AN INTRODUCTION TO THE SOUTH PACIFIC ACTIVITY OF WESLEYAN METHODISM


When I was asked to give this lecture, at very short notice, I understood that I was to give a broad overview of the progress of Wesleyan Methodism in the South Pacific, providing a context within which each of the other contributions to this gathering could be seen in relation to the whole. As I began to reflect on this, I could see that it would be very easy to give a broad framework with explicit dates and names. This would be the kind of response which has usually been given by historians in the past, but today we would have to question as to whether it represented a true picture of the activities of our Saviour Jesus Christ in proclaiming the Gospel as opposed to the activities of a certain group of men.
The Traditional Perspective

I therefore propose to begin with the traditional picture and follow that by two other perspectives on the spread of Methodism in the South Pacific. Dr Wood, in the first volume of his work on the Overseas Missions of the Australian Methodist Church, sums up the traditional picture quite neatly:

1815 Samuel Leigh came to New South Wales
1822 Tonga (and we would have to add New Zealand)
1828 Samoa
1835 Fiji
1841 Rotuma
1875 New Britain etc.
1891 Papua (Islands region)
1897 Indian work in Fiji
1902 Solomon Islands
1916 Aborigines (North Australia)
1950 Highlands, Papua New Guinea

Let us look at this now in more detail.

Samuel Leigh was sent out to New South Wales and arrived there in 1815. Three years later Walter Lawry arrived to help him and the work of establishing Wesleyan causes went ahead. Churches, or chapels as they were called, were built, and societies multiplied. But neither of these young ministers was satisfied. When you come halfway round the world, to live in a frontier situation, the wanderlust becomes an endemic disease. For both Lawry and Leigh, Samuel Marsden, the Anglican, was one person who helped them to focus their eyes on points east.

First, Leigh became sick, and Marsden arranged for him to make a visit to New Zealand in 1819. Here Leigh acted as a peacemaker among the Anglican missionaries, and brought back a disturbing report to Marsden. But he also caught a vision of what might be among the Maori people. He was spurred to action also, no doubt, when he failed to win the hand of Mary Cover Hassall, who married his colleague and rival Walter Lawry. Leigh travelled to England, recovered somewhat in health, acquired a wife, and persuaded the Missionary Society to authorise a move to New Zealand. It says much for Leigh, his zeal and conviction, that he was not only able to persuade the committee but also to extract from the Societies round England the material support needed for the venture. On his return to Sydney he was not over happy with what was going on there, but other ministers had arrived there and the work was growing. And so in January 1822 Mr and Mrs Leigh crossed the Tasman and set up work in the following year in Whangaroa, not far from the present town of Kaeo.

Of the problems faced by the first missionaries, the suffering and finally the withdrawal from 'Wesleydale' in January 1827, you can learn elsewhere. Though the
mission party had at first no understanding of either the language or the people, though they suffered physically and from loss of possessions, the period was not all loss. Firstly some folk who were later to have a strong influence on Methodist development were introduced to Polynesia—Nathaniel and Anne Turner, John Hobbs and others. Secondly, the contact with the local people began to influence the more sensitive of the party and lead them almost unknowingly towards a better understanding. Thirdly a few Maori folk, for one reason or another, began to have some concern for, and indeed affection for, these strange Pakeha. It was the young Maori folk who had become part of the missionary households who urged the Pakeha to leave Wesleydale, because they saw the danger. It was Patuone, the chief from the Hokianga period, who protected them on the journey back to the Bay of Islands, and invited them to come to Hokianga.

In due course Patuone's invitation was accepted, and the mission work re-established in the Hokianga in 1827. Of its subsequent developments I shall say little at this point. But I want us to be quite clear that we must not impute to the Maori (or to any other group of people not ours) the evil we find in ourselves, and fail to attribute to them the kinder and more human motives. I am sure that not only Patuone but many of the Maori folk who helped the early missionaries were as much capable of kindness and compassion, respect and even admiration, as the missionaries themselves were.

While all this was going on, Walter and Mary Lawry went off to Tonga in June 1822. It was one of those ironies that Lawry, who had urged the Missions Committee to extend their outreach to the islands of the South Pacific, should have been instructed to go when he had no intention of going at all, nor any real sense of calling for Tonga. But he was, at that stage of his life at least, a good soldier in the army of the Lord, and obeyed orders. Having agreed to go, he put not only himself and his wife and child on the line, but also much of his personal wealth. It was Mary's health as much as anything that took Lawry back to New South Wales in July 1823, and left the lay members of the party to carry on afterwards. Methodist witness did not cease but it languished somewhat until the arrival of Thomas and Hutchinson in 1826, and, perhaps more importantly, the arrival of the Turner family in the next year.

In giving the 1828 date for the arrival of the Wesleyan Church in Samoa Dr Wood acknowledges for the first time that the coming of the gospel was not dependent on palefaces from the other side of the world. It was a Samoan matai, Saiva'aia, who introduced Lotu Tonga to Savai'i. It was the continuing contacts with Tonga that kindled the spark, fanned it and kept it burning, not only until the first white missionary, Peter Turner, arrived in 1835, but also after he left, until work was re-established in the mid-fifties.

It is interesting to reflect on the stop-start nature of Wesleyan Methodism's introduction to Polynesia. In New Zealand the work begun in 1822 had to be restarted in 1827. In Tonga Lawry's initiatives in 1822 had to be rebuilt after 1826. In Samoa one era came to an end with the removal of Peter Turner in 1839, and a new one began
with the arrival of Martin Dyson in 1857. In each field also the outstanding white missionaries were not the pioneers, but those who came after the first moves had been made—Turner, Hobbs, George Brown.

Just as it was Tongan links with Samoa which opened the door there, and kept it open, so it was Tongan links with Fiji that persuaded the missionaries to move to that group. Thus when William Cross and David Cargill went in 1835 it was natural that they should be accompanied by, or perhaps more truly, accompany, a Fijian converted in Tonga and a group of Tongans of whom Wood writes: The teachers who accompanied (them) included some of the finest church members in Tonga, men who could ill be spared at the time, but who gladly volunteered for the new Mission'.

Fiji stands on the boundaries of Melanesia and Polynesia, and it is notable that while the missionaries who came with the Gospel suffered more perhaps than they had done anywhere else, the Wesleyan cause moved steadily ahead without faltering. The cost in lives lost, children, women and men, was great. The strain on those who survived was at times almost intolerable, but gradually the work spread and the Church flourished.

By 1870 Wesleyan Methodist missionary work was well established in New Zealand, Tonga, Samoa, Fiji and Rotuma, and some were beginning to dream of other fields to conquer. In Samoa George Brown heard with distress of the death of Bishop Patteson at Nukapa in the Solomon Islands in 1871. He had known and admired John Coleridge Patteson since they travelled out from Britain to New Zealand together in 1855. He, in his own persistent way, began to lobby for a move to Melanesia. Others in Australia were also feeling the call for a new initiative. So it was that the second phase of Methodist expansion got underway. It is important to remember that the initiative for the next three moves, to New Britain in 1875, to the Papuan Islands in 1891, and to the Solomons in 1902, came from George Brown. There were few men of his own time or later who could inspire, encourage and cajole more effectively than he. The other significant factor is the large part played by missionaries from the central Pacific. People from Fiji, Samoa and Tonga have played a major part in the development of the Church in Melanesia.

The third phase was a move into areas within countries where there was already a Methodist presence, to the Fijian Indian population in 1897, to the aboriginal people in Northern Australia in 1916, and to the Highlands people of Papua New Guinea in 1950. In that year Gordon Young, Thomas To Mar and Kaminiel Ladi began work in the Southern Highlands District of Mendi, and a whole new world was opened up.

Perhaps we should add that a fourth phase began in the 1950's, when people from the islands of our near north—principally from Samoa, Fiji and Tonga, began to arrive in growing numbers in New Zealand and in Australia. In some Auckland churches the 'take over' by Polynesians has been virtually complete, adding to the complexity and the richness of Christian witness in this country.
A Wider View

So far I have been moving across ground that is well covered in the printed literature. Now I want to take you back over the journey and try to look at other and less well documented perspectives.

Did Methodism in Australia really begin with Samuel Leigh, or was it with Thomas Bowden at The Rocks in Sydney in 1812? Or perhaps it was with Sergeant James Scott of the 108th Company of the army, who arrived in 1788. What of the part played by John Hosking, Edward Eager and a host of other pioneers who were Wesleyan Methodists? I leave others to talk of that. This morning Dr Baker suggested other beginnings of Methodism worth thinking about.

Aotearoa, New Zealand, offers another set of questions. Some Maoris, perhaps many, mostly young men, travelled from these shores to other places for the sheer adventure of it. Some went to Australia and some to the islands of our near north. We know about Ruatara, who opened the way for Samuel Marsden to come to New Zealand in 1815. We also can surmise that the debauchery and violence of such a society as New South Wales was in those days, would tend to prejudice some observant Maori young men against the coming of a Gospel that seemed to be denied in action by those who professed it in words.

At this point may I draw attention again to the habit we all have of seeing our own sins and shortcomings writ large in other people. The first settlers from Europe in this part of the world came from a very violent society. Not only was war brutal and vicious, endemic in Europe, but repressive regimes could only, it seems, be overthrown by violence. The American War of Independence and the French Revolution were still vivid memories. More than that, British society was going through major changes in which the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars, as well as the Industrial Revolution, played their part. Unable to cope with this, society vented its unhappiness on the poor and the marginalised. The jails were filled to overflowing with people convicted, often of trivial offences, and when the jails became too full they were exported under quite brutal conditions. Therefore British people coming to this part of the world looked for, and expected to find, violence in the indigenous people, wherever they went, and of course find it they did. More, they magnified it by the introduction of firearms and a selfish and greedy economic system.

One of the classical examples of this is a ship's captain who visited the Solomon Islands in the 1840's, and characterised the Roviana people as 'the most treacherous and bloodthirsty in the Pacific'. His sailors sat on the deck of his anchored ship and they took pot shots at the local people as they came out onto the beach. Who was bloodthirsty? Who was treacherous?

By contrast, they did not look for, or expect to find, gentleness and consideration, wisdom and discernment, among the 'heathen savages'. They could admire military
valour and courage in their own terms but they usually downplayed it. They did not expect there to be a knowledge of God and they could not recognise in the legends and myths of the local people the witness of the same God that they professed to serve.

I suggest that, looking at the spread of Christianity in the Pacific, we have to divest ourselves of that prejudice and many others, and assume the good qualities which we admire in ourselves may well have been as present among those to whom the missionaries believed they were sent.

In New Zealand the 1823 venture of Methodism would not have been possible without Te Ara (known as George) and his brothers Te Puhi and Ngahuruhura and other leaders. It is not sufficient to say they did it from purely selfish motives. Is it not possible there was some real feeling that the 'minihare' had something that was good for their people in a deeper sense than guns and blankets?

I am not talking about plaster saints. I am talking about very human people who could be kind and thoughtful and understanding as far as difference of culture allowed, as well as being selfish, greedy and violent. It is significant, for example, that in the midst of all the turmoil at Whangaroa in 1824, when the missionaries appeared despised and rejected, the local people could still talk to their visitors from Hauraki about the missionaries as 'Te Iwi Toa', the courageous tribe.

Patuone, a chief from Hokianga, who saved the lives of the missionaries when they were finally driven out in 1827, also invited them to come to his area. He and his brother Tamati Waka Nene were fine leaders in peace and in war, moderates with a real concern for their people. I do not know what they thought, but I suggest their actions, even their support for the Treaty of Waitangi, grew out of a real respect for the missionaries, and for the advantages they saw in the message that was proclaimed.

As an example that could be matched in every mission field, let me speak briefly about Te Rangitahua Ngamuka. He was a chief among the people of the Manukau area. He journeyed to Mangungu on the Hokianga Harbour and attended the teaching of the Wesleyan missionaries. On 18 October 1835 he was baptised at Te Horea, James Wallis' mission station at Whaingaroa, or as we now call it, Raglan, and was given the name Jabez Bunting (Epiha Putini). He became both teacher and preacher to his own people at Pehiakura, on the south head of the Manukau Harbour. He asked for a white missionary but none ever came, though various men visited from time to time. It was Epiha Putini who kept the cause alive. Later he had the assistance of two teachers, Honi Piha and Aperihama Kohiha.

Putini was a strong leader, well versed in the ways of his people. He had not only to resist the blandishments of the Church Missionary Society and remain loyal to the Wesleyans, but he had also to guide the people through the increasingly bitter quarrel over land, which was now a saleable commodity. This involved him and them in armed struggle. Though the missionaries only glimpsed the complexities of the situation that this man had to deal with, they recognised his fine and moderate
leadership, and his real concern for the Christian way. In the mid 1840's he led his people across the harbour to Ihumatao, and got them settled there, and a mission station established. Rev. H.H. Lawry became their missionary.

Putini was now able to turn his attention to wider issues, and became one of the secretaries of the Evangelical Union, which sought to bring the various Missions together for more effective work. He died in 1856, still quite a young man, but an undoubted pioneer of Christianity among the people of the Manukau.

The missionary appointed to Ihumatao was Henry Hassall Lawry, eldest son of Walter and Mary. He would not have lived to take up the appointment but for a Maori. In 1822, when the ship St Michael was passing through the Bay of Islands on the way to Tonga, Walter Lawry gave a tin of ships' biscuits to one of the canoes that passed them, returning from a raid. In the canoe was the leader, Hongi, and he returned the compliment by tossing on board a young lad subsequently baptised as Manihera, or Maunsell. In 1823, this youth saved the life of Henry, the baby, when he was swept overboard from the ship, on their return voyage to New South Wales. Later, after training in Sydney, Manihera returned to New Zealand and laid down his life for the faith in 1847.

Let us think for a moment about Manihera's sojourn of about a year in Tonga. Lawry's party were not the first Christian missionaries to Tonga. The London Missionary Society had sent people from England in 1797, but their efforts had failed, and several of them paid the price with their lives. But the L.M.S. did not give up, and in 1822 Tahitian missionaries went to Vava'u and in 1826 to Tongatapu. It was on that island, it is said, that the first Christian converts were won by Haepe and Tefeta. In the first Wesleyan party there was also a Marquesan man, an L.M.S. convert called 'Macanoe'. Though Macanoe proved no help with the language and was sick most of the time, it is likely that the presence of two Polynesians in the party of missionaries had some effect on the local situation?

In 1827 Nathaniel and Ann Turner arrived in Tonga. When they had fled from Whangaroa in New Zealand to Sydney they had taken with them three Maori youngsters, two boys, Huki and Tungahe, and a girl. The Turners spoke fluent Maori, and their sojourn in New Zealand had given them an understanding that enabled them to adjust more readily to Tonga than any previous missionary had done. The three young people no doubt also kept them in touch. The young woman remained in Tonga and married, and her descendants are with us to this day. I understand her great great grandson is an ordained minister of the Tongan church.

Just to revert for a moment to the question of the first Christians in Tonga. Dr Wood gives credit for making the first converts to Haepe and Tefeta, the L.M.S. Tahitian missionaries. But is that right? What of Tama Nau, or, to give him his baptised name, Watson Nau? Nau became attached to the Lawry household on Mu'a in late 1822 and one might say 'house boy' in place of the ailing Macanoe. When they left Tonga in
1823, he and a man called Malungahu travelled with them to Sydney. Tama Nau then accompanied the family to England, where he appears to have been baptised and given the name of Watson in deference to the Mission Secretary. Watson Nau accompanied John and Sarah Thomas when they left England for Tonga in 1826 and returned to his home land.

Does not the honour of making the first Christian convert among the Tongan people belong to the Lawry 'family' and was not the first baptised Christian Watson Nau? When Walter Lawry revisited Tonga in 1847 he noted that Tama Nau was a highly respected local preacher.

It takes nothing away from the fine work of Nathaniel Turner to acknowledge that his success owed something, perhaps much, to the Tahitian teachers who prepared the way for him, and to the Maori young people who helped to keep him in touch with the reality of Tongan life and at the same time made their own witness to the Gospel.

Dr Owens, in the 1972 lecture The Unexpected Impact drew our attention to the influence of Maori language and culture on the missionaries. This was not a surprise to those of us who have laboured among people of another culture. How often we say we learned more than we taught them? But it has been largely ignored in the printed literature. There is no doubt that subsequent careers of Hobbs and Turner were very much influenced by their sojourn at Whangaroa from 1823 to 1827. Turner was able to 'listen' as well as talk. So his success in Tonga, where he really put the mission on a sound footing, was, I suggest, not only due to his inherent abilities, which were great, but also to what he had learned from the Maori situation. This made it easier for him to come to terms with Tongan culture and Tongan language. Dr Wood says 'strictly speaking, it is Turner who should be honoured as the true founder of the Wesleyan Mission... It was Turner who saved the future of the Tongan Church.' I suggest that, if that is true, the Maori experience played a not inconsiderable part in that achievement.

Of the spread of the Gospel in Tonga others can speak, but I pause to recall the name of Peter Vi, the first Tongan teacher and one who planted the Gospel in Ha'apai and in the heart of Chief Taufa'ahau.

It is not possible in one short talk to raise all the questions that come to mind in regard to the John the Baptists of the faith as well as the bearers of good tidings who scarcely rate a mention in the history books. When we went to the first Assembly of the Pacific Council of Churches in 1966 we were told that when the first Polynesian missionaries arrived on the island of Lifou they were looked after by a Tongan family. Whether the Tongan family had come there, a long way from their homeland, accidentally or on purpose, I know not, but it was those Tongans who took the Rarotongan missionaries into their home, who taught them the local language, gained them acceptance with the local people, and made it possible for them to proclaim the Gospel.
Very interesting is the story of Rotuma. In 1828 certain Maori folk from Whangaroa went to Rotuma. Among them was a man named Peter. Peter led worship. He was called the pastor whether he had that authority or not, and in time a church was built. When John Williams came in 1839 he dismissed this evidence of Christianity, saying that while they had kept the Sabbath their effort to teach the Rotumans had failed. Dr Wood accepts this line uncritically. But I am sure that the descendants of Pita would not do so. Is it not possible that the presence of practising Christians among them—more than that, brown skinned Christians speaking a language akin to their own—did at the very least prepare the way for the coming of the official missionaries? There were two Samoans placed there by John Williams in 1839, and Tongan Wesleyans in June 1841, which, as far as Wesleyan Methodists are concerned, is the official beginning of the work in that island. The first white missionary to live on the island was Rev. William Fletcher, and his wife Elizabeth (nee Wallis), who came from New Zealand. Though they were an outstanding missionary couple with much experience, of which we shall have something more to say later, the way had already been prepared for them by the Tongan and Fijian teachers. Of the latter, Eleazor Takolo translated the Gospel of Matthew and other portions of scripture into the local language. Nor must one forget the efforts of the local man, Zerubbabel 'Urakuata, who kept the witness of the Lotu going when no outsider could do it, and indeed when foreigners had to be withdrawn.

In some respects Rotuma is a strong reminder that the spread of the Gospel in every island was the result of many factors and many people. Samoans, Tongans, Fijians are numbered among the official missionaries, Aitutakians and Maoris among Christians who made their witness. This does not take away from the fine work done by William and Lizzie Fletcher and some of those who came after them. The Pacific Island presence made it possible, enhanced it and strengthened it.

The Witness of Women and Children

The third view of missionary enterprise that I want to take is the contribution made by women, and children, to the spread of the Gospel and the strengthening of the Church. If the local South Pacific missionaries have been in a measure overlooked, even more have the women, white, brown and black, been ignored.

Here again we have to take account of the way in which prejudice blinds our eyes and makes us see things that support our views and none other. One of the modern tragedies in Africa and Asia, and in the Pacific to some extent, is that so many efforts made by westerners to help the local people are based on the western assumption that it is men who have to be taught. In the field of agriculture, where women have for many centuries been the principal growers of food, to limit the new agricultural training to men is not only to waste a lot of time and money but also to disrupt social patterns, and to cut off the new generation of male gardeners from the traditional wisdom about soil conservation. It is this refusal to hear what the women had to say
about crop rotation and soil conservation which has been a not inconsiderable factor in the terrible famines that have followed the introduction of western agricultural methods. In the same way in the Pacific the place of women has been ignored even in those 'quaint oddities' matrilineal societies, of which we have many in Melanesia.

If the early missionaries to Melanesia had only been more open to the fact that women were the key not only to the whole social structure but also to the wisdom and culture of the people, the church may have progressed much faster. But the fact is they did not see what was obvious to the locals. When I first went to Munda in 1959 there was still living a man called Harry Wickham. His mother was a Buin woman from South Bougainville, his father an Australian. He had been to Newington College in Sydney. He said to me very seriously, "Now look, if you want to get anywhere, you've got to make your peace with the women and you've got to listen to what the women are saying."

Seven or eight years earlier than that I had come into conflict with an Australian government officer, a young man of 23 or 24 not long arrived from Australia. Going through employment records he found that a man had signed up for work and was required to give his father's name. The officer was furious when he found the man had put down three different fathers on three papers. "Doesn't he know his own father?" he said. "Probably not," I replied, "and it doesn't matter. It is through his mother he had identity in his tribe. You are trying to impose a patrilineal idea on a matrilineal society and it will not work."

It is this blindness that has prevented us from giving anything like justice to the wives and families of the male missionaries. Apart from the 1849 incident in Fiji, when Mary Calvert and Mary Lyth intervened on the Island of Bau to save Fijian women from the cooking pot, little has been written about women until recently. Fortunately that is now beginning to change. One might quote Pauline Webb's 1958 book Women of our Company and. much more recently, Margaret Reeson's Currency Lass, the story of Mary Hassall Lawry. But justice has yet to be fully done.

Single women have fared somewhat better, but there is need in all fields for a more adequate study of single women missionaries of all races, and their contribution to the spread of the Gospel, and the growth of the church. I wonder who knows the name of Iliseva Levu'a who was probably the first single woman to go from the Fijian church to Melanesia as a missionary? Her story ought to be written down before it is forgotten altogether.

Even in the modern literature there are few references to women. For example, an examination of the indices to recent volumes reveals a disturbing lack of female names—except names of ships. Take, for example: Howe, K.R. Where the Waves Fall 1984; Whiteman, D. Melanesians and Missionaries 1983; and Garrett.J. To Live among the Stars 1982. You could be hard put to find a dozen references to women in these scholarly tomes. By contrast, Neville Threfall's One Hundred Years in the
Islands 1975, on the Centenary of the church in New Britain, contains many references to ladies of several races.

Hints of the story are to be found in many places, but few connected accounts have been put together so far. For example, Walter Lawry wrote of his first wife. Mary Hassall Lawry, on 27 December 1822, 'Both Mrs Lawry and little Henry seem to glide through it, dreary and solitary as it is, much better than I can presume to do'. I can only say 'Amen', for many of us who have been in like situations know that our wives handled it better than we could.

If we accept Watson Nau as the first baptised Tongan, I suggest we must conclude that he became a Christian more from the day to day influence of Mary Lawry, and the whole family relationship, than from Walter's preaching.

Would this not have been true in other places too? I recall the rather envious remark of a Catholic priest on Bougainville who said, 'You have a tremendous advantage over us in regard to Christian family life. We can only talk about it; you demonstrate it'.

From the very beginning the pattern was the same: the male missionary was, by the nature of his calling, out and about, often away for long periods, travelling by sea or land to visit distant villages, meeting with government officials, and attending church meetings of one sort or another. But the missionary wife remained at home, caring for her household, which included her own children, and not infrequently some local children. The local people, especially those who helped in the house, saw her in action day by day, rarely preaching sermons, but constantly witnessing in action to the faith which she held. Usually she shared her husband's sense of missionary calling, or at least totally supported him in his endeavours. Where a wife did not give that support a ministry often crumbled and ended, sometimes with disastrous results for the Christian witness in the area.

This is true not only of white women but also of Polynesian and Melanesian women. I pay tribute to some whose work I have known and admired: Margaret Sotutu and Titilia Vula from Fiji; 'Amilani Taufa and Vasiti Palavi from Tonga. Loata Nahiana from Teop, Bougainville; and Ivy Bui from Munda, Solomon Islands—all part of a great company.

Children also play their part in Christian witness. In our South Pacific children have traditionally been held in high regard, indulged perhaps, but often respected. It is not only in European culture that the folk tales tell of youngsters like 'Jack the Giant Killer', the child upsetting the evil plans of bad ones. Rosu the giant in Teop legends is confounded again and again by children. Because of this, people are much less 'on guard', as it were, towards children of another race and culture. Children also learn languages and customs more readily. They can usually absorb several languages in their first years of life as readily as they can learn one. In multilingual Melanesia expatriate children naturally tend to be multilingual. They can become, quite unintentionally, means of communication between people and their parents.
Sometimes my small children translated for me when I was stuck because of my inadequate knowledge of the language. More importantly, after a day out in the school classroom or in the food garden, my children came home and chattered away at the meal table about what they had been doing. Without realising what they were doing, they told me a lot about local concerns and attitudes that helped to make me more receptive to what my local church leaders had difficulty conveying to the Chairman of the District.

The children themselves were of course influenced by the situation, and it is no accident that generation after generation of some families have walked in the missionary tradition.

Let us look at one example of what I mean. James Wallis married Mary Ann Reddick in Great Britain and came out to New Zealand as a missionary in 1834. Of their family two daughters and one son became missionaries in their turn. In the next generation Rev. T.J. Wallis made his contribution to Fiji, and the Wallis family are still witnesses among us. James Wallis officiated at the marriage of each of his daughters. Elizabeth married William Fletcher, and after seven years in Fiji, they went to Rotuma as we have noted. Lydia married George Brown. An examination of wedding certificates reveals an interesting fact. Contrary to common custom of the time, and for many years afterwards, under the heading of 'occupation', there is an entry for the bride as well as for the bridegroom. And it is not just 'domestic duties'. In each case it is 'missionary'. That speaks volumes to me about the Wallis family. It says first of all that James regarded his own wife as equally a missionary with himself, that he appreciated what his daughters had done in their home, the mission station at Nihinihi (Raglan) and he was proud of what they were going to do.

Lydia Wallis came to school in Auckland in 1850 at the age of eleven. After three years she returned to Whaingaroa and helped in the house and on the mission station. She taught in the school and worked especially among the women and children. Fluent in Maori, accepted by the people as 'local', she acquired an understanding of the local culture and the local people. In 1860 she married George Brown and set off with him for Samoa. George was a very good linguist, a highly intelligent and forward thinking man with a very shrewd business head. But there seems to be no question at all that Lydia, on whom he depended far more than is often realised, must have been in many cases his 'wisdom'. She was already a person of two cultures and had no inbuilt prejudices against other languages or attitudes. Because of her, George was much more tolerant of other people, white, brown or black, than he would otherwise have been. For he was in some ways a very impulsive person, especially in his youth. At Satupaitea, as on the other mission stations, Lydia remained behind to handle things while George travelled far and wide, being away for weeks at a time. She had to deal with rascally whites as well as mischievous locals, and her own growing family. It should be noted that, in a day and age when missionaries' children died young with
monotonous regularity, all six Brown children born in Samoa grew to adulthood. Lydia surely must take credit for this.

When the time came for them to leave Samoa, they returned to Auckland, where Lydia and the family lived, while George went off to establish the work in New Britain. Lydia's years in New Britain were few, but they were deeply significant. She 'held the fort', as it were, while George went south in 1879, away for over twelve months. She buried two children, whose graves are still there in the Duke of Yorks. It was she who stood steadfast in all the storms and troubles. Need I say more of her influence than to remind you that, when the New Britain Mission set up a higher education centre, they wanted to call it Lydia College. It was the male chauvinists, as we would now call them, in Sydney, who insisted it be called George Brown College. The local people then named their ship Litia, and what better name for a messenger of the Gospel?

When in 1962 the Solomon Islands Methodist District celebrated its 60 years of Methodist witness, it was quite interesting what vivid memories that people had, not of John F. Goldie, the pioneer missionary, who had stayed for 48 years, but of Helena, or Nellie, Goldie, his wife. She had not lived in the Solomons since 1920, and in fact had spent only about twelve years or less of residence there in all. Every time she had a baby she went to Australia and stayed there 18 months. She had been dead for more than a decade. Yet she remained vivid in the hearts and memories of the Solomon Islands people. I am sorry now that I did not take more note of the stories at the time. But it was clear that in the minds of many she was regarded as having as much to do with the early triumphs of the Gospel in the Roviana area as anyone.

At Teop, in North Bougainville, where we lived for seven years, the people remembered not just Eroni Kotosoma from Fiji, but also his wives Loata and Pasimaca. When you come to think about it, it was natural. For Teop, like many parts of the Solomons, is a matrilineal society, and they learned much from those two Fijian women and their witness.

John Taufa, from Tonga, went to the Solomons in 1946. He had a long and notable career there. But if you go to Kieta, where he did some very real pioneering work, you will hear, if you are listening, as many tales of 'Amilani, his wife.

Miriam Sai went with her husband Paul, from Roviana, New Georgia, to pioneer Christian work among the Siwai of South Bougainville, as one of the very early missionary couples in the area. One day she found a new born baby who had been thrown in the river to die. She took the child home and cared for it, in spite of strong opposition of the local people. She called him Pirah—the fag-end of a burnt out stick, and in due course he was baptised John. John Pirah went on to become a pastor-teacher, a blessing to people in many parts of South Bougainville, and to many people in the Southern Highlands of Papua New Guinea. He was my colleague in 1949, and...
as a new missionary I owe him a great deal. I give thanks for Miriam's courage and compassion.

I have said that the lack of support for a wife could wreck a man's ministry. But when a husband failed, a wife often carried on the witness. Eliza, wife and later widow, of William White, survived her husband's disgrace and expulsion from the Wesleyan Mission in New Zealand, to be an ardent witness in her own right. She sent Annie Jane Allen to help the Schnackenbergs at Raglan. When Mrs Schnackenberg died Annie married Cort and continued the family witness. Eliza White herself was the founding mother of the Y.W.C.A. in Auckland, with her 'Ladies' Christian Association'.

What I want to emphasise is that we get a totally inadequate picture of the spread of the Church in the South Pacific if we allow ourselves to be bound by the old illusion that it was only the men, especially the white Caucasian males, who determined the spread of the Gospel in this or any other area. We have not heard as much as we should have done of the Pacific Island missionary, and even less of the ladies of all races. We need to ask the right questions, to look in the right places, and train ourselves to hear what people are really saying. Perhaps even more than that we need to accept that none of us can take Christ to a people—he is already there. We have to discern him before we can proclaim him, and in his light we get a truer perspective of the people who worked together with him, women, men, children, families, young and old, out of every race and every tongue.

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