CHAPTER NINE

Disunity: Failed Efforts at Integration

In the 1960s, some local ministers pushed for racial unity and integration in Fijian Methodism with new vigour, while others were content with the existing system that segregated the mission. European missionaries were shifting from protectionist policies, designed to limit the influence of Europeans on indigenous peoples, to consider policies of integration that increased cross-cultural engagement. One of the most crucial issues facing the mission leadership was concurrently being deliberated by the Fijian government: whether it would be possible to change the existing system of separation and better integrate the Fijian and Indo-Fijian communities. This chapter guides us through the debates that emerged during the creation of a constitution for the independent Methodist church.

By 1960, there was no doubt that the mission was destined for independence. An elite leadership was already in training, with hopes pinned on the Reverend Setareki Tuilovoni to assume the role of chairman (or an equivalent position) in the autonomous church. Baleiwaqa, a Fijian historian who wrote about Tuilovoni’s work with the Methodist Youth Department, described Tuilovoni as not being ‘the native messiah against the whites, but the product of the struggle of both Fijian and Australian ministers to develop local leadership’.¹

The mission had capitalised on the ‘world church’ network to ensure that the mission’s elite had access to high quality education programs. Tuilovoni studied at Drew University’s theological school in New Jersey in the 1950s. In April 1961, chairman Stanley Cowled appealed to the board of missions of the Methodist Church in New York for financial support to assist Tuilovoni

to complete a Master of Sacred Theology. These discussions culminated in Tuilovoni’s candidature at Union Theological Seminary in New York, which he began later that year. Tuilovoni wrote his thesis on the topic of church unity in the Pacific, having seen first-hand the challenges confronting missions in Fiji and across the globe. He had been attending international ecumenical events for years, including the 1957 International Missionary Council Conference in newly independent Ghana. His thesis, titled ‘Church and Unity in the South Pacific’, synthesised his diverse experiences overseas and in the Pacific, looking at the global and local aspects of the church. As he wrote his thesis, he delivered sharp messages to the mission’s leaders at home in the hope of influencing the shape of the post-colonial Fijian Methodist Church.

In 1960, Alan Tippett, by then principal at Davuilevu, asked talatala in training what they perceived to be Fiji’s ‘modern problems’. Students offered various responses, which Tippett selectively reproduced in the Australian Methodist publication The Spectator. The students wrote about ‘progress’, and the ‘breakdown of custom and the swing to the European way of life’. Tippett used these student responses to argue that ‘the present students do not belong to the past’.

When they do worry about the breakdown of custom, it is because of the problems caused by rapid breakdown, not the change itself. On the other hand a good deal of their thinking on religion is culturally conditioned — more than they themselves realise. They are truly young men of two worlds.

Tippett encouraged his students to consider the Fijian cultural paradigm, and how this might be used to understand and respond to social change. Change was accepted as inevitable, but the pace at which it occurred was problematic, just as the pace of the devolution of the church had become an issue in the late 1950s. So much about social transformation was linked to temporal notions of progress. The talatala described the rapid alterations occurring within the colony, but some things remained the same. Tippett argued that religion was ‘culturally conditioned’, and that Fijian Methodism in many ways housed

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5 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid.
DISUNITY

a custom-bound past, built around chiefly power. Tippett felt uneasy about
the power still enjoyed by chiefs, and their influence in the mission, which was
counter-productive to efforts to establish a democratically fashioned mission.

Complicating matters further, European missionaries were not entirely disengaged
from chiefly culture. Lesslie Newbigin, a pivotal figure in the international
ecuminal movement, visited Fiji in 1960. He observed that ‘missionaries, in
the main, are put by the people into a chiefly category and I suppose it is very
easy for we human mortals to behave in a chiefly fashion if we get the chance’.8
There was continued inequity between European and non-European staff, at a
time when European missionaries desperately needed to walk beside, rather
than ahead of, local ministers. Even so, the same delineations and allegiances
that had emerged within the colonial administration, where indigenous Fijians
and Europeans were perceived as oppositional to Indo-Fijians, were operating
within the mission.9

In 1960, Gribble, still the General Secretary of Methodist Overseas Missions,
attempted to maintain a rhetoric of unity. He held the mission up as a beacon
of hope while Fiji faced economic and political instability: ‘it is wholesome to
find the Church ready to give an example of racial unity and acceptance of
responsibility to it.’10 Both the Fijian and Indo-Fijian synods made, in Gribble’s
words, a ‘historic decision to work towards autonomy and to submit a
constitution for a Fijian conference’.11 Gribble congratulated the European
missionaries for standing alongside ‘Indian and Fijian churchmen determined
to overcome caution, suspicion and fear’.12 Tuilovoni identified fear as the major
obstacle to progress towards reconciliation and unification. The legacies of
long-term segregation marred the mission’s administration, evangelisation and
worship, and finances. The Indo-Fijian branch was still significantly smaller in
membership than the Fijian branch (there were 559 Indo-Fijian members of the
Methodist mission in 1955).13 The mission’s workers struggled to fathom how
the independent church would financially sustain programs in the Indo-Fijian
community. Considering the mission’s finances, Tuilovoni wrote: ‘The Conference
will succeed if the Methodist people put aside their racial prejudice and enter
into this venture by faith, and not by fear.’14 Gribble recalled, 30 years later,
that they had:

8  L Newbigin to C Gribble, 29 April 1960, 1952–65 Fiji-Fijian 1960–1, MOM Fiji Papers, ML.
10  Ibid.
11  C F Gribble, ‘The Older Pacific Churches’, statement at the board of missions now in session in Sydney,
12  Ibid.
13  A H Wood, Overseas Missions of the Australian Methodist Church: Fiji-Indian and Rotuma, vol. 3,
14  S Tuilovoni to J Robson, 9 April 1962, F/7/J, NAE, p. 3.
to go cap-in-hand to the Indian Synod because they didn’t want the Fijian conference, they were afraid. They were afraid that they wouldn’t get the helpers for their schools, they were afraid that they wouldn’t get the money, the financial support that came from the Board of Missions … they were afraid of being left alone.¹⁵

Tuilovoni had similar recollections. The Reverend Setareki Rika had eventually stood up at the 1963 United Synod and said, pointedly, that there was ‘strong racial antagonism in the minds of a number of Fijian laymen’.¹⁶ His colleagues had lost sight of the fact that they all belonged to one family, living in ‘God’s household’.¹⁷

European missionaries not only struggled to see how the two branches could be brought together, but also with how to manage anti-colonialism. Missionary Cyril Germon read Lesslie Newbigin’s *A Faith for this One World?*, in which Newbigin depicted ‘western cultural and political penetration’ as a bilateral struggle between white races and colonised peoples.¹⁸ Newbigin argued that western culture no longer had ‘the right and power to dominate and replace the cultures of Asia and Africa’.¹⁹ While in earlier decades European missionaries had been more conscious of widespread rejection of Christianity by the Indo-Fijian community, Tippett now admitted that some Fijians had become hostile to Christianity because of its association with ‘western culture and power’.²⁰ He believed that the faith ‘taught some good ethics, but has not demonstrated the love she preaches’.²¹ Despite efforts to acculturate Christianity, the practice of exclusion through maintaining race and class divides had been contrary to Christian values.

With anti-colonialism on the rise, mission leaders were surprised to still hear local leaders convey their hope that European missionaries would stay in the islands. *Talatala* who attended a youth camp in Fiji 1961 told C J Wright, a leader of the Australian Methodist youth movement, that ‘Fijians are not objective enough, not impartial enough’ to run the church.²² However, Wright adopted Gribble’s position, that despite their reluctance, *talatala* — who he deemed quite capable

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¹⁶ Ibid.
¹⁷ S Tuilovoni to S Andrews, 5 January 1972, PMB 1072.
¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 108–9.
²¹ Ibid.
— should be encouraged to take ‘fuller responsibility’.\textsuperscript{23} He felt sure that when Tuilovoni returned to Fiji from the United States, he would be ‘in a position to foster this legitimate urge towards independence’.\textsuperscript{24}

With his extensive experience overseas, Tuilovoni had adopted the highly idealistic rhetoric of the International Missionary Council, but Deoki stood beside him to push for unity in their burgeoning church.\textsuperscript{25} Tuilovoni tried to translate his conceptualisations of unity from his thesis to the Pacific context. Like Newbigin, Tuilovoni remained hopeful that the church would be able to overcome colonial boundaries.\textsuperscript{26} Newbigin had argued that equal partnership could exist between ‘older’ and ‘younger’ churches where they were able to adopt a ‘supra-national character’, ‘so that men may be able to recognise in the missionary operation, not the coming of a particular human cultural or political influence but the mission of him who belongs equally to all races and nations, and being the Saviour of all’.\textsuperscript{27} Newbigin’s plan was good in principle, but was undermined by the everyday reality of mission operations that had been designed and developed during the heyday of Empire and mirrored the divisions imposed by colonial administrations. Despite his own experience of this, Tuilovoni wrote in a similar vein:

\begin{quote}
This is the marvellous thing about the Church. When she is in her rightful place she does transcend racial and other barriers. The political situation in which islands of the Pacific are involved could make church unity difficult yet not impossible. On the other hand the political dependence of native peoples may be an important factor in executing church unity in the South Pacific.\textsuperscript{28}
\end{quote}

Tuilovoni considered the potential for true social cohesion in the Pacific to be dampened by the continued presence of colonial powers. In a decolonised Pacific, amalgamation would be more readily achieved, with Pacific Islanders central to local church administration, rather than manipulated by ‘dependency’ on colonial ties.

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{25} This was one way in which the international discourse of indigenous rights travelled to Fiji. E W Larson and R Aminzade, ‘Nation-states Confront the Global: Discourses of Indigenous Rights in Fiji and Tanzania’, \textit{The Sociological Quarterly}, vol. 48, no. 4, 2007, p. 804.  
\textsuperscript{27} L Newbigin, \textit{A Faith for this One World?}, London, SCM Press, 1961, pp. 115–17.  
\textsuperscript{28} S Tuilovoni, ‘The Church Unity in the South Pacific’, PMB 1072.
A constitution committee was appointed to discuss the parameters of the independent church, meeting for the first time in August 1961. The committee planned to submit a draft constitution for approval to the general conference in Adelaide in 1963, so they had two years to deliberate questions of integration within the church.\(^{29}\) A meeting on 15 September 1961 at Dudley House School in Suva included representatives from all districts of the mission, including European missionaries.\(^{30}\) The Reverend L D Fullerton, then chairman of the Indo-Fijian district, reiterated his hopes for a ‘ministry of reconciliation’.\(^{31}\) With this ideal in mind, the committee formulated three proposed structures for the conference. Proposal A continued the existing structure of racial segregation.\(^{32}\) Proposal B had one conference for all, with a Fijian synod that would incorporate six districts: Rewa, Bau-Ra, Lau, Lomaiviti, Ba-Nadroga, and Vanua Levu Rotuma. The Indo-Fijian synod would remain separate but be answerable to the conference.\(^{33}\) Proposal C was described as follows:

That there be a Conference, a Conference Committee of Details, and six Annual Meetings (comparable to the Fijian Annual Meetings in geographical distribution), and that there be an Indian Advisory Committee to meet before the Annual Meeting and submit recommendations to the Annual Meetings on matters concerned with the work of the Church among the Indian people. Indian and Fijian representatives would meet together in the Annual Meetings. The Indian Advisory Committee would be roughly equivalent in personnel to the Indian Synod.\(^{34}\)

Proposal C was the most integrated of the models. Most of the meeting’s attendees decided that adopting this model would be a ‘premature development’.\(^{35}\) They were able to discuss these proposed models at quarterly meetings with Methodists in each circuit and report on their preferences at the next meeting.

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31 L D Fullerton, ‘Pacific Missionaries’, *The Spectator*, 1 June 1960, p. 7; Fullerton went on to write a thesis in 1969 at Drew University titled ‘From Christendom to Pluralism in the South Seas: Church–State Relations in the Twentieth Century’, where he argued that ‘folk churches’ had become predominant in the Pacific, where a ‘church is broadly accepted within a particular culture and reinforces the cultural values and the political status quo.’ See J E Bush, ‘Claiming a Christian State Where None Exists: Church and State in the Republic of Fiji’, *Pacifica*, vol. 12, no. 1, 1999, p. 63.
32 Conference constitution committee meeting, day 2, 16 September 1961, minutes, F/J/7, p. 3.
33 Ibid., p. 1.
34 Ibid., p. 2.
35 Ibid.
Figure 11: Proposed church structures.
Source: Author's research.

Figure 12: Fijian quarterly meetings in each circuit.
Source: Author's research.
While ministers sought feedback on these proposed models at the village level, Gribble kept abreast of anthropological debates, seeking inspiration on how racial barriers might be bridged. He was aware of the criticisms coming from Australian anthropologist Catherine Berndt about the concept of the ‘native church’. Berndt was Elkin’s protégé, but was not as sympathetic to missions as he had been.36 She too explored questions of ‘integration’, ‘segregation’, and the

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native church policy in an article published in 1961. Focusing specifically on Methodist efforts in Arnhem Land, she spoke about the accommodation or tolerance of Aboriginal culture. She described the acceptance of the idea of a ‘native church’ within Methodist circles, which Methodists did not view as being segregated or producing social or political inequality, even though it had established an inequitable racial system. She believed that despite its claims of accommodating Aboriginal culture, the policy had required ‘the Europeanising ideal to predominate. What appeared to be a permissive or positive approach to Aboriginal culture for example the use of a local language, can only be a matter of temporary expediency, a more skilful way of achieving that end.’

While Berndt observed the Methodist mission’s application of the ‘three selves’ church policy in the Australian context, the same approach to culture and building a ‘native church’ had been used in the Pacific. She rightly observed that the ideals of equity and the acculturation of Christianity never quite overcame the issue of race. The mission’s application of the ‘three selves’ church policy — to establish self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating indigenous churches — had hardened racial boundaries in both the Australian and Pacific contexts.

The 1962 draft constitution declared that the Fijian church would have complete autonomy over ‘doctrine, discipline, organisation, land and property — in the group of islands and Rotuma’, but that it would still ‘be subject to the jurisdiction and control of the General Conference of the Methodist Church of Australasia’. The racial division of the Methodist community remained a source of heated debate. Tuilovoni was frustrated with the persistence of the racialised wage system. He explained that implementing an equitable pay scheme would institute a sense of ‘oneness’ and ‘belonging’, and allow Fijian and Indo-Fijian ministers to work in either district of the church without complications. He asked that members of the constitution committee ‘put aside personal involvement in the ministerial salary’ and bring Methodists in Fiji together ‘irrespective of their race, colour, or social status’. There was one person in particular whose recommendations caught Tuilovoni’s ire. This was the mission’s accountant, J E Nix. Nix had recommended that the conference should continue its existing method of pay: European ministers would be paid £1,000 per annum, Indo-Fijian ministers £700 per annum, and Fijian

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40 Ibid., p. 3.
and Rotuman ministers a mere £120 per annum. Tuitovoni condemned this suggestion, submitting his opinion to acting chairmen of the Fijian district, the Reverend C A Hatcher. Tuitovoni felt that it would work against ‘the unity that has been established in the conference’.

The scheme of salaries proposed by Mr Nix on the basis of three separate racial groups will result in the very thing that has come to many other countries and which they are beginning to accept. If it be true that Fijian, Indian and Rotuman ministers are soldiers in one army, there should be one system of salaries and not many different scales as proposed by Mr Nix.

Tuitovoni continued:

Mr Nix’s scheme is less Christian than the Government, where there is one salary for all, and they are not divided on the basis of race or any other group. As they work for one Government, there is one source only from which they are paid, which is not divided on the basis of what each separate group respectively gives to the Government.

Tuitovoni suggested that the money for wages come from one pool, as the Indo-Fijian congregations would not be able to afford to pay their ministers the sum of £700 per annum as required. He suggested that the wages be made the same for all:

… if this could be done, we will be able to say: (1) that we stand together in one level of mutual love in Christ’s church, (2) there will be nothing in which you missionaries are distinct from the rest of us; at present we do not think of you and us on the same level together. Your spiritual work will have greater effect among men when they know that you have given yourselves for them.

Tuitovoni did not demand that European missionaries exit the mission at the point of independence, but if they were to stay in Fiji, they had to work on an equal basis with non-European ministers. The long-standing system of racially codified wage distribution had to end if there was going to be any legitimacy to claims of Christian brotherhood in the Methodist church in Fiji. Tuitovoni understood that while European missionaries might require a different rate of pay associated with living away from their homeland, ‘Fijian and Indian

42 S Tuitovoni to J Robson, 9 April 1962, F/7/J, NAF, p. 5.
44 S Tuitovoni to J Robson, 9 April 1962, F/7/J, NAF, p. 3.
45 Ibid.
46 Ibid.
47 Ibid.
48 S Tuitovoni to C A Hatcher, Acting Chairman, 27 January 1962, F/7/J, NAF.
ministers truly belong to the Church, and there should not be two distinct rates of salary. Where possible let all people of the Church share together in supporting ministers.49 For this he recommended:

It should be the responsibility of the whole church, when it is inter-racial, to provide for minister’s salaries according to a scale which will make it possible for a leader to fulfil his duties well, and for all ministers to be able to do their work adequately … Within the fold of Christ there is no Indian or Fijian, European or Rotuman, Chinese or Part-European. They are members of one family and partners together in those things that build up the whole household.50

At the April 1962 Conference Constitution Committee Meeting, when revising the existing three-tier system of pay, the committee adopted Tuilovoni’s position, and the minutes stated that when it came to ministerial stipends there would ‘be no difference (Fijian and Indian) as we are united in one Conference’.51 Tuilovoni believed that the foundations of the church, developed in the previous century, had allowed discrimination to proliferate within the mission.52 The mission’s organisation had to be redeveloped if there was to be any reconciliation. ‘There will be many things to unite’, he said, ‘such as land, the funds of the Church and other things that were previously divided’.53 As Maelin Pickering-Bhagwan has illustrated in her essay on these debates, Tuilovoni advocated the integration of congregations, for Fijians to be able to minister to Indo-Fijian congregations and vice versa, and for anyone to be able to enter any Methodist church in Fiji, regardless of race, and be welcomed as part of the community.54 He believed that sharing worship would ‘build up the mutual knowledge and fellowship of those of different races in one village or preaching place’.55

Tuilovoni made a final comment about the rhetoric used to discuss work in the mission and which fostered a sense of exclusion. He wrote that many acknowledged that evangelising the Indo-Fijian community was important, but that the mission could not continue to single out Indo-Fijians.56 He felt that people had spoken of the need for evangelistic work with the Indo-Fijian community incessantly, which was unnecessarily stating the obvious, to the point where it was purposefully overstated in order to exacerbate difference.57

49 S Tuilovoni to J Robson, 9 April 1962, F/7/J, NAF, p. 3.
50 Ibid., p. 5.
51 Meeting, Conference constitution committee, Dudley House School, 27 April 1962, F/7/J, NAF.
52 S Tuilovoni to J Robson, 9 April 1962, F/7/J, p. 3.
53 Ibid.
55 S Tuilovoni to J Robson, 9 April 1962, F/7/J, p. 3.
56 Ibid.
57 Ibid., p. 2.
Tuilovoni pushed the mission to embrace its full membership rather than discussing only the colonies’ two dominant races, expanding the mission’s vision to other Pacific Islanders.

Symbolic of efforts to enhance the inclusion of Indo-Fijian membership, the meetings for the Conference Constitution Committee continued to be held at the Dudley House School in Suva, initially built solely for the Indo-Fijian branch. By this time it was a school for both Indo-Fijian and Fijian children. When the committee met again in June 1962, amalgamation was again discussed, particularly the wage system. Delegates agreed to revisit the constitution every three years ‘to determine whether the Church is ready to take the next step in integration or not’. Complete integration was not yet possible, despite the international pressure to move towards an integrated model.

At the June 1962 Constitution Committee Meeting, members considered ways in which the mission’s spheres could be brought together. They particularly advocated integration at a congregational level, recommending that steps towards this end be taken immediately. Despite this, in 1962 the mission board heard that the united synod had decided to move ahead with proposal B, which was similar to the existing system of governance. An Indo-Fijian annual meeting would replace the Indo-Fijian annual synod — a largely superficial change. The system of segregation between the two cultures would remain embedded in the independent church structure.

It was evident that Tuilovoni’s ideas were incredibly influential in these meetings. In a significant step towards self-governance, Tuilovoni assumed the role of President of the United Fiji Synod in 1962. This meant that the period of transition to independence was now underway and, for the first time, Fijian leadership was fully recognised.

There was still considerable work to be done to prepare the mission for complete autonomy. Discussions about equal wages continued at the constitution committee’s meetings throughout 1963, with ministers requesting parity in pay. Nix’s wage scheme had been abandoned, and John Robson, who was

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59 Those present included Fullerton, Davis, Tabututu, Vatucicila, Salway, Drou, Robson, Wilton, Deoki, Waqairawai, Buiniqio, Bhagwan, Campbell and Rogerson. Meeting re: conference constitution committee held at Dudley house school, Suva, 29 June 1962, F/7/J, NAF.

60 Conference Constitution Committee meeting, Dudley House School, 29 June 1962, F/7/J, NAF.

61 ‘Acting Chairman’s Report to the Annual Meeting of the Board of Missions, 1962, on proposals for a Fiji Conference, Methodist Church in Fiji United Synod, F/J/7, NAF.

now chairman, felt that they had ‘accepted the principle of integration’, and
‘equalisation’, but that they could not make the scheme progress. The Reverend
Doug Fullerton, who had continued to work on church committees in Australia
through his engagement with the National Missionary Council in the 1960s while
he worked as a missionary in Fiji, described the new ‘integrated’ system they
created as a ‘two level ministry with different functions and different salary’.63
The committee reasoned that it would cost £150 per minister per year, ‘if all
monies for salaries were pooled’.64 The salaries would be too low for ministers to
live on, and they needed to be increased, but no resolution came about at this
meeting.65

At the Conference Constitution Committee Meeting on 8 February 1963, the
push for integration was stalled again.66 Racial representation was discussed, as
Indo-Fijian ministers were evidently concerned that they were to be outvoted if
they merged with the Fijian district. John B Wilton, who would become principal
at Davuilevu in 1964, suggested the concerns that a majority/minority dynamic
may be managed by capping the number of talatala who could work at any one
time.67 However, Robson said that this would not be appropriate; he diverted
the discussions away from merging, and suggested that it would be better to
have two separate churches, or form a church that would be primarily Fijian.68
Those who were shaping Fiji’s independent church were preoccupied with
demographics.69 There was no other alternative offered. To ensure its needs were
heard, the Indo-Fijian synod supported the new conference model with seven
annual meetings, six of which would discuss Fijian matters, and a seventh that
would discuss the Indo-Fijian work. The Fijian synod wanted a more blended
model, however, suggesting that ‘there should be only six integrated Annual
Meetings, which would be attended by representatives of both the Fijian and
Indian Churches’.70 A report regarding the proposed conference read:

63 General Secretary to Hickin, 25 September 1959, L D Fullerton to attend Conference of Australian
Churches in Melbourne, Australia, February 1960, National Missionary Council minutes, MOM 448–449, ML;
Conference Constitution Committee meeting, Dudley House School, 8 February 1963, F/7/J, NAF, p. 2.
64 Ibid.
65 Ibid.
66 This meeting was attended by Tuilovoni, Fullerton, Robson, Wilton, Germon, Deoki, Dreu, Mastapha,
Ratu Rusiate Buiniqio, Ali, Singh, Bhagwan, Campbell, and Rogerson.
68 Conference Constitution Committee meeting, Dudley House School, 8 February 1963, F/7/J, NAF, p. 2;
National University, 1979, pp. 284, 286.
69 J Kelly, ‘Aspiring to Minority and Other Tactics against Violence’, in D Gladney (ed.), Making Majorities:
Constituting the Nation in Japan, Korea, China, Malaysia, Fiji, Turkey, and the United States, California,
Fiji, Past and Present’, in D Gladney (ed.), Making Majorities: Constituting the Nation in Japan, Korea, China,
70 ‘Acting Chairman’s Report to the Annual Meeting of the Board of Missions, 1962, on proposals for a Fiji
Conference’, F/7/J, NAF, p. 2
The Fijian Synod showed an understanding of the hesitation and fears of a minority church, such as the Indian Church. The whole question was approached in an atmosphere of Christian love, and it seems that the strong minority vote in the Fijian Synod in favour of seven Annual Meetings (which was not passed) was recognition that this was the wish of the Indian Church. The Fijian Synod further resolved by an almost unanimous vote that the Fijian Church would accept happily whatever decision the United Synod felt was right for the Church as a whole.\footnote{Ibid.}

These meetings revealed aspirations for solidarity between Fijians and Indo-Fijians, but also the arguments put forward for continued separation. Ultimately, the ministry left the united synod to decide the fate of the mission. Seen by many as a Fijian institution, Indo-Fijian ministers felt compelled to assert their ethnic difference in a bid to ensure representation and minimise their marginalisation within the mission as it decolonised.\footnote{J Kelly depicts the indigenous Fijian concept of love as being the main Christian (Methodist) Fijian concept for love. Kelly's description in this way further amplifies the paramountcy of an indigenous 'version' of Methodism in Fiji. Doing so further distinguishes the difference between Hindu and what it is to be Methodist in Fiji, and in doing so polarised Indo-Fijian and indigenous Fijian Methodists, despite his best efforts not to homogenise the Indo-Fijian community (p. 186). J Kelly, 'Aspiring to Minority and Other Tactics against Violence', in D Gladney (ed.), \textit{Making Majorities: Constituting the Nation in Japan, Korea, China, Malaysia, Fiji, Turkey, and the United States}, California, Stanford University Press, 1998. pp. 183–84; R Norton, 'Culture and Identity in the South Pacific', \textit{Man}, vol. 28, 1993, p. 744.}

The opinions of ministers in the field were shaped by international discussions in the global era of decolonisation and by Australian anthropologists. Monitoring events in Fiji, Gribble had been influenced by Catherine Berndt's earlier criticism of Methodist missions and their efforts to preserve and engage with indigenous culture. Berndt had worked in both Australia and Papua New Guinea and was, as a result, familiar with some of the challenges in the Pacific context. Gribble also corresponded with Ronald Berndt, Catherine Berndt's husband, who advised him to continue to support the retention of indigenous culture, as it would remain relevant to the 'here and now'.\footnote{R M Berndt to C F Gribble 29 April 1963, National Missionary Council minutes, MOM 448–449, ML, p. 3.}

Gribble sought Berndt's advice on assimilation, integration and protectionism.\footnote{Ibid.} From Gribble in the General Secretary’s Office in Sydney to those in the field, missionaries had been confounded by the dilemma of reconciling their interest in safeguarding culture and working towards a systematic program of social integration, though the process of acculturation could now potentially continue in the independent
church if it was to remain segregated. In April 1963 Gribble consulted with an Arthur Elemore, who told Gribble that he preferred the term ‘integration’ to ‘assimilation’, as he felt it carried more respect for ‘ethnic entity and difference, as well as standing in contrast to “segregation” which is the policy now rejected’. This discussion directly reflected the decisions made regarding Fiji’s conference constitution.

Ministers were clearly influenced by international debates about racial equality as the Fijian church moved towards independence. The messages emerging from the International Missionary Council, particularly Newbigin’s publications, remained influential, but did not offer a clear guide for reconciliation in a multicultural context. While people within the church had hoped for unity between the Fijian and Indo-Fijian districts of the mission, the church remained divided through to the independent era. This division remained in order to ensure that the voices of Indo-Fijian Methodists were not drowned out amidst a Fijian majority of the ministry and membership. Negotiations over the church’s new constitution in the early 1960s did not break down the racial divisions that had existed within the mission throughout the twentieth century. The responses of European missionaries and local ministers to the issues raised in the lead up to independence demonstrate the legacy of racialist ideas. Even during this era, wages were arranged according to an arbitrary racial and cultural hierarchy. Missionaries were guided as much by anthropology as ecumenism throughout this period of decolonisation, and had a better sense of the impact of colonialism on colonised people, but the racial categorisation which had been so much a part of the colonial Fiji could not be easily dismantled.

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76 A Elemore to C F Gribble, 24 April 1963, National Missionary Council minutes, MOM 448–449, ML.