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PACIFIC ISLANDER PASTORS AND MISSIONARIES: SOME HISTORIOGRAPHICAL AND ANALYTICAL ISSUES

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In global terms, the deployment of indigenous pastors and their equivalents in the dissemination of Christianity was unusual. A notable exception was in the Pacific Islands, where the widespread use of native teachers and preachers was a feature of the missionization process. Their role was not adequately reflected in the historiography of the region until the publication of Ron and Marjorie Crocombes' seminal book *The Works of Ta'unga* in 1968. The Crocombes inspired an outpouring of research on pastors and teachers, which this article describes, categorizes, and assesses. The article concludes with suggestions for further research.

THE MONUMENTS SCATTERED around the Pacific Islands are sometimes in honor of fallen soldiers or of deceased statesmen, but more commonly they stand in commemoration of missionary endeavor, especially to the work of Pacific Islander pastors. They serve as a reminder that Christian culture contacts in the Pacific were often between island cultures and not necessarily an interaction of Europeans and islanders. We do not say this to understate the frequent importance of European missionaries in the initial conversion process and in the general oversight of missionary enterprise but only to recognize the extent to which Protestant missionary societies in the Pacific relied on native pastors to spread and consolidate a Christian dispensation. The fact remains that the introduction of Christianity throughout most of the

Pacific was not accomplished by European missionaries alone but by a veritable army of islander teachers and pastors, themselves often recently converted (Crocombe and Crocombe 1968:xv; Wetherell 1980:130; Thornley 1982:124; Lal 1994:336; Campbell 1989:117).[1]

Before the gradual post–World War II indigenization of the island churches, the terms "pastor," "teacher," "evangelist," "preacher," and "helper" were commonly, if loosely, used to denote someone who was not entrusted with the full range of pastoral duties and who therefore was regarded as being less than a full "missionary." In practice Europeans were the "missionaries" and Pacific Islanders were the "pastors." The latter was a subservient status in the additional sense that very few European missionaries regarded pastors as equal partners.[2] The indigenization of the island churches now means that the pastor of old is not only fully ordained but, almost invariably, a local person from another part of the country—in order to avoid the pressure of immediate family loyalties. No longer are islander pastors largely "international missionaries" who worked in foreign lands. Turakiare Teauariki was the last Cook Islander to serve in Papua New Guinea, departing in 1975 (Forman 1996; Teauariki 1982). The last Fijian to Papua New Guinea was Seru Berake, who had attained the rank of bishop. He returned home in 1994 after thirty years' overseas service unheralded and unnoticed.

The "decolonization" of the island churches and the gradual demise of overseas-serving pastors were a long time in coming. But these processes were anticipated well in advance, in the mid-1920s, by the Methodist missionary J. W. Burton, who wrote:

> We must train men and women, to make unnecessary, some day, the white missionary, and the South Sea Island teacher who costs so much in travel expenses to and from his island home. It is the trained native preacher who can best instruct his people, and it is he who, with his wife and family, can set an example of home life which can be copied by people from the villages. He is not a foreigner, with a foreign accent in his voice, foreign views and manners, and foreign ways of living. To educate village pastors, then, is the first objective.[3] (Burton 1926:82)

At least 1,500 pastors were sent on overseas service between 1819 and the early 1970s, but this is a lower-bound figure.[4] Their ubiquity is astonishing. Many taught on their home islands, but there was a strong overseas mission impulse in the early Pacific churches. The greatest mission field was Papua, which received pastors from places as far apart as Samoa, Tonga, Niue, Fiji, the Solomons, the Cook Islands, and Tuvalu. There were, in fact,

a greater number of pastors in the Pacific on a per capita basis than anywhere else, except for Japan (Forman 1974:432). Actually, the widespread use of pastors was not a feature of missionization in other parts of the world —although some Pacific Islander pastors went to the Caribbean and to the Northern Territory of Australia, just as Jamaican pastors were sent to West Africa (Latukefu 1996:18; Vassady 1979:15–39). But they were few in number. The only recent parallel to the extensive use of pastors in the Pacific is the widespread deployment of lay catechists by Alexander de Rhodes, a Jesuit in seventeenth-century Vietnam (Neill 1986:166–167). In earlier centuries, by contrast, it was common enough for Christians from one area to take the gospel to people of another—as, for example, the use of Celts in Scotland, England, and Europe in the sixth and seventh centuries (Latourette 1955: 344–345; Neill 1986:59–64). So what Pacific historians take for granted as the extensive use of native preachers in the missionization process is a significant departure in a global context in more recent times.

The Historiographical Background to 1967

The notion that pastors were "hidden from history" and have only recently become "visible" is widespread but largely unjustified. It is simply not the case that the pastor was an "unperson," that is, someone whom others neglect to mention and who thus becomes erased from future consciousness (Stern 1977:xix–xxi). From the outset, European missionaries recognized their importance. The missionaries certainly regarded pastors as subservient, but many a missionary book accords prominence to the pastor, often in the form of potted pen-portraits that contain strong moral messages directed at a sympathetic home readership (e.g., Abel 1902; Burton n.d.; Chignell 1911; Reason 1947). The depictions are often open to criticism: in Gunson's view, "the principal defect" of W. W. Gill's book *Gems from the Coral Islands* (published in 1856), which gives a rounded history of the work of pastors rather than anecdotal description, "is that very few of the native missionaries are made to appear as real and vital persons, most of them remaining anonymous" (Gunson 1959:xiii). It is also the case that singular individuals get preferential treatment—as, for example, the iconoclastic Tongan pastor in Fiji, Joeli Bulu (e.g., Burton and Deane 1936:30–34)—which of course underplays the dull routine of the everyday that characterized the pastors' work. In this way, the exceptional becomes the norm. All the same, European missionaries were well aware that "it would have been impossible for us to have carried out our work so effectively without them" (Burton 1926:96).

An older generation of academic scholarship also explicitly recognized the

pastors' importance. The first book to deal solely with Pacific Islander pastors was published as early as 1911—an almost unknown volume that deals largely with French territories (Marchand 1911). There were writers who signally failed to recognize the importance of pastors (e.g., Keesing 1934), but many other texts, such as Kuykendall's history of the Hawaiian kingdom (1938:103) and Koskinen's account of missionary political influence (1953: 30–31) are adamant that the pastor was an important figure in the diffusion of Christianity, even if this observation is only expressed in a paragraph or two within the text of a lengthy monograph. Harrison M. Wright, who discussed the diffusion of Christianity in pre-1840 New Zealand, provides a more substantial treatment of Maori teachers (1959:159–162). Although an important part of Wright's analysis, the Maori teacher was sidelined in the debates that surrounded this controversial book, which put the case that the Maori conversion stemmed from social dislocation and loss of confidence (see Howe 1984:224–226). A further publication of the late 1950s was Colin Newbury's edition of *The History of the Tahitian Mission,* by John Davies, where the pastors' work is again accorded extensive treatment (Davies 1961: chap. 14)—another example of a missionary giving pastors their due.

But there was still no single study about them. In effect, they were being lost in the crowd. Despite the dominant islands-oriented/islander-agency ethos of the Department of Pacific History at the Australian National University in Canberra, which set the intellectual trends from the 1950s to the 1980s, pastors continued to be subsumed within the texts of larger works. The discussion was often substantial enough, as in J. W. Davidson's and R. P. Gilson's histories of Samoa (Davidson 1967; Gilson 1970). Doctoral dissertations on European missionaries and the various mission societies also had significant discussions on the pastor. Niel Gunson's study of evangelical missionaries in the Pacific included a chapter on pastors and an appendix that listed the 308 pastors he could identify to 1860 (1959:520–528); and David Hilliard's work on Protestant missionaries in the Solomon Islands was fully appreciative of the "native agency" and the efforts of the various mission bodies to train and use these men (1966). Works written outside the Canberra department likewise noticed the pastors, for example, Ernest Beaglehole's study of culture change in some of the Cook Islands (1957) and Ann Prendergast's history of the London Missionary Society in Papua (1961).

So there was no excuse, at least for the academic specialist, to be unaware of the numerical and practical importance of pastors. At the same time, the only work solely concerned with pastors was Marchand's all-but-unknown study—in contrast, say, to Harry Maude's sharply focused articles on beachcombers and the early European traders, published in journals that Pacific historians routinely read and gathered together in the author's collected

essays (Maude 1968). These subjects were not buried in the pages of a larger work. Unlike the pastors, they were spotlighted and thus brought to the specific attention of other historians.

The Legacy of Ta'unga

The spotlight finally landed on pastors in 1968, when Ron and Marjorie Crocombe, both of whom had been associated with the Canberra department, published *The Works of Ta'unga* (1968; see also 1961). As part of a new wave of Pacific historians, the Crocombes created a heightened awareness of the importance and the ubiquity of the island pastor. Comprising a series of manuscripts by a long-serving Cook Islands pastor, *The Works of Ta'unga* struck a responsive chord, not least because it seemed to represent an authentic island "voice." Fifteen years later, in 1982, the Crocombes followed up with an edited collection of essays on Polynesian missionaries in Melanesia, and Marjorie Crocombe's edition of the writings of Maretu, another Cook Islands pastor, appeared the following year (Crocombe and Crocombe 1982; Maretu 1983). The publication dates—1967 and 1983—provide convenient markers, because during the period between these dates there was a flowering of pastor historiography that largely stemmed from the Crocombes. *The Works of Ta'unga* has been durably influential in itself, and it provided the impetus for other historians to view pastors as individuals in their own right.

The importance of the islander pastor was confirmed, to varying degrees, over the next decade in the monograph literature on Pacific Islands Christianity—in the histories of particular missions (e.g., Williams 1972; Threlfall 1975; Wood 1975, 1978; Hilliard 1978), in missiological studies (e.g., Tippett 1977b), and in the general histories of missionary activity (Garrett 1982; Forman 1982), not to mention Gunson's study of early evangelical missionaries (1978:237–254). In all these works the pastors are recognized as important agents of change, but they are still being treated as part of a larger story. During this period the first monograph on pastors since Marchand's 1911 study appeared, in 1977, but it had limited impact, at least in academic circles. Alan Tippett's *The Deep Sea Canoe* is either unknown or ignored. Written for the edification of younger readers within the Pacific and appearing under the imprint of an obscure publisher, it has suffered the fate of near anonymity (Tippett 1977a).

Another neglected book was W. H. Oliver and Jane Thomson's *Challenge and Response* (1971). The lack of recognition was undeserved, but the book never overcame the multiple disabilities of being a commissioned, privately published, unfootnoted, tritely titled regional history. *Challenge and Response*

deals with the East Coast of the North Island of New Zealand and was intended by its sponsors as a celebratory history of the European settlers and their descendants. Instead, the authors celebrated Maori agency, provided a warts-and-all portrayal of settler politics, and, far from writing a parish-pump history, they explicitly placed the region in a national context.

It is doubly unfortunate that *Challenge and Response* has been neglected because, to our knowledge, the two chapters on "Conversion" and "Christianity" provide the most forceful case for islander religious agency. In a beautifully expressed passage, Oliver and Thomson give full recognition to the manner in which the Maori purposefully manipulated the European advance—often to their own advantage—selecting, rejecting, and modifying, "especially religion and literacy [which] were found serviceable; with them one may write of adaptation because they could be grafted on to the existing Maori stocks; they were changed themselves while they caused changes. They proved, as much else did not, functional within Maori society; they eased transition even as they brought it about" (1971:27).[5]

The result was "a society Christianised upon its own terms and for its own purposes" (ibid.:38). The European missionaries, who elevated individual experience at the expense of social context, were predictably disturbed. As Oliver and Thomson point out, "Christianity was not rejected; on the contrary, the missionaries were alarmed precisely by the ways in which it was practised" (ibid.:43; see also Sanderson 1983:170–171). The role of the native teacher was not forgotten in these developments. In a scenario repeated elsewhere in the Pacific, the indigenous bearer of grace, often a recent convert himself—and in the Maori case not uncommonly a freed captive of war—was frequently the decisive character; he "drove home the main aspects of the new religion" in ways that a European missionary could not and was left behind to carry on the work while the European returned to his head station. In short, the indigenous missionary was of critical importance (Oliver and Thomson 1971:29–32).[6]

It is within the framework of islander agency, although less pronounced, that the specific studies on the islander pastor were expressed. Between 1971 and 1982, a series of papers on pastors or on aspects of the pastorate appeared in leading journals and major anthologies. These are what made the difference: they consolidated the Crocombes' initial impact and repeatedly kept pastors in the historiographical limelight.

The first such study, by Ron Crocombe himself, was an account of a 1954 dispute at the Takamoa Theological College at Rarotonga, where the students staged a walkout in protest against their conditions and their treatment by the expatriate principal (Crocombe 1970). The next study, by Nigel Oram, was also remote from the nineteenth century: with respect to Papua,

he reinforced J. W. Davidson's observation that an emerging modern élite of an incipient nation-state overwhelmingly comprises the descendants of pastors and that this outcome was largely a function of educational opportunity (Oram 1971; Davidson 1967:36, 69–71, 267–268, 392n). More conventionally, there were survey articles on the role and influence of pastors (Forman 1974; Latukefu 1978, 1981) and a succession of detailed case studies with a solid archival basis: Samoans in Tuvalu and Papua (Munro 1978; Wetherell 1980), Fijians in Papua (Wetherell 1978), Hawaiians in the Marquesas (Morris 1979), and Wesleyan pastors in Fiji (Thornley 1982). There was also Nancy Morris's dissertation on Hawaiian pastors on overseas service (1987) and the Crocombes' edited volume on Polynesian missionaries in Melanesia, which included chapters on Samoans in Papua (Sinclair 1982), portraits of individual pastors (Latukefu 1982; Crocombe 1982), and an autobiographical essay (Teauariki 1982). To cap off a successful season, so to speak, was Marjorie Crocombe's editing of the writings of Maretu, another Cook Islands pastor (Maretu 1983); but this volume never enjoyed the near-celebrity status of *The Works of Ta'unga.*

This very mixed bag cannot easily be characterized or categorized. If there is a common theme, it is a reaffirmation of the importance of the pastor in religious conversion and consolidation, and in culture change generally. The various authors attempted to view the pastors' work in broad terms: their educational role, interaction with their congregations, their political activities, relations with European missionaries, cultural influences, their health, and family life. Another feature of these articles is that most of the authors are committed Christians. Forman, at the time Professor of Missions at the Yale Divinity School, comes from a family with a strong missionary tradition; the late Sione Latukefu was an ordained Methodist minister as well as an academic (Latukefu 1992); Thornley (1996c:176) and Wetherell are the sons of clerics; Sinclair's father was a pastor, and she was brought up in a devoutly religious household (Crocombe and Crocombe 1982:136); the late Turakiare Teauariki was the last Polynesian missionary in Papua (Forman 1996). But the concomitant tendency to see the pastor's work as a "good thing" was not a uniform quality. Although Latukefu was wont to equate historical objectivity with approval of missionary endeavor, he could nevertheless be quite critical of the pastors' frequent enough transgressions of human decency. Sinclair, for her part, is inclined to hagiography, especially in her special pleading for the Samoan pastors' typical high-handedness and cultural chauvinism. What does stand out is the uncoordinated nature of the overall effort. Apart from the Crocombes' edited volume on Polynesian pastors in Melanesia (1982), most of the articles were the happenstance products of individuals working largely in isolation from one another.

Our own examples illustrate the haphazard and largely incidental growth of pastor historiography during the 1970s and early 1980s. Munro wrote his chapter on two Samoan pastors in Tuvalu really by default (1978). Invited to contribute to a volume of biographical essays, he originally intended to write about a trader; but because of his graduate commitments, he decided to write on a topic that would draw on his thesis research. Of strongly secular outlook, Munro had never written mission history to that point but thought it time he started, given the profound importance of the church in Tuvaluan life. It was a purely academic decision: an essay on Samoan pastors in Tuvalu seemed necessary, because they were instrumental in the missionization process and yet they were underrepresented in the scholarly literature. Munro does not recall *The Works of Ta'unga* as a specific influence. Probably it had the oblique effect of making him aware that pastors were a worthwhile and "acceptable" historical investigation. He is more aware of the influence of an article by his undergraduate teacher on the Melanesian Mission, which discussed at some length the training of its native pastorate (Hilliard 1970: esp. 128–133).

Thornley wrote his first piece on Fijian Wesleyan pastors (1982) because Hank Nelson asked him to contribute to a seminar series, the proceedings of which were duly published. The choice of topic was his and the eventual essay derived from his dissertation on Fiji Methodism but with considerable additional research. Like Munro, he never would have written the essay but for the initial invitation.

In other words, the various articles on pastors were largely fortuitous, as authors either made serendipitous individual choices within the prevailing intellectual climate or responded to the equally serendipitous opportunities that came their way. Despite a certain lack of overall purpose, the historiography of the islander pastor had, by 1983, increased to a degree that the Crocombes probably never imagined when they issued *The Works of Ta'unga* some fifteen years earlier.

The Impetus Subsides

Between 1983 and 1994 there was a discernible lull in writing on islander missionaries, which in part reflects the diffuse (and misapplied) redirectioning of Pacific historiography into such paradigms as postmodernism, cultural studies, and feminist theory. There was also, largely under the impetus of the Fiji coups of 1987, a shift of attention away from nineteenth-century history to contemporary affairs. Research on pastors continued, but the output diminished to the extent that no articles about them were published between 1982 and 1988. Part of the reason was that the earlier authors turned their

attention elsewhere, at least for the meanwhile, and were not replaced by other historians. As an indicative example of diminishing interest, the published outcome of Association for Social Anthropology in Oceania sessions in the mid 1980s on Christianity in the Pacific barely mentions pastors (Barker 1990). Pastors were also mentioned, largely in passing, in the occasional monograph (Whiteman 1987) and general text (Garrett 1992).

The slack was eventually taken up and significant essays appeared between 1989 and 1994. Steve Mullins's article on Polynesian pastors in the Torres Strait Islands (1990) is a continuation of the more generalized surveys that typified the work being done in the 1970s and early 1980s. The others reflected the increasing specialization and fragmentation of Pacific historiography—itself a reflection of wider trends in the historical profession. Wetherell's study of the former plantation workers from Queensland who served as pastors in Papua (1989) has a sharper thematic focus; Goldsmith and Munro explore the ambiguities created by the multiple versions of the career in Tuvalu of the Cook Islands pastor Elekana (1992); while Wolfgang Kempf (1994) discusses differences in status between European missionaries and Samoan pastors under the rubric "the politics of distancing." Despite increasing diversification, four articles are a meager total over an eleven-year period.

Recrudescence or False Dawn?

Lack of secular interest, however, has been offset by wide-ranging contributions in church publications, beginning with the 1995 special issue of the *Pacific Journal of Theology* to mark the bicentenary of the founding of the London Missionary Society; it contains three articles on pastors in the early churches (Gallagher 1995; Thornley 1995; Lange 1995). The next year the proceedings of the Fiji Methodist History Conference at Davuilevu were published. Titled *Mai Kea Ki Vei?* they too contain several chapters on individual pastors and the Fijian ministry generally (Baleiwaqa 1996; Thornley 1996a; Jakes 1996).[7] The following year, the present authors published an edited collection of essays specifically about pastors, titled *The Covenant Makers* (Munro and Thornley 1996). The opportunity to work on a joint project presented itself when we both happened to be in Fiji over a three-year period, and we immediately agreed that a further book on islander missionaries was needed. The gap appeared significant, to us at any rate.

The contributors to these three recent publications are largely committed Christians, exclusively so in the case of *Mai Kea Ki Vei?* A conscious decision was made in the case of *The Covenant Makers* to include a variety of persuasions, including those of secular outlook. Even so, ten of the six-

teen contributors are ordained ministers or work in theological institutions, or both. The figure suggests that church history in the Pacific is tending to become ghettoized within such institutions, which carries the risk that mission history might become detached from the academic mainstream and enter a cul-de-sac (Munro 1996a:54). Indicative of such tendencies was the abandonment of the session on mission history at the 1996 Pacific History Conference at Hilo for lack of interest—which might have been averted had representatives from theological colleges offered papers. This lack of interest contrasts with the hugely successful session on missionization at the 1975 Association for Social Anthropology in Oceania meeting in Florida, resulting in an impressive anthology that included chapters on pastors and the development of indigenous churches (Boutilier, Hughes, and Tiffany 1978).

On the question of allegiance, there is something of a chasm separating religious and secular historians. There is often clannishness among church historians and a disinclination to reach out to a secular readership. A further concern is that the clerical dominance of mission history has resulted in an overly theological perspective that downplays the economic role of missionary activity (Leckie 1985:47). Conversely, secular historians are often lacking sympathy for churches and missions, do not always bother to inform themselves sufficiently on these matters, and are strongly suspicious of the missiological approach (Munro 1996a:56). The dichotomy is compounded within the theological colleges themselves, where the low priority on research serves to intensify their insularity. Nor have the recent ecumenical sentiments within the theological colleges extended to employing secular scholars on the basis of academic qualities rather than individual beliefs; and in any case secular historians would probably feel out of place in such environments.

It is also fair comment that many of the general histories of the Pacific Islands give poor service to missions generally and to pastors specifically (Oliver 1951; Barclay 1987; Scarr 1990), although others score better on this issue (Howe 1984; Campbell 1989; Quanchi and Adams 1993:73–86). Given this obvious gap, the makers of the latest general texts missed a golden opportunity to redress the situation. *Tides of History* (Howe, Kiste, and Lal 1994), which deals with the twentieth century, almost ignores religions and churches while the prestigious *Cambridge History of Pacific Islanders,* despite its title, lacks sections on pastors or even on missionization generally (Denoon et al. 1997).

Such comments raise fine points of judgment and relevance. There is the view that one cannot rightly expect authors to go beyond their stated intentions. There is a contrary view that, like it or not, the intrinsic needs of a sub-

ject have to be met; and there are occasions when authors seem oblivious to clear instances when pastors were genuine historical actors. This failing is by no means universal among secular scholars (e.g., Newbury 1980:39–41, 129–138; Monsell-Davis 1981:57–59; Macdonald 1982:31–53; Goldsmith 1989; Beckett 1987:39–44; and in particular Gilson 1970). But there are cases when the marginalization of the pastor seems unjustified. Langmore, in her superb "group biography" of European missionaries in Papua before 1914, explicitly states that she is not concerned with the more numerous Polynesian and Melanesian pastors (1989:xviii). One may regret, however, her lack of discussion of the complicated relationship between the missionaries and the pastors. The perceptiveness of Langmore's comments on the occasion when the pastors do get extended discussion—in the context of indigenizing the church—heightens this regret (ibid.:206–209). It is not as though Langmore presents European missionaries as a stand-alone collection of individuals: she discusses their relationships with traders, government officials, and Papuans in some detail (ibid.:108–133, 211–240), but rarely does she mention how they interacted with their pastor colleagues.

To give another case of omission, Gilson's history of the Cook Islands is avowedly an administrative history, but pastors are hardly to be seen in the chapter "The Mission Period," despite their political influence at the local level (1980).[8] Much the same point applies to Howe's contact history of the Loyalty Islands (1978). A more recent example is Regina Ganter's monograph on the pearl-shellers of Torres Strait. It is a fine book, but to state that pastors were influential in the pearl-shell industry without any kind of elaboration is mystifying (Ganter 1994:63; the omission has been rectified by Mullins's more recent study [1995]).

To sum up so far, the three waves of studies of Pacific Islander missionaries bear resemblance to the three phases of missionary activity identified by Peter Miria (1985). First, there was the initial announcement of the gospel and its "translation" from a Western concept to an island one; second, the "transition" refers to years of ongoing development (or consolidation); and third, the "transformation" from dependent mission to independent church. The Crocombes initiated the "translation" with *The Works of Ta'unga;* the "transition" was accomplished as pastors increasingly entered the literature in their own right, although mainly through Western academic eyes; the "transformation" has perhaps just commenced—more by accident than by design—with the 1995 commemorative issue of the *Pacific Journal of Theology, Mai Kea Ki Vei?* and *The Covenant Makers.*

Or is this a false dawn? Market forces and reader interest may perhaps have been saturated by this surge of activity. While individual studies con-

tinue to put in a welcome appearance (e.g., Lange 1997), there seems little scope for a further collection of essays on pastors in the immediate future. The general lack of a research culture in theological colleges within the Pacific, moreover, suggests that little more will come from that quarter, at least on the basis of individual initiative. Time will tell.

Questions of Representation and Voice

Whatever their exact historiographical location, the various "translation" volumes fall into what has become a well-defined tradition of attempting to give "voice" to the pastors. The prevailing contemporary view was that pastors were an appendage of European missionary endeavor: they carried out a secondary role in a master-servant relationship reminiscent of Robinson Crusoe and Man Friday. The very terms "teachers," "helpers," or "Native Assistant Teachers" indicate that they were regarded as less than fully fledged missionaries who might be entrusted with basic educational duties but not with the full range of pastoral functions. Even the Anglicans in Melanesia, who were comparatively enlightened toward indigenous cultures, at least in the abstract, saw pastors in terms of a "black net" buoyed with "white corks" (Hilliard 1978:81, 153). This fishing analogy neatly reflected the racial and the hierarchical dimensions of the missionary-pastor relationship.

But why have the pastors been given so little "voice," in view of the essential nature of the work they accomplished and the potential sacrifice involved? It is not that the missionaries erased the pastors from the published record. *Missionary Magazine, Juvenile Missionary Magazine, Chronicle of the London Missionary Society,* and the *Annual Reports* and *Occasional Papers* of the New Guinea Anglican Mission contain numerous accounts of pastor activities, as do many books by missionaries. But pastors are generally accorded an elliptical mention in missionary *archival* sources, as anyone who has tried to piece together a continuous narrative and story line on a given pastor will testify. In total there is a fair bit, but there is not much systematically on individuals, although occasionally one will hit on the stories. These stories almost invariably concern atypical individuals whose independence of mind or sheer ability brought them to the attention of the white missionaries. Even then the information is usually only sufficient for the pastors in question to be used as a concrete example of this or that within a group portrait, as Thornley did with the Fiji Wesleyan pastors Eliesa Bula and Tomasi Naceba (1982:130–131, 133–135; 1996a:40–42). For such reasons, studies of individual pastors are rare and group portraits prevalent by comparison.[9] Munro wrote an essay on two Samoan pastors in Tuvalu precisely because the sources would not sustain the study of a single indi-

vidual, and he selected that particular duo because of their singular personalities (Munro 1978). This selection recalls Somerset Maugham's frank admission that his Malaya and Borneo short stories are not about people who lead "humdrum lives and [do] very much the same things every day" but concern "people with some singularity of character." He stresses that "they are exceptional" (Maugham 1951:viii), the very sort of people who tend to find their way into the records in the first place.

These remarks underline the point that history is not so much what actually happened but is more a matter of what happened to get recorded and what of this happened to survive. To put it another way, the Crocombes made a revealing, if unintended, statement by calling their own book *The Works of Ta'unga,* rather than *The Writings of Ta'unga.* By saying that Ta'unga's "work" was what he wrote, as distinct from what he did, the message comes across that action is for naught unless it is recorded for posterity. The observation is doubly interesting given the frequent perception in the islands that writing does not constitute "work."

The customary lament is that only the occasional pastor, such as a Ta'unga or a Maretu, left substantial written records: had more pastors put pen to paper, the record would be less one-sided and less beset with maddening gaps. This very point was made in the preface to Thornley's study of Tahitian pastors in Fiji:

> [A]bove all this story will try to show, as much as the sources allow, the role of the Tahitians in the introduction to Christianity to Fiji. Some questions are easily answered, concerning places, names and dates. A few more difficult questions surround problems of perspective, limited information, the breakdown in support for the new missionary venture to Fiji and the risks involved in making any final assessment of the Tahitians, bearing in mind that the search for vernacular sources has not been forgotten. (Thornley 1996b:91)

The problem of dealing with pastors in the biographical mode is even more acute. This question, among others, was raised by Michael Goldsmith during his keynote address at the 1994 Pacific History Association Conference. He and Munro were writing a book (since completed) on the Cook Islands pastor Elekana, whose fame rests on his association with Tuvalu. Goldsmith discussed the epistemological dimension of writing the biography of an individual about whom the records are so unrevealing and contradictory, so fragmented and sparse—whether in terms of his character, his motivations, or his activities (1995). Even though some written records by Elekana have survived, these records are far outnumbered and outweighed by what the

European missionaries wrote *about* him. The authors' attempts at "getting at the substance of Elekana" were later remarked on by a conference participant with the following words: "Whose life was it anyway when the only documented sources were the records of an unequal relationship between Elekana and the European missionaries?" (Hempenstall 1994:728).

This is another way of saying that Pacific archival sources, not just mission documentation, are "to a large extent tainted, being written by Europeans possessing the almost inescapable bias of their racial background" (Maude 1968:ix–x). Such is the scarcity value of documentation "from the other side," however, that one sometimes forgets that it is just as "tainted" by an "inescapable bias" of its own, and more besides. In an oft-quoted passage, Ta'unga told his mentor, the Rev. Charles Pitman, that he described "what I saw with my eyes, heard with my ears, and felt with my hands." But he also said: "The customs of these islands are innumerable. I have not written about all of them, lest you should not approve of these matters, and perhaps you may not be interested. . . . What is the point of my writing this report to you? It is just to let you know about these things. Then cast it aside" (Crocombe and Crocombe 1968:111). To which Gavan Daws responded:

> To all questions of value Ta'unga responded simply: Christ was the answer. This is not surprising. It is perhaps less remarkable that Ta'unga wrote like a missionary than he learned to write in the first place. Christianity is the price that he paid (willingly enough, to be sure) for literacy. And the price we pay for being able to read Ta'unga's writings at all is that we will never know what he thought of the rest of the innumerable customs of the islands, those he did not describe for Pitman, lest the missionary be uninterested or disapproving. (Daws 1969:228)

Daws has a point that an exaggerated worth attaches to anything scarce; and one could certainly wish that pastors wrote more frequently and revealingly about their experiences.[10] Some missions, such as the Methodists in Fiji, relied for information on letters from Fijian pastors, and these were often published in *Tukutuku Vakalotu.* But other missionaries, such as those of the London Missionary Society in Samoa, went on voyages of inspection to the outstations and generated their own reports (although some letters and reports from Samoan pastors on foreign service were published in the London Missionary Society magazine *Ole Sulu*). To compound the problem, the relatively few letters and reports written by pastors were often lost or destroyed (e.g., Crocombe and Crocombe 1968:31, 153), and few pastors left journals, diaries, or autobiographical accounts, ghostwritten or otherwise.[11] Still, some

material never imagined to exist has been unexpectedly located, such as the manuscript of the Tongan missionary Semesi Nau (1996); and a relative wealth of documentation "from the other side" probably remains to be found, for example, in the considerable vernacular material in *Tohi Fanongongo,* a Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga newspaper.

But it will never begin to rival in bulk or diversity the European archival and published material. Moreover, Semesi's account adds credence to the view that the pastors' own writings have their particular faults: too much self-censorship and celebration, too little reflection and introspection. This shortcoming adds to the original problem that pastors tend to get shouted down in the European archival record. Their wives are even more thoroughly silenced, which stems from another case of corporate missionary amnesia. It is extremely difficult to find information on pastors' wives, a point underlined by the fact that Jeanette Little's essay on Mary Nawaa, a Hawaiian missionary wife and then a missionary in her own right, was only possible because Mary published an autobiographical account (Little 1996; Kahelemauna 1944).

Nor is the visual record without deficiencies. Take the example of Papua. When photographed, the pastors and their wives were often made to pose in an unambiguously subservient role, and they were seldom identified by name. This pose accords with their largely anonymous role. Yet they were very visible on the ground—in their white shirts and trousers—guiding European explorers, helping administration officials, and in their everyday work of teaching and preaching. They were an integral part of the village world and the European world in Papua, but they were sold short in image, and sometimes also in text, when Europeans recorded, represented, and re-presented Papua (Quanchi 1996).[12] The visual imaging in photographs and illustrations often served to deny pastors, despite their pioneering role, the contribution they were making to Papua's political and economic development. Perhaps, in the postcolonial era, such a "contribution" might now be deemed less than desirable. But credit was not given at the time where credit was due.

The final question is, in what fashion are pastors to be represented? More to the point, why are they represented in different and shifting ways? Pastors were often controversial figures, and the contemporary record carries numerous allegations of worldly pretensions, political opportunism, and other human imperfections. These, in turn, have been offset by an explicitly celebratory literature that idealizes and ennobles the pastors, resonances of which are sometimes found in scholarly writing and in popular mythology.[13] The Samoan scholar Malama Meleisea has pointed out that he was "raised on the ideology that 'Papuans' (as all Papua New Guineans were

then termed) were black savages with horrible customs. This popular Samoan misconception was the result of the imaginative tales told by returning Samoan missionaries, no doubt to emphasize their own heroism in going out to convert the heathen" (1987:143–144).

One reason for this celebratory attitude toward pastors of bygone days is the degree of suffering that those on overseas service commonly endured. "It was generally accepted by the missions . . . that the role of the 'native brethren' was to make initial contacts, establish peace, learn the language and obtain at least nominal acceptance of Christianity and thus to *venture their lives* in order to . . . 'prepare the way for more efficient labourers from privileged Britain' " (Crocombe and Crocombe 1968:118; emphasis added). Pastors were, as one historian bluntly points out, considered "far more expendable than a European missionary" (Howe 1984:293). In fairness, some European missionaries had misgivings about sending pastors to dangerous and unhealthy places where they themselves were reluctant to venture (Joyce 1971:169; Langmore 1974:16; Crocombe 1982:68)—and in any case their own mortality rate and that of their children were severe in themselves. Papua, in particular, was a veritable graveyard for pastors and their families (Langmore 1989:75, 98–99, 255–258). According to the London Missionary Society's own figures, almost one-half of the pastors in Papua and their wives died or were killed between 1871 and 1885: of the 188 teachers and spouses concerned, 8 were killed and another 79 died, of whom 4 were suspected of being poisoned (Crocombe and Crocombe 1982:131–134). By any standards this is a shocking mortality rate. It far exceeded that experienced by indentured plantation workers, whose recruitment and employment was so roundly condemned by missionaries as a group. Casualties decreased over time; none of the 55 pastors and spouses in Papua between 1882 and 1885 was killed, and only 12 died (Crocombe and Crocombe 1982:131–134; Jakes 1996:117; Wetherell 1987:340–341). Even so, the mortality rate over this period is in excess of one in five. There are reasons why pastors on overseas service are often represented in their homelands as heroic figures, whatever the accompanying glorification and racial overtones.

Suggestions for Future Research

There is a temptation for the historiographer to focus on gaps and weaknesses, and to lapse into the conventional pleas and injunctions that others rechannel their efforts into things that they cannot do, do not want to do, or need not do. Without presuming to map out an agenda for future research, we can nevertheless make certain points.

First, the work on pastors on overseas service ought to be counter-

balanced by comparable attention to those who served on their home islands. There were home-serving pastors in the Pacific just as there were domestic missionaries in nineteenth-century Britain, New Zealand, and Australia. Second, Samoan pastors have been overrepresented in the scholarly literature. The reasons are understandable given the singular quality of the Samoan pastorate. Frequently overbearing toward their congregations, the Samoans were staunch in asserting their rights vis-à-vis European missionaries. Indeed, the London Missionary Society Samoan pastorate was the first to be ordained en masse, as of right, in 1875, as a result of pressure from London and from the rank-conscious pastors themselves (Gilson 1970:134–135). A consequence of this overemphasis on the admittedly numerous and wide-ranging Samoans is a tendency toward a Samoan model being imposed on the overall Pacific situation. In particular, the impression may be given that missionary-pastor tension was endemic and universal. It was seldom far beneath the surface, but a somewhat different picture would emerge if Fiji, Tahiti, and Cook Islands pastors were accorded attention commensurate to their numbers. Actually, there were more Fijian than Samoan pastors and almost as many Cook Islands pastors, a point seldom recognized (Forman 1970:215–216). In particular, a major study on Cook Islands pastors at home and abroad is waiting to be done. So too is a monograph-length work on Fijian pastors in western Melanesia that draws on vernacular as well as European documentation.

A further imbalance in the literature is the concentration on the nineteenth century, even though more missionaries came to the Pacific and more islanders were converted in the twentieth century (Forman 1978:36). *Tides of History* missed an opportunity to explore this theme (Howe, Kiste, and Lal 1994). Moreover, there has been an increasing trend in the twentieth century, as missions transform into churches and as those churches become independent and indigenous, for the islander pastor of old to shed his subservient "helper" status and become an ordained minister. To complicate matters, there has been a proliferation of so-called new religious groups, typically of fundamentalist and Pentecostalist complexion, whose ministers are usually part-time and unpaid (Ernst 1994). Then there is the "reverse thrust" phenomenon of islander missionaries proselytizing in the First World. We are not thinking here so much of Fijian missionaries among Australian Aborigines but rather of the recent activities of Fijian Columban lay missionaries in Eire (Turaga 1996). It is a nice irony that the Irish are receiving Third World missionaries, as their Celtic forebears of the sixth and seventh centuries took the gospel to Scotland, England, and parts of continental Europe.

Future research on islander pastors, missionaries, and ministers will also have to come to grips with the more convoluted situation of more recent times. Whether these research opportunities will be taken up seems unlikely.

Quite simply, the contagious euphoria of the pioneering phase of missionization has a superficial glamor that attracts historians (as it often did missionaries themselves) in ways that the dull routine of ongoing consolidation does not. The dearth of post–World War II religious history in Papua New Guinea is a particularly glaring manifestation of a Pacific-wide historiographical lacuna,[14] but by no means the only one.

Accounts of European missionaries (Langmore 1989), their wives (Grimshaw 1989), and "lady missionaries" and deaconnesses (Sidal 1997; Tennant 1999) continue to be written. They too belong to the larger picture of which pastors are part; and there is a danger that revisionism in favor of islander missionaries will go too far and obscure the role of European missionaries. There is also a need to study more closely the results of the pastors' work from the perspective of the converts and church members and the development of their Christian lives (e.g., Hoare 1996). And although Protestant missions relied far more heavily on pastors than did Catholic missions on the native catechist, more research on the latter is needed to continue the work of Broadbent (1976, 1996), Buatava (1996), Kabutaulaka (1996), and Knox (1997:141–145). There is also room for studies on deacons and lay preachers, because, as Winston Halapua says, "It is difficult to imagine how the various churches in the Pacific could effectively function without this second strata of the ministry" (1996:290). But there is no need to perpetuate the lingering and simplistic polarization that starkly depicts pastors as either saints or sinners. In attempting to present a nuanced depiction, we recall how John Clive summed up the defining features of the Victorian age. He described them as "contradiction and complexity—conflicts between religiosity and worldliness, belief and action, idealism and practice, self-love and self-sacrifice" (Clive 1989:250). Subsequent research on the Pacific Islander pastor and missionary should strive to capture this spirit.

NOTES

This article is an expansion and rethinking of our editorial introduction to *The Covenant Makers: Islander Missionaries in the Pacific* (Munro and Thornley 1996:1–16). We are beholden to Charles Forman, David Wetherell, and Michael Monsell-Davis for commenting on earlier drafts and to Niel Gunson and Diane Langmore for discussions. We are equally grateful to the two anonymous referees, particularly the "severe" one whose criticisms prompted a rethinking of our conclusions. The final revisions were carried out by Doug Munro at the Centre for the Contemporary Pacific, Australian National University. We thank Brij V. Lal, the center's foundation director, for this opportunity.

1. An indication of the relative importance of European missionaries and islander pastors can be gauged from the numbers involved. In the first hundred years of London Missionary Society activity, 52 European missionaries were appointed to Samoa and another 22 to

the Cook Islands (Thorogood 1995:6). By contrast, at least 209 Samoan pastors and 197 Cook Islands pastors worked in other parts of the Pacific (Forman 1970:215). The figures for pastors are undoubtedly incomplete (see note 4).

2. The personal prejudices of some European missionaries and their treatment of islander pastors fueled justifiable resentment (Latukefu 1981:179–180). Garrett also comments on the social and professional distinctions that many European missionaries continued to preserve between themselves and islander clergy (1982:304).

3. Earlier still, in 1898, the Anglican bishop of Papua expressed the desire that his mission transform into self-supporting local churches. But practical difficulties, not to mention a distaste for competitive fund-raising campaigns, stymied such intentions toward indigenization (Langmore 1989:207–208).

4. This is the approximate figure in the register of pastors that is housed in the Pacific Theological College's chapel, itself a memorial to islander pastors. Compiled by John Garrett, it was based initially on Niel Gunson's "List of Native Missionaries, 1820–1860" (Gunson 1959:520–528), and supplemented by information supplied by the various island churches. The register does not take into account pastors working in their own island groups. While the 1,500 or so pastors identified in the register is a conservative figure, it is nevertheless a total that well exceeds the number of European missionaries. A recent listing of Fijian pastors, which totals 1,023 (Baleiwaqa 1998), indicates the extent to which upward revision is necessary. This listing builds on Andrew Thornley's identification of 447 Fijian ministers serving within Fiji from 1851 through to 1945 (1979:288–303). The Free Wesleyan Church in Tonga is sponsoring a research and writing project on Tongan pastors (by Kisi Finau, Lupe Tuineau, and Paula Onoafe Latu) scheduled for publication in 2001. This research will undoubtedly lead to a further upward revision.

5. Niel Gunson made a similar observation some twelve years earlier, when he said that "the impact of the Evangelical missionaries often provided the quickest way to self-assertion by the native peoples. In the world of culture conflict, which is in a sense, the world of Evangelical religion, the islander was given a beam to support himself against the tide of new concepts. Whenever the beam was grasped, the islander's potentials for self-assertion were increased" (1959:iii).

6. Whether pastors were better able than European missionaries to explain the tenets of Christianity is a moot point. Some European missionaries claimed that pastors were "well adapted to fill the gap between the debased savage and the European missionary" (quoted in Barker 1996:117). Certainly, there were "varying presentations of doctrine by Polynesian teachers and European missionaries" (Gilson 1970:103). It is difficult to comment on this issue, given that the evidence is so impressionistic and nonempirical. Many missionaries considered that the pastors often perverted the "real" meaning of Christianity. A. K. Chignell of the Anglican Mission in Papua, for example, was of the view that its Melanesian pastors were "probably as ill-instructed and incapable as any body of men who ever handled a piece of chalk" (quoted in Langmore 1989:153). But it can also be charged that individual European missionaries were no better. The artist Augustus Earle, who visited New Zealand in the late 1820s, recalled the ineffectual attempts of an artisan/missionary: "a sturdy blacksmith in the prime of life, sitting in the midst of a group of savages, attempting to expound to them the mysteries of the holy redemption—perplexing his own brains,

as well as those of his auditors, with the most incomprehensible and absurd opinions" (1966:86).

7. This bilingual book has made less of an impression than it might have, both locally and internationally, through poor promotion and distribution at the Fiji end. The book was noted in the 1998 "Bibliography of Mission Studies" of the *International Review of Missions* 87 (346): 451, and received a single review (Whiteman 1998). Locally, *Mai Kea Ki Vei?* has penetrated Fijian Methodist households to some degree, but its exposure is still slight. The problem of book marketing and sales in Fiji is worrying, with the progressive closure of bookshops (most recently Desai) or their relocation from downtown Suva to the suburbs (e.g., Zenon), not to mention their increasing emphasis on selling stationery, school textbooks, glossy magazines, and penny dreadfuls. The only decent outlet in the country is the University of the South Pacific Book Centre, and the only effective book distribution network is the university's Institute of Pacific Studies. The book marketing and distribution situation in other Pacific countries is even worse—although the Friendly Islands Bookshop is an oasis in Tonga. Even so, its viability as a business depends on stationery rather than book sales.

8. Richard Gilson died in 1963. Both his books were published posthumously. His magnum opus, a magnificent political history of nineteenth-century Samoa (Gilson 1970), was mostly written in the 1950s, and it anticipated much future research on pastors. His book on the Cook Islands, which derived from a 1952 thesis, was edited for publication by Ron Crocombe (Gilson 1980). The contrast between Gilson's two books in their treatment of pastors is marked. Equally marked is the contrast between Gilson 1980 and studies of other atoll groups, whose authors unfailingly recognize the role and importance of pastors (e.g., Beaglehole 1957; Brady 1975:119–124; Huntsman and Hooper 1996: chaps. 6–7 generally; Macdonald 1982:31–53; Munro 1982:135–161).

9. Studies of individual pastors that are based on the documentary record, with sometimes a smattering of oral testimony, are Crocombe 1982; Goldsmith and Munro 1992; Little 1996; and Munro 2000. Other biographical essays are based on personal acquaintance with the subject, meaning that the author could draw on direct observation as well as the written record (Latukefu 1982; Goldsmith 1996; Kabutaulaka 1996; Halapua 1996). Another point concerns Cook Islands pastors: in contrast to pastor historiography generally, where group studies are the norm, the studies of Cook Islands pastors focus on individuals, namely, Ta'unga, Maretu, Ruatoka, Elekana, and Turakiare Teauariki. The latter's second autobiographical account, which was edited by Charles Forman (1996), was separately published by the University of the South Pacific's Cook Islands Centre in 1996 without Forman's consent and without acknowledging his considerable editorial work.

10. Another reviewer endorsed this point and went on to say that Ta'unga wrote "not as a native with a sympathetic awareness of the problems confronting his would-be converts, but as an outsider, almost as a European" (Parsonson 1971:201).

11. They include Barrère and Sahlins 1979; Bulu 1871; Chalmers 1872; Crocombe and Crocombe 1968; Forman 1996; Kahelemauna 1944; Liger 1932; Marau 1984; Maretu 1983; Maude 1974; Saroa 1982; and Teauariki 1982.

12. The photographic record raised other misconceptions, as in the case of Melanesian sugar workers from Queensland who decided to become pastors in Papua during the 1890s.

They assumed that the well-dressed European missionaries they saw in photographs had rank and status, which they too could acquire by becoming pastors (Wetherell 1978:102).

13. There is a clear disjunction in the literature on Samoan pastors: European writers have given considerable prominence to the negative traits of Samoan pastors (e.g., Munro 1996b; Mullins and Wetherell 1996; Wetherell 1980, 1996:79–95), whereas Samoan historians emphasize their "contributions" and positive impact (e.g., Sinclair 1982; Liua'ana 1996). The selective stress of the Samoan-authored studies is reminiscent of the nationalistic chauvinism of the conservative French historian Fernand Braudel, as described by Evans (1997:192).

14. An exception is Delbos 1985. A valuable first step to fill the gap on a Pacific-wide scale is Garrett 1997.

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