James accuses the mission of creating embarrassment for those who did not wear clothes. Clothes had become *lalae Lotu*, a symbol of the *Lotu*, or an outward sign like a uniform. Binèt correspondence with Dr C James, 1931, microfilm 98-142, UA; Edward Wolfers, *Race Relations and Colonial Rule in Papua New Guinea* (Brookvale: Australia and New Zealand Book Co., PTY, 1975), p. 46.

⁴ Hugh Laracy, Review of *In the Way: a study of Christian missionary endeavours*, Kenelm Burrige, (Vancouver, 1991), *Journal of Pacific History*, vol.29, No2, 1994, p. 255.

⁵ *ibid.*, p. 255.

⁶ Mary Taylor Huber and Nancy C. Lutkehaus, ed., *Gendered Missions: Women and Men in Missionary Discourse and Practice*, (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1999), p. 10.

being unlike Europeans and unlikely ever to attain the same status as Europeans.⁷ This concept of the 'native' as a different form of being was perpetuated by missionaries.

The success of the Methodist missionaries in the Solomons depended on their ability to visit villages on the island, but this was hampered by the lack of a suitable sea-going craft. The mission began as essentially centripetal but began to reach out into other areas as more staff became available. However, the European missionary rarely went to other areas unless there was a problem, or perhaps on an annual tour of the island. There was no nursing sister in the Western Solomons Methodist field until 1906, four years after the arrival of the mission. On Choiseul, there was no nursing sister until the appointment of Florrie Neale and Ethel McMillan in 1916. The wife of the missionary was expected to assist in work with the women and girls, whether formally or by example. The schools were run by Polynesian missionaries, from Samoa, Fiji, and Tonga. They were only allowed to use the title of teacher, and the villages sometimes had a Polynesian or Solomon Island preacher as well. Polynesian teachers faced many problems as they not only had to learn a new culture and a new language, but also faced new diseases, such as malaria. The death rate was high and the recognition given to these teachers was (and still is) almost non-existent. Eventually some Solomon Islander teachers became available, with a few coming from Choiseul and others from islands in the proximate area. The combination of European, Polynesian, and Solomon Islander missionaries brought the spread of the Gospel but it also brought conflict. The extent to which the missionaries were successful depended on how well difficulties were handled, and also on how well they adapted to their new environment. Not the least important was the strength of the faith of the European missionary as he faced intransigent Choiseulese, sickness, death of his children, separation and isolation.

Huber and Lutekhaus argue that studies of colonialism and imperialism have avoided the study of missionaries, and that those that did considered the subject reinforced stereotypes. They argue that the scholar who attempts to study missionaries is faced with ambivalence, citing the way in which early anthropological studies portrayed missionaries as 'biased and amateur observers of native people and sometimes,

⁷ Donald Denoon, ed., *The Cambridge History of the Pacific Islanders*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1997), pp. 236-7.

irresponsible meddlers in native life', which was often the case.⁸ Missionaries were viewed as either culture wreckers or as agents of cultural change. Modern colonial history, they say, has also been against 'narrow and self-serving accounts by in-house mission historians'.⁹ Hagiographical accounts that glorify missionaries are plentiful, and are usually in-house publications written for the purposes of the mission. To quote Kenelm Burridge: 'For a missionary being a missionary is entirely self-justifying. Most seek neither economic [n]or political rewards . . . Their reward lies in the ways their lives may be judged in heaven as in the imitation of Christ'.¹⁰ With this determination, John F Goldie set out to place a missionary on Choiseul.

Stephen Rabone Rooney had a family heritage of missions. His father, Isaac Rooney had been a missionary to New Britain, and his mother had died on a boat in the Western Solomons while en route to New Britain, leaving Rooney, his sister Minnie and brother Fred, to be cared for temporarily by one Mrs MacDonald on Santa Ana, an island in the Solomons group. He also had missionary connections, the Rabones, on his maternal side. As a young boy, Rooney had answered the call for an evangelist to serve on the mission field at a large public meeting by jumping to his feet and proclaiming 'I will go!'¹¹ He was met with discouraging remarks when he made the decision to serve in the Western Solomons. Comments such as he would be a 'darned fool to try and make pals of head-hunters' were ignored as he followed his calling.¹² As a member of the original party to the Western Solomons, led by Goldie, Rooney had several years of experience in the area before he was posted to Choiseul. When Rooney arrived at Babatana, there was dissension among the people about whether or not to allow him ashore, but Rooney, in another case of the imposition of a missionary upon unwilling

⁸ Huber and Lutkhaus, p. 5. George Brown considered himself a scientist. See Helen Gardner, *Gathering for God: George Brown in Oceania* (Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2006).

⁹ Huber and Lutkhaus, pp. 5-6.

¹⁰ Kenelm Burridge, *In the Way; a Study of Christian Missionary Endeavours* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1991), p. 9.

¹¹ *AMMR*, 4 November 1908, p. 6.

¹² *ibid.* In an article in the *AMMR*, Stephen Rooney was described as 'His Excellency's [Sir George Le Hunte] roly poly playmate.' The two had met on a South Sea Island, 33 years previously, where Rooney's father was preaching. He was invited to the missionary's home and befriended the young, curly headed Rooney and they had 'romped and gambolled' together. They met again at a missionary meeting in Melbourne 33 years later. Le Hunte had served as Judicial Commissioner for the WPHC and then as Administrator of Papua New Guinea. He became Governor of South Australia in 1903.

subjects, landed anyway.¹³ Since his wife and son did not accompany him in the early days, Rooney's first few months were spent with little or no contact with Europeans.



Figure 7: Rooney's house for the first nine days after his arrival on Choiseul. McDonald Collection.

During the first few days following the arrival of Rooney's wife and son at Babatana, he was faced with their near-fatal illness. After this crisis was past, he had to become accustomed to the living conditions on the island, befriend the local people, and develop some sort of relationship with them, he also had to establish himself as an authority figure in the area surrounding the mission station at Babatana. He described the people as 'a frightfully dirty, sickly, and lazy crowd' before the mission arrived but, by 1908, he saw that the efforts of the mission were producing a 'cleaner, healthier and more industrious people'.¹⁴ The early days were marked by times of fear. He faced threats from some of the Choiseulese who clearly resented his presence. In one reported incident a gun was held to his head by a 'fanatic'. The cartridge was defective and the gun did not fire.¹⁵ In August 1905 a punitive expedition to Choiseul was made as a result of the murder of Captain Findlayson on his vessel *Savo*. Babatana men were implicated and an expedition was mounted by the Royal Navy ship *Emerald*, assisted by Captain William Hamilton, a plantation owner and pearl fisherman based at Choiseul Bay. Lucy Money wrote that she was told about a large number of villages being burnt over a long stretch of the coast. Several people were shot either resisting or escaping, and only the mission station and the

¹³ Luxton, *Isles of Solomon*, p. 73.

¹⁴ *AMMR*, 4 April 1908, p. 22.

¹⁵ *AMMR*, 4 November 1908, p. 8.

people under Rooney's care were left alone. Metcalfe later wrote that the accused crew members were from the only village in the Babatana area that had not yet converted to Christianity.¹⁶ An account of the incident, the punitive attack and its aftermath can be found in Hamilton's journal and in the Western Pacific High Commission (WPHC) archives. Australian Benjamin Danks (General Secretary for Foreign Missions) expressed his gratitude that God had spared Rooney's life 'through the troubles that have come upon you in connection with the death of Mr Findlayson'.¹⁷

The settlement of Sasamuqa, where the Methodist mission station was located, was in a position that was exposed to westerly gales. The weather, coupled with a treacherous entrance to the bay through dangerous reefs, meant that the station was isolated from the main shipping routes and traders did not call there regularly. Danks acknowledged Rooney's isolation in a letter, saying 'You must oft times be very lonely in your new district so far away from everyone with whom you may hold intelligent and helpful intercourse'.¹⁸ The isolation affected the missionaries in many ways. In 1910, Rooney wrote that his wife suffered from 'nervous attacks which cause her to become lowspirited and depressed'.¹⁹ Rooney wanted a boat to allow his wife and son to travel outside the immediate surroundings of the station, as there was a European family, the Thompsons, living further up the coast at Moli, north of Sasamuqa. He believed it would be beneficial for his wife and son to visit neighbouring villages on the coast as well as the Thompsons.²⁰ The arrival of a new boat later the same year gave them that opportunity, with one of the first trips taking his wife, and son Gordon to visit their 'good friends' the Thompsons for an overnight stay which they both 'thoroughly enjoyed'.²¹

The physical isolation of distance on Choiseul was exacerbated by the irregular nature of the shipping in the area, which meant that supplies of food were also erratic. Isolation from the rest of the mission was another factor. Choiseul appeared to be the forgotten island. Missionary sister Lucy Money is quoted as saying that this probably stemmed from John Goldie's belief that the only place that anything good could come

¹⁶ Metcalfe papers, notes by Lucy Money, p. 167, MAA.

¹⁷ Danks to Rooney, 6 November 1905, item 674 in Letterbook 52/1, MOM.

¹⁸ Danks to Rooney, 2 July 1906, item 807, Box 223, MOM.

¹⁹ Rooney to Danks, 17 February 1910, Box 116, MOM.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Rooney to Danks, 3 August 1910, Box 116, MOM.

from was Roviana.²² Together with this physical isolation there was also the emotional isolation from family and friends to contend with. The one request common to all the missionaries on Choiseul until the 1960s was for an efficient, suitable boat to enable them to travel around the island. Without a boat they had to travel by canoe. This was usually a large canoe, paddled by several men but was still a slow and expensive means of transport as the crew had to be paid and fed, and sometimes accommodated, during a long journey, and it was an inherently uncomfortable way to travel.

The Mission station at Sasamuqa employed local men to work on buildings, in the gardens, and on the small plantation. Without the finances available to pay them very much, the men often sought employment on other islands. In 1910, Rooney recounts the loss of 13 boys who left with a trader and whom he hoped would end up on Vella Lavella with the Methodist missionary Reginald C Nicholson. This event upset him. 'I received a big shock and was deeply grieved when I found that 13 of our school and *Lotu* boys had cleared off for at least six months with a visiting trader . . . it is heartbreaking and most disappointing when one is giving his life for them . . .'²³ He continued to say that when this happens the missionary receives 'a knock out' and that he felt 'very cut up over [his] recent loss'.²⁴ His distress demonstrated his commitment to the Choiseulese and also his despair at having failed in some way. He turned blame for his despair on to the mission administration and bemoaned the lack of arable land; he could not retain the local men without employment for them. He did, however, show commitment to his faith by declaring his reliance on God to help him through the hard times, and also promising still to pray for the boys.²⁵ Rooney's correspondence and comments in the Quarterly Meeting minutes illustrate his attitude to his mission work. For example, in 1912 he added a note to the end of the minutes: 'this meeting places on record its gratitude to God for his manifold blessing to us as a Church and people. As a result of the working of the Holy Spirit the *Lotu* is spreading and growing. To God be the glory'.²⁶ In 1910 a pleasurable diversion came when Rooney was able to conduct the wedding of a European couple, Hugh Scott (from Fiji), and Clara Austen (from the nearby Shortland Islands), whose

²² Communication from Sister Lucy Money, 25 October 2004.

²³ Rooney to Danks, 3 August 1910, Box 116, MOM.

²⁴ *ibid.*

²⁵ *ibid.*

²⁶ Minutes of the September Quarterly Meeting, 5 October 1912, George G. Carter Collection, MAA.

family had been in the area for many years. MacDonald was the eldest daughter of the family which had cared for the Rooney children after the death of their mother.²⁷ The first baptisms took place on Choiseul in the same year, with ten men receiving the sacrament.

Luxton argued that Goldie was particularly fond of Rooney because they had been a 'perfect team', and the friendship forged between them in the pioneering days of the mission had continued.²⁸ Rooney claimed to have opened Choiseul up to the traders and to have paved the way to extend missionary work on the island.²⁹ He instituted Quarterly Meetings on Choiseul, which Metcalfe described as the basic meeting of the Methodist Administration. Although they were essentially a one man affair, with a few teachers coming along occasionally, they provided the beginning of a traditional Methodist structure. The minutes of these meetings contained a numbered list of questions, typical of the way in which Methodists conducted their business affairs. The questions in 1906 included: Who are present? What is the number of members this quarter? What is the state of the Sunday School? (The answer to this was 'there are no Sunday Schools in the circuit as yet').³⁰ The meetings did not continue after Rooney left because Rycroft considered them futile, but Binêt (and after him Metcalfe) reinstated them during their terms.³¹ Although not the tough, pioneering type of missionary, Rooney was a man of great faith and he relied on this to support him through the difficulties he faced in his early years on Choiseul.

In 1913, Rooney decided to return to Australia due to his continuing ill-health. His replacement was Harold Rycroft, who had been based at the Mission's head station at Roviana, and who had also been part of the pioneering party to the Solomons. Some of the younger teachers on Choiseul were acquainted with him as they had undertaken their training at the District Training School there, under his guidance.³² His years were marked by violent incidents, with fighting between tribes at Senga and Virulata creating a dangerous situation for the teachers posted in the area. His reports in the *AMMR* are

²⁷ Rooney to Danks, 3 August 1910.

²⁸ Luxton, *Isles of Solomon*, p. 79.

²⁹ *AMMR*, 4 November 1908, p. 8.

³⁰ Minutes of the first Quarterly Meeting held at Babatana 27 December 1906. George G. Carter Collection, MAA.

³¹ Metcalfe comments on Hilliard's thesis, in David Hilliard's papers in Allan Davidson's Collection. Copy in my possession.

³² Luxton, *Isles of Solomon*, p. 80.

frequently about fighting between groups on the island. He wrote that no sooner had he returned from settling 'some trouble' down the coast than another uprising occurred near the mission station. A raid occurred at Lologai in 1916 to procure human heads for 'splitting' to celebrate the launch of two canoes.³³ Shortly before his departure in the same year, he described a violent incident where two women accused of sorcery were bound up tightly as was customary. One died, and a male accomplice who had escaped was later killed. The local chief, for some reason, blamed the Methodist teacher in the nearby village thereby putting him in danger. Another incident which caused concern for Rycroft was the death, through illness, of Simon Peter, a Roviana trained man who worked in the Ririo area. Rycroft considered this a serious loss, as mission work in the area was opposed by a heathen chief who was threatening anyone who attended *Lotu*, and Simon Peter had planned to build a new Christian village away from his influence. However, he died before this could be done and the chief's threats were then directed at the man's family.³⁴

More accusations of witchcraft at Varisi led to the death of one woman and the sale of another into a tribe where she was most likely going to be killed as part of the funerary rites performed for a chief's death. The woman who died was strung up to a tree by her wrists and left there for three days, naked, and subject to abuse, before being dragged, still alive, to the sea where she was thrown in to drown. The teacher who was stationed nearby protested about the incidents; indeed the subsequent threats to his own life led him to 'wander around' in the daytime and at night to paddle a canoe out to sea and float around until day break to avoid capture. He and his wife and child were subsequently taken to Roviana by Rycroft.³⁵ Such events were still common occurrences on Choiseul regardless of the influence of the missionaries. The tension that these events caused had a profound effect on the missionaries. Rycroft and Rooney both speak of their wives being afflicted with 'nerves' or nervous complaints.³⁶ The constant fear that an attack might occur clearly required a certain type of character in a missionary. Rycroft

³³ 5 October 1914, p. 17; 4 December 1914, p. 21; 4 February 1915, p. 19; 4 August 1916, pp. 16-17; 4 October 1916, pp. 15-16; 4 January 1917, p. 22; 5 March 1917, pp. 15-16, *AMMR*

³⁴ Rycroft to Wheen, 4 June 1917, File 554, MOM

³⁵ Rycroft to Wheen, 19 July 1917, file 554, MOM; Another report of a murder during inter-tribal fighting, 5 June 1916, p. 17, *AMMR*.

³⁶ Rooney to Danks, 17 February 1910, Box 116, MOM; Rycroft to Wheen, 4 June 1917, file 554, MOM.

seemed to view his appointment to Choiseul as a necessary way to progress through the mission organisation, and never expressed any great spiritual enthusiasm, unlike that expressed by Rooney. Rycroft's appointment lasted until 1917, when he was sent to the station at Bilua on Vella Lavella.³⁷ A tribute made at the Methodist Conference in 1959 stated,

'Harold R Rycroft came to Queensland in 1907. He was one of a group of young Englishmen who had responded to the call of our Home Mission Society to enlist in the great task of meeting the spiritual needs of a young and rapidly expanding country. Mr. Rycroft at once identified himself with the pioneering work and rendered valiant service in the Kingaroy, Goondiwindi and other centres. He was the typical Englishman engaged in a great venture for Christ, and hearing of the need for workers in the Overseas Mission fields he offered for service and in 1912 went to the Solomon Islands. For fourteen years he toiled with marked enthusiasm, ever seeking to interpret the needs and aspirations of the native people. Without delay he began the important work of translating the New Testament into the native language. The fruitage of his work is still being gathered'.³⁸

In 1917, Vincent Le Cornu Binêt, together with his wife, were appointed to Choiseul. Originally from Jersey in the Channel Islands, he had been serving as a minister in Western Australia before he offered himself for mission work. John Wheen, the acting General Secretary of the Methodist Overseas Mission in Australia, described Binêt as 'physically strong and of clear spiritual vision'.³⁹

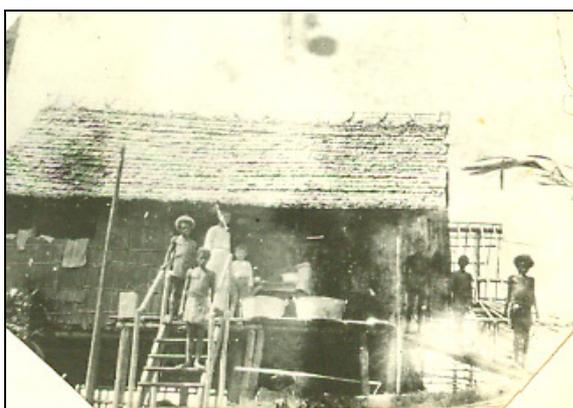


Figure 8: The missionary's first house at Senga. Photographic Collection, MAA.

³⁷ Luxton notes that Rycroft left Choiseul in 1916, but correspondence was still being written from Choiseul in 1917, describing events there.

³⁸ Queensland Methodist Conference proceedings, 1959, provided by Rev. Barry Dangerfield, Uniting Church, Queensland in personal communication, email 22 October 2009.

³⁹ Wheen to Rycroft, 19 October 1917, File 554, MOM.

On his arrival Binêt was confronted with the continuing conflict between the Senga and Virulata people. His goal was to bring peace to these two warring tribes. Senga was on the other side of the island so any visits entailed walking through the jungle covered mountainous terrain, or a long canoe trip. He wrote extensively (with a flourishing copperplate style) about the conflict and its eventual resolution; although minor skirmishes between the two groups still continued for many years. He was also able to assist in making representations to the administration about the conflict. The Methodist Mission attributed the resolution of the conflict largely to its efforts, although the Administration had made some attempts at achieving peace.⁴⁰ By doing so the Methodist mission validated its presence in ways than just the spread of Christianity. They became peacemakers; recognised as such by the Administration, thus giving themselves a status in the Protectorate as something other than missionaries. Their success also provided 'a ripping good yarn' to use in Mission publications and to raise finances for their mission. The peace ceremonies were celebrated annually for several years, and articles recording the events were published in the *Open Door*.⁴¹

Eventually it was decided that there would be two mission stations on the island, one at Sasamuqa, and one at Senga on the north eastern coast. Doctor Clifford James was appointed to Choiseul in 1928. Binêt was put in charge of the Senga station and, together with a nursing sister, developed a small hospital. Retrenchment of the doctor and some of the sisters in the 1930s meant that Binêt left in sole charge of the Senga station until he left the island in 1934. As his appointment overlapped with that of Metcalfe, he was in an unenviable position. Here were two strongly opinionated men who had to demonstrate some degree of cooperation, albeit reluctantly, if only to show Christian ideals to the Choiseulese. Binêt also had a fiery temper and faced Metcalfe and Doctor James head-on in many disputes. Sister Coralie Murray described 'a terrible row between the Doctor and Mr Binêt but Mr Binêt did nearly all the rowing. All in front of the natives too'.⁴² One notable conflict concerned the wearing of European clothes by the Choiseulese. Dr James

⁴⁰ More detailed accounts of the conflict and the resolution can be found in Luxton, *Isles of Solomon*, pp. 84-88; *Open Door*; *AMMR*; Metcalfe Papers; Metcalfe Diary; Corben, *My Father's Journey*, pp. 58-64.

⁴¹ *Open Door*, September 1932, p. 4-6; September 1930, p. 2-3; September 1923, 12-13; September 1922 n.p.

⁴² Coralie Murray Diary, 8 February 1929, copy in my possession.

argued that there were problems caused by the wearing of clothes, such as health and sanitary problems, but Binêt wanted European clothes to stay in some form.⁴³

As Chairman of the Choiseul Circuit, Binêt was in charge. His position, however, was challenged by Metcalfe's arrival in 1920 and their difficult relationship lasted until Binêt left Choiseul. The intensity of the clashes between the two men was exacerbated by the isolation of the island, the knowledge that there was no escape, and the knowledge that any resolution from Goldie could take months. The tensions between missionaries are seldom dealt with in scholarly research but were significant in both hampering and damaging the work undertaken.

John Rudd Metcalfe, a Yorkshire man, was trained at Cliffe College in the Wye Valley in England, and then travelled to Australia, where he served as a Home Missioner for several years. Following his ordination in 1920, Metcalfe responded to a call for missionaries to the Solomon Islands. He found life difficult on Choiseul. Metcalfe desperately wanted to be the superintendent. He accused the incumbent, Binêt, of leaving things in a mess and leaving the buildings in a state of disrepair. He saw himself as the only one who could do things in an acceptable manner. Almost immediately he found himself in conflict with Binêt, accusing him of being reluctant to delegate any of his responsibilities.⁴⁴ In 1927, on the establishment of the new station at Senga, Metcalfe objected to the style of the church that was being built because he felt that it should have been less ostentatious.⁴⁵ However, he did make positive comments about Binêt's polished manners.

In 1925, Goldie complained about Metcalfe's attitude towards Binêt. Metcalfe argued that he recognised Binêt's role as superintendent was 'purely nominal', but if it became anything more, it would lead to the division of the circuit or to his own resignation. There followed an intense argument with Goldie regarding Metcalfe's willingness to be a servant before he was a leader. Metcalfe contended that all superintendents on the field were autocrats and that chairmen were even more so. He believed that there were no checks on these positions, and that the Quarterly Meetings

⁴³ Binêt correspondence with Dr C. James 1931; Wolfers, *Race Relations and Colonial Rule in Papua New Guinea* p. 46.

⁴⁴ Corben, *My Father's Journey*, p. 58.

⁴⁵ *ibid.* p. 151.

had little influence, to which Goldie retorted that they were only finance meetings. Further, Metcalfe argued that he had to carry Binêt financially because he was not producing enough money from his station at Senga.⁴⁶ After the 1924 Synod, Metcalfe said he felt all Synods were unsatisfactory, and the business and ‘spiritual matters . . . did not receive adequate discussion’ and that Goldie held ‘such absolute sway’.⁴⁷ In 1925, Metcalfe described Binêt as ‘no business man’ and as a man who ‘has absolutely no eye for expenses’.⁴⁸ He further criticised Binêt’s preaching as ‘too long and continued after the climax [of the account of his trip to New Zealand]’.⁴⁹

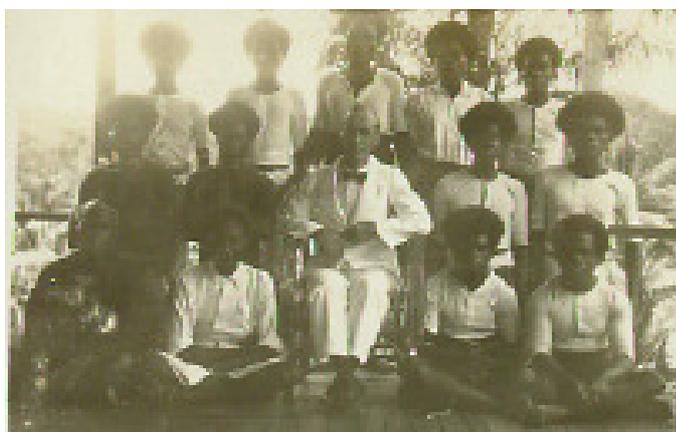


Figure 9: Metcalfe and his teachers. Jean Dalziel Collection MAA.

It is simplistic to think that Metcalfe’s significance was due to his length of service on Choiseul, which, although interrupted twice by appointments to Teop in Bougainville, spanned almost 15 years prior to World War Two (WWII). His long term obviously contributed to a certain extent because he had time to make changes that the earlier missionaries did not. Nonetheless, his determination led to the transformation of many aspects of life on Choiseul, and in the wider mission. He changed the way many administrative tasks were performed. His arguments with Goldie about the criteria for listing numbers of members led to more accurate data being presented at Quarterly Meetings, and at Synod. Metcalfe believed that members who were no longer leading a Christian lifestyle should not be counted as members until they returned to an acceptable way of life. Goldie had apparently been including adherents and church attendees as well

⁴⁶ *ibid.* p. 116.

⁴⁷ 9 December 1924, Metcalfe Diary.

⁴⁸ 30 September 1925, Metcalfe Diary.

⁴⁹ 4 October 1925, Metcalfe Diary.

as baptised members in his tally. Furthermore there was the debate between the two men about whether members under discipline for wrong doing could be counted as members.⁵⁰ In 1925, Metcalfe also initiated the formation of Village Councils to run the villages in an efficient manner. Guidelines for the appointment of a Village Headman for each village are recorded in the Quarterly Meeting minutes. Teachers were advised to select six people for a committee which would deal with land matters, do work to keep the village tidy and clean, guard the village against crime, and help the people make decisions about things concerning the work of the Church.⁵¹ A native teacher, Joeli Dereveke, had observed that the missionaries were unable to agree amongst themselves so, in 1933, it was decided to commence monthly meetings for mission staff to consider any problems, and to improve the impression given to the Chosieulese. The teachers and leaders met monthly to discuss village and general affairs.⁵²

In 1934, following his return from Teop, on Bougainville, Metcalfe wrote a very bitter letter to Rev. Arthur Scrivin, the General Secretary of the Board of Foreign Missions in New Zealand, about the conditions on Choiseul and in the Solomons District generally. He again talked about his desperate need for a boat other than the whaleboat they already had, and also about his frustration at having to look after the whole Choiseul circuit with his wife as his only helper. He continued, sarcastically, to invite Scrivin to come and visit but only when Metcalfe was present on the island so that he could have the pleasure of taking him on a trip by canoe and whaleboat.⁵³ In August that year he described his modes of transport as ‘shoe, canoe and friendly launch . . .’.⁵⁴ In 1936, Metcalfe expressed concern that the Choiseulese was a dying race due to the lack of adequate medical supplies such as quinine which was to be taken prophylactically for malaria, and N.A.B. (norarsenobillon) for injections to treat yaws (tropical ulcers).⁵⁵ The problem of getting another Sister appointed to Choiseul to replace Ethel McMillan, who was retiring, greatly exercised Metcalfe. There had been six white staff on Choiseul in the

⁵⁰ Teachers were placed under discipline for various offences, usually described as immorality although instances of murder, assault, theft and attitude towards in-laws and other family members are also mentioned. Metcalfe to Scrivin, 9 June 1937, Scrivin to Metcalfe, 22 September 1937, Metcalfe papers.

⁵¹ Minutes of the Quarterly Meeting, 26 December 1925, George G. Carter Collection, MAA.

⁵² Corben, *My Father's Journey* p. 244.

⁵³ Metcalfe to Scrivin, 11 July 1934, Metcalfe Papers.

⁵⁴ *ibid.*, 20 March 1934,

⁵⁵ *ibid.*, 12 October 1936.

past, even seven for a short time, and he asserted that his wife was not to be counted as a staff member because she was not, and that this position was supported by the New Zealand Methodist Women's Fellowship who provided financial support and also approved the appointment of missionary sisters.⁵⁶ Eventually, Scrivin replied concerning Metcalfe's 'querulous complaints' regarding the appointment of more sisters to Choiseul. Metcalfe responded that 'it is futile trying to convince [Scrivin] when your mind is made up' Metcalfe then began calling Scrivin 'O Brother beloved', while objecting to being told that he made 'statements that were foolish and futile'.⁵⁷

Metcalfe also kept a firm hand on the work of the Sisters and, in 1924, outlined a policy for what their work should cover, based on Methodist Mission policy. The guidelines were:

1. To train girls for leadership in villages in body, mind and spirit.
2. To visit the sick and minister to their needs.
3. To teach school.
4. To visit the villages, teach sewing, attend the sick, hold Bible classes if possible.⁵⁸

This followed continuing disputes with Sister Ada Saunders and Sister Ethel McMillan who both wanted to preach. Metcalfe's attitude towards the Sisters is very similar to that of Danks, who, in 1908, commented that 'Women who have been specially trained as nurses look upon themselves as different people altogether to women who have been simply trained in education matters We need 'a real good, sensible Christian woman. One who can enter into the lives of the people and win their love and confidence'⁵⁹ Nonetheless, McMillan stayed for 25 years, although Saunders left later in 1924 for health reasons, and probably also because of continuing disagreements with Metcalfe.⁶⁰

In 1923 Metcalfe criticised the ability of the Choiseulese to write (on slates) and even to copy from the blackboard, calling them 'pretty dense' and saying that they made 'no effort'. This ignored the fact that this society was traditionally oral and had only recently been introduced to the written word by the missionaries.⁶¹

⁵⁶ *ibid.*, 13 February 1937. The 'staff' at its peak on Choiseul would have included Metcalfe and wife, Binêt and wife, the doctor, and two sisters.

⁵⁷ *ibid.*, 28 February 1938.

⁵⁸ Metcalfe Diary, 1 February 1924.

⁵⁹ Danks to Goldie, 30 April 1908, box 227, MOM.

⁶⁰ See Chapter 4 this thesis.

⁶¹ Corben, *My Father's Journey*, p. 80.

Notable in Metcalfe's diaries are the references to the white residents of the area. He made frequent entries which include the names of plantation managers on Choiseul, masters of various ships, and other visitors. There were several European families on Choiseul during the 1920s and 1930s, including the Scotts at Supisai, the Davys at Luti, the Walshes at Moli with a French Canadian named Dubois, and also a Mr Flynn, location not stated. The loneliness of months spent without contact with other Europeans must have been joyously broken with the arrival of these people, and journeys around the island which made contact with the European settlers must have been eagerly anticipated. There was also a Mr Thompson, who attended *Lotu* one Christmas Day, but ran screaming from the building as he suffered recurring from shell-shock as a result of fighting in World War One.⁶² Not only would conversation in English be possible, but some even attended the services at Babatana, especially one, Mr Davey, who seemed to be a great companion for Metcalfe, and generously donated money to the work.⁶³

Metcalfe served on Choiseul from 1921 until 1929, then spent five years at Teop on Bougainville, returning to Choiseul in 1934. He remained there until he was evacuated in 1942, and returned in 1946. In 1951 he took Goldie's place as chairman of the Solomon Islands District and retired from the mission field in 1957.

Reverend John Williams, of the London Missionary Society (LMS), suggested the use of Pacific Island missionaries in 1821. He wanted to use 'native agents to pioneer the way for more cultured workers'.⁶⁴ Men came from Tonga, Samoa, and Fiji and were called 'Native Teachers', not missionaries, in most Methodist records. Several missions in Melanesia employed them, including the London Missionary Society (LMS) in Papua New Guinea and the New Hebrides, the Melanesian Mission in the Solomons, and the Methodist Mission in the Solomons and New Britain. In the Solomons the first denomination to employ Pacific Island teachers was the Melanesian Mission in the 1870s.⁶⁵ This mission trained the Solomon Islanders in Auckland and then moved the

⁶² Metcalfe Diary, 25 December 1922.

⁶³ Corben, *My Father's Journey* Metcalfe Diary, 1 October 1921; 6 December 1921. Davy was the manager at the Burns Philp plantation at Luti.

⁶⁴ Ron and Marjorie Crocombe, ed., *Polynesian Missions in Melanesia: From Samoa, Cook Islands and Tonga to Papua New Guinea and New Caledonia*, (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, 1982), p. 1.

⁶⁵ Raeburn Lange, *Island Ministers: Indigenous Leadership in Nineteenth Century Pacific Christianity* (Christchurch: Pandanus Books, 2005), p. 285.

training facility to Norfolk Island. The training was carried out in circumstances which were quite different from their usual surroundings, but Lange argues that this gave the Islanders status and authority when they returned to their homeland.⁶⁶ The Methodists in the Solomons trained their Solomon Island teachers first in a Circuit or local training school, and then selected students were sent to the District Training Institution at Koqekolo. The argument that the Melanesian Mission was slow to evangelise much of the Solomon Islands was attributed partly to its dependence on teachers being trained away from the area rather than by its using suitable local converts and training them on the mission, as the Methodists did.⁶⁷ The Catholics also employed Pacific Islanders as Catechists and assistants. The Marists brought Catechists from Fiji with them, including one who was a Solomon Islander. The first Solomon Islander Catholic priest was consecrated in 1966.⁶⁸ The South Sea Evangelical Mission, which operated in the South Solomons and had an emphasis on congregational self-government and self-support, emphasised the use of indigenous workers alongside a few European missionaries.⁶⁹

Following the first Methodist baptisms on Choiseul in 1910, the first batch of Choiseulese were sent to the local Circuit Training Institution (at Babatana) in 1911. As Rycroft did not hold Quarterly Meetings during his time, there are no records of who was sent to the training Institution. Stephen Gadapeta and Malachi Tipili were most likely to have been sent there during the period because their names appear in the 1922 minutes with the designation of teacher.⁷⁰ Gadapeta was given the status of a catechist at the Synod held on Choiseul, at Sasamuqa, 12 November 1925.⁷¹ He was never ordained because Goldie did not give permission, and when Goldie relented and invited him to be ordained, he refused.⁷² The first Solomon Islander to be ordained was Belshazaar Gina, in 1938, but he was never given authority to administer the sacraments. In 1992, the Conference of the New Zealand Methodist Church recorded an apology for this. The first full ordination of a Solomon Islander was not until 1952, after Goldie had retired and

⁶⁶ *ibid.* p. 285.

⁶⁷ *ibid.* p. 286.

⁶⁸ Michael Aike from Malaita.

⁶⁹ Lange, *Island Ministers: Indigenous Leadership in Nineteenth Century Pacific Christianity* p. 288-9.

⁷⁰ Minutes of the Quarterly Meeting held at Sasamuqa, Choiseul, George G.file 116, Carter Papers, MAA.

⁷¹ Metcalfe Diary, 12 November 1925.

⁷² Metcalfe Papers, Allan Davidson Collection, copies in my possession.

Metcalf became the chairman of the Solomon Island District. The first Choiseulese to be ordained was Leslie Boseto in 1964.⁷³

Polynesian teachers in the Solomons were in an alien environment. Not only was the appearance of the people and their customs completely different from their own, but there were also diseases to which they were not accustomed. Malaria was endemic in the area and many of their number succumbed to it. When they became ill, the traditional support of relatives was not there. They were often alone with their wives, with no one else to help.⁷⁴ The teachers were drawn from Samoa, Fiji, and Tonga which were areas already occupied by the Methodist Mission. Again this presented an intriguing mix of Polynesian people who would probably not usually spend time together. Possibly because of the physical conditions, or just because of their human nature, unrest developed between some of the teachers and the mission beginning in 1906. In 1908 a Fijian teacher with the Methodist mission at Babatana, Simioni Teki, wrote that the teachers believed that the work of the mission was bad. 'We the teachers are in sorrow because of this. Because of this Mr [and] Mrs Adams went back to Norfolk Is[land]. They do not like the way the work is carried on here'.⁷⁵ 'The Sister is going back to Sydney in trouble; the Samoans requested to be sent back to Samoa, one of the Tongans too. . . I say Mr Goldie's and Mr Rooney's work is bad'.⁷⁶ In an undated letter Aminio, a teacher on Choiseul, wrote to Danks, 'If the English are not being cared for, who will look after the natives'.⁷⁷ Several of the incidents described were due to misunderstandings of the situation, with some of the allegations are based on misunderstandings of the events he observed. The sister referred to, Nurse F. E. Moore, was not based on Choiseul, and she

⁷³ The first Solomon Islander to be ordained was Timothy Piani in 1952. Metcalfe, in Hilliard papers. Leadley, *Ever Widening Circles*, pp. 22, 37.

⁷⁴ Sione Latukefu, 'South Sea Islands Missionaries' in James A. Boutilier, Hughes Daniel T. and Tiffany Sharon W., ed., *Mission, Church and Sect in Oceania* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1978), p. 97.

⁷⁵ Simioni Teki to Danks, 21 April 1908, Box 116, MOM.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ A meeting of missionaries and teachers was held at Kokeqolo, Rubiana Lagoon, on April 1 1909 for the purpose of enquiring into 'certain statements by two of the teachers of the district'. Arthur J Small, missionary from Fiji, who was brought in to adjudicate in the matter, noted no grounds for Aminio's complaints about the Samoans wanting to return home. He said that Aminio had proved himself a mischief maker between the teachers, and between the teachers and the missionaries. The December Quarterly Meeting sent Aminio to Fiji in disgrace. Small to Rooney, 31 March 1908, Box 116, MOM; In preparation for his banishment, Aminio went to Ririo on Choiseul to collect his belongings and found his house had been wrecked and everything had been taken. Aminio to Danks, 21 September 1908, Box 116, MOM.

returned to Australia because she could not cope with the conditions with which she had to contend. She was unable to maintain good relationships with the Solomon Islands staff and argued with the ministers. The Adams family were from Norfolk Island, and had only intended to spend a short period on Choiseul with Mr Adams working as a builder. In fact the fear that Mrs Adams was from the Seventh Day Adventist Church and would want to celebrate the Sabbath on Saturday had caused some consternation within the mission. The return of the Samoans was most likely due to the German Administration in Samoa banning any more Samoan missionaries being transferred to the Solomons.

The other complaints from the Fijian teachers indicated that they lacked instructions; they need more money, as they complained about the miserable stipend. They also made accusations that Rooney and Goldie did not have their interests at heart and so were not looking after them as they should, and that teachers were threatening to leave.⁷⁸ The situation was viewed as being different from New Guinea and New Britain. The Solomons were seen as a difficult land, ‘much better is New Guinea for that is a land of food, but here they are great on eating lime [sic]’. They asked why they were treated in the same way as the Solomon Islanders, saying ‘It is true we have the same black skin but we know the things of good and evil’.⁷⁹ During his time in Fiji, Teki had heard that ‘the Governor in Fiji has once and for all closed the door against Fijians going out to new lands’.⁸⁰ In 1911, following his return to the Solomons from Fiji, Teki expressed more concerns, saying that ‘God’s ship in the Solomons is a shipwreck’⁸¹

The other main group of Polynesian missionaries came from Tonga. They had received training in theology as well as advanced studies. The lack of recognition of these men and their families can be seen in the manner in which the missionaries, especially Metcalfe, referred to them. Their names are rarely used. Metcalfe mentioned ‘the Tongan’ frequently, although he does occasionally refer to Willie (Tuamotu) by his first name, and Willi Faiga is sometimes mentioned by name as well.⁸² A photograph in the *Open Door* was captioned ‘Two Tongan widows from Choiseul’, though no names were

⁷⁸

⁷⁹ Aminio Maitiu to Danks, 14 August 1906, 461, in 265, MOM. It is unclear to what he was referring regarding ‘eating lime’. It may have been betel nut or ‘bush limes’.

⁸⁰ Teki to Danks (the Great Elder) 5 March 1912.

⁸¹ Choiseul Quarterly Meeting, 3 October, 1911; 1 October 1911, Koiauko [teacher] Simone Teki (translation).

⁸² 1 March 1925, Metcalfe Diary.

given.⁸³ The Quarterly Meeting minutes of April 1910 noted the death of Taitusi Rauga, a Fijian, following an illness, at Babatana. This apathetic attitude towards the Tongans missionaries continued into the 1970s; as Sister Lucy Money wrote in her memoir that she had been in charge at Sasamuqa for nine years because there had been no superintendent minister, overlooking the fact that at least one ordained Tongan minister had been appointed to Choiseul during that period.⁸⁴ Tongan and Fijian missionaries were not permitted to take part in financial meetings up until as late as 1952, and a resolution was passed in that year saying that fully ordained Tongan and Fijian ministers would not be permitted to administer the sacraments except 'on the instruction of, and under the guidance of, a European superintendent'.⁸⁵

Milton Talasasa notes that many of the names of the Polynesian teachers are missing from the official records. As his thesis begins in 1922, he does not address those teachers who were trained and who worked in the Solomons from 1902. His adamant statement that Luxton pays no attention to Pacific Island missionaries in his list of missionary personnel is only partially true. The names of those in the pioneering party are included on page 215.⁸⁶ Talasasa also argues that Goldie ignored the pioneering party, but their names are included in the *AMMR* report of the teachers who went to the Solomons.⁸⁷

There are also references to the Tongan teachers on Choiseul in Metcalfe's diaries, although not usually by name, and also in the correspondence from other missionaries regarding Choiseul. Talasasa comments that the names of Solomon Island teachers and catechists begin to appear in District and Conference minutes in 1929. They were however present in the Quarterly Meeting minutes for Choiseul from 1906, with somewhat ambiguous designations which included Prayer Leader, Helper, Teacher, and Elder.⁸⁸

⁸³ *Open Door*, December 1925, p. 7.

⁸⁴ 'God's Care', Lucy Money, unpublished personal memoirs, November 2001.

⁸⁵ Latukefu in Boutilier, ed., *Mission, Church and Sect in Oceania* p. 100.

⁸⁶ Milton Talasasa, "His Name Fades Like an Echo': The Contribution of Pacific Islanders and Solomon Islanders to the Work of the Methodist Mission in Solomon Islands", (University of Auckland, 2004), p. 8; Luxton, *Isles of Solomon* p. 215.

⁸⁷ *AMMR*, 6 May 1902, p. 5.

⁸⁸ Minutes of the Quarterly Meeting held at Sasamuqa, Choiseul, George G. Carter Papers, MAA.

Rooney and Rycroft made little mention of them in the correspondence in the available records except for a reference by Rooney stating that he wanted to have at least five for Choiseul so ‘we might respond to the piteous calls of the heathen’⁸⁹ Metcalfe expressed his hope that some of the ten Tongans arriving in Roviana in 1922 would be appointed to Choiseul. This was at a time when there were many Solomon Islanders were being trained at the District Training School. His attitude had changed by 1925; then he said that Tongans were not suited to Choiseul. Three had died during the previous year and he believed that they should only be used if there were no alternatives.⁹⁰ The prevalent attitude among the white missionaries was that the Polynesian teachers were superior to the Solomon Islanders but inferior to the European missionaries. As a source of labourers for the mission the Pacific islanders were happily received, sent off to an outlying area and forgotten about until something happened to draw attention to them, or there was an occasion to note their names in the Quarterly Meeting minutes. For example, in 1910, Akuila Kuboutawa was unable to attend the meeting because his station, Tamba Tamba, was too far away and he had inadequate transport. In 1911 the following complaint was made about him: ‘Teacher at Tamba Tamba has been aimlessly visiting Faisi for up to 3 weeks. People don’t like him because of this and because of his rush and uncalm on all occasions’.⁹¹ The same year, he was sent to a new posting on Vella Lavella.⁹²

The mode of dress assumed by the Tongan teachers for *Lotu* caused consternation among the European missionaries. They liked to wear black suits and white shirts with a tie, seen as totally unsuitable for the climate, and as somewhat foreboding for the Choiseulese. It is traditional for ministers in Tonga to wear long trousers, a coat and a tie when they were preaching.⁹³ The Tongans threatened to return to Tonga if they were not allowed to wear the outfits, but Metcalfe persisted and persuaded them that a *tivi* (lavalava) was more appropriate, although photographs show that he usually wore trousers and a white open necked shirt. Clearly he was determined to maintain a separation between himself and the Tongan missionaries. Metcalfe noted that the Tongan

⁸⁹ *ibid.*, 15 September 1913.

⁹⁰ Metcalfe Diary 14 April 1925.

⁹¹ *ibid.*, April 4 1911.

⁹² *ibid.*, October 3, 1911.

⁹³ Latukefu in Boutilier, ed., *Mission, Church and Sect in Oceania* p. 99.

at Kerapaqala was ‘dressed in European clothes with dirty old boots which did not add to his beauty’.⁹⁴ Observations were made that the Polynesian missionaries were very strict and were systematically destroying traditionally sacred sites. Their discipline was harsh. According to Latukefu, strong discipline, including corporal punishment was part of their indigenous culture and that is why it was accepted.⁹⁵ Sinclair also cites incidents of physical violence meted out by Samoan missionaries in New Guinea.⁹⁶

Some aspects of the Solomon Islanders’ lifestyle were considered crude by the Polynesian staff. Dwellings were roughly constructed shelters that could be easily abandoned if there was a headhunting raid or other disturbance. Commonly, the Pacific Island style of building was adopted and adapted to the European style, thus making houses more durable now that the earlier risks were no longer relevant, and villages were being established permanently along the coast. The wives of the Polynesian teachers taught the women to weave mats in the Polynesian style, to use as covering for the dirt floors. There did not appear to be a tradition of mat weaving on Choiseul, but there is a tradition of making *kusa* (bags) from string made from bark. These classes gave the missionary wife an opportunity to mix informally with the Choiseulese women. The missionaries’ wives also had the opportunity to demonstrate by example their freedom from traditional taboos in their daily lives. After the wife of a Fijian teacher delivered her baby at the mission station at Roviana and not in a specially designated hut as was the tradition in that area, Helena Goldie carried the new baby into a building where Solomon Islanders were working. This was a clear breach of the tabu that men were not allowed near the mother or baby for 15 days, and caused great alarm among the men.⁹⁷ Willi Tuamotu, a Tongan placed the care of his area, Babatana, into his wife’s (Luisa) hands as he was dying. She ably kept things going at Sasamuqa until Rycroft’s return, despite Goldie offering her the opportunity to return home to Tonga.⁹⁸

Foods such as the Tongan taro, yam, and potatoes, and the customary methods used to cook them were introduced to the Solomon Islands. Forms of Polynesian

⁹⁴ 4 December 1921, Metcalfe Diary.

⁹⁵ Latukefu in Boutilier, ed., *Mission, Church and Sect in Oceania* p. 106.

⁹⁶ Sinclair in Crocombe, ed., *Polynesian Missions in Melanesia: From Samoa, Cook Islands and Tonga to Papua New Guinea and New Caledonia*, p. 24.

⁹⁷ Luxton, *Isles of Solomon*, p. 37.

⁹⁸ *AMMR*, 5 July 1915 and 5 June, 1916, p. 20.

gardening, agriculture and fishing which were ostensibly more advanced than those being practiced were also introduced, in a manner described by Boutilier as ‘sometimes arrogant’.⁹⁹ Latukefu argues that the Samoans were the most arrogant, often requiring to be looked after by the villagers as was the custom in Samoa.¹⁰⁰ The introduction of mat weaving, and other aspects of Polynesian life was similar to the westernisation brought about by the missionaries; a form of Polynesianisation perhaps?

The Polynesian and European missionaries on Choiseul had a certain character which kept them determined to carry out the work no matter what the conditions were. Although they were quite different in their approach to the task, they each had characteristics which made them able to persevere with the work. Is there actually such a thing as a ‘missionary type’? With such diverse personalities it is difficult to argue that they were all one type but they each produced similar outcomes in their work. All saw baptisms, increases in church adherence, changes in the behaviour of the Choiseulese, and a decrease in the amount of violent activity on the island. The earlier missionaries went along with the dictates from the chairman, albeit with Rooney occasionally complaining but couching his complaints in terms of furthering the Kingdom of God. Binêt and Metcalfe were too alike to have ever cooperated to any great extent, and Metcalfe’s jealousy was the overriding factor in the failure of the relationship. Metcalfe nevertheless did not allow his reluctance to share authority to impede progress. Although opinionated, he made sure that people did what he wanted, despite rumblings. Ironically, his persistent requests for a better boat were echoed in 1954 when the minister on Choiseul, Alister McDonald, requested a boat for the mission station, or at least, more visits by a boat. Metcalfe, then chairman of the Solomon Islands District, responded tersely that no circuit required a vessel to call more than one month in three, and that he had managed with canoes and ‘probably travelled more on canoes than any of them’.¹⁰¹ Metcalfe maintained a patronising attitude towards the Pacific Island ministers, including Solomon Islanders. Still, although often anonymous, they were not entirely obscured by the European missionaries. No Solomon Island teacher was considered worthy of

⁹⁹ Boutilier, ed., *Mission, Church and Sect in Oceania* p. 84.

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.* p. 99.

¹⁰¹ Metcalfe to McDonald, 1 April 1954, Chairman’s correspondence 1953-54, Solomon Islands, A152, MAA.

ordination until 1938, and the only Choiseulese given any sort of authority was Stephen Gadapeta who was a catechist.¹⁰² Scotter Bo became the first missionary to be sent to the New Guinea Highlands in 1957, although he was not ordained, and Leslie Boseto was ordained in 1964.¹⁰³

An island can be a fortress or a haven, something to be conquered, or a prison. The role of the landscape, in this case an island, on the actions of an individual makes the island an agent of power.¹⁰⁴ Perhaps for Metcalfe, Binêt, and for the Tongan ministers, Choiseul became a prison, suffocating their ambitions. Choiseul became both an agent of isolation and an agent of fulfilment for the missionaries. They were not only able to fulfil their purposes as Christian missionaries but they also had to confront the frustrations inherent in their chosen way of life. Rooney found fulfilment there, Binêt was contented as long as he could have his own way, and Metcalfe felt frustrated at the restrictions that life on an isolated island placed on him, but despite that, he still managed to impose his imprint on the organisation and life of the mission. Each new ‘intruder’ on an island ‘finds a freedom it never had in its old environment’.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Metcalfe comments on Hilliard’s thesis, in David Hilliard’s papers in Allan Davidson’s Collection. Copy in my possession.

¹⁰³ Leadley, *Ever Widening Circles*, pp. 13-17.

¹⁰⁴ Erena Le Heron, ‘Translating Place; Landscape, Film and Film Landscape’, Thesis, MA, University of Auckland, 2002, p.25.

¹⁰⁵ Greg Dening, *Islands and Beaches: discourse on a silent land, Marquesas*, Carlton, 1980, p. 32.

CHAPTER 4

‘A REAL GOOD, SENSIBLE CHRISTIAN WOMAN ...’¹

Female missionaries were in an ambiguous situation. They were ‘members of a sex considered to be inferior within a race that considered itself superior’.² As a result they often had to fight to attain standing in the mission. This was especially so in the Methodist Mission in the Solomons. With a paternalistic Goldie in overall charge of the district, and an opinionated Metcalfe responsible on Choiseul, women had to be strong to avoid being relegated by the attitudes of the two men. Neither man suffered fools gladly, so women had to do the job for which they were employed, and not interfere with anything that was considered the minister’s realm. Boundaries existed on the mission and woe betide the women who dared cross the line, although several did. The structure of the mission was based on societal norms with separate spheres for men and women.³ In the early Wesleyan mission in Papua, in 1890, the rules for Methodist sisters were established on the field with the single rule that they were to work under the direction of the superintendent of their circuit.⁴ The medical work of the mission was based on a humanitarian desire to alleviate suffering and was part of a Methodist tradition of healing that began with the activities of John Wesley.⁵ The choice of women to serve in the Solomon Islands was often made on the basis of their training as nurses, backed up with testimonials from employers and ministers. Sometimes these testimonials did not give a true picture of the woman’s personality and some women did not survive the rigours of the field. A veto could come from the doctor who conducted the rigorous medical examination. Wives of missionaries, however, were not subject to such scrutiny and were expected to accompany their husbands, whether or not they were qualified or suitable.

¹ Danks to Goldie, 30 April 1908, item 724, Box 227, MOM.

² Mary Taylor Huber and Lutkhaus, Nancy C., *Gendered Missions: Women and Men in Missionary Discourse and Practice*, (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1999), p. 18.

³ Early, "If We Win the Women: The Lives and Work of Female Missionaries at the Methodist Mission in the Solomon Islands, 1902-1942 ", , p. 199.

⁴ Langmore, *Missionary Lives* , p. 168.

⁵ Early, "If We Win the Women: The Lives and Work of Female Missionaries at the Methodist Mission in the Solomon Islands, 1902-1942 ", p. 235.

Wives had an advantage over the sisters because they could ask to go home due to health issues, or their children's health or education, while the unmarried sisters did not have that opportunity. The duties of the women missionaries, the wives of the European missionaries and the wives of the Pacific Island missionaries were usually those befitting women, such as nursing, sewing, mat weaving and domestic tasks. The roles and lives of the women missionaries on Choiseul convey a picture of independent women working under the constraints of Methodist authority. Some succeeded and others had to leave the field. Nevertheless, women were essential workers in the Methodist mission on Choiseul. Without them, the mission would have not been able to reach the remotest areas of the island. They provided access to Choiseulese women, which was denied to men; they were instrumental in bringing about a decrease in the perinatal mortality rate in both mothers and babies, and they taught skills that men were unable or unwilling to teach.

Cecile Swaisland contends that, in the 19th century, many single women who applied for missionary work were judged unsuitable on the basis of temperament, education or training. Some women sought to work as missionaries because of their own ambitions and the opportunity to have more autonomy in the church than they were able to achieve at home. With the increased specialisation of missions, more highly qualified women such as teachers and nurses were needed.⁶ By the time the Methodist mission was established in the Solomons in 1902, its specialisation in medical services was clear and created a demand for nurses, not just well-meaning gentlewomen of means. Nevertheless, after the resignation in 1908 of a nursing sister, Nurse F. Moore, Benjamin Danks wrote, 'Women who have been specially trained as nurses look upon themselves as different people altogether to women who have been simply trained in education matters. . . We need "a real good, sensible Christian woman. One who can enter into the lives of the people and win their love and confidence'.⁷

Despite the growing presence of women, missions were still subject to the prevailing male dominance within the church. From the early 19th century, the final selection of a missionary candidate, man or woman, was made by men. The New Zealand

⁶ Fiona Bowie, Deborah Kirkwood and Shirley Ardener, ed., *Women and Missions: Past and Present: Anthropological Perceptions, Cross Cultural Perspectives on Women* (Providence: Berg, 1993), pp. 82-83.

⁷ Danks to Goldie, 30 April 1908, item 724, box 227, MOM. Danks to Goldie, 8 October 1909, item 908, Box 554, MOM.

Methodist Women's Missionary Union (NZMWMU) played a unique role in the work of women on both the mission field in New Zealand and overseas. It set guidelines for the deployment of sisters, and provided support for those in the Solomon Islands in the form of 'Boxes', which contained clothing and other items considered necessary for the mission field. At Synod it provided representatives, but it is not clear what voting rights, if any, these women had.⁸ In the 1920s and 1930s, the president of the NZMWMU interviewed most of the women applicants, and the organisation provided financial support to women missionaries, but the final decision was made by men.

Early religious influences on individuals played a significant role in the eventual decision to become a missionary. Langmore discusses early influences on missionaries destined for Papua between 1874 and 1914. She notes that while a few came from the homes of ministers, most did not, and that although religion was a fundamental part of life, it did not necessarily dominate. Among Protestants, Langmore argues, the childhood aspiration to be a missionary was often a response to mission literature representing gallant missionaries in the service of Christ.⁹ The Methodist periodical for children, *Lotu*, contained stories about missionaries, and suggested ways that children could help, such as the children of Papanoa growing and selling flowers for the 'Brown children' of the Solomons. They told of 'Motherless brown bairn's [*sic*] being cared for by missionary sisters', and were told 'Why the British Empire should be a great missionary nation'.¹⁰ Early influences on those with missionary aspirations frequently stemmed from Sunday School lessons. Langmore points out that a conversion experience was not a significant feature in the religious histories of the Wesleyan and Anglican missionaries that she studied. From the beginning of the nineteenth century there was a decrease in the importance of a conversion experience in the Methodist Church. The letters of application from many of the women do not describe any significant religious or Christian experiences, but often expressed a long-held desire to be a missionary.

As for many others in the colonial field, the possibility of upward social mobility served as another incentive to missionaries. Missionaries were also sometimes misfits in

⁸ Conference Reports of the NZMWMU, 1921-1941, MAA.

⁹ Langmore, *Missionary Lives* p. 37.

¹⁰ *Lotu, Children's Missionary paper, Methodist Church of New Zealand*, Auckland, 1925-1926, microfiche, Hocken Library, Dunedin. The individual publication dates are unclear on the fiche.

their own communities. While their humble status at home meant that they were never likely to rise above their class, service abroad could provide the opportunity to attain positions quite out of their reach at home. Comaroff and Comaroff argue that of the London Missionary Society and Methodist missionaries in 1860, most were from the 'indiscriminate mass caught between the rich and the poor . . . either indeterminate in . . . class affiliation or struggling . . . to make their way over the invisible boundary into bourgeoisie.'¹¹ Langmore cites the example of a pioneer protestant missionary in New Guinea in the 19th century. 'He hoped to be a bishop and had he lived he would have done so'.¹²

The motivation for mission work was also changing. The idea that the suffering of the heathen needed to be alleviated began to emerge at the end of the 19th century. The theme of degradation was condemnatory, assuming missionary cultural and moral superiority, and often evolutionary superiority. Sometimes it involved blatant manipulation of the people to force them to accept European ways. If a degraded state did not exist, there was no need for the saving grace of the gospel, so sometimes it had to be invented. In 1912, to illustrate the effect that the women were having on the girls, the Methodist missionary on Vella Lavella, Reginald C. Nicholson wrote, 'Mrs N[icholson]'s girls are a delight. They were filthy little creatures of habit. Now they have lost the village look and are quite graceful and attractive'.¹³ References to the change to 'clean' villages and 'clean' natives are also a recurring theme in SDA publications.¹⁴ However souls still needed to be saved.

While single women made up most of the working female missionaries, wives also played an important role. Fears about sending wives and children on to new mission fields led to rules being developed. Benjamin Danks, (General Secretary of the Methodist Overseas Mission Australia) expressed surprise that Goldie was married when he applied to go to the Solomons in 1902, and told him that 'it is not possible to take a lady to the

¹¹ Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution; Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness in South Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), p.85.

¹² Langmore, p. 45.

¹³ Nicholson to Danks, 3 September 1912, Box 117, MOM.

¹⁴ Dennis Steley, "Unfinished: The Seventh Day Adventist Mission in the South Pacific, Excluding Papua New Guinea, 1886-1986.", (University of Auckland, 1989), vol. 1, p. 102.

Solomons in the first instance when no provision had been made'.¹⁵ The pioneer Methodist missionary Stephen Rabone Rooney made the trip to the Solomons in 1902 as an unmarried man, but later returned to Australia to marry. He was unable to take his wife with him to the Solomons immediately as the conditions were considered too rough for a woman, but she returned with him in 1903.¹⁶ She had to wait until conditions improved with the provision of suitable accommodation on Choiseul before she joined her husband there in 1905. In the early 1900s, women who were engaged were not permitted to go as missionaries to the Solomons, and one was even turned back after she had commenced her journey when her engagement was discovered. This event caused Danks to suggest that a clause be included in their agreement to prevent this happening again.¹⁷ In 1929, Coralie Murray was accepted as a nursing sister with the mission without having disclosed that she was likely to become engaged.¹⁸ By 1907, both married and single women had arrived in the Solomons. The first unmarried missionary sister arrived in the Solomons from Australia in 1907 and at least 25 others followed before World War II, and 20 between 1945 and 1955. George Carter lists 34 single women arriving in the Solomons from New Zealand between 1955 and 1972. Some of the single sisters married missionaries and returned to the field, but not as missionaries in their own right.¹⁹ Most sisters did not have very long service. Many were plagued by health problems, and shortened their service to care for relatives at home.²⁰ The spiritual lives of the women do not become evident in their writing. They rarely mention praying (other than Ada Saunders) and make no comment about evangelising among the Choiseulese.

The sheer immensity of the task dictated a practical mission. Missionaries were trained by adversity on the job. Sewing played a significant role in the Methodist Mission on Choiseul for many years and is still important. One of the aims of missionary work

¹⁵ Danks to Goldie, 2 April 1902, item 731, Box 748, MOM.

¹⁶ Luxton, *Isles of Solomon*, p. 35.

¹⁷ Danks to Goldie 9 October 1909, 927, Box 554, MOM.

¹⁸ See later in this chapter.

¹⁹ Luxton, *Isles of Solomon* p. 217; Carter, *A Family Affair: A Brief Survey of New Zealand Methodism's Involvement in Mission Overseas 1822-1972*, , Appendix II. Nurse F.E. Moore, Miss Ida Keyte and Miss Mabelle Davey from Australia were the first single women on the Methodist Mission Stations in the Solomons.

²⁰ Carter, *A Family Affair: A Brief Survey of New Zealand Methodism's Involvement in Mission Overseas 1822-1972*, p. 165; Daphne Beniston, *The Call of the Solomons: The New Zealand Methodist Women's Response* (Auckland: JG Associates, 1994), pp. 73-78.

was to subsume the desires of the flesh into activity that was considered appropriate. Perhaps as a means to this end the missionaries taught the women and girls to sew. While this may have been quite innocent in intention, the activity actually served twofold; to keep idle hands busy and keep the girls under the guidance of the missionary women; and to provide covering for their bodies. Richard Eves argues that the appearance of the body indicated the character of the individual, and so this became the basis for the missions to reconstitute it into a form that was acceptable to them. This involved refashioning the outward form of the body by removing dirtiness, and addressing nakedness, as well as considering behaviour, such as manners.²¹ Bodies must show behaviour befitting the converted Christian, and missionaries were the agents for this change.²² The Methodists focussed closely on the more obvious 'heathen' practices such as supposed cannibalism and sorcery but they did not neglect the less obvious such as dress, dancing and other practices.²³ While there were variations in the extent to which the missionaries allowed or forbade dancing, they considered it worthy of notice. The movement of the body came under scrutiny and the purposes of the dancing were often ignored. Dances held at night were of particular concern to one missionary in New Ireland, a region of Papua New Guinea because there was greater opportunity for 'immorality' to occur under the cover of darkness and following that path would only lead to adultery and violence.²⁴

Patricia Grimshaw described missionary wives during the nineteenth century as 'shadowy figures, appendages only [to male missionaries]'.²⁵ This situation continued into the 20th century, with wives infrequently featuring in official church publications. The wife's conflicting responsibilities were all the more difficult because her missionary obligations and aspirations were subsumed by her husband's commitments. The position of wives in the Methodist mission was never fully recognised. They received no representation at Synod, and wielded no direct influence on the administration of the mission. Nancy Carter, wife of the District Chairman in the Solomons in the 1960s, contended however that their influence came through their discussions with their

²¹ Richard Eves, "Colonialism, Corporality and Character: Methodist and the Refashioning of Bodies in the Pacific", *History and Anthropology* 10, no. 1 (1996), p. 89.

²² *ibid.* p. 89.

²³ *ibid.* p. 92.

²⁴ *ibid.* pp. 94-95.

²⁵ Patricia Grimshaw, *Paths of Duty: American Missionary Wives in Nineteenth Century Hawai'i* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1989) p. 5.

husbands, and pointed out, 'Inevitably that was carried through to the courts of the church'.²⁶ In 1929 the all-male student fraternity of Trinity College, the Methodist theological training college, expressed concern about training for future wives who might accompany them to the mission field. Unsuitable, unwilling wives, perhaps with aspirations not matching those of their husbands often caused problems and occasionally couples were forced to return from the field. Screening of the wives of European ministers began in the 1960s, but its intent and methods were vague.²⁷ However, the NZMWMU had made it clear that they did not believe wives of missionaries should be counted as part of the staff on the station and they should not be expected to have regular duties. Metcalfe was concerned that his wife was expected to assist on the station as her duty, contrary to these statements. Ivy Metcalfe had been a missionary in the Solomons before she met and married John. As a result she was happy to return to missionary life, but it was on a different basis from her previous service. Following the conventions of the time, wives of missionaries were not referred to by their first name in mission reports and correspondence, but only as 'Mrs', sometimes followed by her own initials, or, more likely, by her husband's initials. Thus it has sometimes been difficult to determine the first names of the wives. The women were expected to write articles for the various missionary periodicals but were expected to only to relate interesting stories and leave the formal articles to the minister.²⁸

As the first white missionaries on Choiseul, the Rooneys were in a unique position. They were the first white people that many of the Choiseulese had seen. Rooney described the arrival of his wife and baby at Babatana, and the way in which the women felt their arms to satisfy themselves that the only difference in the flesh was the colour.²⁹ The presence of a woman on the mission broke down barriers that had existed and

²⁶ Beniston, *The Call of the Solomons: The New Zealand Methodist Women's Response*, pp.32-33. Irene Cornwell's husband, Gordon, appealed the lack of recognition because a minister's wife in New Zealand was recognised as a church member in their husband's parish, but in the Solomons they were accorded no such right, and their names rarely appeared on lists of missionaries, whereas lay, nursing, and teaching sisters were named.

²⁷ *ibid.*, p. 21. Susan J. Thompson, "Knowledge and Vital Piety: Methodist Ministry Education in New Zealand from the 1840s to 1988 / by Susan J. Thompson.", (Auckland, 2002), pp. 152-153. Some women trained at the Bible Training Institute (now Laidlaw College) in Henderson.

²⁸ Early, "If We Win the Women: The Lives and Work of Female Missionaries at the Methodist Mission in the Solomon Islands, 1902-1942", p. 201.

²⁹ *AMMR*, 4 October 1904, p. 4.

opened the way for evangelisation of the Choiseulese women. It was not until the arrival of Mrs Mabel Rooney that some of the women began to attend the Sunday services at Babatana.³⁰ Mabel Rooney soon began a needlework class for the women, which was held on the verandah of the mission house.³¹ They were described as being ‘greatly delighted’. Mrs Rooney attributed the ‘marked difference in the appearance’ of many of the women to the interaction between them and herself. The first time they wore skirts and blouses, she says, they apparently found it difficult to move freely, and ‘came tumbling in like a lot of sheep, and got tangled up in one another’s garments in a most extraordinary manner’³²

Mabel Rooney was frequently left alone when her husband travelled around Choiseul. She must have been afraid of both the real and the imagined dangers that she could face. On one occasion she was awoken by an uproar outside and discovered a crowd of natives coming towards the house. Her first thought was that they were coming to kill her and her child, but her cook-boy reassured her that the people had come to seek the safety of the mission station to hide from one of the boys who had ‘gone mad’. They had decided that the mission house and the ‘white lady’ would provide safety.³³

She wrote one report to the *AMMR* in 1907.³⁴ Mabel Rooney returned home permanently with her daughter, Hilda, in 1913, a few months before her husband returned. She had been unwell for sometime.³⁵ Their son Gordon had been sent back to Adelaide in 1910 to further his education.³⁶

Harold Rycroft’s wife has been described as ‘a very gentle English lady’, by Reverend Barry Dangerfield, who had met her in the 1920s and 1930s and again in 1954.³⁷ Perhaps with no idea of what life in the Solomons would be like, this apparently

³⁰ Married women and widows were not permitted by the men to attend *Lotu* inside a church building until 1913.

³¹ *ibid.*, p. 5.

³² *AMMR*, 4 April 1907, p. 15.

³³ Early Days on Choiseul, Rev S Ray Rooney, in *Open Door*, March 1927, p. 9; Luxton, *Isles of Solomon* p. 76.

³⁴ ‘For the Women of Bambatana, Solomon Islands’, *AMMR*, 4 April 1907, p. 15.

³⁵ Rooney to Danks, 13 April 1913, 117, MOM.

³⁶ Rooney to Danks, 3 August 1910, 116, MOM.

³⁷ Rev. Barry Dangerfield, Uniting Church, Queensland in personal communication, email 22 October 2009. I have not been able to elicit her first name, and Early does not have it in her thesis. Early, "If We Win the Women: The Lives and Work of Female Missionaries at the Methodist Mission in the Solomon Islands, 1902-1942 ", p. 358.

quiet woman was thrust into the environment at Sasamuqa, among people who had only recently known the Gospel of Christ. Rycroft, not surprisingly, describes her as suffering from nerves.³⁸

Following the death of Simon Peter (see Chapter three), Rycroft was concerned that his wife was 'not at all well'. He said that she 'would not ease off until she is absolutely worn out and seems to think that the work cannot go on without her'.³⁹ He said that he hoped to avoid a 'serious breakdown. Her physical health is also mentioned in correspondence to the General Secretary. 'She spent nearly two weeks in bed with 'sharp attacks of fever' and was left feeling very weak.⁴⁰ As there was no sister appointed to Choiseul until 1916, work with the women and children was not conducted on a formal basis. Nevertheless Mrs Rycroft clearly saw her role as assisting women and children. Although it is not clear whether or not she had any nursing training, Mrs Rycroft was still required to attend to a variety of emergencies. One such occasion was the arrival of a baby, who had been abandoned in a deserted hut to die. Rycroft wrote that his wife was almost afraid to handle it as it was so weak. The child soon recovered and showed no signs of its earlier neglect.⁴¹ Rev. W.H. Leumbruggen reported in the *AMMR* that when he arrived at Babatana to collect Rycroft to take him to Synod, Mrs Rycroft refused to go, preferring to remain on the mission station to 'mind the place'.⁴² When Sister Ethel McMillan arrived in 1916, Rycroft noted the official start of work among the women and girls.⁴³

There are three missionary wives who remain something of an enigma. Ivy Metcalfe, Gertrude Binêt and Florrie James receive little mention in the archives, and most information about them has been gleaned from the way others saw them. They wrote very little themselves. John Metcalfe makes little mention in his diary of his wife as a missionary. There are only a few references to her looking after babies, assisting the sister with sick Choiseulese, and her overwork, and distress about the deaths that

³⁸ Rycroft to Wheen, 4 June 1917, MOM

³⁹ *ibid.*

⁴⁰ Rycroft to Wheen, 10 April 1916, Box 554, MOM.

⁴¹ Rycroft to Wheen, 24 January 1916, Box 554, MOM.

⁴² *AMMR*, 4 February 1915, p. 19.

⁴³ *ibid.*, Rycroft to Wheen, 24 June 1916, MOM.

occurred under her care.⁴⁴ Metcalfe does draw a picture of her as a wife, however. He describes a meeting before they were married as bringing about a ‘breaking down of our stiffness and a full enjoyment of one another’s love’. He continued to say that she puzzles him but that he likes her for ‘her vagaries . . . She is as charming as a mountain stream . . . [but] a trifle forbidding’.⁴⁵ On his first wedding anniversary in May 1924, he said that she was ‘a strong woman’ and that she had a ‘streak of something which is a problem to me’. He wrote ‘to be married to her . . . means development of the spirit and I am a much better man . . .’.⁴⁶ On their second wedding anniversary, he wrote that they had ‘a good mutual understanding but still [had] a long way to go’. Her moods made things difficult.⁴⁷ There are no mentions of their anniversary in 1927 and 1928. Luxton mentions her once, following her marriage to Metcalfe, but makes no other mention of her previous work as a missionary sister for six years in the Solomons.⁴⁸ Ivy (nee Stanford) ceased to be a sister at the time of her marriage because she had ‘the responsibility of a husband to manage’, although she still carried out some of the work of a sister.⁴⁹ She authored only one article in the *Open Door* in December 1933, titled ‘A Review by the Super’s Wife’, but she is mentioned in eight articles under her maiden name of Stanford, five as Ivy Metcalfe and thirty five as Metcalfe’s wife.⁵⁰



Figure 10: Ivy Metcalfe and her Charges. Jean Dalziel Collection MAA

⁴⁴ E.g. Corben, *My Father's Journey*, , pp. 119, 127, 133, 257.

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p. 77.

⁴⁶ 17 May 1924, Metcalfe Diary.

⁴⁷ 17 May 1925, Metcalfe Diary.

⁴⁸ Luxton, *Isles of Solomon* p. 119.

⁴⁹ ‘Sister Ethel’s Work on Choiseul’, *Open Door*, March 1933, p. 9.

⁵⁰ *Open Door* Names, supplied by C. Dureau, copy in my possession.

Her husband's constant worry was that she was doing too much and that she would tire herself out. He appealed regularly to the Missions Board for more sisters to be appointed. At one stage there were six white women on Choiseul but that eventually dropped to just two, McMillan and Ivy. In 1934, Metcalfe appealed to the Mission Board to send another sister to Choiseul. He said his wife found the return to Choiseul from Bougainville distasteful as 'one had to nurse the sick and take the whole responsibility, which she dreads'.⁵¹ He wrote that she 'saw a sick baby as a burden and a midwifery case a nightmare'.⁵² In 1937, Ivy took over the medical work at Babatana, apparently to the relief of the native medical orderly.⁵³

Gertrude Binêt does not often appear in the missionary publications as an individual. Nevertheless there are comments about her by other missionaries on Choiseul. She returned to Australia in 1925 so that their son, Grenville, could be educated, and did not return to live permanently on Choiseul. Metcalfe expressed the opinion that the lad would be better off without his mother.⁵⁴

Missionary sister Coralie Murray said that Mrs Binêt thought her main role on the mission was to calm her husband after his confrontations with Metcalfe.⁵⁵ Murray also observed that when his wife was on the island, Binêt became much more assertive than when she was away, and he began to throw his weight around.⁵⁶ On her return from one of her trips away, Gertrude made rule changes to ensure the hospital staff were able to attend evening *Lotu*, and Murray observed 'The manageress soon begins to put her spoke in'.⁵⁷ Ten mentions of her as an individual and 43 as Binêt's wife are made in the *Open Door*.⁵⁸ Her husband was a prolific writer of articles for the publication. Gertrude authored one article in that periodical describing the farewell when the couple left on furlough in 1925.⁵⁹

⁵¹ Metcalfe to Scriven, 10 March 1934, Metcalfe Correspondence, microfilm 2254, UoA.

⁵² Metcalfe to Scriven, 20 August 1934.

⁵³ Choiseul Circuit Report, 1937.

⁵⁴ Metcalfe Diary, 24 March 1925.

⁵⁵ Early, "If We Win the Women: The Lives and Work of Female Missionaries at the Methodist Mission in the Solomon Islands, 1902-1942", p. 83.

⁵⁶ Coralie Murray Diary, 14 April 1930, copy in my possession.

⁵⁷ Murray Diary, 12 April 1930.

⁵⁸ *Open Door* Names.

⁵⁹ 'Farewell', Gertrude Binêt, in *Open Door*, 1 June 1925, p. 12.

Dr Clifford James' wife, Florrie, received only 2 individual mentions in the *Open Door*.⁶⁰ Again, the main source of information about her is from others, in this case mainly from Coralie Murray whose relationship with the doctor and his family was far from cordial. Florrie believed her role on the mission station was as a support for her husband and as a mother to her family.⁶¹ Their first son, Ivan, was born on Choiseul, and this was a very courageous thing to have permitted, considering the poor conditions and the lack of medical support which might have endangered both the mother and baby. The new house, which Goldie had promised would be finished in time for the birth, was not completed. Metcalfe described the environment in which the baby was born as 'a dirty old place'. James acknowledged the risk of his wife contracting puerperal fever which was rife even in the hospitals in New Zealand.⁶² He wrote that the decision was made as an encouragement to the natives to come to me for their confinement and also to keep down expenses'.⁶³ The story was related by Binêt in the *Open Door*, with strong Biblical imagery. A girl named Grace kissed the baby's feet, and then another girl touched the fringe of the baby's shawl. He also recorded that the first white people visitors to visit the baby were acting Resident Commissioner, Mr J.C. Barley and the government chief medical officer of health, Dr Hetherington, who, he said, came from the east.⁶⁴ Florrie James' attitudes towards the Choiseulese were very biased. She told Murray that 'neither [her or Clifford] would trust any of the natives out of sight with Ivan [their infant son] – they are so immoral'. Murray pondered on their motivation for being on the mission field with such attitudes.⁶⁵

Single women applying to serve as missionaries were subject to extensive interviews, enquiries to several referees, and a medical examination before being accepted for service. The NZMWMU made recommendations to the Board of Foreign Missions. The medical examination included their general state of health, with special attention being to whether the applicant had ever suffered from 'uterine or menstrual disorder or irregularity' because it was thought that 'the climate of all our mission

⁶⁰ *Open Door* Names.

⁶¹ Carter Papers, Box 14, MAA.

⁶² Puerperal fever is a form of septicaemia contracted around the time of childbirth and was prevalent even in hospitals up to the 1950s.

⁶³ James to Sinclair, 14 October, 1929, microfilm 04-105, University of Auckland.

⁶⁴ 'Ivan Clifford James', V. Le C. Binêt, in *Open Door*, 3 December 1929, p. 7.

⁶⁵ Murray Diary, 23 February 1930.

districts bears heavily on those thus afflicted'.⁶⁶ Nevertheless, despite apparently stringent screening processes, some women were employed who had to return home before the end of their term due to what was described as ill health.⁶⁷ The endemic diseases, such as malaria, took a heavy toll on several women and health reasons rivalled family concerns as the main cause of early retirement from the field. There were also those who were emotionally unsuited to work on a mission station. Lily White spent a short time on Choiseul before returning home for health reasons, a thinly veiled way of saying that she was unsuitable.

Single women who worked successfully in the Solomons possessed a certain strength of character and ability to remain cheerful throughout adversity. Sister Ethel McMillan sang.⁶⁸ McMillan arrived on Choiseul in 1916, having served in the Solomons since 1914, and worked with women and girls at Sasamuqa. Bowron described McMillan as 'want[ing] to manage the missionary, his wife and the sister', and suggested she was relocated to Senga to assist (or perhaps manage) Dr James.⁶⁹ During her lengthy term of service she was left alone for two years when Metcalfe was sent to Teop, and Binêt was away from the island. She not only tried to keep the medical work running but she was also the administrator for the mission and conducted Quarterly Meetings and wrote the annual reports. She also held classes for mat making, weaving, baskets, fancywork and string bag making. In the absence of a minister, McMillan conducted *Lotu* every second Sunday morning and Sunday School every Sunday afternoon and she held combined fellowship meetings every Thursday. She had to stop her weekly visits by canoe to outlying villages, and had to leave midwifery cases that needed her care.⁷⁰ As she was the only white Methodist missionary present on the island in 1932 and 1933, Sister Ethel had to deal with as much work as possible with the women and children. On his return, Metcalfe praised the work she had done but also managed, in his inimitable way, to find some faults. He recorded in his diary that 'Sister looked much thinner and worried'.⁷¹ Metcalfe also voiced the opinion that the sisters maintained a high moral tone in the

⁶⁶ Medical report on Coralie Murray, microfilm 04-109, UA.

⁶⁷ Early, "If We Win the Women: The Lives and Work of Female Missionaries at the Methodist Mission in the Solomon Islands, 1902-1942", p. 192.

⁶⁸ Metcalfe to Scriven, 10 March 1934, Metcalfe correspondence, microfilm 2254, UoA.

⁶⁹ Bowron to General Secretary, 24 January 1929, Box 109A, MAA.

⁷⁰ 'Glimpses of the Work of Missionary Sisters', *Open Door*, December 1932, p. 11.

⁷¹ Corben, *My Father's Journey*, p. 266.

villages. Their sometimes unexpected and intrusive visits to villages meant that the people had to maintain the moral climate. He observed that Ethel's inability to visit many villages during his absence had led to a fall in morals and a return to some of the old practices which had been discarded.⁷² Boys had even been visiting the girls' house at Babatana, leaving Sister Ethel 'heartbroken'. In 1935, Ivy Metcalfe assisted her with an 'influx of babies'.⁷³ By 1937, Ethel had 16 babies and 21 girls under her care.⁷⁴ She returned to New Zealand in 1920 for family reasons and undertook maternity training whilst there. She returned to Choiseul in 1921 and left in 1941 to care for her mother. She was unable to return after World War II as she was considered too old.⁷⁵

There were also the romantic evangelical, whose spirituality superceded practicality, and whose aim was to convert the heathen through the power of the Holy Spirit, preferring to use spiritual means of healing both the Choiseulese and themselves. In 1924, Sister Ada Saunders from Mosgiel was appointed to Choiseul. She was 'a fully certificated nurse', and she also undertook further training to equip her for the mission field. She left Auckland for Sydney on 29 March 1923, and then travelled on the *Melusia* to the Solomons with Sister Elizabeth Common. At one stage of the trip the ship was grounded on a reef, and had to wait for the tide to float it off.⁷⁶ Metcalfe describes Saunders as having a 'very forceful personality whose religion has developed into fanaticism, especially as regards the Second Coming'.⁷⁷ After developing dysentery, Saunders became very weak and was convinced she was dying, but Metcalfe believed that she was not taking any medication, but still took her communion.⁷⁸ By 14 January, Saunders was still suffering from attacks of 'Remmittant [*sic*] Fever' and was described as 'far from well'.⁷⁹ She proclaimed that her first duty was to preach. Metcalfe found her 'impossible to work with and Sister Ethel [to be] nearly as bad, in some ways worse'.⁸⁰

⁷² Choiseul Circuit Report 1934.

⁷³ *ibid.*, 1935.

⁷⁴ *ibid.*, 1937.

⁷⁵ Early, "If We Win the Women: The Lives and Work of Female Missionaries at the Methodist Mission in the Solomon Islands, 1902-1942", p. 356.

⁷⁶ *Open Door*, 23 June 1923, p. 14.

⁷⁷ Metcalfe Diary, 15 December 1923.

⁷⁸ *ibid.*, 22 December 1923.

⁷⁹ *ibid.*, 14 January 1924. Remittent fever is one that shows significant variations in 24 hours but without a return to normal temperature.

⁸⁰ *ibid.*, 1 February 1924.

The two sisters were also defiant regarding a matter of theology concerning millennialism, a belief which seemed to have originated from Saunders, which caused him to make several acerbic remarks about the usefulness of sisters on the mission station.⁸¹ Ivy Metcalfe was also ‘fed up with their dogmatic assertions about faith healing and arguments for McMillan to doing more stunts and [paying] less attention to the girls. . . she has gone quite crazy lately’.⁸² Saunders continued to ignore medical advice and refused to take quinine to prevent malaria. She developed a serious form of the disease and was sent to Kokenqolo for medical treatment in 1924, an event which ended her missionary service.⁸³ The Choiseul Circuit Report for 1924 states that she returned home due to ill health.⁸⁴ While Metcalfe’s accusations were about her theology, perhaps the influence Saunders had over McMillan made him feel his position was threatened by the presence of two strong women. Saunders views and beliefs may have stemmed from the various revival meetings that were being held in New Zealand in the 1920s, such as that by the healing evangelist Smith Wigglesworth.⁸⁵ The *NZMT* reported on some of the campaigns, which caused a flurry of concerned and also supportive responses.⁸⁶ Although the Methodist Church was not officially involved in many of them, some of their members did become involved.

Grace McDonald left Auckland on 11 May 1927 and spent one term in the Solomons. Then, after being granted an extended furlough to Ireland in 1934, her service was terminated while she was away. She had originally applied when she was 21, as a qualified midwife. It is unclear whether all her first term was spent on Choiseul as there is little mention of her in archival sources. When she returned after World War II, did go to Choiseul and remained there until 1950. McDonald found it difficult to obtain further training in medical matters because Alice Williams, from Deaconess House where many sisters trained, believed that she should be trained in ‘spiritual issues’, and have lectures on theology and Bible study and . . . psychology’.⁸⁷ Mrs Bowron from the NZMWMU

⁸¹ Metcalfe Diary, 1 February 1924.

⁸² *ibid.*, 10 January 1924.

⁸³ *Open Door*, June 1924, p. 8.

⁸⁴ Choiseul Circuit Report 1924.

⁸⁵ Harry V. Roberts, *Wigglesworth Down Under: The Visit of Smith Wigglesworth to Wellington in 1922, New Zealand’s Greatest Revival* (Wellington: Jubilee Resources reprint 2001).

⁸⁶ *NZMT*, 9 June 1923, p. 9.

⁸⁷ Williams to Pacey, 8 November 1926, microfilm 04-108, UoA.

was concerned that McDonald did not get a chance to show her real skills as she was 'kept under' by McMillan. Accordingly, she suggested that changes needed to be made in the location of the two sisters on Choiseul.⁸⁸ While she was in Ireland on her second furlough, McDonald trained as a general nurse and returned to the Solomons in 1939.⁸⁹

Another sister who spent only one term on Choiseul was Jean Dalziel. She trained at Deaconess House from 1920-21 and worked on Choiseul from 1925-26, then at the hospital in Roviana from 1926-1930.⁹⁰ She recorded some of her experiences in an article in the *Open Door* in 1926.⁹¹ Dalziel returned to New Zealand in 1930 to look after a family member, and married in 1933.⁹²

A sister who proved to be temperamentally and physically unsuited to the mission was Lily White. She trained at Deaconess House, then undertook her nursing training and gained top marks in her examinations. She followed this with a mothercraft course in Dunedin, probably at the Karitane Hospital. After working at the Dudley Orphanage in Fiji, she returned home to care for her sick mother, and then went to the Solomons in 1925, to relieve at Bilua. She was appointed to Choiseul in 1926, and worked at Senga on the east coast of the island, where she assisted Binêt with general and medical work.⁹³ In a 1928 report, White was described as 'indefatigable' in her work with the Senga people. She wrote an article in the *Open Door* expressing her appreciation for clothing and sewing items sent from New Zealand. At the 1928 Synod, 'poor' Sister Lily White was discussed with regard to her suitability for mission work. It was decided that she should not return due to 'a matter of temperament'.⁹⁴

White hoped to return for a second term but, as Early argues, she was privately considered unsuitable for missionary work, citing correspondence from Goldie and Bowron, the president of the NZMWMU. She was allowed to continue to the end of her

⁸⁸ Bowron to General Secretary, 24 January 1929, Box 109A, MAA.

⁸⁹ Carter, *A Family Affair: A Brief Survey of New Zealand Methodism's Involvement in Mission Overseas 1822-1972*, pp. 165-66

⁹⁰ *ibid.* p. 148.

⁹¹ *Open Door*, 9 June 1926, p. 9.

⁹² Marcia Baker, *For Others with Love: A Story of Early Sisters and Methodist Deaconesses*, (Christchurch: Baker Family Publication, 2007), p. 120; Carter, *A Family Affair: A Brief Survey of New Zealand Methodism's Involvement in Mission Overseas 1822-1972*, p. 148; Early, "If We Win the Women: The Lives and Work of Female Missionaries at the Methodist Mission in the Solomon Islands, 1902-1942", p. 352.

⁹³ Baker, *For Others with Love: A Story of Early Sisters and Methodist Deaconesses*, pp. 91-92.

⁹⁴ Corben, *My Father's Journey*, p. 167.

term, and then she was deemed unfit for the tropics by the missionary doctor, Dr E. G. Sayers, when she returned to New Zealand on furlough.⁹⁵

Muriel Stewart was an experienced nurse and came to the mission highly recommended by James. Before her departure for the Solomons she undertook midwifery training at St Helens Hospital in Auckland. In his 1930 report, James described Stewart as ‘an excellent nurse and a true missionary’.⁹⁶



Figure 11: Sister Muriel Stewart and Dr Clifford James with Choiseulese medical assistants.
Photographic Collection MAA.

Stewart wrote an article about her work on Choiseul for the *Open Door*. She described her disappointment at not being able to do more midwifery work. The women were reluctant to come to be treated by a male doctor, as was customary in the obstetric practices of the time. The midwife assisted the doctor, but was allowed to deliver a baby by herself. But with a reduction in perinatal mortality of both mothers and babies, it was decided that it was desirable to concentrate on the care of the babies.⁹⁷

James expressed his concern about Stewart in a letter in 1931. He described her as ‘run down’ and he was afraid that if she was left at Senga after his return to New Zealand

⁹⁵ Early, "If We Win the Women: The Lives and Work of Female Missionaries at the Methodist Mission in the Solomon Islands, 1902-1942", p. 192.

⁹⁶ 'Report of Medical Work on Choiseul for Period 1.10.29 to 30.9.30'.

⁹⁷ 'A Nurse's Work on Choiseul, extracts from a letter from Nurse Muriel Stewart', *Open Door*, 4 March 1932, p. 15.

she could contract a serious illness. He wanted to keep her under his close supervision until her arrival home and so requested that she should return with him.⁹⁸

On her return to New Zealand she stayed with the James family and underwent further examinations to ascertain the cause of her constant high temperatures and find out whether or not she could return to the Solomons.⁹⁹ Goldie was not surprised that Stewart did not return to the mission field as she had not wanted to be there without the doctor. He wrote that she 'had not treated us well' and so should surrender part of her furlough allowance. He was also surprised that James had diagnosed her with malaria as he had always argued that none of his staff could get it.¹⁰⁰

Not all women missionaries attended Deaconess House for training. Coralie Murray trained as a nurse, and then worked as a private nurse for two years. She then applied to work with the Methodist medical mission in the Solomons. She had surgery for breast cancer before she left, and, although already engaged to a Methodist minister, she was reportedly deemed to be unsuitable as a minister's wife as a result of this, and the engagement was ended.¹⁰¹ In the application process, her suitability to work as part of a group at the hospital was questioned. She had been a good private nurse but there was doubt expressed by one referee about her ability to work with more than one patient.¹⁰² She was accepted on trial for a few months, and Bowron believed that she would 'rise to the occasion' once she arrived at Babatana.¹⁰³ The opportunity to work in the Solomons provided the fulfilment of her desire to be involved in the church's ministry and also offered an escape from her circumstances in New Zealand.¹⁰⁴ Her salary was paid by the Misses Ballantyne, of the Christchurch department store family, through the NZMWMU. She arrived shortly before Dr James and Stewart left for a month's tour of the villages on the island and so was in charge of the medical work at Sasamuqa, with little knowledge of tropical diseases, and in conditions that were completely new to her as she was given

⁹⁸ James to Sinclair, 27 July 1931, James correspondence, microfilm 04-105, UA.

⁹⁹ *ibid.*, 14 February 1932.

¹⁰⁰ Goldie to Marshall, 2 May 1932, Box 107, MAA.

¹⁰¹ Winifred Murray, 'A Biographical Study – Coralie Murray the Missionary Nurse', unpublished manuscript, copy in my possession.

¹⁰² Young to Bowron, 27 August 1929, microfilm 04-109, UoA.

¹⁰³ Bowron to Sinclair, 5 September 1929, Box 109A, MAA.

¹⁰⁴ Winifred Murray, 'A Biographical Study – Coralie Murray the Missionary Nurse', unpublished manuscript, copy in my possession.

no specific training for medical work in the Solomons. Although Metcalfe had previously balked at the idea of women preaching, in his absence, perhaps now in more enlightened times, the sisters conducted *Lotu*.¹⁰⁵

From the start of her time on Choiseul, Murray had problems in her relationship with Dr James. In January 1930 she expressed her frustration with his inability to see the moral in verses by A.A. Milne that she was reading aloud.¹⁰⁶ Murray had problems with other personal relationships on the mission station. She found Sister Grace ‘much nicer when there are only the two of us’.¹⁰⁷ Her unhappiness showed in the statement ‘1932 [end of her term] can’t come soon enough for me’.¹⁰⁸ It appears that Murray’s mode of dress was not up to the standard expected by the mission and Stewart told Murray that ‘she would have to wear a few more clothes when Sister Ethel came home’.¹⁰⁹ Murray was the consummate rebel. If she could do something to annoy she would, and then she wrote about it in her diary. Clearly not emotionally prepared for the close confines of the mission station, and not willing to be sociable with the other missionaries, she fought her way through her two years of service, kicking against the goads whenever possible. She was defiant in the matter of attendance at *Lotu*, refusing to go just because she did not like the way Gertrude Binêt had begun asserting her presence and putative authority.¹¹⁰ Binêt complained about the nurses’ non-attendance, and Stewart was quite worried that he may have doubted her sincerity.¹¹¹ Murray’s relationship with Dr James was never cordial. He criticised her for performing tasks that he regarded as the doctor’s responsibility; yet he expected her to give anaesthetics, something that would not have been permitted in New Zealand, but which was a necessity on Choiseul. There were persistent requests for Murray to travel to Senga to assist him, but she was reluctant to go. Binêt spent time with her, explaining things about the doctor and his ‘little ways’.¹¹² At one stage the chiefs from the area around Senga presented a list of complaints about the doctor to Binêt. These included changing the time of *Lotu*, the doctor dragging a female

¹⁰⁵ Murray Diary, 5 December 1929.

¹⁰⁶ *ibid.*, 8 January 1930.

¹⁰⁷ *ibid.*, 12 February 1930.

¹⁰⁸ *ibid.*, 3 March 1930.

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.*, 10 March 1930.

¹¹⁰ *ibid.*, 15 April 1930.

¹¹¹ *ibid.*, 14 April 1930.

¹¹² *ibid.*, 26 July 1930.

outpatient to the hospital and a charge that he was taking moonlight walks with the sister.¹¹³

Murray's diary gives a great deal of information about medical matters at the Sasamuqa hospital. She uses both Babatana and English in describing the various conditions she had to treat. The diary contains names of many of the patients, and residents of the Girls' House, and also gave Murray the opportunity to express her feelings and emotions about her time on Choiseul. When Murray left for the mission field she had a boyfriend, Ken Leak, who was later to become her husband. James wrote that she had not declared her engagement until after she left New Zealand, and he believed her mind could not have been on her work, as a result of the relationship, thus causing her patients to suffer. Furthermore, he said that she spent many hours at the Binêt's house, leaving her patients to 'get on as best they could'. He accused her of neglecting patients at Senga, 'with grave results'.¹¹⁴ Goldie speculated that she actually returned home to get married, rather than for the stated reason, which was to look after a sick mother. Further, he thought that Murray's problems with the doctor may have provided another reason for her early return to New Zealand.¹¹⁵

Other single women missionaries who served on Choiseul were Florrie Neale, (1917 to 1922), and Vera Cannon, (1939 1942). Neale was Australian, and so is not mentioned in Carter's book, and there is little other information about her time on Choiseul.

Women missionaries were very clearly divided into two clearly defined groups, wives and sisters. As wife of the minister or the doctor, her role was to support her husband and to help where possible with the work of the mission, as well as to care for the family. Both Florrie James, the doctor's wife, and Gertrude Binêt, the minister's wife, used their position to exercise power over the nursing sisters, by insisting that the latter attend every *Lotu* service. Gertrude Binêt also seemed to be 'the power behind the throne' with regards to her husband. Murray noted that when she was on the island, Binêt suddenly became much more assertive. The effect of the isolation, the freedom from the constraints of the home church, and the authority that they held as missionaries,

¹¹³ *ibid.*, 22 July 1930.

¹¹⁴ James to Sinclair, 27 January 1931, microfilm 04-109, UA.

¹¹⁵ Goldie to Marshall, 2 May 1932, Box 107, MAA.

sometimes led the sisters to display a side of their character that had not been evident in their application. Saunders expressed her religious beliefs in a very energetic and dogmatic way and tried to use the power of prayer to heal islanders and also herself, as well as influencing McMillan to follow her beliefs. Metcalfe became very protective of his wife and attempted to restrict her duties outside their home.¹¹⁶ Sisters such as White and Stewart were also found to be temperamentally unsuited to the work and were unable to return.

The work of the women was not considered as important as that of the men and that is illustrated by its absence in official documents, and, until recently, in academic writing. The medical work was seen as inferior to evangelism and it suffered the most in the cutbacks that were made during the depression of the 1930s, even though it gave the mission a secular purpose, and justified its presence in a practical way. The role of Methodist women missionaries on Choiseul made it possible to evangelise among the Choiseulese women, and to stop the rising death rate among women and babies. There was not one particular type of missionary sister, whatever other label might be attached to them, but rather a wide variety of skills, personalities and spiritual beliefs. The personality of the woman, and the relationships between her and the missionaries with whom she worked were the overriding factors in the success or failure of her ministry.

¹¹⁶ Metcalfe to Scriven, 10 March 1934, Metcalfe Correspondence, microfilm 2254, UA

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Choiseul first encountered Australian Methodist missionaries in 1905. While the meeting was not cordial, the missionaries were undeterred and continued with their goal of establishing a mission on the island. The outcomes of their endeavours were judged in the framework of their worldviews. Missionaries believed they had succeeded when they saw Solomon Islanders who were clean and resembled Europeans in their mode of dress and beliefs. Failures were judged to have occurred when the Solomon Islanders failed to live up to the expectations of the missionaries in both appearance and in lifestyle. Missionaries suppressed many of the traditional beliefs of the Choiseulese, but they also brought improved health care and a higher (by European standards) living standard. Sometimes missionaries rode roughshod over the traditions of the Choiseulese, and the subsequent misunderstandings could delay the achievement of the mission goals. Whether they were culture wreckers or culture builders depended on the individual approach of each missionary. The missionaries each had very individual characteristics. The new dynamics brought to the mission work by the women were sometimes frowned upon by the men as independent women, free of the constraints of home, began to display a degree of autonomy that was not always familiar or acceptable to the men. The conflicts that occurred among the mission staff also caused difficulties as ambitious people, both men and women, fought to realise their own personal goals. Meanwhile, the Choiseulese endeavoured to understand what the missionaries were trying to accomplish.

From being an island little visited by Europeans, by 1941 Choiseul had become an island with reportedly eighty percent of the population associated with the Methodist Church, which was considered a concrete measurement of the mission's success. Choiseul has come from being an island receiving significantly less attention from Europeans, to being able to operate in the wider world can be partly attributed to the Methodist Mission. From the start of the mission, mention of Choiseul was part of newsletters to Australia and New Zealand and so became known in Church circles, and the wider world.

APPENDIX

All photographs are used with the permission of the owners of the collections.



Figure 12: Mrs Rycroft. White Photographic Collection MAA.



Figure 13: Sister Lily White. White Photographic Collection MAA



Figure 14: Sister Grace McDonald milking. Jean Dalziel Collection MAA.



Figure 15: Sister Ethel with her charges. Jean Dalziel Collection MAA.



Figure 16: Sister Jean Dalziel. Jean Dalziel Collection MAA.



Figure 17: Synod at Babatana 1925. Jean Dalziel Collection MAA.



Figure 18: Kindergarten at Senga with Sister Lily White. Jean Dalziel Collection MAA.



Figure 19: Senga Church. Photographic Collection MAA.



Figure 20: Tramping across Choiseul. Mr and Mrs Metcalfe take a rest with their helpers.

Jean Dalziel Collection MAA

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Box 265

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