Chapter 1

Policy Decisions Affecting Melanesian Mission, 1849-1894

The 1841 Letters Patent, in which George Augustus Selwyn's jurisdiction and responsibility were stated, described the boundary of the Diocese of New Zealand to include the area between 47° south latitude to 34° north latitude. Geographically, this encompasses an enormous area of ocean containing very little land. The stated northern boundary in the Letters Patent is believed to have been a clerical error. In fact the intended boundary of the diocese was to be only the area between 47° south latitude and 34° south latitude[1]. Therefore, by accident, the Islands of Melanesia in the northern portion of the boundary became part of the Diocese of New Zealand.

The word 'Melanesia' was coined in the 1830s to refer to the chain of islands which extends from New Guinea to Fiji and includes the Solomon Islands, New Hebrides (now Vanuatu) and New Caledonia. This chain of islands is inhabited by dark brown-skinned people. Historically, although the people were of the same ethnic origin, the Anglican Church administration in the South Pacific included Fiji in the Church of Polynesia (which also included Tonga and Western Samoa) rather than as part of the Melanesian Mission.

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[1]Darrell L. Whiteman, Melanesians and Missionaries (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1983), 99.

New Guinea was originally under the Melanesian Mission. However, it was handed over to the Australian Board of Mission after the Second World War, becoming the Australian Missionary Diocese of New Guinea. At present, the Province of Melanesia consists of Anglican Churches in the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu (both independent countries) and New Caledonia (a French Territory).

The main characteristics of Melanesia are its diverse cultures and languages. Some areas are matrilineal while others are patrilineal. Even within an island, there are distinct groupings, between the coastal and the bush dwellers. The differences are clearly demonstrated in their songs, dances, and arts. Cultural religion and other social practices will be points of discussion in Chapter three.

First Encounter with Europeans

The Solomon Islands first came into contact with the western world in February 8, 1568, when 150 Spaniards led by the explorer Alvaro de Mendana arrived at Estrella Bay on Ysabel. The expedition had set out from Peru on November 19, 1567, with the aim of expanding the Spanish empire and evangelizing the people discovered. Based on a common belief of the time that King Solomon built his temple using gold from an unknown land in the South Pacific, the expedition had hoped to find that gold deposit. Thus, when he sighted the islands, Mendana called them the 'Solomon Islands'. Mendana and his men spent about six months in the Islands but found nothing of value to

them. They left the Solomon Islands on August 11, 1568. It is believed that during the visit, Mendana had forcibly baptized some people on the islands without teaching them the meaning and significance of the rite.[2] This event, then, was the first reported attempt to introduce Christianity in Melanesia, about 275 years before the later missionary activities of the nineteenth century.

Arrival of Missionaries

The first official missionaries to arrive in Melanesia were Samoans sent by the London Missionary Society to work in the New Hebrides and the Loyalty Islands in New Caledonia in 1839. Since they were established there first, Selwyn did not want to interfere with them and had decided to concentrate on the northern part of the New Hebrides and Solomon Islands. The next group was a Roman Catholic Mission from New Zealand which arrived on Ysabel in 1845. However, their leader, Bishop Jean Baptiste Epalle, was killed by the natives of the island, and they had to withdraw. The Presbyterians followed and started working in the New Hebrides in 1848, followed by the founding of Melanesian Mission in 1849.[3] At the same time, traders such as whalers, sandalwooders and the blackbirders were also busily working in the islands. This caused problems for the missionaries. The Melanesians associated the

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[2]Ibid., 33

[3]Charles E. Fox, Lord of the Southern Isles (London: A.R. Mowbray & Co. Ltd., 1958), 97

missionaries with the traders and especially the kidnappers.[4] The effect of this identification will be discussed later.

George Augustus Selwyn

When George Augustus Selwyn was appointed the first bishop of New Zealand in 1841, he was not deterred by the vast area of the Diocese. He was determined to take full responsibility for the whole boundary as documented in the Letters Patent. Selwyn was reported as being inspired during his commissioning when the Archbishop of Canterbury said the Church in New Zealand was to be a "fountain diffusing the streams of salvation over the islands and coasts of the Pacific."[5] In committing himself to the task that he was commissioned to undertake, Selwyn said, "If the Archbishop had told me to go to Japan or Borneo, I should have endeavoured to go."[6]

George Augustus Selwyn was born on April 5, 1809, in Hampstead, England, the second son in a family of four boys and two girls. The episcopal position in New Zealand had first been offered to his elder brother William, who had turned it down, causing it to be offered to George. Educated at Eton and St. John's College, Cambridge, he was ordained deacon on June 9, 1833 by the

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[4]Alan R. Tippett, Solomon Islands Christianity (London: Lutterworth Press), 20

[5]Whiteman, 100.

[6]Ibid., 100.

Bishop of Carlisle at St. George's Hanover Square and was priested on Trinity Sunday 1834 at the same church by the same bishop.[7] In May 1841, at the time of his appointment as Bishop of New Zealand, he had been serving as a curate at Windsor. When Selwyn told his wife about the appointment, she did not like it but decided not to be an obstacle to what Selwyn felt called to do. Selwyn was consecrated Bishop on Sunday, October 17, 1841, at the Chapel in Lambeth Palace by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishops of London, Lincoln and Barbados.[8] Selwyn, his wife and a party of five clergy and four ordination candidates left England for New Zealand by boat, the Tomatin, on St. Stephen's Day, December 26, 1841, arriving in Auckland, New Zealand on May 30, 1842.[9]

Selwyn worked first to establish the Church in New Zealand. He spent most of his initial years visiting the North and South Islands of New Zealand and founding St. John's College. Only then did his attention turn to the Islands of Melanesia, ultimately administering the Melanesian Mission from St. John's College itself.

His initial visit to some of the Islands of Melanesia came in 1847 when he

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[7]John H. Evans, Churchman Militant (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd. 1964), 20.

[8]Ibid., 29.

[9]Ibid., 32.

was invited to work as a chaplain on board the H.M.S. Dido which had been sent to Rotuma to investigate a fight between the natives of the island and the crews of two English ships.[10] During this visit, he also visited the New Hebrides island group which is now called Vanuatu. Over the next twelve years, Selwyn visited Melanesia eleven times. Considering how difficult travel could be in that era, he certainly did very well.

Selwyn's first visit to Melanesia as the Bishop responsible for the islands was in August, 1849, when he travelled in a small 20-ton boat the Undine, to Anaiteum in New Hebrides and to Lifu and Mare in New Caledonia. Through this visit Selwyn discovered several characteristics of Melanesia which influenced his decision to adopt a 'remote-control' strategy for evangelizing the islands.

(a) the diversity of languages within a small geographical area: Despite geographic proximity of the islands to one another, the multiplicity of languages made communication difficult. The population of a community speaking one language or dialect was normally quite small, ranging from a couple of hundred to one thousand people.

(b) the social structure in Melanesia: Melanesian society was fragmented and egalitarian. Leaders were selected according to the 'Big Man' system

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[10]Ibid., 20.

whereby wealth, bravery and achievements were seen as the requirements for positions of leadership. This was quite different to the hierarchical nature of the Polynesian Islands social structure which Selwyn had observed in his visit to Rotuma and Tonga in 1847.

(c) the climate: Melanesia was hotter and more humid than the cooler climate of the Polynesian Islands.[11]

In view of these factors, Selwyn was sure in his own mind that to establish a permanent mission station on each of the main Melanesian islands would be difficult. A missionary might learn the language of one area but that knowledge would not be helpful in another area perhaps just a few miles away where the inhabitants may have a completely different language. The egalitarian nature of the Melanesian society would also make the process of evangelization slow and demanding. The missionaries, would also be vulnerable to the climate and to malaria, a highly infectious disease in the islands. To establish permanent mission stations on the islands would cost a lot of money, require more missionaries and potentially put the life of the missionaries in great danger.

Carefully weighing these factors, Selwyn believed that the only viable option was to build a central mission station where the bishop, missionaries and training facilities could be based and where young people from the islands could

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[11]Whiteman, 102.

be encouraged to come and receive theological training before returning home to evangelize their own people. Selwyn described this strategy as a "black net floated by white corks."[12] He believed strongly in establishing a Melanesian network of clergy, teachers, catechists and other missionary workers to spearhead the evangelization of the islands. European missionaries would be there only as facilitators and to provide support.

In January, 1843, Selwyn opened St. John's College at Waimate, North Auckland to serve as his headquarters and a place where both European and Maori students could receive theological and other forms of training such as carpentry, agriculture, printing and animal husbandry. In November, 1844, he moved St. John's College from Waimate to its present location in Auckland. A prayer written by Selwyn to be the College prayer indicates that the whole purpose of education for Selwyn was to instill "true religion, sound learning and useful industry" in the students. [13] Selwyn regarded useful industry or practical training as an avenue to self reliance. The concept of self-reliance influenced his plans to establish an indigenous Church in Melanesia. His main philosophy was to teach the Christian faith to the Melanesians, but within the Melanesian context. It was not his intention to impose English customs and ways of life on

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[12]Ibid., 199.

[13]Ibid., 100.

Melanesians.[14]

According to Evans, Selwyn's emphasis on practical training was based on his knowledge of Paul's mission and teaching. Some examples of such teachings which influenced him are, "To aspire to live quietly, to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we charged you." (Thess.4:11), "For even when we were with you, we gave you this command: if anyone will not work let him not eat." (2Thess.3:10), and "To the present hour we hunger and thirst, we are ill-clad and buffeted and homeless, and we labour, working with our own hands" (1 Cor.4:11).[15]

During his 1849 visit to Melanesia, Selwyn brought back the first five Melanesians to St. John's College. Thus officially began the Melanesian Mission. In earlier days, October 1st was regarded as the birthday of the Melanesian Mission as it marked the night Selwyn arrived back in Auckland with the five young Melanesian men: Siapo, Uliete, Kateingo, Thallup and Thol. They were from Mare, Lifu and Yengen in the New Caledonia group. Referring to that night, Mrs Selwyn wrote,

> Do I not remember the famous night of this return, watching for what might happen, then George coming in about 1.a.m. rubbing his hands and saying, 'Thank God with me, I have brought them – the work has begun'. I got up and went down

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[14]Fox, 6.

[15]Evans, 100-101.

> to find five strange looking folk sitting over the fire roasting potatoes.[16]

Selwyn was satisfied that the work of the Melanesian Mission had started. The next step was to find someone,

> who should combine this double qualification of being able to 'rough' it among the islands and yet take up with spirit and ability the education and training of the islanders themselves.[17]

The search for that person took Selwyn back to England. He went around talking about his experiences in Melanesia and his plans for the mission. His search led him to John Coleridge Patteson, ordained a year previously, who showed an interest in the mission.

John Coleridge Patteson

Back in October 31, 1841 Patteson had heard Selwyn preach about his mission to New Zealand shortly after Selwyn had been consecrated Bishop. At that time Patteson was still a student at Eton. In a letter he wrote home about the service he attended, Patteson said,

> It was beautiful when he talked of his going out to found a church and then to die neglected and forgotten. All the people burst out crying, he was so very much beloved by his parishioners. He spoke of his perils and putting his trust in

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[16]Janet Crawford, "'Christian wives for Christian Lads': Aspects of women's work in the Melanesian Mission, 1849-1877." In Allan Davidson and Godfrey Nicholson, With all Humility a nd Gentleness, (Auckland: St. John's College, 1990), 51-52.

[17]Jesse Page, Bishop Patteson the Martyr of Melanesian (London: S.W. Partridge & Co., undated), 47.

> God, and then, when he had finished, I think I never heard anything like the sensation, a kind of feeling that, if it had not been on so sacred a spot, all would have exclaimed, 'God bless him.'[18]

Patteson was the man that Selwyn had been looking for and in 1855 he left England with Selwyn for New Zealand where he served as a priest under Selwyn for six years.

On St. Mathias day in 1861, the missionary Diocese of Melanesia was inaugurated and its first bishop, John Coleridge Patteson was consecrated at St. Paul's Church, Auckland, New Zealand. Patteson was a fine scholar educated first at Eton, and then graduating from Oxford. He was also a good sportsman. During his time at Eton, he was captain of the cricket team. After his consecration, Bishop Patteson took charge of St. Andrew's, the Melanesian School at Kohimarama on the shore of Mission Bay at Auckland Harbour, New Zealand. The Melanesians had initially joined Europeans and Maori students in attending school at St. John's College. However, climate was too cold for the Melanesians, resulting in the Melanesian School being moved from the hill-top down to the shore of Mission Bay.

As head of the Mission, Patteson maintained the two main principles which Selwyn had established: (a) a central mission station from which the Diocese

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[18]Ibid., 13.

was administered, and (b) Melanesia to be evangelized by Melanesians. However, as time went on, he introduced changes in the Mission's approach to work and training. The school was operated "according to his own High Church School of Anglican Theology."[19]

Although Patteson taught the Melanesians to translate and understand the New Testament, the language of instruction was difficult to decide. From 1857 to 1858, thirty-two students from Melanesia attended St. John's College speaking six different languages.[20] It was this wide representation of languages among the Melanesians that Patteson had to grapple with. He tried holding separate classes for the different language groups but he found that approach demanding and time consuming. It became necessary to adopt a primary language for communication and instruction. Since most Melanesians could speak Mota, a language from the Banks and Torres group in northern New Hebrides, Mota was adopted in 1867 as the lingua franca of the Mission.

Selwyn would not have considered Patteson's change of language appropriate. Selwyn had always insisted on English as the official language of communication and instruction because he believed that it would promote unity

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[19]David Hilliard, God's Gentlemen (Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1978), 30.

[20]H.H. Montgomery, The Light of Melanesia, A record of Fifty Years' Mission work in the South Seas, (London: S.P.C.K., 1904),7.

among the different races, especially at St. John's College where European, Maori and Melanesian students were trained together. Patteson, however, looked at it differently. He believed that English was so dissimilar to the Melanesian languages in structure, spelling and pronunciation that it created great difficulty for Melanesians attempting to learn the language.[21]

There was another change that occurred under Patteson's leadership. He realized that the Melanesian School in Auckland had more disadvantages than advantages, markedly affecting the work of the mission. The New Zealand climate was still hard on the Melanesians although they returned to the Islands during the winter season. Additionally, the considerable distance to travel made those annual trips very unpleasant. In order to be closer to Melanesia by about six hundred miles, the school was relocated in 1867 to Norfolk Island where the climate was more favourable for the Melanesians.

The School at Norfolk Island became a permanent place of training for the mission and by the end of 1870, (about twenty years after the establishment of the mission) there were 145 Melanesians attending the Norfolk Island school. Patteson's approach to conversion was based on a thorough understanding of the gospel and of Christian principles in general. Therefore, out of the 145 Melanesians at the school, less than half were baptized and only 17 were

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[21]Hilliard, 34.

confirmed. These figures show that the mission progressed very slowly, but Patteson himself was not disappointed. Looking toward success in the distant future, he wanted to lay foundations which would last."[22]

Clear on the direction to pursue after taking charge of the mission, Patteson wondered much about the nature of training he was going to offer the Melanesians. He was aware of the fact that the Melanesians were at the receiving end of the process and he was trying to be careful not to make any mistakes which would have lasting effect on the ministry of the Church in Melanesia. His cautiousness was influenced by his Anglican high church theology which sees Christianity as an institution teaching the gospel with authority based on "positive dogmatic truth."[23] He believed that the system used by the London Missionary Society (LMS) to train people in the Polynesian Islands in the South Pacific was inappropriate. There was too much emphasis "on emotional catch-phrase and simple text." That approach was effective in creating many enthusiastic followers, but they did not really understand what Christianity was all about.[24] It was therefore Patteson's intention to emphasize a deep understanding of Christianity in the teaching and training of Melanesians

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[22]David Hilliard, "The Making of an Anglican Martyr: Bishop John Coleridge Patteson of Melanesia." In Diana Wood, Martyrs and Martyrologies (UK: Blackwell Publishers), 337. Hereafter quoted as Wood.

[23]Ibid., 30.

[24]Ibid., 30.

"and not a mere religious exuberance."[25] He recognized that Melanesians preparing to become teachers among their own people of different situations and sub-cultures must know their subjects well if they were going to be able to stand firm under societal and cultural pressures. Failure in this area could create a situation where distorted teaching of the gospel would occur. Therefore, Patteson devoted himself to establishing an atmosphere in the Melanesian school where the teaching and learning process aimed at nothing less than achieving "dogmatic purity and the rational comprehension of solemn truth."[26]

As expected, the emphasis on cognitive thinking resulted in Melanesians responding to Christianity by using reason. For instance, some individually said to Patteson:

> I do see the evil of the old life, I do believe in what you teach us. I feel in my heart new desires, new wishes, new hopes. The old life has become hateful to me; the new life is full of joy.[27]

This illustrates the Anglican High Church approach which Patteson used. One becomes a Christian not by emotion or 'crisis experience' but by the accumulation of correct knowledge using cognitive thinking. Judgement, punishment and the idea of 'fire' in 'hell' were never part of Patteson's teaching

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[25]Ibid., 31.

[26]Ibid., 31.

[27]Whiteman, 132.

and preaching. Those who wanted to become Christians were allowed to make their own decisions according to their own convictions.

To become a full member of the Church involved a long period of preparation which went through four distinct stages. When one wanted to be baptized, she/he had to be admitted as a hearer and taught the basic principles of Christianity. The person then became a catechumen who received teaching on the Lord's Prayer, Ten Commandments and the Creed. These were of paramount importance. After this, baptism, followed eventually by confirmation, admitted the person to communion.

At the age of forty-four, on September 20, 1871 Patteson met his death on the island of Nukapu in the Eastern Solomons. Patteson had previously been attacked three years after his consecration in 1864 while performing his episcopal and pastoral duties at Graciosa Bay on Santa Cruz also in the Eastern Solomons. He escaped the attack but two of his assistants from Norfolk Island, Fisher Young and Edwin Nobbs were not so lucky and died from wounds inflicted by poisonous arrows.

Bishop Patteson was no stranger to the people of Nukapu, for he had first landed there in 1857. He described the people as having "very gentle, orderly manners", "evident desire to do anything that was in their power to please their strange visitors" and finding it "easy to converse with them sufficiently for our

present purpose".[28] In fact, the Mission Boat, the Southern Cross, had visited the island in 1856, 1857 and 1870 and very likely in 1866 and 1867. It is believed that a month earlier before Patteson arrived at Nukapu in 1871, a recruiting vessel from Fiji visiting the Solomon Islands, the Emma Bell, had kidnapped five young men at Nukapu. This angered the islanders who vowed they would kill the next European to visit their island. Unfortunately, the next European was Bishop Patteson. When the crew of the Southern Cross recovered the bishop's body from a floating canoe, they found a palm leaf tied in five knots as well as five wounds inflicted on the body. The five knots and the five wounds may represent the five young men who were kidnapped on the island. When the news of the bishop's death reached Norfolk Island, Codrington wrote,

> There is very little doubt but that the slave trade which is desolating these islands was the cause of this attack .... Bishop Patteson was known throughout the islands as a friend, and now even he is killed to revenge the outrages of his countrymen. The guilt surely does not lie upon the savages who executed, but on the traders who provoked the deed.[29]

September 20th is celebrated in Melanesia with Sung Eucharist and the events of that day in 1871 are often re-told, followed by a feast and dances to commemorate the martyrdom of Patteson as well as two other staff members of the mission, Joseph Atkin, a clergyman from New Zealand and Stephen

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[28]Hilliard, 334.

[29]Ibid, 68.

Taroaniara, a Melanesian teacher. The collective deaths of Patteson, Atkin and Taroaniara not only formed a milestone in the history of the establishment of the Church of Melanesia but also prompted the Parliament in England to pass the Pacific Islanders' Protection Bill in 1872 to control the recruiting of cheap labour in the South Pacific by British citizens.

John Richardson Selwyn

After the death of Patteson, the Diocese was without a bishop for almost six years, but work continued under Rev. Dr. Codrington. Then, on February 18, 1877, John Richardson Selwyn, son of George Augustus Selwyn was consecrated second bishop of Melanesia at Nelson, New Zealand. John Selwyn was born at Waimate, New Zealand on May 20, 1844. To the Melanesians, it was probably no surprise that John Selwyn became their second Bishop. When the first Melanesians were brought to Auckland in 1849, he was five years old and spent a lot of time playing with them. F.D. How describes the relationship between John Selwyn and the Melanesians as,

> with these little natives Johnnie Selwyn made great friends, and when one of them was ill with a disease which proved fatal, it was Johnnie Selwyn's name which was on his lips as he kept constantly calling for his beloved playmate.[30]

When John Selwyn was ten years old, he want to England with his parents and

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[30]F.D. How, Bishop John Selwyn. A Memoir (London: Isbister & Co.Ltd., 1900), 2.

on arrival there he was sent to Eton and later attended Cambridge.

As bishop, John Selwyn's task was to continue the plans, work and vision of Bishop Patteson and his father. On February 18, 1877, after his consecration, John Selwyn wrote a letter to his father which reads,

> My dear Father,
> I don't know what I am to say to you about today except that it is over, and that I stand pledged to carry on as head of the work which you and Bishop Patteson began.[31]

His first task was to regain the Melanesians' confidence and trust which had been destroyed by the activities of the 'black-birders'. After the death of Patteson, the people from the Reef Islands where Nukapu belongs closed their door to all Europeans. Through his wisdom and courage, John Selwyn was able to re-open the Reef Islands and the Santa Cruz group for mission work. On October 26, 1884, John Selwyn became the first European to visit Nukapu since Patteson's death in 1871. The purpose of this visit was to erect a cross on the place where Patteson was killed. He describes this visit as follows:

> We got to Nukapu last Saturday, and the chief came out to us at once, and we went in together. I took the engineer in to help me to put up the cross. I was a little bit afraid that the people might be shy at the last moment, but they all manifested the most eager zeal, and dug holes and cleared the ground with great vigour. We put it just in front of the house where Bishop Patteson was killed, at their earnest request, as they said people could see it from the sea. I am afraid they

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[31]Ibid., 112.

> can't very well, as it does not show out much, but it stands very well when you land.[32]

He made a positive impact on the Melanesians through his personality. Charles E. Fox describes him as,

> a man who was a born leader of men, strong and brave, hot-tempered and tender-hearted, the hero of schoolboys, adored by Melanesian children, the friend of chiefs, trusted by his staff, generous and understanding with his clergy and teachers, self-forgetful and self-sacrificing, a man wholly lovable, whose name has since been given to hundreds of Melanesians at their baptism because of the love and admiration their fathers and mothers felt for him.[33]

However, his approach to work strictly followed Patteson's pattern. As Fox says, "He was continually regretting that he could not live up to Patteson's standard, and his reverence for him led him to alter as little as possible Patteson's method of work."[34]

Apart from re-opening the Reef Islands and the Santa Cruz group, another story which is always told about him is the conversion of Soga, the fighting Chief of Santa Ysabel. When Bishop Selwyn arrived on Santa Ysabel in 1886, Soga was sick with influenza. Bishop Selwyn prepared a concoction of brandy and quinine, prayed over it, tasted it to show that it was not a poison and then gave

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[32]Ibid., 160

[33]Fox, 29.

[34]Ibid., 30.

it to Soga. Soga was cured and subsequently converted to Christianity. All his people followed him. When Soga was baptized in 1889, (together with seventy people in his village) Bice who carried out the sacrament referred to him as "a second Ethelbert to his people at Ysabel."[35]

The relationship between Selwyn-Patteson-Selwyn is described by Montgomery as, "No mission has ever been blessed with two men more remarkable than A G Selwyn and Patteson, and John Selwyn was soon to follow."[36] For fourteen years, John Selwyn continued following the plans as laid down by his father and Patteson to prepare Melanesians establishing the Church in Melanesia. However, due to continued ill-health, he resigned in 1891 and the Diocese was again without a bishop for almost three years. During this period, John Palmer and Codrington were care-takers of the mission.

The Working Principles of the Selwyn-Patteson-Selwyn era

The Selwyn-Patteson-Selwyn era (1849-1894) would be seen as phase one of the Melanesian Mission. During this period the bishops emphasised training Melanesians, confident in their capability or understanding the gospel message. Their priority was to prepare Melanesians to become teachers and catechists among their own people. By assisting the Church in Melanesia to become an

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[35]Hilliard, 88.

[36]Montgomery, 6.

indigenous Church, they showed sensitivity to the culture and customs of the peoples. They encouraged the people to internalize Christianity according to their Melanesian context. They pursued the task of translating the Bible and the Prayer Book into different vernaculars to help Melanesians read and understand the Bible in their own languages.

The first fruit of this endeavour was seen in December, 1868, when George Sarawia, a native of Vanua Lava in the Bank and Torres Group, Northern New Hebrides was ordained to the diaconate. He was priested in Auckland on June 11, 1873, almost two years after Patteson was killed. About eight months earlier, on November 17, 1872, three other Melanesians, Robert Pantutun, Henry Tagalad and Edward Wogale (Sarawia's brother), were made deacons by the Bishop of Auckland at Norfolk Island.[37] The ordination of Sarawia to priesthood and the other Melanesians to diaconate show the degree of seriousness with which the idea of training Melanesians to evangelize Melanesia was taken. Selwyn, the founder of the Mission, had believed that,

> England cannot furnish Ministers sufficient for the whole world: it follows therefore that a native Ministry must be the appointed way in which the world is to be evangelized.[38]

The ordination of Sarawia was, in a way, a revolutionary act and a step

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[37]Hilliard, 61.

[38]Evans, 125.

outside of tradition. In the history of evangelization, especially in non-European areas, converts were not considered for ordination until they were a few generations separated from the first converts. This was to ensure that failure did not occur.[39] Patteson, however, looked at it in a different way. He believed that the Western concept of 'qualification', which was achieved by formal education, was not to be imposed on Melanesian clergy. To him, the required qualification for Melanesian clergy was the ability to minister to their own people and gain the respect of those whom they served. Hilliard quotes Charlotte Yonge who refers to Bishop Patteson's perspective as saying,

> They have not to teach theology to educated Christians, but to make known the elements of Gospel truth to ignorant heathen people. If they can state clearly and forcibly the very primary leading fundamental truths of the Gospel, and live as simple-minded humble Christians, that is enough indeed.[40]

For this reason, Sarawia was ordained to the diaconate eleven years after he left his home island, five years after his baptism and three years after his confirmation. Sarawia's qualification for ordination, as far as Patteson was concerned, was merely his leadership role in establishing a Christian community and the growth of that community on Mota Island.

After the first ten years of the Mission, a total of 152 young Melanesians

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[39]Hilliard, 61.

[40]Ibid., 61

were taken to Auckland to attend school at St. John's College during summer. The first two Melanesian girls from Nengone in the Loyalty Islands, New Caledonia, arrived in Auckland in October, 1852. The original intention was to train Melanesian women to be Christian wives for the Melanesian teachers, catechists and later clergy. The two girls were under the care of Mrs. Serah Selwyn and assisted by a wife of another missionary, Mrs. Abraham. In 1866 there were 9 women among 70 Melanesians who attended the Melanesian School in Kohimarama, Mission Bay, Auckland. By 1875 there were 38 girls and 125 boys in the school at its new home in Norfolk Island. The girls were taught mainly by the wives of the missionaries to acquire domestic skills like cooking and sewing.

From the beginning, Bishops Selwyn, Patteson and Selwyn wanted nothing more than to see a Church in Melanesia established by Melanesians. European missionaries would be there only as facilitators and supporters. George Selwyn's approach of bringing young people from Melanesia to the Central School had been considered by some critics as "visionary and impracticable."[41] Critics believe that the approach was not only slow in achieving results but also removed the Melanesians from their own environment and culture. It is seen as

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[41]Wood, 336.

a means of imposing western civilization on them.[42] They believe that the concept of establishing an indigenous church by the Melanesians was good but the approach was inappropriate. They believe that the right approach was to build mission stations on the island as other mission organizations such as the London Missionary Society, the Weslyans, the Presbyterians and the Roman Catholics had done. In response to the critics questioning of Selwyn's approach, the following comment made by Mrs. Selwyn is relevant.

> All these years, the Bishop had never lost sight of the "Melanesian" Islands, as he called them, and the name was afterwards universally adopted, and of his burning desire and intention of carrying to them the knowledge and blessings of the gospel. But he had also thought it right to wait till many things were established in New Zealand, and he should have his Diocese well in hand. Notwithstanding that some of his proceedings in it were disapproved of, and some carped at, this new departure did not at first commend itself to the colonists as infringing on their right to all his time and all his powers.[43]

However, the idea of detaching the Melanesians from their environment and culture was not a matter of concern for Selwyn. Rather, he was more concerned about the practical difficulties that the mission would encounter if they had to establish mission stations in the islands. In outlining his plans for the establishment of the Melanesian Mission he wrote to his father in England thus:

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[42]N.M. Benfell, "Bishop Selwyn and Mission Policy in Colonial New Zealand." The Reformed Theological Review, No.2 (May-August, 1985), 44.

[43]Evans, 126.

> I believe that I have made sufficiently clear, in the course of these letters, the plan which I purpose in the hope of the Divine blessing, to follow for the conversion of the Melanesian tribes; which is in few words to select a few promising youths from all the islands; to prove and test them first by observation of their habits on board a floating school; then to take them for further training to New Zealand; and lastly when they are sufficiently advanced to send them back as teachers to their own people; if possible with some English Missionary to give effect and regularity to their work. In the meantime, all the ordinary losses, by sickness, violence, and theft, which occur frequently where Missionaries are stationed at once on unknown ground, will be avoided by the migratory Mission Station, which will never be in the power of the evil, but will always be within reach of the well-disposed.[44]

For Selwyn, the idea of the Central School was necessary to avoid sickness and violence which were common in the islands during that period. He was truly concerned about the establishment of the Melanesian Mission and had wanted to see his plans through. In expressing his concerns for Melanesians, he said,

> Knowing the difficulties which are thought to stand in the way of the creation of missionary bishoprics, I should then have gladly undertaken the charge of Melanesia as my own diocese, retaining only such an interest in New Zealand as might connect me still with the Councils of its Church... But if the difficulties now standing in the way of the appointment of missionary bishops to act in regions beyond the limits of Her majesty's dominion should not be removed, I should be willing, at some future time, if it please God to prolong my life and health, to resign New Zealand, and undertake the

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[44]Ibid., 126

Bishopric of Melanesia.[45]

Circumstances permitting, Selwyn himself would have wanted to retain the responsibilities over Melanesia. This suggests that he was aware that the strategy he had adopted for the establishment of the mission was not final. To label his approach as a failure is perhaps inaccurate.

Considering the diversity of culture and customs in the islands, there has never been a better vision than his "black net - white cork" concept of mission and, as I shall discuss later, that is exactly the point to which the Church of Melanesia wants to return at the present time. The remote-control strategy of administering the Mission field from a thousand miles away was certainly unsatisfactory, but considering the practical problems of sickness and violence in the islands, and the mission's lack of funds and human resources, the strategy was not a bad start.

However, if the success of a mission is determined by the number of converts, then the Selwyn-Patteson-Selwyn era was certainly struggling. After nearly forty years of work in the Islands, the Melanesian Mission had the following statistics at the beginning of 1894:

Population of the Islands	=	150,000
Baptized converts	=	8,929
Communicants	=	1,111

[45]Ibid., 129-130.

Hearers and Catechumens	=	3,200
Village Schools	=	122
Teachers & Catechists	=	381
Deacons	=	7
Priests (Melanesians)	=	2
White Missionaries	=	8

However, while the figures are not impressive, the work of the Melanesian Mission during this era must be commended. Compared to other mission agencies which had established permanent stations on the islands, the Melanesian Mission had done just as well. According to Hilliard, the number of Anglican baptized converts in China at the same period of time was 10,200 which was not far from that of Melanesia. Compared to Japan which only had 2,910, Melanesia was certainly ahead.[46] Therefore, considering other Anglican missionary activities in the world, the Melanesian Mission was either not far behind or was doing better.

The Selwyn-Patteson-Selwyn era was a pioneering stage. The concept of 'indigenous Church' which they had worked so hard to establish made them well ahead of their time. The question which the Church of Melanesia is grappling with now is, "How are we going to recapture the concept of an 'indigenous Church'?" Attempts to answer this question will be issues of discussion in Chapter Five.

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[46]Hilliard, 115.

However, it must be clearly stated that Selwyn's approach to conversion and evangelization was in a way associated with a particular view of what constituted civilization. This was reflected by the curriculum of St. John's College where emphasis was placed on agriculture, carpentry, animal husbandry and printing press operation. The ideal here was that conversion meant turning away from the old ways of life. Civilization meant improving agriculture methods, building and architectural styles and other forms of trade in order to enjoy better life. Included in Selwyn's curriculum was the adoption of English as the language of communication and instruction.

Later in 1847 the Colonial Government in New Zealand, under the leadership of Governor Grey, recognized the value of Selwyn's approach to education and drafted its policy on education along the same line. Only mission schools which included practical trades in their curriculum and used English for teaching and learning were entitled to receive financial support from the Government. Nevertheless, critics like Benfell believe that Selwyn's approach to education and training did more harm than good. They view the emphasis on practical trades as a form of exploitation and failure because the students seemed to spend more hours working outside than attending school.[47] They also believe that for the Maori people the boarding school system was unhelpful

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[47]Benfell, 46.

because it took the young people away from their homes, alienating them from their own culture and ways of life.

However, if one looks at the decline of the emphasis on practical training at St. John's College, it was not because the programme was a failure but because of other circumstances. About 1852, Maori schools were established in different parts of the country eliminating the need to come to St. John's College. More or less at the same time, the colonial government started to apply Selwyn's philosophy as the condition for schools to receive financial grants from the government. Another reason was that Selwyn was contemplating returning to England to be with his father during the last days of his life, and the responsibility of the College was handed over to Archdeacon Abraham.[48] Change of emphasis by Selwyn's successors may have contributed to the decline in practical training at St. John's College.

Selwyn's approach to education might not have worked for the Maoris in New Zealand, but it worked very well for Melanesians. Since the time mission schools were established in Melanesia, money had always been a problem. Through the practical focus of the curriculum, schools were able to survive through the years. They grew their own food and generated sufficient income by tending their own coconut plantations, cattle and pigs.

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[48]Evans, 113.

The boarding school system also helped in many ways to establish the Church in its early days in Melanesia. Melanesia had been divided by geography, culture, custom, language and tradition, with those divisions being sources of enmity, mistrust, disrespect, head-hunting and violence among the people. Through the boarding school system, young people from different cultural groups were brought together and the barriers existing between them started to break down. Understanding and respect for one another grew through contact facilitated by the schools. In this regard, Melanesia will always treasure the work and vision of Bishop George Augustus Selwyn and his two successors.